

**Lake County Transportation Coordination Plan  
For the period  
July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026**

**Approved by TAC on February 12, 2025**

**I. Introduction:**

**a.) FTA Guidance**

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is developing guidance in the form of circulars to assist grantees in implementing the 5310 (Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities Program) and the New Freedoms Program beginning in FY07. *Draft* guidance was released in the Federal Register on 3/15/06. Excerpts from this guidance are included below:

Federal guidance on participation in the planning process emphasizes: (1) Ensuring adequate outreach efforts; (2) recognition of outreach efforts; and (3) participation from non-DOT funded partner agencies and organizations. FTA offers potential outreach strategies:

- Notice or flyers in centers of community activities.
- Newspaper or radio announcements
- E-mail lists.
- Web-postings
- Invitation letters to other government agency transportation providers, and advocacy groups.

FTA further proposes that recipients demonstrate a good faith effort to reach out to specific targeted partners by maintaining copies of notices, newspaper ads, etc., to document their outreach efforts.

FTA also proposes that the lead agency include the following groups and organizations in the coordinated planning process:

- Area transportation planning agencies.
- Transit riders and potential riders, including both general and targeted populations; those individuals with lower incomes, a representational cross-section of individuals with disabilities and older Americans.
- Public transportation providers.
- Private transportation providers, including School bus, taxi services, charter bus operators, etc.
- Non-profit transportation providers.
- Human service agencies funding and/or supporting access for transportation services.
- Other government agencies that administer health, employment, or other support programs; examples of such programs include Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Workforce Investment Act (WIA), Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Medicaid, Community Action Programs (CAP), Independent Living Centers (ILC) and Western Montana Aging Services Area VI programs.

FTA proposes that the lead agency convening the coordinated planning meeting(s) document the efforts they utilized, such as those suggested above, to solicit involvement.

**I. COMMUNITY AGENCY/ORGANIZATION INVOLVEMENT**

This section provides an overview of various transportation providers in Lake County, whether they are public, private or non-profit. Some entities would not be classified as transit agencies but provide some type of passenger transportation.

## **CONFEDERATED SALISH AND KOOTENAI TRIBES**

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes is a Tribal Government Organization. We are currently serving about 2700 individuals with our transportation program. We are funded through the Montana Department of Transportation and Federal Transit Administration. We provide contract services to Tribal Health and Human Services, Department of Public Health and Human Services, Tribal Voc-Rehab Program, Fatherhood Program and TANF program, and Salish Kootenai College (SKC)

We operate from the transportation hub, which is located above the Quick Silver Express Gas Station in Pablo, Montana. This is where our administrative offices are located, including the DHRD Transportation Program Manager, Administrative Assistant, Dispatcher, and Receptionist. It also includes our mechanic shop with two mechanics and a detailer.

Our transportation services revolve around the following services:

- Transport clients to Tribal and State Assistance Program Offices
- Transport clients to morning and evening routes to commute to work.
- Transport clients to medical appointments within the reservation boundaries and to healthcare specialists in Kalispell and Missoula.
- Transport clients to chemical dependency classes either through the Tribal or State programs.
- Transport clients to court-mandated Tribal or State Probation meetings.
- Transport clients to and from Case Managers through the Tribal Voc-Rehab, Fatherhood, or TANF program.
- Senior Center meals and dinners upon request
- Salish and Kootenai College students
- Services are available to Tribal members, members of other tribes, and local people within the reservation boundaries.

For years, we have coordinated transportation throughout the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal Reservation and off the reservation to Missoula and Kalispell. The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes Transportation Program provided 26,000 rides during FY 2024-2025. We travel to all communities within the exterior boundaries of the Flathead Indian reservation, about 222,500 miles yearly. We have 11 wheelchair vehicles and 10 non-wheelchair vehicles.

This current year CSKT is utilizing VIA scheduling software. We were looking to significantly increase automation of transit services to improve efficiency and reduce manual processes currently carried out by dispatchers, improve transparency and accuracy of reporting, and increase flexibility for riders, drivers and dispatchers with an optimized and integrated system.

## **WESTERN MONTANA AGENCY SERVICES AREA VI (aka Western Montana Transit)**

Our Transportation services revolve around the following services:

- Transport to medical appointments in Lake County, Kalispell and Missoula
- Transit to and from airports in Kalispell and Missoula.
- Shopping, senior centers, visitation and other destinations in Lake County, Kalispell and Missoula as drivers are available.

During FY25 (July to Dec 2024) the WMT provided 1541 rides and driving 52,490 miles which does not include Polson Senior Citizen Center mileage.

