

# Chapter 4 - Planning Area Characteristics

This section provides information on the political and physical characteristics of the Planning Area, as well as area demographics, employment characteristics, commute patterns, and forecasting future conditions.

## A. Political and Physical Characteristics

The Middle Rogue Planning Area is located in the Rogue Valley of southwestern Oregon. The Planning Area covers just under 65 square miles (41,398 acres) extending from Grants Pass eastward to Gold Hill. The cities of Gold Hill, Grants Pass, and Rogue River are wholly within the Planning Area, as well the parts of Jackson and Josephine counties that are anticipated to urbanize over the next 20 years.

The arterial and collector roadways subject to this plan are under the jurisdiction of Jackson and Josephine counties, the three cities, and the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT). Major state highway facilities located within the Planning Area include Interstate 5 (I-5), Sams Valley Highway (OR 234), Redwood Highway (OR199), Jacksonville Highway (OR 238), and Rogue River Highway (OR 99). In Chapter 1, Figure 1-1 depicts the Planning Area.

Topography varies from predominantly level areas near the Rogue River and the Merlin area to rolling foothills surrounding the valley. The Rogue River is the most prominent water feature in the area. Floodplains and numerous wetlands are located near the river and its tributaries.

### 1. Land Use and Zoning

The understanding of interactions between land use and transportation is critical to transportation and land use planning. Location of human activities lay of land determine travel patterns, traffic volumes and the need for transportation facilities, while transportation infrastructure influences land use patterns.

*“Location of human activities and lay of land determine travel patterns, traffic volumes and the need for transportation facilities, while transportation infrastructure influences land use patterns.”*

and

The central areas of Grants Pass, Gold Hill and Rogue River are characterized by compact grid street patterns, while much of the remainder of the Planning Area is less dense and features a more random street pattern, adapting to terrain. Land designated for industrial use in Grants Pass is concentrated in the eastern part of town along the railroad corridor. Other areas of industrial land are between Interstate 5 and Merlin, an unincorporated rural community.

Commercial zones in the area follow major roadway corridors in addition to concentrations in downtown Grants Pass, Gold Hill, and Rogue River. Public land includes parks and surrounding Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Forest Service lands. Much of the Planning Area is zoned as residential with farm and forest zones at the fringe.

## City of Grants Pass

The City of Grants Pass is the primary commercial center of the Planning Area and contains more than two-thirds of the population. The most notable commercial areas of the city include the downtown central business district (CBD), 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Streets, Hwy 99, Highway 238, Hwy 199, and Redwood Avenue. Development in the Grants Pass CBD is relatively compact and includes a mixture of commercial uses. The street system in the downtown area is a grid pattern and includes two sets of one-way streets (6<sup>th</sup> Street southbound and 7<sup>th</sup> Street northbound; E Street westbound and F Street eastbound). Both sets of facilities include pedestrian and bicycle improvements, although the bike lane on 6<sup>th</sup> Street is diverted to 4<sup>th</sup> Street from A Street to Bridge Street. The Grants Pass Comprehensive Plan identifies neighborhood centers, which are located throughout the city, primarily along major arterials and collectors.

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Much of the industrial land in Grants Pass is located in the eastern portion of the city. Higher-density residential areas are generally east of the CBD north of the river, and in portions of the Fruitdale and Redwood districts. Lower-density residential areas are in the northern and western parts of the city.

## City of Rogue River

The City of Rogue River is approximately seven miles east of Grants Pass and is bisected by Interstate 5 and the Rogue River. The city center immediately north of the freeway includes a mix of retail and service commercial uses. Other commercial and employment uses are south of the river, with the largest industrial area at the southern edge of the city, located between the freeway and North River Road. Multiple – family housing surrounds the downtown with single-family dwellings filling the remaining areas.

## City of Gold Hill

Gold Hill is located near the eastern boundary of the Planning Area. Except for small pockets of multi-family housing, it is primarily a single-family residential community. Most commercial and employment uses are concentrated along Second Avenue, which is also a state highway.

A private rail crossing provides access to the largest industrially zoned area, located near the west edge of the city. This access reduces options for use of the property. The railroad runs the width of the city; two public crossings at Gustav Street and Highway 234 provide the only public street connections between the northern and southern portions of the city.

The Rogue River forms the southern and eastern boundaries of the city. Bridges at the east edge and farther to the west connect to Interstate 5.

## Unincorporated Josephine County

The unincorporated portions of Josephine County include a mix of residential, farming, and forest uses with rural residential uses dominating the non-urban areas south of the river. The community of Murphy straddles the Applegate River at the south edge of the Planning Area. Most of the agricultural land in the Planning Area is west of Grants Pass and the largest farms are north of the river. The higher elevations surrounding the valley are zoned forest use.

Several residential areas in the unincorporated portions of the county lie adjacent to the City of Grants Pass. Large portions of these intensely developed areas near Redwood Avenue, Upper River Road, and Demaray Drive are within the city's Urban Growth Boundary. Merlin-North Valley Unincorporated Rural Community connects to the Planning Area via Interstate 5. It includes the North Valley Industrial Park, the Grants Pass Airport, the Rendata Industrial area and the Merlin townsite.



