

# **YAKIMA COUNTY**



***Coordinated Public Transit - Human  
Services Transportation Plan  
DRAFT***

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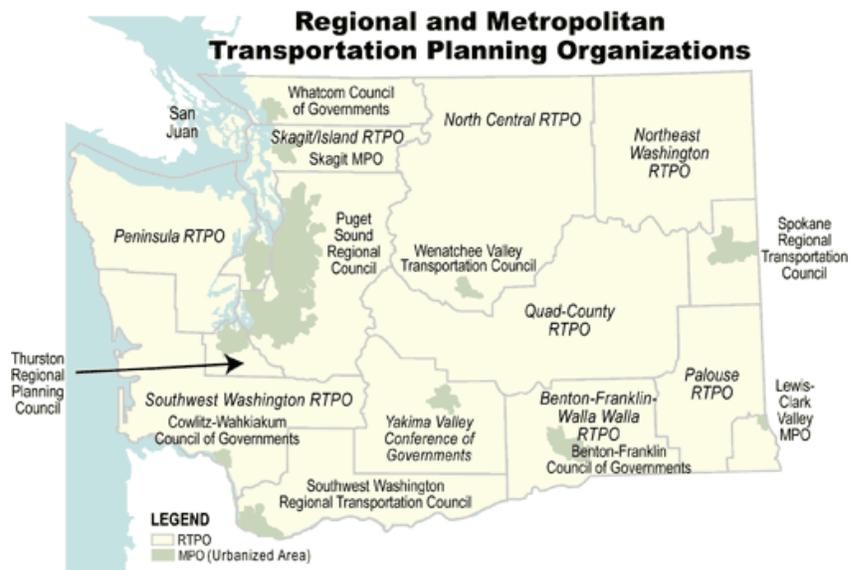
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## INTRODUCTION

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy of Users Act (SAFETEA-LU) of 2005 requires that communities develop a coordinated public transit and human services transportation plan by fiscal year 2007 to be eligible for certain Federal Transit Administration funding. The act's purpose is to improve transportation services for persons with special needs. A person with special transportation needs means those persons, including their personal attendants, who because of physical or mental disability, income status, or age are unable to transport themselves or to purchase appropriate transportation.<sup>1</sup>

Washington State Department of Transportation introduced the state plan to the Regional and Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organizations for implementation of the new coordinated public transit and human services transportation planning provisions of SAFETEA-LU.

Yakima Valley Conference of Governments is the designated organization for Yakima County. People For People was selected as the Lead Agency to create a coordinated public transit/human services transportation plan on behalf of Yakima Valley Conference of Governments.



People For People, a local non-profit, has provided transportation services in

Yakima County since 1982 and has been the Medicaid Trip Broker for the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) since 1989. People For People has provided the leadership for the Yakima County Special Needs Transportation Coalition to work with community service providers to address transportation barriers for the special needs community to access services, employment opportunities, and daily activities. The Yakima County Special Needs Transportation Coalition's goal has been:

*Improving transportation effectiveness and efficiency throughout Yakima County by collaboration.*

Yakima County Special Needs Coalition has provided the framework for development of the Yakima County Coordinated Public Transit - Human Services Transportation Plan.

<sup>1</sup> Washington State Legislature, Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 81.66.020

Monthly meetings were held to identify the stakeholders, solicit community feedback, and develop the tool for surveying the public. Community Transportation Forums were held throughout Yakima County. Community members, human service providers, and transportation representatives identified current transportation services, common points of origin and destination, and the unmet transportation needs for special populations. The forums were held at the following dates and locations.

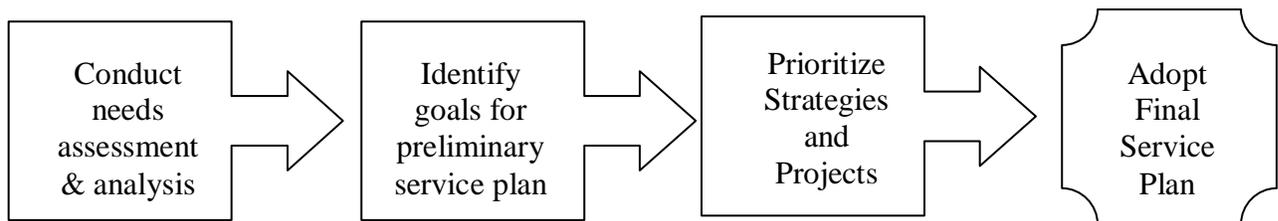
- April 13, 2006—Toppenish at Eagle Seelatsee Auditorium at the Yakama Nation
- July 27, 2006—Yakima at EPIC
- August 30, 2006—Grandview at Yakima Valley Community College

In addition, surveys were sent to health care, human service, and transportation providers to identify the populations served, their transportation needs, and what, if any, transportation the agencies provided. Thirty-seven surveys were returned.

To solicit input from the target population, surveys were developed in English and Spanish, and distributed through individual service providers. 297 surveys were returned and compiled to identify transportation needs, points of origin and destination, what transportation resources were used, and what the unmet transportation needs were.

The Yakima County Special Needs Transportation Coalition reviewed and commented on the DRAFT Coordinated Public Transit and Human Services Transportation Plan at the October 13, 2006 meeting. The DRAFT Coordinated Community Transit and Human Services Transportation Plan will be submitted to Yakima COG for review and comment.

The Yakima County Special Needs Transportation Coalition will solicit public comment for the DRAFT Coordinated Public Transit and Human Services Transportation Plan by placing it on the People For People website at [www.pfp.org](http://www.pfp.org) and through Special Needs Coalition meetings throughout Yakima County. The Coordinated Public Transit and Human Services Transportation Plan will develop prioritized projects to be incorporated into the Yakima County Transportation Plan due by June 30, 2007.



## YAKIMA COUNTY

Yakima County is located east of the Cascade Mountain range in Central Washington, with a geographic area of 4,296 square miles. It is the second largest among Washington State's 39 counties and twelfth in population ranking.<sup>2</sup> Its population density is 53.4 persons per square mile, the fifteenth most densely populated county in the state. The Office of Financial Management (OFM) estimates total population at 231,800 with 38.1% residents living in unincorporated areas with the remainder living in fourteen incorporated cities and towns.<sup>3</sup>

In Yakima County, Yakima is the largest city with a population of 81,710, 35.2% of the total. The city of Yakima consists of 20 square miles with a population density of more than 3,974 residents per square mile. The city of Yakima operates Yakima Transit, the only public transit system in the county. It provides transportation to those who reside within the city limits and with grant funding it has been successful in expanding temporary service to Union Gap and Selah.

Sunnyside and Toppenish are the second and third largest cities, with 14,930 (6.4%) and 9,015 (3.9%) residents respectively. The remaining cities and town in the county vary widely in population ranging from 8,840 residents in Grandview to 630 people in Harrah (see Table 1). OFM reported from 1990-2001 that the fastest growing incorporated areas were Union Gap (81.3%), Harrah (74.4%), and Tieton (69.6%).

Table 1 Population by City Yakima County Cities as of April 2006 <i>Office of Financial Management</i>			
City	Population	City	Population
Grandview	8,840	Sunnyside	14,930
Granger	2,880	Tieton	1,195
Harrah	630	Toppenish	9,015
Mabton	2,075	Union Gap	5,685
Moxee	1,800	Wapato	4,540
Naches	761	Yakima	81,710
Selah	6,840	Zillah	2,635

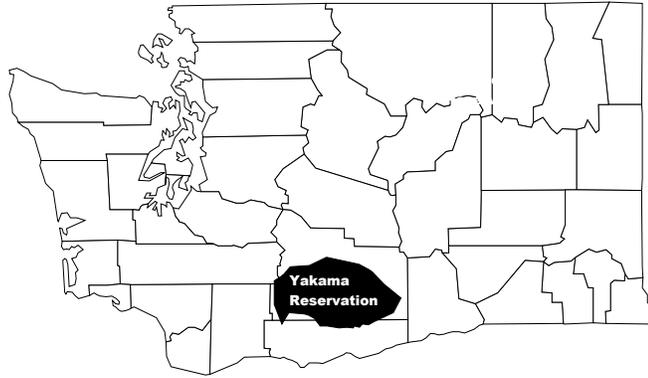
There are two distinct areas of Yakima County. Union Gap is the common dividing point that divides Northern Yakima County from Southern Yakima County. The Southern portion of Yakima County is less densely populated with hundreds of acres of orchards, vineyards, hops, and row crops with residents living in small towns and communities.

<sup>2</sup> Office of Financial Management, Population and Components of Population Change by County: April 1, 2000 to April 1, 2006, Release date: June 29, 2006.

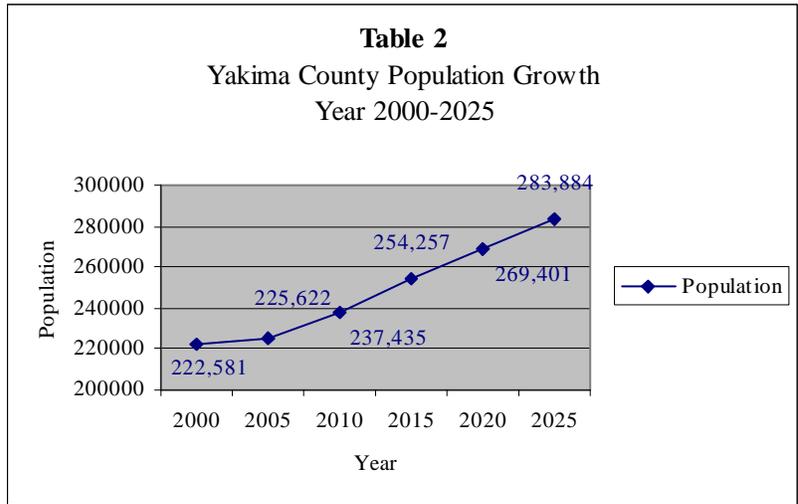
<sup>3</sup> Office of Financial Management, Population and Housing Estimates, 2001 to 2006, Release date: June 29, 2006.

