

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) has been created by the Lewis Clark Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (LCVMPO) to set a path for transportation development and projects until the year 2030. The LCVMPO will use this plan to coordinate the activities of the city, county, and state governments involved in building and maintaining transportation infrastructure in the valley. Key findings from the LRTP are presented below.

### **Purpose of the LRTP**

This LRTP does not involve itself with specific project design, but provides a broad mural of the future transportation system, using data and tools to predict the anticipated demands of the traveling public. This plan also addresses the uncertainties of funding; if adequate funding does not receive public support then the plan must be revised accordingly to reflect the reduction in transportation system enhancements.

This LRTP for the LCVMPO aids in fulfilling the requirements for federal transportation funding consideration. Federal and state transportation funds will flow through LCVMPO each year and to be made available to the region. Future transportation projects intending to utilize federal transportation funds must be identified in the financially constrained LRTP.

### **Public Involvement**

The *LCVMPO Transportation Planning Process Public Involvement Plan (PIP)* outlined the objectives for public involvement in the planning process. Public input helped identify the issues that this LRTP is to address as well as possible solutions. The public involvement process included establishing an understanding of the planning process; explaining the decision-making process; identifying the interested and affected parties; providing for ongoing access to key personnel and information; collecting focused and collective input; establishing ongoing opportunities for public input; and communicating how public input was addressed.

The LCVMPO used many strategies for gathering public opinion. These included interviews with stakeholders, surveys of people on-board public transportation, media releases, mailings, newsletters, web site, on-line surveys, recommended alternatives survey, the local speakers bureau, and public meetings.

### **Metropolitan Area Characteristics**

The Lewis Clark Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization encompasses property in two states, has two rivers running through the middle of it, and includes two counties—Asotin County and Nez Perce County—and three cities—Asotin, Clarkston and Lewiston. The planning area includes the Port of Lewiston, and the Port of Clarkson, and is adjacent to the Port of Wilma. These inland ports mean that the Lewis Clark Valley will have special transportation needs, specifically in the area of the transportation of commercial goods by rail, truck and barge.

This LRTP builds upon the land-use and transportation goals set forth by the plans of these counties, cities and ports. Beyond providing for the building and maintenance of safe and convenient roads, many of these plans also urge the exploration of alternative modes of transport as well as land-use planning measures to help alleviate traffic problems. They also specify that

successful transportation planning in any one area relies upon cooperation among the counties and cities of the Lewis Clark Valley.

### **Socioeconomic Conditions and Trends**

Total population in the MPO was forecasted to increase from more than 51,000 residents in 2000 to slightly more than 65,000 by 2030, representing an additional 13,800 persons, for a gain of 21 percent. A full demographic breakdown of the region is set out in this chapter.

The Lewis Clark Valley has seen an increase in higher income households and a decrease in lower income households; regionally, the median household income is on the rise. It is logical to expect the overall incomes of the region to increase as well. If individuals can afford to travel more often and travel further, then the resulting increase in travel will likely result in a greater number of vehicle miles traveled.

Population, housing unit, and employment forecasts were done to determine where people will live and work in the future. That information was crucial to forecasting travel patterns which will show where changes and improvements to the transportation system are needed.

### **Existing Transportation Infrastructure**

The existing transportation system represents the baseline conditions for assessing future transportation investment needs. By understanding the availability and operation of the current transportation system it is possible to recognize the implications of the future capacity or management issues.

The roadway system serving the Lewis and Clark Valley Metropolitan Area consists of 17 percent Collector roads, 15 percent Minor Arterials and 4 percent Principal Arterials. The metropolitan area has a roadway density of 8 route miles per square mile. Certain roads have been identified as having reached a critical Level of Service (LOS) and their congestion should be addressed. Accommodations should also be made within the plan for those who walk or bicycle the routes of the valley. Chapter five discusses the functional classification system and level of service measures.

### **Public Transit Services**

Public transportation in the Lewis Clark Valley includes fixed-route and Dial-a-Ride service in Lewiston, Clarkston, and the City of Asotin. Limited-run intercity service between Lewiston and Orofino was provided but discontinued and daily intercity service between Lewiston and Moscow has begun. An on-board survey of riders of the existing bus system found that most bus riders use it for shopping, work and school trips and start and end their trip within a 5 minute walk of the bus stop. Riders rate fares, bus conditions, drivers and safety issues as Very Good; wait times and route convenience as Good.

The riders typically depend on the bus, and ride it regularly, having limited access to other methods of transportation. During 2005, the transit provider's fixed-route services provided over 23,000 rides in Asotin County and in excess of 28,000 in the city of Lewiston. Ridership is up 12 and 18 percent during the first quarter of 2006 in Lewiston and Asotin County respectively. The transit provider also provides a curb-to-curb Dial-A-Ride (DAR) system. Although anyone can ride, ADA trips take priority.

