



**Rogue Valley  
Metropolitan Planning Organization**

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**Regional Transportation Planning**

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*Ashland • Central Point • Eagle Point • Jacksonville • Medford • Phoenix • Talent • White City  
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**DATE:** December 10, 2008  
**TO:** Technical Advisory Committee  
**FROM:** Dan Moore and Eric Heesacker, Rogue Valley Council of Governments  
**SUBJECT:** TDM Refinement Plan: Technical Memo 5 – Review of Rogue Valley Transportation District’s (RVTD’s) TDM Program

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**INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND**

The 1980 Census found the Medford urbanized area with more than 50,000 people, the threshold at which a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is created. Transportation planning activities in these MSAs are to be coordinated through a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the Rogue Valley Council of Governments (RVCOG) was designated as the local MPO (RVMPO) by the Governor of Oregon in July of 1982. At that time, the cities of Central Point and Medford were the only jurisdictional members of the RVMPO along with Jackson County. Since then, Jacksonville, Eagle Point, Talent, Phoenix, Ashland, and the White City Urban Renewal Agency have joined the MPO as member jurisdictions. The Rogue Valley Transportation District (RVTD) and the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) also participate in RVMPO transportation planning activities.

The Rogue Valley Transportation District (RVTD) was established in 1975 under ORS 267.510 as a state-chartered Transportation District. Since RVTD depends on ridership (and grants) to continue service, it stands to reason that RVTD would initiate many of the Transportation Demand Management (TDM) efforts in the RVMPO.

TDM is a concept that attempts to get people to leave their cars at home and find other means of getting to their destination. Minimizing automobile travel:

- Reduces congestion;
- Improves air quality;
- Improves health (if people walk/bike);
- Reduces absenteeism at the workplace; and,
- Has been shown to reduce driver stress.

RVTD’s transit service depends upon people abandoning a single occupancy vehicle (SOV) for other means of transportation, in this case public transit. To this end, RVTD began to advertise

transit as a viable alternative to the automobile in the Rogue Valley in the later 1970's. This advertising strategy essentially marks the beginning of informal TDM in the region.

Subsequent to those initial efforts to get people "aboard" transit, and subsequent to formation of the RVMPO, TDM has been a blossoming program that is almost becoming a new "buzz-word" nationwide as fuel prices skyrocket and people are looking to alternative (besides SOVs) modes of transportation.

## **Evolution of RVTD's TDM Program:**

### **Ridesharing**

After RVTD was formed in the mid-1970's, continued advertising of the bus service was really the only form of local TDM program until the early 1990's when a rideshare program was initiated. This TDM program was intended, like all TDM programs, to move people out of their SOVs. The rideshare program facilitated people to begin carpooling/vanpooling to their places of work. RVTD has never abandoned the efforts of their rideshare program; the program is still promoted today through carpool and vanpool matching via a website, [www.carpoolmatchnw.org](http://www.carpoolmatchnw.org), and ride matching performed at the worksite by RVTD staff.

TDM programs are almost exclusively geared toward the work commute that is estimated to make up almost 30% of all daily traffic. Statistically, there are another 70% of drivers out there, but research indicates that TDM programs are most successful with the commute to work. This is a large block of people who have extremely predictable travel behavior; points A and B on a commuter's route are virtually always the same. Therefore, it stands to reason that if you can alter this predictable behavior by providing other means of transport (as opposed to SOVs) congestion is also reduced.

### **Teleworking**

In the mid-1990's, teleworking or telecommuting became the next big push for RVTD's efforts at TDM programs. At this time, personal computers were gaining popularity in the workplace and in the home. Technological developments were (and still are) occurring so fast that a computer purchased one day was almost obsolete the next. Coming on the heels of all this technological advancement was hardware and software allowing one to communicate with the office from any room of the home. People could actually work from home as long as they had a computer, modem, a phone, and in some cases fax machines.

RVTD worked to capitalize on technological advances by promoting programs for telecommuting, staggered work schedules, job sharing, and compressed work weeks. The aim of RVTD's efforts was to decrease the amount of congestion on the transportation network by minimizing the number of trips taken.

Today's telecommuters have even more methods of communicating with the office in the form of satellite offices (reduces the need to rent so much office space at the main office headquarters,

reducing overhead costs) and in the form of video conferencing to connect people face to face over long distances.