Yakima County

Southern Yakima County is also home to Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation. Their 1,377,034 acre reservation covers 1,573 square miles—nearly half of Yakima County, and part of neighboring Klickitat County. The reservation is primarily agricultural with range and grazing land in the foothills, and timbered forests to the south and west. More than 9,600 people are enrolled members of the Yakama Nation, with 16,300 people living on or near the reservation. According to the U.S. Department of Interior’s Bureau of Indian Affairs, estimates for the tribal unemployment rate are 57%, with 28% of the employed workforce living below poverty. Unemployment rates among tribal members have dropped from a high in 2001 of 83%<sup>4</sup>, due in part to tribal enterprises that include Yakama Nation Legends Casino, Yakama Forest Products, and Yakama Juice.



The county seat of Yakima is located in Northern Yakima County. A recent poll ranked Yakima the 25th most livable city in the United States and in 1994 Yakima was named an All-America City. North of Yakima, the county becomes greener and less densely populated in the town of Naches and further northwest into the William O. Douglas wilderness. Yakima County continues to experience substantial growth. The Office of Financial Management estimates the county’s population will reach nearly 284,000 residents by the year 2025 (see Table 2).



<sup>4</sup> Northwest Area Foundation, Tribal Indicators, 2005.

## POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

The population that is most likely to have unmet transportation needs includes persons with disabilities, older adults, youth, and individuals with limited incomes. Within Yakima County a significant percentage of individuals fall into one or more of the categories.

- 22.2 percent has a disability (5 years of age and older)
- 11.2 percent is 65 years of age and older
- 31.8 percent is under 18 years of age
- 19.7 percent of individuals has income that fall below poverty level

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

### PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY

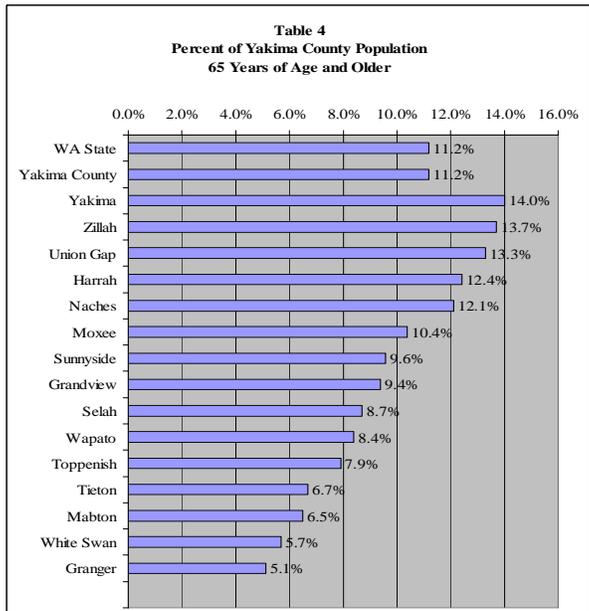
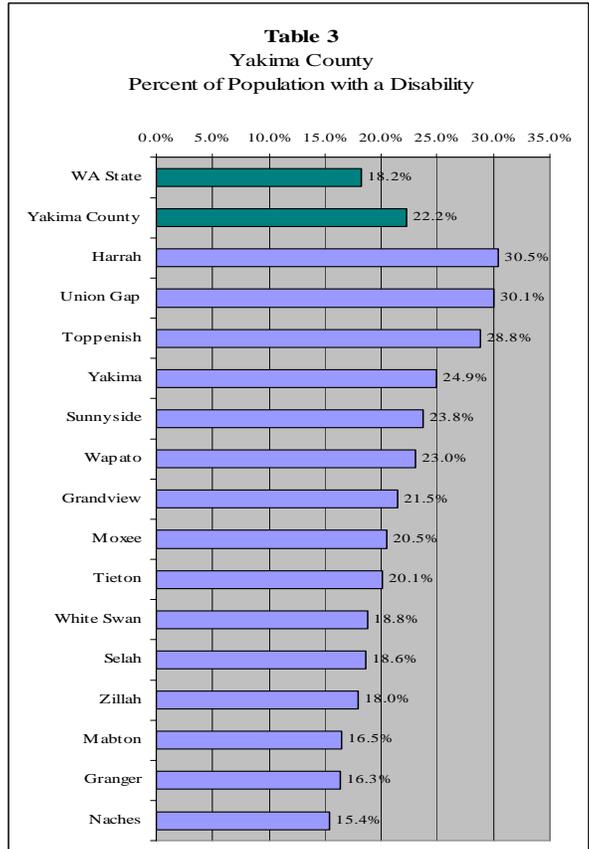
The 2000 US Census identified over 44,663 individuals as having a disability in Yakima County. Individuals were defined as having a disability if one or more of the following conditions were true:

- They were aged 5 or older and responded “yes” to having a sensory, physical, mental, or self-care disability.
- They were aged 16 years and older responded “yes” to having a disability affecting their ability to go outside the home.
- They were between the ages of 16 and 64 and responded “yes” to having a disability that limited their ability to work.

Yakima County’s proportion of people with disabilities (see Table 3) is 22.2%, exceeding the state average of 18.2%. The areas with the highest concentration of disabled persons include Harrah (30.5%), Union Gap (30.1%), Toppenish (28.8%) and Yakima (24.9%). In each instance, elders represent the largest group with reported disabilities.

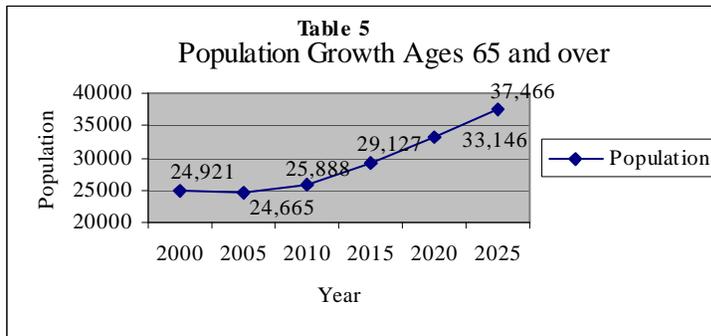
### OLDER ADULTS

Residents 65 years of age and older represent 11.2% of the county’s population, matching the



state average. The older adult population in Yakima County is nearly 25,000 residents. The city of Yakima has the highest percentage of senior residents at 14.0%, followed closely by Zillah (13.7%), and Union Gap (13.3%) (see Table 4).

As the county's population continues to grow, so does the number of elder citizens within the population. With a projected county population exceeding 283,000 in the year 2025, the projected senior population will surpass 37,000 (see Table 5).<sup>5</sup> This increase in the elder population increases the need for transportation to and from nursing homes, assisted living, and health care facilities.



## YOUTH

There are 76,000 youth (age eighteen and under) in Yakima County, 31% of the county's population, compared to 23.6% in Washington State. In Yakima County youth represent the fastest growing segment of the population, and very young children, 5 years of age and younger, is the largest subgroup with a population of 21,261 in 2005.<sup>6</sup> 31% of the households with youth under eighteen years of age are identified as female head of household.<sup>7</sup> 49% of children live in high poverty neighborhoods as compared to the state average of 11%.<sup>8</sup>



*Photo courtesy of Microsoft Office Clipart*

The 2005 school district enrollment for Yakima County was 49,793 students, ranging from 602 students in the Union Gap School District to 14,995 students in the Yakima School District. Yakima County's school districts have a high percentage of students that qualify for free or reduced lunch. Yakima School District reports 74.9% of students are eligible, Toppenish School District (93.9%), and Granger School District (90%) (see Table 6). Highly dependent on a thriving agricultural industry, Yakima County is home to a large migrant and seasonal farm worker labor pool. This contributes to the highest

<sup>5</sup> Office of Financial Management, State of Washington, Population Estimates & Forecasts. 2006.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census. (2005).

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census. (2000).

<sup>8</sup> Washington Health Foundation. County Health Profile. (2003).

enrollment of migrant students in the state (14,472).<sup>9</sup> Migrant families are challenged with low-pay, non-standard work hours, relocating to new areas, and living in rural locations with limited access to social services.

Out of the 39 Washington counties, Yakima ranks as the third highest for teen birth rate. The county’s teen birth rate is 42.1 per 1,000 births, compared to 16 per 1,000 for Washington State.<sup>10</sup> Low-income youth, migrant students, and teen parents represent a significant population that needs transportation resources.

