CHAPTER 6 TRANSPORTATION

This chapter briefly summarizes the County's rural transportation system, including conditions, issues, proposed system improvements, financing, goals and policies. The County's adopted Transportation System Plan (TSP) prepared in 2009 provides more detailed information about the transportation system and also serves as a supporting transportation element of the Comprehensive Plan. The TSP addresses all modes of transportation pursuant to the requirements of the Oregon Transportation Planning Rule.

A. Road Systems

Roadways serve the largest share of trips and support many of the other modes of travel used in Wasco County. Automobiles/trucks, pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, marine vessels, and freight transportation all rely on roadways to some degree for mobility and access to various land uses, including rail, marine, air, and pipeline/transmission facilities.

A number of jurisdictions own and manage the public roadway system within Wasco County, including the following.

- Wasco County owns and maintains approximately 697 miles of roadway, which includes 300 miles of paved roadway.
- The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) owns upwards of 270 miles of state highways within the County, including some of the most heavily traveled roadways.
- The United States Forest Services (USFS) owns and maintains the roadways within the Mt. Hood National Forest, located in the western area of the County. These roadways have been used historically to access logging areas and provide emergency fire access; however they are now seeing more recreational use.
- The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs own and maintain the roadways within the Warms Springs Indian Reservation area. The reservation is located in the southwest area of the county.
- The Incorporated Cities of The Dalles, Dufur, Maupin, Mosier, Shaniko, and Antelope own and maintain the roadways within their city limits that are not owned or maintained by ODOT or the County. These roadways provide local access and primarily serve local trips.

Roads in the County are generally classified as arterial, collectors and local roads. Currently, all arterial roads are state highways and under the jurisdiction of ODOT. Arterials roads are intended to provide mobility by serving high volumes of traffic, particularly through traffic, at higher speeds. They also serve truck movements and should emphasize through their design traffic movement over local access. Collector roads collect traffic from the local street system and distribute it to the arterial street system. These roadways provide a balance between traffic movement and land access and should provide extended continuous stretches of roadway to facilitate traffic circulation through the county. Local roads provide local land access

and carry locally generated traffic at relatively low speeds to the collector street system. They should provide connectivity through neighborhoods, but should be designed to discourage cut through vehicular traffic.

As part of the 2009 TSP process, roads were evaluated for performance using a volume to capacity ratio (v/c) measure. Projected future (2030) performance also was evaluated. The following two tables summarize current (2009) and projected 2030 performance for ODOT and major County roads. This analysis indicates that state highways and collector roads in the county current operate at well below their capacity in all cases and are expected to continue to do so through 2030. It also indicates that all major county roads have very good or excellent pavement conditions.

TABLE 1 - CURRENT AND PROJECTED FUTURE PERFORMANCE OF STATE FACILITIES

Roadway	Current (2009) Average Daily Traffic	Mobility Standard (V/C Ratio)	Current (2009) V/C Ratio	Future (2030) Average Daily Traffic	Future (2030) V/C Ratio
US 26	4,515	0.70	0.15	7,095	0.24
US 30	1,325	0.70	0.07	1,880	0.10
US 97 (South of US 197)	3,170	0.70	0.09	4,565	0.13
US 97 (East of US 197)	2,245	0.70	0.13	3,230	0.18
US 197 (at Boyd Market Road)	3,250	0.70	0.11	4,610	0.15
US 197 (at Fifteenmile Road)	1,735	0.70	0.06	2,465	0.08
OR 206 (East of I-84)	830	0.70	0.05	705	0.04
OR 216 (East of US 26)	235	0.70	0.01	350	0.02
OR 216 (West of US 197)	620	0.70	0.03	1,280	0.07
OR 216 (East of US 197)	255	0.70	0.01	525	0.03
OR 218 (South of US 97)	100	0.70	0.01	180	0.01
OR 293 (East of US 97)	185	0.70	0.01	295	0.02

TABLE 2 - CURRENT AND PROJECTED FUTURE PERFORMANCE OF COUNTY FACILITIES

Roadway	Current (2009) Average Daily Traffic	Mobility Standard (V/C Ratio)	Current (2009) V/C Ratio	Future (2030) Average Daily Traffic	Future (2030) V/C Ratio	Pavement Condition
Boyd Loop Road (East of US 197)	175	0.70	0.01	215	0.01	Very good
Browns Creek Road (South of Chenoweth Creek Road)	265	0.70	0.06	330	0.02	Very good
Cherry Heights Road (Northeast of Wells Road)	375	0.70	0.02	465	0.03	Very good
Dufur Valley Road (West of Rail Hollow Road)	265	0.70	0.01	325	0.02	Very good
Dufur Valley Road (West of South Valley Road)	210	0.70	0.01	260	0.02	Very good
Emerson Loop Road (East of Lower Eight Mile)	145	0.70	0.01	180	0.01	Very good
Fifeteenmile Road (East of	290	0.70	0.02	355	0.02	Very good

