



Transportation System Plan & Safe Streets and Roads for All Plan

Memorandum

Title: End of Project Public Involvement Summary

Date: November 7, 2025

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Introduction

Umatilla County wants to make transportation safer and better for everyone. From March through September 2025, the County asked residents what they think about getting around and what roads or intersections need improvement. This feedback is being used to create two plans: the Transportation System Plan (TSP) and the Safe Streets and Roads For All Plan (SS4A).

Figure 1: Example images of digital engagement strategies



Made up of staff from the County and Zan Associates, the engagement team used different methods to hear from people across Umatilla County. They set up information tables at community events, visited local businesses, created an online engagement site, and used social media and radio ads to spread the word. County staff also gave presentations and talked directly with community leaders. All of these efforts helped collect ideas and concerns from residents about transportation in their area. Table 1 shows the different ways the County reached out to people during this first phase of planning.

Table 1: Engagement strategies

Strategy	Description	Timing (2025)
Online Engagement Site	Website to gather community input on the TSP and SS4A through interactive activities—a survey and comment map—that received participation from 283 unique contributors	March – September
Tabling Events	Tabling at community events (see Table 2: Participation in online and in-person engagement)	March – September
Door-to-Door Business Flyering	Flyering to freight businesses in Umatilla County	April
Presentation	Presentation to the Proud River Leadership Group	March 18
Stakeholder Interview	Interview with the Umatilla County Sherriff’s office	March 7
Handout	One-page document available in English and Spanish used to inform people about the TSP and SS4A through concise project information; distributed via email, at the tabling events, during business flyering, and at the Proud River Leadership Group presentation	March - September
Social Media	Social media posts and Facebook advertisements targeting people in Umatilla County	March - April
Project Video	Animated video in English and Spanish with project information posted on the project website and linked in social media advertisements	April - September
Radio Advertisements	Radio advertisements in English and Spanish requesting participation in the online engagement site and in-person events	April
Emails	Emails to community leaders and local organizations requesting participation in the online engagement site and asking them to share on their social media channels and with the communities they represent	March - May

Engagement Key Findings

Participants shared their transportation experiences and needs through the project website and conversations with County staff. Several important locations and themes came up often. These common concerns will guide the TSP and SS4A plans.



Talking to a young person at the Rip City Rally event in September 2025

Locations

1. **US 395 through Hermiston** is considered unsafe due to heavy traffic, dangerous intersections, and aggressive driving.
2. **Umatilla River Road** between Hermiston and Umatilla is considered unsafe due to narrow lanes, poor lighting, and dangerous conditions for all users.
3. **OR 207** has multiple problematic intersections described as unsafe by some participants.
4. **OR 11** between Pendleton and the Washington State line is considered unsafe, with many respondents avoiding this route entirely.
5. **Punkin Center Road** is considered to have unsafe intersections, especially at the intersection of US 395.

6. **US 30** through Pendleton needs intersection improvements and pedestrian safety measures due to poor visibility and dangerous walking conditions.
7. **Westland Road / Highland Avenue** in Hermiston is considered unsafe due to dangerous intersections, poor road surfaces, and missing sidewalks.
8. **Rieth Road** between Echo and Rieth has potholes, poor road surfaces, and safety hazards like falling rocks.
9. **The Thorn Hollow Road Bridge** has been closed for over five years, forcing residents to take long detours on poorly maintained unpaved roads.
10. **US 395 in Pendleton** is unsafe due to dangerous intersections with frequent crashes, poor roads, and missing sidewalks.
11. **S 1st Street** in Hermiston is unsafe due to multiple dangerous intersections with poor visibility and confusing intersections.
12. **Feedville Road** in Hermiston is problematic due to ongoing construction, poor road surfaces after work is completed, and a dangerous intersection with Highway 395.
13. **Powerline Road** in Hermiston feels unsafe due to high speeds and poor road surface conditions.

Themes

1. **Poor road conditions and slow maintenance response times** are primary transportation concerns in Umatilla County.
2. Respondents want **more bus routes and better schedules** on the Kayak system, especially to reach rural areas and match traveler work hours.
3. **Heavy truck traffic is habitually moving through neighborhoods** with "No Thru Trucks" signs, creating safety concerns on residential streets.
4. Respondents want **intersections with better safety features** like traffic signals, flashing crosswalk signals, or roundabouts to prevent crashes.
5. **Speeding and aggressive driving are major safety concerns** throughout the County, especially near important destinations like schools.
6. Respondents want **more sidewalks, bike lanes/trails, and walking paths** to make it safer to get around without driving.
7. **Weather hazards like black ice, snow drifting, flooding, and rockfall create safety concerns** that are perceived to be inadequately addressed on county roads.
8. **In-person events reached more people with transportation barriers** than online engagement, showing the County should continue to use mixed engagement strategies in the future.

Participants

To maximize participation and feedback, the County focused its outreach efforts on both online and in-person events (Table 2). In-person conversations were held at times and locations tailored to reach people who face transportation challenges.

