

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

This is the *Intercity and Rural-to-Urban Public Transportation Network Plan Final Report*, which documents the analysis, policy recommendations, and proposed program developed for the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Public Transportation and Commute Options Office. This project focused on the development of policies and projects as part of a plan to support a network of transportation services to link cities and towns throughout the State, connect various modes (intercity bus, intercity passenger rail, commercial air service, ferry service, and airport services), and connect rural areas and small towns to this network.

The plan includes an analysis of the existing network, a comparison of its services with the location of places with higher potential levels of need, and the identification of unserved locations. An outreach component solicited input from stakeholders through a website survey, telephone interviews, and on-site interviews with providers and planners across the State. The results of that process are also documented, and directions for expanded services identified.

The study also included a comprehensive examination of federal and state policies related to intercity bus transportation. Although the State may not have direct ownership or control over the various public and private transportation providers operating throughout Washington, it is the policy of the WSDOT to support and facilitate the integration of such services into a coordinated system linked by intermodal facilities. A key recommendation of the study is that the State should be recognized as the appropriate jurisdiction to act as grantee for intercity transportation projects, rather than local cities, counties, and regions.

The study process developed an alternative way to utilize funding provided under S. 5311(f), the program of rural intercity transportation assistance under the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), using the value of the capital in the connecting unsubsidized intercity services as “in-kind” match for operating assistance for rural intercity projects. The study demonstrates how this funding approach can be used to fund key rural intercity services with a minimum of local match funding, utilizing the available S.5311(f) funding. These projects are

then combined into a program of projects that is fundable with the anticipated level of S.5311(f) funding over the next five years.

DEFINITION OF “INTERCITY”

In a policy sense, the WSDOT should be considering the “intercity” needs of the State in a broad sense, including both the services operated by private for-profit firms without any federal, state, or local operating or capital assistance, and the services operated with federal, state, or local operating or capital assistance, whether by private for-profit firms, private non-profit agencies, or public transit entities (including Public Transit Benefit Areas (PTBA) and other entities). Thus the intercity network, broadly defined, includes:

- Services provided by private for-profit firms that are regulated primarily by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) (in terms of registration, insurance, and safety records), and are participants in the national intercity bus network that is based on the interline ticketing system known as the National Bus Traffic Association (NBTA). This is primarily Greyhound Lines and Northwestern Trailways, and is what we think of as traditional “intercity bus” services.
- Services provided by public transit grant recipients that have a “meaningful” connection to the network described above. In Washington this includes three sub-groups:
 - Public transit systems that receive S.5307, S.5311, or S.5309 funding, and operate one or more services that offers patrons the capability of making a physical connection to the services operated by the traditional intercity bus firms **at points outside their service areas (PTBAs or jurisdictions otherwise defined)**. For example, Grays Harbor Transit operates a route that extends outside their PTBA into Thurston County to connect with Greyhound services at the Greyhound station in Olympia.
 - Public transit systems, private non-profit agencies, or private for-profit firms that receive S.5311(f) rural intercity bus assistance to provide service within rural areas (between points of less than 50,000 population) or from rural areas into Urbanized areas, making a meaningful connection with the national intercity bus network.
 - Public transit systems offering service to points outside their service area through the use of transfers and scheduled “end-to-end” routes, in which a patron can travel outside of the transit operators service area by requesting a transfer, deboarding the bus of one agency at the end of a route (which is at the border of the service area), and then boarding the bus of another transit operator for onward travel. An example of this type of service might be the connections offered by Jefferson Transit to Clallam Transit, which would allow a passenger to travel from Port Townsend to Sequim.

- Services provided by “Auto Transportation Companies (Regular Route/Airporter Bus Services)” regulated by the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC). The WUTC defines these carriers as offering intrastate service in Washington, transporting persons for compensation, between fixed points, or over a regular route. The WUTC regulations do not apply to passenger carriers operating only within an incorporated city (and the immediate zone around it), to taxicabs, to hotel or school buses, to commuter ride sharing, or to transporting passengers without compensation. At this point in time, these are primarily carriers offering scheduled service to airports, such as Bellair Charters or Central Washington Airporter.
- Bus services operated by or in conjunction with Amtrak intercity rail passenger services (Amtrak Thruway), shown in Amtrak schedules.

