



Peer Community Analysis

INTRODUCTION

An important step in a “new” public transit system is the basic estimation of the type of service, operating budget, and performance measures that need to be met based on “peer” systems in other communities. Data for the analysis were obtained from the projects recently completed by LSC, information provided by the respective transit agency, and the 2000 US Census. The following are the peer transit systems selected for analysis:

- Community Transportation Services (CTS)
- Durango Transit
- Eagle Transit
- NRoute Public Transit
- North Country Transit
- Park City Transit
- Steamboat Springs Transit (SST)
- Tahoe Area Regional Transit (TART)
- Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS)

The above communities selected were based upon general criteria. The characteristics that were considered in this selection were the population, the rural characteristics of the area, and influx of tourists. Some of the transit systems were selected as they are geographically close to Carroll County or in the New Hampshire area. The performance measures presented provide a model with the approximate levels of service that need to be met for the new transit system to provide public transportation in the most cost-effective way.

Although every effort was made to find the closest matching peers, no two systems are ever exactly alike. Factors such as the type of service (modified fixed-route, demand-response, etc.), local fare policies, and quality of capital equipment can substantially impact the performance of the individual systems. This peer analy-

sis, therefore, should only be viewed as a rough gauge for Carroll County with a representative sample of similar systems, rather than an exact “report card.”

PEER SYSTEMS

Table VII-1 (at the end of the chapter) provides the compilation of data on the peer communities such as the transit provider, area population, type of service, number of vehicles, annual miles, annual hours, annual ridership, operating budget, and performance measures such as passenger per hour, passenger per mile, cost per passenger, cost per hour, cost per mile, and trips per capita. The peer comparison helps come up with a realistic target productivity level and Carroll County can use the following information in seeing how other peer communities are addressing public transit services. The following is a brief text description of each of the peer systems.

Community Transportation Services – Newport, NH

The Community Transportation Services (CTS) is a public transit service provided for the residents of Sullivan County. The agency operates two route-deviation routes—the Newport and the Claremont routes. These routes deviate up to one-quarter mile from the fixed route for patrons who schedule an advance pick-up or drop-off. The agency employs three 18-passenger buses and one trolley for this service.

The agency also provides paratransit demand-response service for seniors and persons with disabilities in the greater Claremont area. An advance reservation of at least 24 hours is required to schedule a trip. In addition, charter service is available for groups and organizations for a nominal fee. For paratransit services, the agency employs three wheelchair-accessible vehicles. CTS is funded by the Bureau of Elderly and Adult Services (BEAS) Title III; Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds such as FTA Sections 5309, 5310, and 5311; and other local funds.

CTS operates Monday to Friday from 6:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Approximately 128,000 miles of service were provided in 2006.

Durango Transit (T) – Durango, CO

Durango T is a public transit service operated by the City of Durango General Services Department. The agency primarily serves the Fort Lewis students and local residents. Durango T currently operates The Loop, The Trolley, and The Opportunity Bus. The Loop operates six fixed routes. The Trolley operates on Main Avenue from downtown to the Iron Horse Inn and Days Inn. This service is operated year-round. Though much of the summer use is by visitors to the community, local residents use the service throughout the year. The Opportunity Bus is a demand-response, door-to-door service for the Durango urban area. The Opportunity Bus provides service to origin/destination points up to 10 miles outside of the city limits.

Durango T operates seven days a week during summer from 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. During the remainder of the year Durango T operates Monday to Saturday from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. The service area includes the City of Durango and La Plata County within 10 driving miles outside the city limits. With prior arrangements, residents can be picked up anywhere on the scheduled routes. Approximately 27,176 hours and 402,116 miles of service were provided in 2005.

Eagle Transit – Flathead County, MT

Eagle Transit is a division of the Flathead County Area IX Agency on Aging. Eagle Transit is the primary transportation service in Flathead County. Flathead County is a relatively rural area which has a growing reputation as a tourist destination because of its proximity to Glacier National Park, hiking areas, ski resorts, and Flathead Lake. Eagle Transit was originally designed to serve the elderly and has expanded to serve the disabled population and the general public within Flathead County. Eagle Transit is available to all persons within Flathead County. Eagle Transit currently operates the City Bus Route—a checkpoint service within the City of Kalispell and a countywide door-to-door demand-response service. The agency also provides an after-school program for children through the Regional Medical Center.

Eagle Transit's demand-response service days and hours vary within each community. The approximate service days are Monday to Friday between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. Transportation services provided are approximately 8,000 hours and 96,000 miles of service in FY2004-05.

