

# Saving Money on Regional Inmate Transportation: The “Northwest Shuttle” Story

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The Northwest Shuttle system is a cooperative effort across the states in the American northwest to move prisoners expeditiously and economically from one jurisdiction to another. By sharing resources between sheriff's offices and state corrections agencies, participating agencies save tax dollars that would otherwise be used to conduct costly extraditions. The shuttle links agencies in 15 states in a system of in-state warrant and out-of-state fugitive return built on an unofficial, professional agreement and understanding between participating agencies. There are no federal laws or state statutes that govern shuttle business, only the goal of financially responsible fugitive return and the cooperative efforts and communication of each agency each week and yearly at the regional conference.

The system relies on law enforcement agencies to assist in the transporting of prisoners across regions. Sharing resources reduces the financial burden on agencies as the workload and costs are spread across a great number to better assist in the transportation of inmates.

All local and state charges against the prisoner must be satisfied prior to placing him or her on the shuttle for transport out of state. Once the prisoner has waived extradition or has been served with a Governor's Warrant and is ready for transport, the agency can place him or her on a scheduled shuttle run or drive the prisoner to the nearest “hub” in the system for pick-up.

## A Brief History of the Northwest Shuttle

In March 1979 a small group of Washington State warrant officers gathered to discuss the issue of transporting prisoners across the State of Washington. Not only was it apparent that more prisoners were being transported from one county to another, but there was an obvious duplication of services as multiple counties were driving to the same jails, often through each other's counties and traveling much of the same route. This gathering was led by Deputy Spike Millman of Lewis County, Washington. The group formed the Washington Prisoner Relay System, which later became known as the Washington State Transport System.

The intent was to create a mechanism for transporting prisoners in the State of Washington by having all of the counties working together and sharing the workload. The Washington State Transport System started the co-op approach to transporting inmates. By routing a system of inmate movement along the

state’s major highways, they could expedite the movement of inmates throughout the state. Figure 1 shows the major routes for inmate transportation in Washington State.

**Figure 1. Inmate Shuttle Routing in Washington State**



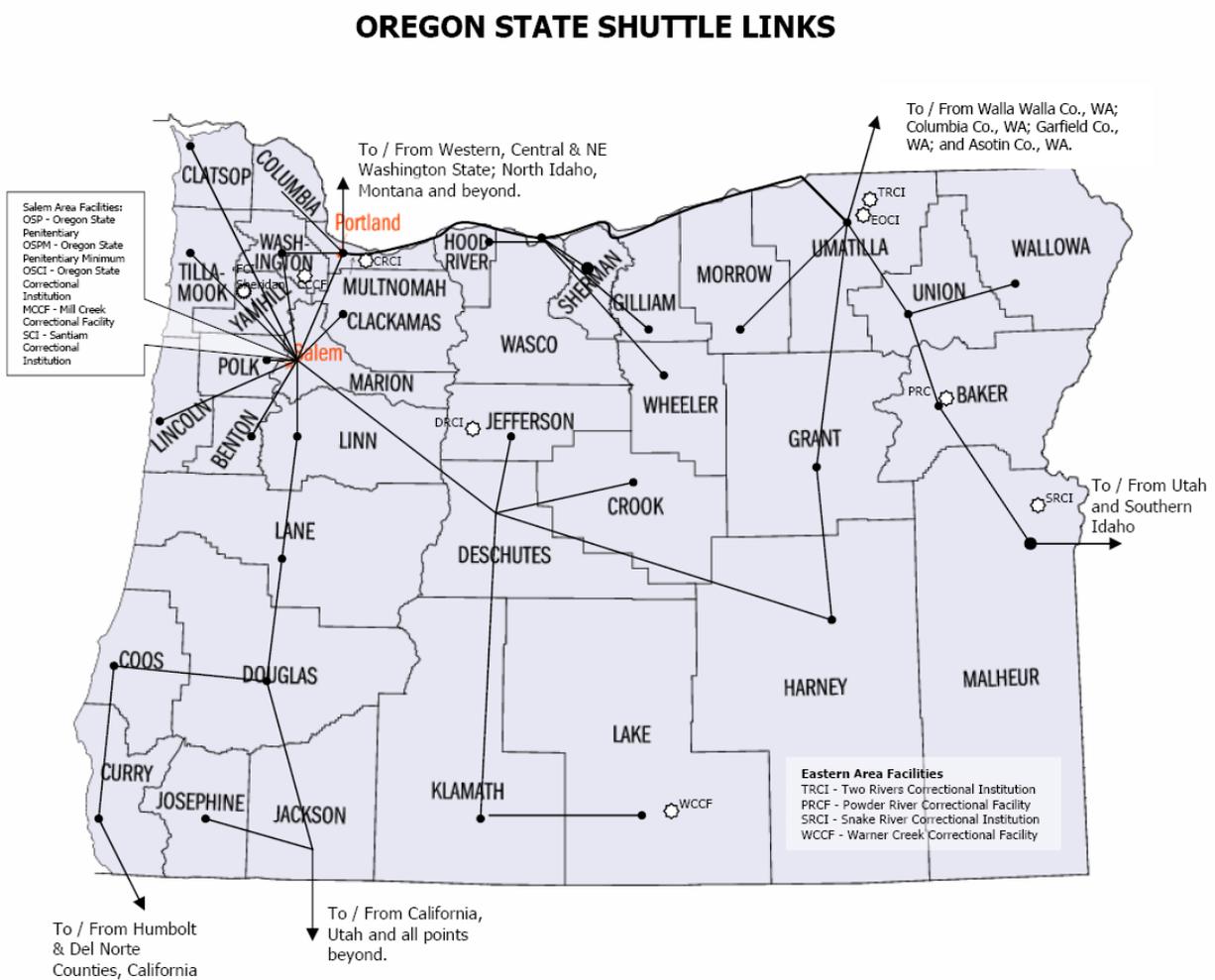
Word of the success of the Washington State Transport System quickly spread to adjoining states. Oregon was the next to come on board, creating a system between two states. Because there was no funding to send Oregon officers to a Washington State transport meeting, Marion County Deputy Dina Medsen and Lt. Leon Riggs took charge and hosted the first meeting of what would become the Oregon Transport Association in May 1979. There were 37 people from several counties in attendance.

