Yakima County Commute Trip Reduction Four-Year Plan Update: 2025–2029

Washington State has adopted a State Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Law intended to reduce traffic congestion on the state's busiest commute routes. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is responsible for administering the statewide CTR program requirements. The state has adopted regulations and developed transportation demand management strategies for employers and jurisdictions to help meet local performance targets. The following report has been developed based on state requirements, review of local plans and policies, and discussions with local staff and CTR affected employers.

The Yakima Valley Council of Governments (YVCOG) oversees, administers the CTR plan, and manages the reporting requirements for local agencies within the Yakima Valley. Enforcement of CTR requirements for employers are addressed by the local jurisdictions consistent with requirements outlined in the local codes and regulations.

Benefits of CTR

1. **Describe the local land use and transportation context and objectives.**

   a) *Describe the setting in the jurisdiction as it is today or will be in the near future.*

   Yakima County is a predominantly rural area. There is a unique challenge to construct roadways in the County due to the topography including the Yakima River, Naches River, irrigation canals, and general mountainous area including the gap between Yakima and Selah. Key corridors through the County include I-82, SR 821, SR 823, US 12, SR 97, SR 24, and SR 241. City limits within the County are generally adjacent to these corridors. The County's West Valley Neighborhood Plan Area is located west of the City of Yakima. Yakama Nation is also located within the southwest region of the County.

   Sidewalk connectivity outside of the City limits is limited; however, there are a number of trails within the County currently totaling 95 miles. Future plans would double the county trail system available today . Notably, the Yakima Greenway Trail generally follows alongside US-12 and I-82 providing an off-road non-motorized trail connection for both bicycles and pedestrians extending between Union Gap, Yakima, Selah and Naches. Additionally, the proposed Yakama Nation's Heritage Connectivity Trail is woudl provide connectivity between Yakama Nation, Toppenish, Zillah, Wapato, and eventually connect to Fullbright Park within Union Gap which will then provide connectivity proximate to the Greenway trail connecting to Yakima.

   Both People for People (PFP) and Pahto Public Passage currently provide fixed route service within the County. PFP provides a route connecting Yakima and Prosser (Route 200). Pahto Public Passage provides connections between Toppenish, Wapato, Harrah, Union Gap, White Swan and Brownstone. Both transit providers also provide on-demand services within the County. Additionally, there are transit services for each of the cities of Yakima, Union Gap, and Selah. The routes generally concentrate their services within their respective cities; however, there are connections between the transit providers as noted below:
   - Yakima Transit and People for People at the Yakima Transit Center – this provides connectivity to Wapato, Toppenish, Zillah, Granger, Sunnyside, Grandview, and Prosser

- Yakima Transit, Selah Transit, Union Gap Transit, and Pahto Public Passage at the Valley Mall
- Yakima Transit and Selah Transit at the Fred Meyer (west Yakima) and at N 16th Avenue
- Yakima Transit and Union Gap Transit along West Washington Avenue at 10th Avenue and 3rd Avenue.

Additionally, Yakima Transit includes the Yakima Commuter operated by Yakima Transit to/from Ellensburg connecting to Central Washington University (CWU).

There is also an airport located in the southern area of the City of Yakima. Passenger service at this facility is provided by Alaska Airlines with service to/from Seattle (SeaTac). It is anticipated there will be an airport expansion in the future, although timing has not been confirmed.

b) *Describe features of land use and transportation facilities and services that affect commuters.*

Work in the Yakima Valley region is driven by agriculture. Many residents within the County commute to the Lower Valley region and city of Yakima. Commuting within the generally rural County is affected by numerous factors.

