

# Salem Willamette River Crossing Alternate Modes Study: Summary of Obstacles to Alternate Mode Use

PREPARED FOR: Salem Willamette River Crossing Alternate Modes Study  
Stakeholder Advisory Committee

PREPARED BY: Kristina Evanoff/CH2M HILL  
Theresa Carr/CH2M HILL

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Three Willamette River bridge crossings currently exist in Salem – the Marion Street Bridge (westbound OR 22), the Center Street Bridge (eastbound OR 22), and the Union Street Bridge (bicycle/pedestrian only). These crossings are the only connections for West Salem residents that regularly access downtown Salem for work, health care, shopping, or errands. The two OR 22 structures primarily serve automobiles, with a predominant use by single-occupant vehicles (SOV). The Union Street Bridge is constrained by poor connections for bicyclists and pedestrians on either side of the river. A new or reconstructed bridge (the Salem River Crossing Project) is being evaluated with a possible opening date of 2015. Cross sections for the potential new bridge include two travel lanes, bicycle lanes and sidewalks on both sides of the structure.

Modeshare data available from the U.S. Census Bureau for West Salem is provided below.

## MODE OF TRANSPORTATION TO WORK (BY RESIDENCE)

Mode	West Salem Residents (Percent)	Salem Total Residents (Percent)
Drive Alone	75.1	73.6
Carpool/Vanpool	14.3	15.1
Transit	1.6	2.7
Bicycle/Walk	3	3.6
Other	0.6	0.9
Work at Home	5.4	4.2

Source: CTPP 2000, Table 1-013

The information above indicates that residents of West Salem are more likely than residents elsewhere in Salem to drive alone or work at home. They are less likely to car/vanpool with others, ride transit, bicycle, or walk.

Several key areas have been identified as important to individual mode choice. These areas were identified through interviews with key stakeholders, a review of available information, and a conversation with the project's advisory committee. They are described in deficiency

form below, and serve as a basis for Technical Memorandum #3 Evaluation Framework. They will be central to the project's ability to achieve the modal target of a minimum eight percent shift away from the SOV<sup>1</sup> in the future (2031) peak hour.

- **Travel Time.** The average driving commute time in Salem, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, is 20 minutes. The short average commute time by car makes it difficult for other modes to compete. Average commute times via transit (service frequency, stops, transfers), bicycling (topography, fragmented network), and walking (travel speed) are higher, and the differential in travel times is perceived to be substantial for most trips.
- **Natural features.** The decision to take a walk or bicycle trip can be influenced by the environment where that trip is taken. The topography in West Salem is hilly and serves as a barrier to residents who see bicycling as too strenuous. Walking or bicycling trips along certain streets in Salem are considered "pleasant" because of streetscapes, speeds, or traffic volumes. However, other facilities are located along busy streets, through areas with real or perceived safety concerns, or areas where facilities end abruptly.
- **Safety.** The Union Street Bridge (a primary off-street bicycle/pedestrian facility) crosses high volume, sometimes one-way roads at mid-block or at unsignalized intersections, creating a potentially unsafe environment for bicyclists. Diagonal parking in downtown presents a potentially unsafe environment for both bicyclists and pedestrians. Real or perceived security concerns exist at underutilized park-and-ride locations.
- **Flexibility.** Transit and car/vanpools can be viewed as inflexible compared to the auto. Transit, for example, serves a fixed route at designated times. Outside the peak hour, service can be infrequent or nonexistent meaning either that the rider's schedule becomes constrained, wait times increase, or the mode becomes infeasible. Prospective carpool participants can be uncomfortable with start and end times that must work for other participants. Schedule changes can make the commute more difficult.
- **Limited knowledge/experience.** Awareness about non-SOV modes of travel is deficient. Some major employers were unaware of Cherriots rideshare program. In addition, there is a hurdle associated with trying something new – there is an investment (transit pass, bicycle lock, comfortable backpack) involved, trial and error on commute start/end times, and sometimes even physical training. Non-SOV modes of travel are not marketed adequately to encourage new users to "try it" and get beyond these barriers.
- **Quality of Service.** With the reduction in Cherriot's operations, the transit service between downtown Salem and areas west is not ideal. Stakeholders voiced a desire for frequent, reliable service – service that runs on schedule and if one bus is missed another one comes along quickly. Trips to and from Dallas, Monmouth, and Independence are difficult due to infrequent transit schedules to and from these locations.
- **Cost.** Employer parking programs encourage long-term unlimited parking usage by offering spaces on a monthly basis to employees and by offering the most convenient parking spots to longtime participants in employee parking programs. Some major employers offer free off-street parking for employees. Free or subsidized parking can make the out-of-pocket costs for some alternate modes higher than driving.

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<sup>1</sup> Eight percent of river crossings in Salem during the future (Year 2031) peak traffic hour.