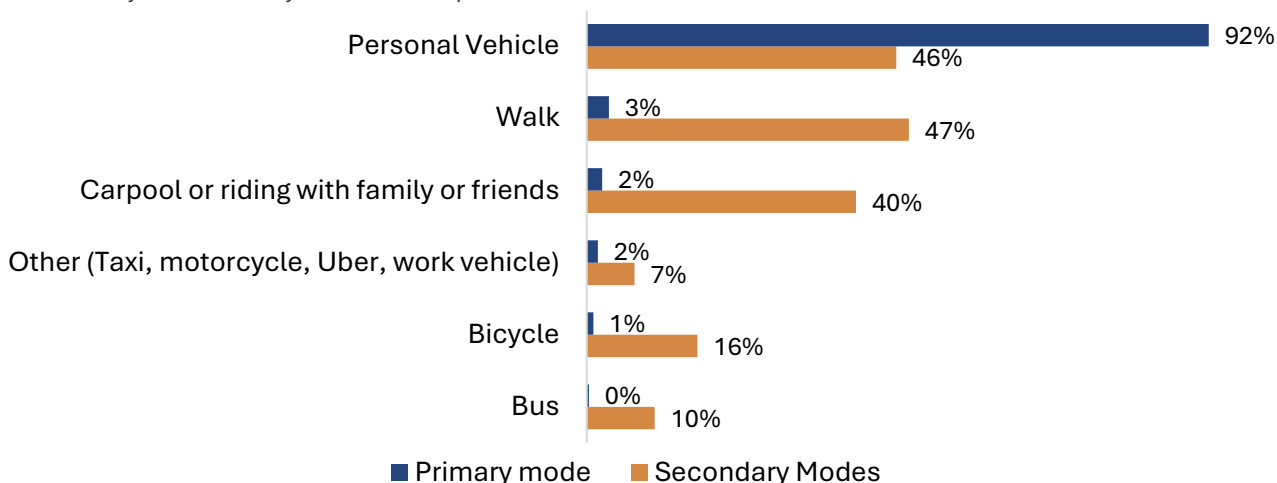
Table 2: Participation in online and in-person engagement

Strategy	Description	Count
Online Survey	Online survey to gather information about current travel habits, assessments of the transportation system, and barriers to different travel modes	308 responses
Online Comment Map	Interactive map to identify specific locations where transportation improvements are needed or where existing infrastructure works well	15 comments
Farm City Ag & Home Expo	Tabling during the Expo on March 7-8 to reach residents of Umatilla County	100 interactions
Proud River Leadership Group	Presentation to the Group on March 18 to reach workers	15 interactions
Cinco de Mayo Celebration	Tabling at the Celebration on May 4 to reach Latinos and families	50 interactions
Pilot Rock Saturday Market	Tabling at the Market on May 10 to reach rural communities	40 interactions
Wednesdays in the Park	Tabling at a public concert at Roy Ralley Park in Pendleton on July 2	30 interactions
Mission Market	Tabling at Mission Market—a gas station within the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR)—on July 11	35 interactions
Columbia Harvest Foods	Tabling outside of Columbia Harvest Foods in Umatilla on August 5	9 interactions
Umatilla County Fair	Tabling at the Umatilla County Fair in Hermiston on August 6-9	113 interactions
Rip City Rally	Tabling at a kid-focused event in Pendleton, sponsored by the Portland Trail Blazers	100 interactions

Online Participants

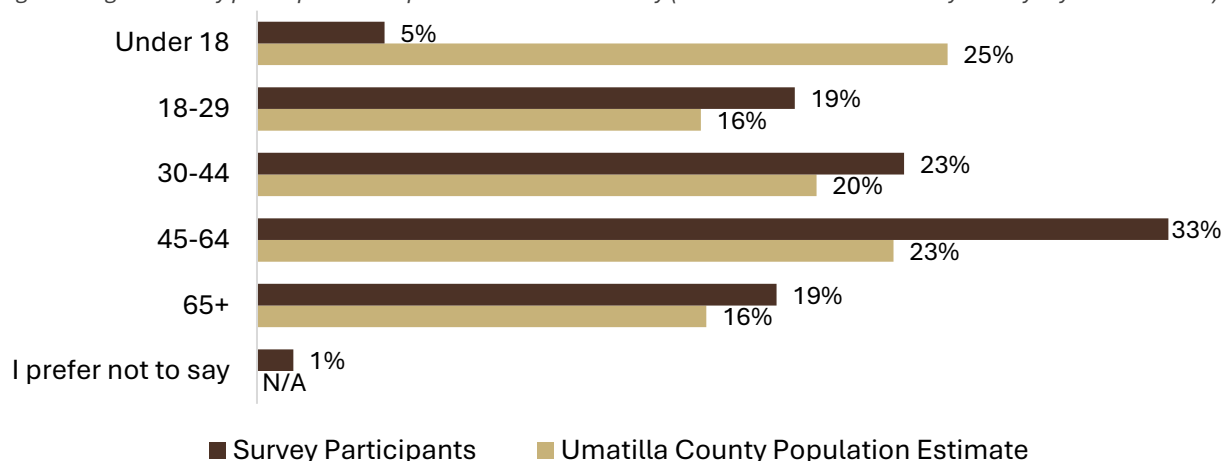
Almost all online survey participants (97%) live in Umatilla County. Most survey participants (92%) said a personal vehicle was their primary mode of transportation in the County (Figure 2). This is consistent with the County population overall considering 91% of people drive to work (American Community Survey 2022 5-year Estimates). Many survey participants also said they walk, carpool, bike, or bus as a secondary mode of transportation.

