

Draft Technical Memorandum #9:
Preferred and Financially Constrained Plan
Attachment C
City of Ashland Transit Review and Recommendations

CITY OF ASHLAND

Transit Review and Recommendations

Draft Technical Memorandum #2

Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates
785 Market Street, Suite 1300
San Francisco, CA 94103

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Nelson | Nygaard
consulting associates

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Overview

This memorandum presents the existing conditions and recommendations resulting from a review of public transportation in the City of Ashland in conjunction with the City's Transportation System Plan (TSP) update. As a review of existing conditions, this document presents:

- Review of applicable planning and policy documents;
- Summary of existing demographic data that determine the market for public transportation;
- Inventory of existing public transportation services; and
- Assessment of community needs with respect to public transportation services.

Building on these findings, this memorandum presents a discussion of potential transit goals for Ashland, describes a set of alternative service scenarios to meet these goals and a set of next steps to follow up on open issues.

Plan Organization

The remainder of this existing condition document is presented in the following chapters.

Chapter 2—Planning Context highlights the various plans, regulations and programs that provide guidance and funding with respect to the delivery of public transportation in the City of Ashland.

Chapter 3—Existing Public Transportation Services provides an inventory of existing transit services within and to the City of Ashland. It provides a detailed summary of the Rogue Valley Transportation District (RVTB) and its services as the agency is the principal provider of public transportation service in the city.

Chapter 4—Market Analysis includes a demographic profile of the City of Ashland, to establish the framework for better understanding the local characteristics of the study area, with a focus on those population groups which are transit dependent.

Chapter 5—Needs Assessment synthesizes the findings from the previous chapters, along with stakeholder interviews, to describe the public transportation needs of Ashland residents and visitors to Ashland.

Chapter 6—Transit Goals discusses potential transit goals for the City of Ashland. The primary tradeoff between serving everyone with some minimal level of service versus serving routes with the greatest ridership potential is examined.

Chapter 7—Service Scenarios presents a set of alternate service scenarios for local transit service in the City of Ashland. Each scenario represents a combination of: 1) a future level of funding available for public transportation; and 2) a single, or mix of, coverage and/or productivity service(s).

Chapter 8—Next Steps identifies a number of action items that need addressing before the City of Ashland and RVTB move ahead with any major transit investments in Ashland.

Chapter 2. Planning Context

This chapter highlights the various plans, regulations and programs that provide guidance and funding with respect to the delivery of public transportation in the City of Ashland. The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) has developed statewide plans for specific transportation modes, a statewide transportation improvement program, and specific area studies. The city has a variety of plans that dictate policies governing transportation improvements and/or analyze transportation conditions. Other jurisdictions including the Rogue Valley Transportation District (RVTD) and Jackson County shape the regional transit system and the land uses it serves.

The public transit component of this TSP is intrinsically linked to these documents and programs. Policies, goals and objectives in these plans and rules assure that the mobility needs of Ashland citizens are properly planned for.

State Plans and Policies

Transportation Planning Rule

The Transportation Planning Rule (TPR) is found in the OAR Chapter 660, Division 12. It requires local governments to adopt transportation system plans and to amend land use regulations to implement these plans. The intent is to achieve the following objectives:

- Plan for local transportation systems in a way that is consistent with the state plans
- Develop travel demand forecasts that can reduce reliance on automobiles and achieve compact urban development
- Plan for a road network that identifies local street connections and extensions to reduce reliance on arterials
- Provide for bicycle and pedestrian facilities and circulation patterns
- Reduce excessive standards for local street width and right-of-way to make streets more livable and safer for bicyclists and pedestrians
- Assure that new developments and land divisions include bicycle and pedestrian accessways and circulation patterns

Oregon Transportation Plan

The Oregon Transportation Plan (OTP) is the state's long-range multimodal transportation policy. The OTP provides an overall framework while mode plans, such as the Oregon Public Transportation Plan (OPTP), apply OTP policies and service levels to specific transportation modes. The OTP, with a 20-year planning horizon, was originally adopted in 1992, with the goal of addressing the future needs of Oregon's airports, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, highways and roadways, pipelines, ports and waterway facilities, public transportation and railroads. An update to address transportation needs through 2030 was adopted in 2006. The plan provides the following strategies to support public transportation across the state.

STRATEGY 1.2.1

Develop and promote inter- and intra-city public transportation.

STRATEGY 2.1.6

Support incentives and regulations for locating high traffic generators and mixed use development near fixed-route, high frequency public transportation and/or public transportation stations.

STRATEGY 3.2.2

In regional and local transportation system plans, support options for traveling to employment, services and businesses. These include, but are not limited to, walking, bicycling, ridesharing, public transportation and rail.

STRATEGY 3.4.2

Partner with public transportation providers and the private sector to develop innovative ways to deliver goods and services more efficiently such as public transportation services in rural areas.

STRATEGY 4.3.5

Reduce transportation barriers to daily activities for those who rely on walking, biking, rideshare and public transportation by providing:

- Access to public transportation and the knowledge of how to use it
- Facility designs that consider the needs of the mobility-challenged including seniors, people with disabilities, children and non-English speaking populations

STRATEGY 4.3.6

Consider the proximity and availability of public transportation when siting public facilities and services.

Oregon Public Transportation Plan

The Oregon Public Transportation Plan (1997) codifies goals, policies, strategies and service standards for public transportation systems throughout the state.

Goal 1 of the OPTP defines the purpose of public transportation stating,

“The public transportation system should provide mobility alternatives to meet daily medical, employment, educational, business and leisure needs without dependence on single-occupant vehicle transportation. The system should enhance livability and economic opportunities for all Oregonians, and lessen the transportation system’s impact on the environment. The public transportation system should provide services and meet transportation needs in a coordinated, integrated and efficient manner.”

Goal 2 defines the components of such a system, accounting for the different needs and resources available to urban, small city and rural systems. The OPTP contains minimum service standards that each system should achieve.

The OPTP contains minimum service standards that each system should achieve. The TPR is part of the planning context of the OPTP and thus addresses requirements placed on local land

use plans, ordinances and development codes in order to promote public transportation as a viable alternative. The TPR further mandates that all local transportation system plans contain a public transportation plan.

OPTP policies and strategies specify the nature and level of public transportation that Oregon communities should provide, based on community population. Access to public transportation and reduced reliance on the single-occupancy vehicle (SOV) are key elements of the OPTP. The plan references state and federal goals and mandates when planning Oregon's public transportation system of 2015.

The OPTP states that public transportation should be provided in small cities and towns in a manner appropriate for their size, density, and locally identified needs. At a minimum, public transportation should serve the transportation disadvantaged with rideshare, volunteer programs, taxis or minibus services. Rideshare matching and transportation demand management service should be available in communities of 5,000 or more where there are large employers with a base of 500 employees who are not covered by a regional program. General public transportation with fixed-route or other service may be available, and all places of 10,000 people or more should have demand responsive service. The OPTP also proposes minimum levels of service for communities with populations between 2,500 and 25,000. These services include:

- Coordinated intercity and intracity senior and disabled service
- Provision of at least 1.7 annual hours of public transportation service per capita by 2015 with fixed-route, dial-a-ride or other service.

Statewide Transportation Improvement Program

The Oregon Department of Transportation's Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) is the culmination of ODOT's integrated planning process. It schedules and prioritizes transportation projects throughout the state over a four-year period. State and federal programs typically require that projects be listed in the STIP in order to receive funding. The projects that affect public transportation in the Ashland area include:

- RVTD operating assistance
- RVTD capital improvements
- RVTD vanpool development funding
- Ashland park-and-ride facility

City Plans and Policies

The plans and policies of the City of Ashland recognize the need for transit service and provide guidance on the relationship of land development and land use patterns to transit service.

Ashland Transportation System Plan (1998)

The previous version of the Ashland Transportation System Plan was adopted in 1988. The TSP assesses the entire transportation system, one component being public transit. Chapter 9 of the previous plan set forth the following local transit recommendations:

- Expand local service to include five additional routes over the first six to ten years (1998-2008)
- Operate two bus service plans for peak and non-peak operations
- Increase the city's stock of bus shelters (26) to better accommodate patrons
- Conduct a more detailed Transit Development Plan in coordination with the Rogue Valley Transit District in order to identify short- and long-term system improvements and develop a funding program for capital and operational costs

Ashland Comprehensive Plan (1982) (Transportation Element updated 1996)

The existing Ashland Comprehensive Plan guides and controls land use within the city and its Urban Growth Boundary. It directs the city's planning efforts through the year 2005 and an estimated population of 19,995, in the city's goal "to create a public transportation system that is linked to pedestrian, bicycle and motor vehicle travel modes, and is as easy and efficient to use as driving a motor vehicle."

The Plan's Transportation Element contains 92 policies relating to street systems, non-motorized travel, public transit and commercial freight and passenger transportation. The following are those policies related to public transportation in the City of Ashland:

- (1) Develop pedestrian and bicycle networks that are linked to the public transportation routes.
- (2) Zoning shall allow for residential densities and a mix of commercial businesses within walking distance (one-quarter to one-half mile) of existing and planned public transit services which support use of public transportation.
- (3) Work with the local public transit provider to provide service within one-fourth of a mile of every home in Ashland.
- (4) Promote and support express commuter service between cities in the Rogue Valley.
- (5) Incorporate needs of people who don't drive when developing transit routes and facilities.
- (6) Provide pleasant, clean, safe, comfortable shelters along transit lines.
- (7) Require residential and commercial development within one-quarter of a mile of existing or future public transit services to provide transit shelters, bus access, and bus turnaround areas.
- (8) Install bike racks or lockers at transit stops.
- (9) Identify park-and-ride, bike-and-ride and walk-and-ride lots in Ashland to support ridesharing.
- (10) Develop a transportation center in Ashland.
- (11) Encourage promotional and educational activities that encourage people who own cars and school children to use public transit.
- (12) Work with the local public transit provider to address the specific public transportation needs of Ashland.

- (13) Participate and show leadership in interacting with counties, cities and other special governments in Southern Oregon to develop regional public transportation services to reduce the frequency and length of vehicular trips.
- (14) Establish aggressive but realistic performance targets for increasing public transit use for the short, medium and long run.

City of Ashland Capital Improvement Program

The city's most recent Capital Improvement Program update includes plans for the development of approximately eighty parking spaces for a "park-and-ride" lot located on Highway 99 north of Valley View Road. The "park-and-ride location" will be adjacent to a local bus stop enabling easy access into downtown. City expenses are estimated at approximately \$30,000.

City of Ashland Street Standards (1999)

Design principle number 11 of the Ashland's Street Standards is that "Streets should be designed to meet the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists, thus encouraging walking, bicycling, and riding the bus as transportation modes. Pedestrian, bicycle and public transportation considerations should be integrated from the beginning of the design process." Design principle number 23 states, "Streets identified as future transit routes should be designed to safely and efficiently accommodate transit vehicles, thus encouraging the use of public transit as a transportation mode. Transit stops should include amenities, such as but not limited to, bench, shelter from the elements, a posted schedule, bicycle parking, and water fountains."

City of Ashland Development Ordinances (proposed draft October 2007) & Site and Design Use Standards (1992)

The City of Ashland has a development code for the evaluation and approval of development and land divisions. The city also has a separate code, Site Design and Use Standards, which includes urban design standards for Ashland Boulevard Corridor and the downtown, established in order to reduce the auto-oriented nature of these environments.

Transit Options for a Livable Ashland (1999)

This report, written in 1999, identified key strategies towards meeting the city's goal for expanding public transit options and providing alternatives to the motor vehicle in general.

Ashland in Action 2000

Drafted by the Transportation, Transit and Parking Committee in 2000, the Ashland in Action 2000 is an action plan to ease local automobile congestion. Focus was placed on three core areas with the heaviest congestion: 1) Southern Oregon University (SOU)/Ashland High School campuses and neighborhoods; 2) Ashland Community Hospital neighborhood; and 3) the downtown area.

The report's recommendations included the following strategies to improve transit service in the City of Ashland:

- Develop a fully fundable, flexible managed transit program that will provide no-fare service to the community. Expand the hours of service, and existing routes.

- Evaluate the feasibility for a fundable park-and-ride walk/bike program that uses underutilized parking in various locations at the north and south ends of town. Explore the use of SOU parking lots in the summer months for shuttle service to downtown.
- Expand the RVTB/SOU student ridership program to include Ashland School District students.
- Improve tour bus parking in and around the Oregon Shakespeare Festival properties.
- Encourage the School District to develop programs that encourage children to walk or bike to school.
- Evaluate the feasibility of offering dial-a-ride services to the community.
- Evaluate the feasibility of developing an express route between Medford and Ashland.

Other Jurisdictions' Plans and Policies

Effective regional coordination requires that the policies of one jurisdiction, such as the City of Ashland, be coordinated with those of other area jurisdictions. The jurisdictions with the greatest interest in future public transportation planning efforts are Jackson County and the Rogue Valley Transportation District.