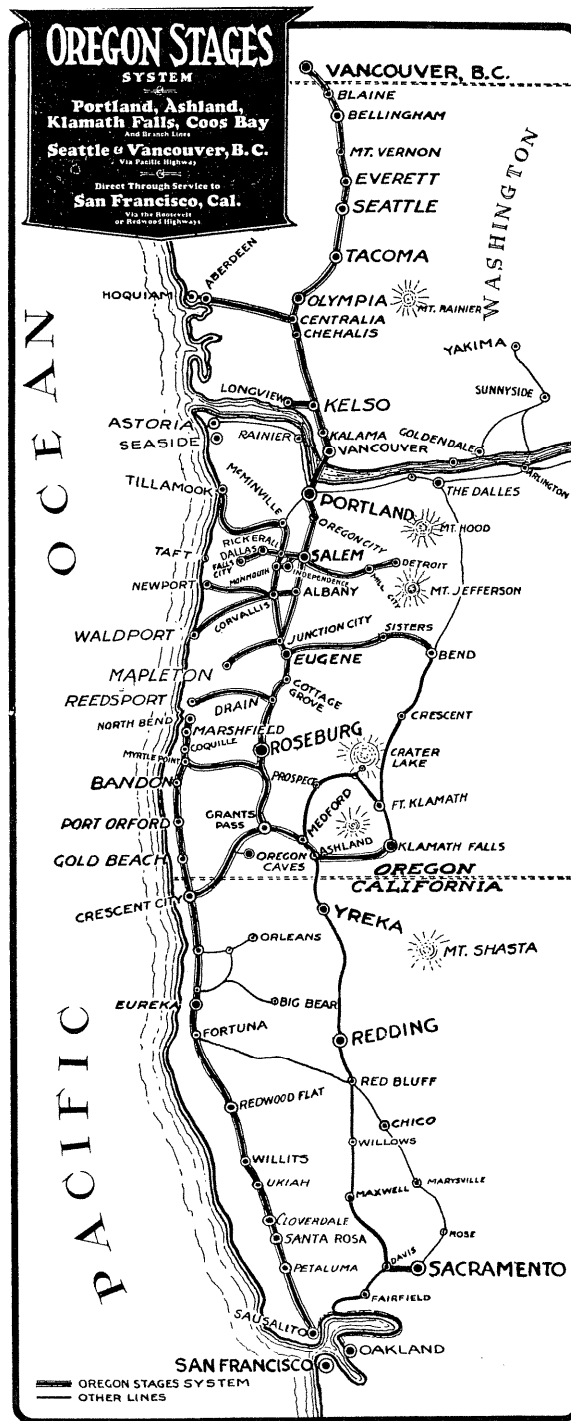
Clearly, this is a broad network, though it should be noted that it excludes a lot of publicly-available transit services, some of which operate lengthy routes between urbanized areas or between urbanized areas and non-urbanized areas. It does not include any public transit services that operate completely within the service area of the provider, even though the routes may be long, and many municipalities may be connected. For example, Sound Transit services could be seen as intercity, but in this definition they would not be included because they are entirely within a service district. In addition, WUTC-regulated demand-responsive airporter services are not included. The network described above is one that WSDOT should be monitoring, should be capable of providing information about, and should support where it can, given the limitations of various funding programs. The network described above is the network of policy concern for WSDOT. However, in funding terms there are much narrower segments to which different kinds of funding may be applied.

