



Review of Management and Organizational Structure

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to review the organizational structure, operational procedures, maintenance procedures, and administrative procedures. Of particular interest, this chapter focuses on what needs to be done administratively to prepare the Targhee Regional Public Transit Authority (TRPTA) for the enhanced service described further on in this study.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Before the first transit passenger can be served, before the first bus can be purchased, and before the first dollar of funding can be generated, an institutional structure must be developed to manage and operate the transit service. The identification of a cost-effective and geographically appropriate institutional form for the provision of transit is thus a key element in the improvement of public transportation services. Obviously, TRPTA has an existing organizational structure; however, the purpose of this section is to describe possible organizational structures TRPTA may wish to investigate.

TRPTA operates its public transit service using a combination of FTA grants, contracts with other entities, passenger fares, and local government financial support. The present organizational structure has managed to support the provision of public transit service over the years and should be able to operate the system into the future.

The current structure does reflect an ongoing long-term commitment to the provision of transit service, but does not provide a dedicated long-term funding source. Transit Authority organizational structures in Idaho do not have the regulatory authority to seek a dedicated tax. It is difficult to rationally plan for the

long-term provision of transit service. The amount of service to be provided from one year to another is not known until the funding sources are determined. Therefore, it may be time for TRPTA to consider an organizational structure that can obtain a dedicated funding source.

An important objective of this study is to present recommendations for an institutional framework and a financing plan for public transit which are acceptable to the parties involved and which can be realistically implemented. With this goal in mind, the following discussion presents an analysis of the most appropriate alternatives and a basis for decision-making.

Criteria for Institutional Structures

Transit services throughout the United States have a variety of organizational homes, from independent agencies (such as Huntington, West Virginia; Aspen, Colorado; and Crested Butte, Colorado) to transit districts (such as the Dawson County Transit District, Montana and Utah Transit Authority) to departments of a municipal government (such as Pocatello, Idaho) to departments of county government (such as Summit County, Colorado) to nonprofit agencies (such as Casper, Wyoming).

Based upon the history of transit organizations serving scattered urban areas and areas with low population densities, the following criteria should guide the selection of the institution for managing and operating improved transportation services within the BMPO planning area.

The institutional structure should be an entity:

- whose structure is legitimate.
- whose policy-making actions are authorized and defensible.
- which can limit the exposure of the participants to suits and claims of liability.
- which can be responsive to the complete policy-making and management needs of the transit organization.
- which has the political and financial support to endure more than one year at a time.

- which can annually perform proactive planning to improve the system, and can effectively identify and implement improvements regularly and easily.
- which has a full-time management/coordinator position that deals with all operational and administrative issues for transit, and works to improve the visibility of transit within the community through an aggressive marketing program.

Alternatives for the Targhee Regional Public Transit Authority

Department of Local Government

The advantage to a department of local (city or county) government organizational structure is that a local government system has the broadest possible tax base. The disadvantages of a local government-operated system are that transit may not be a high priority) and there may be little long-term stability in transit service funding.

Regional Public Transit Authority

Regional public transportation authorities are complex organizations. The organizational structure is determined in part by statute and in part by the intergovernmental agreement creating the district. There is considerable flexibility in designing an organization that has the support of the member governments and the public. One significant advantage of the regional public transportation authority is the capability to bring several municipalities and counties together in funding and operating a transit system. The regional public transportation authority must be approved by the local residents, which requires a significant grassroots public education effort to rally support for public transportation.

TRPTA's current organizational structure is a regional public transportation authority. The organizational structure has worked well in the past few years. The existing system has all but one of the general elements of a regional public transportation authority—the ability to levy a tax in order to cover the operating costs of the transit system. TRPTA's board should consider joining together with other regional transit authorities in Idaho to petition the State to allow regional public transportation authorities to obtain voter approval in order to apply a levy. A

significant grassroots public education effort would need to be conducted in order to obtain voter approval of TRPTA creating a tax.

Intergovernmental Transit Agency

An intergovernmental transit agency is the last alternative presented for the Targhee Regional Public Transportation Authority. The intergovernmental agency could be formed by the City of Idaho Falls, Bonneville County, and other communities in the study area. The governing board would have equal representation from each entity. This type of agency has been successfully implemented in other locations. If provided with strong and long-term intergovernmental funding agreements, the intergovernmental transit agency structure provides stability and helps ensure the continuation of transit service within the community. This structure would replace the existing public transportation authority.