Moody Road)						
Fivemile Road (West of OR 197)	415	0.70	0.02	515	0.03	Excellent
Friend Road (West of Dufur Gap Road)	100	0.70	0.01	125	0.01	Very good
Juniper Flat Road (West of OR 216)	30	0.70	0.01	35	0.01	Very good
Lower Tub Springs (South of OR 218)	40	0.70	0.01	50	0.01	Very good
Mill Creek Market Road (Northeast of Orchard Road)	1,630	0.70	0.09	2,020	0.12	Very good
Reservation Road (South of OR 216)	180	0.70	0.02	225	0.01	Excellent
State Road (at Sevenmile Hill Road)	480	0.70	0.01	600	0.03	Very good
Threemile Road (Southeast of Steele Road)	1,625	0.70	0.09	2,020	0.12	Very good
Upper Tub Springs (South of Hwy 218)	20	0.70	0.01	25	0.01	Very good

While most of the primary roads in the County have adequate existing and future capacity, a variety of projects are recommended in the future to improve intersection operations, address safety issues, and reconstruct roads as they age and require repairs or rebuilding. These projects are described in the TSP, which identifies approximately $80 million worth of capital improvement projects through 2030. A significant portion of these funds would be dedicated to improving state or federal facilities (i.e., Interstate 84).

As of 2009, funding for the County's operation program for 700+ miles of paved and gravel roads comes almost entirely from sources outside the County in the form of transfer payments from the federal government and the State of Oregon. This revenue is used to pay salaries of County employees and for materials and services, road maintenance, and minor improvements. The federal payments once were related to the harvest of trees on federal forest land in the County; the payments were a means of compensating the county for wear and tear on public roads used to haul logs to mills and finished products to market. As logging declined, the federal government passed a five year Safety Net law in 2000 guaranteeing that counties would continue to receive annual funding at historic harvest levels. However, congressional support for continuing those temporary payments is waning and payments are expected to be phased out by 2013.

Transfer payments from the State of Oregon are the second largest source of revenue the County relies on to maintain its road network. The Oregon Department of Transportation redistributes revenue that it collects from fuel sales, weight mile taxes, driver and vehicle fees, and other sources to local governments across the state. The formula used to distribute funds differs for cities and counties.

For Wasco County and virtually all cities and counties in Oregon, gas tax revenue has not been keeping pace with costs. A combination of factors is weakening this

revenue source's purchasing power. The biggest problem is that the fuel tax rate is not indexed, so inflation is eroding its purchasing power. In addition, the combination of improved vehicle fleet mileage and the use of non taxed alternative fuel vehicles is affecting the amount of fuel sold disproportionately to vehicle miles traveled. Consequently, wear and tear on the road system is outstripping available revenues to accomplish needed maintenance and capital improvement projects. Recent forecasts by ODOT predict that without significant increases in the tax rate, fuel tax revenue will continue lagging inflation and decline in value to local road authorities.

As noted above, special federal forest payments are expected to be phased out by 2013, which would eliminate the Road Fund's primary revenue source. This would leave very limited available money for road maintenance and virtually no funds for capital improvements. The County will need to consider and implement a variety of potential approaches to address this shortfall, including the following:

- Make better use of existing resources
- Alter road network design and operating standards
- Secure more external funding
- Adopt additional local taxes and user fees

The County's TSP describes these actions and recommendations in more detail.

B. Other Modes of Transportation

A variety of non-auto modes of transportation are important for county residents to meet their mobility and recreation needs. They are described briefly here and in more detail in the County's TSP.

1. Pedestrian and Bicycle Travel: The pedestrian and bicycle modes serve a variety of needs including relatively short trips to major attractors, recreational trips, circulation within parklands, and access to transit (generally for trips under ¼ mile to bus stops). In rural areas of the County, walking and bicycling mainly serve as a form of recreation or exercise, rather than for commuting or shopping, due to the relatively long distances between originations and destinations. As a result, the majority of pedestrian and bicycle trips are short trips, including trips to the school, recreational areas, etc. While there are safety concerns associated with bicycle and pedestrian travel on high-speed, highly traveled roads, roadways with a low volume of traffic are preferred routes for pedestrian and bicycle use.

   Existing pedestrian and bicycle facilities in Wasco County include a multi use trail along the Columbia River and several bike routes that are commonly traveled. These routes include the Mosier Loop, Dalles-to-Hood River connection, Cherry Heights, and Eightmile and Fifteenmile loops.

   All State and County roadways in rural parts of Wasco County, except State Highways 26, 97 and 197, have an average daily traffic count of less than 3,000 vehicles, which is consistent with ODOT guidelines for shared bicycle use. However, most of the roadways are not signed to warn motorists of the potential

for encountering bicyclists on the roadways. In addition, County roadways with low traffic volumes tend to have high speed motorists and poor sight distance, making it potentially unsafe for bicyclists.