### Existing Freight Infrastructure

The Ports of Lewiston, Clarkston and Wilma are all situated within the MPO area at the head of the navigation of the Columbia-Snake River System. The Port of Lewiston handles mainly grain and containerized cargo. The Wilma Port Site, with rail and highway access, is built to accommodate wood products shipment, bulk petroleum products handling, and public port facilities, all served by complete utility systems. The Port of Clarkston is known for log shipment, and serves tourists who sail on cruise ships traveling the river from Portland.

Rail transportation is necessary, if difficult, for the Port of Lewiston to be competitive as an intermodal distribution center. A feeder line of the Great Northwest Railroad provides the Port with a direct link to the main lines of the Union Pacific Railroad and Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad. However, the national trend of rural rail abandonment has made its mark locally, significantly reducing rail access into the Port from the east, south and north. If this trend continues, Lewiston could become a railhead with all rail service east of the city abandoned.

Because of the flexibility of motor freight, it has become the primary mode of transport in the region; several motor freight companies are based in the Lewiston area. Two major U.S. highways, 12 and 95, intersect at Lewiston. Trucks carry a significant volume of grain in the region. These trucks are chiefly from eastern Washington and North Idaho, with some from as far east as North Dakota and eastern Montana. However, the road infrastructure is not adequate in many areas to support the increased axle weights of trucks and year-round trucking.

Air transportation is available at the Lewiston Nez Perce County Regional Airport (LWS) only two miles from the Port of Lewiston. LWS serves passengers and cargo deliveries with an average of 50 planes per day. Passenger and cargo service is provided. Private and rental auto access to the facility is readily available although public transportation has not developed enough to offer better access options than other types of ground transportation.

### **Needs Assessment**

This needs assessment is not determined by cost so much as by future transportation demand, based on levels of congestion, economic activity or redevelopment, and accessibility considerations. Anticipated financial resources are used to determine which among the priority projects can be funded with available revenue sources.

The foundation for the needs assessment will be the TIP, which will address the MPO area's immediate needs and funding. Future needs assessments will build upon the previous transportation funding commitments to determine what additional needs exist, or will come into being over the 25-plus year planning horizon for transportation facilities and services.

Current available crash data (1999 to 2003) was used to identify problem traffic areas and at public transportation to identify wants and needs of the system. Alterations in both physical characteristics and social policies should be considered to enhance safety in the Lewis and Clark Valley MPO area.

### Public Transportation Needs

Stakeholders interviewed for this LRTP were supportive of current public transit, especially the area's relatively new fixed-route bus service. Several stakeholders suggested that the public

transit system should continue to expand, becoming more viable to the broader public. Most agreed this would require expensive improvements that may not be realistic in the short term given current local and statewide funding constraints. Suggested improvements included more frequent service on all existing lines; implementation of two-way service; expansion of service coverage; improvement of the visual appeal of transit vehicles and stops to bring more riders of all types to the system; and the provision of better information at fixed route bus stops, on the Internet, and in print available at key public locations.

For their part, as in most areas, the LCVMPPO member agencies are facing the prospect of improving and updating an aging infrastructure while trying to accommodate growth. The challenges faced involve maintaining roads in the face of increased traffic, mitigating the impact of traffic on shopping and residential districts, countering a possible reduction in barge traffic and the subsequent increase in rail and truck shipping, and cooperating among themselves to create a unified GIS system and implement a coherent planning vision.

#### Unfunded Needs in Transportation Planning

As the LCVMPPO proceeds with the process of coordinated regional planning, the MPO recognizes that the costs to meet the needs exceed available funding. The following items describe the greatest needs that are not covered by anticipated funding:

- Development and management of access control on primary corridors throughout the urban area to improve connectivity between commercial/industrial areas and residential areas;
- Approach correction on all bridges for safety and congestion deficiencies;
- Improvements in freight movement within the urban area to serve major destinations;
- Congestion mitigation;
- Air quality improvement;
- Potential requirement for improvements to a major bridge that serves all communities;
- Conduction of regional signal timing studies and the use of intelligent transportation systems (ITS) as a tool to minimize congestion;
- Signalization coordination and upgrades;
- Expansion of public transit service throughout the region.

#### MPO Area Travel Demand Forecast Model

Travel demand forecasting involves predicting the impacts that various policies and programs will have on travel in the urban area. The forecasting process also provides detailed information, such as traffic volumes, bus patronage, and turning movements to be used by engineers and planners in their designs. This LTRP advises that the LCVMPPO undertake a travel demand model to analyze the entire system based upon alternative networks and service (supply side) and

alternative estimates of socioeconomic data such as housing, population, income, employment, etc. (demand side).

### **Funding**

ISTEA, TEA-21 and SAFETEA-LU each required that regional transportation plans like this one be fiscally sound with the projects found within it being reasonably fundable with foreseeable transportation funding. Many of the recommendations this plan would likely recommend cannot be funded by current projected dollars; some efforts to secure new funding should be made. Due to the complexity of the Lewis Clark Valley area, there are many diverse funding sources available. Some categories of funding, like roadway, transit, enhancement, and school trip safety show up on both sides of the state line, while others are specific to their state.

