

Re-Building Sustainably in the Rogue Valley

Focus on Transit

by Jerry Allen

How many residents in the Rogue Valley look forward to having a lot more cars on the roads? Yet, if we respond to the need for housing by building sprawl, we'll end up with all those cars. Many residents came to Oregon to get away from that.

The key seems to be that we have to plan town-centric multi-family housing, transit alternatives and job location all together in a smart mix. This requires great cooperation between planning departments, civic leadership, developers, investors and transit experts.

Envision a transit future in which we have more small electric buses and jitneys, shared e-cars like Austin, Texas and soon in northern Oregon, shared community bikes and transit hubs in each of our towns. We could have the capacity to get many more residents out of their automobiles, riding fast transit and sometimes using small e-cars at their destination and then returning home via the same transit that got them to the bigger towns. This could be good for reducing tailpipe emissions, more enjoyable, safer traveling, cheaper, and less time spent in clogged traffic.

Here's an example of future vehicles. The Wuling Hongguang Mini EV is an all-electric microcar manufactured by SAIC-GM-Wuling since 2020. Retail deliveries began in China in July 2020, and, as of January 2021, sales since inception totaled 160,000 units. They cost \$5600 fully loaded and go about 80 miles on a charge. Not yet sold in US. Not here yet. Since General Motors is co-owner of the Mini EV's we should be able to have them in the US.

Having small fleets of those Mini EV's co-located at major bus stops and at the transit hubs would greatly extend the capacity to get people around cities with way less car congestion. Some say that's a pipe dream. Okay, maybe, but someone has to start working on building a reasonable alternative to what we have now. I want to see a major push to import these very inexpensive Mini EV's to the US. I would buy one. At \$5600 we could have 10 of those on the road for the cost of one Tesla.

