



Forum on Rural Population Health

May 19-21, 2025
Seaside, Oregon
ohsu.edu/orhforum



Driving Change: Community-Led Solutions to Rural Transportation Barriers

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Problem:

Rural community members in Southern Oregon often lack options and resources that connect them to their communities.

Response:

Providing options and resources to access healthcare, employment, childcare, health food, and social connection.

Upper Rogue



**TRANSPORTATION
PROJECT**



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The Why



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Disconnected by Design: Rural Realities in the Data

People living in rural areas experience unmet travel needs and financially burdensome travel at higher rates.

People of color and those with limited car access are disproportionately transportation-burdened in rural contexts.

Car access is the most important predictor of financial burden and unmet need in rural communities.

Rural populations face tradeoffs between paying the financial costs of accessing a car or failing to meet mobility needs.

Living in a small town may mitigate rural transportation challenges.



Access in Motion: Transportation & Rural Well-Being

- Employment Opportunity
- Social connection
- Access to healthcare,
professional services, and social
human & services



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- Federally Qualified Health Centers
- Rural Governments
- Regional Economic Development Organizations
- Faith-based Organizations
- Transit Districts
- NEMT Providers
- Local Non-profits
- Local School Districts
- Local Fire Districts
- Emergency Response

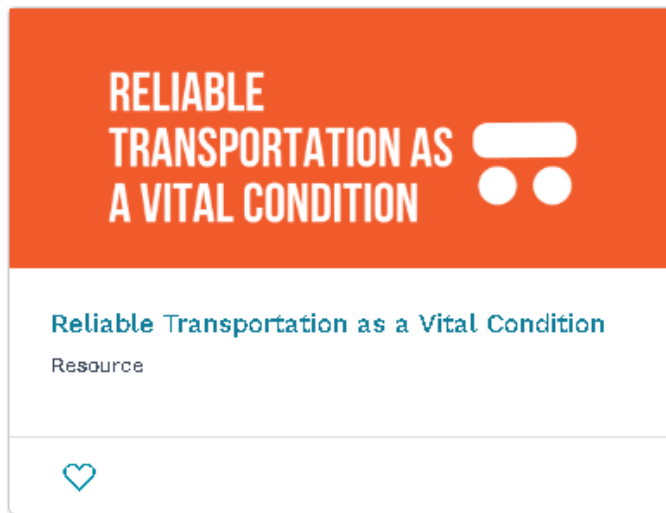


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Connecting the Conditions: Why Transportation Matters Everywhere



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The What



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From the Community, For the Community

Improving rural transportation options necessitates collaborative partnerships with:

- Hospitals
- Clinics
- School Districts
- Local Government
- Community organizations
- Other



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Driven by Community, Powered by Volunteers

When you start to form friendships with local rural community members, and they begin sharing their transportation struggles, you learn the community is trying to solve the problem internally, with very constrained resources.

Informal ride-share programs almost always already exist, but struggle due to lack of capacity (drivers) and resources (working vehicles and fuel).



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Repairing Cars, Restoring Access

The Pitt Stop



Butte Falls Garage



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Stronger Together, Farther Together



BUTTE FALLS
CHARTER SCHOOL



Prospect Church of the Nazarene



The How



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Designed *With*, Not *For*

- Spent time in communities
- Attended social events
- Met with local government
- Met with church leaders
- Developed working relationships with civic minded community members with social capital
- Learned about need
- Incorporated learning into approach



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Building the Backbone: **Resources that Sustain**

- Partner with agencies that also care about solving rural transportation issues
- Funding can come unexpectedly from partners who “think of you” when a particular funding source becomes available
- Advocate for the need and don’t be shy about positioning the work to receive funding
- Use a diversified funding plan, utilizing grants, donations, volunteers, and sub-awards

Braided Solutions, Shared Success



- AmeriCorps (Federal)
 - Volunteer to run program
- Rogue Community Health
 - Program sponsorship
- Rogue Valley Transportation District
 - Network Improvement Funds for NEMT work
- Coordinated Care Organizations
 - Funds to support rideshare program, automotive repair, and emergency gasoline
- Private donations



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A Dedicated Path to Transportation Solutions: **The case for a dedicated Non-Profit**



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Fixing What Wasn't Built for Us