2001-2023 Rogue Valley Regional Transportation Plan

The Interim Regional Transportation Plan Update 2000-2020 (RTP) and, later, the 2001-2023 Regional Transportation Plan (adopted April 2002), anticipated 20-year transportation needs within the greater Medford- Ashland metropolitan area. The RTP examines the projected population and employment growth within its planning area and transportation options to serve this growth. The RTP operates as the regional transportation system plan required by the Transportation Planning Rule. The RTP adopted seven alternative measures to meet the state's TPR requirement to reduce VMT over the 20-year planning period.

The RTP sets out nine policies to improve public transportation in the region:

Policy 11-1: RVTB should periodically review ridership and service throughout the region and adjust routing to maximize ridership potential and ensure service availability.

Policy 11-2: Where practical and when financially possible, RVTB transit services shall be routed to provide service coverage within a quarter mile walking distance of urban area residences.

Policy 11-3: When financially possible, the Rogue Valley Transportation District (RVTB) shall operate all transit routes with route headways no greater than one-half hour during peak periods.

Policy 11-4: When financially possible, the Rogue Valley Transportation District (RVTB) shall continue to provide off-peak mid-day services on all routes, or a guaranteed ride home program should be available and publicized.

Policy 11-5: Rogue Valley Transportation District (RVTB) shall periodically evaluate the addition of new routes to increase the area of coverage.

Policy 11-6: Local governments shall work with major employers to encourage transit use by their employees through fare subsidies and other programs.

Policy 11-7: RVTB and local governments shall cooperate to the maximum extent to identify and include features beneficial to transit riders and transit operations when developing plans for roadway projects.

Policy 11-8: RVTB and local governments shall encourage connectivity between different travel modes, including accessibility of major transit facilities to bike, pedestrian, and automobile traffic.

Policy 11-9: RVTB and local governments shall promote the use of transit services to residents and businesses as an alternative mode of travel.

Rogue Valley Transportation District Ten-Year Long Range Transportation Plan (2007)

The RVTB's Ten-Year (2007-2017) Long Range Transportation Plan outlines regional public transportation service goals and funding strategies for the RVTB's service in the cities of Ashland, Medford, Central Point, Phoenix, Talent, Jacksonville, and the unincorporated area of White City.

The plan highlights the set of Board adopted goals and objectives for RVTB. The following objectives impact the delivery of transit service and/or provision of community benefits in the City of Ashland:

- Social Goal
 - Support equitable access to transportation
 - Improve quality of life
- Organizational Goal
 - Ensure the efficient use of transit investments
 - Maintain overall service quality while increasing service levels
 - Improve communication with key partners
 - Improve internal communications
 - Improve public outreach/marketing
- Economic Goal
 - Enhance RVTB's financial stability
 - Support economic vitality
- Environmental Goal
 - Improve air pollution/greenhouse gas reduction / fuel efficiency
 - Reduce sprawl
 - Reduce water and other pollution

As part of the long-range planning process, RVTB worked with local jurisdictions to review city and county transit priorities. The plan identifies Ashland priorities as:

- Priorities and Immediate Needs
 - Reinstate Route 5, possibly re-routing it to serve other areas

- Provide extended peak hour service until 10 PM
- Establish a feeder service from the neighborhoods to the main route
- Reinstate 15-minute service on Siskiyou
- Serve the large established neighborhood, youth center and the Mt. Meadows Assisted Living Facility located off of N. Mountain Avenue
- Serve the Ashland Community Hospital and surrounding Maple Street neighborhoods
- Future Needs
 - An employment center and outlying neighborhood development is being planned for the Crowson Road/Oak Knoll area
 - An intermodal transfer station is planned near the A Street Marketplace to serve a proposed commuter rail and could be built before 2017.

The plan highlights a growing gap between expected district costs and revenues during the planning period. To address these funding deficits, the plan identified the following potential and feasible sources, as well as strategies for implementing them:

- Increased property tax assessment
- One-time local payroll tax assessment
- Full implementation of local payroll tax assessment

The long-range plan developed a prioritized list of service expansion scenarios. Service improvements are assigned to one of three tiers based on available funding. Those which affect the City of Ashland are highlighted in Figure 2-1.

Figure 2-1 RVTD LRTP Service Expansion Priorities for Ashland

Region	Major Destination
Tier One. Extended Hours and Minor Service Expansion	
Expand service hours~4 AM to 10 PM	All Routes except low productivity routes
Saturday Service	Base service from 8 AM to 6 PM
Tier Two. Additional Routes, Express Routes, Peak Service	
Ashland Talent Phoenix Circulators	West of Hwy 99 in Talent and Phoenix/ East of Hwy 99 in Ashland
4 Hour Peak Service	All Routes except low productivity routes
Express Routes (15 min.) to Ashland and White City	Front St. to Ashland Plaza and Front St. to Cascade Shopping Ctr.
Tier Three. Additional Routes/ Grid System	
South Ashland	Region not yet defined

Jackson County Comprehensive Plan (2004)

The County Comprehensive Plan provides the official policies which will be used in county decision-making processes. The Plan's Transportation Element is intended to "provide and encourage a safe, convenient, energy efficient and economical transportation system." The Comprehensive Plan establishes the following transportation policy:

"Transit service will be encouraged in urban and urbanizing areas, where it is an energy-efficient form of transportation, and in rural areas to meet social service needs."

Jackson County Transportation System Plan (2005)

The Jackson County Transportation System Plan (TSP) adds to, enhances and/or implements various transportation policies set forth in the Jackson County Comprehensive Plan.

The Jackson County TSP states that the "County should work with RVTD and RVCOG to identify means of implementing most to all of the Tier 2 (RTP identified levels) program by the year 2023."

The TSP does not support the pursuit of a commuter rail between Grants Pass and Ashland due to a 2001 study claiming "estimated annual operation costs that were twice RVTD's current operating budget, and daily ridership that would be lower than any single-line commuter rail service currently operating in North America, with the exception of a limited Wednesday-Sunday service in Syracuse, New York."

Chapter 3. Existing Transportation Services

Public Transportation Providers

This chapter provides an inventory of existing transit services within and to the City of Ashland. It provides a detailed summary of the Rogue Valley Transportation District (RVTD), which is the primary public transit operator in Jackson County. RVTD serves seven cities including Ashland, Central Point, Jacksonville, Medford, Phoenix, Talent, and White City. There are limited transportation options provided by social service organizations in Ashland.

Rogue Valley Transportation District

RVTD is the primary public transit operator in Jackson County, including transit within Ashland and between Ashland and Medford. RVTD provides fixed-route and paratransit services as well as the Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program.

Overview and Governance

RVTD is Jackson County's public transportation provider, serving a district which is approximately 159 square miles. Its service area includes the incorporated cities of Ashland, Central Point, Jacksonville, Medford, Talent and Phoenix and the unincorporated community of White City.

The district is governed by a seven-member board of directors who serve for four-year terms. 2008 Board members represent: Medford (4), Ashland (1), White City (1), and Jacksonville (1).

Established in 1975, RVTD is a state-chartered transportation district¹ which assesses property taxes (\$0.17 per thousand dollars of assessed value) within the district. The organization is also supported by state and federal grants, passenger fares, and advertising fees.

Fixed-Route Service

RVTD operates six fixed-routes Monday through Friday. Certain routes offer early morning and evening commuter service. Except for Route 30 to Jacksonville and Route 1 to the Airport, all routes operate with a 30-minute frequency. The adult fare is \$2.00 for all routes, except for Ashland-based trips on Route 10, which is \$.50. The routes are as follows:

- Route 1: Medford Front Street Station to Medford/Rogue Valley International Airport
- Route 2: West Medford between Medford Front Street and West Main/Bi-Mart
- Route 10: Service between Medford Front Street Station and Ashland
- Route 30: Service between Medford Front Street and Jacksonville
- Route 40: Service between Medford Front Street and Central Point
- Route 60: Service between Medford to White City

¹ ORS 267.510

Route 10

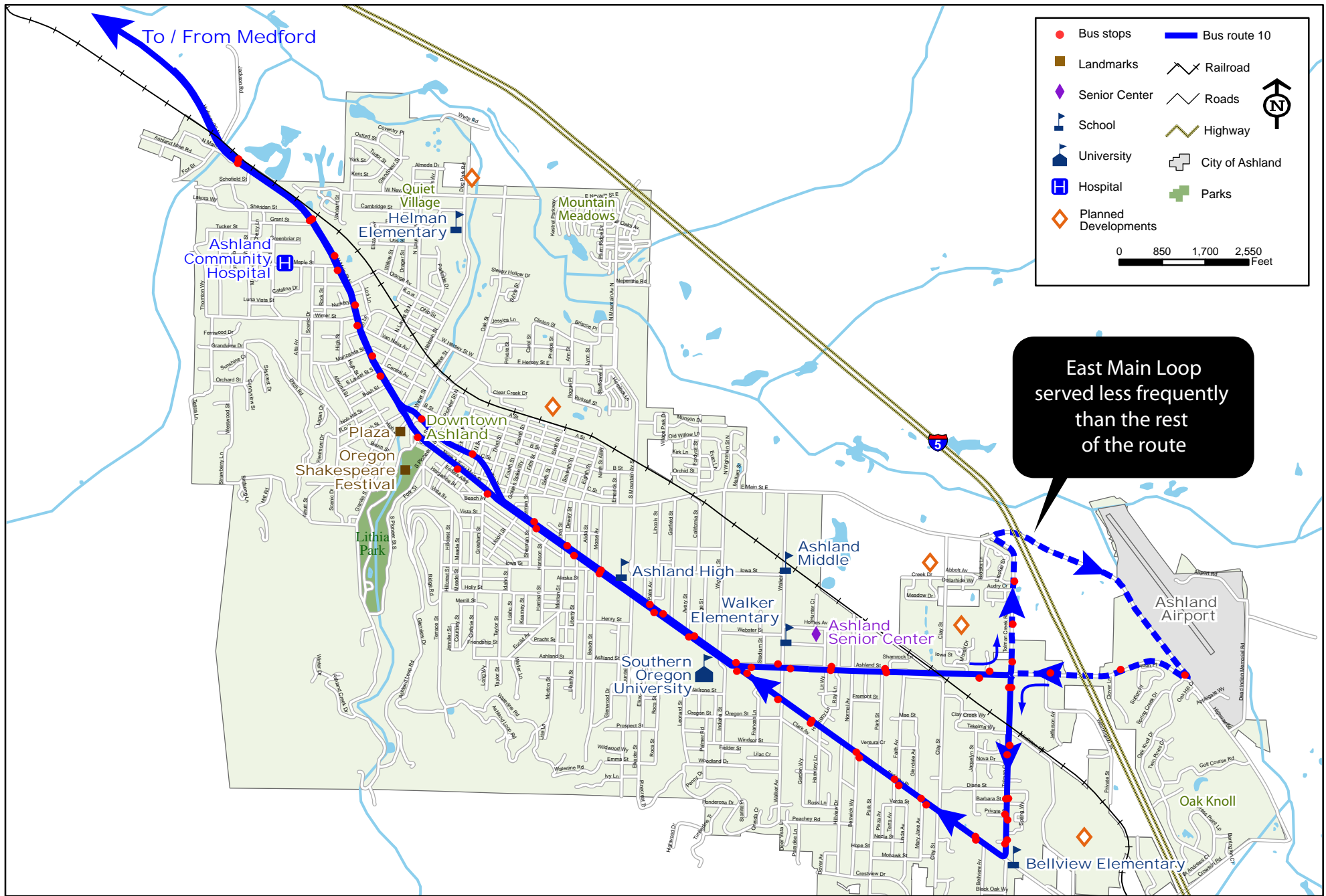
Route 10 is the only route that currently serves the City of Ashland. It operates between Medford Front Street Station and ends at Windmill Inn at Ashland Hills in Ashland (see Figure 3-1). The first bus to leave Front Street Station leaves at 5:00 AM and the last departs at 6:30 PM.

Within Ashland, the route travels on North Main Street, Siskiyou Boulevard, Ashland Street, Tolman Creek Road, and Lithia Road. At its eastern end, the route operates on a one-way loop, traversing Ashland Street, Tolman Creek Road, and East Main Street. The route stops within a few blocks of the Ashland Community Hospital², downtown, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and Southern Oregon University.

The route serves older adults, youth, commuters, university students, and persons with disabilities traveling within Ashland and between Ashland and Medford. According to the 2005 Passenger Survey, Route 10 ridership can be characterized as:

- Over half of those responding report an annual income of less than \$15,000
- Less than 20% are under 18 years old and less than 10% are 65 or over
- More than 60% are regular riders, making 4 or 5 trips per week
- About half use cash fares
- Work was stated as the primary reason for making a bus trip, followed by shopping, school and recreation with less than 5% using the bus for medical trips

² In order to access the hospital from the Route 10 bus stop, it is necessary to climb a few steep blocks.



Existing Transit Routes and Stops
FIGURE 3-1

History of Routes 10 and 5

Route 10 was established in the early 1980s and has maintained the same basic routing since then. During the 1990s, the route operated from 4:30 AM to 8:00 PM, although these hours were scaled back due to budget shortfalls in subsequent years.

