

Butte Silver Bow County Transportation Coordination Plan



January 2023

Community Description

Butte-Silver Bow County is situated in the heart of the Rocky Mountains in southwestern Montana. Butte began as a collection of small mining claims, becoming a large and booming mining center during the early 1900s. Butte is known as "The Richest Hill on Earth" due to the vast wealth of valuable ores lying beneath the surface. While silver and gold were actively mined in Butte, it was copper that truly put Butte on the map. Butte has a long history of Public Transit that started in Butte in 1887 and by 1933 under the Butte Electric Railway there was 38 miles of track and 57 motor cars carrying 10,000,000 passengers per year.

The city of Butte has seen many changes over the past 100 years; currently Butte is in a transition from the older areas of Butte to newer developments to the south. Silver Bow County is approximately 718 square miles in size; ranking it as the smallest county in Montana in terms of land area, and 8th in the state for population with 34,200 citizens according to the 2010 census, which is about the same as the 2000 census. Butte-Silver Bow has a population density of approximately 48 persons per square mile. The population is most dense within the northern portion of Butte.

A majority of residents that live in Silver Bow County have access to personal vehicles that allow them access to jobs, education, employment, medical, and social opportunities. However, according to the 2010 Census, approximately 10% of the households in Silver Bow County do not own any vehicles. Those individuals must rely on public transportation, friends, or families.

Nationwide a significant number of transit dependent individuals are 60 years and older. According to the 2010 Census 21% of the total population for Butte-Silver Bow are individuals that 60 years and older. Nationwide, approximately 10% of the population has some form of mobility impairment; although this is typically much lower in rural areas. This holds true for Butte-Silver Bow, where approximately 2% of the population have some type of mobility limitation. Low-income persons tend to depend on transit to a greater extent than more wealthy persons or persons with a high level of disposable income. The portion of population living below poverty level within Butte-Silver Bow is approximately 15%, according to the 2010 census.

Transportation Advisory Committee Description

The Transit Advisory Committee (TAC) was formed for the development of the Butte-Silver Bow Transit Coordination Plan. The TAC is represented by the five major Transportation providers in our community Butte-Silver Bow Transit, BSW, Aware, BSB Developmental Disabilities Council and Belmont Senior Center. Other members include the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Montana Voc-Rehab Services, Ability Montana, Montana Blind & Low Vision Services, Area V Agency on

Aging, other State of Montana representatives, and various other agencies have been involved on a more limited basis, we also have a consumer that attends the TAC meetings. The general consensus in the development of our Coordination Plan was to improve transportation services in Butte by minimizing duplication of services while enhancing transportation access and striving to provide high quality, personalized and cost-effective services for the community.

A description of the transportation services provided by the five providers is as follows:

Butte-Silver Bow Transit Division (Copper City Connection)

Butte-Silver Bow Transit has been providing public Transportation service to the City of Butte since 1976. The Transit Division is under the umbrella of the Butte-Silver Bow Public Works Department and the main office is 126 W. Granite, Butte, MT. Butte-Silver Bow Transit operates a fixed route system within the Butte urban area which includes the City of Walkerville. Butte-Silver Bow Transit System has changed its name to the Copper City Connection and provides reliable and affordable Transit services to our 34,000 residents. The bus fleet consists of five 2013 Low floor Gillig buses, 2011 International 23 passenger bus, 2010 10 passenger cut-away bus, 12-passenger ADA cut-away bus, along with three Transit Vans for the para-transit service.

Butte-Silver Bow Transit began operating the para-transit service on July 1, 2014. The hours of operation for the fixed route and para-transit service are Monday through Friday from 6:45 a.m. to 6:15 p.m. and the service route operates from 8:45a.m to 4:15p.m Monday through Saturday. All buses meet every ½ hour at the Bus Transfer Station which allows convenient transfers to all areas of our community.

Butte-Silver Bow has received additional TransAde funds that will be used for providing Senior Transportation through the Belmont Senior Center and will allow Butte-Silver Bow to redirect 5311 Funds that were previously used to fund senior transportation back to our fixed route operations.