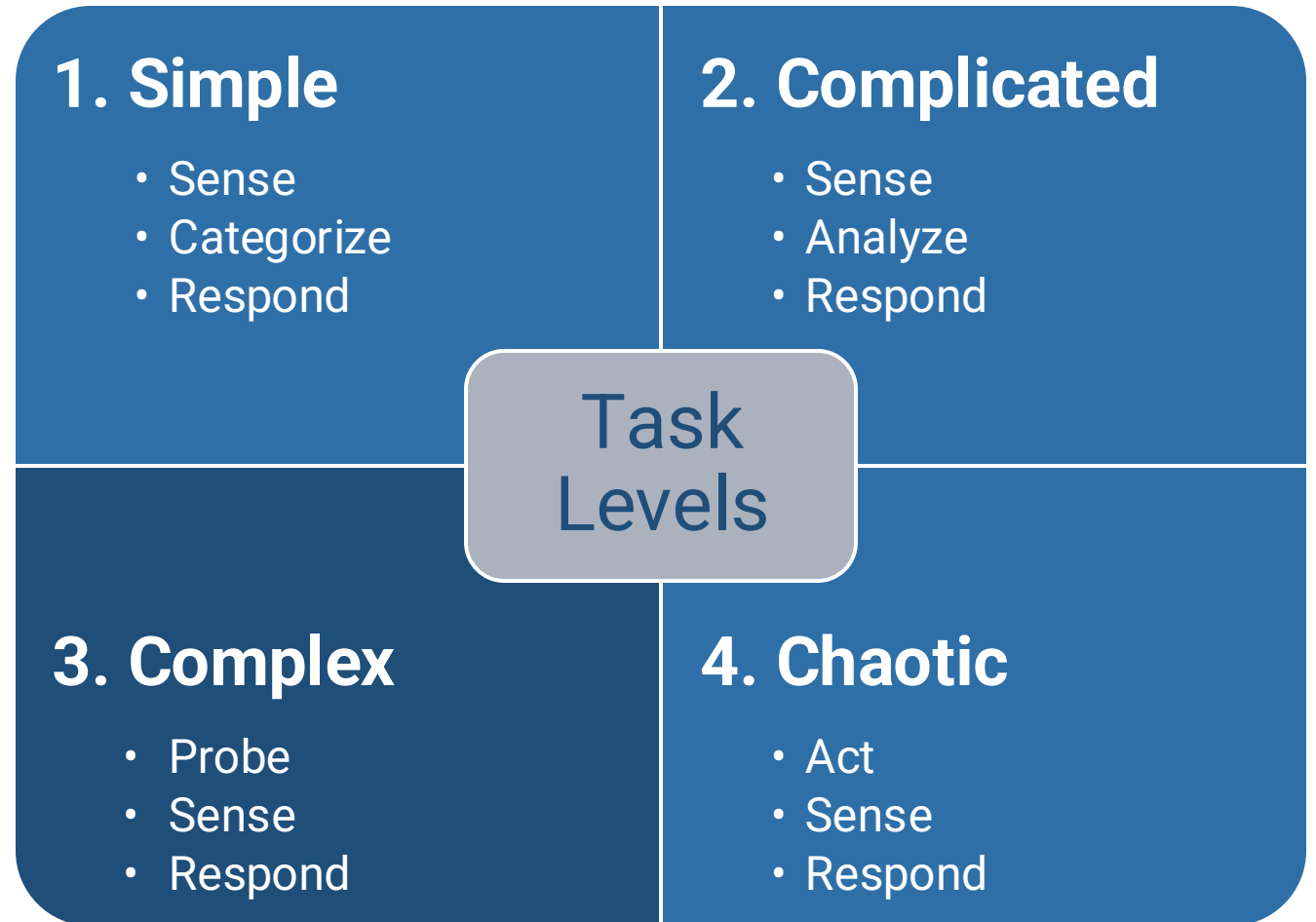
- Ownership of adequate rural transportation
- Funding is not designed to support rural transportation needs
- Dedicated champion to move the work forward
- Lack of technical expertise
- Commitment from impacted communities
- Will most likely always be dependent on outside funding
- Making the invisible visible

How Can I Do This?



Simple, Complicated, Complex, and Chaos

Solving rural transportation issues is a **COMPLEX** problem, that requires probing, sensing, and then responding.