### **Event/Education Coordination**

In the later 1990's, RVTD embarked on a schedule of public outreach and education. Special events were sponsored by RVTD to educate people about the local transit system; their TDM programs (see above), and to introduce their Interactive "Gus Rides the Bus" education program, which reaches thousands of school children each year. The class includes safety messages, curriculum on the benefits of alternative transportation and a bus ride.

Recent efforts have expanded the Interactive Program to include other programs like:

- "Mike Rides his Bike";
- "Kate Rides her Skates";
- A bicycle safety class;
- A skateboard safety class; and,
- An Interactive Bus class geared toward seniors and the disabled.

RVTD has won many national and state awards for the Interactive Bus Program . The skateboard clinic was last used in 2005/2006, but is to be revived again with more staffing. This program addresses safety in skateboarding as a mode of transport since the skateboard is being utilized by so many school children, including high school and college students, to get from home to school. This is a five day program with a ninety-minute session planned for each of the five days and is taught by an experienced skateboarder. Previous successes for the program reveal a need to offer it once again.

RVTD's TDM program became more formalized in 2001 when a system using quantitative benchmarks and tracking of activities came into use. For example, Park and Ride lots are assessed each quarter for use, the Interactive program distributes unique transit passes that when collected can determine the effectiveness of the program, and the number of booths that were hosted to distribute information to the general public are all tracked and summarized in a report. While this assessed effectiveness has no bearing on how much money is given to RVTD by the State (ODOT) it is useful in determining how many users of the system there are.

In addition, the TDM program adopted a new image and branded itself the "Way To Go! (WTG) Program". A logo has been created and RVTD has begun to utilize this new name instead of the acronym TDM for several activities. The WTG has expanded to encompass six primary tasks:

- Education;
- Public Outreach;
- Employer Outreach;
- Government Outreach;
- Rideshare; and,
- Administration.

## **Safe Routes**

In 1999, a Safe Routes to School (SRS) pilot program was initiated in Marin County, CA. This program was adopted by RVTD in 2003 and it is designed to promote safe pedestrian and bicycle routes to local schools for children. These routes consist of off-street sidewalks, pathways, signalized crossings at major streets and high-visibility areas which are sometimes not the shortest way for a child to get from home to school and back again. However, these are routes that are deemed to be safer by the local committees who form them to avoid dangers of on street walking to school.

RVTD's Way To Go! Program has grown from one school in 2003 to eight schools in 2007. The WTG program also assisted Walker Elementary in Ashland, OR with a Walking Wednesday program in 2005-2007 with more than 25% of the school using alternative modes each Wednesday. The national SR2S program seeks to have the SR2S day, always the first Wednesday in October, to expand to a monthly or weekly program, demonstrated with Walker Elementary.

RVTD's WTG Program also coordinates Car Free Day in the fall of each year. This event promotes citizens to use an alternate mode for this one day each year, and can also be expanded to once per month, then once per week. This effort started in Europe and has spread quickly across the globe. RVTD first recognized Car Free Day in 2001 by providing free transit throughout the district, hosting 'People Powered Fuel Stations.' More recently the WTG Program closed Oak Street in downtown Ashland to motorized vehicles for an event with booths and fun activities. RVTD has partnered with the City of Medford, the City of Ashland, and Harry and David to promote Car Free Day.

Other events that RVTD's WTG Program contribute to are: the Ashland Bike Swap, Rogue Valley Earth Day, Rogue Valley Safe Kids Day, Access Senior Fair, and several more.

## **RVTD TDM Current Efforts**

As stated above, virtually none of RVTD's TDM programs have been abandoned. Over the years, programs have evolved, they have been fine-tuned, and they are meeting with greater and greater success. Current efforts aimed at reducing congestion include RVTD's Universal Bus pass program, also called the U Pass and programs regarding skating/skateboard safety.

The Upass program has been around for some time under other guises but has been modified with new technology. With this program, those employers who desire discounted passes for their employees are sold passes which are usually discounted more than 50% when essentially purchased in bulk. The new technology comes in the form of an ID card distributed to the employees benefiting from the U Pass program purchased by their employer. Each employee is issued a discounted pass and is given a card with their photo to flash to the driver when boarding a bus.

RVTD eventually hopes to install swipe card systems on the bus fleet to allow the cards and other fare media to be used similar to a debit card. . The rider's photo is matched to the face by

the bus driver to dissuade these discounted riders from selling their discounted passes to regular riders for profit.