The Oregon Transport System was not hard to organize. It then was adapted and constantly refined until it ultimately took the lead in the inmate transport “race” in the Northwest. Oregon established transport hubs around the state where counties would meet to exchange inmates, held regular transport meetings, established transport routes, and developed an automated transport tracking system that was

accessible by all counties in Oregon. An electronic system is still used to enable counties to enter information on subjects being transported in the state and allow any agency to retrieve transport information.

Figure 2 shows the major routes for inmate transportation in Oregon.

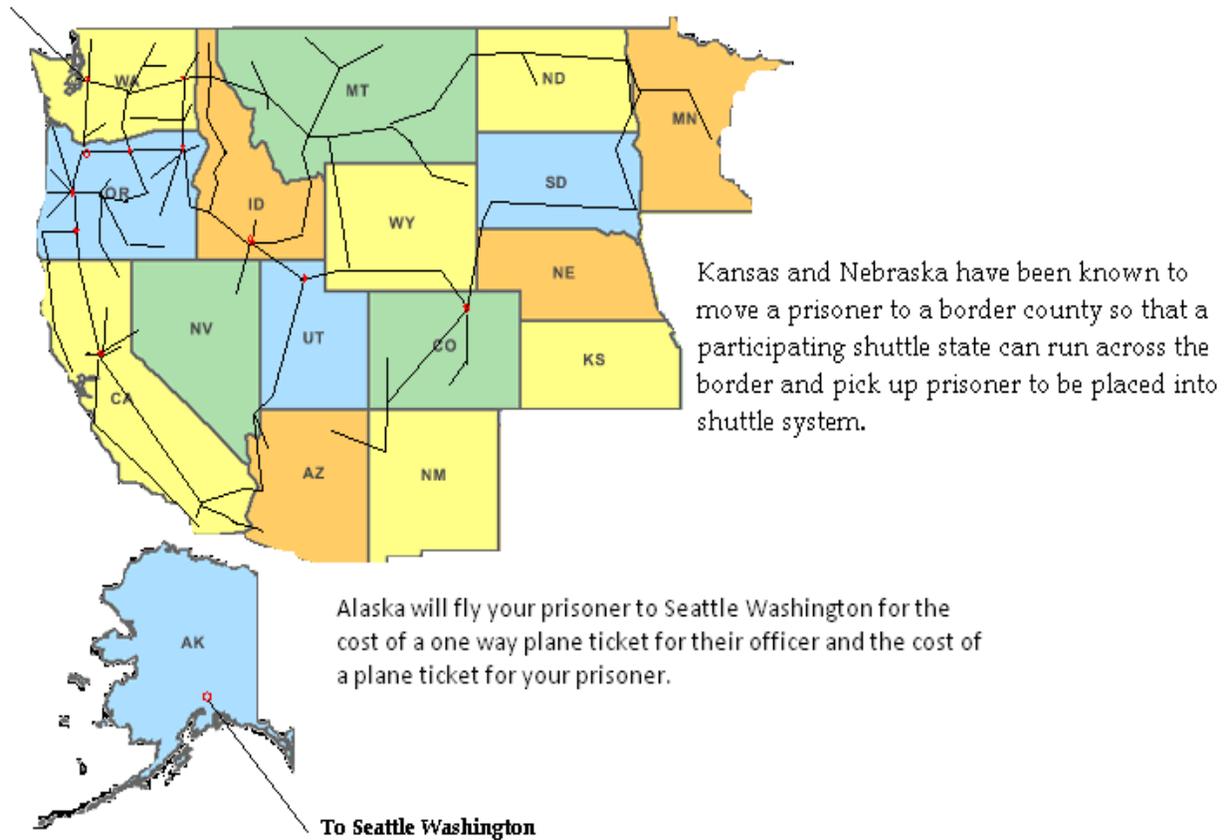
**Figure 2. Inmate Shuttle Routing in Oregon**