- Availability and access to transit - Fixed route transit within the County is provided by PFP and Pahto Public Passage as identified above as well as transit service provided within the respective cities of Yakima, Union Gap, and Selah. Given the rural area, the limited fixed route service can be challenging to be able to specifically connect residents with their place of employment.
- Vanpool - transit services within the County do not provide vanpool services due to high costs to maintain and low utilization.
- Non-motorized - Although there are non-motorized trail options including the Greenway Trail, the distance required for commuters, as well as severe weather (e.g. hot summers and cold winters) provides for challenges to commuters.
- Telecommuting - Given the agricultural focus, many jobs require employees to be in person such that telecommuting is not feasible.

c) *Describe whether and how commuting patterns have changed in the past few years.*

Commuting patterns have been relatively consistent given the agricultural nature of employees and limitations to alternative modes of travel as described above. Open to continued opportunities to gain transit connectivity through existing transit agencies.

d) *List the most important land use and transportation objectives from your city or county's plans that commute trip reduction most directly affects.*

- Encourage urban growth within designated urban growth areas. Infill development, higher density zoning and small lot sizes should be encouraged where services have already been provided and sufficient capacity exists.
- Encourage alternative transportation modes.
  o Collaborate with other service providers to improve transit facilities.
  o Identify opportunities for additional transit facilities as they arise.

- o Support alternative transportation education for County residents.
- o Consider the needs of future transit service when planning transportation projects.
- o Develop a coordinated system for bikeways, walkways and trails, emphasizing route connectivity in conjunction with other jurisdictions.
- o Support land use strategies and site design methods that improve and encourage alternative transportation modes.
- Encourage private-sector development of telecommuting centers in rural and urban areas of Yakima County.
- Make steady improvement in the air quality of the Yakima Valley by reducing dust, odor, auto emissions, smoke, and other contaminants.

e) *Describe critical aspects of land use and transportation that should be sustained and key changes that should be considered to improve commute trip reduction's contribution to the land use and transportation objectives you reference.*

The County has been aligning with its goals by following a complete streets model with roadway sections including sidewalk; however, federally classified roadways limit how much this model can be implemented. Additionally, the County has been partnering with Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to provide Park and Ride facilities and to provide connections to existing facilities.

The County recognizes challenges given the size and associated issues to provide adequate services/routing throughout to reach users (e.g. residents, employers, etc.) The County will look for opportunities to continue to improve and expand its services by completing studies to identify gaps and to look at the potential addition of rail services.

These elements will continue to support and improve commute trip reduction.

2. **Describe how the CTR program will help achieve the jurisdiction's land use and transportation objectives.**

a) *Describe how and to what extent your CTR program will help your city or county achieve the land use and transportation objectives referenced in question 1.*

The County's goal to encourage growth within the urban growth areas, supporting more denser development with greater access to multi-modal networks supports the reduction in drive alone trips by providing alternatives for both employees and local trips in general. The CTR program mutually supports those goals by making higher density housing more desirable to employees when it is paired with access to multi-modal networks.

The CTR program will also encourage the continued coordination between transit operators to provide improved transit options for commuters to travel throughout the County.

3. **Describe how the CTR program will help achieve the jurisdiction's environmental objectives.**

a) *Describe how the CTR program will support jurisdiction greenhouse gas emission reduction efforts.*

The County identifies implementing transportation improvement projects that maintain or improve air

quality and to continue to make steady improvements in the air quality of the Yakima Valley by reducing dust, odor, auto emissions, smoke, and other contaminants.

Each drive-alone trip that converts to an alternative mode (transit, rideshare or a non-motorized), eliminates the greenhouse gas emissions that would have been generated by that drive-alone trip. Additionally, Yakima County is eligible for both federal CMAQ and Carbon Reduction Programs that could support CTR activities.

b) *Describe how the CTR program will support jurisdiction environmental objectives in addition to greenhouse gas emission reductions.*

Each drive-alone trip that converts to an alternative mode (transit, rideshare or a non-motorized), supports the County's goal to implement transportation improvement projects that maintain or improve air quality. Additionally, the County is eligible for both federal CMAQ and Carbon Reduction Programs that could support CTR activities.