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## Unincorporated Jackson County

The unincorporated portions of Jackson County represent a relatively small portion of the Planning Area. These areas are dominated by small residential lots along the river and small farms at the upland, open areas. At the intersection of Rogue River Highway and Foothills Creek Road is a small cluster of commercial structures that comprise the Foothills Creek Rural Service Center.

## 2. Schools and Parks

Community focal points, such as schools and parks, are important to understanding travel patterns. These facilities attract pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and drivers and have specific transportation needs (e.g., pedestrian safety around schools). Awareness of the location of these facilities is important to planning for an effective regional transportation system.

### Schools

Trips to and from school by students and teachers – via bus, walking, bicycling, or driving – affect transportation patterns and transportation infrastructure planning and design. Schools also attract people outside of school hours for sports, extracurricular events, and community events held at school facilities.

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There are 27 public and private schools, including Rogue Community College, within the study area. Thirteen of the schools are inside the Grants Pass city limits, including nine elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school, in addition to a K-12 private school. Other schools in Josephine County outside of the Grants Pass city limits include four elementary schools, two middle schools, one high school, and one K-12 private school. One elementary school and a junior/high-school are in

Rogue River; one elementary school and one middle school are in Gold Hill.

See Map 4-2, *Public Schools and Parks*, at the end of this chapter for a visual depiction of school locations.

**Table 4-1: Public Schools by Jurisdiction**

Jurisdiction within Planning Area	Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools
City of Grants Pass	9	2	1
City of Rogue River	1	1	1
City of Gold Hill	1	1	0
Unincorporated Josephine County	4	2	1

### **Rogue Community College (RCC)**

Grants Pass is home to the Rogue Community College Redwood campus, which is located just west of downtown along Hwy 199. The campus encompasses approximately 84 acres, including 30 campus buildings with over 200,000 square feet of building space. The campus provides parking for approximately 846 vehicles and has three designated bicycle parking areas.

### **Parks and Recreational Areas**

Parks are important to the transportation system because they are popular destinations for residents and visitors. Parks sometimes need special transportation attention to serve particular park users, such as children.

Not counting sites set aside for future park use, there are 37 existing parks and open space areas in the Planning Area that cover more than 1,246 acres. In Grants Pass, Riverside Park and the Reinhart Volunteer Park are heavily used parks with a regional draw. Most parks are managed by Josephine County or the cities where they are located, with several exceptions. The Josephine County Fairgrounds in Grants Pass are managed by the County. Cathedral Hills Park is adjacent to Grants Pass, listed as a park by Josephine County, but is managed by the Bureau of Land Management. Valley of the Rogue Park is the only state park in the Planning Area. Map 4-3 located at the end of this chapter displays parks within the MPO region.

## **B. Demographics**

Population trends are a key factor affecting the volume of travel in the region. In addition, where and how people live greatly determines which transportation facilities and modes get used most and which warrant the greatest investment of transportation funding. The following pages contain general demographic characteristics for the Planning Area based on the 2010 US Census, the Oregon Household Activity Survey and the most recent American Community Survey (ACS) data. Where appropriate, the characteristics are compared to statewide or countywide data.

*Data Notes: Beginning with the 2010 U.S. Census, the decennial census no longer collects the same extent of socio-economic information; the American Community Survey now does. For those tables containing ACS data, it is important to note that estimates are based on a sample of the population using five-year averages rather than a count at one point in time, such as the decennial census. Additionally, please keep in mind that there is a margin of error (MOE) associated with every estimate in this section, although not individually noted. An MOE is an indicator of the reliability of the data estimates by proving a range where the true value of the estimate most likely falls. For example, a 20% poverty rate could have a (+/- 2%) MOE, meaning that the poverty rate is actually likely between 18-22%. For smaller communities such as Gold Hill or Rogue River, MOEs for ACS data estimates are generally larger due to the smaller sample sizes.*

The Census Bureau defines two types of urban areas:

- *Urbanized Areas* (UAs) of 50,000 or more people;
- *Urban Clusters* (UCs) of at least 2,500 and less than 50,000 people.

In the 2000 Census, the Grants Pass urban area was an *Urban Cluster* with a population of 43,811. In the 2010 US Census, the Grants Pass urban areas became an *Urbanized Area* with a population of 50,520. In federal transportation law, this is the threshold for establishing an MPO. As of 2018 according to Portland State University the population of the MRMPO planning area is identified in table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: Population for MRMPO

<b>Member Jurisdictions</b>	<b>2018 Population</b>
Gold Hill*	1,220
Grants Pass*	37,285
Jackson County**	2,916
Josephine County***	16,355
Rogue River*	2,245
<i>Total</i>	<b>60,021</b>

Table 4-3 below shows the estimated **number of households** for the MPO Planning Area and each MPO jurisdiction and unincorporated place based on numbers from the 2010 U.S. Census.

**Table 4-3: Households**

Jurisdiction	# of Households	Avg Household Size
Grants Pass Urbanized Area	21,226	2.32
Grants Pass	15,023	2.38
Rogue River	1,150	2.16
Gold Hill	516	2.59
Merlin, Census Designated Place	654	2.43

Source: 2013-2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates Table DP02: Selected Social Characteristics in the United States

The **median age** of 42.2 for residents of the Planning Area is higher than the statewide median of 39.2 years. The City of Grants Pass has the lowest median age in the Planning Area at 38.2, while the rural community of Merlin is highest at 54.3.