Route 5, which operated in the same corridor as Route 10, but only within the City of Ashland, was established in the early 1990s. The route was initially funded with a grant from the Oregon Department of Energy (ODE) and the City of Ashland provided a local match.

Eventually the ODE funds expired and the City continued to subsidize Route 5 and to provide funds to RVTD to buy down the fare in Ashland to 25 cents. Between 2002 and 2006, the City of Ashland increased the subsidy to RVTD to provide free fare within Ashland on Routes 5 and 10 and Valley Lift. It paid between \$240,000 and \$290,000 for these services. Beginning in 2003, SOU contributed approximately \$20,000 to these routes, but discontinued its subsidy as of 2005. After free service was implemented, Ashland-based ridership increased by 49 percent.

In 2006, service costs increased and RVTD approached the City of Ashland for direction. Due to budget constraints, the city decided to maintain the same level of expenditure by eliminating Route 5, but maintaining a fare subsidy on Route 10. Despite this, the fare on Route 10 increased from free to \$0.50. Discontinuing Route 5 effectively meant that the frequency of bus service within Ashland was decreased from every 15 minutes to every 30 minutes. RVTD also implemented district-wide service reductions during this time. Figure 3-2 summarizes the history of Ashland transportation service.

Figure 3-2 History of RVTD Fixed-Route Service in Ashland

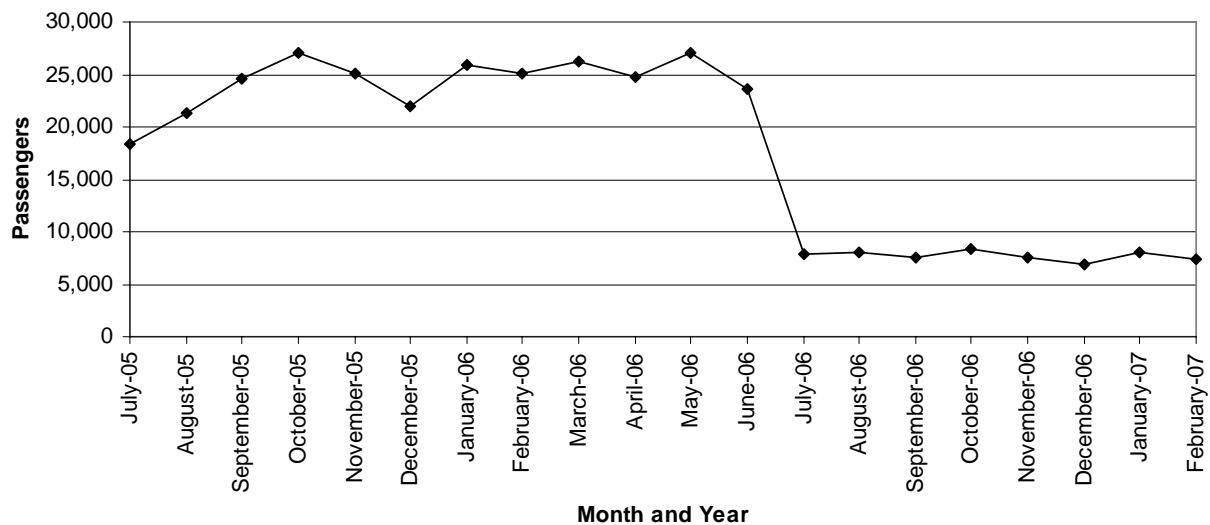
	Route 10	Route 5
1980s	Route 10 established	
1990s	Hours lengthened (4:30 AM -8:00 PM) and then reduced; City of Ashland provided subsidy.	Route 5 is established with Department of Energy funds in early 1990s; City of Ashland provided subsidy.
1997	ODE funds expire. City continues to fully subsidize Route 5 and provides additional funds to buy down the fare to 25 cents on Routes 10 and 5.	
2002	City continues to subsidize Route 5 and buys down fare to free on Routes 5 and 10 in Ashland.	
2005	RVTD expenses increased and approached City of Ashland to make decision about additional funding, service reductions, or fare increase. RVTD raises fare system-wide to \$2.00.	
2006	City subsidizes Route 10 in Ashland to buy down the fare increase to 50 cents.	City of Ashland could not raise additional funding and decided to stop paying for Route 5 service

	Route 10	Route 5
2007	Significant ridership declines associated with increased fare and decreased combined frequency. City subsidizes Route 10 in Ashland to buy down the fare increase to 50 cents."	RVTD and Ashland discussed possibilities for reinstating Route 5 service

Ridership Trends

Figure 3.3 shows the combined ridership trends for Routes 10 and 5 between FY 2005-2007. Shortly after the 2006 service changes were implemented, there was a steep decline in Ashland ridership, which can be largely attributed to reduced frequency and increased fare. Ridership among the youth and low-income riders may have been particularly affected due to the fare increase. Combined ridership for the two routes dropped from 18,399 trips to 7,791 between July 2005 and July 2006, a decline of 58%.

Figure 3-3 Ashland Fixed-Route Ridership FY 05-07



Source: RVTD

Ridership on Route 10 did not increase when Route 5 was discontinued, even though the two routes operated within the same corridor in Ashland. To illustrate this point, in July 2005, before the service changes were put into effect, ridership on Route 10 was 11,632. A year later, ridership in July 2006 was only 7,791 a decline of about 33%.

Route 10 Operations

Of the 23 vehicles in the RVTD fleet, approximately four 40-passenger buses are used for Route 10 service on a regular basis. RVTD does not designate buses to each route but will use higher capacity buses on the routes with highest ridership. The majority of the vehicles are operated with compressed natural gas.

In FY 2005-2006, ridership for the entire route was 568,724 and 184,150 were intra-Ashland trips, which was 32% of Route 10 ridership. After the service changes were implemented in 2006, Ashland-based trips decreased to 92,819 trips or 21% of Route 10 ridership.

RVTD estimates that it pays approximately \$1.36 million per year to operate Route 10 service.³

Other RVTD Services

RVTD also oversees the complementary paratransit, Medicaid brokerage and Transportation Demand Management programs for the Rogue Valley area, including:

Valley Lift

RVTD operates the Valley Lift Program, a curb-to-curb paratransit service for people with disabilities that prevent them from using fixed-route service. Participants must complete an application and be re-certified every three years.

There are three types of eligibility:

- *Temporary Eligibility*: Those with a temporary illness or injury that make it impossible for them to use RVTD fixed-route service for a limited period.
- *Conditional Eligibility (Category 3)*: The passenger is expected to use RVTD fixed-route service when possible, but can utilize Valley Lift if their conditions prevents them from using the bus.
- *Unconditional Eligibility (Category 1)*: Those who have a disability that prevents them from using fixed-route service may use Valley Lift for all trips within the service area.

Valley Lift service is operated by Paratransit Services, under contract with RVTD. Service is available within three quarters of a mile to any of RVTD's fixed routes. At \$4.00, the fare is double the fixed-route fare. Service within Ashland is \$1.00, as the City of Ashland pays a subsidy of \$3.00 per trip. Program participants can ride RVTD's fixed-route service for free, which is an incentive to shift Valley Lift passengers to fixed-route service when possible.

Valley Lift operates during the same days and time as RVTD fixed-route service, which means that service is available Monday through Friday between 5:00 AM and 8:00 PM.

In FY 2006-2007, Valley Lift provided a total of 16,918 Ashland-based trips including:

- 9,466 trips within Ashland
- 3,934 trips from Ashland to other locations
- 3,518 trips into Ashland

The Ashland Senior Center is the most popular destination for Valley Lift passengers within Ashland. The following list highlights the most frequent destinations for Ashland's Valley Lift customers with the ridership in 2007:

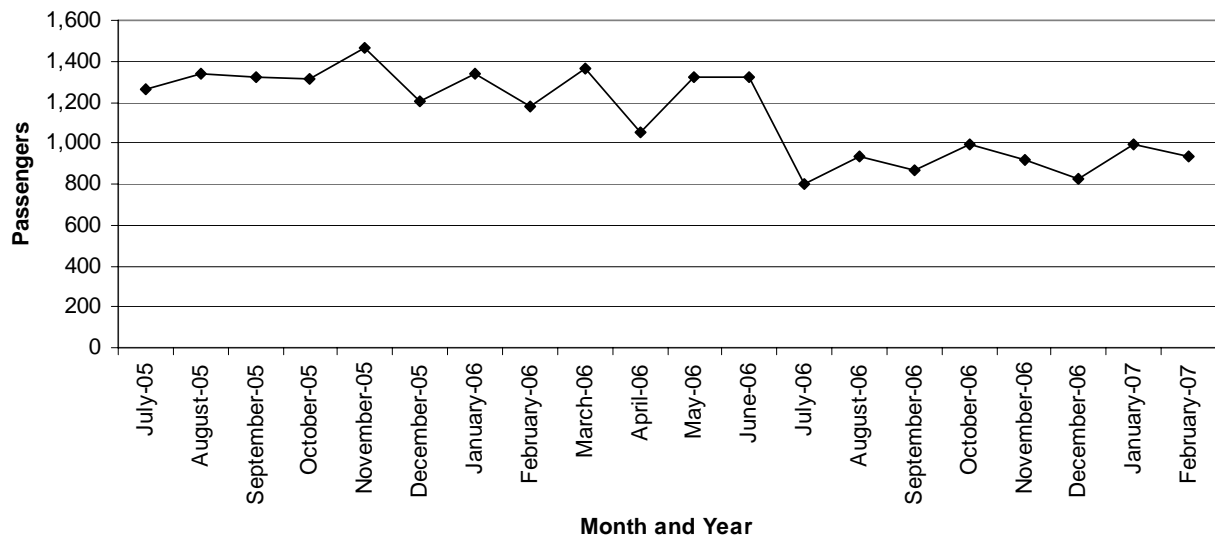
- Ashland Senior Center: 722 trips
- Miller House: 448 trips

³ Rogue Valley Transportation District, Fixed Route Operation Costs Estimator, Based on 2007-2008 Budget.

- Living Opportunities: 433 trips
- Albertsons: 270
- Ashland Community Hospital: 250
- YMCA: 223 trips
- Goodwill: 221 trips
- Bi-Mart: 162 trips

Figure 3.4 illustrates Ashland's paratransit ridership trends during FY 2005-2007. It shows that there was a considerable ridership decline in July 2006, when the fare was raised from free to \$1.00.

Figure 3-4 Ashland Paratransit Ridership FY 05-07



Source: RVTD

Valley Lift Plus, which is paid for by Title 19 Medicaid funds, provides up to 20 one-way non-medical trips for qualified participants. Eligibility criteria stipulate that participants must be Department of Human Services (DHS) clients who are typically older adults or people with low-incomes or disabilities. This program provides demand-response service to those living within 1.5 miles from existing transit service.

Translink

Translink, a program that provides transportation service to eligible Oregon Health Plan and Medicaid clients, is the Medicaid broker for individuals who travel to authorized medical services in Coos, Curry, Douglas, Josephine, Jackson, Klamath, and Lake Counties. Therefore, service is not provided in-house as Translink coordinates the transportation that is operated by a wide variety of transportation providers.

Eligibility requirements stipulate that passengers must be eligible OHP and Medicaid clients who have no other way to travel to medical appointments. The service is fare free to eligible passengers and is 100% funded by the Department of Health and Human Services. RVTD houses the program.

Way to Go! Program

RVTD houses the Way to Go! Program, the region's Transportation Demand Management program. The program is funded through ODOT Region 3 and requires a local match provided by RVTD. It assists residents in the region with reducing single-occupant vehicle trips by providing information, planning support, and technical assistance to residents and employers. Program elements include community outreach, education programs, travel training, customer information, and workplace trip reduction programs.

The program encourages residents to reduce single-occupant vehicle trips by:

- Vanpooling
- Ride sharing
- Biking
- Walking
- Skateboarding
- Teleworking and flexing work schedules
- Using transit

Currently, there are no vanpools in Ashland or within the RVTD service area, despite extensive outreach to local employers. In Ashland, RVTD has mobilized bicycle and transit clinics at numerous workplaces. RVTD coordinates the region's Safe Routes to School Program, which has been successful in Ashland.

U-Pass

U-Pass is a new employer program that allows companies to purchase annual bus passes for their employees at a price of \$3.85 per person per month. This program is supported by CMAQ funds and Oregon Business Energy Tax Credits, which, if used together, can reduce employer costs by about 78%. Currently, there are no Ashland employers or organizations participating in the U Pass program.