4. **Describe how your CTR program will help achieve regional and state objectives.**

   a) *Summarize the local, regional, and state benefits that would be gained if you achieve your CTR targets.*

   The County's Goals as identified in the Comprehensive Plan which are supported by the CTR program include:
   - Encourage urban growth within designated urban growth areas. Infill development, higher density zoning and small lot sizes should be encouraged where services have already been provided and sufficient capacity exists.
   - Provide for an orderly, phased transition from rural to urban uses within the Urban Growth Area.
   - Encourage alternative transportation modes.
     o Collaborate with other service providers to improve transit facilities.
     o Identify opportunities for additional transit facilities as they arise.
     o Support alternative transportation education for County residents.
     o Consider the needs of future transit service when planning transportation projects.
     o Develop a coordinated system for bikeways, walkways and trails, emphasizing route connectivity in conjunction with other jurisdictions.
     o Support land use strategies and site design methods that improve and encourage alternative transportation modes.
   - Promote safety through effective transportation improvements and maintenance operations.
   - Prioritize improvements to facilities that are critical components of inter-modal transportation systems (e.g. roads leading to the airport, rail transfer facilities, etc.).
   - Ensure that adequate access is provided to business and employment centers.
   - Implement transportation improvement projects that maintain or improve air quality.
   - Encourage private-sector development of telecommuting centers in rural and urban areas of Yakima County.
   - Make steady improvement in the air quality of the Yakima Valley by reducing dust, odor, auto emissions, smoke, and other contaminants.

   New outcomes as identified in WSDOT's 2023-2025 State CTR Draft Plan:

- Improve delivery of CTR programs.
- Expand CTR market to address equity.
- Produce more useful transportation behavior data.
- Expand investment and service to advance equity and environmental justice.
- Respond to shifting mobility patterns.
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

These local and statewide goals are benefited through achieving the CTR goals by:

- The preparation of the CTR plans included coordination and conversations with the local jurisdiction, employers, and stakeholders as well as with the broader region and WSDOT providing an opportunity to discuss and improve delivery of the program.
- The state and region both have the goal of reducing environmental impacts. Each commute trip that is shifted to a non-drive alone mode through the County's CTR program reduces environmental impacts such as greenhouse gas emissions.

b) *List adjacent CTR-affected cities and counties.*

Affected cities within the County include Yakima, Union Gap, Moxee, Selah, and Toppenish.

c) *Describe the top few cross-border and regional transportation issues that affect your jurisdiction.*

The Yakima Valley region is a generally rural area driven by agriculture with daily commute patterns extending outside the local jurisdictional boundary. There is an established urban growth area (UGA); however, there are challenges transitioning between the rural and urban populated areas as well as challenges navigating between the city's jurisdictions and the County's jurisdiction. Transit connectivity throughout the region is limited with routes through the County provided by People for People and Pahto Public Passage as well as within the cities of Yakima, Union Gap, and Selah. This poses a challenge for commuting in non-drive alone options as many residents in the County commute to the Lower Valley region and Yakima.

Additional cross-border and regional transportation issues related to alternative modes are identified below.

- There are non-motorized trail options within the western portion of the County including the Greenway Trail, but this does not provide connectivity throughout the region which extends a great distance.
- The movement of freight traffic is critical for the region and relies on I-90 to connect to Western Washington. It is anticipated that with improvements/expansions of the Yakima Airport that there will also be a growth in freight traffic associated with the airport which may result in a shift in travel patterns by providing an improved alternative mode.

d) *Describe the strategies you, adjacent cities and counties, and your region have agreed to use to address the top issues described in the previous bullet.*

The local transit operators are cooperatively meeting and open to transit coordination improvements. Pathways, a non-profit organization, is leading the effort to facilitate the transit coordination between the operators.

The jurisdictions within Yakima County also participate in Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

and Mobilizing Public Access Countywide Transportation Advisory Committee (MPACT) meetings to facilitate coordination and work together as a region.

Additional strategies related to alternative modes are identified below.

- The proposed Yakama Nation's Heritage Connectivity Trail would provide connectivity regionally to Yakama Nation, Toppenish, Zillah, Wapato, and eventually connect to Fullbright Park within Union Gap which will then provide connectivity proximate to the Greenway trail connecting to Yakima.
- There is the potential return of scheduled passenger rail service as well as potential increase of WSDOT Intercity Transit and countywide transit services which would provide increased transit opportunities.
- Planned improvements/expansions of the Yakima Airport may result in increased commercial passenger and freight traffic which may result in a shift in travel patterns with possible increased air ridership and/or may result in increased employment and business growth.

