

Appendix C: Needs and Opportunities Analysis

Regional Transportation Options Plan: Needs and Opportunities in the Central Lane MPO

Introduction

To inform the needs and opportunities of transportation options in the Central Lane MPO, an analysis of existing conditions, public comments, and stakeholder outreach was completed.

The existing conditions report describes existing transportation option services, programs, funding, and policies, in the Central Lane MPO. Most pertinent to identifying needs and opportunities, the report describes existing demographic characteristics and travel characteristics based on commute patterns, mode choice, and vehicle miles traveled (VMT). An analysis of these existing conditions led to identification of the needs and opportunities for regional transportation options described in this memorandum.

Coupled with the data findings, a compilation and analysis of transportation and land use related public comments from concurrent planning processes, further informed identification of regional needs and opportunities. Dominant transportation options themes were derived from the Regional Transportation System Plan (RTSP), Eugene and Springfield's Transportation System Plans, Eugene's Comprehensive Lane Assessment, Springfield's Glenwood Redevelopment Project, and Springfield's Commercial and Industrial Buildable Lands Inventory and Economic Opportunities Analysis.

Additionally, in late 2011 through early 2012, as a part of the existing conditions process, a series of five focus groups were conducted. The focus group sessions included representatives from health care and insurance, human services, recreational services, education, and economic development. The final element of stakeholder outreach included interviews with the small cities' city managers. The cities interviewed included Veneta, Junction City, Cottage Grove, and Creswell. An analysis of the qualitative data collected from the focus group discussions and small city interviews also contributed to the RTOP identification of needs and opportunities for regional transportation options.

The needs and opportunities identified fall into two categories: Population and Environmental Context and Travel and Land Use Characteristics.

Needs and Opportunities

Population and Environmental Context

The needs and opportunities within the population and environmental context address issues among the aging population, communities of concern, community health, and safety. These areas of need are highlighted in this section.

Aging Population

Consistent with national demographic trends, one of today's fastest growing populations in the MPO is seniors. According to the American Community Survey (ACS), the share of the population over 65 years old within the Eugene-Springfield urbanized area is approximately 12.5 percent; with anticipated growth by 2035 to almost 21 percent.

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Transportation options programs and services can serve as a key partner to address the aging population, and the associated health, mobility and disability issues. There is a need for creative partnerships between transportation options programs and transit, social services agencies, health care providers, private transportation providers, and for profit and not for profit organizations.

Communities of Concern

The MPO identifies Communities of Concern that include low-income, minority, limited English proficiency, disability, elderly, and zero car households. Many of these communities have limited access to employment, education, healthy food, recreation, and other services. Many individuals that reside in the MPO's Communities of Concern are transportation disadvantaged. Due to a physical or mental disability, income status, or age transportation disadvantaged citizens have limited travel options.

This lack of access and mobility among communities of concern present opportunities for the region to provide safe and affordable transportation options through shared resources to meet common access goals, which include school transportation services, local health care agencies and advocacy groups, and focal points for transportation services (e.g., community mobility hubs).

Findings from the human services focus group highlight interest in pursuing volunteer driver programs coordinated through LTD's call center and human services agencies. Opportunities to utilize existing transportation infrastructure to meet access and mobility needs are on the horizon.

Community Health

Community health is another prominent issue in the region. According to the Lane County Public Health Authority, a lack of physical activity and poor nutrition are the second leading cause of death in Lane County. In addition, twenty-six percent of Lane County adults are obese, which is greater than the state average adult obesity rate of 25%. Obesity rates in children are also increasing to epidemic levels due to lack of exercise and poor nutrition.

Transportation options and the promotion of active forms of transportation, such as biking or walking to school, work, recreation, and shopping, can help to reduce obesity rates and other illnesses in the region. Opportunities to address health issues include establishing regional partnerships between the region's cities, LCHAY, and Community Care Organization to promote active transportation, and continuing to develop and implement Safe Routes to School throughout the region.

Safety

Safety and the perception of safety limit active transportation options in the MPO. In the RTSP online survey comments, respondents indicated that safety is the most important value for the future transportation system. A safer environment would include improving sidewalks for pedestrians, reducing conflict points between bikes and pedestrians, and decreasing crash rates for cars. The majority of respondents believed that safety is the most prevalent walking and biking issue. Respondents identified poor interactions between autos and cyclists and that automobile drivers are not aware of pedestrians. Another issue to address is the perception of safety. Parents' perception of safety of the travel route between home and school can determine whether children walk or bike to school.