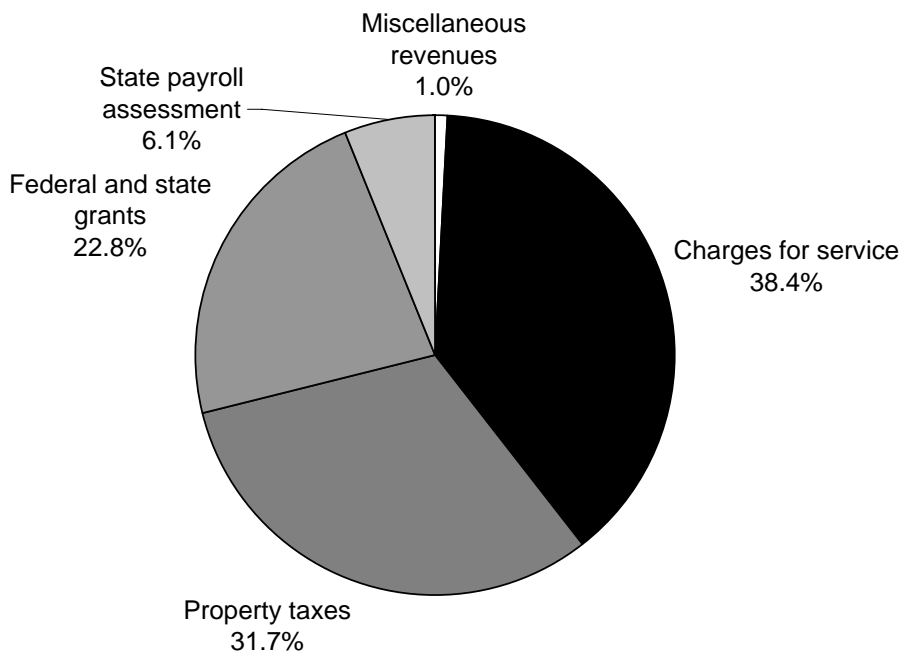
Financial Considerations

RVTD's expenses for 2006-2007 were \$13,961,269. The revenue sources are outlined in Figures 3.5 and 3.6.

Figure 3-5 RVTD Revenues 2006-2007

Charges for service	\$2,069,655
Property taxes	\$1,710,103
Federal and state grants	\$1,232,119 ⁴
State payroll assessment	\$331,071
Miscellaneous revenues	\$51,579
	\$5,394,527

Figure 3-6 RVTD Revenues 2006-2007



The RVTD Ten-Year Long Range Plan (2007-2017) describes how escalating operational costs have outpaced revenue growth. This trend makes it difficult for RVTD to maintain existing services or to expand service areas and frequencies.

The City of Ashland compensates RVTD for a reduced fare on Route 10 by paying toward rides taken anywhere between Jackson Well Springs and Ashland Windmill Inn. The city also subsidizes complementary paratransit in the same manner. This means that the city pays \$1.50 for each of the fixed-route trips and \$3.00 for Valley Lift trips.

In FY 2006-2007, Ashland compensated RVTD approximately \$139,200 for Route 10 service and \$28,400 for Valley Lift trips.⁵ In addition to subsidizing Route 10, the City of Ashland purchases reduced fare passes for low-income students.

⁴ RVTD received a one-time rolling stock replacement grant from FTA in 2006 totaling nearly \$8 Million dollars. It is not included in Figure 3.5.

RVTD has a contract with the City of Ashland, which stipulates that the city will pay no more than \$210,000 for transit service in FY 2007-2008. According to the contract, if the amount is exceeded before the end of the fiscal year, the program for that fiscal year will end and fixed route and Valley Lift paratransit fares will revert to standard RVTD fares for the rest of the fiscal year.

Financial Trends

In FY 2005-2006, the City of Ashland paid \$290,000 for Route 5 service and the Route 10 subsidy. The cost of Route 5 service was determined using an average operating cost per mile multiplied by the route length. As described previously, the city reimbursed RVTD for free Route 10 service on a per trip basis.

During this time, RVTD hired a new accountant and has been better able to assess how well the agency was recouping the actual cost of service. This assessment led to an increased mileage unit cost, which raised the price of Route 5 service. Rising fuel and insurance costs meant that RVTD had to seek new sources of funding or implement service cuts. When RVTD approached Ashland in 2006, estimated costs for Route 5 and Route 10 escalated to approximately \$410,000. In order to maintain the previous level of expenditures, the City of Ashland decided to discontinue Route 5 and to increase the fare on Route 10 to \$0.50.

Other Transportation Services

Social Service Transportation

No social service organizations providing transportation services were identified in Ashland. Ashland Senior Center discontinued its shuttle service when Valley Lift was established.

Private Providers

Taxi service is available within Ashland and to Medford. These services fill a variety of trip needs ranging from visitors staying at local hotels to Medford airport service and local and regional medical trips. Local fares within Ashland run between \$8 and \$12 (one-way), while service to Medford is over \$50 one-way. Special Medford airport service is available for \$24-\$35 from Ashland. One local taxi cab is procuring wheelchair-equipped vehicles, but none are currently available. Local providers include:

- Yellow Cab
- Cascade Airport Shuttle/Ashland Taxi Cab

⁵ Fixed-route costs were calculated using Ashland-based Route 10 trips, which were 92,819 in FY 2006-2007. Valley Ride costs were estimated using trips within Ashland only, which were 9,466 in FY 2006-2007.

Chapter 4. Market Analysis

Market Analysis

This chapter includes a demographic profile of the City of Ashland, which was prepared using U.S. census data as well as that available through the Oregon Office of Economic Analysis. This step establishes the framework for better understanding the local characteristics of the study area, with a focus on those population groups which are transit dependent.

Study Area Description and Demographic Summary

Located in southern Oregon, the City of Ashland is well known for its natural beauty, outdoor recreation, and cultural attractions. The Oregon Shakespeare Festival attracts more than 100,000 visitors annually. As of July 1, 2007, Ashland's estimated population is 21,630.¹

Ashland is located in Jackson County which includes the incorporated cities of Ashland, Butte Falls, Central Point, Eagle Point, Gold Hill, Jacksonville, Medford, Phoenix, Rogue River, Shady Cove, and Talent. The three main transportation corridors through the region are I-5 and State Routes 99 and 66, which link Ashland to the larger metropolitan city of Medford to the north. State Route 66 connects the area to Klamath Falls to the east.

Figure 4-1 below provides the total population in Ashland along with a "snapshot" of key demographic groups which are often most reliant on local public transportation: older adults, persons with disabilities, population below poverty level, persons under the driving age, and population that does not own a vehicle. For comparison purpose, the total population and percentages are also presented for Oregon and the United States as a whole.

Figure 4-1 Basic Population Characteristics

Area	City of Ashland	State of Oregon	United States
Total population	19,511	3,421,399	281,421,906
% of state population	0.6%	-	-
% persons aged 65+	14.8%	12.8%	12.4%
% poverty level	19.6%	11.6%	12.4%
% persons w/disability	12.8%	18.8%	19.3%
% persons under the driving age	16.0%	21.9%	22.8%
% persons who do not own a car	7.5%	7.5%	10.3%

Sources: 2000 US Census Bureau

¹ Portland State University Population Research Center

Population Trends

Countywide, the population is projected to grow 63% by 2040. (See figure 4-2)

Figure 4-2 Population Projections

Total Population	2000	2010	2020	2030	2040	Population Change 2000-2040
Jackson County	182,200	208,369	238,865	268,385	297,496	63%

Source: Office of Economic Analysis, Department of Administrative Services, State of Oregon, April 2004

Older Adults

Statewide, 12.8% of Oregonians are aged 65 and older, which is on par with the national average of 12.4%. The City of Ashland reports a rate of older adults of 14.8%, which is slightly higher than Oregon and the nation as a whole.

As is the case nationwide, the population in Jackson County is aging. In 2000, 16% of the county's population was aged 65 or older. Between 2000 and 2040, the number of older adults in Jackson County is expected to increase by 139%, and by 2030, nearly one in four residents of the county will be a senior citizen.

Figure 4-3 Population Change for Persons aged 65 Years and Over (Jackson County)

Age Group	2000	2010	2020	2030	2040	Population Change 2000-2030
Under 65	153,093	174,449	189,482	205,767	227,721	48.7%
65 and over	29,107	33,921	49,383	62,618	69,775	139.7%
% older adults	16.0%	16.3%	20.7%	23.3%	23.5%	-

Source: Office of Economic Analysis, Department of Administrative Services, State of Oregon, April 2004

Persons with Disabilities

The Census Bureau has determined that the 2000 Census overstated the number of people with disabilities. This overstatement occurred because of a confusing instruction in the Census questionnaire. In particular, the number of people with a "go outside the home disability" was substantially overstated as a result of a confusing skip pattern in the mail-back version of the Census long form.

The Census's 2006 American Community Survey incorporated an improved questionnaire that eliminated the source of the overstatement. For Oregon as a whole, the 2000 Census estimated

that 18.8% of non-institutionalized people age five and older had a disability. The corrected estimate, based on the 2006 American Community survey, was 16.3%. Corrected results are not available for many smaller cities such as Ashland, however countywide data is available. For Jackson County as a whole, the 2000 Census estimated that 20.2% of non-institutionalized people age five and older had a disability, whereas the 2006 American Community Survey reports 19.2%.

Nationwide, about 15% of Americans aged five and older reported a disability, which is slightly lower than for Oregon as a whole (16.3%). Jackson County's average (19.2%) is higher than the national average and for Oregon as a whole. This pattern is not surprising as physical limitations typically increase with age.

Income Status

Based on the 2000 Census, the level of Ashland residents living at or below the federal poverty level is 19.6%, which exceeds the statewide average of 11.6% by a relatively significant margin.

Car Ownership

The incidence of households without a vehicle available is a good indication of where transit dependency is likely to be high. For the City of Ashland as well as Oregon as a whole, 7.5% of households do not have a vehicle available to them. This is lower than the national average of 10.3% of households.

Employment and Major Employers

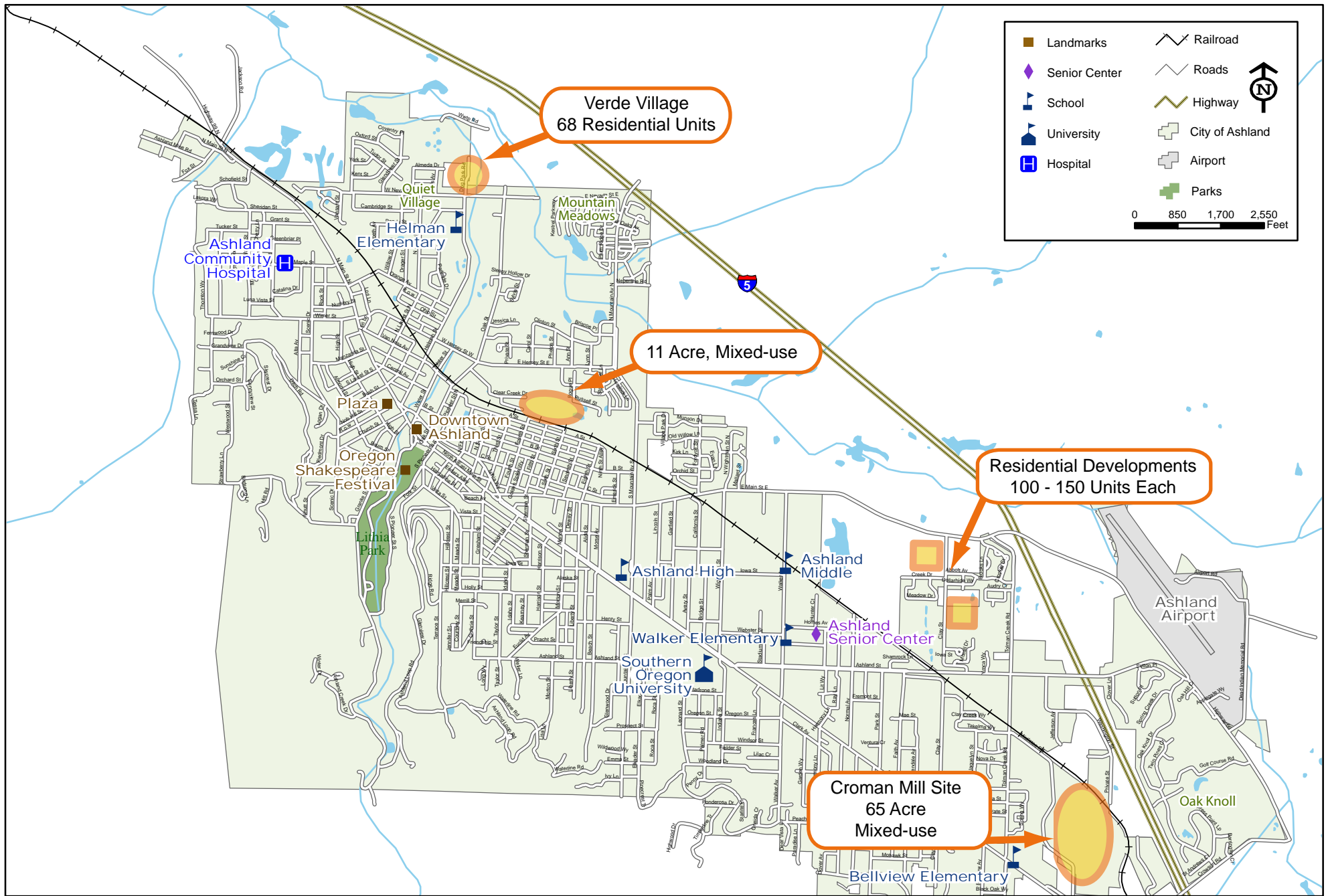
Based on figures from the Oregon Employment Department, the 2006 annual average number of employees in the Medford-Ashland MSA was 94,992. The MSA's unemployment rate in March 2008 was 7.9%, which was higher than for Oregon as a whole (6.3%) likely due to the region's agricultural and tourism industries. The major employers for the City of Ashland include Southern Oregon University (SOU), Oregon Shakespeare Festival Association, Ashland School District, Ashland Community Hospital, City of Ashland, Ashland Food Cooperative, Ashland YMCA, and Butler Ford.

