

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.

Political and Physical Characteristics

The Middle Rogue Planning Area is located in the Rogue Valley of southwestern Oregon. The Planning Area covers approximately 73.49 square miles (47,038 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 as 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), Sam’s Valley Highway (OR 234), Redwood Highway (US 199/OR 99), 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.

Land Use and Zoning

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

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 the 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.

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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), 6th and 7th Streets, Hwy 99, Jacksonville 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 (6th Street southbound and 7th Street northbound; E Street westbound and F Street eastbound). Both sets of facilities

include pedestrian and bicycle improvements. 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 part 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 7 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 eastern edge of the city, located between the freeway and North River Road. Multi-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 state highway 99.

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 for 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.

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 in the upland 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.

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 36 public, charter and private schools, including Rogue Community College (RCC), within the study area. Grants Pass city limits, including six elementary schools, two middle schools, and three high schools, in addition to five private schools, one charter school. Other schools in Josephine County outside of the Grants Pass city limits include four elementary schools, two middle schools, one high school, one K-12 private school, and one charter school. One elementary school, a middle school, and a high school are in Rogue River. One elementary school and one middle school are in Gold Hill.

See 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	Alternative Schools*
City of Grants Pass	6	2	3	1
City of Rogue River	1	1	1	0
City of Gold Hill	1	1	0	0
Unincorporated Josephine County	4	2	1	0

* Include virtual and blended learning schools. Also, serving students in 6th through 12th grade. This does not include Private or charter schools.

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 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. located at the end of this chapter displays parks within the MPO region.

Demographics

Population trends are a key factor affecting the volume of travel in the region. Where and how people live greatly determines which transportation facilities and modes get used most and which warrant the greatest investment of transportation funding. Below and the following pages contain general demographic characteristics for the Planning Area based on the 2020 US Census and the most recent American Community Survey (ACS) data. Where appropriate, the characteristics are compared to statewide or countywide data¹. The Census Bureau defines urban areas as having 2,500 or more residents and 2,000 or more housing units.

Population

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 2020, U.S. Census Bureau, the population of the MRMPO planning area is identified in Table 4-2 below.

Table 4-2 – Population

Member Jurisdictions	2010 Population	2020 Population	change	
Grants Pass Metro Area (MRMPO)	82,713	88,090	5,377	6.5%
Jackson County	203,206	223,259	20,053	9.9%
Josephine County	82,713	88,090	5,377	6.5%
Gold Hill	1,220	1,335	115	9.4%
Rogue River	2,131	2,407	276	13.0%
Grants Pass	34,533	39,189	4,656	13.5%

Source: 2020 Census Data Downloaded from PSU

As shown in Table 4-2 above, results of the 2020 US Census when compared to 2010 US Census data demonstrate a rise in population within the cities and counties that make up the Middle Rogue MPO Planning Area.

¹ 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.

Households

Table 4-3 below shows the estimated number of households for the MPO planning area and each MPO jurisdiction and unincorporated place.

Table 4-3 – Households

Jurisdiction	Households	Avg. Household Size
Oregon	1,658,091	2.49
Jackson County	89,467	2.44
Josephine County	36,148	2.40
Grants Pass Urbanized Area	36,148	2.40
City of Gold Hill	482	2.43
City of Grants Pass	16,231	2.34
City of Rogue River	876	1.96
Merlin	712	2.48

Source: 2016-2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Table S1101

Age

Table 4-4 below shows that the median age of 47.1 for residents of the planning area is higher than the statewide median of 39.6 years. The City of Gold Hill has the lowest median age in the Planning Area at 39.9, while the City of Rogue River is highest at 55.6 years.

The Planning Area has a relatively high percentage (25.8%) of senior residents (age 65+) compared to the statewide average (17.7%). A large degree of variation exists in the area, however. For example, in Rogue River, 35.1% of the population is 65 years or older while the estimate for neighboring Gold Hill is 21.3%.