A five-year Transit Development Plan was completed in 2012 and routes were changed and reconfigured as follows:

Purple Route/Walkerville Route

This route serves the uptown business district and Butte High School. The route travels North on Utah/Arizona Streets to the Uptown continues North on Excelsior through Walkerville down Main Street to Granite across Granite to Montana then to the Mural Park Bus Stop on Park Street. The bus returns South on Arizona/Utah Streets to the Bus Transfer Station. The Walkerville Loop takes ½ hour to run the route. This portion of the route has remained the same under the reorganization. However, this Bus used to

run the Racetrack Loop and has been rerouted to run the Harrison Avenue Route (Orange).

Green Route/ Montana Tech Uptown Route

This route provides service to Front Street, the Westside, Montana Tech, Uptown area and Main Street. The bus travels from the Bus Transfer Station over Front Street to Montana Street over Platinum Street with access to St. James Hospital and surrounding medical facilities. The bus continues up Excelsior Street to Montana Tech Campus then over Park Street to the Mural Park Street Bus Stop. The bus returns to the Bus Transfer Station by traveling down Main Street to Front Street. Butte-Silver Bow Transit and MT. Tech have developed a student rider program that allows students to ride the bus for free with a student ID and MT Tech then pays for the rides at the end of the year. This route was not changed and runs the Harrison Avenue loop on the other portion of the route.

Red Route- Oregon Avenue/Racetrack Route

This route has been changed as the bus used to run the Oregon Avenue Route on the first loop and then the Montana Street Loop on the second leg of the route. The TDP Plan recommended changing this route by combining the two routes which have similar coverage and are a lower number of passengers which did not warrant ½ hour service. The new Oregon Avenue Route provides adequate coverage on a hourly basis and this change allowed BSB Transit to add ½ hour service to Harrison Avenue commercial corridor. The Racetrack Loop that was previously served by the Walkerville/Racetrack bus is now the Oregon/Racetrack bus and the route has remained the same. Starting in the summer of 2018, the Oregon Avenue route will divert into Stodden Park to stop at the Ridge Waters waterpark during the summer months.

Orange Route/Harrison Avenue

This route has been changed with the addition of the bus to Harrison providing ½ hour service to meet the demands of our passengers. The route travels directly South on Harrison Avenue to the Highlands College (formerly the College of Technology) and then returns north on Harrison to the Bus Transfer Station. This route provides service to major commercial centers for shopping and employment they include Sears, Wal-Mart, K Mart, Butte Plaza Mall and many more businesses in the corridor. This route along with the Walkerville provides most rides for work and training opportunities for our low-income riders. This route change has been well received and is responsible for a significant increase for the first six months.

Blue Route/Around Town Route(Service Route)

This route serves a large portion of the Butte-Urban areas. The route is designed to serve elderly and disabled population by traveling north to the Belmont Senior Center, St. James Hospital, Uptown area and senior living centers to transport person to shopping centers and medical services. This route travel southbound down Continental

Drive stopping at the Copper Ridge Care Center, Continental Gardens, Big Sky Living, Vintage Suites then travels over Elizabeth Warren to Wal-Mart then north with stops at Highland View and Columbus Plaza apartments before arriving at the Bus Transfer Station. The Bus provides front door service to all the senior centers. The Saturday bus service is provided by this bus with an addition of Walkerville added to the route.

Para-Transit Service

Butte-Silver Bow Transit is operating the para-transit service primarily using three Transit Vans and three full time and one part time drivers. The BSB Transit operations began on July 1, 2014 and the operations began by utilizing the old fixed route Orion II buses and borrowing used buses from the Belmont Senior Center and BSB Developmental Disabilities Council to provide the service. BSB was fortunate to receive a van that was not being used in Laurel, MT and the MDT Transit Section transferred the vehicle to Butte and we also received two mini-vans that have been put into operation and have helped tremendously with our service. Butte Silver Bow Para-Transit was fortunate to receive through a grant from the Montana Transit Association dispatching software. The dispatching software is very helpful when scheduling rides across the community. With the dispatch software Butte Silver Bow also purchased tablets and installed them in the para-transit vehicles. Dispatch and the drivers are on real time and can communicate when a rider is ready to be picked up or if a ride has been cancelled. The para-transit service is a demand response service for persons with disabilities that are unable to use our fixed route system. The persons must meet eligibility requirements to qualify for the service. A review committee comprised of representatives from MT DPHHS, Montana Blind & Low Vision Service, MILP and BSB DD Council all lend their expertise to review the applications. The service is offered Monday through Friday 6:45 a.m. to 6:15 p.m. and reservations can be made for next day service. The Para-Transit committee has updated the para-transit application.