The cooperation between Oregon and Washington in transporting from one system to another became increasingly easy and effective, and the concept spread to more adjoining states. The Northwest Shuttle System was off and running. The development and growth of the system has been incremental over the years, and it now includes more than 463 counties in 16 participating states, the corrections departments in those states, and the U.S. Marshals Service.

The Northwest Shuttle System also has become the national role model in transporting inmates. With a successful record widely recognized, there still is a continuing effort to improve the system by helping to establish transport systems in new states and to expand the network of participating Shuttle states. Figure 3 shows the current major routes for inmate transport in the western United States via the shuttle system.

**Figure 3. Major Routes for the Northwest Shuttle System**



## Keys to Success: Establishing Transport Hubs

A key to managing a transport system is the use of a “transport hub.” A “transport hub” is a regional center of activity within the system where all exchange of prisoner custody occurs. A participating state can have multiple hubs or a centralized hub where all transport exchanges take place.

Agency personnel at the hub location coordinate with other agencies by setting times and dates when exchanges will take place. This makes deliveries and pick-ups as efficient as possible.

A hub may coordinate daily with the other counties in the state, the state’s corrections department, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the U.S. Marshals Service, and counties outside the state to transport inmates from the county of arrest to the county of jurisdiction.

Counties that are acting as hubs provide additional savings to other counties by coordinating with the state corrections department and holding state inmates overnight for pick-up by those counties for a court appearance. When the inmates are finished with court proceedings in one county, they are returned in the same way. Participating hubs offset the costs of holding these prisoners by means of the transportation savings they gain when their own inmates are transported from an originating location to the hub by other participating agencies.

## Keys to Success: Being a Good Partner

The main keys to a working an efficient shuttle system are cooperation, understanding, and communication. Participating agencies must maintain a constant relationship with each other to ensure smooth transportation of prisoners over extensive distances. All prisoners moved via a shuttle system must be suitable for transport.

**Avoiding high-risk transports.** High-risk or high-profile prisoners and prisoners with severe medical or mental health issues jeopardize the safety and security of a shuttle system and can subject multiple agencies to unwanted and unnecessary litigation. Participating shuttle agencies must be diligent in determining a prisoner’s eligibility to travel through a shuttle system. If it is determined that a prisoner is unsuitable for transport by the shuttle, the holding agency must advise the requesting agency to make other arrangements for the prisoner’s pickup.

To reduce liability, inmates must meet basic criteria that all participating agencies agree to in order for them to be transported by the shuttle. Those categories should include the following:

- 1) **No major mental health issues** — Caution should be used before placing any inmate on transport who has (or is suspected to have) psychological problems or has made a recent suicide attempt. The key determinant is the inmate’s behavior.