Table 4-4 – Median Age and Senior Population

Jurisdiction	Median Age	Pop. 65+
Oregon	39.6	17.7%
Jackson County	42.4	21.9%
Josephine County	47.1	25.8%
Grants Pass Urbanized Area	47.1	25.8%
City of Gold Hill	39.9	21.3%
City of Grants Pass	40.0	20.0%
City of Rogue River	55.6	35.1%
Merlin	54.9	25.7%

Source: 2016-2021 ACS 5-year Estimates, Table S0101

Race

Table 4-5 below shows that in the planning area, 82.6% of residents identified themselves as White Alone in the 2020 U.S. Census. 8.0% of the planning area population identified as Hispanic or Latino. For a statewide comparison, 71.7% of Oregon residents identified themselves as White Alone and 13.9% of the state's population identifying as Hispanic or Latino.

Table 4-5 – White Alone and Hispanic/Latino Populations

Jurisdiction	White Alone (Not Hispanic or Latino)	Hispanic or Latino
Oregon	71.7%	13.9%
Jackson County	76.2%	13.6%
Josephine County	82.6%	8.0%
Grants Pass Urbanized Area	82.6%	8.0%
City of Gold Hill	84.6%	5.2%
City of Grants Pass	79.9%	10.0%
City of Rogue River	84.8%	7.4%
Merlin	83.6%	6.6%

Source: 2020 Decennial Census, Table P2

Poverty

Table 4-6 below shows that over 16% of planning area residents reported living below the poverty level in the past 12 months according to ACS data for 2016-2021. This is higher than the statewide average of 12.1%. The current percentage of the population living in poverty within the City of Grants Pass is 16.4%, with Rogue River and Gold Hill at 16.2% and 15.3%, respectively.

Table 4-6 – Poverty

Jurisdiction	Percent Living Below Poverty Level
Oregon	12.1%
Jackson County	13.5%
Josephine County	16.1%
Grants Pass Urbanized Area	16.1%
City of Gold Hill	15.3%
City of Grants Pass	16.4%
City of Rogue River	16.2%
Merlin	10.5%

Source: 2016-2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Table S1701

Education

Approximately 90.8% of Planning Area residents aged 25 years or older are high school graduates, with 18.1% having obtained a bachelor’s degree or higher (Table 4-7). These numbers are similar for the City of Grants Pass and Josephine County. Statewide, the percentage of high school graduates is just slightly higher at 91.5% and those that hold a bachelor’s degree or higher being greater at 35%.

Table 4-7 – Education Level (Age 25+)

Jurisdiction	High School Graduate +	Bachelors Degree +
Oregon	91.5%	35.0%
Jackson County	90.9%	30.0%
Josephine County	90.8%	18.1%
Grants Pass Urbanized Area	90.8%	18.1%
City of Gold Hill	93.1%	12.6%
City of Grants Pass	90.6%	17.2%
City of Rogue River	89.2%	13.6%
Merlin	81.5%	23.8%

Source: 2016-2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Table S1501

Households with a Child

Table 4-8 below shows that the City of Grants Pass has the highest percentage of households with a child less than 18 years old (31.6%), while Rogue River had the lowest percentage (17.2%). The planning area has a slightly lower proportion (26.2%) than the state (27.7%).

Table 4-8 – Households with a Child Under 18

Jurisdiction	Percent of Households
Oregon	27.7%
Jackson County	26.7%
Josephine County	26.2%
Grants Pass Urbanized Area	26.2%
City of Gold Hill	28.6%
City of Grants Pass	31.6%
City of Rogue River	17.2%
Merlin	20.6%

Source: 2016-2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Table S2501

Housing Occupancy

In the state of Oregon, the percentage of owner-occupied housing units outnumber renter-occupied housing units 63.2% to 36.8%, respectively. Owner-occupied units also outnumber renter-occupied units in the MRMPO Planning Area, 69.5% vs. 30.5%. Merlin has the highest percentage of owner-occupied units at 83.8%, while the City of Grants Pass has the largest proportion of renter-occupied units (46.3%)

Table 4-9 – Housing Occupancy

Jurisdiction	Owner-Occupied	Renter-Occupied
Oregon	63.2%	36.8%
Jackson County	64.6%	35.4%
Josephine County	69.5%	30.5%
Grants Pass Urbanized Area	69.5%	30.5%
City of Gold Hill	75.3%	24.7%
City of Grants Pass	53.7%	46.3%
City of Rogue River	56.7%	43.3%
Merlin	83.8%	16.2%

Source: 2016-2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Tables S2504 & H1

Housing Age

Table 4-10 below shows that the age of the housing stock varies throughout the MRMPO Planning Area.