The Planning Area has a relatively high percentage of **senior residents (age 65+)** compared to the statewide average of 16.3%. A large degree of variation exists in the area, however. For example, in Rogue River 25.7% of the population is age 65 years or older while the estimate for neighboring Gold Hill is almost half of that, at 13.9%.

**Table 4.4: Median Age and Senior Population**

Jurisdiction	Median Age	Population Age 65+
Oregon	39.2	16.30%
Grants Pass Urbanized Area	42.2	21.40%
Josephine County	47.6	24.90%
Jackson County	43	20.50%
City of Grants Pass	38.2	19.80%
City of Rogue River	46.1	25.70%
City of Gold Hill	39.2	13.90%
Merlin	54.3	21%

Source: 2013-2017 ACS 5-Year Est. Table S0101

In the Planning Area, 86.1% of residents identified themselves as **“White alone”** in their choice of race and ethnicity during the 2010 U.S. Census. In choice of ethnicity, 8.1% of the Planning Area population identified as **“Hispanic or Latino”**. For a statewide comparison, 76.5% of Oregon residents identified themselves as White alone, with 12.7% of the state’s population identifying as Hispanic or Latino.



Table 4.5: White Alone and Hispanic/Latino Populations		
Jurisdiction	White Alone Population (Not Hispanic or Latino)	Those Who Identify as Hispanic or Latino
Oregon	76.50%	12.70%
Grants Pass Urbanized Area	86.10%	8.10%
Josephine County	87.40%	7.10%
Jackson County	81.70%	12.20%
City of Grants Pass	84.70%	9.50%
City of Rogue River	89.30%	5.70%
City of Gold Hill	90.70%	3.30%
Merlin	92.80%	0%
2013-2017 ACS 5-Year Est Table DP05		

Approximately 19% of Planning Area residents reported living below the **poverty level** in the past 12 months according to ACS data for 2013-2017. This is higher than the statewide average of 14.9%. The current percentage of the population living in poverty within Grants Pass is 20.2%, with Rogue River and Gold Hill at 18.7% and 16.6%, respectively.

Table 4.6: Poverty	
Jurisdiction	Population Living Below the Poverty Level (Last 12 Months)
Oregon	14.90%
Grants Pass Urbanized Area	18.90%
Josephine County	18.60%
Jackson County	16.70%
City of Grants Pass	20.20%
City of Rogue River	18.70%
City of Gold Hill	16.60%
Merlin	15.50%
Source: 2013-2017 ACS 5-Year Est Table S1701	

Approximately 89% of Planning Area residents aged 25 years or older are **high school graduates**, with 16% having obtained a **bachelor's degree or higher**. These numbers are similar for the City of Grants Pass. Statewide, the percent of high school graduates is just slightly higher at 90.2% and those that hold a bachelor's degree or higher being greater at 32.3%.

Table 4.7: Education Level (ages 25+)		
Jurisdiction	High School Graduate or Higher	Bachelor's Degree or Higher
Oregon	90.20%	32.30%
Grants Pass Urbanized Area	89.00%	16.00%
Josephine County	88.10%	18.50%
Jackson County	89.80%	27.20%
City of Grants Pass	88.70%	16.10%
City of Rogue River	89.70%	15.40%
City of Gold Hill	90.10%	21.10%
Merlin	95.70%	12.40%
2013-2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates Table S1501		
Note: Population 25 years and older		

The City of Grants Pass had the highest percentage (24.3%) of **households with a child less than 18 years old**. In Gold Hill, 22.6% of the households had a child younger than 18, compared to 20.8% of households in Rogue River, and 22.1% of all Planning Area households. The statewide percentage was 21.5%.

**Table 4.8: Households with a Child (less than 18 years)**

Jurisdiction	Percentage of Total Population
Oregon	21.50%
Grants Pass Urbanized Area	22.10%
Josephine County	19.60%
Jackson County	20.90%
City of Grants Pass	24.30%
City of Rogue River	20.80%
City of Gold Hill	22.60%
Merlin	11.30%

*Source: 2013-2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates Table S0101*

The percentage of **vacant housing units** is quite varied throughout the MRMPO planning area. The City of Grants Pass had 5.7% of housing units vacant, with Rogue River and Gold Hill at 9.4% and 6.5%, respectively.

In the state of Oregon, the percentage of **owner-occupied housing units** outnumber **renter-occupied housing units** by 61.7% to 38.3%, respectively. Similarly, but to a lesser degree, owner-occupied units also outnumber renter-occupied units in the MRMPO Planning Area, at 55.8% vs. 44.2%. The City of Gold Hill has the highest percentage of owner-occupied units at 74%, while the City of Grants Pass has almost half of all housing units (49.3%) being renter-occupied and just over half being owner-occupied (50.7%).

