

# 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 and lay of land determine travel patterns, traffic volumes and the need for transportation facilities, while transportation infrastructure influences land use patterns.

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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, 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 (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.

*“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.”*

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 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 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 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 at the upland, open areas. At the intersection of Rogue River Highway and Foothills Road is a small cluster of commercial structures that comprise the Foothills 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, a middle school, and a high school are in Rogue River; one elementary school and one middle school are in Gold Hill.

See Map 4-2, *Public Schools*, 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. Below and the following pages contain general demographic characteristics for the Planning Area based on the 2010 US Census 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.

**Table 4-2: Population**

Jurisdiction	2000 U.S. Census	2010 U.S. Census
Grants Pass Urbanized Area (MRMPO Planning Area)*	43,811	50,520
Josephine County	75,726	82,713
Jackson County	181,269	203,206
City of Grants Pass	23,003	34,533
City of Rogue River	1,847	2,131
City of Gold Hill	1,073	1,220
Merlin (Unincorporated Rural Community)	Not Available	1,615

Source: 2000 & 2010 U.S. Census, Table DP-1

\*MRMPO Planning Area boundary encompasses the Grants Pass Urbanized Area boundary, and is therefore slightly larger.

As shown in Table 4-2 above, results of the 2010 US Census when compared to 2000 US Census data demonstrate a rise in **population** within the cities and counties that make up the Middle Rogue MPO Planning Area.

Table 5-3 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	Number of Households	Average Household Size
Grants Pass Urbanized Area (MRMPO Planning Area)*	20,697**	2.36**
City of Grants Pass	14,313	2.34
City of Rogue River	1,054	2.02
City of Gold Hill	509	2.40
Merlin (Unincorporated Rural Community)	686	2.35

Source: 2010 U.S. Census, DP-1 Table; \*\*2010-2014 ACS, Table DP02

\*MRMPO Planning Area boundary encompasses the Grants Pass Urbanized Area boundary, and is therefore slightly larger.

The **median age** of 42.9 for residents of the Planning Area is higher than the statewide median of 38.4 years. The City of Grants Pass has the lowest median age in the Planning Area at 39.3, while the rural community of Merlin is highest at 51.8.

The Planning Area has a relatively high percentage of **senior residents (age 65+)** compared to the statewide average of 12.9%. A large degree of variation exists in the area, however. For example, in Rogue River 29.6% of the population is age 65 years or older while the estimate for neighboring Gold Hill is less than half of that, at 14.4%.

**Table 4-4: Median Age and Senior Population**

Jurisdiction	Median Age	Population Age 65+
State of Oregon	38.4	12.9%
Grants Pass Urbanized Area (MRMPO Planning Area)*	42.9	20.9%**
Josephine County	47.3	22.3%
Jackson County	42.1	17.6%
City of Grants Pass	39.3	18.6%
City of Rogue River	49.3	29.6%
City of Gold Hill	43.9	14.4%
Merlin (Unincorporated Rural Community)	51.8	24.5%

Source: Median Age – 2010 U.S. Census, Table P13; Senior Population - 2010 U.S. Census, Table P12 and \*\*Table QT-P1

\*MRMPO Planning Area boundary encompasses the Grants Pass Urbanized Area boundary, and is therefore slightly larger.

In the Planning Area, 87.6% of residents identified themselves as **“White alone”** in their choice of race and ethnicity during the 2010 U.S. Census. In choice of ethnicity, 7.4% of the Planning Area population identified as **“Hispanic or Latino”**. For a statewide comparison, 78.5% of Oregon residents identified themselves as White alone, with 11.7% 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
State of Oregon	78.5%	11.7%
Grants Pass Urbanized Area (MRMPO Planning Area)*	87.6%	7.4%
Josephine County	88.6%	6.3%
Jackson County	83.6%	10.7%
City of Grants Pass	86.0%	8.5%
City of Rogue River	91.2%	5.3%
City of Gold Hill	92.0%	2.7%
Merlin (Unincorporated Rural Community)	90.0%	5.2%

Source: 2010 U.S. Census, Table P12I and Table P12H

\*MRMPO Planning Area boundary encompasses the Grants Pass Urbanized Area boundary, and is therefore slightly larger.