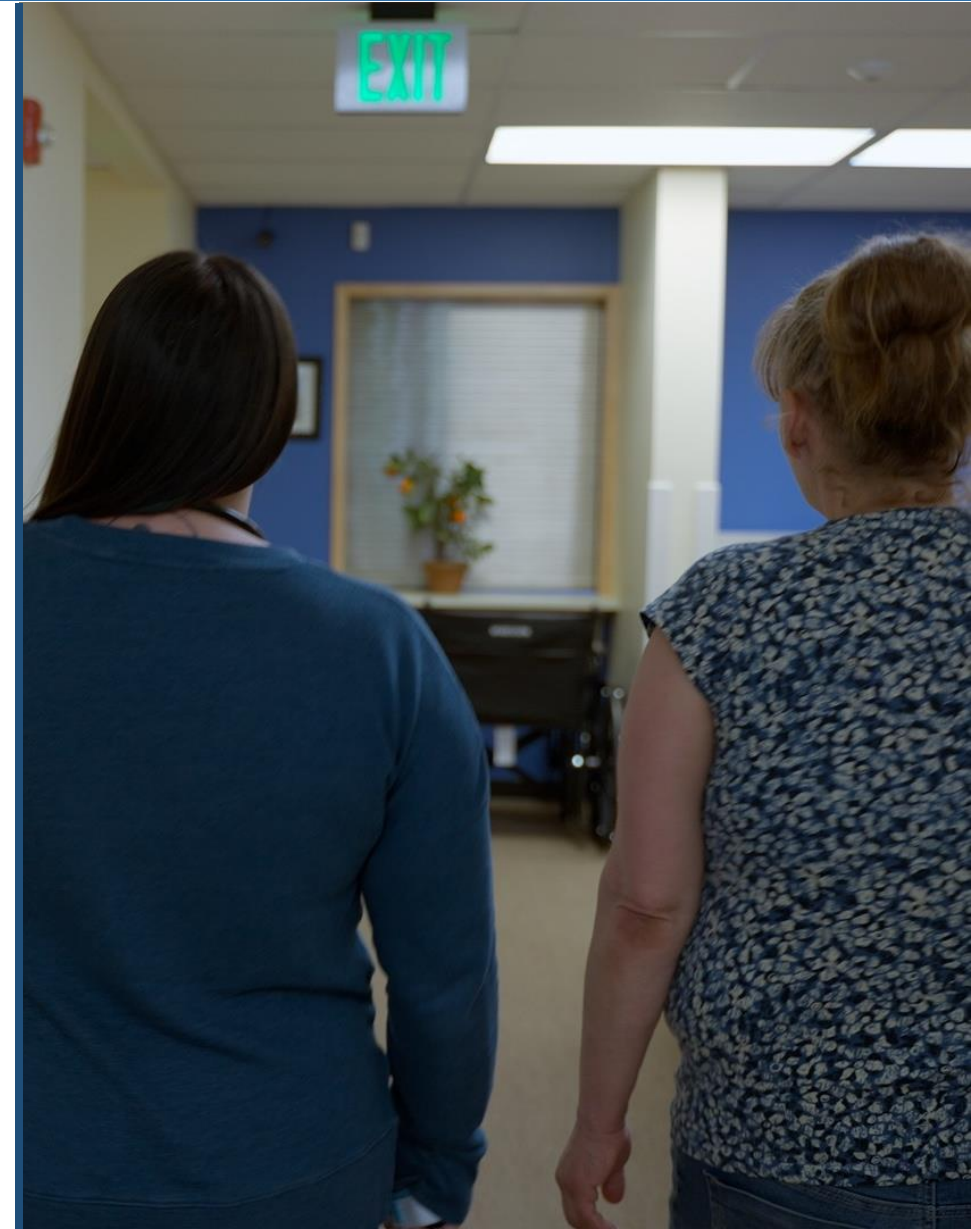
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The Basics....

- Walk with the Community:
 - No parachuting please.
- Build Relationships:
 - Social capital goes miles.
 - Long-term, measured in years/decades.
- Help the Community recognize the needs they see as vital.
- Look to Build Capacity within the community
 - Resistance, especially around technology.



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The Basics Continued....

- Develop partnerships with other dedicated organizations
- Remember that rural transportation is a quiet, invisible emergency:
 - Sell your case, make it compelling.
 - The rural transportation crisis is viewed by the absence of rural community members receiving critical services.
- Funding streams rarely last forever:
 - Apply outside funding sparingly.