Figure 2: Primary and secondary modes of transportation



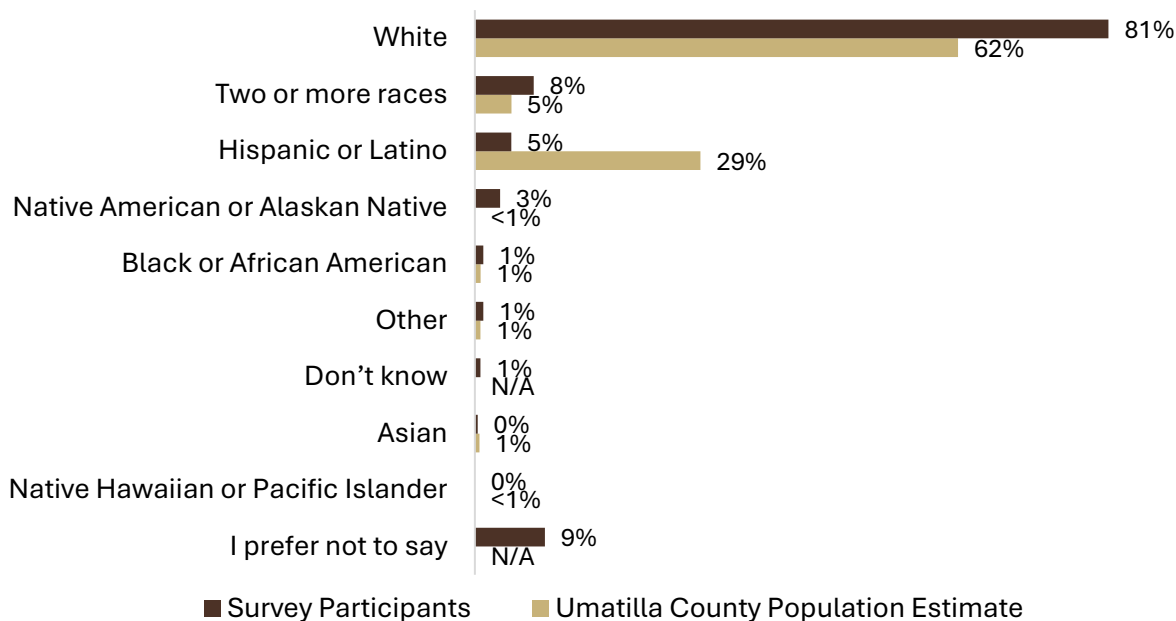
The people who took the online survey were different from the County's overall population in several ways. Survey participants were older than the average county resident (Figure 3). Only 5% were under 18, but young people make up 25% of the County's population. The most common age bracket among participants was 45-64 years old (33%), while the other age groups of 18-29, 30-44, and 65+ made up around 20% of survey participants each. The survey had an equal mix of women (46%) and men (47%), with one person identifying as non-binary, and a few others choosing not to answer.

Figure 3: Age of survey participants compared to Umatilla County (2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates)



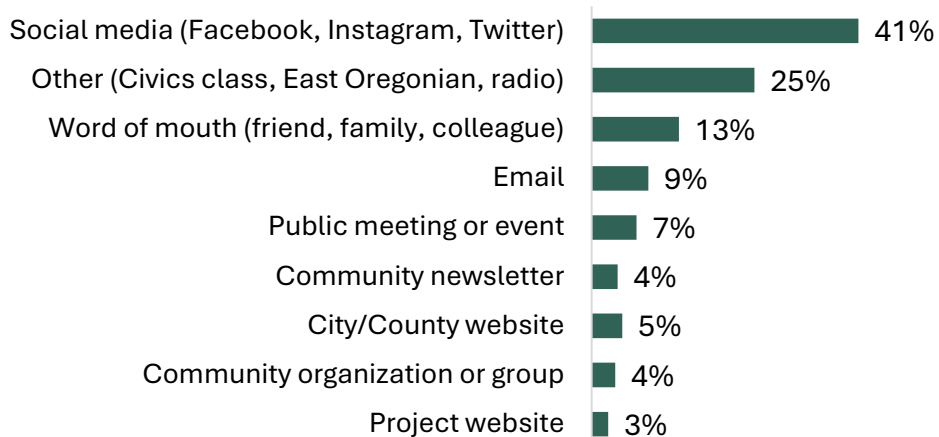
More than three out of four survey participants were white (81%) (Figure 4). Much fewer were Hispanic or Latino (5%), even though Hispanic and Latino people make up 29% of Umatilla County's population (see In-Person Participants section for methods to reach these and other populations missed by online outreach). Other participant groups included people of two or more races (8%) and Native American people (3%). Ten percent of participants reported having a disability.

Figure 4: Race and ethnicity of survey participants compared to Umatilla County (2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates)



Many people learned about the project through social media (41%) (Figure 5). People who answered “other” ways of learning about the online engagement site said they found out through school, the East Oregonian newspaper, or radio ads (25%).

Figure 5: How participants learned about the online engagement site



In-Person Participants

The County hosted pop-up tables at various community events to reach people who might not be able or inclined to fill out online surveys. Events were chosen with a focus on reaching communities that face transportation challenges, like non-English speakers, Hispanic and Latino communities, young people, and rural communities.

While demographic information wasn't collected at these events, the pop-ups were designed to include voices from communities that experience the most transportation barriers and might not participate in the online engagement site. At the Farm City Ag & Home Expo, staff connected with residents from around the County. The Cinco De Mayo celebration helped them reach Hispanic and Latino families and young people. At the Pilot Rock Saturday Market and Mission Market, they focused on talking with rural residents. Tabling at Columbia Harvest Foods helped staff connect with urban dwellers in Umatilla while tabling at the Umatilla County Fair attracted a wide range of demographics across the Hermiston and greater Umatilla County areas. Finally, the Rip City Rally proved very successful in reaching children and families.

Figure 6 and Figure 7: Staff table at the Pilot Rock Saturday Market and an example of the table materials



Figure 8 and Figure 9: Staff table at Umatilla County Fair and Columbia Harvest Foods



Engagement Results

Community members shared detailed feedback about transportation challenges throughout Umatilla County. The results are organized into two main areas: the most frequently mentioned locations that need attention and the common themes people discussed about transportation safety and accessibility.

There were 466 unique comments collected through online and in-person engagement. Tables , , and show the codes used to organize participant comments and the number of times each code occurred in responses. Only codes that appeared three or more times are included. Each code is grouped into one of three thematic groups:

- **Issues:** Concerns that influence travel choices in Umatilla County (Table 3).
- **Modes:** Methods of travel discussed by participants (Table 4).
- **Locations:** Corridors, intersections, or other specific locations of travel in Umatilla County (Table 5).