**Table 4.9: Housing Occupancy**

Jurisdiction	Owner-Occupied	Renter-Occupied	Vacant Units
Oregon	61.70%	38.30%	9.30%
Grants Pass Urbanized Area	55.80%	44.20%	6.20%
Josephine County	66.40%	33.60%	7.70%
Jackson County	62.90%	37.10%	8.00%
City of Grants Pass	50.70%	49.30%	5.70%
City of Rogue River	44.10%	55.90%	9.40%
City of Gold Hill	74.00%	26.00%	6.50%
Merlin	79.40%	20.60%	0.00%

*2013-2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates Table DP04*



Age of the housing stock varies throughout the MRMPO Planning Area.

**Table 4.10: Age of Housing Stock**

Grants Pass Urbanized Area	Percentage of Total Homes
Built 2014 or later	0.50%
Built 2010 to 2013	1.10%
Built 2000 to 2009	15.30%
Built 1990 to 1999	16.60%
Built 1980 to 1989	13.70%
Built 1970 to 1979	19.60%
Built 1960 to 1969	7.90%
Built 1950 to 1959	11.10%
Built 1940 to 1949	7.70%
Built 1939 or earlier	6.50%

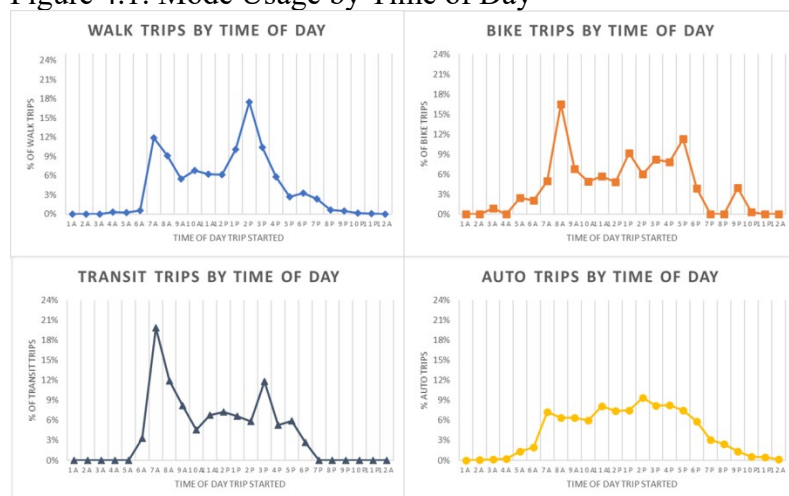
Source: 2013-2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates Table DP04

## C. Commute Patterns

Commute characteristics and patterns help determine where transportation system needs exist. Many of the MRMPO Planning Area residents commute to the Medford area for work, as well as traveling to the area for shopping and services. It is also important to note that many residents of outlying rural areas travel to the Grants Pass area for work, shopping, and services. Interstate 5, Hwy 99, Hwy 199, and Hwy 238 are all important commuter routes.

The following tables and charts come from the Oregon Household Activity Survey conducted in the Rogue Valley in 2011. Some interesting characteristics were identified from the data that was collected. While peak hour travel was similar for all modes age of the traveler had a significant impact on time of day travel. Figure 4.1, below is a series of charts showing travel time behavior by mode.

Figure 4.1: Mode Usage by Time of Day

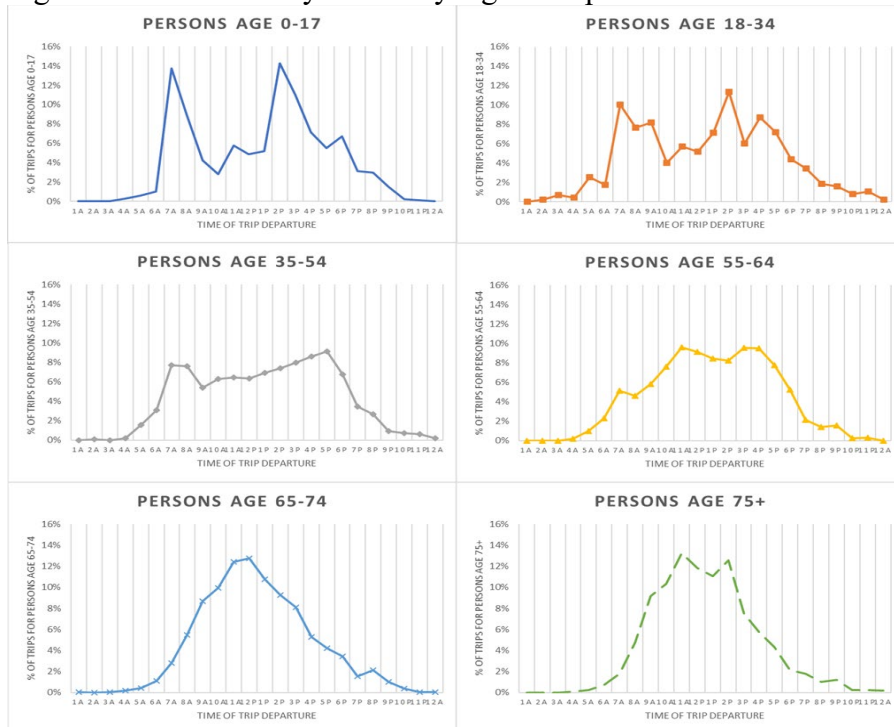


Oregon Household Activity Survey Fig. 6-11

While the percent of trips per time of day are different for each mode there is a common AM peak period and a similar pattern in the afternoon.

