

# Trolley

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The trolley has nine official stops, but riders can flag the driver anywhere along the route.

"Just put your hand up and wave. The driver will pull over wherever it's safest," said Joe Hayes, county manager for Community Connection of Baker County.

The entire route covers Baker City from Grocery Outlet to the east, south to Colorado Street, west to 17th Street and north to Saint Alphonse Medical Center.

The loop takes an hour. It begins and ends at Community Connection, 2810 Cedar St.

On the map, the first half hour is marked with a blue line. The second half hour is designated in green.

Maps are available at Community Connection, the Chamber of Commerce, and online at <https://ccno.org/publictransit/baker-county-2/>. Click on "Trolley Deviated Fixed Route."

The fare is \$1 every time you board, or you can buy a pass — \$3 daily for unlimited rides, or \$35 monthly.

Passes are available from the driver, or at the main office.

Community Connection of Northeast Oregon includes Baker, Union and Wallowa counties. Hayes said that the fixed route fare in Union and Wallowa counties is free, thanks to a grant.

In Baker County, the \$1 fare — which raises \$20,000 to \$30,000 each year — supplies a local match when applying for grants, he said.

Children as young as 10 can ride the trolley without an adult.

Because the trolley is considered public transportation, masks are still required through at least April 18, per federal guidelines.

## Dial-A-Ride

The trolley isn't the only choice for public transportation in Baker County.

Dial-A-Ride can be requested for specific pick up and drop off — unlike the fixed route trolley that must follow a certain path and schedule.

Hayes said those who want to utilize Dial-A-Ride should call ahead at least four hours prior to pickup, although an entire day of notice is recommended.

Although the priority is given to medical appointments, Dial-A-Ride is available to the general public with an emphasis on service for seniors and people with disabilities.

Cost for Dial-A-Ride is \$1 per direction.

For more information or to schedule a ride, call the office at 541-523-7433.

## Baker to La Grande

Those who commute to La Grande for work or school could catch a ride on the connector bus, which leaves Baker City at 7 a.m.

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Stop	Location	Westbound	Eastbound	Nearby Attractions
01	NEOTransit	On the hour	:55	NEOTransit, Senior Center, Community Action
02	Campbell & Cherry	:02	—	Baker Towne Square, Albertsons, Safeway
03	Main & Court	:09	:49	Historic Downtown Baker City
04	Hwy 7 & Mitchell	:13	:41	South Baker City Residential Area
05	Second & Auburn	:21	:37	Baker City Hall, VFW, Crossroads Art Center
06	Fourth & Court	:22	:36	Courthouse, Baker Middle School
07	Broadway & Sixth	:23	:35	Salvation Army, Baker Middle School
08	Tenth and E	:27	:33	Dept. of Human Services, Baker High School
09	St. Alphonse Hospital	:28	:30	Medical Clinics, Health Department, Shopping

Community Connection of Northeast Oregon

A map of the trolley route is available at Community Connection and the Chamber of Commerce.

## Taxi service using thriftier vehicle

Baker City's licensed taxi service, Elkhorn Taxi, has made a change to reduce the financial burden of the recent spike in gas prices.

"We've been running a smaller (vehicle), a Hyundai Elantra, and that has helped a lot because it gets about 26 miles a gallon around town," Elkhorn Taxi employee Wes Phegley said. "We haven't been using our van. But yeah, we've definitely been feeling it. We're trying to mitigate it by using a more fuel-efficient car."

Phegley said the volume of calls has been pretty steady through the winter. "We're hoping we can maintain our prices and stuff and not have to raise our prices but we're definitely keeping an eye on it," Phegley said.

If the company sought to increase its prices it would need to make that request to the City Council, which has the authority to set rates under a city ordinance.

— Samantha O'Conner

It stops in Haines, then arrives in La Grande by 8 a.m.

"It drops them off at work," Hayes said.

The bus returns to La Grande around 5 p.m. to bring riders home.

A monthly pass costs \$110. Other-wise fares are \$11 round trip or \$7 one way.

Worried about being stuck in La Grande without a car?

There are two fixed trolley routes in La Grande, with free fare.

## From outlying areas

On Wednesdays, a bus runs from Halfway to Baker City for residents who

have shopping lists. Cost is \$7.