We operate 9 minivans including 2 non-powered ADA vans and 1 powerlift ADA 9 passenger van. We have a contract with Polson Senior Citizen Center to provide rides with 7.5 miles of their facility.

WMT coordinates transportation to outlying areas through the Salish Kootenai Tribal Transit, MRTMA, Mission Mountain Enterprises and Commercial Transportation providers.

WMT is a member of the Lake County Transportation Advisory Committee and Montana Transit Association and has been a Senior and Disabled Transportation and public provider since July 2024. WMT assumed the assets, contracts and personnel of Lake County Council on Aging related to transportation.

### **MISSION MOUNTAIN EMPOWERMENT**

Mission Mountain Empowerment is a non-profit corporation that provides a variety of support to people with developmental disabilities. We are currently serving about 40 people with intellectual disabilities in Lake County, Montana. We contract with the State of Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services to provide group home, community living, community employment, work activities and transportation services primarily in the Ronan and Polson areas.

We operate four group homes, a day program, training center and two thrift stores in both Polson and Ronan. We also provide Supported Living service for individuals living in their own homes. Our main office is in Polson.

Our transportation services revolve around the following services:

- Transport from group homes and community living sites in both communities to our activity centers and thrift stores.
- Transport to work sites.
- Medical appointments within the county and to specialists in Kalispell and Missoula, and occasional trips out of the preceding areas and out of state.
- Recreational opportunities throughout the communities in Lake County and to Kalispell and Missoula.
- Shopping trips throughout the communities and to Missoula or Kalispell.

We are able, if necessary, to coordinate transportation to outlying areas through the Salish Kootenai DHRD Tribal Transit for people attending our day services. We have occasionally loaned our vans to other community groups, families, and/or transported people who needed accessible transportation.

Mission Mountain Empowerment provided 15,923 rides in FY24 to about 45 individuals traveling close to 139,541 miles in an aged fleet of 23 vehicles. The average number of miles on vehicles across our fleet is 124,603. Of the current 19 operating vehicles, 8 of them are more than 15 years old. We are in dire need of replacement of some of the 15+ year-old vehicles, as many are in poor working conditions. Many vehicles do not transport enough clients. Other vehicles are no longer worth fixing. We cannot afford to pay the full price for needed new vehicles.

### **MT STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AND BLIND SERVICES (VRBS)**

VRBS provides employment support, training services and new ridership orientation training to clients in Lake County who have a documented disability and need assistance to gain or maintain employment. They serve

approximately 200 clients per year. Many of their clients do not possess a driver's license due to various issues; therefore, transportation needs are great within the agency's clientele as most are seeking jobs in the Mission Valley, Kalispell, or Missoula job market. Transportation for clients is needed for both community employment and re-training opportunities. Transportation services are needed both in-town and inter-city.

## **MISSOULA RAVALLI TMA**

Missoula Ravalli Transportation Management Association (MRTMA) is a private non-profit agency that has been offering transportation demand management services and resources since 1996. A six-member board of directors, selected from the public at large in Missoula, Ravalli and Lake Counties, oversees the organization. MRTMA consists of a staff of two full-time and two part-time office and management staff. The mission of MRTMA is to create a more livable region, by promoting the availability of transportation options to affect the reduction of single occupancy vehicle use. To accomplish this, MRTMA provides ride sharing programs, ride matching and scheduling services, coordination and development of park & ride facilities.

The communities served by MRTMA are located in Missoula, Ravalli, Lake, Butte Silver Bow and Gallatin County. The affected Missoula County communities are comprised of Missoula, Lolo, Evaro, Huson and Frenchtown. The affected Ravalli County communities are Hamilton, Corvallis, Victor, Stevensville, and Florence. The affected Lake County communities are: Charlo, Ronan, Pablo, St. Ignatius, Ravalli and Arlee. The affected Butte Silver Bow communities are comprised of Butte and Whitehall. The Gallatin County communities are comprised of Three Forks, Bozeman, and Manhattan. MRTMA provided 19,434 rides in Fiscal Year 2024 in the vanpool.

Missoula Ravalli TMA provides the following services:

### Vanpool Program:

The I Ride Vanpool program is designed to serve the commuter workforce living in communities along the Highway 93 corridor and working in the Missoula urban area. The program also provides reverse commute service to Missoula residents working in outlying communities, such as Hamilton and Arlee. The vanpool received MDT approval for statewide operations, which has resulted in vanpools in Gallatin County. The vanpool program controls operating costs through a volunteer driver program. The vanpool program had 20 routes serving an average of 125 individuals and 16 worksites.