Organizational Structure Summary

Table VIII-1 ranks each institutional alternative according to four factors: legal capability, revenue generation capacity, administrative impacts, and political acceptability. Legal capability refers to the existence of statutory authority. Revenue generation capacity refers to the capability of funding sources to generate adequate funding levels relative to the projected subsidy requirements. Administrative impacts refer to the level of effort involved in implementing a funding mechanism and the ability to provide coordinated service throughout the TRPTA Region. Political acceptability refers to the likelihood of a given funding mechanism to be accepted by the public and the local elected officials.

Table VIII-1 Institutional Alternatives Comparison Matrix				
Institutional Alternative	Legal Capability	Revenue Generation Capacity	Admin. Impacts	Political Acceptability
Local Govt. Department	■	■	□	□
Regional Transportation Authority	■	□	■	◐
Intergovernmental Agency	■	◐	◐	◐
Legend:	■ = strong/acceptable	◐ = moderate/satisfactory	□ = weak/unacceptable	
<i>Source: LSC, 2006.</i>				

The first column (legal capability) in Table VIII-1 shows that all of the alternatives are permitted legally, with each alternative having the same authority to engage in certain activities related to revenue generation. The second column (revenue generation capacity) indicates that there is a range from strong to weak of the alternatives' abilities to generate funding under existing state law. The third column (administrative impacts) reflects that there would be various administrative impacts to providing transit under a new framework. A regional transportation authority is rated as the most acceptable because it is the existing system for TRPTA and that this alternative scored highest in both legal and administrative capabilities. An intergovernmental transit agency is rated as having moderate administrative impact, while a department of the county is rated the weakest. All of the alternatives are rated as having moderate or weak political acceptability, including the existing regional transportation authority. Based on the above information, the existing organizational structure is the best in order to serve the transit systems needs.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

For a short time, one of TRPTA's board members was the General Manager (did not handle day-to-day operations). Now there is an Executive Director/General

Manager. There was a short time when there were two transit managers (one who oversaw the fixed-route service and one who oversaw the rural transit system) and two dispatchers. This is no longer the case. The Planning Team recommends the following job descriptions for each position.

Transit General Manager (Reports to TRPTA Board)

1. Develops and administers operational policies and procedures; enforces compliance with rules and regulations.
2. Develops, administers, and monitors the transit budget to include overseeing and approving purchasing procedures.
3. Researches and resolves complaints and problems; develops customer surveys to determine customer satisfaction.
4. Represents TRPTA at meetings and on committees for transportation; provides administrative and technical support for the Transit Advisory Committee.
5. Supervises staff to include: assigning and reviewing work, ensuring staff are properly trained, evaluating performance, approving time off, handling disciplinary actions, and making hiring and termination recommendations.
6. Is TRPTA's liaison on transit matters with the Idaho Department of Transportation and the Federal Transit Administration.
7. Prepares transit reports; researches and applies for local, state, and federal funding.
8. Actively promotes public transportation within the community and develops marketing strategies to increase ridership and positive public perception.
9. Develops transit goals and objectives; develops short- and long-range plans.
10. Performs contract management to include: negotiating contracts, preparing contracts, and making or receiving payments.
11. Develops Annual Report on transit operations.

Transit Manager (Reports to Transit General Manager)

1. Supervises and coordinates daily transit operations to include: coordinating usage of vehicles, developing methods of operation to meet the public demand for service, monitoring and assigning work of staff, and completing performance evaluations.
2. Assists in the development and administers operational policies and procedures; enforces compliance with rules and regulations.
3. Researches and resolves complaints and problems concerning transit operations.

4. Participates in meetings and serves on committees for transportation/transit issues.
5. Assists in preparing the transit budget and tracks the budget.
6. Assists in the development of reports and oversees data collection.
7. Participates in purchasing materials and supplies.
8. Performs other duties of a similar nature or level.

Lead Dispatcher (Reports to Transit Manager)

1. Assigns and monitors work; provides employee training on proper methods and procedures.
2. Coordinates the repair and maintenance of fleet vehicles by development of work orders, scheduling and monitoring work, service schedules, and tracking expenditures.
3. Orders and picks up supplies and other materials.
4. Completes and maintains required reports which include updating databases, coding and tracking expenditures, and informing supervisor of daily divisional activities.
5. Conducts daily road supervision and responds to vehicle accidents involving transit vehicles.