Approximately 20% of Planning Area residents reported living below the **poverty level** in the past 12 months according to ACS data for 2010-2014. This is higher than the statewide average of 16.7%. The current percentage of the population living in poverty within Grants Pass is 22.3%, with Rogue River and Gold Hill at 19.7% and 19.1%, respectively.

**Table 4-6: Poverty**

Jurisdiction	Population Living Below the Poverty Level (w/in past 12 months)
State of Oregon	16.7%
Grants Pass Urbanized Area (MRMPO Planning Area)*	20.5%
Josephine County	19.7%
Jackson County	17.8%
City of Grants Pass	22.3%
City of Rogue River	19.7%
City of Gold Hill	19.1%
Merlin (Unincorporated Rural Community)	11.9%

Source: 2010-2014 ACS, Table DP03

\*MRMPO Planning Area boundary encompasses the Grants Pass Urbanized Area boundary, and is therefore slightly larger.

Approximately 88.5% of Planning Area residents aged 25 years or older are **high school graduates**, with 15.2% having obtained a **bachelor's degree or higher**. These numbers are similar for the City of Grants Pass and Josephine County. Statewide, the percent of high school graduates is just slightly higher at 89.4% and those that hold a bachelor's degree or higher being greater at 30.1%.

**Table 4-7: Education Level (ages 25+)**

Jurisdiction	High School Graduate or Higher	Bachelor's Degree or Higher
State of Oregon	89.4%	30.1%
Grants Pass Urbanized Area (MRMPO Planning Area)*	88.5%	15.2%
Josephine County	88.7%	17.3%
Jackson County	88.7%	25.1%
City of Grants Pass	89.1%	16.0%
City of Rogue River	88.9%	10.8%
City of Gold Hill	92.3%	11.8%
Merlin (Unincorporated Rural Community)	95.2%	4.9%

Source: 2010-2014 ACS, Table S1501

\*MRMPO Planning Area boundary encompasses the Grants Pass Urbanized Area boundary, and is therefore slightly larger.

The City of Grants Pass had the highest percentage (30.7%) of **households with a child less than 18 years old**. In Gold Hill, 27.3% of the households had a child younger than 18, compared to 21.9% of households in Rogue River, and 28.0% of all Planning Area households. The statewide percentage was 30.1%.

**Table 4-8: Households with a Child (less than 18 years)**

Jurisdiction	Households with a Child
State of Oregon	30.1%
Grants Pass Urbanized Area (MRMPO Planning Area)*	28.0%
Josephine County	25.5%
Jackson County	28.7%
City of Grants Pass	30.7%
City of Rogue River	21.9%
City of Gold Hill	27.3%
Merlin (Unincorporated Rural Community)	22.2%

Source: 2010 U.S. Census, Table P20

\*MRMPO Planning Area boundary encompasses the Grants Pass Urbanized Area boundary, and is therefore slightly larger.

The percentage of **vacant housing units** is quite varied throughout the MRMPO planning area. The City of Grants Pass had 8.5% of housing units vacant, with Rogue River and Gold Hill at 15.7% and 13.9%, respectively.

In the state of Oregon, the percentage of **owner-occupied housing units** outnumber **renter-occupied housing units** 61.5% to 38.5%, respectively. Similarly, but to a lesser degree, owner-occupied units also outnumber renter-occupied units in the MRMPO Planning Area, at 55.1% vs. 44.9%. The City of Gold Hill has the highest percentage of owner-occupied units at 71.2%, while the City of Grants Pass has half of all housing units (49.9%) being renter-occupied and half owner-occupied (50.1%).

**Table 4-9: Housing Occupancy**

Jurisdiction	Owner-Occupied	Renter-Occupied	Vacant Units
State of Oregon	61.5%	38.5%	9.7%
Grants Pass Urbanized Area (MRMPO Planning Area)*	55.1%	44.9%	8.3%
Josephine County	66.0%	34.0%	10.1%
Jackson County	64.2%	37.6%	9.1%
City of Grants Pass	50.1%	49.9%	8.5%
City of Rogue River	46.9%	53.1%	15.7%
City of Gold Hill	71.2%	28.8%	13.9%
Merlin (Unincorporated Rural Community)	69.6%	30.4%	0.0%

Source: 2010-2014 ACS, Table DP04

\*MRMPO Planning Area boundary encompasses the Grants Pass Urbanized Area boundary, and is therefore slightly larger.