### Special Services:

MRTMA provides transportation services for government officials touring community development projects.

### Ride Matching Program:

The Ride Sharing/Carpooling program is designed to serve the commuter workforce living in communities in Montana and working in other communities, individuals seeking to trip share and agencies/organizations providing rides between communities to post ride availability. The program is maintained by and accessed through the MRTMA website. In 2017 MRTMA partnered with Missoula In Motion to also utilize their Ride Amigos ride sharing software.

### Guaranteed Ride Home Program:

The Guaranteed Ride Home program, sponsored by Missoula In Motion, provides commuters who regularly vanpool, carpool, bus or are active users of the Way To Go Club, a way to get home or to a park-and-ride site when an emergency arises. To be eligible a person needs to be registered with the MRTMA. MRTMA contracts with the Huckleberry Taxi, BitterRoot Bus, Bitterroot Taxi, Polson Taxi and CSKT Transit to provide guaranteed ride home service for vanpoolers living and working in Ravalli and Lake County, respectively.

ETA Voucher Program: MRTMA administers the Emergency Transportation Assistance program for the Lake County TAC. The program offers vouchers from Community Medical Center, Marcus Daly Hospital, St. Luke's Hospital, Mineral Community Hospital and Lake County Job Service and CSKT. Transportation providers are BitterRoot Bus, Bitterroot Taxi, CSKT Transit, Western Montana Aging Services Area VI, Polson Taxi and Mineral County Pioneer Council. Since inception the program has provided 913 emergency rides.

COORDINATION DESCRIPTION: All Memorandums of Agreement/Understanding are attached as appendix documents.

## **POLSON SENIOR CITIZENS CENTER**

Polson Senior Citizens Center is a non-profit corporation that provides a variety of services to senior living in Polson and the surrounding area, including transportation. PSC has a sub-contract with WMT to provide transportation to seniors and the public for the Polson area only.

PSC is located at 504 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave East in Polson, MT. PSC owns this facility. Transportation services provided include but are not limited to shopping, medical appointments, dialysis, or other needed locations. PSC owns one van, one wheelchair van and a car. In FY24, PSC provided about 2200 rides for about 9300 miles for 2 vans titled in WMAS's name. Additional rides and miles on non-titled WMAS vehicles. The services operate between 6-8 hours per day depending on demand.

**ANNIE'S TAXI SERVICE** is the only taxi service operating in Lake County with limited hours.

## **II. COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION:**

The communities are located in Lake County and Sanders County. The effected communities are Polson, Ronan, Pablo, St. Ignatius, Big Arm, Hot Springs, Ravalli, Dixon, Camas Prairie, Elmo, Arlee, Evaro, Charlo, Dayton, Moiese and Niarada.

ARLEE: is located 29 miles north of Missoula. The community has a Tribal Health Clinic.

POLSON: is the Lake County seat of government and the largest city in Lake County. The community has a hospital and dental clinic. Polson is located 70 miles north of Missoula and 49 miles south of Kalispell.

RONAN: is located 12 miles south of Polson. The community has a hospital and dental clinic. Ronan is the second largest community in Lake County.

PABLO: is located approximately 7 miles south of Polson. Pablo is the hub for tribal members. The community is home to the College, DHRD offices, Tribal offices, and Mission Valley Power.

St. IGNATIUS: is located approximately 27 miles South of Pablo. The community has private dental services, doctor clinics, THHS medical services such as doctor clinic, dental, behavioral health, hearing, and a pharmacy

DAYTON, ELMO, BIG ARM, RAVALLI: are very small communities along Highway 93.

ARLEE, ELMO, NIARADA, HOT SPRINGS, CAMAS PRAIRIE, CHARLO, MOIESE AND DIXON: are small communities located on main arterials adjacent to Highway 93.

### **III. COMMUNITY NEEDS:**

The unmet need estimates in the *Rural Passenger Needs Study*, completed in March 2001 by LSC Transportation Consultants for the Montana Department of Transportation, incorporated needs related to households without transportation, seniors, low-income and people with disabilities. Program trips for Lake County are those transportation needs associated with specific programs for mental health services (such as Head Start, Development Services programs, Senior Nutrition, or Sheltered Workshop programs). The annual transit need estimates for Lake County were 320,619 trips for the public including youth and seniors, 21,400 trips for persons with disabilities, and 66,953 program trips. The 1999 total transit need reported in the *Rural Passenger Needs Study* for Lake County is estimated at 408,972 annual trips or which equates to approximately 8 percent of the existing transit need is being met with 92 percent of the transit need for the county unmet. The inability to provide service to remote housing within the county is the profound area of unmet needs. Drivers average 120 miles per day. Tribal Transit routinely has 16 to 18 drivers working per day, amounting to approximately 2,100 miles a day for the fleet.