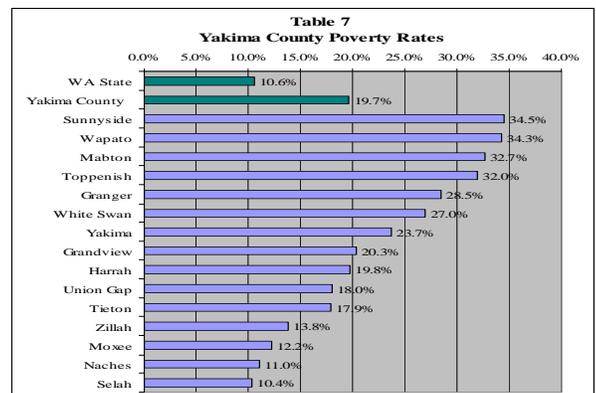
<b>Table 6</b>								
<b>Youth Data</b>								
<i>Sources: Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (WA State Report Card), 2005; Washington Department of Health, 2004; Migrant Student Data and Recruitment 2004-2005</i>								
<b>Location by School District</b>	<b>Teen Birthrate Per 1000</b>	<b>Percent Under 18 Years</b>	<b>Student Enrollment</b>	<b>Free or Reduced lunch</b>	<b>Disabled</b>	<b>Drop-out 2004-2005</b>	<b>Transitional Bilingual</b>	<b>Percent Migrant</b>
<b>Yakima County</b>	<b>42.1</b>	30.6%						
Toppenish			3,324	93.9%	11.3%	6.0%	48.7%	15.3%
Granger			1,372	90.0%	9.6%	2.4%	33.7%	55.7%
Wapato			3,406	89.1%	12.5%	7.8%	25.5%	18.2%
Mabton			937	85.0%	10.4%	2.8%	37.0%	60.3%
Mt. Adams			1,039	84.1%	15.3%	2.8%	12.8%	60.4%
Sunnyside			5,853	84.0%	10.3%	7.9%	23.4%	2.6%
Grandview			3,354	81.0%	12.8%	10.2%	25.1%	1.9%
Yakima			14,995	74.9%	12.9%	12.0%	24.7%	0.0%
Highland			1,206	69.4%	6.8%	5.4%	19.6%	217.3%
Union Gap			602	67.0%	14.3%	*	12.5%	238.7%
Zillah			1,315	48.7%	12.3%	0.8%	9.1%	7.8%
East Valley			2,683	47.7%	12.9%	2.8%	6.1%	46.6%
Selah			3,487	38.9%	12.4%	4.1%	4.5%	4.8%
West Valley			4,656	34.4%	12.0%	2.2%	1.3%	116.9%
Naches			1,564	33.0%	10.5%	1.2%	5.0%	9.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>49,793</b>					

\* Union Gap School District is K-8

## LOW INCOME

Yakima County has poverty rates that have been among the highest in the state for several decades. Most recently the 2000 Census reported a 19.7% poverty rate for the county, with some cities exceeding 34% (see Table 7).

The Northwest Area Foundation’s (NAF) 2003 indicators rank Yakima County second in the state



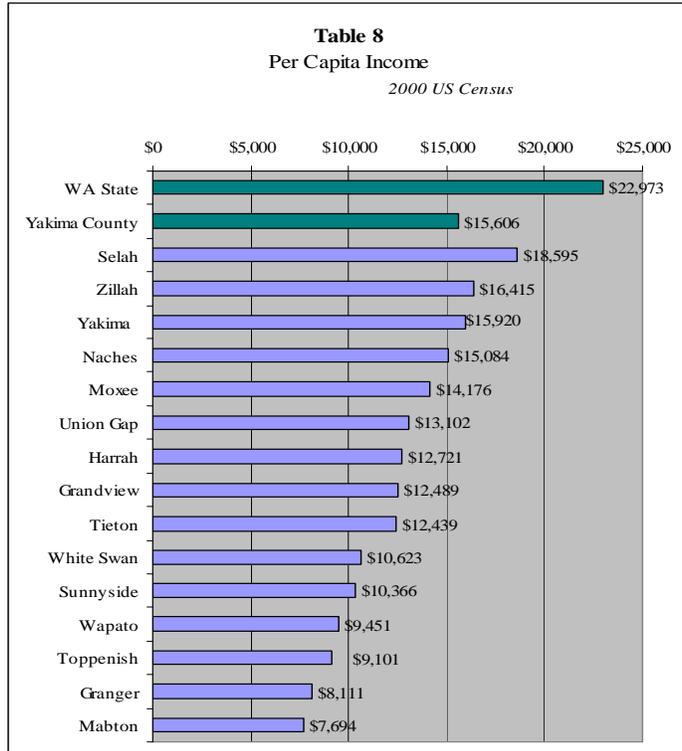
<sup>9</sup> Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Washington State Report Card. (2006).

<sup>10</sup> Washington State Department of Health. (2004).

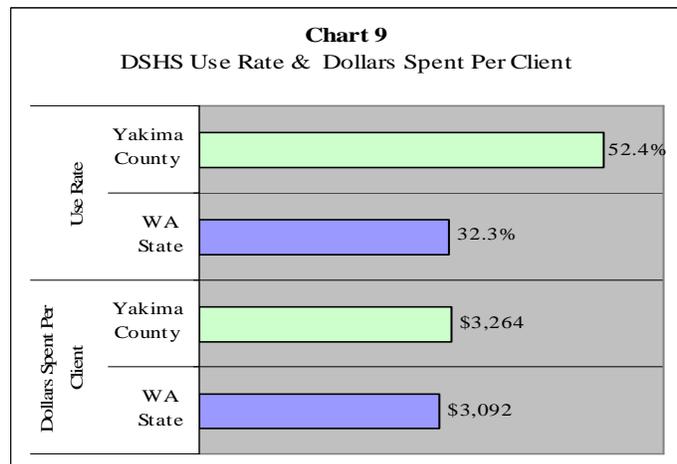
for percentage of population living below the poverty level.<sup>11</sup> This alone doesn't capture the entire population that struggles to make ends meet. NAF identified that 44.2% of Yakima County's population has incomes below 200% of poverty as compared to 26% of the state population.

The per capita income is defined as the average obtained by dividing aggregate income by total population of an area. Yakima County's per capita income is 32% less than Washington State. Cities range from Selah (\$18,595) to Mabton (\$7,694), which is half the county average.

Use of DSHS services and assistance is another indicator of low-income status. According to DSHS, in 2004 Yakima County had the highest DSHS usage of any county in the state at 52.4% (see Table 9). The state average in the same year was 32.3%. 119,103 county residents used DSHS services in 2004 at a cost of \$388,789,976. The highest usage rates were in medical assistance and economic services respectively. More than 84,000 Yakima County residents received some medical service through DSHS.



Unemployment rates are linked to individual self-sufficiency. People are counted as unemployed if they are without a job, available for work, and have made recent efforts to locate employment. Yakima County's average annual unemployment rate for 2005 was 7.6% compared to 5.5% for Washington.<sup>12</sup> Unemployment in Yakima County has traditionally been greater than the state because of the county's agricultural base that has seasonal employment.



Agricultural workers are usually immigrants from Mexico that speak little or no English, have limited education, and work in the fields and orchards for low wages. Yakima

<sup>11</sup> Northwest Area Foundation, County Indicators, (2003).

<sup>12</sup> Northwest Area Foundation, County Indicators, (2005).

County has the highest population of Migrant/Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFW) in Washington State, an estimated 52,476 individuals. When family members are included in the population, Yakima has a total of 81,175 workers and family members. Traditionally, MSFW will face lay offs during the winter months leading to higher unemployment and poverty rates.<sup>13</sup>

Because most farms and orchards in Yakima County lie outside the Yakima City limits, where access to public transportation is limited, workers moving from farm to farm must find alternative types of transportation to get to work sites. Many use their own vehicles or carpool; because of low wages many have automobiles in poor working condition and are hardest hit by high fuel rates. With the lack of alternative transportation, individuals are forced to drive even when they have a suspended license or lack the required liability insurance. In 2005 Yakima County had 3,830 charges for driving with a suspended driver's license and 1,986 for Driving Under the Influence.



## **TRANSPORTATION FORUMS AND SURVEYS**

Community Transportation Forums and Transportation Surveys provided valuable information on:

- Common Points of Origin
- Common Destinations
- Current Transportation Resources
- Unmet Transportation Needs
- Duplication of Resources

Three Community Transportation Forums were held in Yakima County. Representatives from the following organizations provided information regarding transportation for special needs populations:

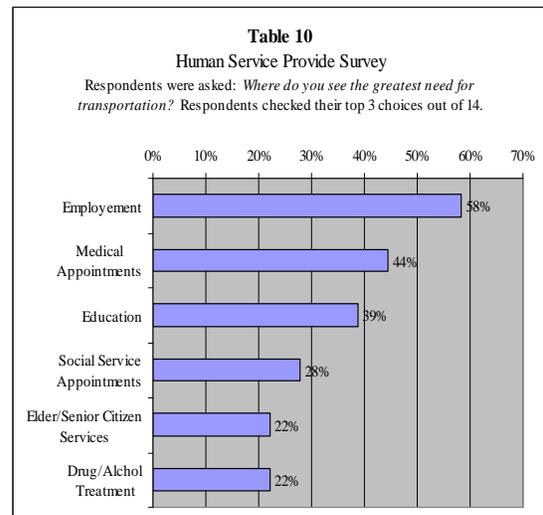
### **COMMUNITY FORUMS**

- **April 13, 2006** in Toppenish (*41 community members attended*)
- **July 27, 2006** in Yakima (*32 community members attended*)
- **August 30, 2006** in Grandview (*20 community members attended*)

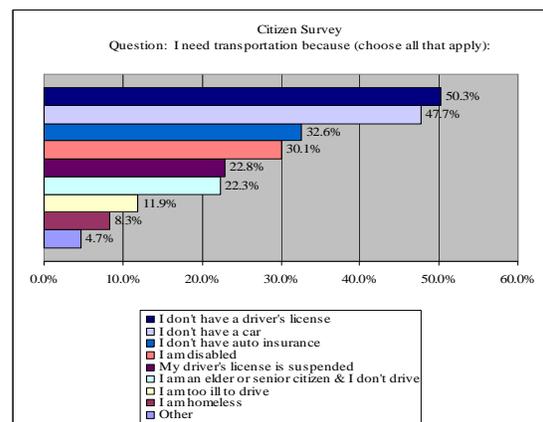
<sup>13</sup> Larson, Alice C., Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Enumeration Profiles Study, (2000).

