



Needs Assessment

COTTAGE GROVE AREA TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

DATE: April 8, 2021
TO: Cottage Grove Area TDP Advisory Committee
FROM: Lane Council of Governments: Kelly Clarke, Rachel Dorfman, Syd Shoaf
SUBJECT: Cottage Grove Area TDP Needs Assessment Draft

Contents

Purpose	2
Assessment of Needs	3
Stakeholder and Public Identified Issues and Gaps	3
TDP Goals and Objectives	5
Existing and Future Conditions	6
Existing Services	6
Population Growth.....	8
Employment and Development	9
Cottage Grove Transit Development Plan Needs Summary	12

Purpose

The purpose of this memo is to provide an assessment of the transit related needs within the Cottage Grove area. It is a key step in developing the TDP implementation strategies tailored to the Cottage Grove area community. This memo presents the gaps, issues, and needs articulated from three primary sources:

1. The Cottage Grove area community and stakeholders
2. The Draft TDP Goals and Objectives
3. Analysis of the Cottage Grove area's existing and future transportation, population, and land use conditions

In some cases, needs from each source were articulated as an experienced or analyzed gap or issue with the current transit system and are presented as such. This project's *Public Participation Report; Vision, Values Goals, Objectives, and Performance Measures Memo; Existing Conditions Memo; and Peer Analysis Memo* may be referenced for additional detail on each source. The final section of this memo summarizes the gaps, issues, and specific needs as a synthesized list of transit-related needs.

Assessment of Needs

Stakeholder and Public Identified Issues and Gaps

The Project Management Team, Advisory Committee, current riders, community members, and other stakeholders weighed in on transit related needs through a variety of outreach methods (Table 1). Due to COVID-19 and the associated stay-at-home orders, many outreach activities were not possible as originally planned and were either reformatted in scale or reimagined for a remote setting. Despite these challenges, a robust effort was made to engage Cottage Grove area residents in the TDP process. This section summarizes the key issues and gaps identified through the community outreach process. For a full description of outreach methods and results, see the [Public Participation Report](#).

Table 1: Summary of TDP Community Outreach

Timeframe	Outreach Event
March 2020 – Present (April 2021)	Project Management Team involvement
June 2020	Stakeholder Advisory Committee #1
July 2020 – September 2020	Community Survey
July 2020 – Present (April 2021)	Project Website
August 2020	Be Your Best community group presentation
August 2020	Beeper Radio Show presentation
September 2020	Stakeholder Advisory Committee #2
January 2021	Stakeholder Advisory Committee #3
April 2021	Stakeholder Advisory Committee #4

Public and stakeholders identified the following transit-related needs, issues, and gaps:

- Connections between Cottage Grove, Creswell, and the Eugene-Springfield metropolitan area are not convenient for work, recreation, seeing family/friends, and medical services
- There is not enough service to areas outside of the Cottage Grove city limits – e.g. Row River, Shoreview Drive, Disston, Culp Creek, Curtain, London, Dorena, Culp Creek, the lakes, the Eugene Airport, and southern Lane County’s recreational destinations
- There are gaps in services for students of all ages; high school and middle school students do not have reliable access to transportation for after school events and college students do not have reliable service for evening classes
- Better access to community service agencies, downtown Cottage Grove, and the shopping center off Gateway are needed
- Additional service in the morning, later at night and during weekends is needed to better serve local businesses, particularly restaurants and community events