Table 4-10 – Age of Housing Stock

Grants Pass Urbanized Area	Percent of Occupied Homes
2020 or later	0.0%
2010 to 2019	5.5%
2000 to 2009	17.2%
1980 to 1999	28.9%
1960 to 1979	29.7%
1940 to 1959	13.1%
1939 or earlier	5.6%

Source: 2016-2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Table S2504

Employment Characteristics

Employment characteristics are important to the understanding of travel patterns and particularly work trips. Peak hour periods are used for travel forecasting and determination of needed transportation improvements, facilities, programs, and strategies. Employment numbers and locations have a significant effect on transportation planning outcomes. The following 2016-2021 ACS Census data represents current data available for each of the jurisdictions.

Because the 2016-2021 ACS data is aggregated over a five-year period, it does not necessarily reflect current economic conditions or dramatic shifts in trends. The most current information can be found in monthly data from the Oregon Employment Department, which for example, reported a seasonally adjusted unemployment rate of 3.8% for the Grants Pass Urbanized Area (MRMPO Planning Area) for 2016-2021, as compared to 5.7% for 2015 (Table 4-11).

Approximately 49.6% of the MRMPO Planning Area population age 16 and over are in the labor force compared to 62.6% for the state. Within the MRMPO Planning Area, the lower percentage of workforce likely reflects the high percentage of the population age 65+, as shown on page 6 of this chapter.

Median household incomes within the MPO Planning Area are lower than the statewide median household income. The 2016-2021 ACS data estimates median household income within the state of Oregon to be \$70,084 and \$51,733 for the MPO Planning Area.

Employment Density within the Planning Area are shown in Map 4-3 at the end of the chapter.

Table 4-11 – Employment

Jurisdiction	Unemployed	Pop. 16+ Years old in Work Force	Median Household Income (\$)
Oregon	3.5%	62.6%	70,084
Jackson County	3.2%	57.8%	61,020
Josephine County	3.8%	49.6%	51,733
Grants Pass Urbanized Area	3.8%	49.6%	51,733
City of Gold Hill	4.0%	55.0%	50,750
City of Grants Pass	3.1%	56.4%	49,355
City of Rogue River	4.9%	41.5%	33,704
Merlin	7.7%	51.5%	61,613

Source: 2016-2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Table DP03

Industry

Table 4-12 below indicates that major employment sectors throughout the MRMPO Planning Area included educational services, health care and social assistance (24.9%); retail trade (11.8%); arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services (11.2%); and manufacturing (10.3%).

Comparing 2016-2021 data to 2005-2010 data shows several significant industry changes for the Grants Pass Urbanized Area. Educational services, and health care and social assistance grew by 4.6% and arts, entertainment, and recreation and food service grew by 2.7%. Meanwhile, construction decreased by 3.0% and retail trade decreased by 2.6%.

Table 4-12 – Industries

Industry	Oregon	Jackson County	Josephine County	Grants Pass Urbanized Area	City of Gold Hill	City of Grants Pass	City of Rogue River	Merlin
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	2.9%	3.5%	4.1%	4.1%	2.6%	1.5%	1.3%	7.5%
Construction	6.6%	6.4%	6.2%	6.2%	11.2%	6.0%	7.0%	6.6%
Manufacturing	11.0%	8.0%	10.3%	10.3%	16.7%	9.2%	6.3%	11.4%
Wholesale trade	2.6%	2.2%	1.7%	1.7%	1.0%	2.1%	1.5%	0.0%
Retail trade	11.6%	13.7%	11.8%	11.8%	9.2%	10.5%	19.2%	18.2%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	4.6%	4.4%	3.8%	3.8%	4.5%	3.7%	7.2%	1.6%
Information	1.6%	2.2%	1.2%	1.2%	3.7%	0.9%	0.0%	0.4%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	5.5%	5.3%	4.8%	4.8%	0.6%	4.7%	0.0%	4.3%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	11.5%	8.3%	9.5%	9.5%	9.2%	10.7%	6.5%	16.5%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	23.4%	25.7%	24.9%	24.9%	26.1%	26.2%	22.0%	25.5%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	9.4%	10.4%	11.2%	11.2%	6.7%	13.8%	13.3%	0.0%
Other services, except public administration	4.6%	5.4%	5.0%	5.0%	6.5%	5.5%	10.7%	5.0%
Public administration	4.7%	4.3%	5.7%	5.7%	2.0%	5.1%	5.0%	3.0%

Source: 2016-2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Table DP03

Commute Patterns

Commuting 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.