- Aging and Long Term Care
- Black and White Taxi
- Community Living
- Deaf Access Washington
- Division of Voc. Rehab.
- DSHS Community Service Office
- Employment Security
- EPIC-Head Start
- ESD 105
- Grandview School District
- Granger School District
- Heritage University
- Indian Health Services
- Long-Term Care Ombudsman
- Medstar Cabulance
- Merit Resources
- North Star Lodge
- Northwest Community Action Center
- Nuestra Casa
- People For People
- Perry Technical Institute
- Provident-Horizon Group
- Services for the Blind
- SLR Home Care Services
- Sunnyside Promise
- Toppenish School District
- University of Washington
- Workforce Development Council
- WorkSource
- Yakama Forest Products
- Yakama Nation Legends Casino
- Yakama Nation DVR
- Yakima County
- Yakima School District
- Yakima Transit
- Yakima Valley COG
- Yakima Valley Community College
- Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic

In addition to the Transportation Forums, Transportation Surveys were completed by 37 Human Service Providers. Providers completed the survey to identify current transportation resources and the unmet transportation needs of the client population they serve. The results identified that transportation is needed from rural locations to the larger cities in Yakima County, mainly for the following reasons: employment, medical appointments, education, social services, senior services, and drug/alcohol treatment as priorities (see Table 10).

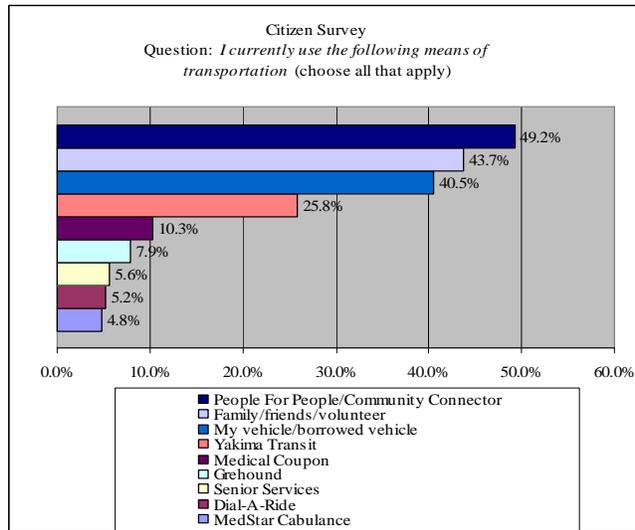


A survey was developed in English and Spanish that was distributed to citizens by human service and transportation providers. Surveys were completed by 297 individuals with special needs. 50.3% of the respondents indicated that they need transportation, because they don't have a driver's license, 30.1% indicated that they have a disability, and 22.8% have a suspended driver's license.



64.4% of individuals with special needs reported using some transportation services, and indicated their means of transportation were People For People (49.2%), Friends, Family, and Volunteers (43.7%), their own or borrowed vehicle (40.5%), and Yakima Transit (25.8%). 35.8% indicated that transportation services were not meeting their needs. Individuals surveyed indicated that there was a need for door-to-door, weekend, and evening transportation services. The hours, days, and frequency of fixed route services make it impossible or inconvenient to use existing service. Eligibility requirements exclude services for some individuals.

Accessing existing transportation services remain a challenge for individuals with special needs. The Community Transportation Forums identified that there are no bus stop shelters for the Community Connector in the rural communities. Frail individuals need shelter from the extreme weather conditions. Additionally, surface conditions and lack of sidewalks make it difficult for individuals to make it to some bus stop.



Transportation is critical for citizens to receive health care, obtain employment, and access community resources. In the Transportation Survey respondents were also asked how transportation would improve elements of their life. Specifically they were asked about their medical needs, work, community, and daily activities. The respondents clearly indicated that the availability of transportation would improve their employment opportunities and their ability to access community and social services to improve their quality of life. Overall citizens believe that transportation services will improve their health and well being (see Table 11).

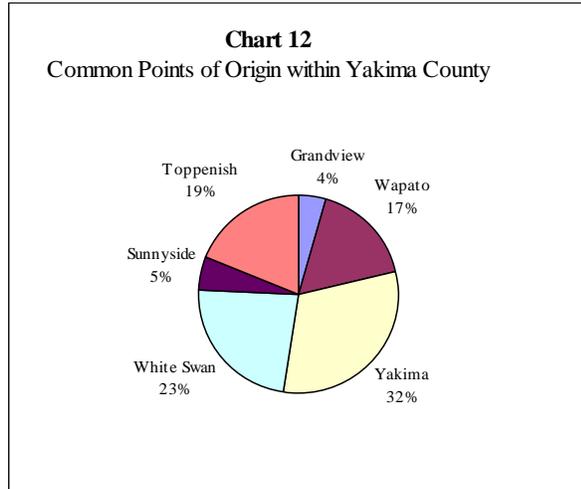
Table 11		
Respondents that said "yes"		
Would transportation services improve . . .	. . .your ability to access community and social services to improve quality of life?	85.4%
	. . .your ability to shop and accomplish daily activities?	85%
	. . .your ability to meet medical and healthcare needs?	82.9%
	. . .your ability to participate in social and community events?	82.1%
	. . .your employment opportunities?	62.5%

## COMMON POINTS OF ORIGIN

The common points of origin were identified through Community Transportation Forums, Transportation Surveys, and Service Provider Surveys.

- ❖ Rural locations at individual residences and smaller towns and communities
- ❖ Low-income housing, senior housing, tribal housing, migrant seasonal farm worker housing, correctional facilities, homeless shelters, assisted living, and nursing homes.

The special needs population is distributed throughout Yakima County. With 41% of the population residing in unincorporated areas of the counties, the rural locations require individualized transportation services. The residents that live in unincorporated areas and smaller towns need transportation to access social services, health care, employment, education, recreation, worship, and legal services that are located in the larger cities. 73% of those surveyed live outside Yakima Transit service area and have limited transportation options. (see Chart 12).



Within the cities there are some common points of origin such as subsidized housing units, correctional facilities, homeless shelters, assisted living, and long-term care facilities. Within Yakima County there are 13 nursing homes, 12 adult family homes, and 19 boarding homes/assisted living. Eight nursing homes, eight adult family homes, and 13 assisted living facilities are located in Yakima. There is one nursing home in each of the following communities: Wapato, Toppenish, Grandview, Sunnyside, Union Gap, and Selah. There are two adult family homes in Wapato, one in Selah, and one in Moxee. There are three assisted living facilities in Sunnyside, one each in Grandview, Selah, and Glead.

Housing complexes are provided for seniors, migrant seasonal farmworkers, and low-income individuals and families throughout Yakima County. Homeless shelters are only located in Yakima with limited homeless service provided through hotel vouchers. The Yakima County Jail and the Juvenile Justice facility are located in Yakima, and transportation is needed for individuals when they are released to return to their communities.

## **COMMON DESTINATIONS**

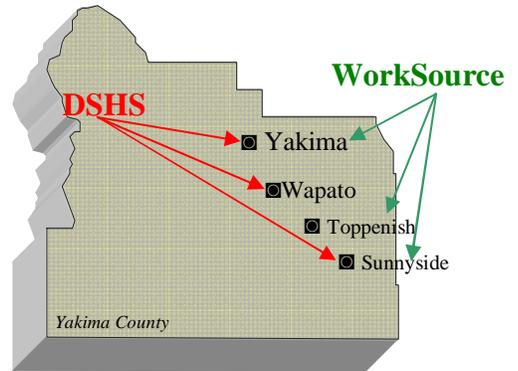
Services are generally located in the larger cities or towns, but may be miles from smaller communities or rural locations. The Community Transportation Forums and surveys identified the following common destinations.

- Health care facilities (local and out-of area)
- Social Services: DSHS, mental health, chemical dependency treatment, food banks, senior nutrition sites, child care, Community Action Agencies
- Educational services: post-secondary, English as a Second Language (ESL), Adult Basic Education (ABE), and after-school programs.
- Employment: WorkSource and major employers
- Shopping, banking, legal services, courts
- Recreation, spiritual, and social activities

Residents who live in unincorporated areas of Yakima County lack transportation options and may travel up to 40 miles each way to access basic services. Areas such as Cowiche, Naches, White Swan, and Mabton are isolated from transportation services. The “Community Connector” that is operated by People For People only provides intercity connections between Prosser and Yakima.

Those seeking hospital services must travel to Yakima, Toppenish, or Sunnyside. More specialized health care, such as cancer treatment, may require travel to Yakima, the Tri-Cities, or Seattle. Employment and training services from WorkSources are located in Yakima, Sunnyside and Toppenish (limited). Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), food stamps, and social services are offered through the Department of Health and Human Services’ Community Service Offices in Yakima, Wapato, and Sunnyside.

Miles to DSHS and WorkSource offices		
City	DSHS	WorkSource
Grandview	8	8
Granger	10	10
Harrah	9	13
Mabton	8	8
Moxee	8	8
Naches	15	15
Selah	5	5
Sunnyside	0	0
Tieton	20	20
Toppenish	8	0
Union Gap	4	4
Wapato	0	8
White Swan	20	21
Yakima	0	0
Zillah	11	4



Post-secondary educational opportunities are offered by Yakima Valley Community College in Grandview and Yakima. Heritage University in Toppenish and Perry Technical Institute in Yakima provides additional post-secondary options. YV-Tech (Yakima Valley Technical Skills Center) provides vocational opportunities for high school student in Yakima County. With its location in Yakima, transportation is costly to access the training opportunities that YV-Tech provides.