HISTORICAL SERVICE COVERAGE

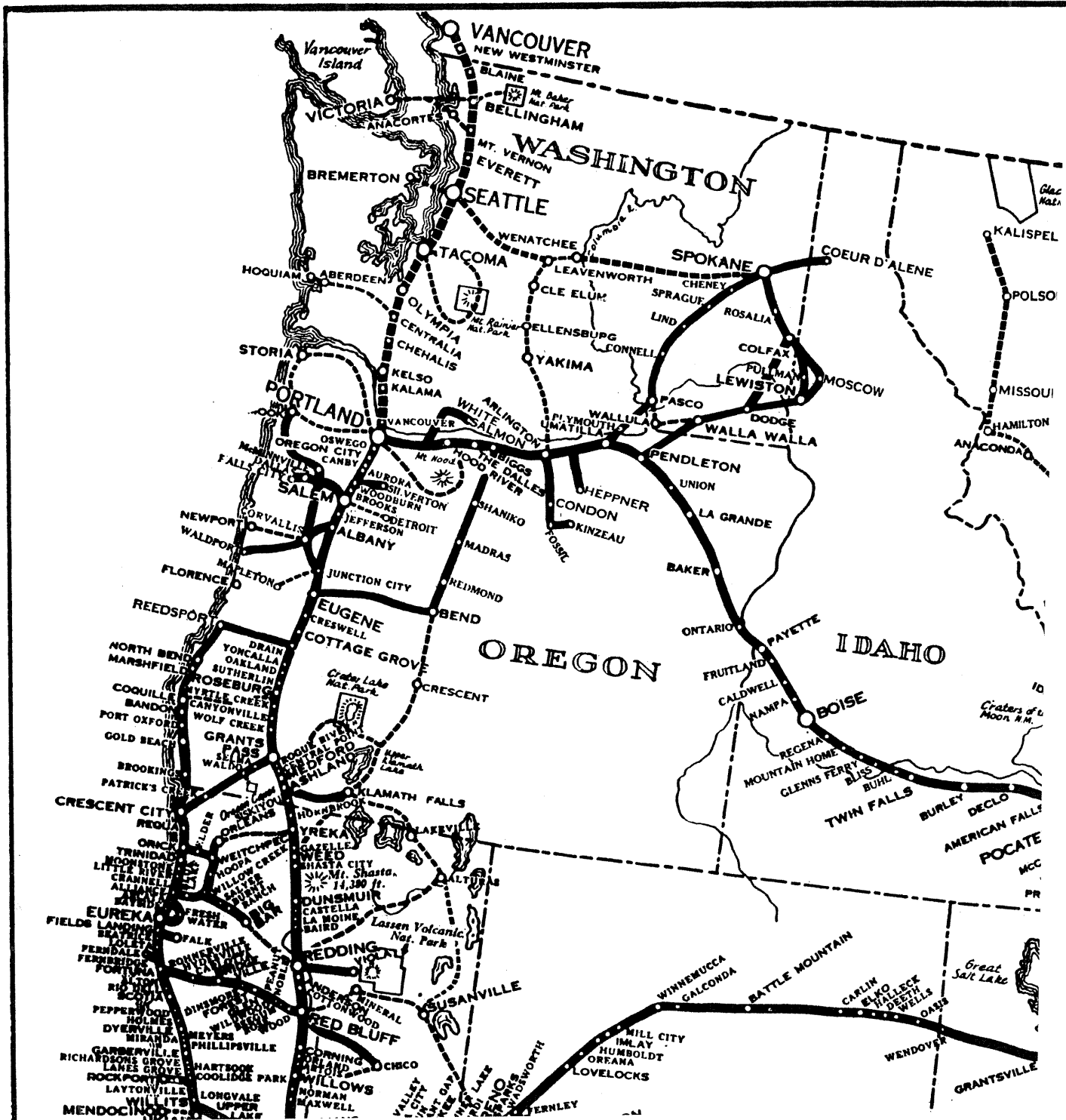
In addition to looking at demographics and the location of potential key destinations, another way of looking at the potential need for funding or policy changes to improve intercity service is to look back in time to see what cities and routes had service when ridership on the bus was higher, and operating costs were lower. Places that formerly received service might be candidates for some type of subsidized service, whether it is re-instatement of regular-route intercity bus service, or some type of feeder or regional service.

Just to illustrate the early development of the intercity bus network in Washington State, Exhibit 1-1 presents a copy of a 1927 route map of Oregon Stages, which later became part of Greyhound. It reflects the early demand for service in what is now called the I-5 corridor, though it also shows services from Kelso to Longview, and at Goldendale and Sunnyside. Exhibit 1-2 presents a portion of the 1930 Greyhound-Pickwick national intercity bus network map, showing most of Washington State served by connecting carriers. The basic route network, however, is quite similar to the current day in terms of the routes, though some of the points served in 1930 are now bypassed.

EXHIBIT 1-1



Source: Motor Bus Society, *Motor Coach Age*, "Over Oregon Trails", April 1978, p. 7.



Source: Motor Bus Society, *Motor Coach Age*, January-February, 1992, p. 16.

Perhaps more relevant is the State of Washington’s intercity bus network just prior to the federal deregulation embodied in the Bus Regulatory Reform Act of 1982. Figure 1-1 is a map of the intercity bus network from the 1982 Russell’s Guide. Compare it to the map in Figure 1-2 to see the coverage that has been lost over the past 24 years. In general terms, the greatest coverage losses have been in the northeastern corner and the southeastern corners of the State—areas of very small towns and low population density.

In terms of the population that would be served (2000 population) if that network were still in place, Table 1-1 shows that the 1982 network would serve 93 percent of the State’s population within ten miles of a stop, while the actual 2005 network has only 76 percent of the State’s population within ten miles of a stop. (It is not known at this time how many of these 1982 service points are now served by public transit in place of intercity providers). However, if the service area is considered to be the 25 mile radius from a stop, then the change in coverage is much more limited, declining from 99 percent to 97 percent. This suggests that many people must go further to reach an intercity bus stop, suggesting a potential increase in the role for local or regional transit to service those without auto access.