No specific proposed future bicycle and pedestrian improvement projects are identified in the TSP. However, given increasing recreational bicycle use in the County, a formal identification and recognition of cycling routes within the County was identified as a need and was formally recommended as part of the TSP process.

2. Transit Facilities and Service: Existing public transportation service in Wasco County is provided by the Transportation Network. The Transportation Network, a member of the Gorge TransLink, provides dial-a-ride service for The Dalles and selected portions of Wasco County. The Hood River County Transportation District offers public transportation services through Columbia Area Transit (CAT). CAT provides fixed-route service between Hood River, Mosier, and The Dalles on a daily basis and between Portland and The Dalles on a weekly basis.

   The Mid-Columbia Economic Development District, under contract with the Association of Oregon Counties, prepared the Wasco County Coordinated Transportation Plan (CTP) update to address area needs from 2009 to 2012. The plan provides a framework to guide investments in public transportation. As such, improvements and future funding of public transportation in Wasco County should be implemented in accordance with the CTP.

3. Marine Transport: The Port of The Dalles is located on the Columbia River although it is primarily a marketing entity for industrial land in the region. In general, the Port owns industrial and commercial sites, some with riverfront barge access. Currently no known marine freight is loaded from sites within the Port of The Dalles, but the potential for such facilities exists. The Port also owns and operates a 120-slip marina facility with moorage for all types of boats with drafts up to 14 feet. A public boat launch ramp is also available at the marina. Adjacent to the Port of The Dalles is a private facility that currently provides storage and transport of wheat via the Columbia River.

   No specific marine transportation facility improvement projects are identified in the County's TSP.

4. Air Transport: One public air transportation facility, The Columbia Gorge Regional/The Dalles Municipal Airport, serves Wasco County. The Airport is not located within the County, but is directly across the Columbia River from The Dalles, in the State of Washington. The Airport is jointly owned by the City of The Dalles and Klickitat County in Washington State. Despite the location, the Columbia Gorge Regional/The Dalles Municipal Airport is included in the statewide air transportation study, and serves many large local commercial companies, heavy industrial firms, and the United States Forest Service.

Two private air facilities are located in Wasco County. The Chenoweth Airpark is a private airport established in 1959 and located three miles west of The Dalles. Permission to use the airport is required in advance. The runway has an asphalt surface and is approximately 2,450 feet by 75 feet. Pine Hollow Airport is located 2 miles northwest of Wamic, Oregon. It is a private air strip and permission to use the air strip is required in advance. The airstrip is turf, with a 25-foot wide gravel center. The total dimension of the airstrip is 2,400 feet by 130 feet wide.

Future growth and development is a top priority of the Columbia Gorge Regional/The Dalles Municipal (CGRDM) Airport. However, there are currently no projects scheduled that are expected to increase the volume of air travel. No other long-term plans have been identified that suggest future air travel needs will increase at the CGRDM or private airports within the County over the next 20 years.

C. Freight, Pipeline and Transmission Facilities and Needs

Wasco County contains part of the Union Pacific (UP) Railroad's east-west main line. The UP main line provides the most direct connection from the Pacific Northwest to the Overland Route via Pocatello, Idaho, and Cheyenne, Wyoming. The Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway (BNSF) is Oregon's second largest transcontinental railroad. A north-south BNSF line runs roughly along the county line between Wasco County and Sherman County before diverging into the south central part of Wasco County and points south.

BNSF and the Oregon Rail Plan identified needed improvements to five tunnels on the BNSF north-south line through central Oregon, located along an 88-mile stretch in Wasco and Jefferson Counties. Improvements were deemed necessary to provide clearances sufficient for "high-cube," 9-foot 6-inch containers stacked one on top of another in a double-stack configuration. When the ORP was published in November 2001, the State did not have funding in place to support these improvements.

Wasco County contains one major interstate transmission pipeline. The facility is a 36-inch diameter natural gas pipeline operated by Gas Transmission Northwest Corporation. This line runs through the southeast portion of the County enroute from Canada to California. The line transmits between 800 million and 1 billion cubic-feet of Canadian natural gas to California each day.

Wasco County recognizes the potential for future lines to bisect the County as future demand for natural gas increases. One proposal by Palomar Gas Transmission, a partnership between NW Natural and TransCanada, would provide additional capacity and reliability to the natural gas transmission system.

The proposed 36-inch-diameter underground pipeline will be approximately 217 miles long and connect to an existing gas pipeline located northeast of Shaniko. As proposed the route would run east-west through Wasco County adjacent to Maupin and Pine Grove. The project is anticipated to be completed in late 2011.

Additional pipeline transportation in and through Wasco County includes transport of water and sewer within incorporated cities, and transmission lines for electricity and telephone service throughout the County.