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

**Table 4-10: Age of Housing Stock  
Grants Pass Urbanized Area (MRMPO Planning Area)**

Built before 1950	14.4%
1950 – 1969	17.1%
1970 – 1989	32.3%
1990 – 2009	35.8%
2010 and later	0.3%

Source: 2010-2014 ACS, Table DP04

## C. 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; and employment numbers and locations have a significant effect on transportation planning outcomes. The following 2010-2014 ACS Census data represents current data available for each of the jurisdictions.

Because the 2010-2014 ACS data is aggregated over a five-year time 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 5.7% for the Grants Pass Urbanized Area (MRMPO Planning Area) for November 2015, as compared to 10.2% for November 2010.

According to 2010-2014 ACS data, approximately 51.3% of the MRMPO Planning Area **population age 16 and over are in the labor force**. For comparison purposes, 62.5% of the statewide population age 16 and over are in the workforce, and 63.9% nationwide. 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 2010-2014 ACS data estimates median household income within the state of Oregon to be \$50,521 and \$33,868 for the MPO Planning Area. The median household income was \$28,344 in Rogue River, \$37,163 in Gold Hill, and \$33,240 in Grants Pass.

ACS data (2010–2014) indicates that **major employment sectors** throughout the MRMPO Planning Area included educational services, health care and social assistance (26%); retail trade (17%); and manufacturing (10%).

In looking at **sector growth and decline** in Josephine County over time, Oregon Employment Department data from 2001 to 2013 shows professional and business services having grown by 48%, followed by education and health services having increased by 35%. The greatest declines were seen in the mining and logging sector, which saw a 52% decline in employment from 2001-2013, and in the information sector where employment declined by 38%.

#### D. 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.

According to the 2010-2014 American Community Survey, 59.4% of **workers in the Planning Area** lived in the Planning Area, while 40.6% of working residents worked outside of the Planning Area. Additionally, 13.9% of the worker population commute into the Planning Area for work.

**Table 4-11: Planning Area Worker Populations (workers 16 yrs+)**

Worker Population Types	Share of Worker Population
<i>Live in and Employed in MRMPO Planning Area</i>	59.4%
<i>Live in, but Employed Outside MRMPO Planning Area</i>	40.6%
<i>Live Outside, but Employed in MRMPO Planning Area</i>	13.9%