- It takes too long to travel between Cottage Grove, Creswell, and the Eugene-Springfield metropolitan area; the timing is particularly challenging for commuters
- Service cuts to Lane Transit District's (LTD) Route 98 have led to longer trip times; the cuts have also made riders go to appointments earlier than necessary and come back later in the day
- The one-way route structure of LTD's Route 98 through town limits the ability to promote community connections for daily shopping, social, or medical trips
- Southern Lane County is aging and rural; transit service needs to be accessible for disabled, elderly, low-income, and rural Cottage Grove area residents
- Language is a barrier for some community members with limited English proficiency; it is difficult to understand the transit services that are offered
- Better customer service and a commitment to equity is needed to build trust with riders of color
- Scheduling and obtaining information about public transportation is difficult for those without technological expertise and/or a smart phone; the Route-Around-Town and the LTD Mobility on Demand (MOD) Connector are difficult to use for some
- Transit service in Cottage Grove is infrequent and unpredictable, which makes trip planning difficult
- There are not enough buses and drivers to meet the ridership needs of the community
- The app for LTD's MOD Connector service is confusing since it shows different estimated time of arrivals for the bus, which can appear that the ride was cancelled and cause undue stress
- There is a lack of general awareness about public transportation services that are available in the Cottage Grove area
- Current MOD service is limited to the Cottage Grove city limits; there are businesses just outside the city limits that are not served
- I-5, the railroad tracks, and the Coast Fork Willamette River create East-West barriers to public transportation access
- Lack of performance targets makes it difficult to track progress toward goals
- Community events, like the Cottage Theatre and Bohemia Park have after hours and weekend practice, performance, and program times, which are not served by transit
- There are inadequate sidewalks and bicycle infrastructure that connect to transit locations
- Communities in northern Douglas County, like Drain, are food deserts and residents need to go to Cottage Grove for groceries and other goods

TDP Goals and Objectives

The Cottage Grove Area TDP goals are:

1-SAFETY

The public transportation system is safe for all users.

2-CONVENIENCE

Public transportation is a convenient option for traveling in and beyond the Cottage Grove area.

3-EFFICIENCY & RELIABILITY

Public transportation provides people with an efficient and reliable way to get where they need to go when they need to be there.

4-ACCESSIBILITY

Public transportation connects people with their destinations and improves access to Cottage Grove and the surrounding area.

5-ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Public transportation provides an environmentally responsible transportation option.

6-EQUITY

Public transportation reduces transportation barriers and expands opportunity for everyone in the Cottage Grove area.

7-FINANCIAL STABILITY

Public transportation is financially stable through responsible stewardship of financial resources.

8-SYSTEM RESILIENCE

The public transportation system is resilient and helps the Cottage Grove Area anticipate, prepare for, and adapt to natural and non-natural hazards.

The TDP objectives center on supporting the goals through regional coordination, safety and access, transportation options, outreach and education, equity, capital needs, convenience, sustainable funding, coordinated improvements, environmental sustainability, reducing vulnerability, and community and economic development. For the full description of Goals and Objectives, please see the [Vision, Goals, Objectives, Performance Measures Memo](#).

Public engagement directly informed the goals and objectives and also helped identify needs, gaps, and issues at a higher level in the current system.

Transit-related needs relating to the **TDP Goals and Objectives** include:

- The Cottage Grove area public transportation system needs to be resilient and responsive to changing funding climates and environmental conditions
- Riders need to feel safe using the public transportation system
- People who do not have access to a smart phone or credit card still need to be able to use the public transportation system
- The vehicle fleet should produce low to zero emissions
- People need to be able to rely on the public transportation system to get them where they need to go when they need to be there
- Public transportation needs to work with local service providers to provide emergency response

Existing and Future Conditions

The Cottage Grove area is a growing and evolving community which places increased demand on transit. This section assesses transit needs to meet projected future population, employment, and land use growth in the Cottage Grove area. Understanding the Cottage Grove area's future conditions is important in anticipating the future public transportation related needs of the community. For a full description of baseline conditions in the Cottage Grove area, including a community demographic profile and description of the current transportation system, see the [Existing Conditions Memo](#).

Existing Services

Three types of transit service are currently offered to the general public in the Cottage Grove area: door-to-door services operated by South Lane Wheels (SLW), fixed-route services operated by Lane Transit District (LTD), and LTD's Mobility on Demand (MOD) service, the *LTD Connector*, operated by SLW. In addition, LTD offers s through the Medicaid brokerage *RideSource*, which provides transportation to Medicaid/Non-Medical appointments for free to qualifying residents. SLW previously operated a deviated fixed-route service, Route-Around-Town, which was suspended in January 2019 in response to LTD's MOD pilot. Recent analyses by students at University of Oregon¹ have helped identify gaps in current services that supplement qualitative data gathered through the stakeholder and public engagement process. The City of Cottage Grove reports on its service and fleet to the Federal Transit Administration's National Transit Database but does not currently track local performance targets.