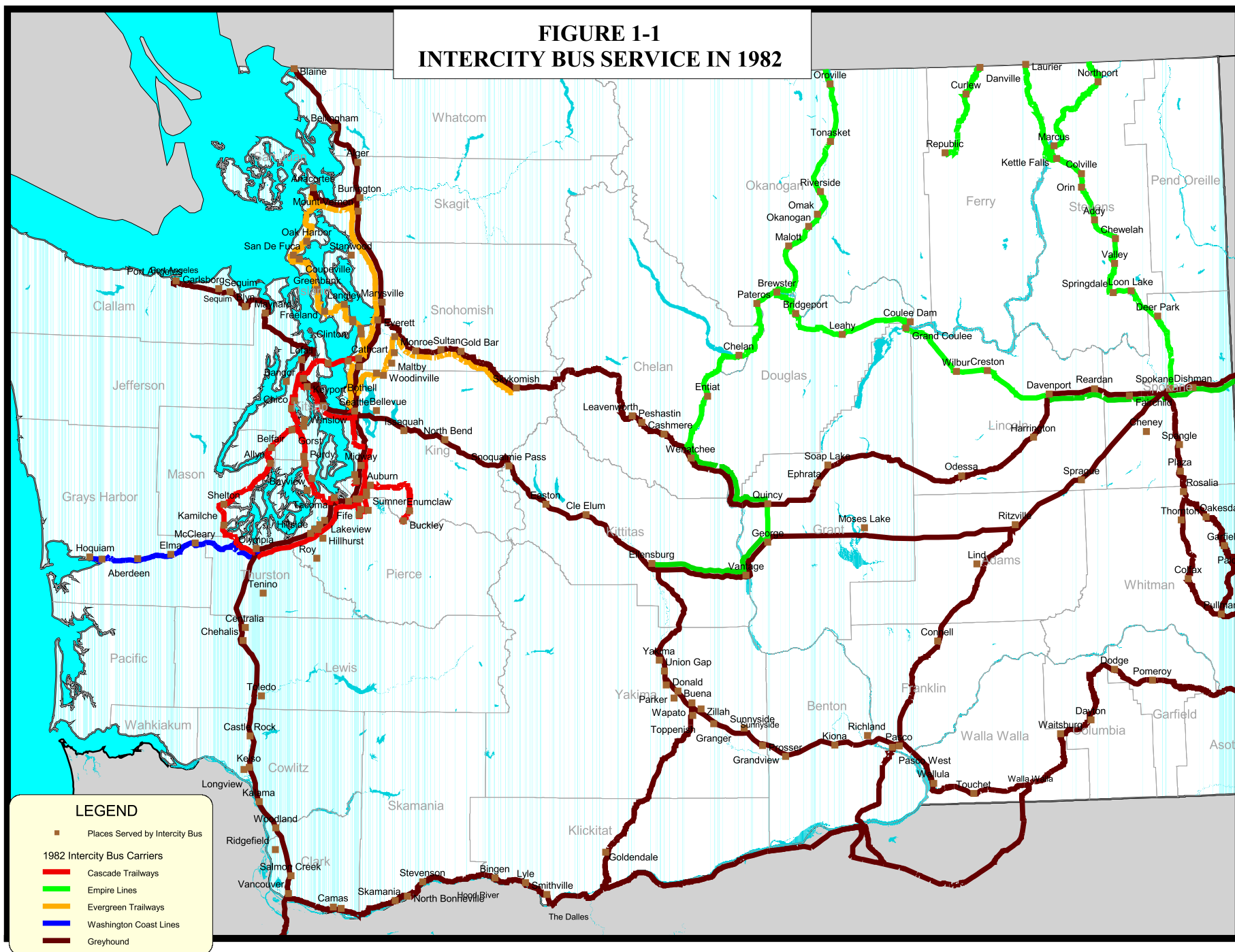
**Table 1-1: POPULATION SERVED BY INTERCITY BUS:
1982 NETWORK VS. 2005 NETWORK**

Service Coverage Area	Population Served				Percentage Change
	1982 Network		2005 Network		
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	
10-Mile Contiguous Buffer	5,479,111	93%	4,464,816	76%	-17%
25-Mile Contiguous Buffer	5,846,461	99%	5,737,044	97%	-2

Note: Analysis is based on applying the service levels in 2000 and 1982 with the Census 2000 population figure of 5,902,642.