Commute Origins and Destinations

According to the 2016-2021 ACS (Table 4-13), 41.1% of people within the MRMPO boundary who are employed live and work within the MRMPO boundary, while 21.2% work within it but live outside it.

Table 4-13 – MRMPO Commute Patterns

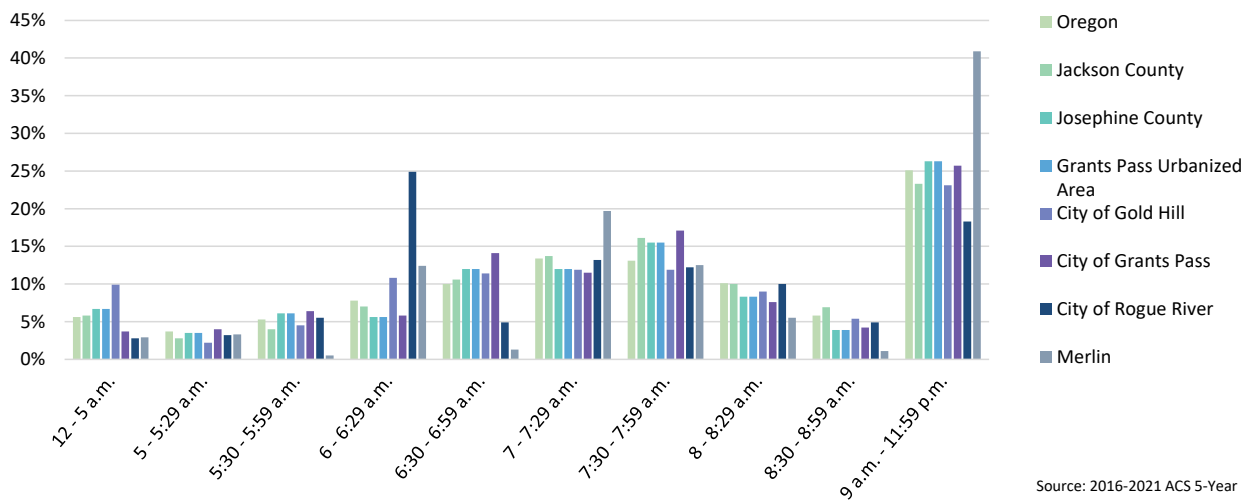
Worker Population Types	Population	Proportion
Total Employed Within MRMPO Boundary	32,655	100.0%
Live In and Employed Within MRMPO Boundary	13,422	41.1%
Live In, but Employed Outside MRMPO Boundary	6,921	21.2%
Live Outside, but Employed within MRMPO Boundary	12,312	37.7%

Source: 2016-2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Table B08008

Commute Schedule

Figure 4-1 below shows what times commuters in the MRMPO planning area leave home to go to work. The largest bracket for people to leave home is between 9:00 a.m. and 11:59 a.m., although the most popular 30-minute window is from 7:30 a.m. to 7:59 a.m. Notable spikes include Rogue River residents' tendency to leave between 6:00 a.m. and 6:30 a.m. and Merlin residents' habit of largely leaving home after 9:00 a.m.

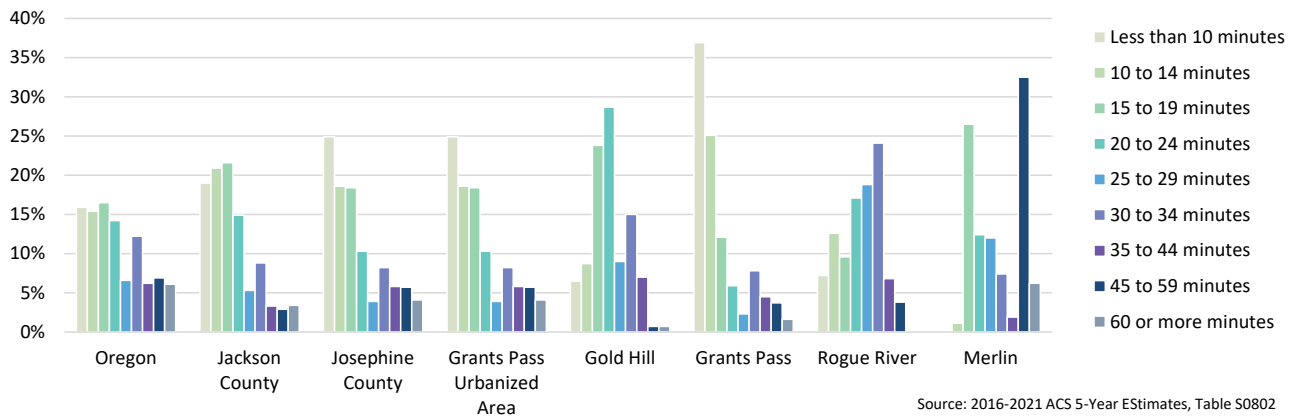
Figure 4-1 – MRMPO Departure Time to Work