Table 3: Thematic codes, descriptions, and frequencies for codes grouped as “Issues”

Code	Description of comments that impact transportation	# of Mentions	% Of Total Mentions
Maintenance	Quality of infrastructure or construction	84	17%
Crossing	Safety and accessibility of street crossings	45	9%
Traffic control	Stop signs, traffic lights, and intersection management	34	7%
Behavior	Driver conduct and road etiquette issues	24	5%
Speed	Vehicle speeds and speed limit concerns	21	4%
Identity	Identity of traveling individuals	17	3%
Potholes	Road surface damage and deterioration	17	3%
Natural	Environmental factors	12	2%
Bridge	Bridge conditions and accessibility	11	2%
Congestion	Traffic volume and flow problems	11	2%
School	Safety around schools and student transportation	10	2%
Sight	Visibility and sightline issues	11	2%
Narrow	Insufficient road or lane width	6	1%
Shoulder	Road shoulder conditions and availability	6	1%
Curb	Curb presence and condition	4	1%
Parking	Parking availability and management	4	1%

Table 4: Thematic codes, descriptions, and frequencies for codes grouped as “Modes”

Code	Description of comments that impact transportation	# of Mentions	% Of Total Mentions
Walk	Pedestrian infrastructure and safety	62	12%
Transit	Public transportation services	46	9%
Bike	Bicycle infrastructure and safety	28	6%
Drive	General driving comments and conditions	26	5%
Freight	Commercial vehicle and truck traffic	18	4%
Rail	Railroad crossings and train-related issues	6	1%

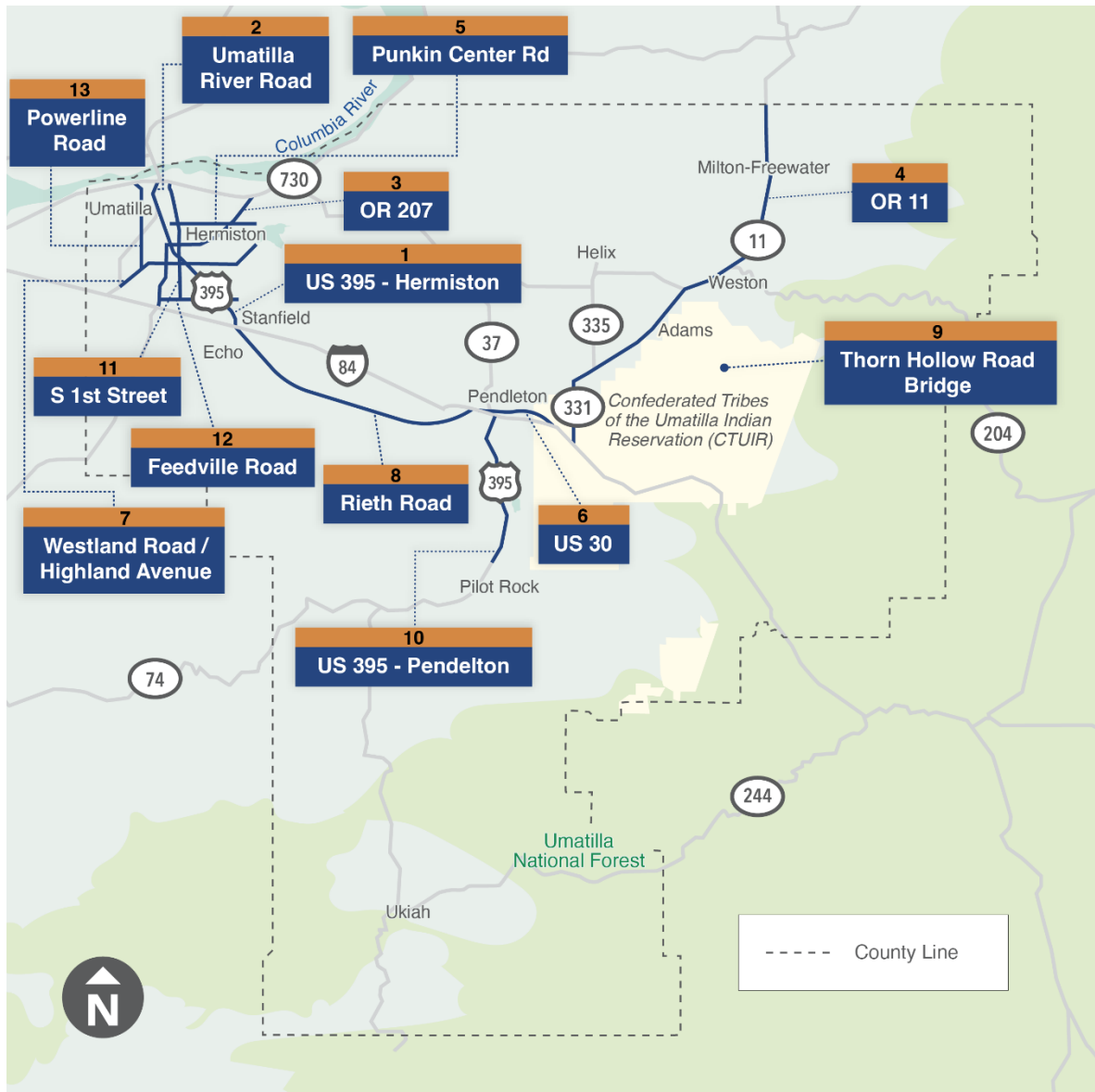
Table 5: Thematic codes, descriptions, and frequencies for codes grouped as “Locations”