Planned Developments

Ashland's population grew by roughly 20% during the 1990s and by 11% so far this decade, slightly less than the county's growth rate during these periods. Future development is expected in the following areas (and illustrated in Figure 4-4):

- Two residential developments, between 100 and 150 units each, located along Clay Street south of E. Main Street.
- An 11 acre mixed use development on the railroad property near Oak, Hersey, and A Street.
- A 68-unit residential development at E. Nevada Street and Helman Street.

- The Croman Mill Site project which represents the largest, unused parcel of land within the city limits. The site is located on Mistletoe Road, extending to the Central Oregon and Pacific Railroad, Siskiyou Boulevard, Mistletoe Road, and I-5. Current options for the 65-acre site include:
 - A plan for low-density housing units with relatively few jobs
 - Multiple options for greater commercial and light industrial development supporting up to 1,400 jobs along with a neighborhood center and roughly 250 housing units
 - An office campus option with 250 housing units and support for 3,200 new employees



Chapter 5. Needs Assessment

This chapter describes the public transportation needs of Ashland residents and visitors to Ashland. The information in this chapter is a synthesis of information that was derived from 14 stakeholder interviews, an analysis of current and future land uses, a review of previous transportation studies, and internet research.

Summary of Findings from Previous Studies

As documented in Chapter 2, the City of Ashland has a number of planning studies that outline the transportation needs of residents and visitors to Ashland. The primary documents include:

- Comprehensive Plan, 1996
- Transportation System Plan, 1998
- Transit Options for a Livable Ashland, 1999
- Ashland in Action Committee, 2000
- RVTD Long-Range Plan, 2007

The following section highlights recommendations from these studies:

Service frequency and span

- Provide increased frequency in Ashland (7.5- or 15-minute)
- Extend service to operate between 4:00 AM and 10:00 PM

Proposed service

- Provide service to outlying unserved neighborhoods including Oak Knoll and Mountain Meadows
- Create a demand-response feeder service from surrounding neighborhoods to Route 10 (Valley Feeder)¹
- Provide express service using the I-5 Freeway or Highway 99 between Ashland and Medford
- Reinstate Route 5, with the possibility of re-routing to serve currently unserved areas
- Serve the Ashland Community Hospital and Maple Street neighborhoods

Future Considerations

- Anticipate transportation needs of a new employment center and community planned for the Crowson Road/Oak Knoll area
- An intermodal transfer station is planned near the A Street Marketplace to serve a proposed commuter rail and as a transfer point to the transit system; could be built before 2017

¹ Proposed in the RVTD Long Range Plan

Major Activity Centers

The following describe major activity centers in Ashland. These locations generate a significant number of trips within Ashland or to the Ashland area from other places.

Southern Oregon University

Southern Oregon University (SOU) has approximately 5,000 enrolled students and approximately 700 faculty and staff. About 60% of the student body lives in Ashland, with the remainder commuting from neighboring communities.

The following highlights travel behavior and characteristics of SOU students and staff:

- Approximately 80% of both faculty and staff live within five miles of the Ashland campus.²
- Approximately 64% of students and 78% of faculty currently drive alone to and from the university and only 2% rely on transit as their primary form of transportation.
- According to RVTB's Ten-Year Long Range Plan, the university generates approximately one-third of Ashland's daily trips.

SOU discontinued participation in an RVTB regional bus pass program in 2004 because it was not perceived to be cost-effective. Previously the program, which was paid for through the Student Union Activity Program, provided fare-free travel to students throughout the entire transit system. During this time, trips within Ashland were fare free.

For a number of years, SOU has offered classes to students in Medford at various locations, but a new consolidated SOU-Rogue Community College (RCC) satellite campus is scheduled to open in downtown Medford in the fall 2008. The university predicts 1,500 students will need inter-campus transportation. The majority of the students may need to attend both campuses at some point during their education. Classes will be offered in the evening with the last class ending at around 10:00 PM. RVTB is considering extending hours until 10:00 PM.³

Ashland Senior Center

The Ashland Senior Program operates numerous programs for older adults, including the Ashland Senior Center. The senior center, which is located on Homes Avenue, draws older adults for daily lunches and other activities. It is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 AM to 3:30 PM. It is approximately two blocks from the Route 10 bus stop on Ashland Street.

The senior center used to operate transportation services for older adults, but discontinued the service when Valley Lift began operations approximately 10 years ago. According to the Director of Ashland Senior Services, many older adults travel to the senior center using Route 10. Those who are not able to walk from the bus stop travel with Valley Lift.

² "Alternative Transportation Promotion on Southern Oregon University Campus, Kelly Gustafson, Capstone project Sponsored by RVTB and RVTB (2006).

³ RVTB Ten-Year Long Range Plan, pg. 70.

Oregon Shakespeare Festival

The Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF), located in downtown Ashland, is the most popular tourist destination in Ashland and draws approximately 125,000 visitors each year. The theater runs from February to October, with peak season from June to October. OSF typically offers a matinee as well as an evening performance.

Hotel shuttles transport visitors between OSF and hotels at the south and north end of town, providing a direct link between lodging and downtown Ashland. OSF patrons staying in downtown Ashland often walk to the theater. According to the OSF Marketing Director, few visitors to OSF take advantage of transit provided by RVTD because:

- Service ends before evening performance finishes
- Thirty-minute frequency is perceived as an obstacle
- The transit service is not actively marketed to tourists so they are often not aware of it
- Many tourists drive to Ashland and tend to use the private vehicle that is available to them
- Hotels located outside of downtown Ashland provide transportation to and from OSF

OSF employees also are not frequent riders of RVTD transit, primarily because they work after 7:00 PM, when the last RVTD bus departs Ashland for Medford at 7:05.

Finding parking can, at times, be difficult for visitors and OSF employees. Both take advantage of the Hargadine Parking Structure (on Hargadine between 1st and Pioneer Streets), which charges \$1.00 per day and has 145 spaces. The structure is normally full at peak times (2:00 PM to 8:00 PM) during the height of the tourist season, but tends to be underutilized during the rest of the year.⁴

Downtown Ashland

Downtown Ashland is probably the second most popular attraction in Ashland. Located downtown are:

- Specialty retail: Downtown Ashland houses a variety of stores catering to tourists and visitors.
- Restaurants: There are numerous restaurants located in downtown Ashland.
- Lithia Park: The 100-acre park extends from the Plaza in downtown Ashland up Ashland Creek. It includes a bandshell, hiking trails, a Japanese garden, and two ponds.

Visitors to downtown Ashland may have some difficulty with parking during the peak season. According to the City of Ashland, the Downtown Business District has 977 parking spaces. The Hargadine Parking Structure accounts for about 15% of the total available spaces.⁵

Ashland Community Hospital

Ashland Community Hospital is located on Maple Street in the northern section of Ashland, where there are also numerous physician offices and a nursing home. The hospital has approximately

⁴ City of Ashland website. <http://www.ashland.or.us/Page.asp?NavID=8265>

⁵ City of Ashland website, <http://www.ashland.or.us/Page.asp?NavID=8265>

425 full-time, part-time, and on-call employees. The current bus schedule does not meet the needs of most hospital employees since their shifts either begin or end when there is no service. With the exception of administrative staff, shift workers begin work at 7:00 AM, 3:00 PM, and 11:00 PM seven days a week. Approximately 70% of employees commute from locations outside of Ashland, with the majority coming from Medford. The hospital does not sponsor any vanpool programs, although there are a handful of employees who have formed informal carpools.

The facility is licensed to accommodate 49 beds, but typically staffs only 36 beds. The bulk of the daily traffic to the hospital is generated by out-patient surgery. The hospital is located a few blocks from the Route 10 bus stop on North Main Street; however, passengers disembarking the bus must climb a hill in order to get to the hospital. This means that fixed-route service is not a viable transportation option for a considerable number of patients. Those patients who are unable to take transit, live within three quarters of a mile from an RVTB route, and meet other eligibility requirements can utilize Valley Lift. For those who live outside of the RVTB service area, the only transportation options are private medical vans and non-emergency medical trips provided through Translink, the regional Medicaid broker.

Parking has been a long-term problem for the hospital, which encourages employees to save parking spaces for patients. Consequently, employees, given their limited transit options, take street-level parking spots in the surrounding residential neighborhood.

During 2003-2005, the hospital established a patient shuttle to mitigate construction impacts. The hospital used vans because full-size buses cannot travel up the hills safely. Shuttles picked up passengers at Christian Fellowship Church at West Hersey and Oak Streets and transported them to the hospital between 6:00 AM-9:00 AM and 2:00 PM-6:00 PM Monday through Friday. During this time, approximately 24 employees used the shuttle on a regular basis.

Unserved Locations

Rogue Valley Medical Center, Southeast Medford: As dictated by federal regulations, RVTB provides paratransit services only within three quarters of a mile from its fixed-route services. When Route 4 was discontinued, it made Rogue Valley Medical Center in Southeast Medford inaccessible to fixed-route customers as well as Valley Lift passengers. Therefore, there is currently no way to travel to the hospital via public transportation. After the service was discontinued, the hospital began shuttling patients from doctors' offices in Medford to the hospital by appointment only.

Mountain Meadows, Ashland: This community, which is located on the east side of Highway 99, has a number of facilities serving older adults, including day programs, assisted living, and specialized services for people with Alzheimer's and dementia.

West Ashland: There are numerous residential neighborhoods in West Ashland that are located in the hills. The hilly terrain presents a challenge for transit riders since those walking from bus stops are often faced with a long uphill climb. These locations are not easily served with standard 30-40-foot vehicles.

Quiet Village, northern Ashland: The residential community, which has its center at Oak Street and Nevada Street, is not served by public transit service.

Oak Knoll, southern Ashland: This residential community, which is located in southern Ashland, is not well-served by public transit.

Planned Developments

The following planned developments will generate demand for additional travel within Ashland. The demand for transit will depend on the final uses developed at these sites. All are located within 1-2 blocks of existing Route 10 service:

- Mixed-use development at A Street Marketplace (11 acres)
- Residential development with 100-150 units on Clay Street, between East Main Street and Faith Avenue
- Cremen Mill Site (65 acres) on Mistletoe Road

Stakeholder Interview Summary

The consultant team spoke with 13 stakeholders representing diverse interests in order to document transportation needs in Ashland. The stakeholders were comprised of representatives from social service organizations, the school district, pedestrian/transit advocates, local business, the local transit agency and elected officials. The Appendix includes a complete list of stakeholders who contributed to this report.

Stakeholders most frequently mentioned the following concerns with RVTD Route 10, which is the only fixed-route service in Ashland:

- The 30-minute headway on Route 10 is not frequent enough
- There is no weekend or evening bus service

In addition, numerous stakeholders spoke about how the poor condition of sidewalks makes it difficult for pedestrians, most notably in locations where they disappear completely or abruptly change to the opposite side of the street. In addition to affecting Ashland's walkability, it makes transit services harder to access, especially for older adults and people with disabilities.

The one-way loop at the south end of town is more inconvenient since Route 5 was discontinued. For those living in southern Ashland, Route 10 works well in the northbound direction, but is less convenient in the southbound direction.

Older Adults & Disabled

Older adults and people with disabilities may take RVTD's Route 10 or, if they have difficulties boarding the bus, can arrange for paratransit services through Valley Lift (described in Chapter 3).

Accessibility Issues

Some bus stops can be difficult to access due to a poor pedestrian environment resulting from no or sub-standard sidewalks. Ashland's hilly topography can make it difficult for those with mobility problems to travel from the bus stop to their final destination. In addition, not all bus stops have benches and shelters, which makes longer wait times uncomfortable, especially for older adults and people with disabilities.

Affordability

Clients who are eligible to take Valley Lift may still be limited by the cost of travel. For those traveling to Medford or other locations outside of Ashland, the \$4.00 fare may be more expensive than they can afford. At \$1.00, intra-Ashland trips are considered to be unaffordable for low-income residents.

Senior Facilities

There are two senior housing facilities and two assisted living facilities in Ashland:

- Ashley Senior Apartments: on Siskiyou Boulevard at Blackberry Lane
- Donald Lewis Retirement Center: on YMCA Way at Ashland Street
- Mountain View Retirement: on Main Street at Glenn Street
- Mountain Meadows: on Mountain Meadows at Stony Point

All of them, except for Mountain Meadows are within a couple of blocks of a Route 10 bus stop.