Performance targets

5. **List your jurisdiction's CTR performance target(s).**

    a) *List performance targets that reflect only CTR-affected worksites.*

    Per the WSDOT CTR Guidelines Appendix B, the Drive Alone Rate (DAR) performance target for Yakima County is 60%. This DAR performance target aligns with WSDOT's Option 1, which is consistent with the State's DAR target.

    b) *List any additional performance targets.*

    None

6. **List the base value you'll use for each performance target.**

    a) *For each performance target, provide the number you'll use as the baseline (or starting number). You'll measure the difference between this number and your results to report performance.*

    Performance targets will be tied to the CTR survey. We will establish a base value during the 2023-2025 survey cycle and measure progress using 2025-2027 survey results.

7. **Describe the method you used to determine the base value for each target.**

    a) *Provide the source for each base value listed.*

    Performance targets will be tied to the CTR survey. Base values will be established during the 2023-2025 survey cycle and progress measured using 2025-2027 survey results.

8. **Describe how you'll measure progress toward each target.**

    a) *List the method you'll use to measure progress for each target.*

    Progress will be measured using 2025-2027 survey results.

9. **List your jurisdiction's CTR-affected worksites.**

    a) *List all your CTR-affected sites.*

    CTR affected sites within the County include:
    - Yakima County
    - Borton & Sons Inc
    - Yakima Valley Farmworkers Clinic

10. **List a performance target for each CTR-affected worksite.**

    a) *For any performance targets tied to the CTR survey, indicate that you'll establish performance targets during the 2023-2025 survey cycle.*

    Base year performance targets will be established during the 2023-2025 survey cycle.

11. **List the base value you'll use for each site.**

    a) *For any performance targets tied to the CTR survey, indicate that you'll establish a base value during the 2023-2025 survey cycle.*

    Base values will be established during the 2023-2025 survey cycle

Services and strategies

12. **Describe the services and strategies your jurisdiction will use to achieve CTR targets.**

    In addition to the County's goal to encourage growth within the urban growth areas, supporting more denser development with greater access to multi-modal networks, the following strategies are anticipated to support the County achieving its CTR goal:
    - To work towards greater efficiency and to improve the quality of transit such as reviewing targeted activities and to improve services based on those demands.
    - The local transit operators are cooperatively meeting and open to transit coordination improvements. Pathways, a non-profit organization, is leading the effort to facilitate the transit coordination between the operators.
    - The jurisdictions within Yakima County also participate in TAC and MPACT meetings to facilitate coordination and work together as a region.
    - Supporting YVCOG's "Switch Your Trips" program, encouraging non drive alone trips.

13. **Describe how jurisdiction services and strategies will support CTR-affected employers.**

    By improving transit as well as other alternative mode connections, employers' goals of lowering the drive alone rates are supported.

14. Describe barriers your jurisdiction must address to achieve CTR targets.

   a) *Describe how you'll address these barriers.*

As outlined above, the County is large generally with low density which results in less congestion compared with higher density regions in the state and that paired with limited alternative mode options, and more severe weather conditions results in it being hard to gain support for using alternative modes. Specifically, providing access to transit near a residence or job is limited.

- The County has identified plans to construct additional connectivity including a bridge and trails.
- The County's goals include increasing alternative transportation education for County residents
- The local transit operators are cooperatively meeting and open to transit coordination improvements. Pathways, a non-profit organization, is leading the effort to facilitate the transit coordination between the operators.
- The jurisdictions within Yakima County also participate in TAC and MPACT meetings to facilitate coordination and work together as a region.

15. Describe the transportation demand management technologies your jurisdiction plans to use to deliver CTR services and strategies.

- Supporting YVCOG's "Switch Your Trips" program, encouraging non drive alone trips.
- Implementing an internet for all program that increases access to internet and supports employees being able to work from home.
- Work with transit agencies to identify technology enhancements that can increase ridership (i.e. arrival times, etc.)

16. Transcribe or link to your local CTR ordinance.

Yakima County Municipal Code 9.60

17. Describe your financial plan.
   a) *Describe the estimated average annual costs of your plan.*

The CTR is managed by YVCOG on behalf of the County.

   b) *Describe likely funding sources, public and private, to implement your plan.*

The CTR is managed by YVCOG on behalf of the County.