¹ *The LTD Connector: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Mobility-On-Demand in Cottage Grove, Oregon and Current and Future Mobility Needs Assessment for the Cities of Cottage Grove and Creswell*

Door-to-Door Services

SLW operates door-to-door services (dial-a-ride) in the Cottage Grove area as well as the Metro Shuttle, which takes riders to the Eugene-Springfield metropolitan area. Passengers call SLW dispatch in advance to schedule rides. SLW vehicles cover large distances, and fares for services are dependent on mileage; they range from \$3 to \$10 and up depending on distance for door-to-door services in the Cottage Grove area and \$20 to \$30 round trip between Creswell or Cottage Grove and the Eugene-Springfield Metropolitan Area for the Metro Shuttle. For a detailed breakdown of fares, see the [Existing Conditions Memo](#). A peer fare comparison found that peer transit agencies provided commuter services for \$1 to \$2 each way. Rural dial-a-ride and fixed-route services were more difficult to compare with peer providers, most of which provided services confined within city limits or smaller service areas for \$1 to \$2 per ride (for additional comparison with peer providers, see the [Peer Analysis Memo](#)).

Fixed-Route Services

LTD's Route 98 connects Cottage Grove with Creswell and the Eugene-Springfield metropolitan area and serves the City of Cottage Grove in a one-way loop that makes stops at key trip generators within the community, including the Cottage Grove Lane Community College campus, Cottage Grove High School, the downtown and commercial districts, and the Walmart Park-and-Ride. Although these key community destinations are served, Route 98 follows a large figure eight path through town that takes 20 minutes to complete, and the one-way route structure limits its utility as a convenient intracity transit option for daily shopping, social, or medical trips. There are significant infrastructure limitations to rerouting Route 98 due to the East-West barriers created by the river, railroad, and I-5. Route 98 primarily serves ridership that needs to access educational opportunities, employment centers, medical services, and other social services in the Eugene-Springfield metropolitan area.

Mobility on Demand (MOD) Pilot Services

The MOD pilot, also known as the *LTD Connector*, provides smartphone app-based trip planning for on-demand door-to-door services within the Cottage Grove city limits. MOD was initially conceived as a replacement for the loop portion of LTD's Route 98 in Cottage Grove. The original concept truncated Route 98 at the Walmart stop. However, LTD found that the app struggled with making connections at prearranged destinations and times with fixed-route services. LTD responded by reinstating the Route 98 loop through town and running it simultaneously with MOD. With these adjustments, MOD is providing a valuable mobility service for local access within the City limits, particularly to low-income and elderly community members. LTD is now working with a new app provider that will allow users to prearrange a pickup time and location as well as provide more certainty to riders hoping to make a connection with Route 98. From an equity perspective, the app-based platform potentially presents technological and financial barriers to low-income and elderly residents and those without access to a smart phone or bank account.

Transit-related needs, gaps and issues relating to existing services include:

- SLW buses cover large distances, leading to wear and tear on vehicles
- SLW fares may be too high for regular commuters or low-income riders; alternative services (Route 98 and MOD) take too long, do not run with enough frequency, or are limited to rides within city limits
- Uni-directional routing of fixed-route services serves key destinations but limits the ability to promote community connections for daily shopping, social, or medical trips
- Significant East-West barriers including I-5, the railroad tracks, and the Coast Fork Willamette River limit transit routes through town
- MOD is not adequately integrated with Route 98
- The MOD's dependence on technology to access the service presents potential technological and financial barriers for some seeking to use the service
- The City of Cottage Grove reports on its service and fleet to the Federal Transit Administration's National Transit Database but establishing and tracking local performance measures with targets are needed to help to monitor progress over time and help to prioritize investments.