- 2) **No juveniles** — As a general rule, juveniles should not be sent on a shuttle system but instead should be transported individually.
- 3) **No major medical problems** — Inmates who have serious medical problems or special medical needs (such as those in wheelchairs, those who have had recent serious surgery, dialysis patients, etc.) should not be placed on a shuttle system. Pregnant women should not be more than 6 months along in the pregnancy. Women with high-risk pregnancies should not be permitted on a shuttle, regardless of how far along the pregnancy has progressed.
- 4) **No high-profile cases** — Intense media coverage or public outrage regarding a prisoner's charges can place potential risks on shuttle agencies. Requesting agencies should make separate arrangements for the transport of these inmates.
- 5) **No serious charges** — Always check with requesting agencies when an inmate is charged with a serious crime, such as aggravated murder. Such inmates almost always should be transported separately. However, a serious charge is not necessarily grounds for exclusion from a shuttle transport. A prisoner's behavior while in custody may be utilized as means of determining eligibility.

**Sharing information on inmate behavior.** A primary focus for transporting prisoners is screening to ensure they qualify for movement by shuttle. It is imperative to communicate potential issues with the agencies involved early and often. Figure 4 shows a form used in the Northwest Shuttle system to communicate classification and disciplinary issues on inmates who are being transported.

**Sharing medical needs information.** Northwest Shuttle agencies use an additional form to communicate medical information so that transport officers are notified in advance about any known medical issues that may arise while transporting an inmate. Figure 5 shows the shuttle system's medical information form. The medical piece of communication is vital to agencies to ensure the proper steps are taken in the safety and security of prisoners.

**Figure 4. Transported Inmate Information Form**

**NORTHWEST SHUTTLE PRISONER CLASSIFICATION AND DISCIPLINARY INFORMATION REQUEST**

To provide for safe transport and proper prisoner classification, the following information is required before placement of prisoner on the Northwest Shuttle to or through the State of Oregon. In any case where the prisoner was already placed on the Shuttle before receipt of this request, please still complete the form and fax to requesting agency as soon as possible.

**Prisoner Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DOB:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SID:** \_\_\_\_\_ **FBI:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Facility/Jail ID#:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PRISONER CLASSIFICATION**

Please provide prisoner’s classification level in your facility. Please provide additional information in the space provided if the prisoner is classified as maximum, protective custody, or has any “special” needs. If your agency uses a numeric system, please provide the full range or scale and the risk associated with the numbers.

Minimum \_\_\_\_ Medium \_\_\_\_ Maximum \_\_\_\_ PC \_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

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**PRISONER DISCIPLINE**

Has the prisoner received any disciplinary sanctions while in your facility?  Yes  No

Was any disciplinary documentation forwarded to you from another facility?  Yes  No

Are there any other disciplinary concerns for transport officers to be aware of?  Yes  No

Please provide any documentation concerning major disciplinary action. Please give a brief explanation of any disciplinary concerns: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Please fax completed form to this requesting agency:**  
 Your Agency Name  
 Agency Address, City, OR 11111  
**Fax: (503)-555-1212, Phone: (503)-555-0000**

**Figure 5. Transported Inmate Medical Information Form**

**NW Shuttle Prisoner Transport Medical/Classification Authorization**  
**FOR PRISONERS TO BE TRANSPORTED VIA NW SHUTTLE SYSTEM**

This form, when completed and signed by an authorized representative of the agency holding the named prisoner, will allow Oregon Sheriffs Agencies to transport the listed prisoner on the NW Cooperative Shuttle. This form should provide necessary medical instructions and medications required by the prisoner while in route from the holding agency to the destination agency. If the prisoner requires prescription medication, a sufficient supply must accompany the prisoner while In Transit. Please use destination as your guide to determine supply needed. Oregon Sheriffs agencies will not be responsible for any medical emergencies that may occur during transport due to a lack of medication if it was not supplied by the holding agency. For purposes of reimbursement for cost of medication, please forward all billing receipts to the destination agency.

**PRISONER NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DOB:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SID#** \_\_\_\_\_ **GENDER:** \_\_\_\_\_ **HEIGHT:** \_\_\_\_\_ **WEIGHT:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PRESCRIPTION OR OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICATION REQUIRED?** Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, specify type(s) and quantity required: \_\_\_\_\_

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**MEDICAL CONDITIONS THAT MAY EFFECT TRANSPORT (INDICATE ALL THAT APPLY)**

<input type="checkbox"/> Diabetes	<input type="checkbox"/> Pregnant(if yes, # of weeks _____)	PPD Given _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Heart Disease	<input type="checkbox"/> Recent Surgery	Date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Seizure Disorder	<input type="checkbox"/> Wounds Requiring Treatment	Results _____
<input type="checkbox"/> High Blood Pressure	<input type="checkbox"/> Communicable Disease	
<input type="checkbox"/> Hearing Impaired	<input type="checkbox"/> Mental Disorder/Illness	
<input type="checkbox"/> Visually Impaired	<input type="checkbox"/> Prosthesis(type _____), Crutch or Cane	
<input type="checkbox"/> Allergies (list): _____		

\_\_\_\_ OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_

**ARE THERE MEDICAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR TRANSPORT?** Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

The undersigned attests that the above named prisoner is medically cleared for **ground** transport.