On Fridays, a bus brings Sumpter residents to Baker City. Cost is \$5.

## Baker City to Ontario

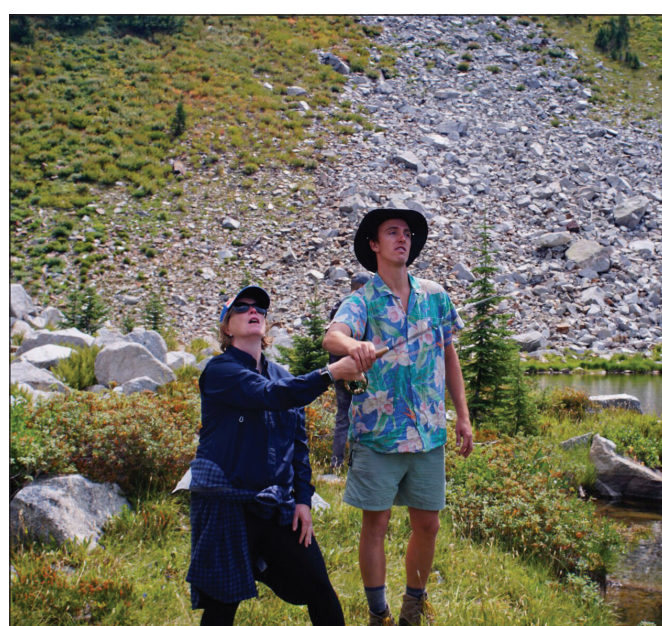
On Thursdays, a shopping bus heads to Ontario. Riders can request multiple places to stop.

"We'll take you anywhere you want to go," Hayes said.

Cost is \$5 because this trip is subsidized by a grant, he said.

Please call ahead to reserve a ride — the amount of passengers dictates which vehicle they use, Hayes said.

"If nobody rides, we don't go," he said.



Go Wild: American Adventures/Contributed Photo

Go Wild: American Adventures owner Dan Sizer, right, gives a fishing lesson during the summer of 2021. Sizer started the business to showcase the outdoor spectacles of Eastern Oregon, while focusing on environmental education and community partnerships.

# Tourism

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Sizer and his team of four focus on guiding the trips throughout treasured spots in Eastern Oregon. The crew helps the clients have the most ideal outdoor experience by providing services such as transporting equipment, teaching fishing lessons and serving high-end campfire meals.

The business often helps beginners or inexperienced campers submerge themselves in a full-on backpacking experience that otherwise might be out of their comfort zone. Sizer noted that many car campers look to Go Wild for a more immersive camping and hiking experience.

"My thinking is that if I can provide a really fun, comfortable experience for folks if it's their first time sleeping in the wilderness, then those people have a greater understanding and appreciation for the outdoors," Sizer said. "Ultimately, I think they become better caretakers of nature."

Environmental education is an important aspect of Go Wild, showing clients how to make the most out of an outdoor experience while appreciating the land.

"That component I think is a big part of the narrative," Sizer said. "We talk about growing up on this land and how we use it, how important it is to use it in a certain way so that we protect this resource

for generations to come. In Eastern Oregon, you're connected to the value of the land."

Pat Vaughan joined Sizer in 2017 with the primary focus of crafting a gourmet food experience for travelers. Vaughan has since moved on to nursing school, but the culinary services he introduced carry on in the company. Go Wild partners with local businesses, such as Glacier 45 Distillery, Terminal Gravity, Copper Belt Wines and other local restaurants and businesses.

"What I think makes a memorable trip is the people you meet, the food you eat and the experiences that push the boundaries," Sizer said. "We've tried to instill really cool things that you might not do by yourself."

Sizer and his crew have a slate of summer events already planned, while custom trips can be scheduled on the Go Wild website, [www.gowildusa.com](http://www.gowildusa.com). According to Sizer, the business is planning to partner with a mule packer this summer, elevating the potential for high-end food experience as well as helping with accessibility for those who may not be able to carry a backpack well.

On top of showcasing the natural treasures of Eastern Oregon, Sizer noted that Go Wild: American Adventures has helped create lasting connections among participants and crew members.

"I think one of the coolest things," Sizer said, "is the community it fosters within people."