The existing administrative budget should be able to cover these positions since there are no additional administrative positions recommended. The new administrative structure will also establish a clear chain of command.

DISPATCHING AND SCHEDULING

TRPTA operates a Flex Zone service in which four fixed routes have been established that can “flex” within three-quarters of a mile of the fixed route to pick up passengers. Passengers that are picked up off the fixed route must call in to reserve a time to be picked up. A schedule is then developed using Microsoft Excel that shows the time, date, pick-up location, destination, name of the customer, the customer’s phone number, and columns that the driver needs to fill out to show if the customer rode the trip or if they cancelled. This system has become so successful that TRPTA is finding it difficult to operate all the trip requests.

TRPTA may wish to look into the purchase of a computer software and hardware system for scheduling and dispatching paratransit trips. This computerized

system would replace the existing manual system currently in place and would make scheduling and dispatching much easier, as well as more efficient and effective. This type of system may help in allowing TRPTA to better facilitate the requests for service with which they are now having difficulty.

Urban transit systems receiving formula funds, such as TRPTA, are required to report data to the National Transit Database (NTD). Urban systems have to report the following:

- Total Annual Revenue
- Sources of Revenue
- Total Annual Operating Costs
- Total Annual Capital Costs
- Fleet Size, Type, and Facilities
- Revenue Vehicle Mileage
- Ridership

Most of these data can be collected using the computerized dispatching software, thereby eliminating time-consuming manual input of data. The software can also be programmed to place these data into report formats.

Other high tech advancements to aid flex routing, demand-response, and para-transit service are the Mobile Data Terminal (MDT), Automatic Vehicle Locator (AVL), and the Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) system. Once dispatch develops the automated schedule, a manifest is transmitted to the MDT onboard each van. The MDT video screen continuously updates and reviews, as necessary, the pick-up and delivery points for the day, and guides the driver with a visual map that also broadcasts directions using the GPS.

The MDT also provides continuous electronic updates to each driver's route, such as reporting a bus out of service that means additional pick-ups for other vehicles, a customer cancellation, or a delay. It allows drivers and dispatchers to interact quickly and efficiently to provide effective public transportation service.

The AVL is a GPS-based system that picks up signals every second via a satellite beam, records the bus's location and speed at one-minute intervals, and simultaneously communicates the information to operations so dispatchers can optimize efficiency when they have to adjust daily schedules. A great advantage of this technology is the ability for customers to make "real time" reservations.

Safety and security can be enhanced with a surveillance and motion indicator system. The system consists of surveillance cameras and microphones, with continuous loop recordings for both the outside and inside of the van, along with a G-force indicator system that provides an integrated record of events to dispatch. This record of events can be downloaded through a wireless local area network each time the bus drives into the vehicle maintenance facility.

The G-force indicator flags the feed from the surveillance cameras whenever the driver pushes a button, and/or the feed from the system kicks in automatically because the van's motion exceeds a prescribed force level. Automatic flags include braking too hard, taking a corner too fast, a collision, or accelerated speed. The driver also may push the flag button to record a customer interaction. All recorded activity inside and outside the vehicle can be set up for timely replay that can enhance coaching and training for drivers or create evidence for customer or employee issues.

MAINTENANCE PROCEDURES

The Planning Team is quite impressed with the current maintenance performed on the TRPTA fleet and sees no need to change the current procedures. The Planning Team has reviewed work orders of maintenance performed on the fleet and find them to meet industry standards for labor and materials costs. The Planning Team has also reviewed the TRPTA Fleet Maintenance Plan and has found it informative and in-depth. At this time we recommend no significant changes to the existing procedures.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As previously mentioned, the regional transportation authority has political advantages such as coordinating multiple agencies into a single agency, and disadvantages related to the strong powers. At this time, LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc. recommends that TRPTA remain with the existing organizational structure of a regional transportation authority. The regional transportation authority organizational structure would aid in TRPTA's plans to expand to regional service. It is also recommended that TRPTA work with other regional transit authorities in the State of Idaho to allow those authorities to be able to levy a tax (with voter approval) that would allow for a stable funding source for the authorities.

It is also recommended that TRPTA adopt the administrative structure described earlier in this chapter. This administrative structure would fill one of the key criteria of a successful institutional structure and allow for the transit operation to grow in an orderly, supervised manner.