In figure 4.2 below you will note that travel behavior by age cohort is similar for the first three cohorts from ages 0-17 years old to the age cohort 35 – 54 years of age. However a marked change is obvious beginning with the age cohort 55-64 years of age. For these ages, trips are beginning to focus more around the middle of the day and, indeed, by the final age cohort, age 75 and above this is the timeframe for the highest travel activity.

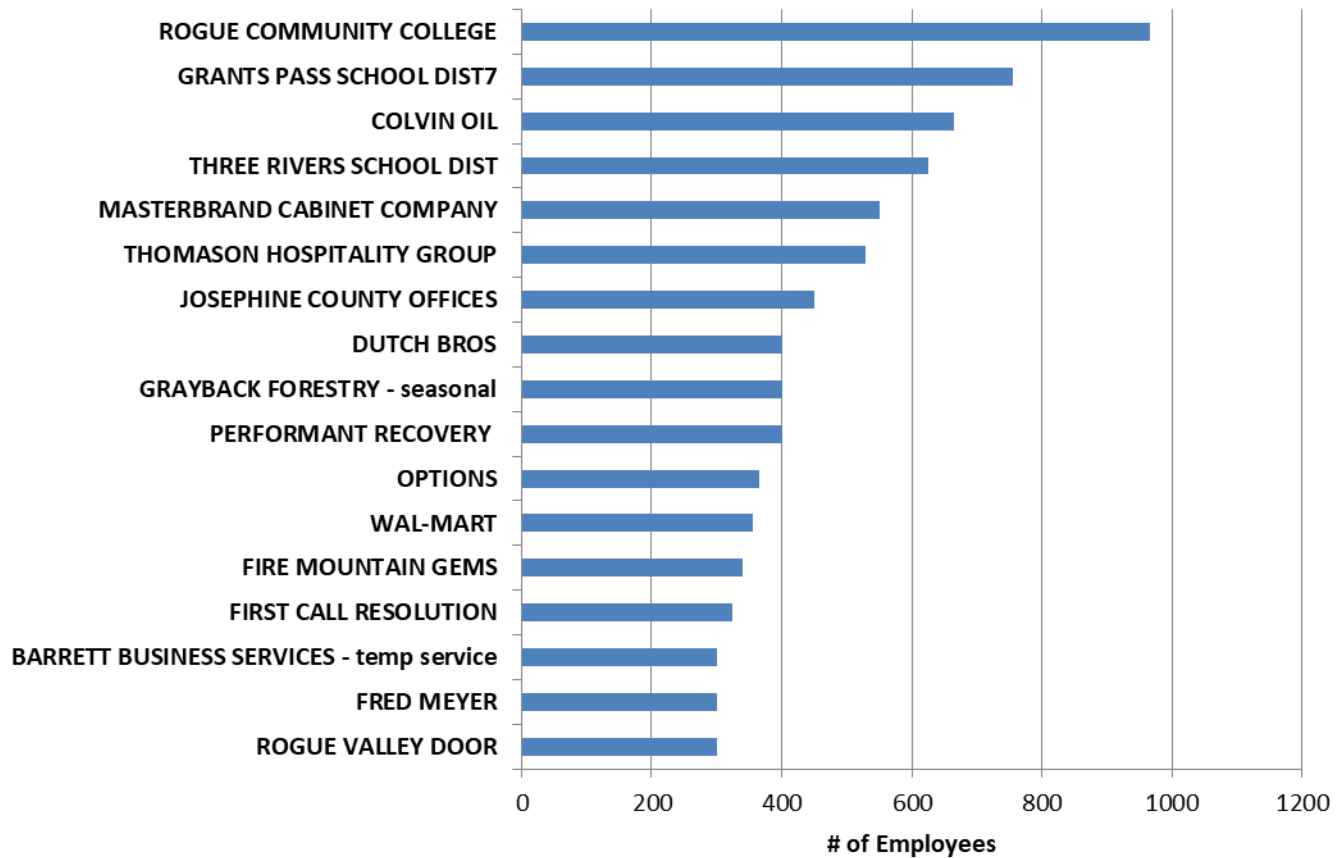
Figure 4.2: Time of Day Travel by Age Group



