

# Linn-Benton Loop Board Member Handbook



## Linn-Benton Loop Transit Service for Albany and Corvallis

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

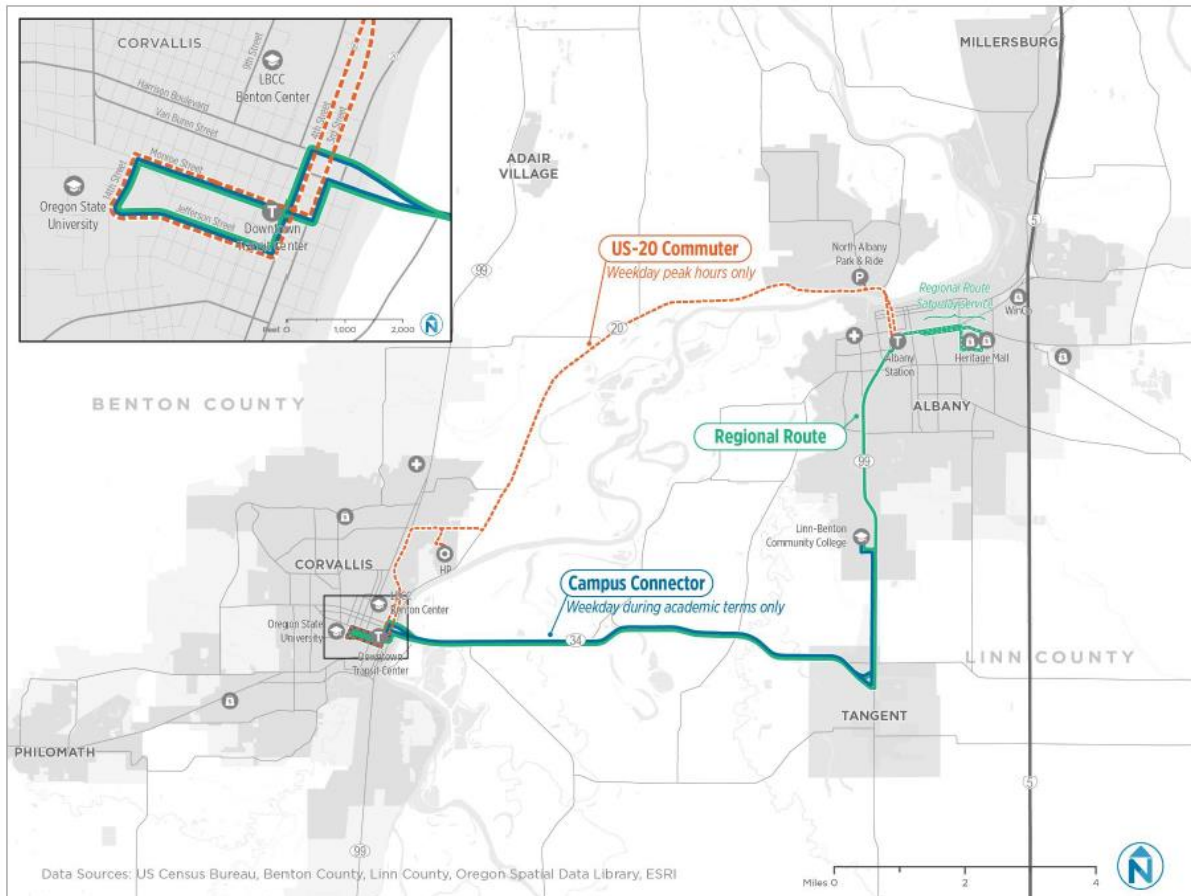
## What is the Linn-Benton Loop?