Employment opportunities are located throughout Yakima County with most of the employers located in Yakima. Wal-Mart, Yakama Forest Products, Yakama Legends Casino, Snokist, Washington Beef, and Western Recreational Vehicles are employers that hire entry-level and WorkFirst individuals. As with most retail and manufacturing employers, the positions require shift work, weekend and holiday schedules. Table 13 identifies some of the major employers, locations and number of employees,

<b>Table 13</b>					
<b>EMPLOYMENT DESTINATIONS</b>					
<b>Employer</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b># of Employees</b>	<b>Employer</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b># of Employees</b>
Yakima Valley Memorial Hospital	Yakima	1,500	Tree Top	Selah	535
DSHS	County wide	1400	EPIC	County wide	500
Yakima Regional Hospital	Yakima	1,100	Wal-Mart Distribution	Grandview	425
Yakima School District	Yakima	1001	Yakima Training Center	Yakima	415
Yakima County	County wide	1000	Quality Transportation	Yakima	410
Snokist	Yakima	851	West Valley School District	Yakima	408
Wal Mart	Yakima/S'side	825	Selah School District	Selah	344
Washington Beef	Yakima	631	Ace Hardware	Moxee	330
City of Yakima	Yakima	623	Washington Fruit	Yakima	320
Yakima Valley Community College	Yakima	590	WA State DOT	County wide	300
YVCC	Yakima/G'view	590	Del Monte Foods`	Yakima	290
Western Recreational Vehicles	Yakima	574	Central Washington Comp. Mental Health	Yakima	275
Yakama Legends Casino	Toppenish	573	Smith Aerospace	Yakima	270
Shields Bag and Printing	Yakima	550	Independent Food Processors	Sunnyside	250
Yakama Nation Legends Casino	Toppenish	540			

## **TRANSPORTATION RESOURCES**

**School District Transportation:** Each school district within Yakima County provides transportation services to students within their district boundaries. School districts provide their own equipment, driver training, maintenance, and operations. The state allocates funds to each school district based on the number of students needing transportation and their distance from school. (see Table 14). This allocation doesn't cover all transportation expenses and school districts must supplement their state allocation with local funds. Therefore, school districts must prioritize transporting student to and from school and limit transportation for after-school activities.



*Photo courtesy of  
Microsoft Office Clipart*

<b>Table 14</b>				
<b>School District Transportation</b>				
<b>OSPI Data 2005</b>				
<b>School District</b>	<b>OSPI Transportation Allocation</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Number of Passenger Trips</b>	<b>Average Reimbursement per Trip</b>
East Valley	\$545,485	1,421	511,560	\$1.07
Grandview	\$376,065	958	344,880	\$1.09
Granger	\$225,177	452	162,720	\$1.38
Highland	\$267,129	706	254,160	\$1.05
Mabton	\$117,994	212	76,320	\$1.54
Mt. Adams	\$335,646	610	219,600	\$1.53
Naches	\$505,523	809	291,240	\$1.74
Selah	\$490,077	1,307	470,520	\$1.04
Toppenish	\$425,128	1,120	403,200	\$1.05
Union Gap	\$73,222	127	45,720	\$1.60
Wapato	\$547,924	1,282	461,520	\$1.19
West Valley	\$768,139	1,975	711,000	\$1.08
Yakima	1,869,686	2,905	1,045,800	\$1.79
Zillah	\$195,516	334	120,240	\$1.63

**Head Start Transportation:** EPIC (Enterprise for Progress in the Community), Washington State Migrant Council (WSMC), and Yakima Nation provide Head Start transportation.

- **EPIC Head Start** provides transportation for eligible children to attend a full preschool curriculum at 18 sites in Yakima County. Epic Head Start provides transportation services for approximately 700 children using 26 available buses.
- **Washington Sate Migrant Council** provides Head Start services for children in 7 sites in Yakima County. Each site operates two 32-passenger buses. More than 90% of the 780 children served each year rely on WSMC’s door-to-door transportation services because there are no fixed bus stop/routes. Transportation costs are correspondingly high.
- **Yakama Nation Tribal Head Start** provides transportation for eligible preschool children to attend Head Start centers in Toppenish, White Swan, and Wapato with two buses transporting 190 students each day. Yakama Nation Tribal Head Start has four buses, but only has two eligible drivers.

**DSHS Health and Recovery Service Administration-HRSA (formally known as Medical Assistance Administration-MAA):**

DSHS HRSA pays for transportation services for non-emergency medical visits for eligible individuals. Recipients must qualify for Medicaid and have no other means to reach an approved medical service. Assistance is provided through a HRSA Regional Broker. People For People is the HRSA Regional Broker for Yakima County. PFP Broker Customer Service Representatives will screen clients for eligibility and then arrange the most appropriate and cost effective form of transportation assistance for the individual. Transportation or other service options may include: public bus, gas voucher, client and volunteer mileage reimbursement, non-profit providers, cabulance, commercial bus, lodging, and air. Reservations need to be made two business days in advance of the scheduled appointment. From July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006 People For People Brokering provided 78,191 rides for eligible clients in Yakima County (see Table 15). Transportation providers for Medicaid include Medstar, A-1 Tri-City Taxi, A+ Transportation, and People For People.

Table 15 Medicaid Transportation by Type July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006	
Trip Type	Trips
Ambulatory Ride	42,197
Airline	4
Commercial Bus	11
Gas Voucher Client	4,311
Mileage Client Associate Vehicle	1,863
Non-ambulatory ride	15,937
Public bus (Paratransit)	8,745
Public bus - fixed route	4,703
Volunteer - broker	1,050
<b>Total Trips</b>	<b>78,191</b>
<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>2,804,548</b>

**WorkFirst:** The WorkFirst program, through DSHS provides eligible parents with vouchers for transportation. Eligible parents are individuals who qualify for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Transportation is provided to assist with employment related activities including job search and participation in the Community Jobs

*"Transportation would be good for those who are just starting a job or can't afford their own transportation."*  
*Response from Citizen Survey*

program. The local DSHS Community Services Office (CSO), Employment Security, and Community Jobs contractors can provide transportation vouchers to eligible clients. Vouchers may be used to purchase bus passes, fuel, driver's licenses, or vehicle repair.

**Yakima Transit:** Yakima City Transit is the only public transportation system in Yakima County; its service delivery covers just 20.4 square miles of the county, with the remaining 4,276 square miles lacking a public transportation service. Yakima Transit operates nine fixed routes operating weekdays, between 6:15 a.m. and 6:45 p.m. and eight fixed routes operating on Saturdays from 8:45 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. The Fixed Bus Routes use 24 ADA accessible vehicles.



*Photo courtesy of Yakima Transit*

Yakima Transit provides services to all of the elementary, middle, and high schools in the Yakima School District, as well as Yakima Valley Community College and Perry Technical Institute. Yakima Transit provides service to eight Park and Ride lots located in Grandview, Moxee, Selah, Sunnyside and Yakima/Naches. Base fare is 50 cents per boarding with free bus transfers for the fixed routes. In 2005, Yakima Transit provided 1,083,488 passenger trips, traveling 741,788 miles.

Yakima Transit contracts with A-1 Tri-City Taxi to provide in city Dial-A-Ride services for persons with disabilities. Dial-A-Ride provides door-to-door transportation to pre-qualified riders with mobility impairments that are unable to use the regular bus system. The service is available seven days a week. People certified as eligible for paratransit services according to the standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act may use Dial-A-Ride to travel to any destination within the city limits of Yakima for \$1.00 per ride. Qualifying disabilities include mobility, vision, respiratory or cardiac impairment, mental disability, and developmental disability. Individuals must submit an application form accompanied by medical verification of the disability status. Age or the inability to drive, are not considered qualifying factors. Dial-A-Ride operates with a total of 18 ADA accessible vehicles.

*"Mom and Dad could go to town  
more often together-  
independently"*  
*Response from Citizen Survey*

Yakima Transit also provides vanpool services for drivers and commuters. All vanpools begin or end in the urban Yakima area. Currently, 12 vehicles are used. Yakima Transit provides the vehicle, insurance, and all the vehicle maintenance. Fuel costs are included in the monthly vanpool fare.

**People For People:** In Yakima County, People For People uses five maxivans, 19 minibuses (14 passenger), one minibus (21 passenger-used on the “Community Connector” route), and one four-passenger automobile to provide paratransit services and inter-city transportation. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) consolidated grant program provides funding to serve special needs populations and the general public on a competitive basis. Transportation programs have funding cycles that expire on June 30, 2007. Without these funds, literally thousands of individuals depending upon these programs will have no other means for transportation service.