BSB Transit will coordinate with BSB Road and Community Enrichment Department to improve snow removal along bus routes and bus stops.

Butte Silver Bow Transit is requesting 3 large heavy-duty buses, replacement for garage door openers and replacement heaters.

Belmont Senior Center

The Belmont Senior Center provides a door to door service to riders (seniors) who come to the Belmont Senior Center for lunch Monday through Friday. The Belmont has 2 buses which cover two city routes. The buses leave from the Belmont Senior Center at 9:00 each day picking up seniors from their homes. Without safe, reliable bus transportation seniors would not be able to come to the Belmont for lunch or many other activities, which include; bingo, pinochle, exercise, nursing clinics, foot clinic, SHIP, and Medicare appointments and other entertainment. The Belmont Senior Center

provides a home away from home where seniors can visit and interact with other friends and neighbors. The seniors can also receive information and assistance for a variety of services throughout Butte and the surrounding area.

The Belmont Senior Center provides transportation to grocery store, pharmacy, doctor appointments, hospital, nursing homes, and assisted living visits to loved ones.

BSW

BSW provides private services to developmentally disabled individuals. Funding for the agency is based mainly from Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) Vocational Rehabilitation, and Developmental Disabilities Program.

BSW provides transportation and employment services for disabled persons within the Butte-Silver Bow area. BSW produces clothing and apparel, laundry textiles and supplies, park equipment, textiles, fibers, household linens, and piece goods, picnic tables, and survey stakes.

BSW provides transportation services for the residents of group homes and for persons with disabilities. Approximately 58,988 trips are provided each year for clients. Portions of BSW clients utilize Butte-Silver Bow Transit on a daily basis and the city taxi.

BSW is requesting an AWD Extended Van.

AWARE, Inc.

AWARE is a non-profit agency, headquartered in Anaconda, Montana that provides community based services in Butte and in multiple communities across the State of Montana. AWARE provides services to adults and youths with challenging mental, emotional and in some cases, physical needs who otherwise would be served in a more restrictive setting or in some cases, not at all. These services ensure that these individuals achieve maximum independence, productivity, and integration into the community.

AWARE is directed by a seven-member Board and currently employs approximately 800 people in multiple communities around the State, including Butte. AWARE offers a variety of services in fully licensed and nationally accredited programs, geared towards improving lifestyles and opportunities for Montanans affected by disabilities or mental challenges.

In Butte, AWARE currently operates three therapeutic youth group homes, one adult mental health group home, six adult developmentally disabled group homes and one

Day Service Center. Transportation is integral to the services provided and AWARE has committed approximately a dozen vehicles to provide transportation services to the clients residing at AWARE Butte group homes and Day Service Center. These vehicles provide transportation services for a number of activities which include but are not limited to day service activities, work, school, recreation, and medical appointments. Transportation services are available to clients seven days per week, 24 hours per day.

Silver Bow Developmental Disabilities Council

Silver Bow Developmental Disabilities Council (SBDDC) is a private non-profit agency formed in 1977. The agency funding comes from the Department of Public Health and Human Services. SBDDC has a goal to assist people with disabilities so they can complete their goals to be independent within the community. SBDDC provides transportation to constituents to different events including work, medical appointments, recreational outings, and basic life needs. SBDDC has done travel training with clients so that they are able to ride the fixed route system. SBDDC provides transportation in a variety of ways. They own a 2011 Ford Econoline 12-passenger van, a 2007 Converted Dodge Grand Caravan, a 2005 Grand Caravan and a 2002 Honda CRV. They also reimburse staff and families for covered transportation rides in non-owned vehicles. The first quarter of FY20 there were 30,000 miles of rides in these non-owned vehicles and are averaging 7,500 miles a quarter in owned vehicles. SBDDC has partnered with Paratransit, nursing homes, the Belmont Senior Center and Whitehall Transportation over the years by loaning vehicles in non-peak hours. Until this fiscal year, 2020, SBDDC has leased Glacier Park vans for the winter months for Special Olympic and other special event transportation needs. That lease program no longer is available. The director of SBDDC sits on the ADA Para-Transit Committee, TAC, and local ADA committee.