As the LCVMPPO is a new collective, it represents a new way to allocate transportation project development dollars in the Lewis Clark Valley area. Available transportation funding and project costs for the MPO were forecast based on current funding, with the understanding that the inter-state nature of the LCVMPPO may change the nature of transportation funding to the area.

The scenarios presented provide constraints on potential transit service and capital plans. The first maintains the current funding revenue sources, allowing for expanded operations and additional capital projects in Asotin County but maintains current services in Lewiston. The second assumes a growth in funding revenues in Lewiston, likely in the form of increased franchise fees, to provide expansion of Lewiston services in conjunction with those in Asotin County. Projects were prioritized in terms of the funding available.

#### Proposed Transit Service Improvements Using Existing Funding

Many stakeholders and riders expressed a desire to reduce their travel time on transit and to increase the frequency of service. While the current frequency of service is reasonable given the service area, land uses and demographics, travel time via the current large one-way loop routes can be excessive. Given limited resources, initial improvements should address travel time improvements. Also, one bus should be added on the existing Clarkston route, allowing two bidirectional linear routes to serve streets currently served by the existing loop route. The additional service will cost an additional \$100,000 per year to cover variable costs including operator salary, fuel and maintenance expenses.

#### Proposed Transit Service Improvements Using Growth Funding

**Bidirectional Service:** The existing Lewiston route is also a large one-way loop. As with the Clarkston route, the Lewiston route can be broken into two bidirectional routes.

**College Route:** A new route between Lewis Clark State College and Walla Walla Community College would provide a connection between the two educational institutions.

**North Lewiston Commuter Service:** Adding this proposed route would connect currently unserved residential development east of the Orchards and industrial/commercial areas in North Lewiston.

**Weekend Service:** Saturday service is typically a priority, as a number of transit dependent individuals require employment and personal errand trips on Saturday relative to Sunday.

Asotin County PTBA and the City of Lewiston should define their policies for stop amenities and set standards that determine when certain amenities are justified at a particular bus stop.

Transit vehicles have a limited lifetime and service providers need to plan for the purchase of replacement buses in addition to regular maintenance.

Asotin County will reserve \$33,000 per year for replacement vehicles. Actual vehicle purchases will be for one every other year in Asotin County. Should Lewiston have the funds available, \$53,000 per year should be reserved for replacement vehicles. Actual vehicle purchases will be for one every year in Lewiston.

Lewiston bus routes should be provided with the following amenities: a sign and bench at every stop (One time capital expenditure of \$26,000 for 13 stops) and shelters at four of the stops (One time capital expenditure of \$20,000)

### **Assessment of Existing Facilities and Operations**

The consultant team has interviewed Valley Transit staff, and has toured the facilities. Based on these observations, the following points support staff claims that the existing facilities are insufficient:

- Maintenance, fueling, cleaning and bus storage all take place at separate locations
- Most of the buses are stored at an unsecured location
- Most of the buses are being damaged by the elements at an accelerated rate
- The administrative facility does not have enough workspace
- The administrative facility lacks a secure and efficient fare counting space

### **Future Work Plan**

Transportation data, once collected, are too valuable to only use once and should be shared among agencies within the MPO area. Conducting the MPO's transportation planning and programming process will involve extensive efforts to develop data and information regarding the region's transportation network. While some of this information is developed by Idaho Transportation Department, Washington State Department of Transportation, consultants, area local governments, and the like, the MPO should have a key role in developing and managing information for the metropolitan area. This effort would centralize and consolidate data, as well as provide consistency, needed for planning transportation projects.

The development of transportation data for use in various reports, studies, plans, and programs is invaluable. To ensure that the data is as effective and valuable as possible, the LCVMPO should undertake some key activities, such as:

- The MPO should provide for staff and maintenance of a Geographic Information System (GIS) service. The use of GIS should become an integral part of the transportation planning process, providing an ability to work with map information and to graphically display various features, data, and other characteristics in various formats. The GIS

system will provide staff the ability to link map and data information to conduct transportation systems analysis.

- Development of maps and data linked to a GIS map system. This includes maps used in the LRTP and the TIP, as well as for the local planning jurisdictions, emergency service providers, the ports and the general public. A central map generator will help ensure that current and consistent data is presented and referenced.
- Technical assistance to such groups as Valley Transit and others to aid in study activities, in mapping data, and providing information for analysis and display. By offering assistance to other groups, knowledge and expertise can be shared, thereby reducing costs and eliminating duplication of efforts.
- Development of a street name clearinghouse. The LCVMPPO community, and more specifically Lewiston, may in part be characterized as having a fractured street naming system, consisting of the duplication of a numbered street pattern in separate portions of the city, as well as “broken” linkages of the same-named roadway. This leads to confusion which in turn increases public and private service delivery costs and creates a public safety hazard resulting from delays in emergency service responses. The formation of a Street Naming Program (Committee) would seek to avoid and eliminate, whenever possible, existing street name duplicates that create confusion in property and address location. A central “clearinghouse” for names would enable data centralization, consistency, organization, and communication.