Code	Description of comments that impact transportation	# of Mentions	% Of Total Mentions
US 395 - Hermiston	US 395 and North 1st Street in the Hermiston area	46	9%
Umatilla River Road	Umatilla River Road, Old River Road, County 1275 Road between Umatilla and Hermiston	32	6%
OR 11	OR 11 (including Main Street in Milton-Freewater) between Pendleton and the Washington State line	29	6%
OR 207	OR 207, 11th Street, Elm Avenue, and Diagonal Boulevard in and around Hermiston	24	5%
Punkin Center Road	Punkin Center Road and County 1250 Road north of Hermiston	16	3%
US 30	US 30, Westgate, Dorion Avenue, and Court Avenue through Pendleton	15	3%
Westland Road / Highland Avenue	Westland Road, Highland Avenue, Bridge Road, and County 1200 Road in Hermiston	12	2%
Rieth Road	Rieth Road, the old Pendleton River Road that runs between Echo and Rieth	11	2%
Thorn Hollow Road Bridge	The Thorn Hollow Road Bridge	11	2%
US 395 - Pendleton	US 395 and Southgate in the Pendleton area	9	2%
S 1st Street	S 1st Street, S 1st Place, and County Road 1275 in and around Hermiston	9	2%
Feedville Road	Feedville Road and County Road 1000 south of Hermiston	9	2%
Powerline Road	Powerline Road and County 1225 Road south of Umatilla	9	2%
Edwards Road	Edwards Road east of Hermiston	6	1%
US 730	US 730 between Clarke and the Washington State line	6	1%
Bridge & Agnew Road	Intersection of Bridge Road and Agnew Road	5	1%
I-84	Interstate 84	5	1%
Emigrant Road	Emigrant Road, Old Emigrant Hill Road, County 931 Road, and County 937 Road east of Mission	4	1%
Birch Creek Road	Birch Creek Road east of Milton-Freewater	3	1%
Blue Mountain Station Road Bridge	Blue Mountain Station Road bridge south of Milton-Freewater	3	1%
Ott Road	North Ott Road and County 1261 Road north of Hermiston	3	1%

Key Location Findings

The following section focuses on the thirteen most frequently mentioned roads and bridges from community feedback, each of which received at least nine mentions during engagement (Table 5). Most of these locations were described as unsafe roads in populated areas of Umatilla County. This feedback is particularly valuable for the SS4A program, as it helps identify which transportation improvements the County should prioritize. These key locations are mapped in Figure 9 and discussed in detail on the following pages.

Figure 10: Top locations mentioned during engagement



1. US 395 - Hermiston

The section of US 395 in the Hermiston area was the most frequently mentioned roadway corridor. Respondents reported congestion, unsafe intersections, and reckless driving concerns. Problem areas include the intersection at OR 207 and Feedville Road. Respondents noted speeding and aggressive driving are common occurrences. Many respondents feel that recent improvements along US 395 have been inadequate. They point to temporary repairs, poor traffic light timing, and narrow lanes that don't meet the area's needs. The overall feeling is that the road infrastructure has not kept up with increasing traffic, creating dangerous conditions throughout the corridor.

395 Through Hermiston. Traffic is becoming overwhelming for our infrastructure, leading to road rage and poor driving decisions with other drivers as well as congestion that sometimes pours into intersections.

2. Umatilla River Road

Umatilla River Road, particularly between Hermiston and Umatilla, was cited as an unsafe route that many respondents tend to avoid when possible. The road is described as narrow with insufficient space for drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Respondents noted that poor lighting makes the road especially unsafe at night and during winter. Many commented on the lack of shoulders and legal passing zones.

Suggested improvements include adding a walking and biking path, making the road wider with shoulders, and increasing police patrols. Some mentioned that road repairs have been poor, resulting in surfaces that damage vehicles. The intersection at Elm Street was specifically mentioned as needing traffic signals improvements such as a traffic signal.

Many exceed speed limit. Few places to pull off the road. No places to legally pass. Not safe for biking or pedestrian use. Often congested.

3. OR 207

OR 207 (known locally as Elm Avenue in Hermiston), Diagonal Boulevard, and the 11th Street corridors were noted as having several problematic intersections. The junction where OR 207 meets Highland Avenue and turns into 11th Street was described as unsafe. The intersection of 11th Street & Elm Street near Good Shepherd was mentioned multiple times as needing a traffic signal for pedestrian safety.

Other challenging areas include the intersection where OR 207 (Diagonal Boulevard) meets Edwards Road and Walls Road, and the five-way intersection at OR 207 (Diagonal Road) and Punkin Center Road. Some suggested installing roundabouts to improve safety while keeping traffic

moving. Concerns were also raised about commercial vehicles parking on 11th Street and blocking busy side streets.

5 way intersection [at Diagonal Rd and Punkin Center Rd] is very dangerous. Can be difficult to cross during peak trucking hours. Diagonal has a flashing yellow while the other County roads have stop signs. Often people travelling down Diagonal are going too fast.

4. OR 11

OR 11, from Pendleton through Milton-Freewater to the Washington state line, was frequently cited as having safety-related challenges. The stretch between Milton-Freewater and the state line was described as having high speeds and multiple driveways and side roads. Respondents reported poor patch repairs that make it hard to stay in the proper lane. During the winter, this road experiences extremely bad snow drifts which increase the already present level of danger for drivers.

Illegal passing was mentioned as a major safety concern, with suggestions to only allow passing in marked lanes. Some suggested expanding the highway to four lanes with a raised center median. Others noted the shoulder is too narrow for cycling between Pendleton and Athena. Recent safety improvements include upgraded crosswalks in Milton-Freewater and increased Oregon State Police patrols.

Highway 11 from Milton-Freewater to Stateline is extremely dangerous, especially with the speed and multiple vehicle access points.

5. Punkin Center Road

Punkin Center Road was frequently mentioned as having challenges at intersections with other major roads. The junction with US 395 was described as unsafe, with multiple respondents suggesting a roundabout would improve safety. The five-way intersection with OR 207 (Diagonal Road) was also highlighted as unsafe, especially during peak trucking hours.

Several respondents commented on the poor condition of the road itself, noting crumbling shoulders. Others mentioned the need for a bridge across the Umatilla River. There was also a suggestion to make Punkin Center Road an official truck route to move commercial traffic away from Diagonal Boulevard and Elm Street, where new housing and school developments have made truck traffic a safety concern.

Punkin Center Road needs to be repaved. The edges of the road are deteriorating creating unsafe edge of road.