- People For People with WSDOT funding provides **paratransit services** to individuals with disabilities outside the city of Yakima. The annual boardings for those with disabilities in Yakima County was 15,480; buses traveled 144,972 miles, logging 7,979 service hours. Eligible riders answer a brief initial telephone questionnaire, but doctor verification is not required. For scheduling purposes, transportation dispatchers do request a minimum 24 hour notification prior to medical appointments or needed trips.
- People For People with WSDOT funding provides the **Community Connector** fare-free general public transportation for persons traveling along the I-82 corridor from Yakima to Prosser. The ADA accessible “Community Connector” buses stop at designated sites in Yakima, Wapato, Toppenish, Zillah, Granger, Sunnyside, Grandview, and Prosser. The service is available four times per weekday, with the first Yakima departure at 6:15 a.m. and the last Yakima arrival at 8:36 p.m. The “Community Connector” service reported 28,161 boardings last year, operating 4,100 service hours and traveling 100,138 miles on its fixed route.
- People For People with WSDOT funding provides **Job Access-Reverse Commute (JARC)** transportation for recipients of Temporary Assistance for Need Families (TANF) and their children. Transportation to job training activities is provided to eligible participants with no other means of transportation. JARC provided 14,043 rides last year in Yakima County. Its vehicles traveled 100,590 miles and operated for 5,007 hours.
- People For People through a contract with Aging and Long Term Care (ALTC) and WSDOT provides **Senior Transportation** to residents who are 60 years of age or older and are living outside the Yakima City limits. Transportation is available to nutrition/meal sites, medical appointments, necessary shopping, and other sites as funding allows. Last year, People For People reported 21,838

Senior Transportation boardings, logging 8,717 hours and traveling 140,299 miles.

- People For People also provided **Medicaid transportation** for eligible participants, with a total of 14,728 boardings, logging 218,177 miles, and 9,768 hours.

**Greyhound Bus Line:** Greyhound provides limited bus line transportation in Yakima County, serving the cities of Sunnyside and Yakima. The Yakima to Seattle runs occur three times per day, in the morning, mid-afternoon, and evening.



**Airporter Shuttle:** The Airporter Shuttle provides four daily trips to the Sea-Tac International Airport with pick-up and drop-off sites in Yakima, Ellensburg, Cle Elum, Seattle, and Sea-Tac Airport. The Seattle site provides access to Amtrak passenger train, ferries, and local ground service.

**Taxi Services:** Six taxi companies serve Yakima County. All taxi services operate out of the city of Yakima or Union Gap.

**Other Services:** The transportation surveys and recently held forums identified the lack of accessible transportation in some areas of Yakima County as a major problem facing many Yakima County residents. Forums and surveys indicate that although medical transportation funded through HRSA is available to Medicaid eligible clients, many low income individuals who are not poor enough to access Medicaid, but are nonetheless still poor, simply fall through the cracks, have no safety net, and therefore are unable to access needed medical appointments. In response to this shortage of accessible transportation, especially as it pertains to cancer patients, People For People, The Yakama Nation Navigator Program and NorthStar Lodge Cancer Center, have teamed up to provide necessary transportation and lodging assistance to cancer patients living on the Yakama Reservation and neighborhood communities who are low income but not Medicaid eligible. Funded through a grant from the Yakama Nation Legends Casino, this service provides transportation for a population that would otherwise be without.

*"... (transportation) should help the elderly that don't have medical coupons; get need the assistance"  
Response from Citizen Survey*

Yakama Nation Area Agency on Aging provides transportation for older adults to access healthcare, shopping, and recreation with one shuttle bus and two vans.

Providers of social and health services throughout Yakima County have indicated that they try to overcome transportation shortfalls by transporting clients in their own

vehicles. Social service providers when faced with a lack of transportation options for their clients will simply transport those clients in their own vehicles to needed services. Assisted living facilities and area churches provide some limited transportation to their target population.

Yakima Transit is the the only transportation system in the county. It provides access to those who reside within the city limits, and with a state WSDOT grant it has been successful in expanding temporary service to Union Gap and Selah. However, transportation remains a challenge for rural areas and small communities that are miles from resources. It is even a greater challenge for older adults, individuals with disabilities, youth, and individuals with limited incomes. The majority of the population throughout Yakima County resides in small towns or the vast rural region that lack access to any form of public or private transportation.

**Table 17  
Transportation Options  
Yakima County**

Yakima County Cities	Medstar	A-1 Tri-City Dial-A-Ride	Taxi	Airporter Shuttle	Greyhound	Yakima Transit Bus Service	Airline	People For People Transportation	A+ Transportation	People For People Medicaid Broker
Grandview	X							X	X	X
Granger	X							X	X	X
Harrah	X							X	X	X
Mabton	X							X	X	X
Moxee	X							X	X	X
Naches	X							X	X	X
Selah	X					X		X	X	X
Sunnyside	X				X			X	X	X
Tieton	X							X	X	X
Toppenish	X							X	X	X
Union Gap	X		X			X		X	X	X
Wapato	X							X	X	X
White Swan	X							X	X	X
Yakima	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Zillah	X							X	X	X

## **DUPLICATION OF TRANSPORTATION RESOURCES**

Transportation providers operate with local, state, and federal funding targeted to specific eligibility for the person and purpose of the ride. There is a reluctance to integrate resources because of perceived risk, liability, and funding restrictions. Areas that were identified for increased coordination to reduce duplication were:

- **Equipment:** Each transportation system purchases vehicles only for their system.
- **Drivers:** School districts, Yakima Transit, Head Start programs, and other transportation providers hire and train their own drivers.
- **Service Eligibility:** Yakima Transit and the Community Connector are two public transportation systems that have no eligibility requirements. Other transportation systems have restrictions and have different requirements for documentation of eligibility.
- **Funding Restrictions:** Various funding sources restrict transportation services to a specific population for a specific purpose.

With silo funding for transportation, there are areas of duplication. A school district in Southern Yakima County transports students 30 miles to the Yakima Valley Tech Center in Yakima. In transporting the students, the bus bi-passes four other school districts with students that could also be transported on the same bus. Areas of duplication are opportunities to coordinate transportation resources. Coordination of transportation resources creates efficiencies that lower overall costs and allows for the provision of more resources.

## **UNMET TRANSPORTATION NEEDS**

Yakima County has a diverse population with unmet transportation needs. The primary transportation needs are for employment, health care, human services, nutrition, and education. Secondary transportation needs were identified for shopping, child care, court mandated appointments, and social, cultural, recreation, and spiritual events.

**Most older adults** in Yakima County have always relied upon their personal car for transportation, and when they are unable to safely drive it is a difficult transition. Older adults need transportation to medical appointments, senior meal programs, shopping, visiting friends or relatives in hospital or nursing homes, and for community events that include spiritual, social, recreation, and cultural events. Those who are not Medicaid eligible have limited options for non-emergency medical transportation. Those who live outside Yakima Transit service area in rural locations are often isolated from services. When access to services is no longer possible, older adults move out of their homes and communities to assisted living or nursing homes. Transportation provides access to services that allow older adults to remain independent and reside in their homes and community. Transportation is needed for non-Medicaid older adults to access specialty health care in Yakima, Tri-Cities or Seattle.

**Individuals with disabilities** need transportation to remain independent as well. Transportation provides access to jobs and training opportunities in their communities. Washington State, Division of Developmental Disabilities has implemented the “Working Age Adult Policy.” This policy is to assist adults (21 to 62 years of age) with disabilities to enter the workforce. Transportation is a critical component. For independence and mobility, transportation is needed to access health care, shopping, recreation, and social services.

**Youth** are in need of transportation to access educational opportunities, employment, and social services. With Yakima County ranking third in the state for children living in poverty, transportation is needed to participate in after-school activities (a particular challenge for those in rural locations) and to access post-secondary education. Yakima Valley Community College (YVCC) reported that students have difficulty commuting to their Grandview and Yakima campus due to lack of reliable transportation options. Perry Technical Institute located in Yakima and Heritage University located in a rural Toppenish location both identified transportation as a barrier for students to access their campuses. With Yakima County having a high percentage of teen parents, accessing social services, health care, and child care is essential to ensuring that teen parents have the opportunity to remain in school and complete their education.

**Individuals with limited incomes** identified the need for transportation to access employment, training, education, child care, job search, social services, and health care. Without reliable transportation, individuals are unable to secure and maintain employment. Agricultural work requires dependable transportation to access employment in the rural areas of the county. Many entry level positions are in retail and warehouses that require weekends, holidays, and shift work. Low-wages make it difficult for individuals to purchase reliable vehicles and maintain automobile insurance. The working poor are left with few public transportation options to maintain employment. Transportation is available for Medicaid eligible clients to access medically approved appointments, but there are limited transportation services for accessing non-medical services. The Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) requires families that receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) to participate in specific work activities in order to receive cash assistance. This federal requirement affects the increased need for transportation. The Wapato DSHS office conducted a survey in October 2005 with TANF clients and over 70% of the respondents indicated that transportation was a barrier to seeking, obtaining, and retaining employment. Low-income individuals have difficulty accessing education and social services that will assist individuals to become self-sufficient citizens.

***Example of Transportation Challenge***

One young teen parent explained how difficult it is for her to care for her special needs daughter.

Living in Harrah, she is miles from school and social and health services. She has appointments in Wapato at the DSHS, WIC appointments in Wapato, and medical appointments in Toppenish and Yakima. She tries to rely upon family to get her to the appointments, but they are often working and unavailable. The lack of reliable transportation has made it difficult for her to access the services that she needs for her daughter.

**Existing transportation services** need bus stop shelters, lights, and signage to improve safety and accessibility. Transportation for special needs populations requires ADA accessible vehicles. Social service providers have limited resources to provide transportation for clients to access services. With an increasing population growth and the cost of transportation, the transportation need far exceeds the available resources. Coordination of human service and transportation resources is critical to prioritizing and meeting the transportation needs.