# Upgrades

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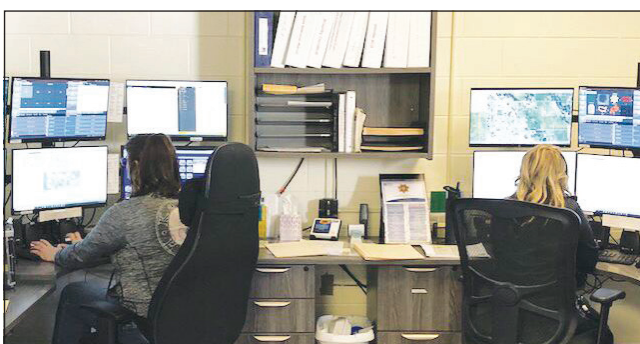
Dispatchers there communicate with officers from the Sheriff's Office and Baker City Police Department, as well as with the county's many volunteer fire protection districts.

Oregon State Police and federal agencies including the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management have their own radio networks, but those agencies can also use the county's system if needed, Ash said.

The largest, and most recent, grant is \$190,000 included in the final funding package from Congress for the 2022 fiscal year.

President Joe Biden signed the bill into law on March 15.

"The Sheriff's Office appreciates this opportunity which will allow us to update radio infrastructure, improving communications among first responders (EMS, fire, and law enforcement) and also with the dispatch center," Ash said. "These upgrades will not only increase officer safety, but will also enhance the services provided to those we serve



Baker County Sheriff's Office/Contributed Photo

A \$190,000 allocation from the federal government will allow the county to replace 17-year-old radio consoles.

throughout our community. This project will truly be a benefit to all."

Combined with \$60,000 from the Oregon State Fire Marshal's Office, money that the Greater Bowen Valley Fire Protection District applied for, and \$30,000 from the federal Department of Homeland Security, the \$190,000 should be sufficient to replace the repeaters at all 10 sites, said Chris Galiszewski, chief for the Bowen Valley district and the Sheriff's Office's radio technician.

Several of the mountains have two repeaters — one for fire districts and one for law enforcement.

Ash said the new repeaters

should improve radio signal coverage in the county, although some dead spots likely will remain.

Work on the repeaters will start when the snow melts enough to allow access to the sites, Galiszewski said.

The county will also replace the radio consoles that dispatchers use to communicate with emergency responders, Ash said.

Those consoles, which date to 2005, are increasingly troublesome because parts are harder to come by, he said.

The Sheriff's Office has not ordered new consoles and there is no firm timeline for that part of the project.

# COVID

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The most significant consistent task throughout the pandemic has been the Health Department's work to investigate cases and do contact tracing — interviewing people who might have been exposed to the virus, Bennett said.

Per state guidance earlier this month, the county is no longer doing those tasks, he said.

The state also ended, as of March 12, the requirement that people wear masks in some indoor public settings, including schools.

Mask requirements remain in effect for health care settings, including the Baker County Health Department at 2200 Fourth St., and on some public transportation.

Nancy Staten, director of the Health Department, said the county reported only one COVID-19 case during the week March 13-19.

The number of tests done in the county that week had not been updated for the entire week before press time. But for the first five days of

the week, the total was 130, so the test positivity rate for the week was less than 1%, according to the Oregon Health Authority.

That hadn't happened in Baker County since late June 2020.

The county also reported a single case for three weeks in 2020, but the number of tests was lower so the positivity rate was higher — July 12-18, Sept. 13-19 and Oct. 11-17.

Staten said county officials plan to meet this week to discuss whether to cease reporting daily case totals. The county temporarily switched to weekly reports in July 2021 until the surge caused by the delta variant began.

For the first 20 days of March, the county had zero or one case on 17 days. That includes zero cases on nine of 11 days from March 10-20.

Staten said that although the Health Department has ceased contact tracing and might reduce the frequency of its data reporting, she encourages residents who have questions or concerns related to COVID-19 to call the agency at 541-523-8211.

Staten also said the Health

Department continues to offer COVID-19 vaccines.

Baker County has the fifth-lowest vaccination rate among Oregon's 36 counties, with 55.8% of residents 18 and older having had at least one dose.

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