18. Describe your implementation structure.

   a) *Describe who will conduct the activities listed in your plan.*

The CTR is managed by YVCOG on behalf of the County.

   b) *Indicate who will monitor progress on your plan. List job title, department, and name.*

The CTR is managed by YVCOG on behalf of the County. Geoff Wagner (CTR Coordinator) at YVCOG manages the CTR process on behalf of the County.

The Transportation Coordinator for Yakima County's own CTR program will be managed by Jamie Roettger, the CTR Coordinator.

19. List your implementation schedule.

a) Provide the timeline for anticipated projects.

The CTR is managed by YVCOG on behalf of the County. YVCOG has identified the following activities and anticipated frequency of those activities as summarized in the table below.

YVCOG Activity	Frequency
a. Identify Worksites and Employee Transportation Coordinators.	Annually
b. Engage and Train Employee Transportation Coordinators.	Annually
c. Support Distribution of Information About Transportation Options to Commuters	Annually (minimum), or as new local/state opportunities allow.
d. Enable Incentives, Subsidies, and Disincentives.	Annually
e. CTR Plans and support Code Updates	2025. *Anticipate next update in 2029*
f. Performance Reporting	Biennially

20. Describe the CTR plan for jurisdiction employees.

a) Describe the services, programs, information, and other actions your city or county put in place to help its employees reduce their drive alone commute trips.

As identified per Yakima County Municipal Code 9.60., required elements for affected employers and for the County's CTR plan include:

1. The employer shall designate an employee transportation coordinator (ETC) to administer the CTR program. The coordinator's name, title, address, location and telephone number must be displayed prominently at each worksite. The ETC shall oversee all elements of the employer's CTR program and act as liaison between the employer and the county.

2. Information Distribution. Information about alternatives to single-occupant vehicle commuting shall be provided to employees at least once in each consecutive twelve-month period. Each employer's program description and annual report must indicate the information to be distributed and the method of distribution.

3. Annual Progress Report. The CTR program shall include an annual review of employee commuting and of progress toward meeting CTR Plan goals. Affected employers shall file an annual progress report with the director in accordance with the CTR Plan.

21. Describe how the CTR plan for jurisdiction employees contributes to the success of the overall plan.

a) Describe how the plan for jurisdiction employees reinforces the success of the jurisdiction plan?

The County, consistent with affected employers within the County are participating in the program, which supports employers involvement in the program given the County is held to the same CTR goals. Also, the established transportation coordinators at the County and affected employers allows for additional coordination opportunities to help facilitate continued progress toward meeting the CTR goal.

Alignment with plans

22. List the transit agencies that provide service in your jurisdiction.
- People for People
- Pahto Public Passage
- Yakima Transit
- Selah Transit
- Union Gap Transit

23. List the transit plans you reviewed while developing this plan.
- Yakima Transit, Transit Development Plan (TDP)
- Selah Transit
- Union Gap Transit

24. Describe how this CTR plan supports the transit plans.

Providing employees with incentives to take transit can increase ridership which in turn can raise the profile of and social support for public transit.

25. Describe any comprehensive plan updates that are needed and when they will be made.

Comprehensive plan updates have recently begun and specific changes have not yet been identified. The updated plan is anticipated to be completed in 2026.

Engagement

26. Describe stakeholder engagement.

a) Who did you talk to?

Coordination meetings with Yakima County, adjacent jurisdictions, YVCOG, and local transit agencies. Additional meetings were held with the MPACT and YVCOG TAC groups. Additionally, surveys were conducted for MPACT members and employers of affected worksites.

Public outreach workshops were conducted at the Yakima Transit Center and the Valley Mall bus stop.

b) When did you talk to them?

Meetings were conducted as follows:
- MPACT members - 9/25/2024
- City of Union Gap - 10/7/2024

- YVCOG TAC Group - 10/10/2024
- Yakima Transit - 8/22/2022 and 10/3/2024
- Selah Transit - 7/20/2022
- People for People - 6/28/2022 and 10/3/2024
- Pahto Public Passage - 7/13/2022 and 10/30/2024
- Medstar - 7/20/2022
- Protran East - 6/29/2022
- Entrust Community Services - 7/27/2022

September 26, 2024 and October 2, 2024 surveys were sent to MPACT members and employers, respectively and a reminder to complete the surveys was completed on October 14, 2024.

