

**Title:** A Yellowstone-Teton Regional Transportation System

**Human Need:** There are few if any transportation options beyond private vehicles for travel in the Yellowstone Teton Community. This limitation often causes both residents and visitors to experience high transportation costs and hazardous driving conditions. It restricts access to world class recreation and tourism facilities for both workers and visitors, and it also imposes a burden on permanent residents who need access to regional medical and commercial centers.

**Description of Service:** This service will provide a series of equally accessible alternatives for traveling between transportation hubs throughout the region. The alternatives would encompass private vehicles, secure parking facilities, pathways, and air and surface transit. Achieving this level of service will require new infrastructure and policies that support efficient connections between all modes of transportation in the region.

Skeptics will dismiss this concept as improbable to implement due to the rural nature of the region and dispersed population centers. This skepticism however, does not take into account the leveraging possible from the world class reputation of the natural amenities of the Yellowstone-Teton, the economic engine supported by this natural beauty, and the technological base that can produce efficiencies through a detailed knowledge of who needs to travel and how they want to do it.

Further economies of scale are possible through coordination of employer - employee interests where employers need reliable staffing and employees need cost effective lifestyles where they can both live and work in a community that supports diversity and social equity. Such economies have already been partially demonstrated in Jackson Hole, Wyoming and Big Sky Montana where transit systems and pathways have pushed through traditional barriers to begin to meet these needs.

If this seems improbable in such a disperse and rugged landscape consider the fact that current economic and social interests have already created the first elements of a regional system. Both Teton County, Wyoming and Gallatin County, Montana have built vibrant community transit systems that serve both tourists and residents. Ridership on both systems has increased each year with the Jackson's START system carrying over 700,000 riders in 2007. There are also numerous specialized transit services that serve single employers or single target markets such as weekly or daily ski buses where riders enjoy a social, party-like experience in addition to a ride.

Another key and spontaneously developing element of a regional system are the community pathways that are part of nearly every gateway community of the Y-T: Idaho Fall's Greenbelt; Henry's Fork Greenway; the pathways of Harriman Park, Jackson Hole, and Bozeman; and thousands of miles of forest service and rails-to-trails segments that could be connected to provide a continuous circuit that surrounds the Y-T. These pathways are certainly a source of community recreation and ambiance, but perhaps more importantly they are also a major element of a real transportation alternative. To reach their full potential the pathways need to be physically connected and their access points supported by transit and secure parking for private vehicles.

It is important to understand that the integrated system being described by this scenario is not just a bus system where traditional wisdom dictates high population densities and short headways. It is a fundamentally different system where urban efficiencies are replaced by targeted services made viable through the linkage and marketing of airline service, worker commutes, promotion of world class pathways, and social services for residents.

To make this happen, the scenario proposes the continued development of local services that will ultimately be linked as regional system. To facilitate this development the following principles will be applied:

1. With or without a regional transportation system, highway trust fund revenues will likely continue to decrease with increases in the cost of oil. A new economic model is required that can embrace the efficiencies of a regional, multi-modal system while supporting the long term maintenance of the region's highway infrastructure and private vehicle access.
2. Every community should have a local pathway system that serves both recreational needs as well as access to the workplace.
3. The National Parks are the cornerstone of the region's identity, sustainability, and economy.

Their needs must be addressed by any regional transportation system.

4. Air transit and its development must have as a long term goal easy access to a "carless vacation"
5. Each gateway of the Y-T should have a community gathering place that serves as a transportation hub with access to commercial centers and with room for casual gatherings such as picnics, concerts, and similar social functions.
6. A transportation system that crosses so many jurisdictional boundaries must solve diverse legal and administrative obstacles. In doing so, these solutions will be collected into a toolkit to provide examples to help future projects.
7. An easily accessible information system is an absolute requirement for an effective system, and such a system must serve both local and international users.
8. Economic viability is enhanced if the system load can be more evenly distributed to include "off-season" activity.
9. Worker access to jobs and housing must be humane and supportive of building diverse communities. Ever longer worker commutes are not a sustainable solution for deficient housing policies.