Source: 2016-2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Table S0802

Figure 4-2 below shows how long it takes residents in the MRMPO planning area to get to work in the morning. The most common travel time for the planning area is less than 10 minutes, but for Gold Hill residents the most common travel time is 25-29 minutes and for Merlin residents it's 45-59 minutes. The City of Grants Pass shows a distinct trend for shorter travel times over all, whereas the City of Rogue River leans in the other direction.

Figure 4-2 – MRMPO Travel Times to Work



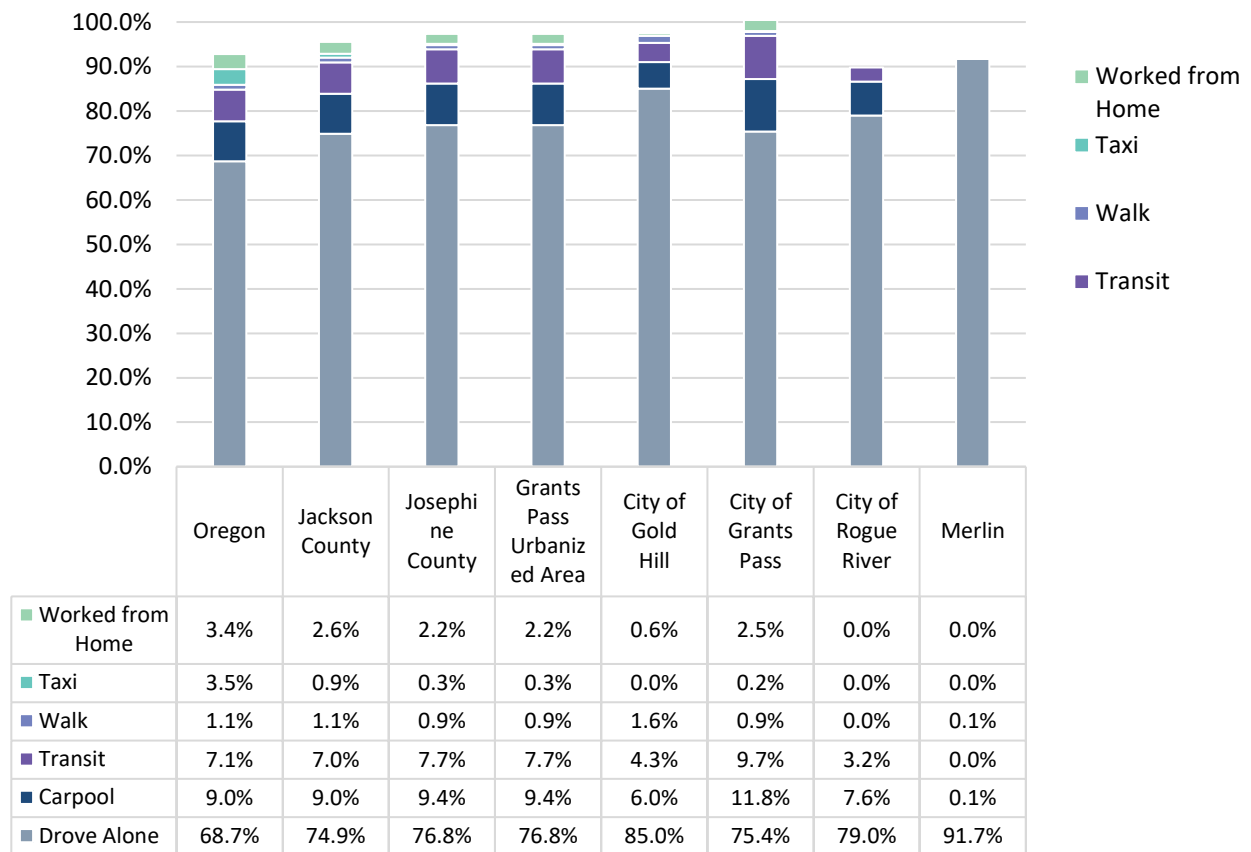
