



CHAPTER I

Introduction

The Bonneville Metropolitan Planning Organization (BMPO) contracted with LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc. to prepare a Short-Range Transit Plan for the public transportation services operated by the Targhee Regional Public Transit Authority (TRPTA). The plan focuses on the necessary steps to implement new or enhanced transit service.

This report presents the results of the transit system and operational analysis. The LSC team and the stakeholders committee have reviewed several transit managerial and service alternatives. The report presents the results of the planning process as the preferred recommendations. The report also reviews the goals and objectives that were introduced in Technical Memoranda #1 and #2.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to analyze and recommend strategies for transit services in the BMPO area which will affect the delivery of public transportation services over the next five years. This final product of the study includes the updated goals and objectives, the identification of transportation issues, a profile of the existing transit services and ridership, a service evaluation, the development of performance indicators, a marketing/communications plan, a financial plan, a review of the management and organizational structure, and an implementation plan.

REPORT CONTENTS

Chapter II of this report provides a summary of the community demographics and economics. Chapter III presents a review of the existing transit services that PTA and CART provide. Chapter IV evaluates the transit services provided by PTA and CART with route profiles and route analysis, based on such performance measures as the number of passengers per mile, number of passengers per hour, and

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cost per passenger. Chapter V presents the transit demand estimates and needs, based on demand-response and fixed-route transit modeling. Chapter V also includes an analysis of the community areas that possess the greatest transit need. Chapter VI presents the results of the on-board passenger interviews that were conducted by the BMPO staff and analyzed by the LSC team. Chapter VII presents the mission statement, goals, and objectives. Chapter VIII presents a review of the existing and alternative managerial and organizational structures. The administrative, operational (including dispatching), and maintenance procedures are also reviewed in Chapter VIII.

Chapter IX describes the transit service alternatives. Three alternatives are presented, along with their estimated costs. Route maps are presented which depict the transit service areas and transit generators (such as social service agencies, governmental facilities, schools, and retail centers). The capital needs (such as buses, facilities, bus shelters, and benches) for the new transit service are assessed in Chapter X. Chapter XI discusses the financial alternatives that will be necessary to transition from the existing transit service to the new transit service. Chapter XI also discusses the potential funding sources for the new transit service. Chapter XII presents the preferred transit service plan including route structures, costs, levels of service, and draft schedules. Chapter XIII presents the implementation plan, management plan, and marketing plan for the development of the preferred transit service plan.

PROJECT TEAM

An initial “kick-off meeting” was held in Idaho Falls on March 7, 2006. The meeting was attended by key stakeholders from the BMPO, TRPTA, Idaho Transportation Department, Idaho Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Health and Welfare, and other local agencies within the study area that have transportation concerns for the community. This project team met to discuss the study goals and priorities, as well as a timeline for completion of the final study. The team also discussed the local stakeholders who would be critical in completing the transit study for the area.

Several other stakeholders committee meetings were held during the planning process for the Short-Range Transit Plan. The LSC team also conducted several public meetings in April and June 2006, and made presentations to the TRPTA Board. The final public meeting was held on August 9, 2006 to present the results of the Short-Range Transit Plan. Two meetings were also held with the bus drivers in March and June 2006 in order to obtain their input on the planning process and the transit service alternatives.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Throughout the planning process, public involvement is key to the success of the Short-Range Transit Plan for the community. At critical points during the planning process, public meetings were announced and held where citizen participation was openly welcomed and appreciated. Four public open houses were conducted in April and June 2006. In August 2006, the LSC team held one formal public meeting to present the study results.

The open houses offered members of the community an opportunity to provide public input regarding the transportation issues that should be addressed as part of the Short-Range Transit Plan. Community residents were asked to comment on the existing and future transit services in the Bonneville metropolitan planning area. The public was given the opportunity to state which transportation services and other alternatives they think are necessary in order to address the identified transportation issues and meet the established goals.

In addition to the formal meetings, the BMPO staff conducted onboard (bus) interviews with the PTA system's passengers. This was done in order to obtain public input on the concerns and issues that the passengers face in riding the transit service.

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUES

During the March 2006 meeting, the LSC team briefed the stakeholders committee on the study process to be undertaken over the five-month period. The major

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issues and concerns regarding public transportation were discussed at the meeting.

Following are summaries of the major public transportation issues:

1. Transportation to and from places of employment throughout the Bonneville metropolitan area (study area).
2. Mobility of the elderly and disabled to medical appointments, work, and shopping.
3. Student transportation to and from educational institutions, after-school programs, and the Head Start program.
4. Access to work, medical, and shopping locations for the low-income population due to the lack of private vehicles.
5. Short-term funding alternatives for the transit service.
6. Sustainable long-term funding for the transit service.
7. Implementation of existing transit service and of new service in the short term.
8. Maintenance of the transit service over the long term.
9. Regional service that links Idaho Falls with communities outside the study area.
10. Level of capital investment in vehicles and infrastructure (new transit transfer station, benches, bus stops, and bus facility).
11. Public education on the transit service in the study area, in order to promote the transit system as a benefit to the community for the community leaders (City Council) and general public.
12. Service area has gaps and does not cover the needs of the transit-dependent.
13. Service hours and levels of service are not effective to meet the needs of the transit-dependent or the community as a whole.
14. Merger of PTA and CART, and how these two systems can operate as an integrated transit network.
15. Land use policies do not currently include transit service in the development process.