

UCLA

Policy Briefs

Title

Revitalizing Rural Transit in Siskiyou County: Strategic Interventions for Improved Accessibility and Efficiency

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3xq526f6>

Author

Lewis, Mia

Publication Date

2024-07-23

DOI

10.17610/T6V60W

JULY 2024

Revitalizing Rural Transit in Siskiyou County: Strategic Interventions for Improved Accessibility and Efficiency



Mia Lewis, MURP

Issue

Siskiyou County, a rural region of Northern California, faces significant barriers to providing efficient and accessible public transportation service. The county's public transit system, operated by Siskiyou Transit and General Express (STAGE), struggles with low ridership, limited route coverage, and financial constraints. These challenges are exacerbated by the county's large land area, extreme weather conditions, and dispersed population.

Key concerns include:

- **Aging Population:** With a median age of 47.2 years — older than the statewide median of 36.5 years — many residents have increased mobility needs and a greater reliance on public transportation.
- **Tourism and Recreation:** The seasonal influx of tourists, particularly hikers from the Pacific Crest Trail and visitors to Mount Shasta, strains the existing transit system, which is not well-equipped to handle these surges.
- **Economic Constraints:** Limited financial resources hinder the county's ability to invest in and expand the public transit system.
- **Geographic Barriers:** The vast distances between communities and the county's dispersed population make it difficult to provide efficient and cost-effective transit service.

Addressing these issues is crucial for enhancing quality of life for residents and visitors, supporting economic development, and ensuring sustainable transportation solutions.










Study Approach

This study involved a multi-faceted approach to understand and address the transportation challenges in Siskiyou County. First, quantitative data analysis was conducted using Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics data, Google Maps Points of Interest data, and STAGE transit data. This helped identify trends and gaps in the current transit system. Additionally, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with local planners, city officials, and transit professionals to gather qualitative data on the current state of the transit system and inform recommendations. This approach provided a comprehensive understanding of the local transit landscape and ensured that recommendations were grounded in the experiences and expertise of key stakeholders. The researcher also completed a literature review to analyze successful rural transit initiatives, identifying best practices and potential solutions that could be adapted to Siskiyou County's context. This combination of methods ensured a robust and well-rounded approach to addressing transit-related challenges in the region.

Key Findings

- **Transit Accessibility:** There are significant gaps in transit coverage for people accessing lodging, tourist attractions, residential locations, and employment (Figure 1). Only 38% of home locations and 53% of work locations are easily accessible by transit. However, there is high accessibility within a half-mile of STAGE transit lines for schools, shopping centers, government facilities, restaurants, and medical facilities. Shopping centers are the most accessible destination; 97% of them are within a half-mile buffer of a transit stop.

Figure 1. Accessibility to various locations in Siskiyou County by transit

	Total	Within 0.5 Mile Buffer	Accessible By Transit
Schools	36	27	 75%
Shopping	119	115	 97%
Government Facilities	87	72	 83%
Lodging	132	65	 49%
Restaurants	99	90	 91%
Medical Facilities	120	108	 90%
Things to Do	64	16	 25%
Home Locations	1822	697	 38%
Work Locations	601	320	 53%

- **Weather and Climate:** Extreme weather conditions, particularly snow in the winter and heatwaves or wildfires in the summer, significantly impact ridership.
- **Ridership:** Key ridership groups currently include south-north commuters along Interstate 5, tourists, high school and college students, seniors, and unhoused community members.
- **System Accessibility:** Challenges include maintaining a consistent schedule, hiring operators for certain routes, and the lack of a cashless payment system.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, the researcher proposed various strategic interventions for the Siskiyou County Local Transportation Commission.

South County Hub-and-Spoke System

- Establish a central transit hub in Mount Shasta with strategic spoke routes connecting surrounding communities (Yreka, Weed, Dunsmuir, and McCloud).
- Enhance transit infrastructure through covered waiting areas, wayfinding devices, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, and designated pick-up and drop-off zones.

Siskiyou Seasonal Explorer Programs

- Implement seasonal routes to enhance transit options to natural and recreational sites during peak tourist seasons.
- Partner with local tourism boards and businesses to market seasonal routes, offering special discounts or package deals to incentivize transit use.

Partnered and Subsidized Rideshare

- Form partnerships with rideshare companies and local taxi services to extend transportation options into underserved areas.
- Utilize grant opportunities like the Federal Transit Administration’s Section 5310 program to subsidize rideshare and taxi services for the elderly, disabled, and low-income families.

Community Engagement

- Conduct regular workshops and forums with each community in the county to actively involve residents in the transit planning process.
- Develop an ambassador program that engages local volunteers to assist with navigation, promote transit usage, and gather feedback.



Lewis, M. (2024). Revitalizing Rural Transit: Transit Analysis and Recommendations for Siskiyou County, California (Master’s capstone, 2024). Retrieved from: <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2b76k03c>

U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). QuickFacts: Siskiyou County, California.