The Linn-Benton Loop, referred to as simply “the Loop”, is a fixed route bus service running between the cities of Albany and Corvallis with service to regional destinations. The Loop is operated by the City of Albany, with staffing support provided by the Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments (OCWCOG) through the Albany Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (AAMPO) and Corvallis Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO). Funding for Linn-Benton Loop operations is provided by Oregon State University (OSU), Linn-Benton Community College (LBCC), AAMPO, CAMPO, Linn County, Benton County, and other regional partners.

## Service Area

The Loop serves key regional destinations including Albany Station, Downtown Albany, North Albany Park & Ride, Hewlett Packard, OSU, Downtown Corvallis Transit Center, and LBCC. The Loop also functions as a key connector to other transit services including Albany Transit System (ATS), Benton Area Transit (BAT), Corvallis Transit Service (CTS), and Linn Shuttle. Primary travel corridors for Loop buses include US Hwy 20, OR Hwy 34 and OR Hwy 99E.

**Figure 1: Regional Transit Vision Network<sup>1</sup>**



<sup>1</sup> Map comes from the Loop Service Development Plan  
Linn-Benton Loop Member Handbook

## Historical Context

The Loop began operating in 1980 to provide transit service between Albany and Corvallis. Since that time, the Loop has been a key link between the two communities providing transit service to critical educational, employment, and activity centers.

The Loop Commission, which operated as a function of the City of Albany, served as the first governing body for the Loop. The Loop Commission continued in this role until 2013 when the AAMPO and CAMPO Policy Boards renewed their commitment to provide the needed funds for the continuation of Loop service. After reviewing options for decision-making and funding representatives from AAMPO, CAMPO, OSU and LBCC, collectively agreed to establish Loop governance with an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) between the current primary funding partners. Agreement to pursue a new governing approach and develop the current IGA came on July 22, 2014. OSU participates as a funding partner, but declined representation on the policy making body at the time of formation. The IGA was amended in 2019 to add a citizen representative with a vested interest in transit, to the board.

### *Highlights*

- **1979-** Cities of Albany, Corvallis, Philomath, and Tangent; Benton and Linn Counties; OSU; and LBCC sign and Inter-governmental Agreement establishing the Loop
- **1980-** the Loop begins operation as a demonstration project
- **1983-** Delivery of the first new bus, a Gillig Phantom
- **1995-** Delivery of the second new bus, another Gillig Phantom. This allowed for the sale of the 1966 GMC previously in service.
- **1997-** Hewlett-Packard became a private partner and established the Loop's first pass program for employees and contractors
- **1999-** LBCC followed suit by establishing a pass program for students, staff and faculty
- **2001-** OSU joined LBCC to provide passes for dual enrollment students
- **2008-2014** – During the Great Recession, ridership on the Loop surges, reaching an all time high of 132,302 riders in the 2011-2012 fiscal year, with multiple years reaching over 100,000 riders.
- **2014-** Loop IGA establishing Governing Board written and signed
- **2019-** Linn-Benton Loop Service Development Plan recommending expansion and other changes adopted

# Chapter 2: Loop Operations

## Relationship with City of Albany and OCWCOG

The City of Albany operates and maintains the Linn-Benton Loop and is responsible for budget, appropriations, and all other actions permitted by law and required to perform this service. Additional staff support is provided by the Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments (OCWCOG) through the Albany Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (AAMPO) and Corvallis Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO). OCWCOG provides administrative and technical support to the Loop including scheduling and facilitating Loop Board and TAC meetings. OCWCOG staff dedicated to Loop activities are located in the Community and Economic Development Department (CED). City of Albany staff dedicated to Loop activities also operate the Albany Transit Service and are located in the City's Public Works Department.