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Impact/Results



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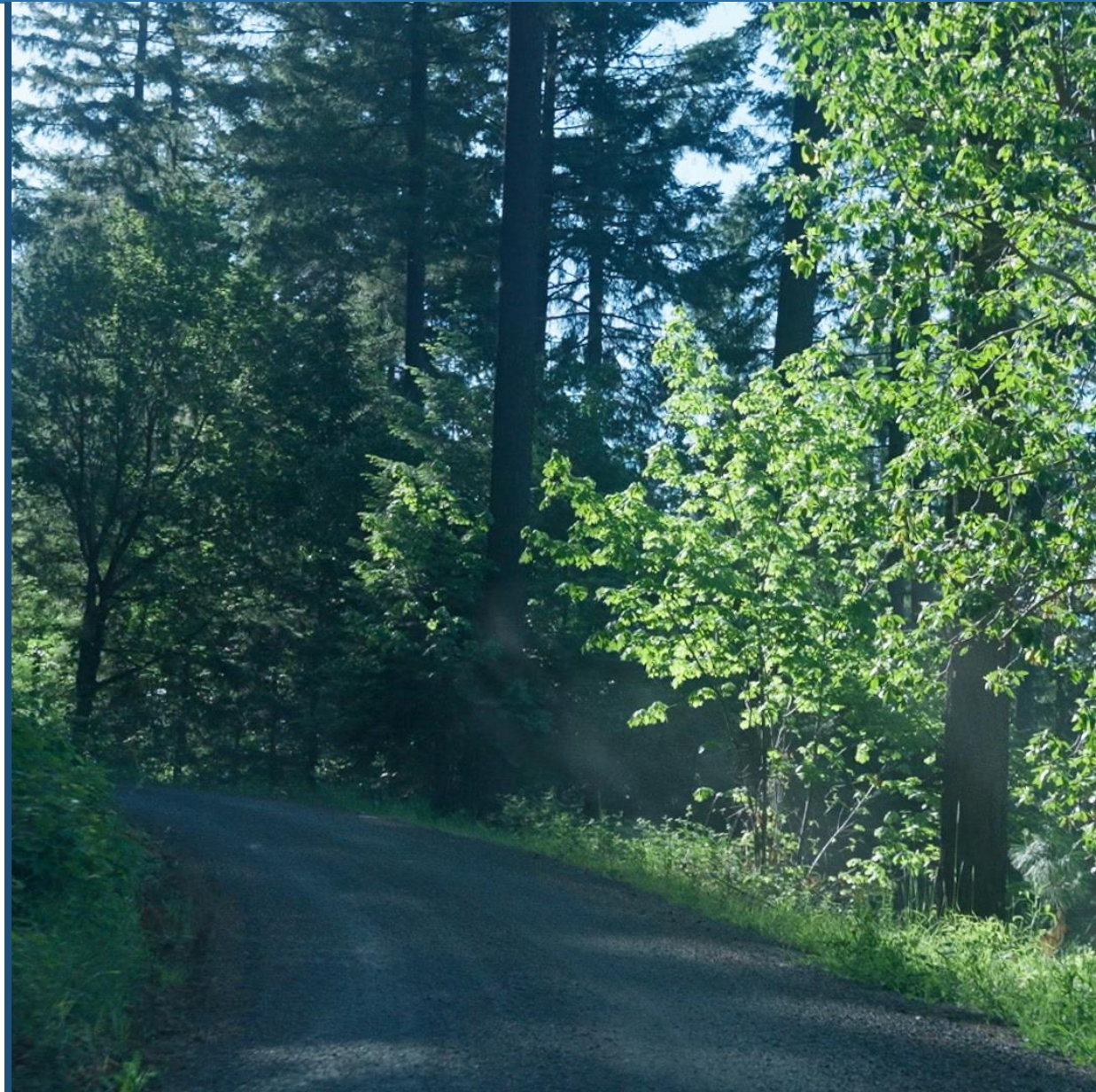


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Traction & Transformation

We've achieved measurable outcomes, including:

- Number of people served and lives impacted
- Funds raised and sustainable revenue streams established
- Partnerships formed with healthcare providers and community organizations



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What's Working

- Rideshare program
 - Upper Rogue
 - Illinois Valley
- Automotive repair support
- Emergency gasoline support



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Next Steps



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From Momentum to Movement

- Scale volunteer driver programs.
- Secure additional funding to keep the wheels turning on rural vehicles.
- Expand partnerships with healthcare and public health organizations.
- Advocate for policy changes to support rural transportation.



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What Questions Can We Answer?



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Thank you to the 2025 Forum partners!

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