

Executive Summary

This co-op feasibility study was launched by Yellowstone Business Partnership (YBP) at a meeting of committed volunteers and facilitators on July 8, 2009, in West Yellowstone, Montana. Since that inaugural meeting, more than 50 volunteers have been active on the project steering committee and contributed the ideas developed in the study and co-op plan. The six-month, intensive public involvement process produced a wealth of information that supports the final recommendation to form a regional transportation co-op called **Linx**. Linx will offer mobility management services in the Greater Yellowstone region, defined as the 27 counties and four Indian reservations that surround Grand Teton and Yellowstone national parks.

Bannock, ID	Franklin, ID	Park, MT
Bear Lake, ID	Fremont, ID	Park, WY
Beaverhead, MT	Fremont, WY	Stillwater, MT,
Bighorn, WY	Gallatin, MT	Sublette, WY
Bingham, ID	Hot Springs, WY	Sweet Grass, MT
Bonneville, ID	Jefferson, ID	Teton, ID
Carbon, MT	Lincoln, WY	Teton, WY
Caribou, ID	Madison, ID	Washakie, WY
Clark, ID	Madison, MT	Yellowstone, MT
Fort Hall Indian Reservation	Crow Indian Reservation	Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation
Wind River Indian Reservation		

These mobility management services will include online trip planning and ticketing; improved marketing of existing and emerging services; coordination of route schedules and transfer points; innovative technology applications that benefit both transportation operators and their riders; and a centralized location for information on all modes of mobility.

Alternatives to the cooperative business model were studied. None provided the incentive to expand partnerships among all potential stakeholders within the region. The co-op business model will give this project the greatest operating flexibility and opportunity for long-term success.

The need for coordinating services is well documented within the Greater Yellowstone (GY) region. State agencies, consultants, private companies, and community organizations have studied the mobility limitations within this region for more than a decade. Their findings formed the basis for this study. The GY region is not well-connected by public or private transportation services, and many cities lack accessible pathways, sidewalks, and bicycle lanes, all of which restrict travel options for the region's 700,000+ residents and their guests.

While the need for these services is well documented, the actual demand (as measured by the number of consumers willing and able to pay for the services) is not. This study estimates the potential increase

in ridership for each of the 27 counties within the region using Painter & Casavant's TDD-FARE developed for the State of Washington. This model was chosen from several available models because it was the only one that could be broadly applied across the GY region. In addition to estimating ridership potential, the steering committee included a 12-member transportation provider team that assisted in developing co-op services and estimating provider demand. This study proves that there is sufficient provider demand for mobility management services, and that significant increases in ridership can be expected from a well-designed regional transportation system.

Gaps in service have been identified and prioritized. Eliminating these gaps and providing connected service is a key goal of this transportation project. For each prioritized gap, potential provider members have expressed interest in expanding their service to meet this co-op objective.

The Co-op will be organized and developed over the next 12 months. In January, we recommend filing the incorporation papers and holding a founding meeting in West Yellowstone, tentatively set for Tuesday, January 26th. YBP will administer a \$335,000 grant from ITD along with Co-op raised funds during the 2010 pilot year. The plan is to transition from YBP to Co-op staff administration in January 2011 for the second half of the two-year pilot phase.

Within the Greater Yellowstone region, there is a general lack of information about the transportation services that are available. Significant improvement in the availability of mobility resources in the GY region must be made for Linx to be successful. A plan to improve the marketing of existing services is detailed in this study, central to which is the creation of a website to serve as a central clearing house for regional transportation information. In designing the mobility management services to solve the region's transportation challenges, it was apparent that new technology applications needed to be developed. This study outlines the development of a central ticketing and trip planning website that riders will be able to use for trips anywhere in the region. We also have tested a system called "LinxComm" that will allow vehicles to communicate directly with the central server. The benefits from the LinxComm system include online ticketing and remote printing, onboard ticket validation, GPS location information for vehicles that can be made available to both transportation operators and riders, and Wi-Fi service for riders of participating Linx providers.

Recommendation

Yellowstone Business Partnership recommends that a transportation cooperative be organized and custom-designed as a mobility management service provider for the Greater Yellowstone region. The American Public Transportation Association has identified common characteristics of successful mobility management programs, all of which are included in the Linx system design:

- Multi-agency partnerships that can reduce costs through efficient and effective coordination; potential partners include social service agencies, senior programs, non-emergency medical providers and taxi companies
- Customer-driven, market based approaches to transportation that offer a variety of individualized travel options
- Greater use of Information Technology Systems in real time

- The development and implementation of one-stop travel information and trip planning systems
- Coordination of public transportation with infrastructure development and land use policies.

Evidence of regional demand for these services has been documented in this study. Technology applications that will link member systems across state boundaries and offer online ticketing have been proven feasible. Adequate sources of co-op revenue have been identified that will not hinder member operations. Input from all stakeholders has been considered in designing the Linx system, which increases the likelihood of its long-term success. The region's providers are sufficiently interested in co-op investment to warrant moving forward with incorporation. For all these reasons, YBP recommends that the Linx transportation co-op proceed into the planned pilot phase.