Population Growth

The population of Cottage Grove is expected to grow 14% by 2040, which will put additional pressure on the existing transit system.² Several key transit-supportive populations in the City of Cottage Grove—including people over 65 and under 18, people of color, people with limited English proficiency, people with a disability, people with low to moderate incomes, and households with no vehicles available—grew between 2010 and 2018. These trends indicate a growing demand for transit in the Cottage Grove area over the past decade, and—combined with forecasted overall population growth—will likely continue to sustain new demand for transit services in the future.

In 2018, the City of Cottage Grove adopted a Housing Needs Analysis for the 2018 to 2038 period.³ The report describes factors that will affect future housing demand in Cottage Grove, such as population growth.⁴ Although the report focuses on demand for housing in Cottage Grove, it presents two key population characteristics that will also have an impact on Cottage Grove's transit demand:

² Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census 2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates (Table S0101) and PSU Coordinated Population Forecast for Lane County, 2018 to 2068

³ https://www.cottagegroveor.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/community_development/page/7371/hna.pdf

⁴ The Housing Needs Analysis shows a 28% increase from 10,740 residents in 2018 to 13,981 residents in 2038, a 1.3% average annual growth rate. This discrepancy is due to the fact that ECONorthwest extrapolated the official

1. **A growing population of seniors.** In addition to identifying a need for housing types specific to seniors, the report identifies “loss of mobility” as a challenge that aging seniors face in continuing to live in their community.
2. **A proportionally large population of younger people.** According to the report, a larger share of the population in Cottage Grove is under 20 years old (28%), compared to Lane County (22%) and Oregon (24%). A larger population of younger residents without access to a vehicle or who seek transportation options will continue to drive demand for transit services geared toward young people and students.

Transit-related needs relating to **population growth** include:

- Expanded transit services will be needed to serve a growing population in general, with specific focus on the needs of transit-supportive populations
- A growing population of seniors will require transit tailored to their needs, such as increased access to shopping destinations, healthcare facilities, and other services as well as Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible facilities
- A growing population of people with limited English proficiency will require translated materials and targeted education/outreach
- Increased outreach and education are needed to promote awareness about existing services among people of all ages and abilities

Employment and Development

Employment is expected to grow over the next decade, and land development/redevelopment is already occurring in the Cottage Grove area. Both will influence demand for transit as significant trip generators and destinations.

The Oregon Employment Department (OED) provides ten-year employment forecasts by industry for Lane County.⁵ Total employment across Lane County is projected to grow 8% from 2019 to 2029, with the largest growth in Health Care and Social Assistance (19%) followed by Private Educational and Health Services (18%). According to the Cottage Grove Transportation System Plan, employment within the Cottage Grove Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) is expected to grow to 4,916 by 2035. The growth in employment is expected along OR-99 between the UGB and East Harrison Avenue in the southwest, on either side of Row River Road, and near the Cottage Grove Connector at OR-99 in the north. Current employment density is primarily centered along the I-5 corridor, with fewer employees per acre in rural areas.

population forecast from the Oregon Population Forecast Program for 2015 (to 2018) and 2035 (to 2038). This Memorandum used the Portland State University Coordinated Population Forecast for Lane County, 2018 to 2068.

⁵ https://www.qualityinfo.org/more-articles?assetPubId=101_INSTANCE_zzQVrB7aEq2k

Commute patterns in Cottage Grove provide clues to transportation needs and represent a potential need for transit services. More workers commute from Cottage Grove than into the area for work, a phenomenon that is not surprising given Cottage Grove's proximity to a major urban area. Most workers employed in Cottage Grove (76%) live outside city limits and commute in for work, while 82% of Cottage Grove residents commute beyond city limits for work. A majority of residents (81%) drive to work in a car, truck, or van, most of whom (65.4%) drive alone.⁶ Public and stakeholder feedback have indicated that existing services in the Cottage Grove area do not capture this potential market; fixed route services take too long for commuters and do not operate at convenient times of day, while door-to-door services may be cost prohibitive for daily use as a commute option.