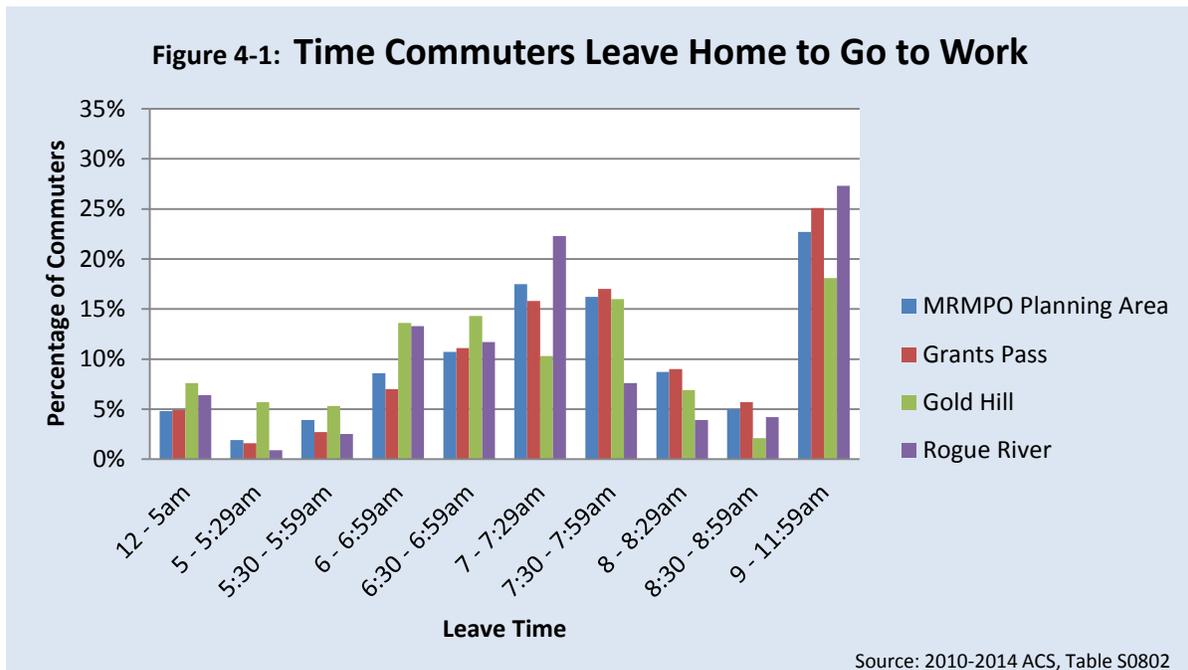
Source: 2010-2014 ACS, Table B08008

\*MRMPO Planning Area boundary encompasses the Grants Pass Urbanized Area boundary, and is therefore slightly larger.

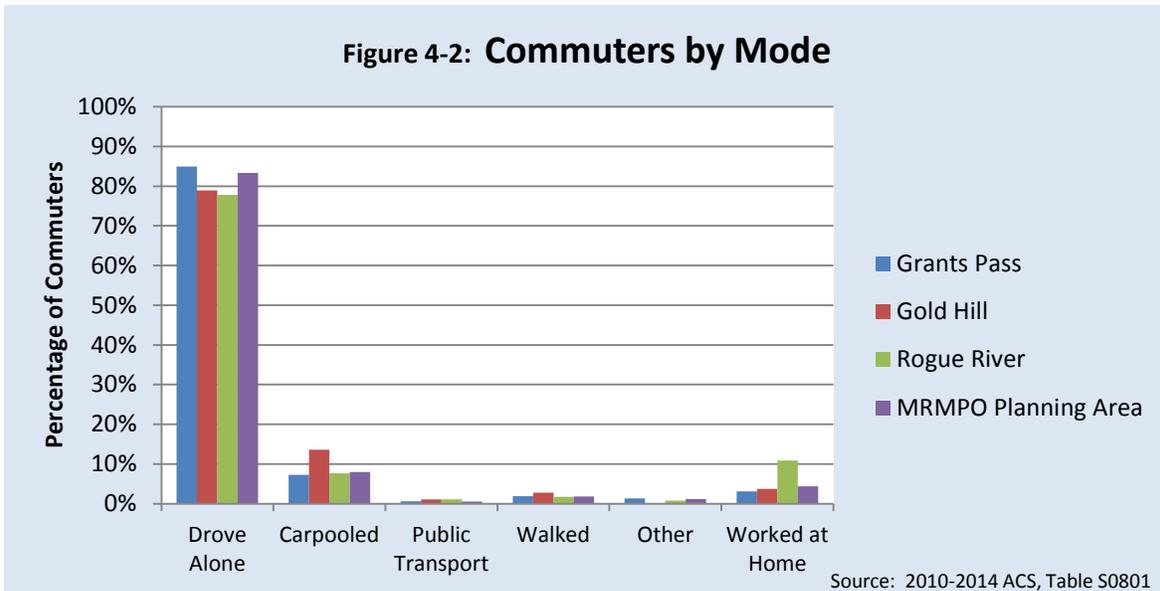
In the MRMPO Planning Area, 1.5% of **households did not have access to a vehicle**, with 1.6% of households in Grants Pass, 2.3% in Gold Hill and 1.9% of households in Rogue River not having a vehicle available.

Figure 4-1 on the following page illustrates when commuters in the MRMPO Planning Area **leave home to go to work** according to 2010-2014 ACS data. As seen in the graph, the highest percentages of all area commuters left home between 9:00 a.m. and 11:59 a.m., with the next highest leave time bracket being 7:00 a.m. to 7:29 a.m. It is important to note, however, that all time brackets are one half hour, with the exception of the 9:00 a.m. to 11:59 a.m. time bracket being three hours.