## **TRANSPORTATION SERVICE PLAN**

*Improve and expand transportation services for individuals with disabilities, older adults, youth and individuals with low-incomes.*

### **PRESERVE AND EXPAND DEMAND RESPONSE PARATRANSIT SERVICES FOR SPECIAL NEEDS POPULATIONS.**

Door-to-door transportation service is required in the rural and isolated areas of the county for special needs population. Transportation services are needed to access employment, healthcare, social services, education, shopping, and activities that improve their quality of life. ADA accessible vehicles are needed to accommodate special needs individuals

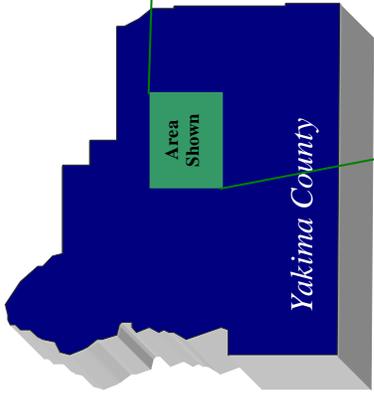
### **PRESERVE AND EXPAND INTERCITY CONNECTIONS THROUGHOUT YAKIMA COUNTY.**

Coordinate with intra and inter-city transportation providers to provide transportation services to all areas of Yakima County. Provide safe sites for bus stops with shelters, lights, and signage.

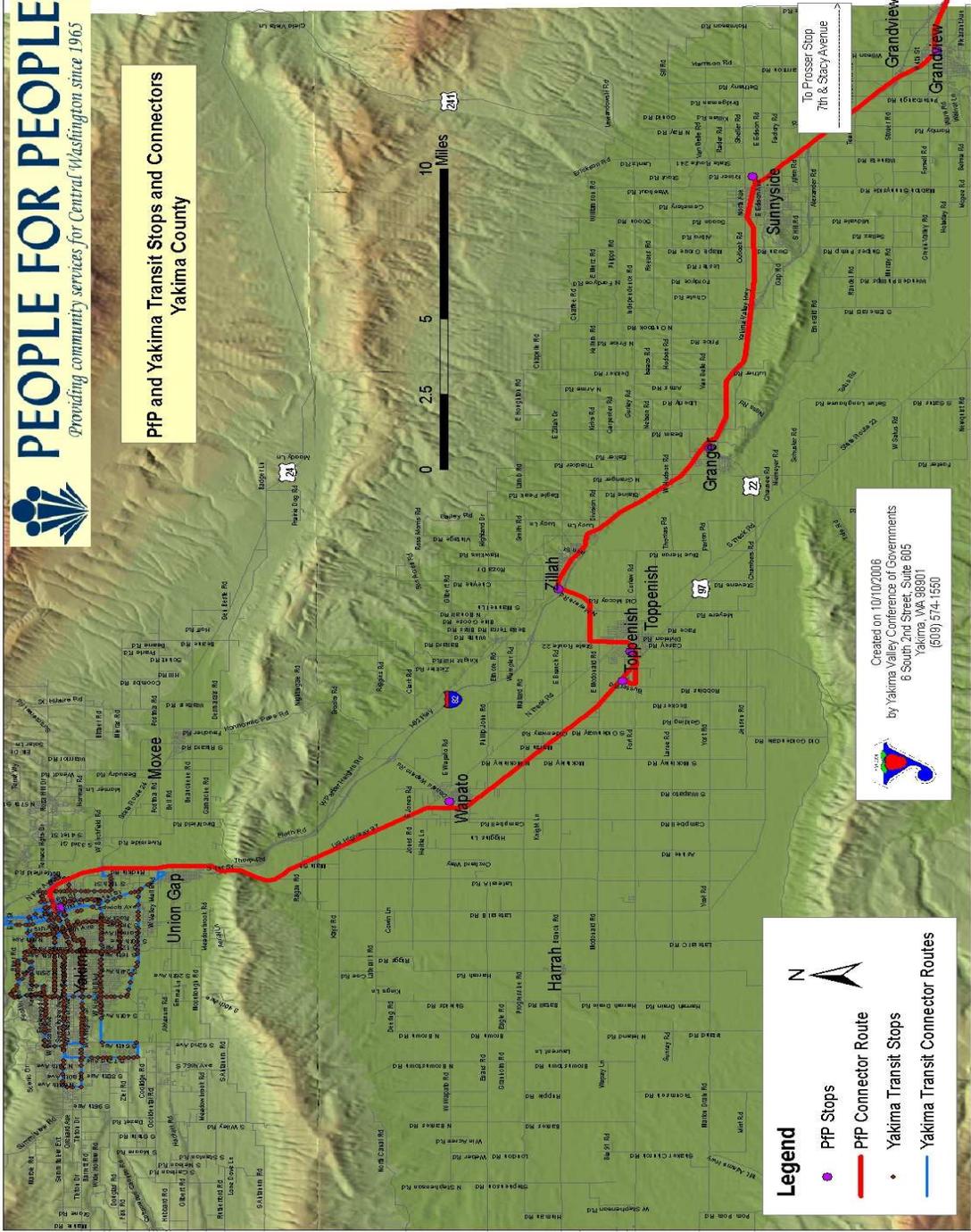
### **COORDINATE TRANSPORTATION SERVICES FOR SPECIAL NEEDS POPULATION.**

Coordinate transportation services for special needs populations. The following are examples:

- Coordinate reservations, maintenance, purchase and maintenance of equipment, staff training, coordinate pupil and public transportation
- Coordinate social service transportation resources to provide universal access.
- Coordinate, develop and expand alternate transportation resources with volunteer drivers, re-licensing program, loans for automobiles, and van pools.
- Coordinate trips for individuals to include multi-purpose activities (e.g. medical appointment, shopping, nutrition)
- Coordinate transportation resources with a central information and referral such as 2-1-1.



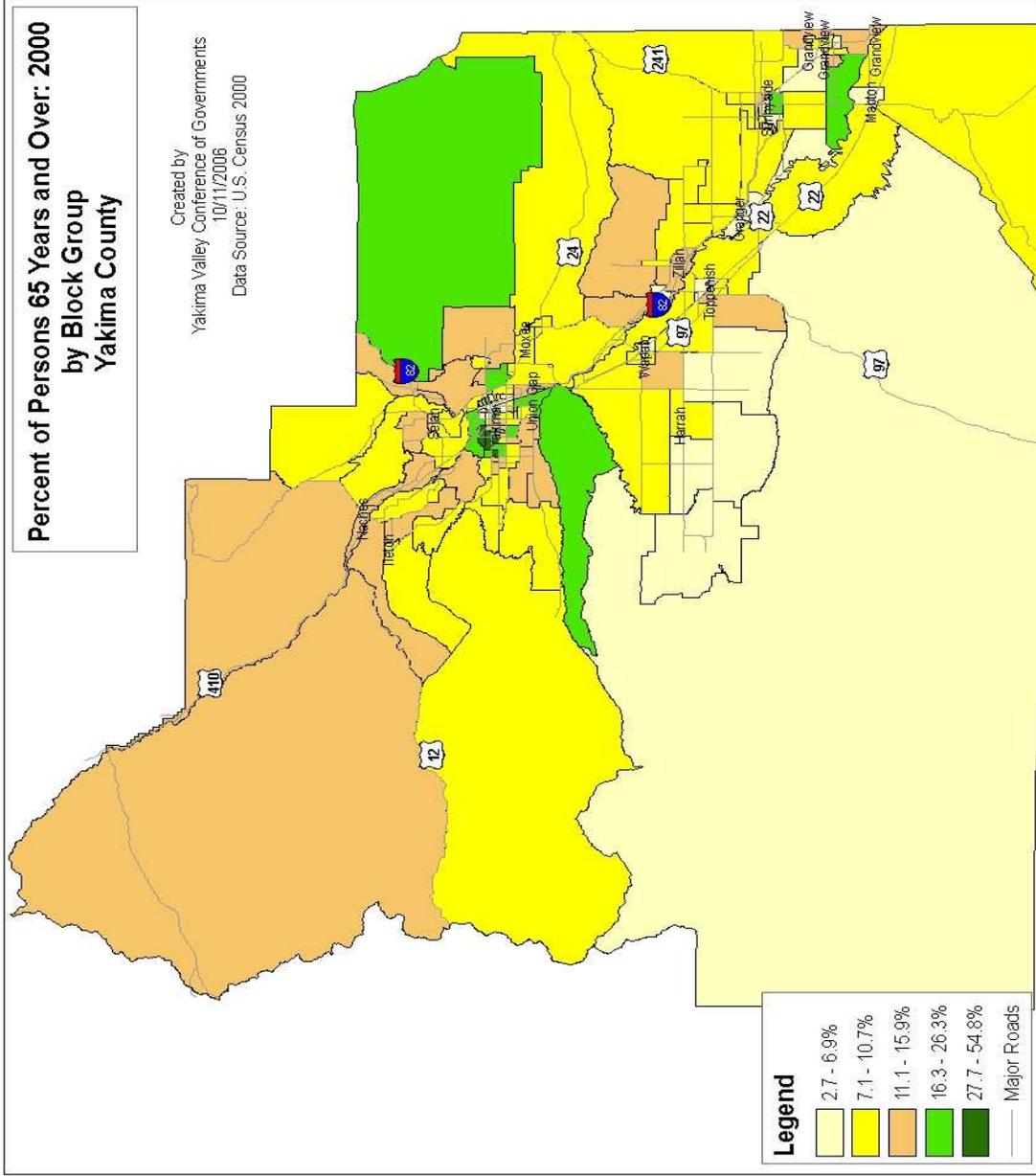
**PIP and Yakima Transit Stops and Connectors**  
**Yakima County**