Oregon Household Activity Survey Fig. 6-12

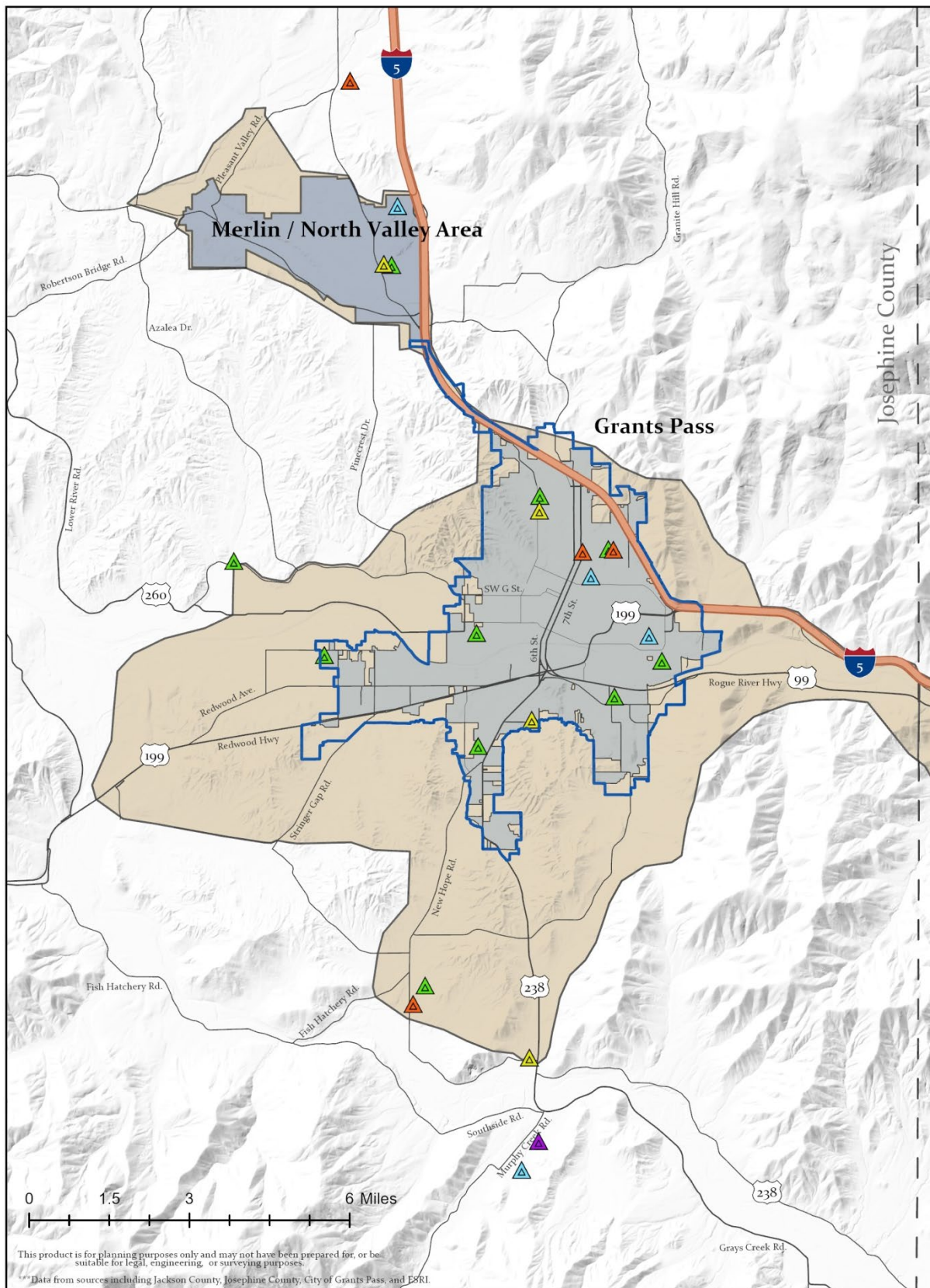
The location of **major employers** helps to identify commuter travel patterns, including heavily used corridors and peak-hour transportation needs. Major employers ( $\geq 300$  employees) within the Planning Area are shown on Figure 4-3, below, and on Map 4-4.