**NAME & TITLE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**AGENCY & ADDRESS** \_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNATURE & DATE** \_\_\_\_\_

**CLASSIFICATION: Please attach documentation if any of the following apply:**

Misconduct History     Assaultive Behavior     Security Threat Group (ex. Gang Affiliation)

PLEASE FAX COMPLETED FORM TO: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_, PLEASE SEND THE ORIGINAL WITH THE PRISONERS TRANSPORT DOCUMENTS

This form is utilized in accordance with HIPPA regulations as they pertain to the health and well being of an individual incarcerated in a correctional facility or jail.

*"Health care providers may disclose information to correctional facilities and other law enforcement officials having lawful custody of the inmate if the information is necessary for the provision of health care to the individual; for the health and safety of the inmate or other inmates, officers or employees at the facility or those transporting the inmate; or for law enforcement or the administration and maintenance of safety, security and good order."*

For more information consult your HIPPA manual or <http://www.nocho.org/pubs/CC/hipaa.html>

## A Study in Savings: Clackamas County Inmate Transports

The Clackamas County Sheriff's Office in Oregon City, Oregon, operates a 434-bed jail facility that houses individuals sentenced to 365 days or less. The facility holds both male and female inmates. The county is 1,879 square miles in size and has a population of 376,780 residents. The intake for the jail in 2012 was 14,390, and the number of bookings in 2012 per 1,000 county residents was 38.2.

### *Out-of-State Transports*

In 2012 the Clackamas County Jail extradited 95 individuals from 8 different states. Only 3 of the 95 prisoners required jail staff to physically travel to another state to take the person in custody from a local correctional facility. The other 92 prisoners who were transferred due to extradition were transferred using the Northwest Shuttle System.

The vast majority (73.91%) of extraditions were from Washington State. (This is no real surprise due to the close proximity of Washington State to Oregon and the relatively short distance from Clackamas County to Washington State.)

Figure 6, appearing on the following two pages, presents monthly data on Clackamas County inmate transfers via the Northwest Shuttle. Data for each month include the location of the extradition by state and county, the gender of the prisoner, the miles of roundtrip travel from Clackamas County Jail to the holding facility had the Shuttle not been used, and total estimated costs for fuel, food, travel (airlines), and lodging. Costs for security staff escort are excluded from these cost calculations.

A review of the savings finds:

- Roundtrip mileage totaled 56,607 miles.
- The total savings for 2012 in fuel, food, travel (airlines), and lodging (if applicable for the trip) came to \$32,720.
- If security staff had been needed to staff these 92 extraditions, at two deputies per extradition, the personnel costs would have come to \$68,632.<sup>1</sup>
- Estimated total savings on out-of-state extraditions utilizing the shuttle system came to \$101,352 for the 2012 calendar year.

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<sup>1</sup> This covers two security staff for a total of 1,472 hours (736 hours for each staff member) at a pay rate of \$46.62 per hour (overtime wages per union contract) for each deputy.

**Figure 6. Clackamas County Out-of-State Prisoner Transport Data and Cost Estimate, CY 2012**

JANUARY				FEBRUARY			
	GENDER	MILES RT	COST \$		GENDER	MILES RT	COST \$
ID, Ada Co.	M	874	\$632.00	WA, Franklin Co.	M	446	\$291.00
WA, Clark Co.	M	54	\$27.00	WA, King Co.	M	374	\$255.00
WA, King Co.	M	374	\$255.00	NV, Clark Co.	M	2,040	\$990.00
WA, Cowlitz Co.	M	126	\$80.00	MN, Crow Wing Co.	M	3,322	\$1,545.00
WA, Pierce Co.	M	314	\$191.00	CA, Riverside	M	2,014	\$910.00
CA, San Diego	M	2,152	\$755.00	WA, Pierce Co.	M	314	\$191.00
WA, DOC	M	488	\$312.00	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8,510</b>	<b>\$4,182.00</b>
WA, Clark Co.	M	54	\$27.00				
WA, King Co.	M	374	\$255.00				
WA, King Co.	M	374	\$255.00				
CA, Eldorado	M	1,224	\$677.00				
MT, Richland	M	2,120	\$1,272.00				
WA, King Co.	M	374	\$255.00				
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>8,902</b>	<b>\$4,993.00</b>				