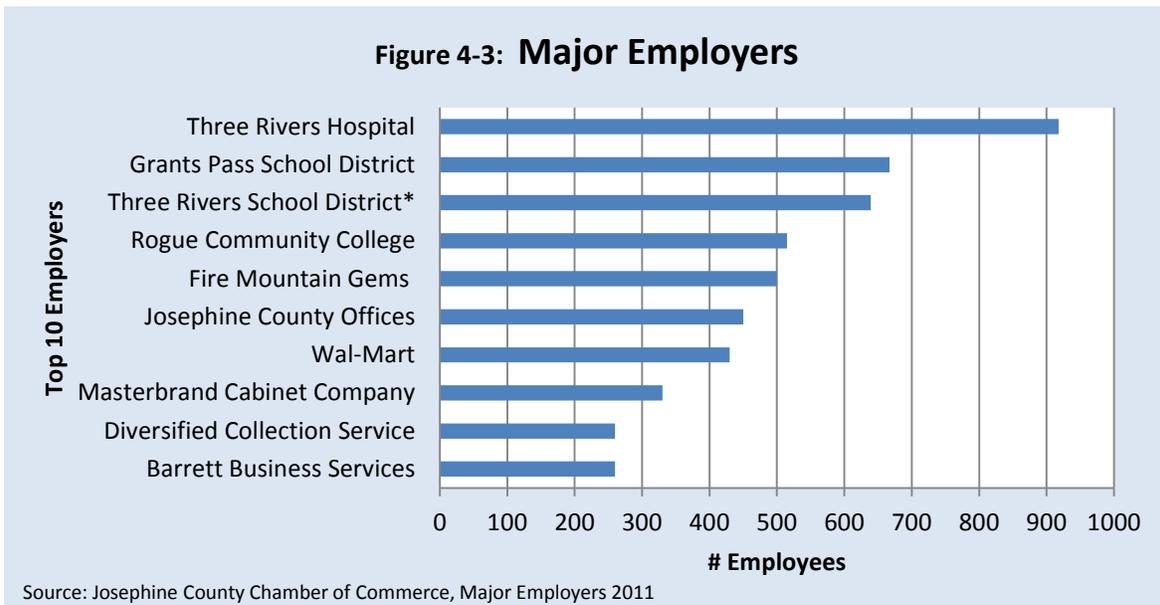
**Commute times** by all modes for MRMPO Planning Area residents were much less than for statewide residents, with a commute time of 19 minutes or less for 68.3% of MRMPO residents as compared to 44.2% of statewide residents.



Throughout Oregon an estimated 71.4% of workers 16 years and older **drove alone while commuting to work**, according to 2010-2014 ACS data. In comparison, the following percentages reflect commuters in MRMPO jurisdictions who drove to work alone: 83.0% for Grants Pass, 77.8% in Rogue River, 78.9% in Gold Hill, and 83.3% throughout the MRMPO Planning Area. Of those in the Planning Area who did not drive to work alone, an estimated 8.0% carpooled, 0.5% used public transit, 1.8% walked and 1.2% used “other” means of transportation. An estimated 4.4% worked at home. Figure 4-2 illustrates the percentage of commuters by mode for jurisdictions over a five-year period from 2010-2014.



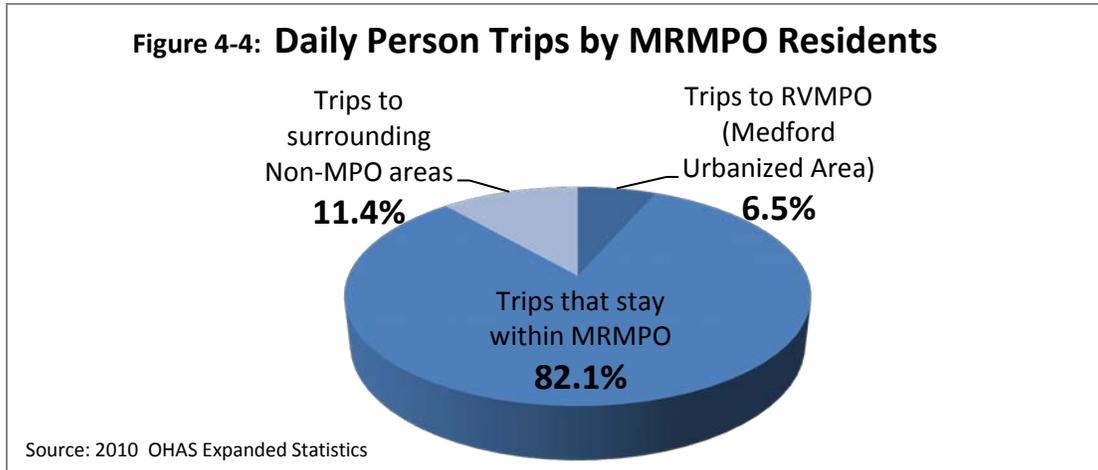
The location of **major employers** helps to identify commuter travel patterns, including heavily used corridors and peak-hour transportation needs. Major employers within the Planning Area are shown on Figure 4-3, below, and on Map 4-4.