**Figure 4.3 Major Employers (≥ 300 employees)**

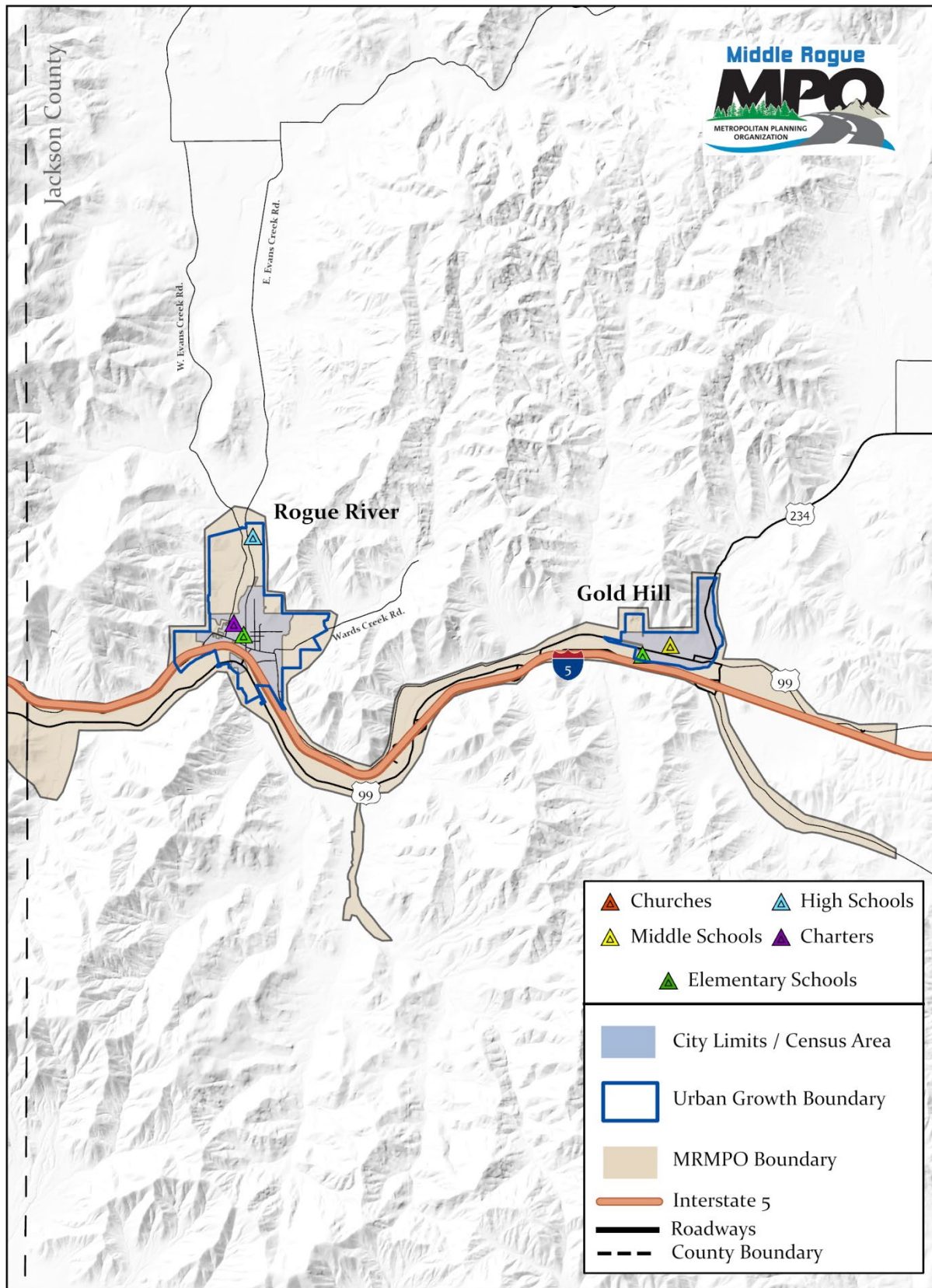


\*School district office located within MRMPO boundary, but not all schools lie within boundary.