MARCH	GENDER	MILES RT	COST\$
MT, Roosevelt Co.	F	2,166	\$1,272.00
WA, Clark Co.	M	54	\$27.00
WA, Clark Co.	M	54	\$27.00
AZ, Santa Cruz Co.	M	2,670	\$1,065.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4,944</b>	<b>\$2,391.00</b>

APRIL	GENDER	MILES RT	COST\$
WA, Clark Co.	M	54	\$27.00
MT, Yellowstone Co.	M	1,836	\$1,262.00
WA, Clark Co.	M	54	\$27.00
CA, San Francisco Co.	M	1,254	\$820.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3,198</b>	<b>\$2,136.00</b>

MAY	GENDER	MILES RT	COST\$
MT, Yellowstone Co.	M	1,836	\$1,262.00
ID, Ada Co.	M	874	\$632.00
WA, Pierce Co.	M	314	\$191.00
WA, Clark Co.	F	54	\$27.00
CA, Monterey Co.	M	1,454	\$979.00
CA, Contra Costa	F	1,230	\$959.00
WA, Klickitat Co.	M	446	\$257.00
WA, Clark Co.	M	54	\$27.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6,262</b>	<b>\$4,334.00</b>

JUNE	GENDER	MILES RT	COST\$
WA, King Co.	M	374	\$255.00
ID, Kootenai Co.	M	876	\$586.00
WA, Yakima Co.	M	384	\$260.00
WA, Whatcom Co.	M	552	\$344.00
WA, Clark Co.	M	54	\$27.00
WA, King Co.	M	374	\$255.00
MT, Deer Lodge Co.	M	1,276	\$1,395.00
WA, Klickitat Co.	M	446	\$257.00
CA, Fresno Co.	M	1,508	\$935.00
WA, Pierce Co.	M	314	\$191.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6,158</b>	<b>\$4,505.00</b>

JULY	GENDER	MILES RT	COST\$
WA, Clark Co.	M	54	\$27.00
CA, San Diego Co.	F	2,152	\$1,148.00
WA, Pierce Co.	M	314	\$191.00
WA, Clark Co.	M	54	\$27.00
MT, Missoula Co.	M	1,112	\$945.00
WA, Clark Co.	M	54	\$27.00
WA, Lewis Co.	M	199	\$116.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3,939</b>	<b>\$2,481.00</b>

AUGUST	GENDER	MILES RT	COST\$
WA, King Co.	F	374	\$255.00
WA, Pierce Co.	M	314	\$191.00
WA, Clark Co.	F	54	\$27.00
WA, Clark Co.	M	54	\$27.00
WA, Thurston Co.	M	256	\$145.00
IA, Linn Co.	M	3,876	\$1,191.00
WA, Cowlitz Co.	M	126	\$80.00
WA, DOC	M	488	\$312.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5,542</b>	<b>\$2,228.00</b>

SEPTEMBER	GENDER	MILES RT	COST\$
WA, Clark Co.	F	54	\$27.00
WA, DOC	M	488	\$312.00
WA, Clark Co.	M	54	\$27.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>596</b>	<b>\$366.00</b>

OCTOBER	GENDER	MILES RT	COST\$
WA, Skamania Co.	M	105	\$52.00
WA, Skamania Co.	M	105	\$52.00
WA, Grays Harbor	F	292	\$214.00
WA, Clark Co.	M	54	\$27.00
WA, Clark Co.	F	54	\$27.00
WA, Clark Co.	M	54	\$27.00
WA, King Co.	M	374	\$255.00
WA, Cowlitz Co.	M	126	\$80.00
WA, Clark Co.	M	54	\$27.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1,218</b>	<b>\$761.00</b>