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

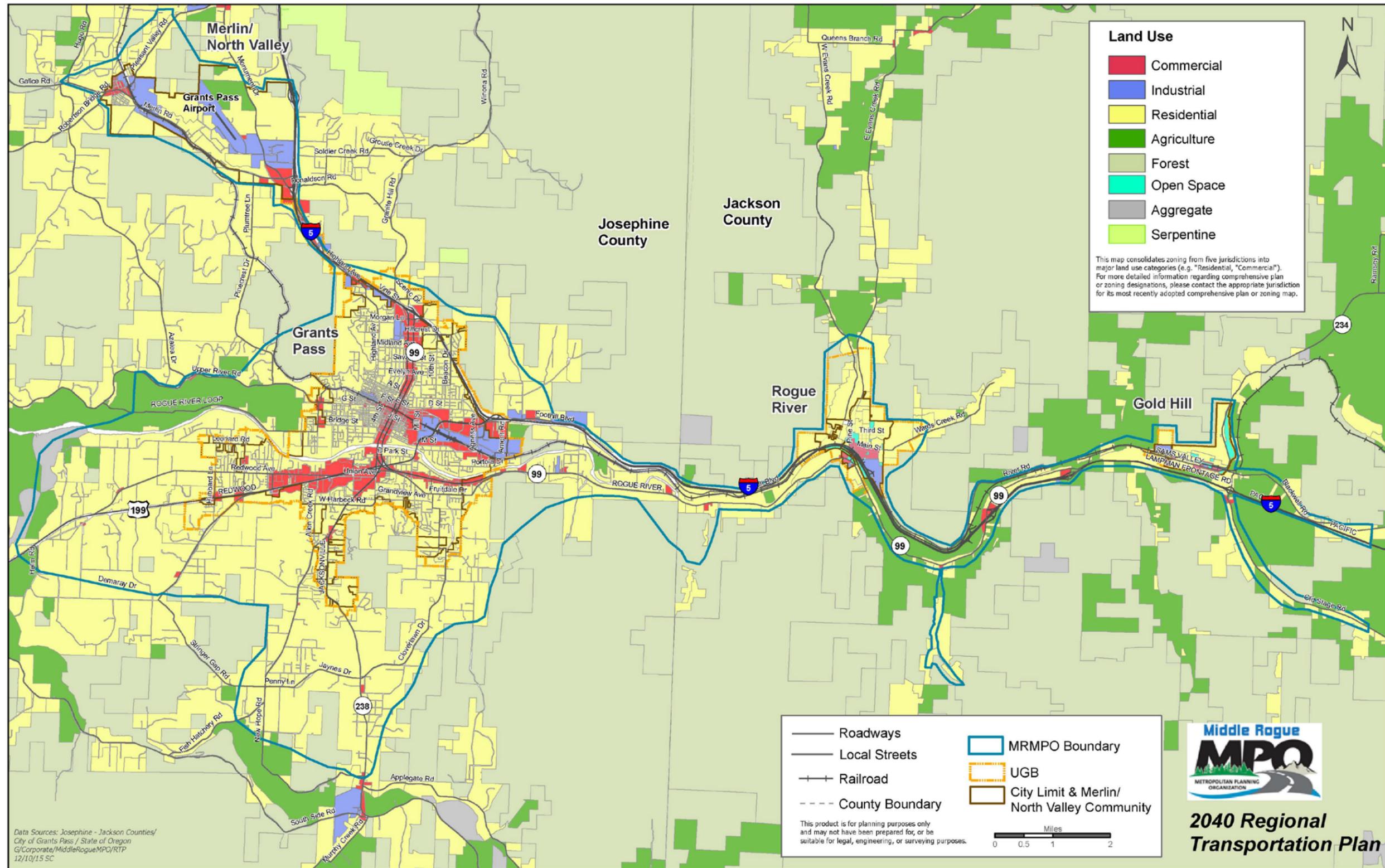
## 1. Travel Patterns between the Grants Pass and Medford Urbanized Areas

As mentioned previously, many MRMPO residents travel to the Medford Urbanized Area (Rogue Valley MPO) for work, shopping and services. Utilizing data from the 2010 Oregon Household Survey (OHAS), Figure 4-4 shows estimated weekday travel characteristics of MRMPO residents, including: percentage of person trips that remain within the MRMPO, those that go to the Medford Urbanized Area (RVMPO), and trips to surrounding non-MPO areas.