This look back suggests some possibilities for considering state-level policies, and for considering the development of rural to urban and rural transit options in parts of the State that appear to have lost all coverage. It also supports the notion of developing projects that would serve small towns along existing routes that are now bypassed by express services, such as the Yakima-Prosser Connector now in place. However, it is true that the private firms, responding to market forces, did not find enough demand to warrant continuation of these services, and a careful look at the potential demand and appropriate service type/provider would be needed before simply reinstating any of this service with public assistance.

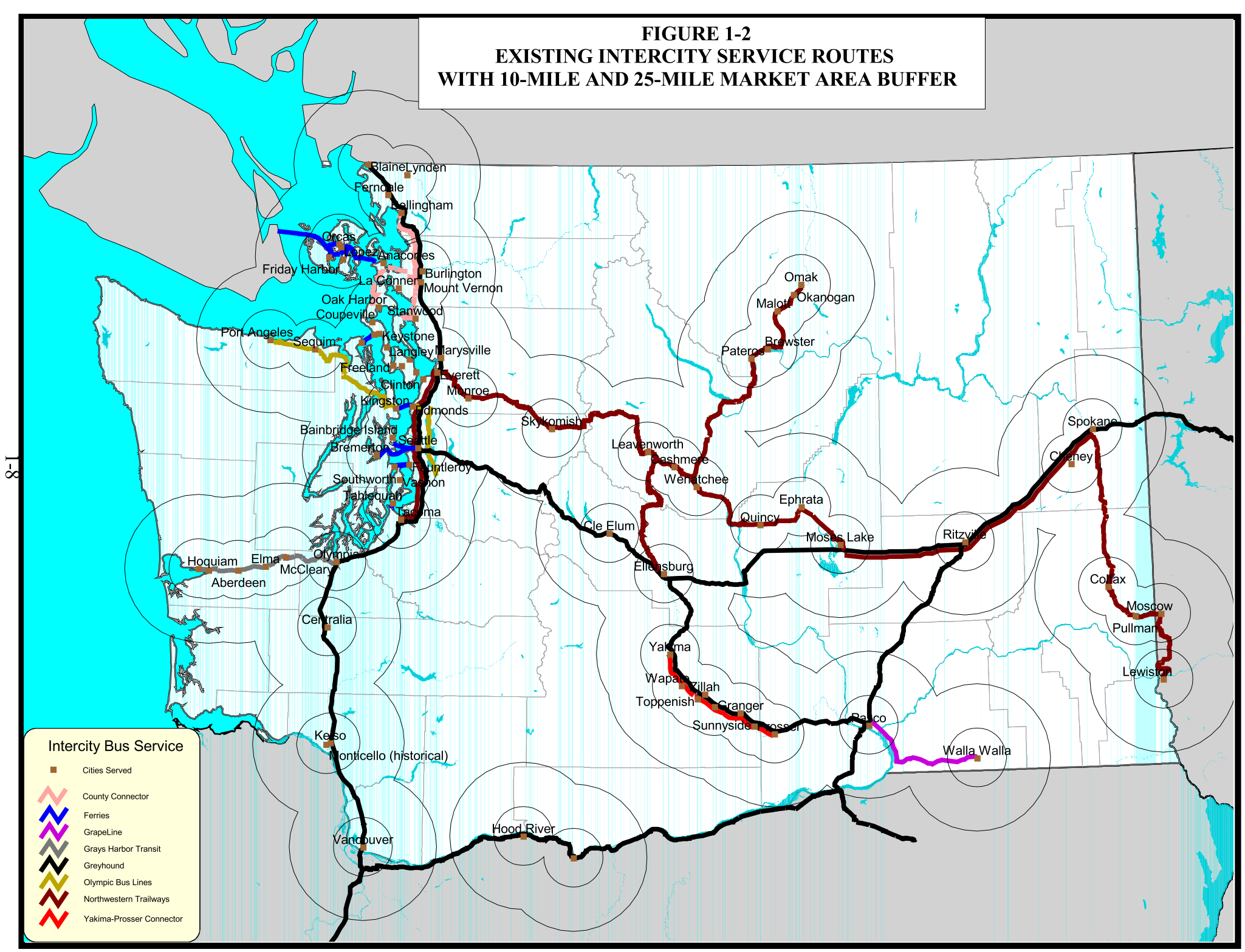
**FIGURE 1-1
INTERCITY BUS SERVICE IN 1982**



LEGEND

- Places Served by Intercity Bus
- 1982 Intercity Bus Carriers
- Cascade Trailways
- Empire Lines
- Evergreen Trailways
- Washington Coast Lines
- Greyhound

**FIGURE 1-2
EXISTING INTERCITY SERVICE ROUTES
WITH 10-MILE AND 25-MILE MARKET AREA BUFFER**



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