

Yakima Valley Conference of Governments (YVCOG) 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.

Performance targets

1. List your region's CTR performance target(s).

Per the WSDOT CTR Guidelines Appendix B, the Drive Alone Rate (DAR) performance target for the cities within the YVCOG are as follows. Note that these targets align with performance targets Option 2.

- City of Moxee = 64% DAR performance target
- City of Selah = 69% DAR performance target
- City of Toppenish = 68% DAR performance target
- City of Union Gap = 72% DAR performance target
- City of Yakima = 73% DAR performance target

Additionally, Yakima County has a 60% DAR performance target, aligning with WSDOT's Option 1, consistent with the state's goal.

2. List the base value you'll use for each performance target (if applicable).

Performance targets will be tied to the 2023-2025 CTR survey cycle and measure progress using 2025-2027 survey results.

3. Describe the method you used to determine the base value for each target (if applicable).

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

4. Describe how you'll measure progress toward each target.

Progress will be measured using 2025-2027 CTR survey results.

Strategies for achieving targets

5. Describe the services and strategies your region will use to achieve CTR performance targets.

Transit enhancements are a high priority for the Yakima Valley region to decrease SOV trips and alleviate congestion along critical corridors including improved transit connections between neighboring transit service areas. 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. YVCOG will continue to support coordination between operators to work toward a more cohesive transit system within YVCOG and less compartmentalized.

YVCOG has completed Phase I of their Transit Feasibility Study. This study identified current transit funding, equipment and operational resources and how those resources can be better utilized to address current and future public transportation needs and gaps; and identify applicable mobility strategies, which may be implemented over time. Phase II is scheduled to start in Q1 of 2025. This study will assess existing infrastructure, facilities, ridership, and services available in the region. The scope of the Phase II analysis will thoroughly investigate measures to improve existing services, intercity cooperation, administrative consolidation, and identify (and potentially fill) gaps in transportation services within existing regional budget constraints. The Phase II study will lay the groundwork for “Phase III”, which will examine new funding opportunities, strategies, and mechanisms may expand transit accessibility throughout the region. The efforts of the transit feasibility studies are to enhance and improve transit throughout the region which directly supports and facilitates achieving CTR performance targets in the region.

The jurisdictions within Yakima County also participate in TAC and MPACT meetings to facilitate coordination and work together as a region.

Additionally, the following strategies are inherent in our traditional CTR program and shall continue to be utilized:

- *Employer outreach*: Employer outreach is accomplished by YVCOG through training, promotions, CTR affected employer identification, program reviews with CTR affected employers, etc.
- *Area wide promotions*: Regional promotion of the Washington State Rideshare Organization (WSRO) sponsored event now called “Switch Your Trips”. This promotion is typically held once a year in the fall. YVCOG also promotes rideshareonline.com and Bike to Work Month campaigns.
- *Transit pass discounts*: Encourage employers to offer transit passes to their employees when deemed appropriate.
- *Parking cash-out programs*: Parking is for the most part free and unconstrained. Therefore, parking cash-out programs have not been deemed effective. The parking situation will be periodically re-evaluated and parking cash-out programs will be encouraged if warranted in the future.
- *Carpool subsidies*: Some CTR affected employers offer carpool subsidies or incentives to their employees who choose to carpool. All employers are encouraged, when reasonable, to offer carpool subsidies or incentives.
- *Parking charges and discounts*: Employers are encouraged to develop parking management policies which traditionally reduce drive alone rates; these strategies include increased parking fees, discounted parking fees for HOV, etc.
- *Preferential parking*: Employers are encouraged to provide preferential parking opportunities to

those employees that use alternative modes to SOV.

- *Flexible work schedules:* Employers are encouraged to allow their employees flexible work schedules such as compressed work week schedules (such as 4/40 or 9/80) to move their commute outside of the peak commuting hours.
- *Telework and satellite worksites:* Employers are encouraged to allow select employees to work from home or a closer worksite in order to reduce VMT and drive alone trips during peak commute hours
- *Individualized marketing programs:* This program expands education efforts to CTR affected employees about alternative commuting options including workshops, information brochures, and advertising.
- *Neighborhood social marketing programs:* This program expands education efforts to the community at large regarding alternative commuting options including workshops, information brochures, advertising and liaison with local news outlets as well as community groups.
- *Bicycling infrastructure:* Encourage employers and jurisdictions to provide ample secure bicycle lockdown facilities, shower facilities, and ample gear lockers to encourage bicyclists to ride to work.

Yakima Valley Conference of Governments Draft Commute Trip Reduction Administrative Workplan has identified a number of activities. The activity and frequency in which these are anticipated to occur is shown in the table below. Note that the identified frequency is subject to change based on the needs of the jurisdictions.

<u>YVCOG Activity</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
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

6. Describe the regional transportation demand management technologies that will be used to deliver CTR services and strategies.

- Formalize a centralized repository for transit services and develop a public-facing website
- Supporting the Washington State "Switch Your Trips" program, encouraging non drive alone trips.
- Consider local incentive programs focusing on regional facilities and infrastructure during the spring and summer months.

Financial plan

7. Describe your financial plan.

YVCOG's CTR Program funding is a state originated and authorized through a state contract in accordance with a WSDOT approved CTR Work Plan. State funding is passed through WSDOT and is used to carry out the region's CTR planning program. All products generated as an outcome of the work program may be shared with YVCOG's affected stakeholders. The planning efforts will be carried out by YVCOG staff in accordance with the UPWP.

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is developed locally, then submitted for state and federal approval in the third quarter of each state fiscal year for implementation at the beginning of the next state fiscal year. The purpose of this combined YVCOG UPWP is to identify and describe transportation planning activities that will take place throughout the Yakima Metropolitan area and the Yakima Valley RTPO planning area during the next two State Fiscal Years.

The annual UPWP is a required statement of how state and federal funds will be used by the YVCOG for transportation planning purposes. YVCOG will update bi-annually and operate under a two-year UPWP unless in future years the option of operating under a one-year UPWP is chosen. The UPWP is based on state and federal transportation planning requirements, regional priorities, and bi-annual emphasis areas. The intent of the work program is to provide an overview of general work elements, anticipated work products, and an estimated budget for the upcoming State Fiscal Years.

Engagement

8. Describe engagement.

a) Who did you talk to?

Coordination meetings with CTR affected cities including cities of Yakima, Toppenish, Union Gap, Moxee, and Selah as well as Yakima County, 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 as part of the previous Transit Feasibility project.

b) When did you talk to them? What did they have to say? How did what they said influence the plan?

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 11/5/2024

- 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, transit availability and coordination between agencies including the Pahto Public Passage, and future plans.

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. Limited participation was received from area employers. Feedback from the employers focused primarily on the use of transit was slow due to availability of the routes, regional coordination, and lack of congestion to drive employees to alternate routes.

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.

9. Describe vulnerable populations considered and how you engaged them. Who did you talk to? When did you talk to them?

- 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 Tribal Transit
- Medstar

Responses to the MPACT surveys, meetings, and public engagement. See response to 8b above.

10. Describe results of engagement focused on vulnerable populations. What did they have to say? How did what they said influence the regional CTR plan?

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. Additionally, Pahto Public Passage's service which connects with Yakima Transit has coordinated its service times to allow for connections between the agencies for riders. 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 and coordination between agencies, 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 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

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

11. List the results of your engagement, including results from vulnerable populations, that will be provided for consideration in the state CTR and public transportation plan; regional growth, economic and transportation plans; and 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.