Older adults visit the following locations with some regularity:

- Ashland Senior Center
- YMCA
- Southern Oregon University
- Lithia Park
- Ashland Community Hospital
- Ashland Library
- Shopping in Southern Ashland
- Big box stores in Medford

Youth

School-age children, especially those in high school, have significant transportation needs. According to the Ashland School District Superintendent, ninth grade students said that after-school transportation was one of the most important issues facing them. In focus groups, they said that the increased fare is a hardship and asked that a student pass program be implemented. Approximately 80% of students participate in extra-curricular activities, which require students to stay at school when there is no transportation provided by the district. A student bus pass as well as later or more frequent service would allow students to participate more freely in after-school programs. In addition, students like to travel downtown after school and to Medford for shopping during the weekends.

University Students

Students attending the SOU Ashland campus can utilize RVTD service for intra-Ashland trips and for travel between Ashland and Medford. The following summarizes transportation needs of SOU students:

- Evening trips: Students who take courses at SOU's Medford campus or Rogue Valley Community College in the evening cannot currently travel back to Ashland using RVTB service since the last bus leaves at 6:30 PM. Likewise, students traveling within Ashland cannot use transit to make evening trips.
- Weekend trips: Students who rely on transit cannot travel to Medford or to locations within Ashland on the weekends.
- More frequent service: Students need transit that is considered to be convenient and reliable. Many find the 30-minute intervals to be too long.

Downtown Business

Downtown Ashland is a compact, vibrant retail district which attracts local and regional residents as well as tourists, many who travel to the area for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Employees working in downtown Ashland often commute from other locations, including Phoenix, Medford, and Grants Pass. Given the growing cost of fuel, long-distance commuting is becoming more and more unaffordable, especially for those working in the retail sector, which typically pays lower wages.

Route 10 does not meet the needs of most employees, since many begin work before bus service begins or finish after bus service ends. Weekend service and additional hours of service during the week would make transit more useful to downtown employees.

Employees working downtown have limited parking options since much of the parking is short-term. Therefore, employees spend a considerable amount of time searching for on-street parking.

Commuters

Just as there are Medford-based companies that employ Ashland residents, Medford residents also travel to jobs in Ashland. As the driving time is approximately 20 minutes, commuters need efficient, affordable, and direct service between these two locations. As Route 10's last bus leaves at 6:30 PM, those employees who work in the evening are not able to utilize this service. Commuters would benefit from express service that is oriented to their needs, providing more direct service and longer hours.

Tourists

Tourists stay primarily in hotels at the south and north ends of town and at hotels and bed-and-breakfasts in downtown Ashland. Similar to what was identified for OSF visitors, tourists do not utilize existing transit service for the following reasons:

- Service is perceived to be infrequent and there is no weekend service
- Transit service is not actively marketed to tourists so they are often not aware of it
- Many tourists drive to Ashland and tend to use the private vehicle that is available to them
- Many hotels provide shuttle service

Summary

There was considerable consensus among stakeholders concerning Ashland's transportation needs. In general, stakeholders found routing within Ashland to be adequate as Route 10 serves most of the critical locations in town. Ashland's concentrated core and development along Siskiyou Boulevard allows relatively convenient and efficient service. One exception to this is the one-way loop on the south end of town, which has become less convenient since the discontinuation of Route 5 led to decreased combined bus frequencies.

Stakeholders did identify some critical locations that are not served by RVTD, including:

- North Mountain Community
- Quiet Village
- Oak Knoll
- Ashland Hospital
- West Ashland residential communities
- Rogue Valley Med Center

The most common complaints among stakeholders pertained to the level of bus service, including:

- **Buses do not run frequently enough:** Most stakeholders said that they would like to see 15-minute service reinstated.
- **Bus service does not run on weekends:** Stakeholders described how those who rely on bus service are stranded on the weekends.
- **Evening service is needed:** Stakeholders described how ending service at 7:00 PM prevents many people from using bus service.

Chapter 6. Transit Goals

This chapter presents a framework for examining the goals for public transportation in Ashland. Transit can serve many purposes and should be deployed as to best meet Ashland's transportation, land use and livability goals. However, public transportation can involve a number of potentially competing objectives. Limited financial resources will likely result in the need to clearly identify these objectives and to prioritize among them. For this reason, the City of Ashland must weigh these objectives and decide where local and regional transit funding should be committed.

These tough decisions are not unique to Ashland as every community has to prioritize spending. At the highest level, public transportation can be viewed as meeting one of two potential goals. The *coverage model* says that transit should cover as many people as possible with at least a minimal level of service. Conversely, the *productivity model* says that transit should be provided in the densest locations and corridors where service can be provided most efficiently, thereby resulting in higher ridership, farebox recovery etc. These concepts are further explained below.

In reality, most public transportation systems provide a mixture of coverage and productivity services. This requires local and regional policy makers to decide where along the coverage-productivity continuum their system should operate and how the system should evolve over time, if and when service is added or eliminated. These decisions cannot be done in isolation and should represent community values and priorities. The pending Community Based Strategic Plan presents Ashland with an opportunity to align transit goals with other community goals.

Coverage Model (Serve Everyone)

The coverage model aims to serve as many people as possible, even those needing to travel between low-density developments. The level of transit ridership is highly correlated to the density of land uses. The higher the concentration of residents, employees, students or customers along a given route, the higher the number of potential transit passengers that could use that route. Conversely, running buses to locations that are not along, or near, densely developed corridors increases the costs to operate public transportation on a per-ride-taken basis. Deviations into outlying neighborhoods or activity centers increases scheduled travel times and often requires additional buses in operation in order to maintain a desired frequency of operation. Current development patterns, street designs and the local terrain make it difficult to serve communities north and south of the Siskiyou corridor in Ashland.

In summary, coverage services have the following attributes:

- Serve most residents with some level of service;
- Result in more routes and stops, especially in low-density or hard to reach areas;
- Provide less frequent service as a result of higher costs per rider;
- Are applicable when addressing neighborhoods north and south of Siskiyou Blvd.; and

- Correlate to City Goals & Objectives (as identified in the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan)
 - *Work with the local public transit provider to provide service within one-fourth of a mile of every home in Ashland.*
 - *Incorporate needs of people who don't drive when developing transit routes and facilities.*

Productivity (Green/Sustainable Ashland)

The productivity model focuses service on where it produces the greatest return on investment. This return is often measured in terms of riders per service hour. Fare revenue's contribution toward operating cost (farebox recovery) is another measure and often higher with productivity-based services. To achieve these benefits, productivity service is provided where there are large numbers of potential riders. Service along densely populated corridors and running between busy activity centers will generate the greatest ridership per unit of service offered.

These transit-supportive corridors can typically generate ridership all day, in the evenings and on weekends, not just during work/school commute times or during weekday peak travel times. Offering service during these expanded times and at higher frequencies of service make public transportation competitive with automobile travel and offer residents a viable transportation option. By providing an alternative to driving alone, a community can meet a variety of objectives ranging from controlling transportation infrastructure costs to supporting sustainability goals. But providing service over longer spans of time and at higher frequencies of service dramatically increases both operating costs (primarily fuel and operator salaries) and capital costs (more buses in service).

In summary, productivity services have the following attributes:

- Result in stops and routes focused where they'll generate the greatest ridership;
- Associated with more frequent all-day service operating all week;
- Provide an efficient and effective alternative to driving alone and therefore reduce vehicle miles traveled;
- Help address congestion, parking and air quality/climate change problems by providing an effective alternative to driving alone;
- Able to build on service along Siskiyou Blvd.
- Correlate to City Goals & Objectives (as identified in the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan)
 - *Promote and support express commuter service between cities in the Rogue Valley.*
 - *Zoning shall allow for residential densities and a mix of commercial businesses within walking distance (one-quarter to one-half mile) of existing and planned public transit services which support use of public transportation.*
 - *Participate and show leadership in interacting with counties, cities and other special governments in Southern Oregon to develop regional public transportation services to reduce the frequency and length of vehicular trips.*

Preferred Mix of Coverage and Productivity

In reality, communities typically do not plan for a public transportation system that is either 100 percent coverage service or productivity service. Instead they strive for a mix of services based on local goals and objectives. Local policy makers should identify a targeted mix of services for their community after judging: current and future land uses; goals to manage parking and/or congestion; and potential revenue sources available to public transportation. Transit providers can use a specified target mix of productivity and coverage services to determine how new, incremental service should be deployed when new resources are available or which services may be deprioritized if financial resources are ever decreased

Other Potential Trade Offs

In addition to the coverage-productivity tradeoff, a number of competing sub-objectives exist within and between the high-level goals. With limited financial resources at hand, policy makers also need to determine where community needs and values align with these tradeoffs. Other competing objectives that require judgments regarding where to make transit investments include committing to:

- Work commuter services vs. non-work focused services;
- Increased regional service vs. local service
- More frequent daily service vs. weekend/evening service; and
- Weekend service vs. evening service.

Potential Transit Goals for City of Ashland

Discussions with City of Ashland City Council members, planning commissioners and feedback from public open house conducted in conjunction with this study point to possible goals for public transportation in Ashland. Participants at the transit open house were asked their opinions on a series of tradeoffs¹ and potential service options. This outreach indicated support for both productivity and coverage services. Actual open house attendees showed greater support for productivity services in terms of intensifying and expanding core local service along Siskiyou. City staff and civic leaders also associated productivity services with the City's efforts to be seen as "green" and sustainable. Mountain Meadows area residents providing input after the meeting indicated strong support for new coverage routes, especially one connecting North Mountain Avenue to the Ashland Community Hospital.

The needs assessment (Chapter 5) conducted as part of this transit review highlight community needs for increased frequency of service along with evening and weekend service in support of a productivity solution. Stakeholders also enumerated some underserved neighborhoods in support of a coverage solution. The following chapter defines a set of alternative service scenarios that address these needs while meeting the primary goals for transit.

¹ Copy of transit open house survey instrument is provided in Appendix A. 29 surveys were submitted by open house attendees and 72 were provided after the meeting by Mountain Meadows area residents.

Chapter 7. Alternate Service Scenarios

This chapter presents a set of alternate service scenarios for local transit service in the City of Ashland. Each scenario represents a combination of: 1) a future level of funding available for public transportation; and 2) a single, or mix of, coverage and/or productivity service(s). The funding scenarios include:

- Currently available resources in the City of Ashland;
- Moderate growth in local resources available to the City of Ashland; and
- Aggressive growth in regional resources available to the City of Ashland and to the Rogue Valley Transportation District.

These funding levels constrain the amount of new service available in each scenario. The current funding scenario severely limits the options for new service and results in the choice between the addition of coverage-based service or new productivity-based operations. The other two funding scenarios assume a blending of coverage- and productivity-based service as at this time there are formal community-wide transit goals.

The following sections describe each scenario, detailing:

- Suggested service design and level of service;
- Issues for consideration;
- Operating cost estimates and fleet expansion requirements; and
- Potential funding sources.

The operating cost estimates provide a conceptual, order-of-magnitude cost that can be used to compare the scenarios. These are based on RVTD fixed-route and Valley Lift hourly operating cost as reported to the Federal Transit Administration². Actual cost will vary based on actual cost structure, deadhead travel times between facility in Medford and start/end of service in Ashland, labor rules etc. Additional Valley Lift paratransit service is costed out when fixed-route bus service is added beyond the current route coverage or span of operation.

In all scenarios, there is an opportunity to split the existing Route 10 into a regional (intercity) component and a local (Ashland intracity) service. It is envisioned that both routes would turnaround in the vicinity of the Plaza allowing transfers from the local to regional service and vice versa. Separating Route 10 in this manner presents a number of benefits and concerns including:

- An opportunity for RVTD to realize (time/cost) savings from not operating Route 10 through Ashland and to reinvest savings in Ashland local service;
- An opportunity to develop unique branding of local service, including smaller sized vehicles for all local service;

² The 2007 FTA National Transit Database list RVTD's Bus operating expense per revenue hour as \$111 and Demand Response operating expense at \$61 per revenue hour.