SBDDC is requesting an AWD Extended Van.

Montana Independent Living Project (MILP)

Montana Independent Living Project (MILP), a resource center for people with disabilities, has been able to partner very closely with the Butte Silver Bow Transit System to provide travel training to individuals with disabilities wishing to access public transportation. Through this partnership we have assisted several individuals in becoming independent bus riders and assisted BSB transit in increasing ridership to a high need population. MILP has members that sit on the ADA Para-Transit Committee, TAC, and local ADA committee.

Montana Independent Living Project has no capital requests.

DPHHS Blind and Low Vision Services

Blind and Low Vision Services is part of Vocational Rehabilitation Services. We provide Vocational Rehabilitation to individuals with low vision who wish to gain or maintain meaningful employment. We have a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, a Vision Rehabilitation Therapist who assists individuals with low vision learn daily living skills and an Orientation and Mobility Specialist. BLVS's Orientation and Mobility Specialist serves on BSB TAC. An Orientation and Mobility Specialist assists individuals who are blind or have low vision learn to navigate their environment. This is often done through teaching the person who to use a cane to interpret the environment and detect obstacles, as well as how to know where they are, where they need to get to, and how they are going to get there. Learning the transportation system whether it is the fixed route or Paratransit is an important part of this. The Orientation and Mobility Specialist also assists individuals in the general Vocational Rehabilitation program learn the fixed route. This is not typically what an Orientation and Mobility Specialist does, as the profession is focused on individuals with vision loss.

Blind and Low Vision Services also serves individuals who are 55 over and living with vision loss by teaching low vision skills and offering some limited low vision technology. This is a no cost program to the individual.

ACTION, INC.

Action Inc. is a private, non-profit organization that provides a variety of safety net services to poor and low-income people in Butte and Southwest Montana. For many of the agency's participants, transportation is a challenge, which can impede their access to important services. As part of the Continuum of Care Coalition that organizes an annual service connect event for homeless families and individuals, Action Inc. works with Butte-Silver Bow Transit Services to provide free bus service to people wishing to attend the event at the Maroon Activity Center in January. At the event, participants are able to access critical medical, housing and other social services as well as get food, clothing, a haircut and shower. Free bus service that has been offered in Butte-Silver Bow over the last couple of years has been critical to the poor and low-income people served by Action Inc., particularly the elderly and/or disabled, and their ability to access our services. Action Inc. also provides transportation services to the Butte-Head Start program.

Jefferson Bus Lines and Salt Lake Express

In 2013 the Intercity Bus service in Montana came to halt because of the shutdown of Rimrock Stages. Jefferson Bus Lines and Salt Lake Express stepped up as a temporary fix to keep intercity bus service going.

Jefferson Bus Lines is the provider of intercity bus transportation between Missoula and I-90 east assuming the routes previously served by Rimrock Stages/Greyhound.

Jefferson Bus Lines has been providing very safe and efficient passenger service, the company also provides a number of other services for its customers such as same day package delivery to all the destinations they serve. Jefferson Bus Lines has assumed the agent duties for Greyhound at the Bus Transfer Center.

Salt Lake Express which runs the route from Butte to Salt Lake City twice daily. Salt Lake Express also provides a single route daily from Great Falls to Butte meeting the 7:00 PM routes.

Butte-Silver has decided to continue to lease the Bus Transfer Station for inter-city connections. The Butte Transfer Center has served approximately 40,000 inter-city travelers each year.