NOVEMBER	GENDER	MILES RT	COST\$
CA ,San Francisco Co.	F	1,254	\$708.00
WA, Snohomish Co.	M	432	\$250.00
WA, Kitsap Co.	M	360	\$248.00
WA, King Co.	F	374	\$255.00
WA, Pierce Co.	F	314	\$191.00
ID, Kootenai Co.	M	876	\$503.00
WA, King Co.	M	374	\$255.00
WA, Grays Harbor	F	292	\$214.00
WA, Cowlitz Co.	M	126	\$80.00
WA, Clark Co.	M	54	\$27.00
NV, Mineral Co.	F	1,426	\$765.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5,882</b>	<b>\$3,496.00</b>

DECEMBER	GENDER	MILES RT	COST\$
WA, Snohomish Co.	M	432	\$250.00
WA, Clark Co.	F	54	\$27.00
WA, Pierce Co.	M	314	\$191.00
WA, Clark Co.	F	54	\$27.00
WA, Clark Co.	M	54	\$27.00
WA, Pierce Co.	M	314	\$191.00
WA, Cowlitz Co.	F	126	\$80.00
WA, Clark Co.	M	54	\$27.00
WA, Clark Co.	M	54	\$27.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1,456</b>	<b>\$847.00</b>

### *Intra-state Transports*

Transportation of inmates to and from Clackamas County within the state of Oregon involved 30,339 miles driven throughout 2012. These miles involve driving to specific hubs in Oregon where agencies meet to exchange prisoners.

As shown in Figure 7, during calendar year 2012 a total of 1,163 male inmates and 342 female inmates were transported to Clackamas County via the shuttle system in Oregon. Simultaneously, Clackamas County transported 1,089 male inmates and 229 female inmates to hubs for other facilities throughout the year.

These transports to the hubs involved dropping off the inmates for other facilities while picking up those destined for the Clackamas County Jail. The cost of transporting other facilities' inmates to the hubs is

negated because Clackamas County officers would be traveling to the hub to receive inmates destined for Clackamas County anyway. Furthermore, because so many inmates are transported to Clackamas County via the shuttle, there would be no cost savings if we stopped transporting other facilities' inmates. In fact, if other agencies also ceased the practice of meeting at hubs it would create a huge cost deficit for Clackamas County, because our personnel and vehicles would be required to travel all over the state to pick up Clackamas County warrants.

**Figure 7. Clackamas County Intra-State Prisoner Transports, CY 2012**

	IN	OUT
Males	1,163	1,098
Females	342	229

While the specific calculation on net savings for intrastate shuttle transports is difficult, the fact remains that limiting travel around the state to only the hubs, instead of to each individual facility, creates a large saving in travel and staff time.

We estimate conservatively that without the shuttle system, Clackamas County would have traveled an additional 10,695 miles to accomplish its intrastate inmate transports in 2012. This estimate is based solely on saved travel to and from the east side of the state each year. Realistically, our mileage likely would be doubled, based on the full range of locations at which inmates were located throughout the state.

The estimated cost savings in staff hourly wages for transports on only the east side of the state would be about \$17,625<sup>2</sup> per year, not including the benefits package. Additional savings occur in the areas of gasoline, vehicle incidentals, and wear and tear and other costs associated with transporting inmates.

## Conclusion

The Northwest Shuttle co-op is a relay system between correctional facilities throughout the participating states. It is designed to transport fugitives from one state to another via the participating agencies' normal transport schedules if possible. This relay system allows agencies to extradite more fugitives, clear more warrants, and save more budget dollars and man-power hours than is possible by using traditional extradition methods.

<sup>2</sup> This covers two security staff for a total of 352 hours (176 for each staff member) at a pay rate of \$32.59 (union contract) and 132 hours of overtime at \$46.62 per hour (overtime wages per union contract) for each deputy.

There is no formal participation agreement, but the system is based on a professional, informal agreement between participating agencies. The only requirement for belonging to the shuttle is that your agency reciprocates by assisting in transportation or housing when you are called upon.

As has been stated, this system is built on cooperation and communication. If your agency asks for assistance from the "shuttle," be prepared to go out of your way to assist when it is your turn. As more agencies and more states join in this network, it will bring more fugitives to justice.

Document available at:

[http://community.nicic.gov/blogs/national\\_jail\\_exchange/archive/2013/07/25/saving-money-on-regional-inmate-transportation-the-northwest-shuttle-story.aspx](http://community.nicic.gov/blogs/national_jail_exchange/archive/2013/07/25/saving-money-on-regional-inmate-transportation-the-northwest-shuttle-story.aspx)

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