## Governing Board

### ***Board Composition***

The Loop is overseen by a Governing Board consisting of three voting members and three non-voting Ex-officio members. Voting members include representatives from AAMPO, CAMPO and Linn-Benton Community College (LBCC). Representatives of the City of Albany, OCWCOG and an at-large member with a vested interest in regional transit serve as non-voting Ex-officio members. OSU participates as funding partner, but has declined representation on the Governing Board.<sup>2</sup>

Agencies represented on the Loop Board may designate an alternate member to the Board who may vote on behalf of the primary member should the primary member not be able to attend a Board meeting. Additional members may be added to the Board with an amendment to the Loop Intergovernmental Agreement, and with unanimous consent of the Board.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Board Responsibilities***

The Board is authorized to provide policy direction and recommendations regarding the operation and performance of the Loop but does not have authority to make direct operational decisions or enter into contracts.<sup>4</sup> The Board has the power to:<sup>5</sup>

- After review by the TAC and consistent with Federal and State law, review, comment, and concur on the budget of the Loop; recommend the Operator receive, appropriate, and expend funds; and the conduct of other business necessary to operate the Loop.
- Review and make recommendations regarding level of service, operations, and performance of the Loop
- Seek, identify, and recommend funding sources for the Loop
- Establish and administer the policies of the Loop

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<sup>2</sup> This paragraph summarizes details outlined in Section 3 of the IGA Establishing the Governance of the Loop Transit Service.

<sup>3</sup> This paragraph summarizes details outlined in Section 3 of the Loop Board Bylaws

<sup>4</sup> See Section 2 and Section 4.1 of the IGA Establishing the Governance of the Loop Transit Service

<sup>5</sup> This list of responsibilities is from the Loop Board Bylaws with light editing made to the first bullet point for clarity. The list is supported by responsibilities outline in the IGA Establishing the Governance of the Loop Service.

- Sponsor and administer the development and implementation of plans, programs, projects and studies for the Loop
- Designate an Operator for the Loop
- Work with the Operator to develop memoranda of agreement related to funding, operations, and ongoing expectations for continuing the Loop service

The Board is not responsible for developing or managing the budget and has no independent budgetary or purchasing authority.<sup>6</sup> The Loop budget is adopted as a subsection of the Operator’s (City of Albany) budget. Albany City Council holds budget authority for Loop operations.

## Technical Advisory Committee<sup>7</sup>

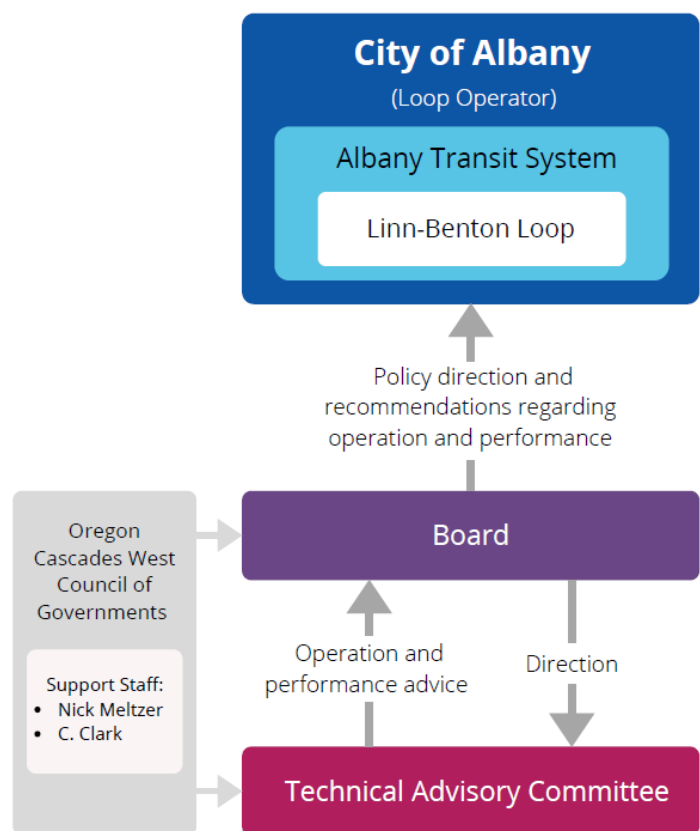
### TAC Composition

The Loop Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) serves in an advisory role to the Governing Board. The voting membership of the Linn-Benton Loop TAC consists of one technical or managerial staff representing each of the following:

- City of Albany
- City of Corvallis
- Benton County
- Linn County
- Oregon Department of Transportation
- Albany Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Corvallis Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Linn-Benton Community College
- Oregon State University
- Four at-large members, which may represent riders of the Linn-Benton Loop service, students, individuals with disabilities, bus drivers, interested citizens, or other funders of the Linn-Benton Loop service. At-large members should not represent entities already represented, except in the case of a bus driver.

TAC members are appointed by the entities listed above except for at-large members who are appointed by the Governing Board upon review of the TAC and recommendation of staff. Entities

**Figure 2: Loop Organization Chart**



<sup>6</sup> See section 6.2 of IGA Establishing the Governance of the Loop Board and Section 5 of the Loop Board Bylaws

<sup>7</sup> Information in this section is derived from the TAC Bylaws

may re-appoint representatives as necessary. Members may designate alternates to serve in their place and vote on their behalf.

### ***TAC Responsibilities***

Specific responsibilities of the TAC include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Advise on Loop operations, including fare structure, routes and route timing, and service delivery
- Advise on strategic planning efforts, including service expansion, service cuts, and regional coordination
- Recommend to the Board an annual budget
- Explore additional funding or match sources as directed by the Board
- Review, comment and provide input on safety programs<sup>8</sup>
- Review customer feedback and complaints and recommend to the Board follow-up actions requiring Board approval
- Develop recommendations for and at the direction of the Board, implement transit marketing programs
- Conduct transit system planning, on-board or other rider surveys, regional transit service analyses, and other technical tasks as assigned by the Board

### **Relationship with the Federal Transit Administration**

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is an agency within the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) which provides financial and technical assistance as well as oversight to public transportation systems throughout the US. As such, the Loop is subject to Federal oversight as part of the operator's (Albany Transit System) triennial FTA reviews. Reviews occur every three year and are designed to ensure that recipients of FTA funds meet statutory and administrative requirements.

The FTA's National Transit Database (NTD) is a centralized information resource which documents the finances, operations and asset conditions of transit systems throughout the US. The City of Albany (Albany Transit System) reports key metrics to the FTA for inclusion into the NTD and does so on behalf of the Linn-Benton Loop.

While AAMPO and CAMPO designate a key recipient to receive 5307 funds, the contributions to the Loop are made at the discretion of Corvallis Transit System and Albany Transit System. Furthermore, the FTA provides direct oversight of these funds, AAMPO and CAMPO have limited ability to dictate how they're spent.

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<sup>8</sup> This is slightly different than the language in the TAC bylaws  
Linn-Benton Loop Member Handbook

# Chapter 3: Loop Funding

The Linn-Benton Loop is funded through a combination of local contributions, Federal Transit Administration 5307 (small urban) funds, fare revenue, and Special Transportation Fund (STF)/Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) funding. The following list is an overview of the primary funding sources:

- Linn-Benton Community College (in exchange for a group pass)
- Oregon State University (in exchange for a group pass)
- Albany Area MPO 5307 Funds
- Corvallis Area MPO 5307 Funds
- Linn County Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF)
- Benton County Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF)
- Fare Revenue

## Primary State and Federal Funding Sources

1. **Section 5307 Funds:** FTA 5307 funding is provided to MPOs for public transportation capital, planning, job access and reverse commute projects. 5307 funds may also be used for operating expenses in MPOs of less than 200,000 or if the system has fewer than 100 buses.

As with any federal funding, there are rules and limitations on how the 5307 monies are spent. Most importantly, operating expenses require a 50/50 match, and are reimbursement based. This means local funding (non-federal) must be expended first and then federal funds can be reimbursed for most expenses at a \$1 to \$1 ratio. Capital and other expenses require a 80/20 match. 5307 funds can only be used for eligible expenses.