Public engagement workshops were held on 9/1/2022 and 11/15/2022

c) *What did they have to say?*

The meetings allowed for discussion of the existing conditions, transportation and land use conditions, use and barriers of the CTR program, and what is planned.

The employer surveys allowed for input regarding what is working well for their worksite and employees as well as identify barriers they have relative to employees using the program.

The MPACT survey identified their target population/focus group, identify programs that are effective, programs that not effective, barriers to non drive alone trips, and recommendations on what programs could be added to provide reductions to drive alone rates.

The 2 public engagement events were as follows:
- The first event was to introduce the project to residents and gain insight from passengers on how transit is used today and how transit can be improved in the future. Feedback identified interest in extended service hours and more frequent service, more benches and amenities at bus stops, and challenges related to transfers and infrequent service.
- The second event was to share the findings and recommendations of the Yakima Valley Transit Study and get any additional feedback. Those who attended were generally in agreement with the findings and supportive of the study recommendations that are outlined within this report.

d) *How did what they said influence the plan?*

The feedback from the engagement meetings and surveys is incorporated above particularly in identifying the barriers and ideas to continue improve access for employees to use the program.

27. Describe vulnerable populations considered.
- Entrust Community Services - People with disabilities
- People for people - Individuals with special transportation needs
- Protran East/VGA Professional Services, Inc. - Non Emergent Medical Transportation, those who have no access to long distance medical transportation services. Low income, Veterans and Seniors.
- Asian Pacific Islander Coalition of Yakima - BIPOC and Asian communities

- Yakama Nation and Pahto Public Passage
- Medstar

28. Describe engagement focused on vulnerable populations.

a) Who did you talk to?

Entrust Community Services, People for people, Protran East/VGA Professional Services, Inc., Asian Pacific Islander Coalition of Yakima, Yakama Nation and Pahto Public Passage, and Medstar

b) When did you talk to them?

Responses to the MPACT surveys, meetings, and public engagement. See response to 26b above.

c) What did they have to say?

The groups generally consistently identified the following:
- Effective programs - Shared rides, long distance shuttle services, work from home options, and public transportation such as bus, shuttle, etc. People For People provides these services and also specifically includes Community Connector and paratransit services. Also, specifically fixed bus routes that run both directions on route and have intervals 1/2 hour or less.
- Not effective services: Single one way routes that do not serve all adjoining communities equally, Carpooling as there is a lack of common schedule and destination/origin.
- Barriers to non-drive alone trips: the lack of coverage area outside of fixed route systems, Lack of safe pedestrian access with rural roads without shoulders and sidewalks or for individuals who cannot walk long distances to reach transit, Length of routes and long time duration between buses that prohibit people from actually reaching destinations without exhausting planning
- Opportunities for improvements: expanding bus routes, Safe pedestrian access, Locate high population resident area to business areas and include large companies that have over 100 employees requiring access regardless of being located in city or non incorporated city areas where employers s have moved out of cities have majority single occupant vehicles due to complete lack of service to all industrial exporting employers
- Additional feedback received from Asian Pacific Islander Coalition of Yakima was that all areas should have equal access to DSHS and unemployment services for all of city of Yakima

d) How did what they said influence the plan?

The feedback received was incorporated into the identified barriers and recommended changes above.

29. List employers' suggestions to make CTR more effective.

Employer responses were minimal. Employers that did respond indicated there are numerous barriers to employees using non-drive alone options, including:
- Need car for family obligations on the way to/from work
- Lack of transit service
- Alternative commute options take too much time
- Personal safety

- Need my car during the day
- Need my car to get home in case of emergency

However, methods used at sites to promote the CTR program have included promoting the alternative mode options and providing preferred parking for carpoolers.

30. Describe results of engagement focused on vulnerable populations that will be provided for use in comprehensive plan and transit plan updates.

The updates to the plans are beginning at this time and this feedback will be considered and incorporated as possible such as identifying a new or revision to goals or policies.

Regional transportation planning organization CTR plan review

RTPO comments

The CTR plan was developed by the YVCOG in coordination with the Yakima County staff. As such, this local jurisdictional plan is consistent with the regional CTR plan.