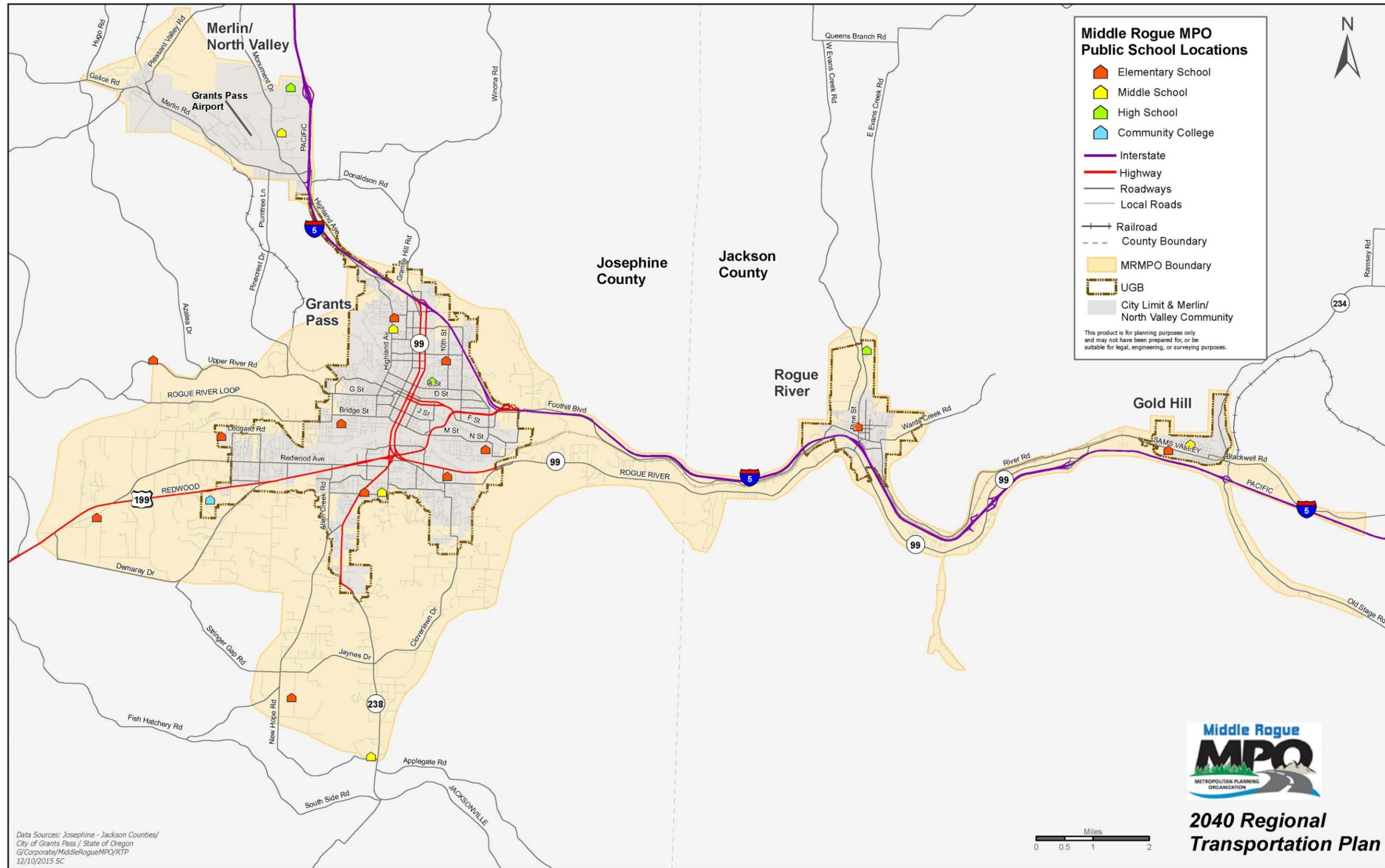


In relation, approximately .8% of weekday person trips made by Medford Urbanized Area (RVMPO) residents go to the Grants Pass Urbanized Area (MRMPO). Given the number of inter-regional trips that occur between the Grants Pass and Medford urbanized areas, it is estimated that 40% of the average daily traffic on I-5 between the two regions are MRMPO residents traveling to/from RVMPO (9,100 daily person trips), and RVMPO residents traveling to/from MRMPO (3,988 daily person trips).