6. US 30

US 30, which goes by different names like Westgate, Dorion Avenue, and Court Avenue through Pendleton, has several intersection and pedestrian safety problems. Many drivers reported trouble seeing oncoming traffic at key intersections, especially at SW 1st & Court Avenue where stop signs create congestion. Pedestrians face challenges getting around downtown Pendleton safely, with recent changes making walking "inconvenient at best and downright dangerous at worst." Several intersections need traffic signals, including SE 1st & Dorion and SE Court & 17th Street, where heavy traffic and poor visibility create safety concerns. Additionally, several respondents noted the injustice and safety concerns around not having sidewalks or bus stops at the county jail and probation offices. For those who need to visit or leave these destinations and don't have a personal vehicle, walking conditions are unsafe at best or entirely inaccessible at worst.

The stop signs at SW First and Court AVE are difficult for drivers causing congestion. Drivers cannot see cars coming from their right.

7. Westland Road / Highland Avenue

Survey respondents reported numerous concerns with travel conditions along the Westland Road and Highland Avenue corridors. Unsafe conditions were noted at the 11th Street, Bridge Road, and OR 207 intersections. Furthermore, said corridors were noted to be unsafe for both drivers (due to poor surface condition) and pedestrians (due to lack of sidewalks).

Around Hermiston High School, they need a light on the corner of highland and [South] 1st street.

8. Rieth Road

Respondents noted that Rieth Road, which connects Echo and Rieth along the river, has serious road condition problems that need major repairs. Many respondents complained about potholes that get only temporary fixes with cold mix several times a year, so the problems keep getting worse. The road surface is so bad in some areas that drivers must turn around and find another route. There are also safety concerns about falling rocks in the roadway. Some sections of the road have been reduced from pavement to gravel, making it much less enjoyable and safe to drive on.

Reith Road needs improvement, one person said the road condition was so bad they had to turn around in their vehicle and go another way.

9. Thorn Hollow Road Bridge

The Thorn Hollow Road Bridge has been closed for over five years. Respondents expressed frustration about how the closure affects travel time, especially for Athena-Weston students. The detour requires using a dirt road that stays in poor condition despite regular grading. Respondents emphasized that the bridge closure adds significant travel distance, increases costs for fuel and vehicle maintenance.

Fix the bridge at Thorn Hollow! It has been years and it is costing the school and the public thousands in extra and fuel vehicle damage due to the detour being a dirt road that no matter how many times it is graded it is still washboard.

10. US 395 – Pendleton

Respondents highlighted safety problems along US 395, known locally as Southgate, in the Pendleton area. The stretch from the base of the hill to the hospital was flagged as particularly dangerous. Multiple people pointed to intersection problems, especially near Burger King and the freeway exit where rear-end crashes happen often. Respondents also noted heavy truck traffic, poor road surfaces throughout the area and incomplete sidewalks that force pedestrians to walk in the roadway.

*Use extreme caution on Southgate by Burger king and freeway exit/entrance.
Many rear endings in that short space.*

11. S 1st Street

Respondents reported safety concerns along S 1st Street (also known as S 1st Place and County Road 1275) in Hermiston. Problems were noted at several intersections, including near Hermiston High School where people want a traffic light. The intersection at 1st Place, NW Geer, and Harper Road was called especially dangerous due to three stop signs within 20 feet near railroad tracks. Other problem areas include intersections at Orchard Avenue and Main Street, where poor visibility and confusing traffic controls create safety issues.

Intersection of [South] 1st Pl (co. Rd 1275), NW Geer and Harper Rd. There are 3 stop signs within 20 feet of each other because of the railroad tracks. Scary as heck trying to turn onto Geer or onto Harper.

12. Feedville Road

Respondents expressed frustration with ongoing construction and poor conditions on Feedville Road (County Road 1000). Multiple people complained about continuous construction that creates delays, detours, and road closures instead of completing work all at once. After construction, the road surface remains in poor condition with potholes, patches, drop-offs, and gravel areas. The intersection with US 395 was noted as particularly dangerous due to poor visibility that causes crashes.

Feedville road seems to be under continuous construction instead of doing it all at once.

13. Powerline Road

Several types of concerns were raised about Powerline Road: car speeds are too fast, road surface conditions are poor (and drivers don't have confidence in the quality of road patchwork/repaving), and bar ditches alongside the road are not maintained. Overall, survey respondents noted Powerline Road as a street they avoid due to safety issues.

[There are] poor road conditions, specifically... Powerline Road where the pavement chips off at the edge of the road and creates a steep drop off.