Vehicle Access

In the MRMPO planning area, 5.2% of households do not have access to a personal vehicle, compared to 9.7% for the City of Grants Pass, 1.7% for the City of Gold Hill, and 7.3% for the City of Rogue River (2016-2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Table B08201).

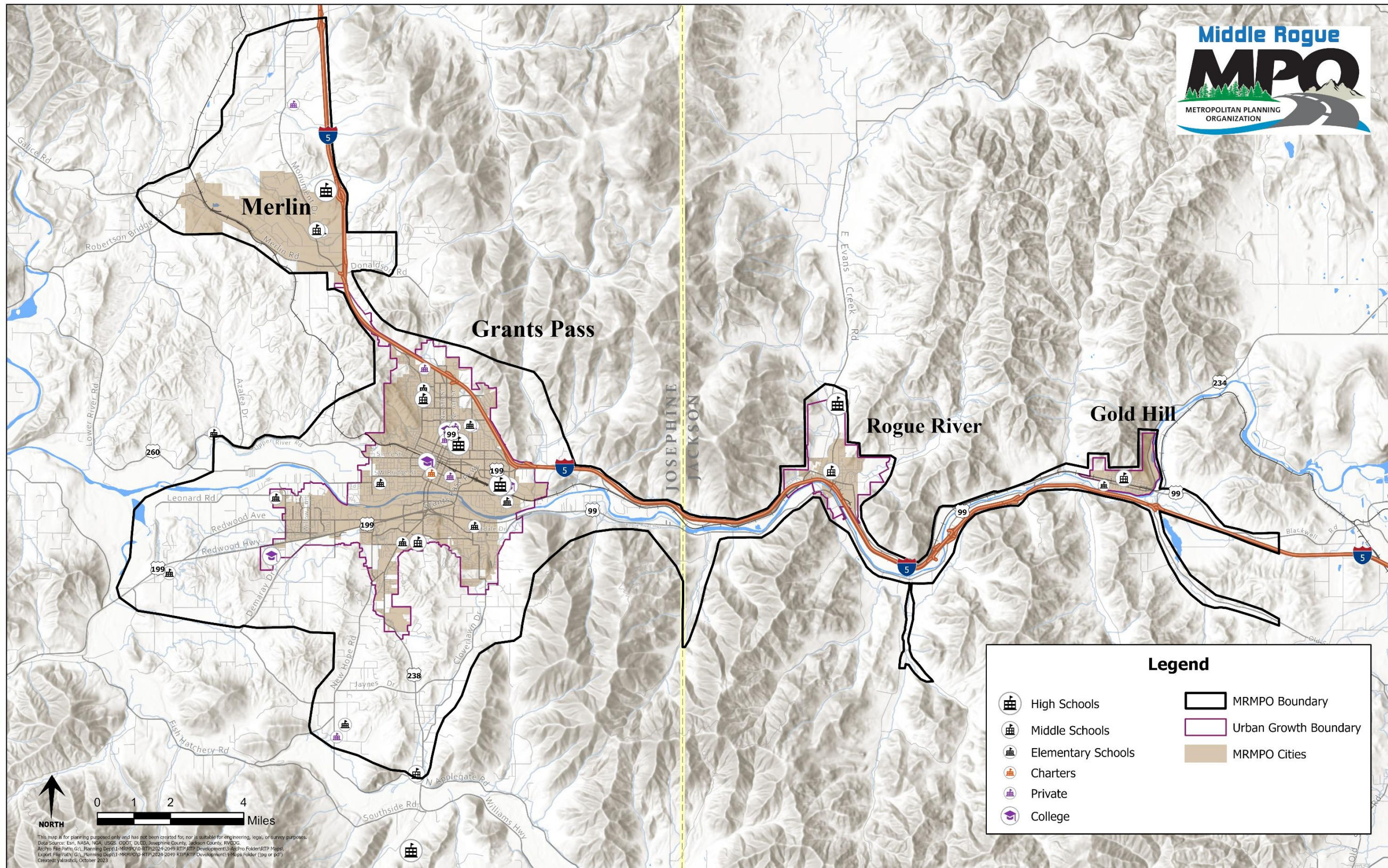
Travel Modes

Figure 4-3 below shows that for the MRMPO planning area, 76.8% of workers drove alone to get to work, compared to 68.7% for the state. 2.2% of people in the MRMPO planning area worked from home, while 3.4% did for the state.