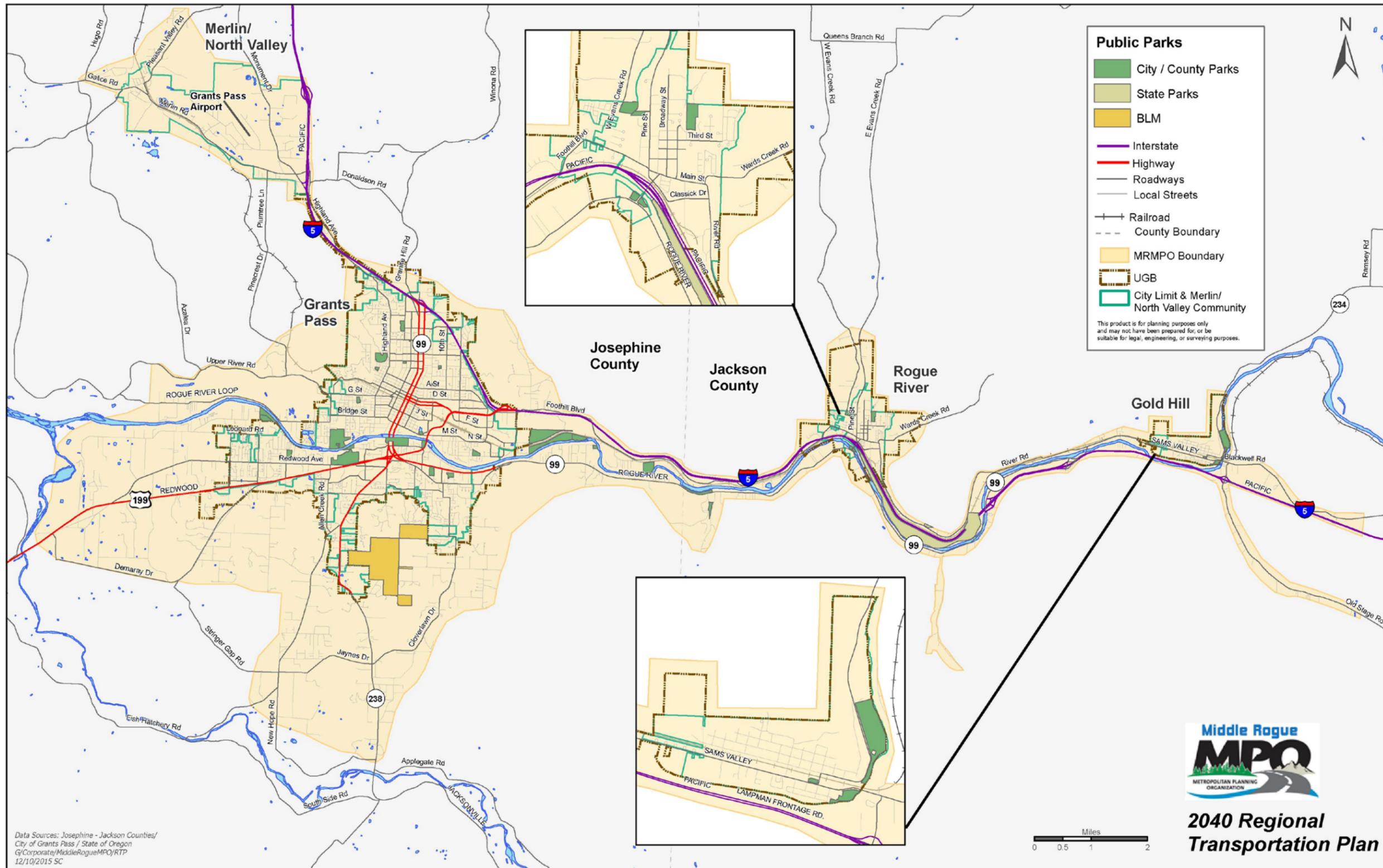
Map 4-1 – Land Use



Map 4-2 – Public Schools



Map 4-3 – Public Parks



Map 4-4 – Major Employers