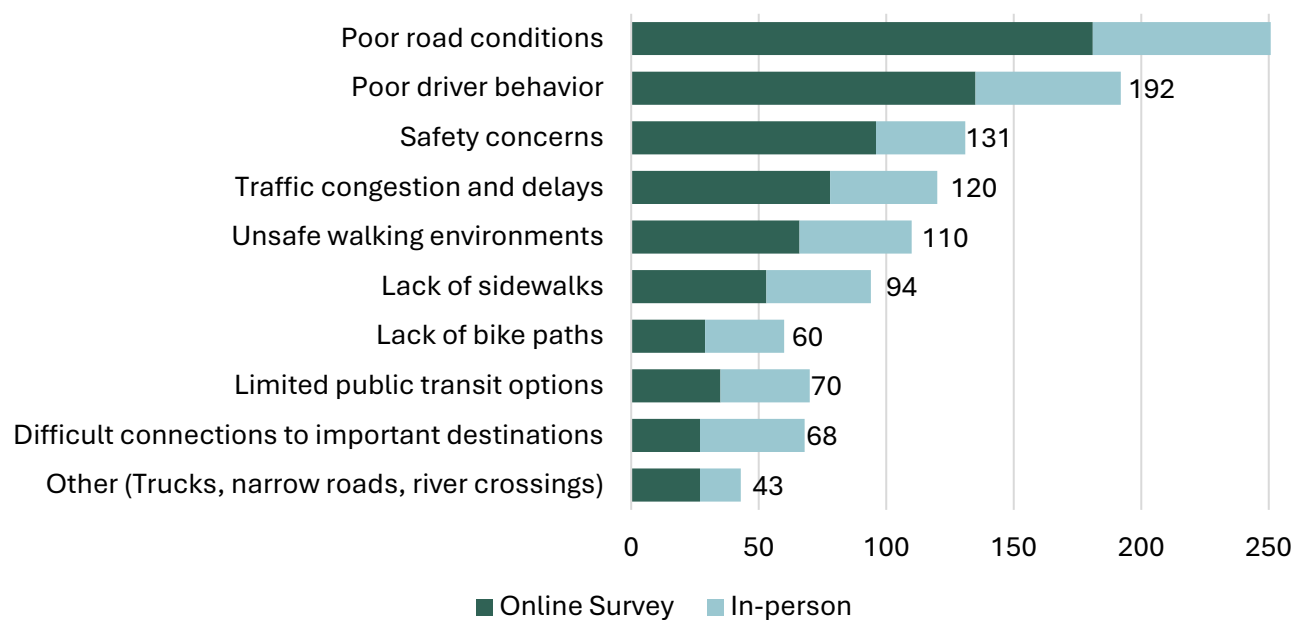
Themes

Respondents shared their thoughts on transportation issues and modes throughout Umatilla County. The feedback covered many different themes, from road conditions and safety concerns to public transit needs and truck traffic problems. People want higher-quality roads, safer intersections, more bus service, and solutions to keep up with heavy truck traffic. This section groups the public comments by theme, organized roughly from most to least common based on how often each issue came up in the feedback.

Maintenance

Community members across Umatilla County have raised concerns about the poor condition of local roads and the quality of maintenance work. Poor road conditions were the most selected travel challenge for online and in-person participants (Figure 10). Many respondents report that roads have many potholes, are rutted, have rough shoulders, and repairs don't last long. People are frustrated with "quick fixes" that create more problems; for instance, patched areas that eventually sink and cause bumps, or road work that leaves surfaces rougher than before. According to some travelers, the chip sealing and paving work often appears to be done poorly, leading to solutions that wear out quicker than they should. In addition, extreme winter weather creates dicey road conditions and visibility, for which there are not counteractive measures in many parts of the County. Respondents widely noted a lack of both proactivity and frequency in clearing snow and ice on major roads, such as I-84 and Highway 204, that connect the County's cities. Visibility was another issue brought up, with residents saying that some roads—like Powerline Road in Hermiston—don't have fog lines and/or any road striping that does exist is very faded.

Figure 11: Most significant travel challenges according to online and in-person participants



Rural unpaved roads need much more attention, especially in areas with heavy truck traffic from farming and wind turbine maintenance. Respondents want the County to focus on properly fixing roads instead of making temporary patches that fail within a year. Many feel that road maintenance should be the top priority for County spending, since poor roads damage people's vehicles and create safety hazards. There's also concern that maintenance crews are overwhelmed by the amount of work needed across such a large county.

Road maintenance needs to be top priority for Umatilla County. There seems to be a lack of interest in maintaining the existing infrastructure. Invest more resources in the maintenance of the roads that we have already paid for.

Walking Safety

Respondents appreciate recent sidewalk improvements and ADA-compliant upgrades but want much more pedestrian infrastructure throughout Umatilla County. Many people are asking for dedicated walking paths and wider sidewalks to make it safer and more convenient to walk around their communities. Unfortunately, many areas of the County still lack basic sidewalks, forcing pedestrians to walk in the roadway, which is especially dangerous on high-speed roads like Townsend Road. Children in Hermiston and Stanfield areas told County officials their neighborhoods don't have adequate sidewalks for walking and riding scooters. In Mission, Cayuse Road is used by kids for walking to/from school but it has no sidewalks. In general, many people walk and bike into Pendleton from the CTUI Reservation—they need safer routes for this.

The popularity of projects like the Oxbow Trail and Pendleton River Parkway (River Walk) also demonstrate a strong demand for dedicated recreational, non-motorized vehicle trails. People want better connections between communities, with suggestions for trails linking Umatilla to Echo and Athena to Weston. While some respondents question spending money on pedestrian improvements in rural areas where few people walk, others believe these investments are important for transportation options and healthy living.

Please prioritize new walking paths and new bike paths. I realize that most people think of transportation needs as streets and roads, but many of us believe it's important to not use the car all the time.

Road Crossings

Respondents across Umatilla County are asking for better traffic safety features at intersections and crosswalks. Many people want more flashing crosswalk warning beacons or signals, traffic signals instead of stop signs at busy intersections, and better traffic control during construction projects. Several specific intersections were mentioned as being unsafe: the Punkin Center Road &

Highway 395 intersection, various spots along Highway 11, Bridge Road & Agnew Road, and multiple other intersections in Hermiston and Pendleton. People are especially concerned about areas where trucks and farm equipment create visibility problems for smaller vehicles or where high-speed traffic makes crossing difficult. At the mentioned intersections where stop signs are the only traffic control treatment, respondents often noted observing crashes because drivers tend to run the stop signs.

There's significant debate in the community about roundabouts, with some respondents strongly supporting them as safer and more efficient solutions, while others are completely against them. Supporters say roundabouts improve traffic flow and reduce accidents, especially at busy intersections that currently back up during peak hours. However, opponents worry that roundabouts don't work well for heavy commercial and farm traffic and local drivers aren't used to navigating them safely.

5 way intersection [at Diagonal Rd and Punkin Center Rd] is very dangerous. Can be difficult to cross during peak trucking hours. Diagonal has a flashing yellow while the other County roads have stop signs. Often people travelling down Diagonal are going too fast.

Transit Needs

Community members strongly support the Kayak bus system and want to see it grow. Many people rely on buses to get to work, medical appointments, and grocery stores—especially those who cannot drive or don't have cars. Thus, people want more bus routes, schedules that more closely match work hours, more frequent service, and service to rural areas. Ultimately, people want a public transportation system that has a long-distance, regional reach.