There are 3 retirement homes, 5 Personal home care agencies and 4 apartment complexes serving seniors and individuals with disabilities in Lake County. There are numerous low-income family housing complexes located throughout Lake County. According to the 2000 US Census there are 14.5% or 3,851 seniors, 19.3% or 4,741 individuals with disabilities living in Lake County. There are also 18.7% or 4,862 individuals living below the poverty level in the County. These groups are typically identified as transportation dependent. With Lake County being comprised of many small communities with approximately 10 or more miles between each, land mass/travel time is a constant barrier to addressing the unmet transportation needs in the county.

We find many of these individuals seek transportation with elderly friends and/or require their children to take time off from work to transport them to medical appointments. Or they simply let their condition become a medical emergency in order to qualify for emergency transportation services.

The necessity to keep the small communities of Lake County linked through transportation is vital for not only the survival of the individuals, but the community itself. If residents are unable to access the necessary medical and social services, they are forced into making the decision to let their health deteriorate or move to another community. If their only option is to move to communities that offer the needed transportation services, we will certainly see the demise of small towns across the county.

Therefore, the Lake County Transportation Advisory Committee actively seeks partnership with local and regional agencies. Many look to the Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribal Transit to act as the lead agency for the county, as well as, a regional connection to other transportation providers such as the Missoula International Airport, Flathead Transit, Western Montana Transit, Polson Senior Citizens Center and Missoula Ravalli TMA for individuals needing transportation to Missoula, other parts of Montana and nationally.

### **IV. Opportunities for Public Involvement**

Grant applications are available to the public upon request and comments accepted via phone or email.

### **V. TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

The Lake County Transportation Advisory Committee meets quarterly on the second Wednesday in February, May, August and November at 11 am at CSKT Transit Center, 52001 Quick Silver Road, Pablo, MT. The public is

advised of TAC meetings by email, notices mailed to senior centers, and notice posted in local newspapers in Community Activities. The TAC Officers are elected annually at the February meeting.

#### **VI. FUTURE GOALS AND PLANS:**

1) Short Term: Coordination efforts will continue with short term goals (1-3 years) are as follows:

- Continue to expand Transportation Advisory Committee membership to include veterans, public, businesses, private transportation providers and Health and Human Service grantees. - Ongoing
- Continue to expand and incorporate MRTMA "I Ride" vanpool services.
- Expand service area to address unmet needs in remote areas. – Ongoing
- Maintain partnerships and linkages with adjacent county providers to facilitate seamless transportation along the Highway 93 corridor. - Ongoing
- Continue working with the local Job Service and Working Innovations to address unmet employment transportation needs. - ongoing
- Continue working with local medical providers to address unmet medical transportation needs. - Ongoing
- Work with local medical facilities to encourage referrals to local providers to their no-show appointments.
- Work with local pharmacies to refer clients who have exhibited difficulty in picking up prescriptions.

2) Long Term: 3–5-year goals are as follows:

- Explore participation in any federal transportation grant program (i.e. HUD and USDA) to initiate sustainable community activities.
- Continue to coordinate with Taxi, VTS and DAV Van to facilitate additional transportation options.
- Work with local medical facilities to encourage referrals to local providers for their no-show appointments.
- Work with local pharmacies to refer clients who have exhibited difficulty in picking up prescriptions.

#### **FY 2026 FUNDING REQUESTS:**

In the upcoming year, the following agencies will be requesting operating funding for new or replacement vehicles from the Montana Department of Transportation (listed alphabetically, not implied priority or ranking)

1) Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribes will be requesting operating funds for the CSKT Tribal Transit program:

\$131,816 in 5311                      \$ 26,579 in TransADE

2) Western Montana Transit requests \$76,098 in 5311 operating funds, and \$22,243 in TransADE. Capital funds 5311 are requesting for 3 non-ADA AWD minivans at \$49,999 each and 2 ADA AWD mid-top extended vans at \$149,405 each for a total of \$448,807 .

3) Polson Senior Center will be requesting no Capital funds.

4) Mission Mountain Empowerment will be requesting \$ 223,549 in 5310 Capital funds for two non-ADA AWD 7-passenger minivans at \$49,999 each and \$123,550 1 ADA AWD 9-passenger mid-top extended van

5) Missoula Ravalli TMA will be requesting \$195,650 in 5311 operating funds and \$ 113,974 in CMAQ funds and \$ 42,000 in Capital funds for 1 minivan.