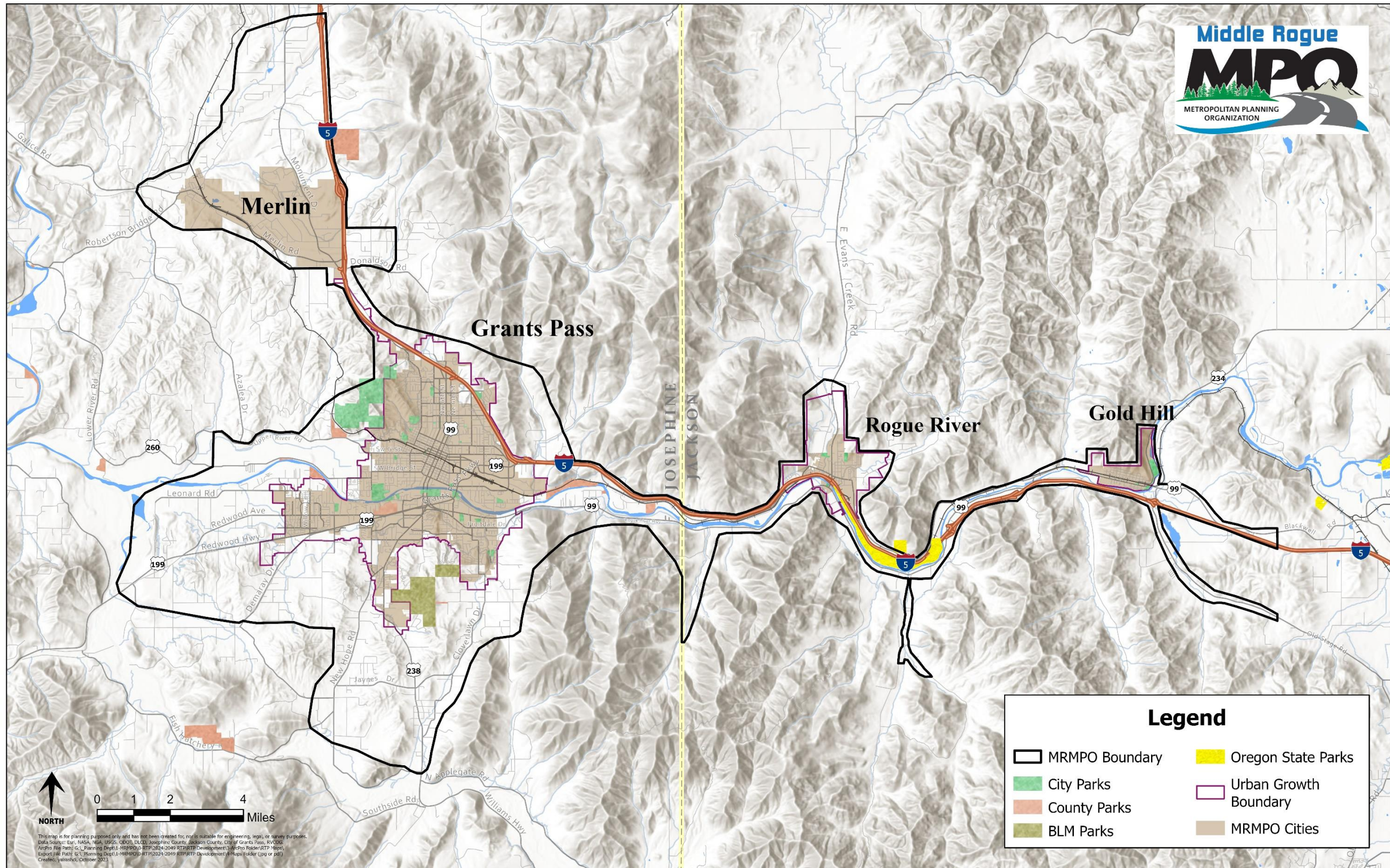
Figure 4-3 – MRMPO Travel Modes



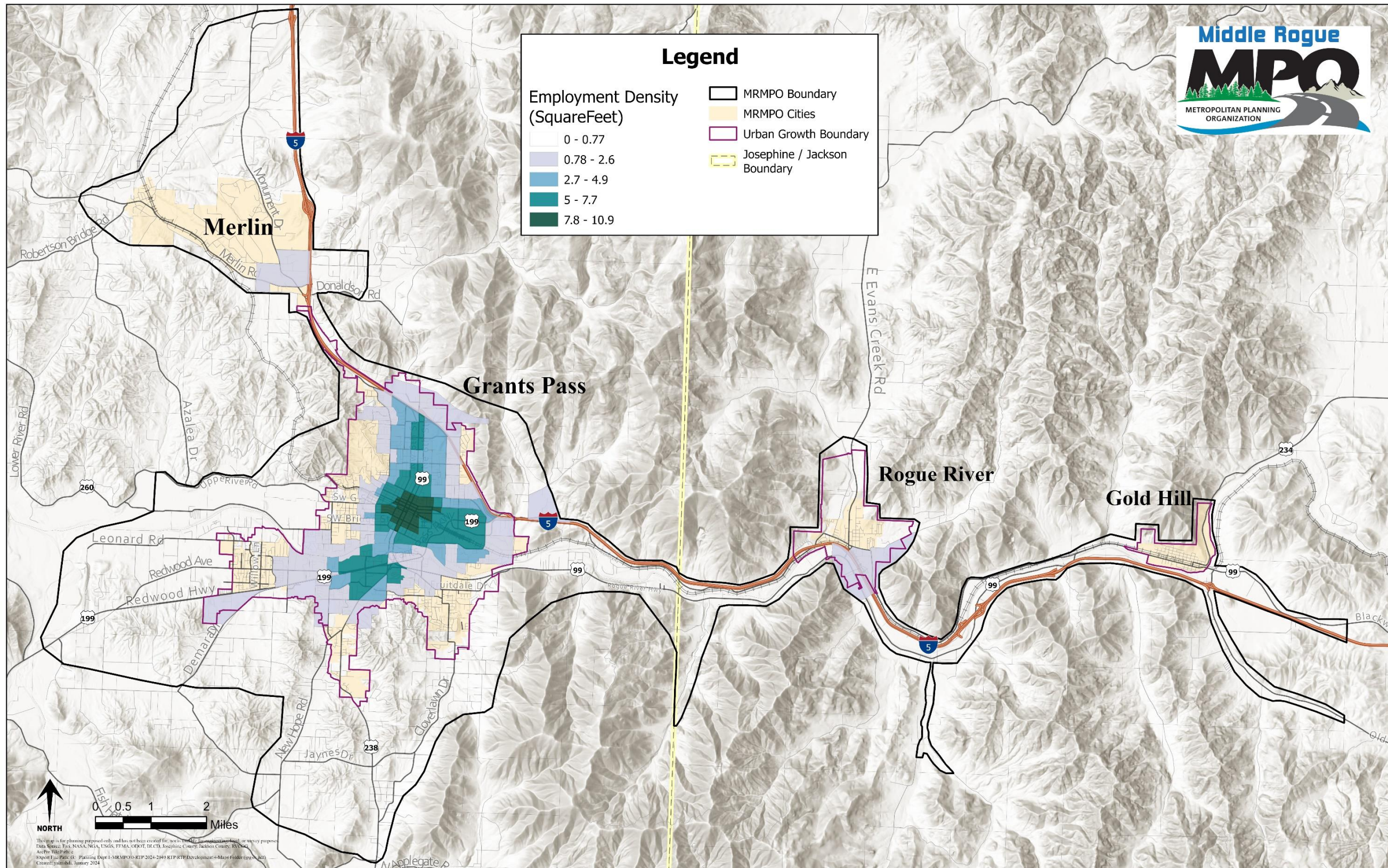
Source: 2016-2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Table S0801



Map 4-1 – Public Schools



Map 4-2 – Public Parks



Map 4-3 – Employment Density