Several residents mentioned they would use public transit every day if it ran more often, reached more places, and reliably came on time (for example, sometimes a scheduled Kayak bus will not show up in winter weather conditions, leaving the anticipatory rider stranded). For residents in rural parts of the county, the lack of transit connections can leave them feeling isolated and unable to get to essential services like appointments or grocery stores if they aren't able to drive themselves. Other respondents mentioned specific barriers they face in there not being bus service to County court offices such as the jail and probation office.

Safety and cleanliness concerns were common themes in the feedback. Some riders feel unsafe due to other passengers' behavior and others mentioned problems with homeless individuals using bus stops as shelter. One respondent emphasized a need for behavioral training for transit operators after observing multiple occasions of operators disrespecting riders via racism and sexual harassment. People with disabilities face extra challenges, with some unable to use buses because they need door-to-door service or the bus doesn't have a way to load and transport mobility devices. Despite these issues, residents see public transit as essential for the community

and want County leaders to expand services. Residents of all backgrounds expressed wanting more connections, especially to serve vulnerable transportation users like youth, people with low incomes, seniors, and people who need to travel to medical appointments in other cities.

We desperately need more public transportation options. There are several community members who are unable to reach necessary services, such as healthcare, due to lack of transportation.

Traffic Control

Respondents noted mixed feelings about traffic signals and stop signs throughout Umatilla County. While some people appreciate recent improvements like reinstated traffic signals at busy intersections and new flashing crosswalk signals, others are frustrated with poor traffic signal timing and positioning, which creates congestion and visibility problems. There are also concerns about stop signs being placed too far back from intersections, making it hard for drivers to see traffic when they stop at the painted stop bar.

People are asking for better signage throughout the County, including solar-powered flashing stop signs to make intersections more visible and bilingual (English-Spanish) road signs. School zones see specific concerns in traffic control too, with requests for flashing lights near school speed limit signs to remind drivers to slow down. Some respondents also mentioned problems with commercial truck signage, especially at the Pilot Truck Stop area where poor signage has contributed to crashes.

Pilot Truck Stop on I-84/Hwy 395 has horrible signage for trucks headed south. Another fatal accident happened at that intersection last week. Trucks coming out of the Pilot often miss the on ramp going west.

Behavior

Respondents across Umatilla County reported concerns with dangerous driving behaviors that make roads unsafe for everyone. Speeding is a major issue, with drivers going too fast through towns and on rural highways like OR 11, US 395, and US 730. Many people are frustrated with aggressive driving, including illegal passing in no-passing zones, cars running red lights, and road rage incidents. People feel that drivers act like they own the road, drive under the influence, and don't pay attention to pedestrians or other vehicles. During engagement, many of the children spoken to described their top concerns as being related to poor driver behavior—two children even shared two separate experiences about themselves and/or their family members being in crashes recently.

The community is asking for more police patrols and traffic enforcement, especially during rush hours and in areas around schools. Many residents want flashing speed limit signs, particularly near schools where drivers habitually cruise through at non-school-zone speeds. There are also concerns about commercial vehicles parking illegally and blocking traffic, distracted driving from phone use, and drivers not yielding to pedestrians at crosswalks.

Almost everywhere. It is scary to be out there on the roads with people driving way too fast, passing when they are not supposed too, no regard to anyone or anything else.

Biking Safety

Respondents are asking for better and safer ways to bike around their communities. Many people want more bike lanes, wider shoulders on roads, and separate paths for biking that don't share space with cars. They're especially concerned about safety on busy roads like OR 11 and US 395, where the shoulders are too narrow for bikes. People mentioned specific areas like Theater Street in Pendleton and Old River Road between Umatilla and Hermiston. Several respondents suggested connecting towns with trails, particularly between Umatilla and Echo.

I would like to see wider shoulders to improve bike safety. Having some dedicated bike lanes would also improve bike safety.

Freight Traffic

Respondents noted frustrations with heavy truck traffic going through neighborhoods where "No Thru Trucks" signs are posted. Many people report frequent truck traffic on roads like South Edwards Road east of Hermiston. The problem gets worse when farmers are allowed to use these roads as shortcuts, which then encourages other trucking companies to use the same routes. People want better truck routes built and properly paved so trucks will want to use highways instead of residential streets. Respondents around the County expressed how heavy truck and farm traffic accelerates the deterioration of roads along highways and rural connectors alike, which is perceived as increasing costs and headache for everyday, non-freight drivers.

[There are] freight traffic violations in residential areas where No Thru Trucks signs are posted.

Environmental Hazards

Weather conditions and natural hazards create significant safety challenges on Umatilla County roads. For example, black ice is a major winter concern. Deep ruts in the road become especially dangerous during rain and snow when water collects and creates hazardous driving conditions. Flooding affects some county roads—making them impassable—while gravel roads are particularly vulnerable to storm damage and need more frequent maintenance after heavy rain and snow events. Rockfall is a serious issue along US 730 between McNary and the Washington state line, where drivers regularly dodge rocks that have fallen onto the roadway. The problem is so common that road crews use snowplows to push rocks into ditches, yet the ditches eventually fill up and become hazards themselves, forcing residents to avoid driving certain routes altogether at night.

The stretch of highway 730 from McNary to the Washington State line has continuous rockfall problems. Most mornings I have to dodge rocks in the roadway.

Conclusion

During community engagement efforts conducted between March and September 2025, the County collected valuable feedback from Umatilla County residents about transportation challenges and needs. Through information tables at community events, visits to local businesses, an online survey, social media outreach, radio ads, and direct conversations with community leaders, the County was able to hear from a wide range of people across the area. This comprehensive approach proved largely effective, with in-person events particularly successful in reaching residents who face transportation barriers.

Recorded feedback clearly shows that poor road conditions are the community's top priority, with specific locations like US 395 through Hermiston, the Umatilla River Road, and stretches of OR 11 needing attention. Residents also emphasized the need for expanded public transit, better truck traffic management, safer intersections, and more walking and biking infrastructure. These findings provide a strong foundation for developing a County Transportation System Plan that ensures resident priorities are included in plan goals and objectives.