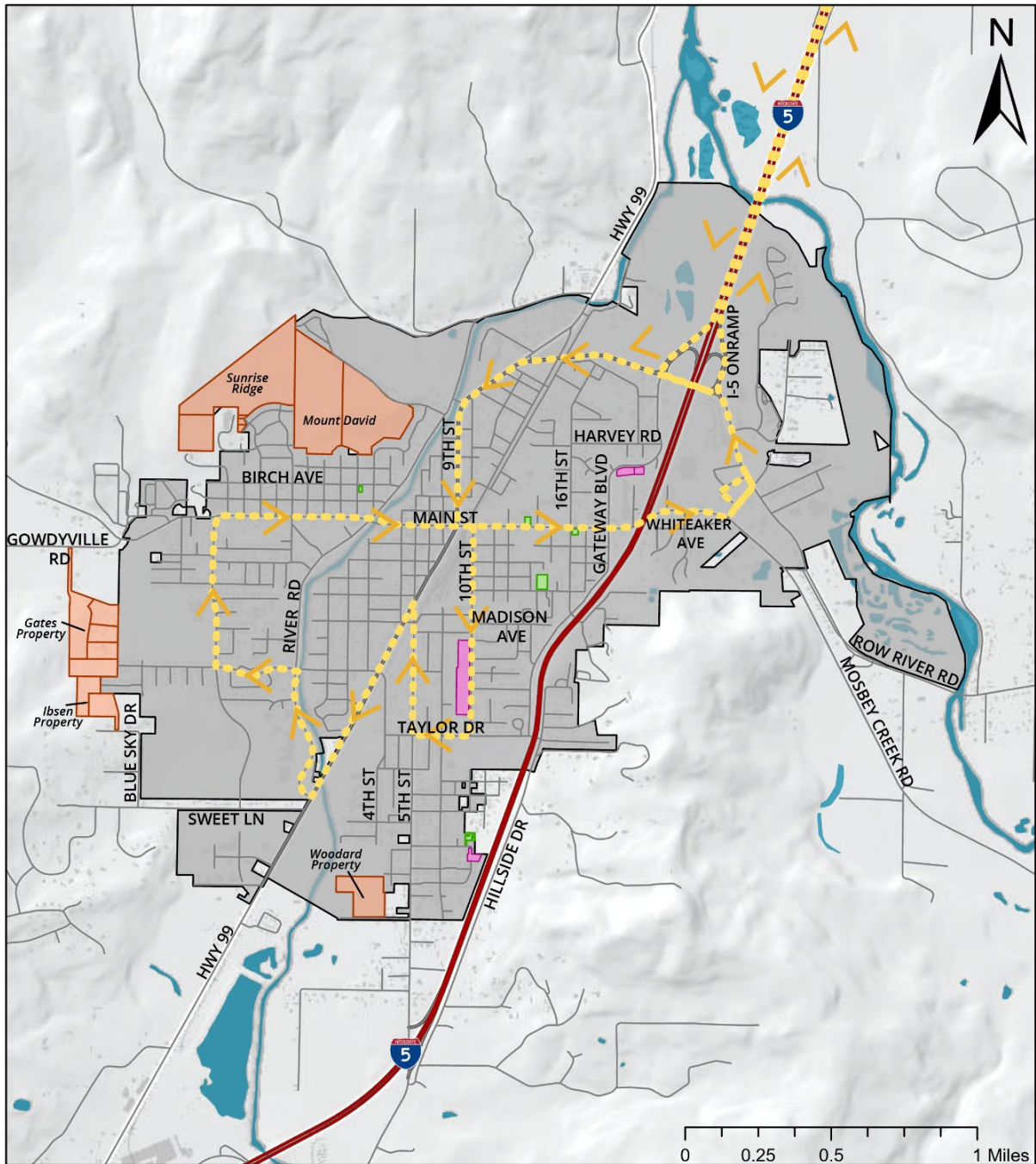
Development and redevelopment also play an important role in transit planning since both directly affect travel demand and ridership. Identifying current and future land uses and developments is vital in understanding where the Cottage Grove area residents and visitors may rely on public transportation to get to and from now and in the future. Map 1 illustrates multi-family residential developments in Cottage Grove that are potential, permitted/in-construction, and recently completed. Most of the potential projects in Cottage Grove are at the edges of the city limits and are further away from LTD's Route 98 through town. Additional land use and development considerations within the Cottage Grove area are documented in the [Existing Conditions Memo](#).