- Concerns with respect to transfers between regional and local service;
 - Requires the use of timed-transfers between routes or a high frequency of service on local routes to make transfers convenient for riders;
 - The use of timed-transfers will result in buses laying over for some period of time and appropriate on-street or off-street layover locations need to be identified;
- An opportunity to explore development of transportation center identified in Comprehensive Plan

Current Funding Options

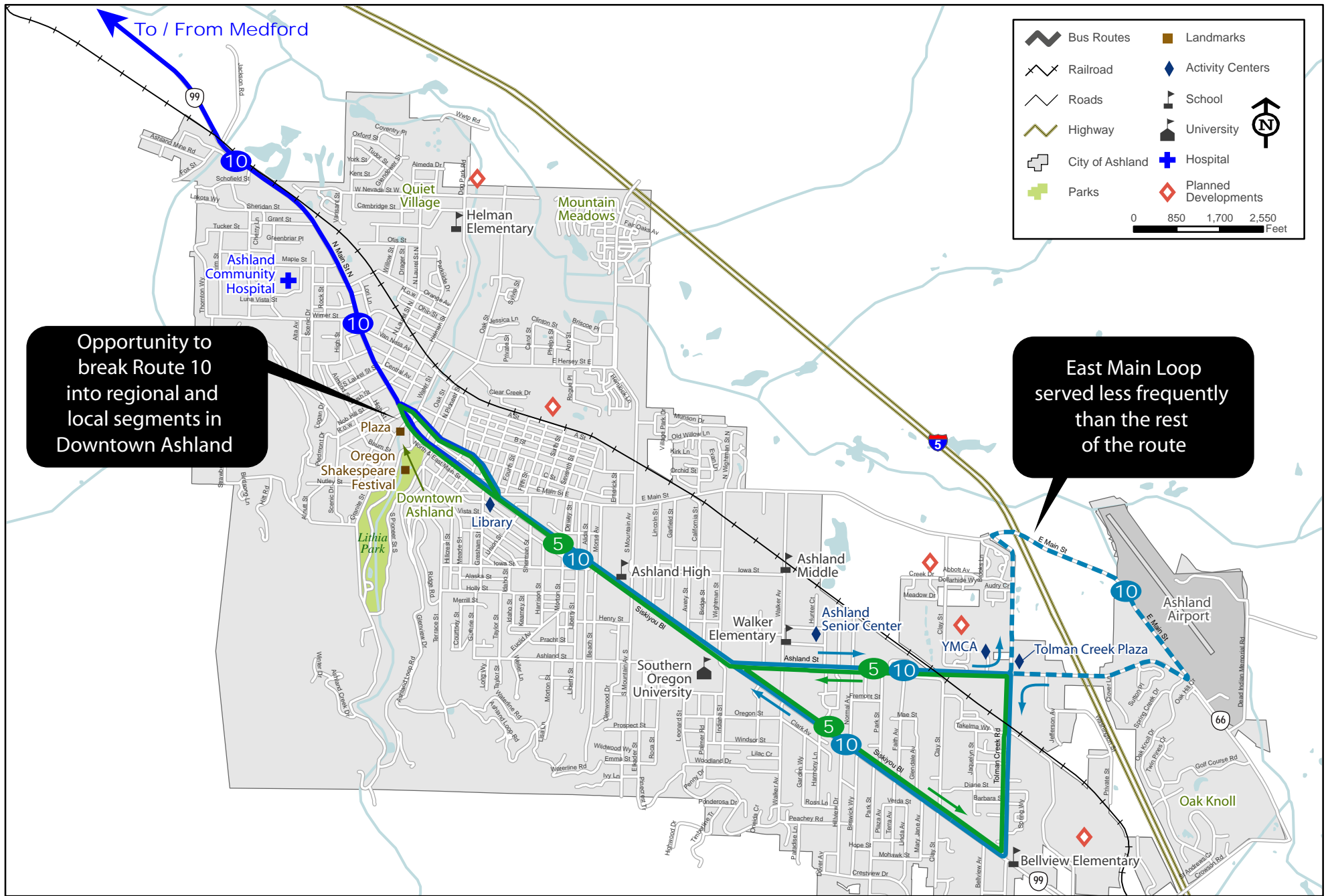
Current Funding-Productivity Scenario

In this scenario, service is overlaid on top of the current Route 10 service in Ashland, similar to the previous Route 5 (see Figure 7-1). This route basically doubles the frequency of service on the main part of Siskiyou Blvd, providing greater convenience for transit users in Ashland's downtown core. However, it is limited to weekday-only operation.

Issues for Consideration

Current funding levels may not be adequate operate an equivalent to Route 5 over the entire weekday span (14 hours). In this case, the new route could operate over an eight-hour segment of the day limiting operating costs and avoiding the need for a relief vehicle and driver mid-shift do to work rules limiting the amount of time an operator can be driving an in-service vehicle. Shortening the span of this route does make it less convenient and reduces its ridership potential.

Based on current and future traffic conditions and boarding activity, this new route may not be able to serve stops east of Tolman Creek. Service may have to be limited to Siskiyou, Tolman Creek and Ashland if a bus cannot complete a round trip within 30 minutes.



Current Funding-Productivity Scenario
FIGURE 7-1

Current Funding-Coverage Scenario

This scenario adds a neighborhood “circulator” serving North Mountain Ave and Ashland Community Hospital. Figure 7-2 illustrates a deviated, or Flex, route connecting the Mountain Meadows community to the hospital via North Mountain and Siskiyou/Main. The extension of service along North Mountain results in an increased area requiring complementary ADA paratransit service. Public transportation providers are required to offer on-demand service to residents within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from regularly scheduled fixed-route. The use of deviations from the fixed route (or flexing of the route off its primary path) to pick up passengers, who cannot access a bus stop along the primary route, eliminates the requirement for separate paratransit service. Riders are required to call in advance to request a deviation, similar to making a reservation on Valley Lift service.

Issues for Consideration

Deviations off the primary route can be provided to only those residents outside of the current Valley Lift service area, or to additional communities along the route. A tradeoff exists between the size of the Flex boundary (areas served by deviations) and the number of deviations that can be made during a single trip. The larger the boundary, the fewer deviations that can be made if the bus needs to travel off the main route and return from multiple locations on the same trip. Figure 7-2 shows a flex boundary serving only those outside of the Valley Lift area. It should be noted that the boundary extends outside of Ashland city limits to meet the $\frac{3}{4}$ mile requirement.

The route depicted in Figure 7-2 operates on North Mountain to Siskiyou, providing additional service on the primary corridor. As an option, it could run on Main between North Mountain and Lithia Way. This provides some service to additional areas and shortens the primary running time, allowing more deviations.

While the use of deviations addresses the ADA requirements, it has been RVTD’s policy to provide Valley Lift service to complement all fixed routes. Extending Valley Lift service area would eliminate the need for deviations but would increase costs if additional buses and drivers are required to maintain service levels.

Operating Cost

Each of the Current Funding scenarios adds one bus and driver. Operating over a 14-hour service day (matching the current Route 10) on weekdays only results in a conceptual cost of \$320,000 per year.

Financial Resources

The current funding scenarios rely on financial resources currently available to the City of Ashland and on any additional fare revenue raised by the new services.

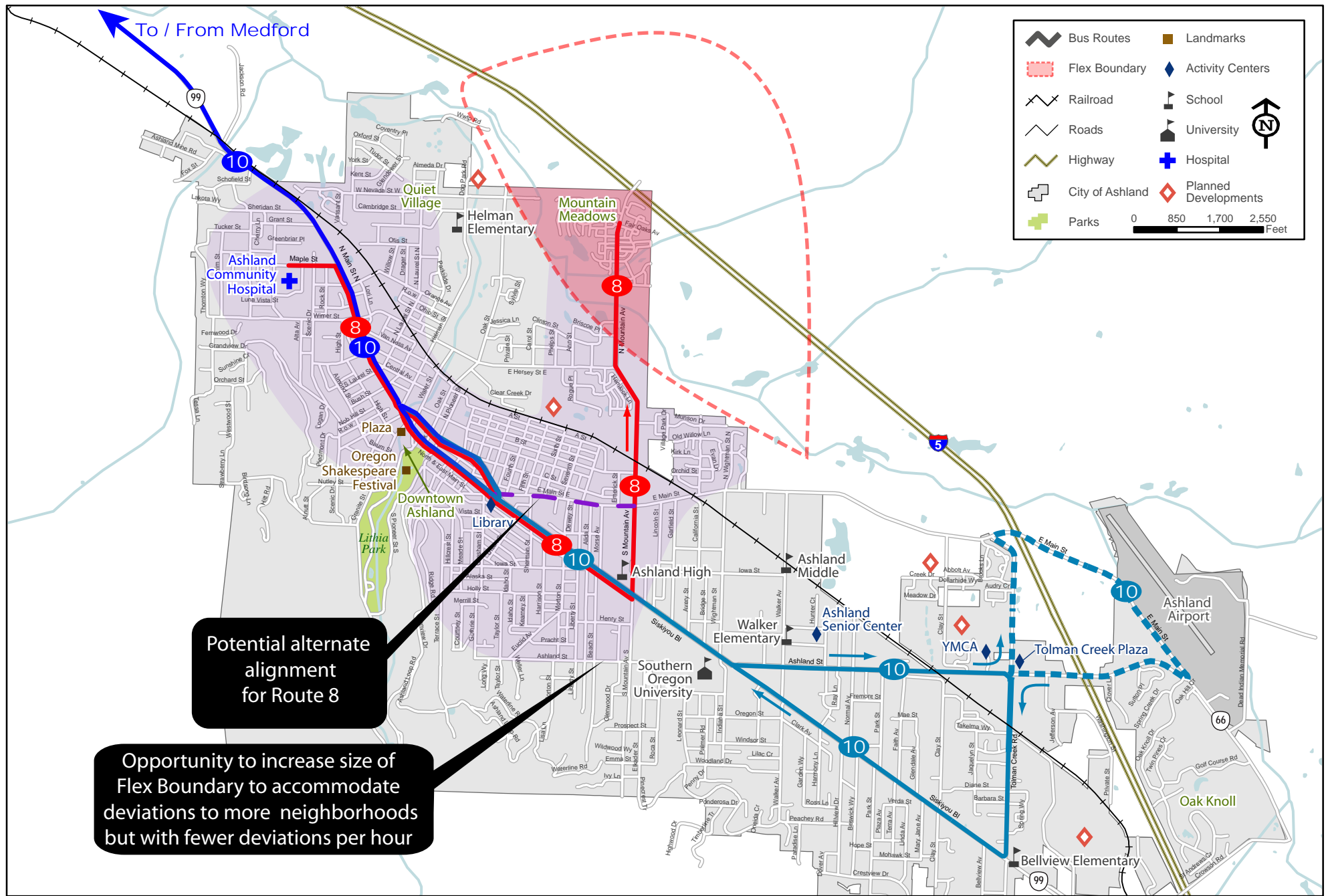
City of Ashland Funds

The City of Ashland currently provides a fare subsidy on the order of \$210,000. Adding new service without the addition of major new financial resources will require the redeployment of the City’s funding away from fare subsidies and to the new service. Eliminating the fare subsidy will have a negative impact on ridership, but the addition of new service, especially productivity-orientated service, should increase ridership. Research has shown that rider response to both

changes in fares and service levels can be measured using elasticities where the percent change in ridership is proportional (the elasticity value) to the percent change in fares or service levels. However, there are no definitive elasticity values for these changes and the documented ranges for fare elasticity and service elasticity overlap and vary based on local conditions. Ashland residents have welcomed transit service and new service may be valued more than fare subsidies. The response to recent addition of fares for local service in Ashland should not be extrapolated to future increases. Going from a fare-free system to one with fares represents a significant change. More than the monetary impact, riders realize a significant level of inconvenience when having to possess and transact fares. Subsequent fare adjustments tend to have lesser impacts.

Fare Recovery

The addition of new local service in Ashland will generate new ridership. Fares from these increases can be used to offset operating expenses incurred from the service. RVTD is open to allocating net fare increases associated with new Ashland service against operating cost increases.



Current Funding-Coverage Scenario
FIGURE 7-2

Moderate Funding Scenario

This scenario assumes a moderate growth in resources available to fund transit. It provides a mix of coverage and productivity services. The addition of evening service in Ashland is the primary benefit of this scenario. Later service along Siskiyou will make transit more convenient for local employees, residents, visitors and student. The lack of regional service in the evenings constrains the use of public transportation for anyone needing connections to locations outside of Ashland.

The coverage service is essentially the same as that presented in the Current Funding scenario – a neighborhood circulator (e.g. Route 8) operating weekdays until 7:30 pm.

The productivity service in this scenario is a reinstatement of Route 5-equivalent service but operating until 10 pm. In addition, Route 10 service local to Ashland also operates to 10 pm in this scenario.

In addition, new express bus service is provided between Medford and the Plaza in Ashland. This service would run on I-5, cutting the travel time and operate the Route 10 regional service on Highway 99 and making more intermediate stops. The express service would run hourly during peak commute times.

The addition of evening service in Ashland requires that Valley Lift service be available in Ashland for roughly 2.5 additional hours each weekday and the additional cost is reflecting the estimated operating cost for this scenario.