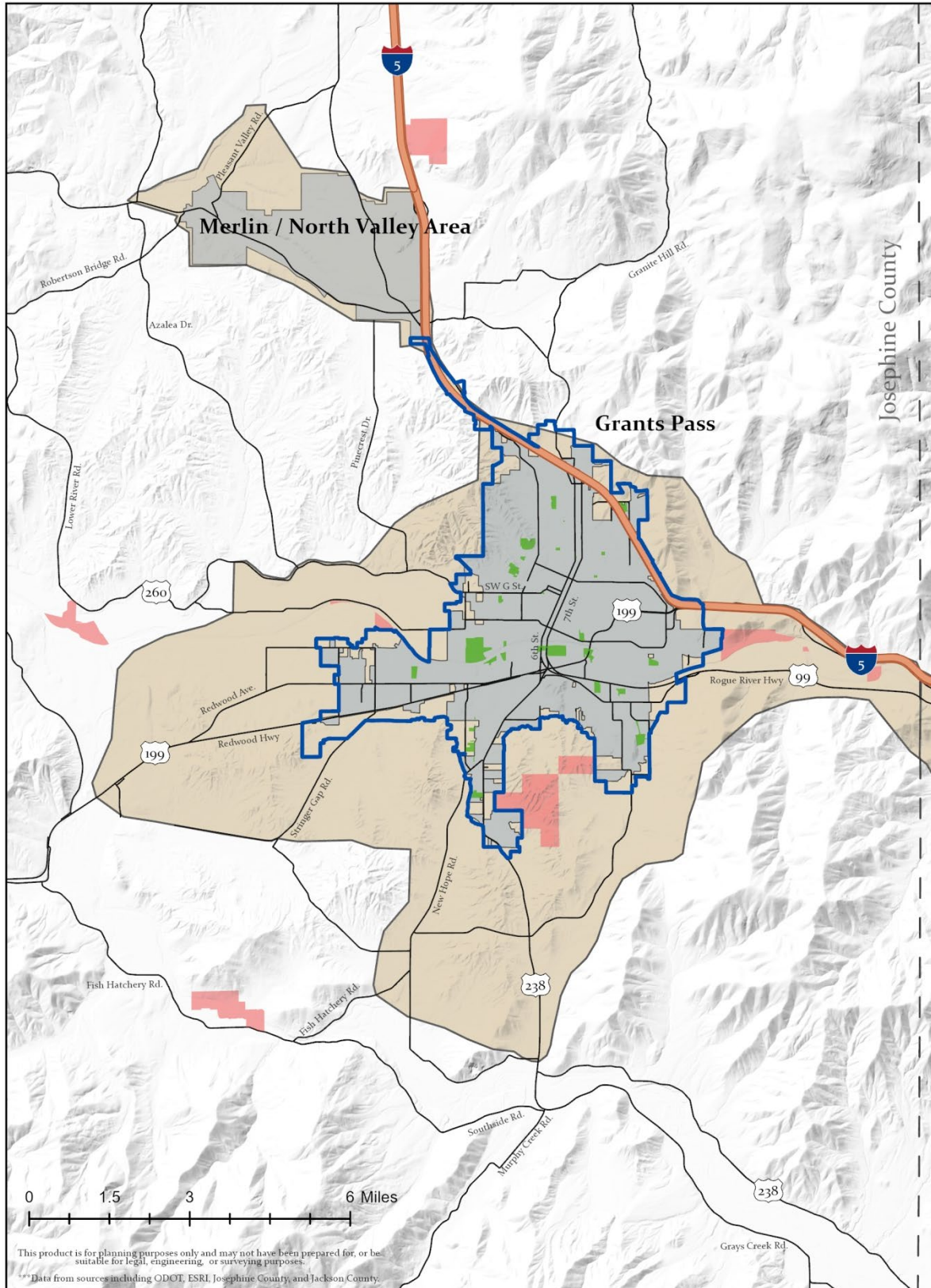
**Map 4-2 – Public Schools**



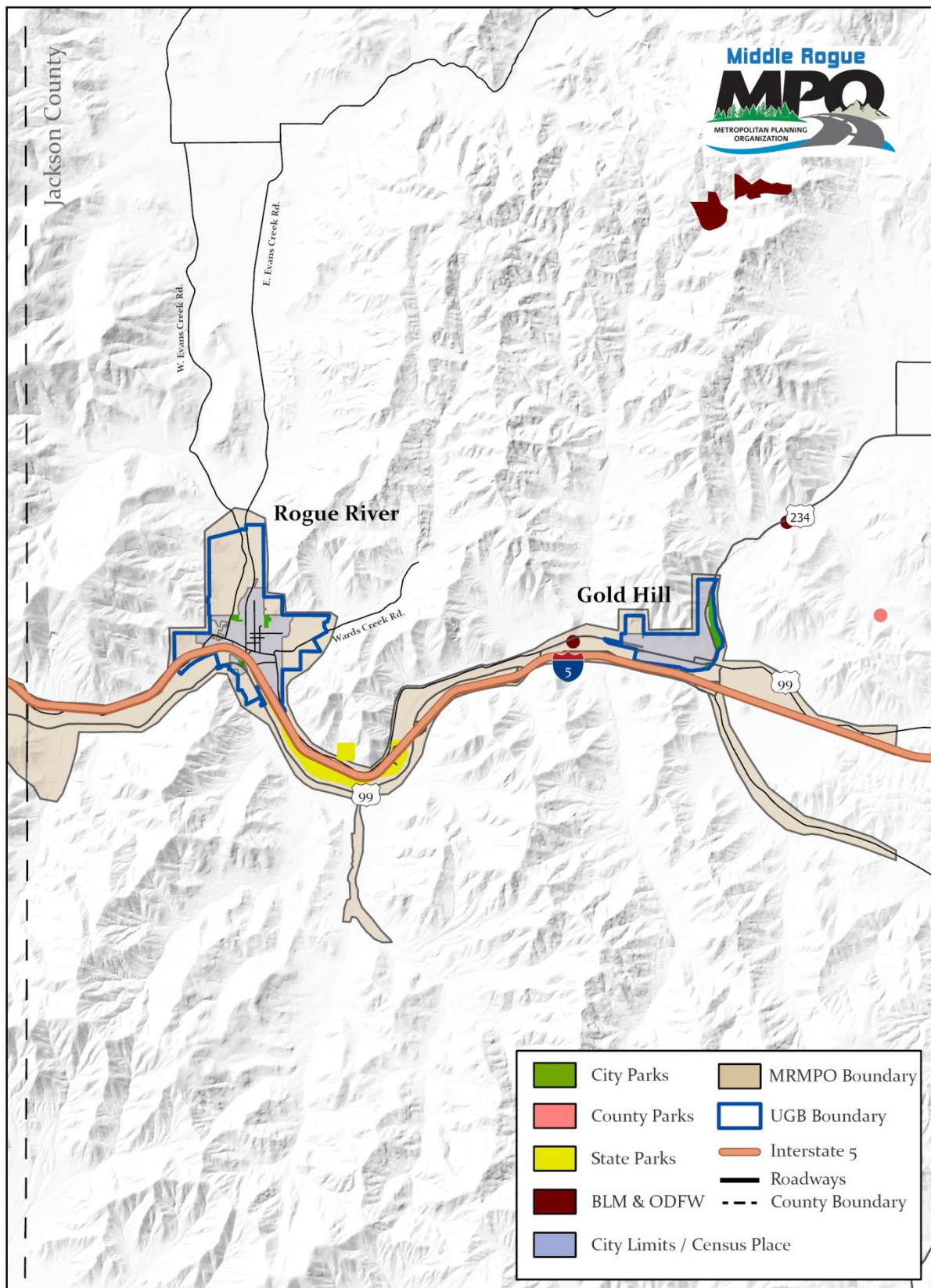




**Map 4-3 – Public Parks**







**Map 4-4 – Major Employers**