Transit-related needs relating to **employment and development growth** include:

- Transit service that operates during peak commute times and that has a direct, timely service to the Eugene-Springfield metropolitan area is essential to meet the needs of workers who travel to and from Cottage Grove
- Expected employment growth may lead to increased demand for transit services; particularly along OR-99 between the UGB and East Harrison Avenue in the southwest on either side of Row River Road, and near the Cottage Grove Connector at OR-99 in the north where employment growth is expected
- New residential development will need to be served by transit
- The new Federally Qualified Community Health Center will be a major regional trip generator; low-income and limited English proficiency residents from the region may need transit to access services

⁶ Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates (Table DP03)

Map 1: Multi-Family Residential Developments in Cottage Grove since 2019



Cottage Grove Area Transit Development Plan Lane Transit District Residential Development Areas

The information on this map was derived from digital databases on Lane Council of Governments' regional geographic information system. Care was taken in the creation of this map, but it is provided 'as is'. LCOG cannot accept any responsibility for errors, omissions, or positional accuracy in the digital data or the underlying records. There are no warranties, expressed or implied, accompanying this product. However, notification of any errors will be appreciated.

Residential Development Area Types

- Completed
- Potential
- Permitted/
In Construction

- LTD Route 98
- Cottage Grove City Limits
- Bodies of Water
- Roads
- Interstate Highways



Source: LCOG GIS Services

Cottage Grove Transit Development Plan Needs Summary

Table 2 reflects a summarized list of transit-related needs within the Cottage Grove area as synthesized from the community and stakeholders; the draft TDP Goals and Objectives; and analysis of the Cottage Grove area's existing and future transportation, population, and land use conditions.

Table 2: Summary List of Cottage Grove Area Transit Needs

ADA compliant vehicles and infrastructure are needed to meet the ongoing needs of a growing and aging population.

The Cottage Grove area's population is increasing and is projected to include higher proportions of seniors and young people. The public transportation system will need to respond to a growing demand for transit in the Cottage Grove area.

Increased frequency of transit service between Cottage Grove, Creswell, and the Eugene-Springfield metropolitan area is needed so that it can be more reliably used for commuting, shopping, personal needs, medical appointments, and education.

Increased collaboration with regional partners is needed to provide regional coverage; particularly connections to rural southern Lane County, northern Douglas County, and communities outside of the Cottage Grove city limits.

Expanded weekday and weekend service hours are needed in the morning and evening to better serve students; local businesses; local events, and local destinations.

Expanded marketing and outreach efforts are needed to raise public awareness and clearly communicate how to use available services. Materials should be accessible to all Title VI populations.

Physical, financial, and technological barriers to transit for Cottage Grove area residents need to be lowered, particularly for transit-dependent populations.

Public transportation needs to contribute more to enhance community and economic development in Cottage Grove.

Transit needs to serve incoming development, particularly the Federally Qualified Community Health Center, incoming residential development, and forecasted areas with increased employment.

Transit is subject to economic fluctuations, natural disasters, climate change and hazardous incidents. Resiliency needs to be integrated into the system to absorb and respond to these fluctuations, changes, and incidents.

Feeling safe and secure when using a public system is important to its success; the system needs to provide a safe and accessible space for all riders.

Walking and bicycling is integral to the transit network. Sidewalks, bicycling infrastructure, and vehicles with bicycle racks are needed to complete this network. The City of Cottage Grove will be developing a Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan and should cross-reference the TDP to better leverage funding opportunities to implement strategies serving all active (bicycle, pedestrian, transit) modes.

More vehicles and drivers are needed to meet the community's transit needs.

Establishing and tracking local performance measures with targets is needed to help monitor progress over time and help to prioritize investments