Improving the safety of the street network can encourage active transportation options for travelers. Opportunities to improve safety and the perception of safety include safety marketing and outreach and bicycle/pedestrian safety education programs.

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Travel and Land Use Characteristics

The needs and opportunities of travel and land use characteristics in the Eugene-Springfield area are particularly important to RTOP as they highlight major travel issues in the region. The needs and opportunities relating to travel and land use characteristics include commute patterns, vehicles miles travelled (VMT) and greenhouse gases (GHG), and connectivity and proximity to alternative modes.

Commute patterns

Commute patterns in the Eugene-Springfield region are identified by the commute to and from one's home to one's work. In the Eugene-Springfield area, there is a cumulative inflow of approximately 40,000 workers, or roughly 36 percent of all workers in the MPO, that commute from outside the MPO boundaries to jobs that are located within the MPO boundaries. Commuters who work inside the MPO are traveling from unincorporated areas in Lane or surrounding counties. In addition, the majority of people who live and work in the MPO (66 percent) are commuting less than 10 miles to work, followed by workers commuting greater than 50 miles (15 percent).

These commute patterns show that there are opportunities to increase transportation options to and from the Eugene-Springfield region from surrounding areas. Such opportunities include enhancing multimodal connections that are targeted for the commute of 10 miles or less within the City, as well as, promoting carpooling, vanpooling, and ridesharing options for those that commute into the MPO for work.

Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), Congestion, and Greenhouse Gases (GHG)

Daily vehicle miles traveled per person is estimated to be 17.3 miles within the Eugene-Springfield area, which includes all trips.

The most tangible consequence of an increase in VMT without addressing an increase in demand is traffic congestion. Congestion in the region results in losses to commuters and other drivers from vehicle operating costs, environmental costs, lost economic productivity, and freight unreliability.

Congestion does not only affect the economy, but also the environment. According to the 2010 MPO Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Inventory, Eugene and Springfield area residents and businesses are responsible for an estimated 3.2 million metric tons of GHG emissions annually (Central Lane MPO, 2010). The study found that transportation by car and truck caused roughly 30 percent of these greenhouse gas emissions (Central Lane MPO, 2010).

Even though the Eugene-Springfield VMT has not risen since 1990, there is a need in the region to provide transportation options to reduce per person VMT, congestion, and emissions. Opportunities to address congestion and GHG emissions include targeting transportation options to prioritized congested areas in coordination with CLMPO Congestion Management Process as well as marketing and educating larger employers on transportation option strategies such as telework, teleconferences, and alternative schedules.

Connectivity and Proximity to Alternative Modes

Connectivity and proximity to walking, biking, and transit facilities are important elements to using transportation options. Sidewalk coverage is a useful indicator to measure pedestrian connectivity. Based on Eugene, Springfield, and Coburg's TSP evaluation of sidewalk coverage, there is a need to increase, where and when appropriate, the amount of sidewalks to better serve pedestrians in the area.

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In addition to creating better connectivity, respondents to the RTSP online survey indicate that improving the condition of the current sidewalk infrastructure is a need in the region.

Access to bikeways is another measure of regional connectivity and accessibility. In the RTSP public comments, Eugene-Springfield residents have identified better connectivity of bicycle facilities as a major need for the region; as well as the importance of maintaining the condition of the current bicycle infrastructure.

In 2004, 83 percent of all households in the Central Lane MPO were located within ¼ mile of a transit stop (Central Lane MPO, 2007). The large amount of households located a short distance from transit stops provides an opportunity to promote transit use in the region with a focus on transferability between modes, technology, and community focal areas for transportation options.

Bike sharing and bike parking are prospective strategies to address the need to improve the transportation option infrastructure. In locating bike shares and bike parking facilities it will be critical to consider distance and access to housing, employment, and transit stations.

Conclusion

The needs and opportunities identified in this document will help the region move forward with the Regional Transportation Options Plan toolkit and strategic plan. Given the population and environmental context and the travel and land use characteristics of the region, improvement efforts can be focused on areas with the highest need and opportunity identified in this document. This information will inform the development of a transportation options best practices toolkit, which will assist regional and local governments in expanding their transportation option programs in the future.