Figure 7-4 highlights the services available in the Moderate Funding scenario which in summary are:

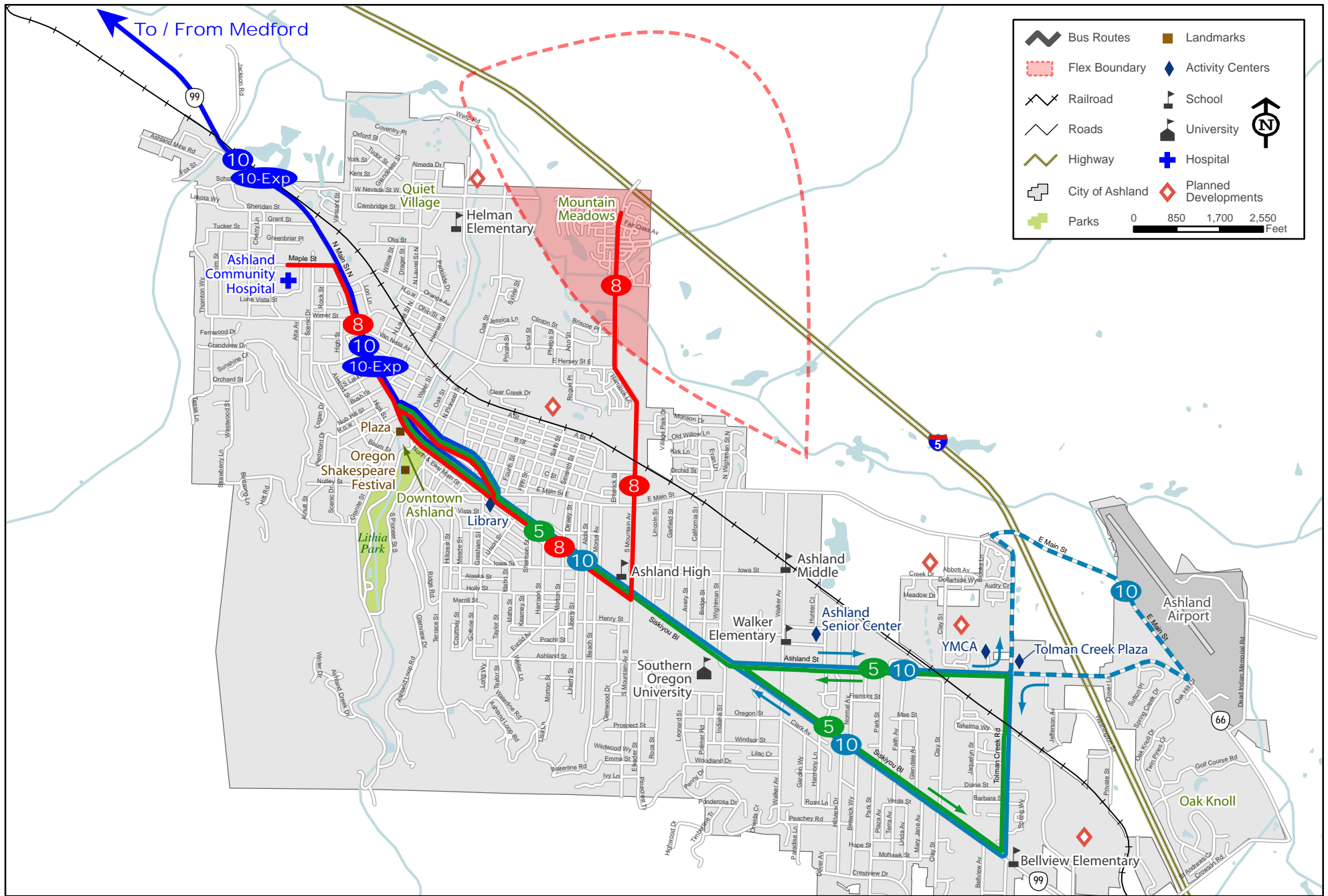
- Reinstatement of Route 5-equivalent service until 10 pm;
- Route 10-Local service until 10 pm;
- Valley Lift service in Ashland until 10 pm;
- Addition of Route 8 neighborhood circulator until 7:30 pm; and
- Addition of Medford to Ashland Express Service.

Operating Cost

The new and expanded service, along with the additional Valley Lift service, has a conceptual cost of \$1.4 million as summarized in the following table.

Figure 7-3 Moderate Funding Scenario Operating Costs

Service	Conceptual Operating Cost
Route 5 Weekdays	\$396,300
Route 5 Evenings	\$98,200
Route 10 Local Eve	\$307,000
Route 8 Weekdays	\$396,300
Medford Express	\$226,400
Total	\$1,424,200



Moderate & Aggressive Funding Scenarios
FIGURE 7-4

Financial Resources

To cover the additional \$1.4 million required for the new Ashland-based service under this scenario, a number of revenue resources require investigation. A financial strategy for this scenario will likely entail a combination of the following potential sources.

City of Ashland Funds

As with the Current Funding scenario, the redeployment of the current fare subsidy can provide over \$200,000 toward the initiation of new service. In addition, the City may seek an incremental property tax levy to pay for transit enhancements. While the last RVTD proposal to increase property taxes for transit failed at the ballot box in 1998, City of Ashland voters supported the increase. Support for transit appears to remain among Ashland residents and they may back a local levy for local service improvements. Actual support will depend on the amount of the levy, economic conditions and any competition for property taxes. As a rough estimate, 10 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value can yield \$188,000 annually (based on \$1.88 billion taxable property values and disregarding any Measure 50 limitations).

Fare Recovery

As with the Current Funding scenario, incremental farebox revenues from new services should be available to offset some of the expenses associated with these services. Fare revenue should be higher in this scenario as the level of service is increased.

Local Sponsorship

Advertising or sponsorship revenues are another source of funding for transit operations. Traditional advertising on, and in, local buses or at shelters is a possibility, but may conflict with local design standards. As an alternative, local business may be interested in sponsor a shelter or bus to increase its goodwill and get its name in the public. Revenues from these sources may be limited but will help offset the costs associated with this scenario.

BETC

In Oregon, entities which invest in transportation projects that reduce miles traveled in Oregon may be eligible for a Business Energy Tax Credit (BETC). The tax credit is 35 percent of eligible project costs and is filed over five years. For projects with eligible costs of \$20,000 or less, the tax credit may be taken in one year. Unused credits can be carried forward up to eight years. Tax credits are potentially available for purchasing vehicles or purchasing contracted transit services. Other incentives that encourage the use of transit may be eligible for a tax credit including the purchasing of bus fares.

A tax credit recipient must be able to show a reduction in overall energy consumption and have an Oregon tax liability, partner with another entity that can provide a lump-sum cash payment in return for a transfer of the tax credit via the BETC Pass-through Option. The Oregon Department of Energy determines the rate that is used to calculate the cash payment. It should be noted that finding pass-through partners may be difficult at times.

Aggressive Funding Scenario

This scenario assumes an aggressive growth in resources available to fund transit. It builds on RVTB's plans to expand service in the entire district. The addition of evening and Saturday service in the larger region is the primary benefit of this scenario. At these levels of service, transit becomes a viable alternative to the automobile for more riders and provides greater choices for those dependent on public transportation.

The coverage service is essentially the same as that presented in the Moderate Funding scenario but adds Saturday service. The productivity service in this scenario is also a reinstatement of Route 5-equivalent service but operating until 10 pm weekdays and on Saturdays. In addition, the regional Route 10 service operates to 10 pm weekdays and on Saturdays in this scenario. And new express bus service remains as it did in the Moderate Funding Scenario.

The addition of regional evening and Saturday service greatly increases the level of Valley Lift service required. Services available in the Aggressive Funding scenario can be summarized as:

- Regional Saturday (8 am – 6 pm) and Evening (until 10 pm) service
- Reinstatement of Route 5 weekday, evenings and Saturdays
- Operate Valley Lift service in Ashland and along Route 10 on evenings and Saturdays
- Add Route 8 and operate until 7:30 pm on Weekdays and all day Saturday
- Express Ashland to Medford service

Operating Cost & Fleet Requirement Summary

The new and expanded service, along with the additional Valley Lift service, has a conceptual cost of \$2.4 million as summarized in the following table.

Figure 7-5 Aggressive Funding Scenario Operating Costs

Service	Conceptual Operating Cost
Route 5 Weekdays	\$396,300
Route 5 Evenings	\$98,200
Route 5 Sat	\$57,700
Route 10 Eve	\$723,000
Route 10 Sat	\$421,200
Route 8 Weekdays	\$396,300
Route 8 Sat	\$57,700
Medford Express	\$226,400
Total	\$2,376,800

Financial Resources

A financial strategy for the Aggressive Funding scenario will require both local and regional contributions. Many of the expensive, regional services are identified in the RVTB and Long Range Plan and accounted for in the RVTB 2008-2015 Business Plan.

RVTB Payroll Tax

The RVTB Business Plan identifies a district-wide payroll tax as the most appropriate source of new transit funding for the region. The current business plan identifies funding to cover the Long Range Plans Tier One priorities including evening and weekend service on Route 10. Implementation of a payroll tax requires voter approval and RVTB is considering moving ahead with this in the spring of 2009

Local Sources

The RVTB Long Range plan identifies Medford-Ashland express service and an Ashland circulator (Route 8 equivalent) as Tier Two Priorities and these services would not be covered by an initial payroll tax. These services and the Route 5-equivalent service would need additional funding sources and those resources identified for the Moderate Funding scenario would like need pursuing to augment the payroll tax.

Chapter 8. Next Steps

This chapter identifies a number of action items that need to be addressed before the City of Ashland and RVTB move ahead with any major transit investments in Ashland. Many of these attempt to resolve uncertainties related to community preferences and potential funding sources.

1. **Confirm Transit Goals for Ashland** – The City should confirm, and possibly document in policy, the goals for transit. How does the community as a whole respond to the coverage vs. productivity tradeoff? To what degree is transit seen as a means for meeting other sustainability or livability goals? If the City moves ahead with Community Based Strategic Plan, the role of transit should be clearly identified along with other strategies.
2. **Assess level of, and target of City subsidy** – The level of future City investments in transit may be critical in implementing and sustaining the services identified in this memorandum. Will the \$210,000 contribution be available in future years and will the level remain constant, grow or contract with economic conditions? And does the City desire to retain its use for fare subsidies or invest in new service instead?
3. **Determine Potential for Local Levy** – The likelihood for a local tax levy has two primary components. What is the revenue generating potential based on property values and limitations under Oregon law? Secondly, what is the public's support for a local transit tax?
4. **Conduct market research** – Ascertaining public opinion is critical for resolving the previous steps and understanding the community's vision and support for transit. Formal research, providing statistically reliable results will aid the City when addressing these issues such as:
 - Community priorities for the type and level of service, including input on the coverage vs. productivity and other trade-off;
 - Public's response to fare increases in return for additional service question; and
 - Local support for a tax levy to support public transportation.
5. **Refine Service Options** – The City needs to work with RVTB to refine costs and level of service for the suggested routes. This is also an opportunity to uniquely brand local Ashland service. Should the local service, including the possible splitting of Route 10, have its own identity with distinctive logos and/or name? What are the most appropriate vehicles for local Ashland service? How should bus shelters and stops support any local branding?
6. **Identify Transportation Center Opportunities** – The potential splitting of regional and local service should coordinate with short- and long-term plans for a transportation center in Ashland. How many modes should be included at a transfer/transportation center? When should rail linkages be addressed? Where should these transfers take place? How will the development of on- or off-street facilities integrate with other downtown plans and developments?

7. **Determine Potential Revenues Sources** – In addition to the local tax levy, other local sources need to be quantified. Based on local design guidelines and advertising markets, what types of sponsorship revenues can be expected to contribute toward transit? Is a pass-through partner available for the City to successfully obtain BETC funding? Is SOU in a position to support local transit?

APPENDIX A

Transit Open House Survey Form

Ashland Transit Open House - Feedback Form

About You

Do you currently ride transit in Ashland? (Check all that apply.)

- ☐ Yes, I ride RVTD Route 10
☐ Yes, I ride Valley Lift wheelchair accessible transportation service
☐ No

If you do not ride transit, do you know how to get information on how to ride?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

If you ride transit, how often do you take the bus?

- ☐ Everyday ☐ A few times each month
☐ Three to four times a week ☐ Not often/Rarely
☐ Once or twice a week

Community Needs

Do you have additional needs that were not highlighted at the Open House?

- ☐ Yes (Please identify below) ☐ No

Local Ashland Service

Would the implementation of a distinctive local service using smaller vehicles make you more likely to ride transit?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

Would the implementation of local service make you more likely to support any proposed increase in public funds for transit?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

Please Continue on the Back

Community Priorities

Please consider the following tradeoffs and indicate (circle number that best represents your support) how you would prioritize each with three representing neutrality.

Choice #1	Strongly Support	Support	Neutral	Support	Strongly Support	Choice #2
Work commute trips	1	2	3	4	5	Non-work trips
Increased regional service	1	2	3	4	5	Local service
More frequent daily service	1	2	3	4	5	Weekends/evenings
Weekend service	1	2	3	4	5	Evening service
Serve the most residents	1	2	3	4	5	Serve routes that generate greatest ridership

Service Options

Please indicate your general support for the following service options and indicated the likelihood that you will use it (circle number that best represents your support)

Option	Little Support	Moderate Support	Great Support	Will not use any transit	Will take transit but probability not this option	Will take transit and would use this option
Rte 10 Eve to Medford	1	2	3	1	2	3
Rte 10 Eve, Ashland Only	1	2	3	1	2	3
Rte 10 Sat to Medford	1	2	3	1	2	3
Reinstate previous Rte 5	1	2	3	1	2	3
Flex service on N. Mountain (7)	1	2	3	1	2	3
Fixed route on N. Mountain (8)	1	2	3	1	2	3
Siskiyou/Hersey Loop (9)	1	2	3	1	2	3
Frequent Siskiyou Service (12&13)	1	2	3	1	2	3
Express service to Medford	1	2	3	1	2	3

Please provide any additional comments on these service options or others that you can envision.

Please share any other comments you may have on the future of transit in Ashland.