The Future of Transit in Butte

The Transit Advisory Committee represents: Butte-Silver Bow City / County Government, Aware Inc., BSW, Belmont Senior Center and Montana Department of Transportation Transit Division and private providers. The following is a list of the members: Joe Gilboy, Area V Council on Aging; Belinda Ballard, Blind & Low Vision Services; Cory Johns Butte-Silver Bow Transit Director; Todd Hoar BSB DD Council; Ann Ueland, Belmont Senior Center; Mark Melby, BSW; Cassie Weightman, Ability Montana; Ron Knight, AWARE, Inc., Tina Crummett, Southwest Community Health.

During the planning stages for the coordination of services we reviewed the demographic data of the community and it became apparent that Butte-Silver Bow must pursue a coordinated effort with all transit providers in our community so that we may meet the needs of the elderly, mobility impaired, disabled, low income, and individuals without access to a vehicle.

When developing the coordination plan our main focus is to improve transportation services to the community, minimize duplication of services, enhance transportation access, and provide the most appropriate cost effective transportation possible with available resources.

The Butte-Silver Bow Transit Committee has accomplished coordinating Transit Services under the City and County of Butte-Silver Bow. BSW and AWARE has been included in the Transit development plan to incorporate the DD service they perform for their consumers. Belmont Senior Center will provide their own transportation services.

The Transit Advisory Committee will have quarterly meetings to insure that coordination efforts are being achieved. During these meetings we will encourage riders from the community to attend (elderly, low income, persons with disabilities, the general public

and minority population groups). Since a coordination plan is a living document each day we must work to coordinate our services.

The Transit Advisory Committee currently meets all transportation needs that we have identified with dependable, reliable and cost effective services. In our many meetings we have established goals to outreach the various agencies and Health Care facilities (i.e. Southwest Mental Health Services, Butte Convalescent Care Center and etc.) to identify any unmet needs in our community.

The Transit Advisory Committee entities currently provide services to work places and retail shopping centers.

Butte-Silver Bow has approximately 15% of the population living below Federal poverty levels. The majority of these residents reside in the areas served by the Walkerville Bus Route. A total of 12% of the households do not have access to a private vehicle and are Transit dependent. The only access to work and training related activities is by City bus. The BSB Transit needs assessment is determined by the areas in our community that contain the highest percentage of zero vehicle household that are elderly, low income and mobility limited residents. The census tract information was utilized to determine if BSB Transit was serving the greatest need areas of our community. The new Transit Development Plan will look again at the areas we are currently serving and areas not being served such as the Second Street neighborhood.

BSW currently provides daily transportation services for seventy one developmentally disabled men and women. These consumers are served by five buses that transport from group homes and private residents to their individual programs, work training and job sites. At present BSW is accruing costs that exceed current revenues received from the DPHHS and the JARC funds would allow the agency to recover a portion of the total transportation costs.

AWARE provides approximately 35,000 rides for developmentally disabled men and women from group homes to MT View Social Development Center, BSW and other agencies.

Butte-Silver Bow advertises the application to solicit public comment and comment are also solicited at the Council of Commissioners meeting at which the application is approved.

Butte-Silver Bow Transit hopes to identify changes in our operations that would provide for more growth possibly route changes and marketing efforts we discover in our Transit Development Plan update.

As the 5311 recipient, Butte-Silver Bow City/County Government will manage the coordination plan and facilitate coordination efforts with the other transportation providers. Butte-Silver Bow Transit (fixed route and Para-transit) and, The Belmont Senior Center will operate under the funds designated from the 5311 program.

Short and Long Term Goals

- On a daily basis personnel will monitor transit services that have been coordinated to make sure we are meeting the needs of our customers.
- The Transit Advisory Committee will meet on a quarterly basis to assess our coordination efforts. By meeting on a continual basis we hope to identify the weak and strong points of our transportation services. This analysis should provide us with information on what is working and to determine where we need to improve our services. This will help the committee develop the future coordination plans.
- Request funding for a transportation study for Butte-Silver Bow.
- Study the possibility of an expanded service grant for transportation for medical services.
- Work on getting all Bus Stop signs up and accessible areas. Work with bench vendor on getting benches at bus stop locations.