2. **Statewide Transportation Improvement Funds (STIF):** Statewide Transportation Improvement Funds (STIF), generated through a payroll tax, are used for improving or expanding public transportation service in Oregon. ODOT distributes the majority, or 90%, of STIF funds based on employment location to Qualified Entities (QEs). Qualified entities are either regional transit districts, or counties. In the Loop region, Linn County and Benton County are the Qualified Entities. Each county receives between \$3 million and \$4 million per year (in 2021) to spend on transit operations, expansion, planning and administration. The remaining STIF funds are split into two categories and distributed bi-annually on a competitive basis.

Those two categories include:

The STIF Discretionary Fund receives 5 percent of STIF funds. ODOT awards Discretionary funds to public transportation service providers based on a competitive grant process.

The STIF Intercommunity Discretionary Fund receives 4 percent of STIF funds. ODOT awards Intercommunity funds to public transportation service providers to improve public transportation between two or more communities based on a competitive grant process.



## Other State and Federal Funding Sources

1. **Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) Program:** The Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (previously the Surface Transportation Program) provides flexible funding that may be used by states and localities for projects to preserve and improve the conditions and performance on any federal-aid highway, bridge and tunnel projects on any public road, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, and transit capital projects, including intercity bus terminals. STBG funds can also be used for bikeshare, sidewalk improvements and other transit related infrastructure. STBG funds cannot be used for operations. Funds are administered by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA.)

Both AAMPO and CAMPO's allocation of STBG funds are distributed with approval from their respective Policy Boards after review by their Technical Advisory Committees. The State of Oregon allows small MPOs to complete fund exchange agreements with ODOT. Both MPOs receive \$0.94 for every dollar they put into the state fund exchange but gain significant flexibility in project delivery.<sup>9</sup> The region's annual share of STBG dollars has been growing over the past several years and is expected to continue growing going forward.

2. **Section 5303 Funds:** These FTA metropolitan transit planning funds are intended for multimodal transportation planning in MPO areas. 5303 funds are apportioned to states by a formula that includes each state's urbanized area population in proportion to the total urbanized area population for the nation, as well as other factors. 5303 funds are redistributed by state DOTs to MPOs by statewide formula. (Transit Planning)
3. **Section 5339 Funds:** Section 5339 (Bus and Bus Facilities Program) provides capital funds to transit projects for replacement, rehabilitation, purchase of buses or bus-related equipment, and for construction of bus-related facilities. Section 5339 funds cannot be used for operating assistance. (Transit Capital)
4. **Transportation Growth Management Program:** The Transportation Growth Management (TGM) Program is a state fund program administered jointly by ODOT and the Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD). The TGM program consists of five program areas, including the planning grant program. The planning grant program awards grants on an annual basis to support policy decisions through development of transportation plans or integrated land use and transportation plans. Examples of TGM grant projects include city level transportation system plans (TSPs), downtown plans, bicycle and pedestrian plans, and mobility hub feasibility studies. The purpose of TGM Program is to reconcile challenging land use and transportation issues.

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<sup>9</sup> Note- this is scheduled to change to \$0.90 for every dollar in 2022

# Chapter 4: Supplemental Materials

A variety of resources were used to develop this handbook, however, there are three primary documents which were referenced at length. Together these three documents (listed below) form the foundation of the Loop's operation and can be referenced for additional information when appropriate. However rare it may be, it is important to note that if there are instances when these documents are in conflict with one another the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) Establishing the Governance of the Linn-Benton Loop Transit Service takes precedence. Bylaws for both the Loop Board and TAC were developed to refine the IGA and provide further guidance, they were not developed to offset the IGA.

## ***Key Documents***

- Bylaws for the Linn-Benton Loop Board
- Bylaws for the Linn-Benton Loop Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
- Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) Establishing the Governance of the Linn-Benton Loop Transit Service