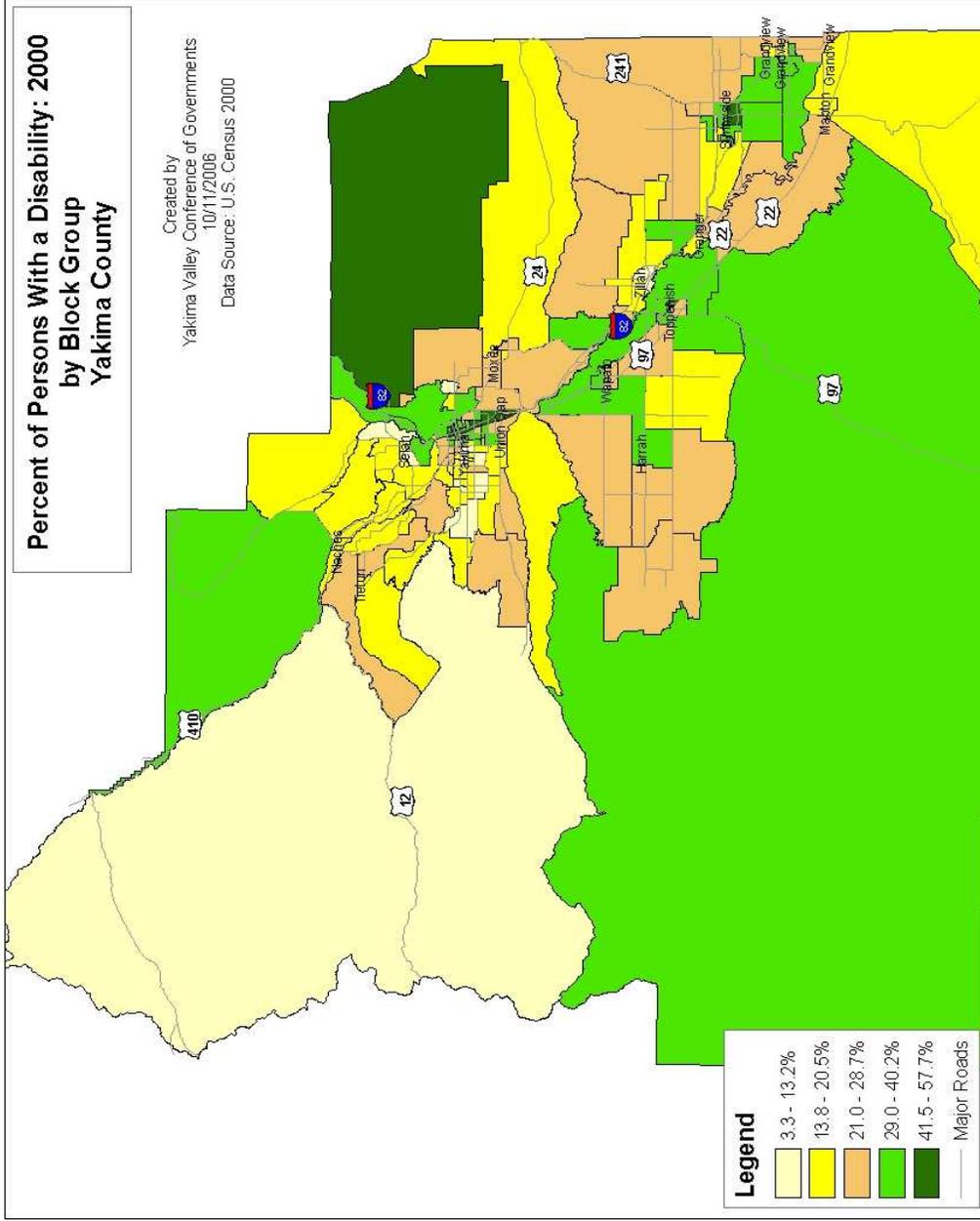


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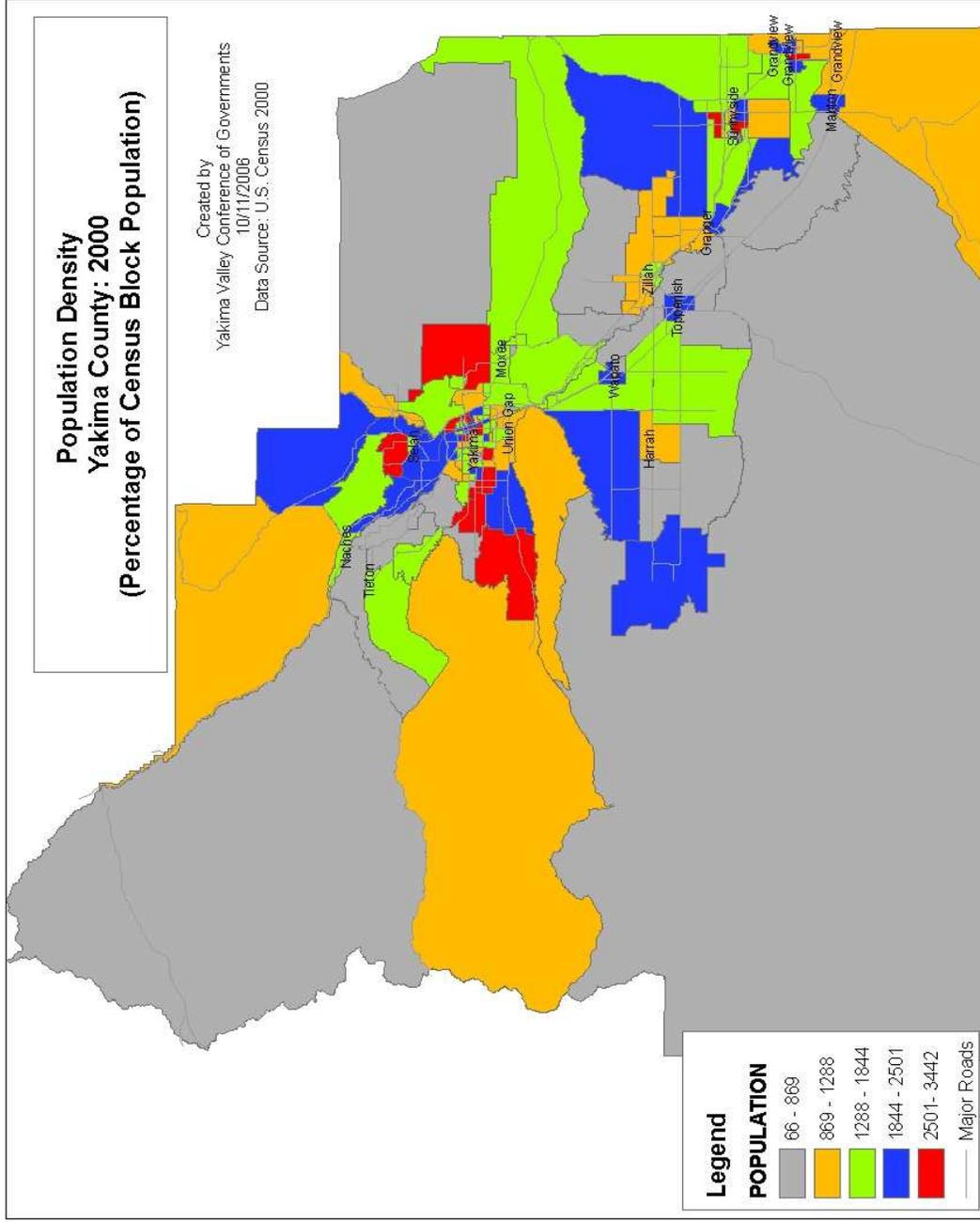
**Legend**

- PIP Stops
- PIP Connector Route
- Yakima Transit Stops
- Yakima Transit Connector Routes











## Yakima County Project Ranking

### (A) Projects – 50 Points

Agency	Title of Project	Type of Project	Service Area	Is the project new/expanded / preservation	Project Description	Funds Requested	Matching Funds
<b>People For People</b>	The Community Connector	Fixed Route	Yakima Valley from Yakima to Prosser	Preservation	This projects is a fare free Community Connector for the Yakima Valley beginning in Yakima and making four round-trips daily, five days a week, to Prosser and back to Yakima.	\$492,245	\$0
<b>People For People</b>	Yakima County Senior/Disabled Demand-Response Transportation	Dial-A-Ride	Yakima County	Preservation	Provide door-to-door and curb-to-curb transportation services to the elderly and to persons with disabilities	\$1,618,513	\$462,600
<b>People For People</b>	Yakima County Employment Transportation	Employment Options	Yakima County	Preservation	Provide dependable transportation to Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) clients, their dependents and the general public whose incomes fall under 175% of the poverty level.	\$926,882	\$0

<b>Yakima Transit</b>	Dial-A-Ride Vehicle Replacements	Capital: replace vans and minibus	Yakima	Preservation	To replace about one third of the fleet; starting with the older vans and minibuses. Our grant request will be for replacing three Cut-A-Way bus units and two small manual lift vans.	\$280,000	\$56,000
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<b>(B) Project – 25 Points</b>							
<b>Agency</b>	<b>Title of Project</b>	<b>Type of Project</b>	<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Is the project new/expanded/preservation</b>	<b>Project Description</b>	<b>Funds Requested</b>	<b>Matching Funds</b>
<b>Yakama Nation</b>	Mobility Coordinator / Manager	Mobility Management	South Central Yakima Valley	New Service	Create new marketing and outreach opportunities to increase participation, communication and integration of transportation. Assist with planning and promoting seminars to educate the public and employers in the South Central Yakima Valley on area transportation services and tasks necessary to encourage the rural and isolated populations to access services independently.	\$189,357	\$42,735

*No additional projects were submitted for ranking.*