An additional program provided by RVTD includes combining alternative transportation modes. Around 2001/2002, each bus in RVTD was equipped with a bike rack that can hold two bicycles. For a brief trial period, some busses were equipped with a triple bike rack; however, these racks produced obstruction problems for bus headlights and the trial ended. This bike rack concept is a great way to combine modes of transit (bicycling and transit riding) as viable alternatives to utilizing SOVs. Research indicates that when alternative modes of transport are combined in a single trip, changing travelers' behaviors is enhanced.

While the back rack program was of short duration, the result was installation of bike racks on all RVTD busses in 2001 and 2002. It is difficult to consider this an on-going TDM program except to track the use of the racks themselves.

The following is a complete inventory of RVTD's current and ongoing TDM programs/efforts:

- A. The "flagship" of RVTD efforts to promote their service is the award-winning Gus Rides the Interactive Bus program that educates people from all walks of life to safely/efficiently utilize the transit service. Combined with this program are alternative transportation education programs that have reached thousands of students over the years, now being expanded into a Senior Education program as well. There are other public outreach activities which promote TDM and non-SOV transportation modes (see above).
- B. Discounted bus pass provision through the UPass to employers who foster transit use at the workplace.
- C. Free employer assistance with establishment of company carpools, vanpools, Business Energy Tax Credits (BETC), telecommuting, and employee trip-reduction analysis and incentives. RVTD staff also conducts free, onsite, transportation fairs for employers and have also established "Guaranteed Ride Home Programs" for registered employers. These programs provide a sort of 'safety-net' so that these registered employers can safely/conveniently provide an emergency ride for those employees now car/vanpooling who normally commute by non-SOV. Finally, RVTD supports parking construction mitigation such as explaining to employers how to reduce the need for employee/customer parking spaces through implementation of company-wide TDM measures (like bicycle parking review and site design).
- D. Promotes transportation options at over 25 events each year and coordinates the annual Car Free Day and Try Transit Week helps establish people-powered fuel stations for employers and school who want to encourage employees/students to try a mode other than SOV. RVTD staff also coordinates events to increase awareness of efficient transportation such as 'Reflect on Walking' and 'Safe Routes to School' programs.

- E. Marketing of TDM through general advertising in various media. Distribution of free materials in the community such as pedestrian/cycling reflectors, brochures, water bottles, and bicycle helmets.
- F. In concert with the Rogue Valley Council of Governments (RVCOG), RVTD staff helps to orchestrate the efforts of the Rogue Valley Transportation Management Association (RVTMA). This association is comprised of local business owners and, among other things, is set with the task of implementing region-wide TDM programs. Currently, the RVTMA is inactive, however, reactivation for this association is expected to occur in the near future. In combination with this program is Government outreach to educate officials about TDM measures including attending meetings to promote the use of TDM measures, and reviewing planning documents and site-design for TDM-supportive policies and infrastructure.
- G. Providing Park and Ride lots throughout the transit service area for accessing transit lines and meeting carpools.
- H. Specialized transportation for people with disabilities service called Valley Lift which transports disabled people throughout the region who cannot otherwise partake of regular transit service due to their disability. A portion of clients utilize Valley Lift to reach their workplace.

## **Conclusion**

The single biggest obstacle to TDM-based efforts at reducing congestion remains the RVMPO's population, or rather, lack thereof. In MPO's with few people (as opposed to L.A. or New York), commuters are not being frustrated enough by local congestion, or associated costs of driving such as parking or tolls, to begin making other travel choices. It is therefore difficult for programs such as RVTD's to be as successful as they could be in urging commuters to find other methods of getting to work.

RVTD operates during the weekdays, during the work hours, and does not provide evening, weekend, or holiday service. This is mostly due to the District not receiving additional funds through the Federal, State or local governments or through regional levies.

Local jurisdictions are adopting new land use standards as TDM programs are becoming more popular due to rising oil costs. One of these new standards is known as transit-oriented development (TOD) which is the practice of approving mixed use developments (residential, commercial, office uses) within ¼ mile of a transit route. These are higher density residential projects wherein parking standards are reduced, people have a higher chance of being able to walk or bicycle to work, and where access to transit routes is made easy due to route proximity and frequency. Currently, there are at least five TODs within RVTD's boundaries. More discussion of this is contained in Technical Memos 1 and 2.