NRoute Public Transit – Vicksburg, MS

NRoute Public Transit—which operates in Vicksburg, Mississippi—is a new transit system that began operation in July 2006. The agency provides seven deviated fixed-route services for the general public with services concentrated in the City of Vicksburg. Transportation is provided Monday through Friday between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Revenue sources include Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds; city, county and state funds; donations from area businesses; and advertising.

The agency's vehicle fleet consists of six buses, and there are plans to buy two more vehicles. These six vehicles are 20-passenger Ford E-450 buses. All the buses are equipped with bike racks and are wheelchair accessible. The fares for general public service are \$1.50 for a one-way trip on the regular routes at the regular stops, \$0.75 one-way fare for riders 60 years and older, \$0.50 for children between the ages of 3 and 12, children under the age of 3 years ride free, and \$3 for a one-way fare for those individuals who want to be picked up at their homes or elsewhere off a scheduled route. There is a \$0.25 fare for transfers between routes. Transfers are valid for 75 minutes after they are issued. Monthly passes are available for \$30. All routes begin at the downtown central hub station located at the intersection of South and Walnut Streets.

North Country Transit – Coos County/Northern Grafton County, NH

North Country Transit (NCT)—which is part of the Tri-County Community Action Program—provides transportation services for the general public, elderly, and persons with disabilities within the Coos County area and the Lancaster-Littleton corridor in the Grafton County area. The agency operates with the coordination of many agencies—New Hampshire Department of Transportation, Coos County, New Hampshire Department of Elderly and Adult Services, United Way, local communities, and the Federal Transit Administration. North Country Transit

offers two deviated fixed routes—one between the Berlin-Gorham area and the other between the Lancaster- Whitefield-Littleton area. The agency also provides demand-response service in the Berlin- Gorham area, Lancaster, and the northern Coos County area. NCT also provides long-distance medical transportation to the elderly and Medicaid clients outside the NCT’s service area with the help of volunteer drivers. The Care-a-Van service is operated under contract to the Littleton Regional Medical Center.

NCT operates Monday to Friday with varying operating hours depending upon the type of service. The approximate service hours are between 6:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. There is limited service on Saturday and Sunday between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 4:15 p.m. Approximately 17,300 hours and 146,300 miles of service in were provided in FY2005-06.

Park City Transit – Park City, UT

Park City Transit provides free fixed-route and demand-response bus service within Park City, and has contracted with Summit County to provide fixed-route and demand response services in the Snyderville Basin area, including Quinn Junction. Service is operated on two different schedules for winter and summer, as well as a reduced, off-season service schedule. All vehicles are wheelchair-lift-equipped. The ADA paratransit van service provides door-to-door service for senior citizens and persons with disabilities who are unable to use the fixed-route transit service. The dial-a-ride demand-response service provides service from Park City to the Quinn Junction Recreation Complex and the National Ability Center. An advance reservation of at least two hours before the scheduled trip is required. Park City operates seven days a week between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 10:30 p.m. in the local area and between the hours of 7:40 a.m. to 8:55 p.m. in the Summit County areas.

Steamboat Springs Transit (SST) – Steamboat Springs, CO

Steamboat Springs Transit (SST) is owned and operated by the City of Steamboat Springs which serves the general population of this mountain resort area. Ridership has consistently been around one million riders annually. Approximately 99 percent of the riders use the general public services, and the remaining one

percent (922 trips) uses the complementary paratransit services. Reflecting the resort community environment, 44 percent of riders were accessing recreational sites with 31 percent using the transit service to get to employment or educational sites. All vehicles are ADA-accessible. SST provides free fixed-route and paratransit services within the city limits. SST also provides fare based regional service that links Steamboat Springs to Milner and Hayden in Routt County and Craig in Moffat County. Approximately 38,400 hours and 531,500 miles of service were provided in 2006.

Tahoe Area Regional Transit (TART) – North Lake Tahoe, CA/NV

The Tahoe Regional Transit (TART) system began in 1975. TART is a public transit service operated by the Placer County Department of Public Works. TART is funded by Transportation Development Act funds, FTA funds, farebox revenues, contract revenues from the Washoe County Regional Transportation Commission for the Incline Village service, and contract revenues from the Town of Truckee and the North Lake Tahoe Resort Association for the Truckee Route. TART currently operates along two major routes—The Main Line which operates along the northern and western shores of Lake Tahoe from Sugar Pine Point State Park to Incline Village and the Truckee route which serves the Truckee River corridor between Tahoe City and Truckee. The one-way fare is \$1.50 for the general public and \$0.75 for persons with disabilities. TART operates seven days a week between the hours of 6:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.

Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS) – Merced to Yosemite, CA

The Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS) operates daily year-round bus service between Merced and Yosemite National Park. Though the agency extends their service during the summer (operating from Mammoth Lakes to the Yosemite National Park), the existing operating information provided includes only the service from Merced to Yosemite National Park. YARTS is a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) of the counties of Mariposa, Merced, and Mono. YARTS provides service along Highway 140 to and from Yosemite National Park. The trip takes approximately 2.5 hours from Merced to Yosemite.

YARTS service was first initiated when the National Park Service was faced with limited access, automobile congestion, and air pollution in the Yosemite Valley. YARTS has a fixed-route service with intermediate stops serving the entire Yosemite region. The route along Highway 140 originates in Merced and has intermediate stops in the communities of Cathey's Valley, Mariposa, Midpines, and El Portal. There is also free Yosemite Valley shuttle bus service provided within the park. YARTS contracts transportation services (both vehicles and drivers) from a private contractor—the VIA-Adventures, Inc. which operates along I-40 from Merced to Yosemite. The majority of vehicles are over-the-road coaches, and amenities on these coaches include restrooms. There are three to four wheelchair-accessible buses that operate along the corridor of Merced to Yosemite. Forty-eight-hour advance reservations are required.

YARTS operates Monday to Friday with operating hours ranging from 5:52 a.m. to 6:35 p.m. in the winter and from 5:52 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. in the summer. The annual vehicle revenue-hours and annual vehicle revenue-miles operated by VIA Adventures, Inc. for YARTS are approximately 7,500 and 237,000 respectively.

PEER STATISTICS

The averages for each of the categories are listed at the bottom of the table (Table VII-1). The peer communities were not restricted to a particular type of service offered by a transit system, but fixed-route or fixed-route deviated service between the major communities and demand-response service in low density areas seemed to be the type of service offered by most similar-sized communities. Most of the populations listed were lower than Carroll County, which has a higher population (47,439 people) than the overall average of 25,223 persons. It should be noted that the visiting tourist population is the predominant factor affecting transit ridership in some of these peer communities and not the area residents. The Park City service area had the lowest population with approximately 11,000 people, while the Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS) service area had the highest population with approximately 52,000 people.

The following section describes the results of the peer analysis. The figures provided reflect the peer communities' data in a graphical manner.

Figure VII-1 presents the comparison of annual passenger-trips (ridership). The average of the nine agencies was 359,851 annual trips. The highest ridership was from Park City Transit with 1,415,787 passengers. The high ridership in Park City, Steamboat Springs, Tahoe Area Regional Transit (TART), and Durango Transit can be attributed to the strong tourist market segment in these communities.

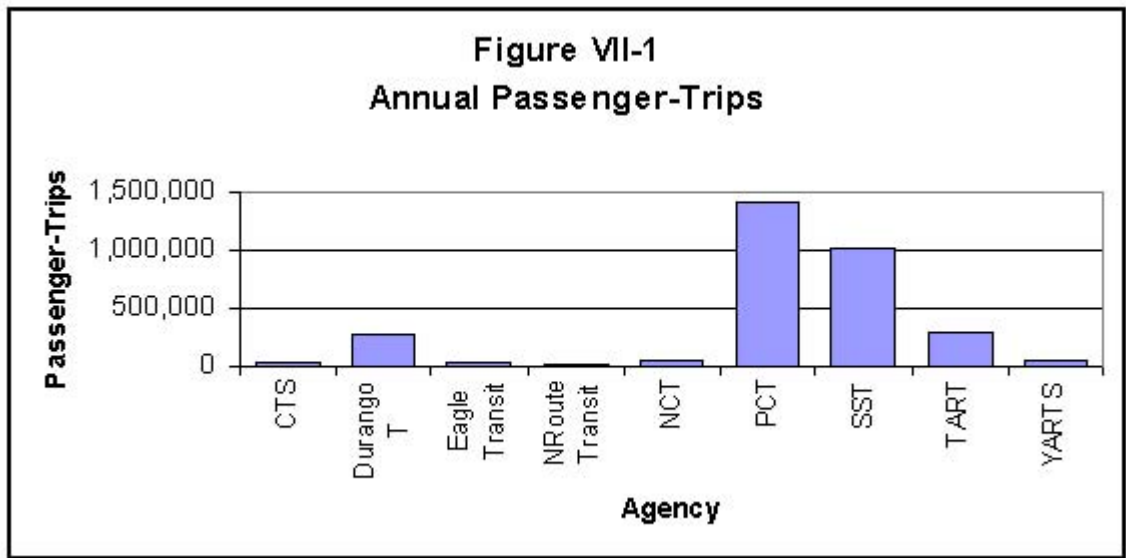
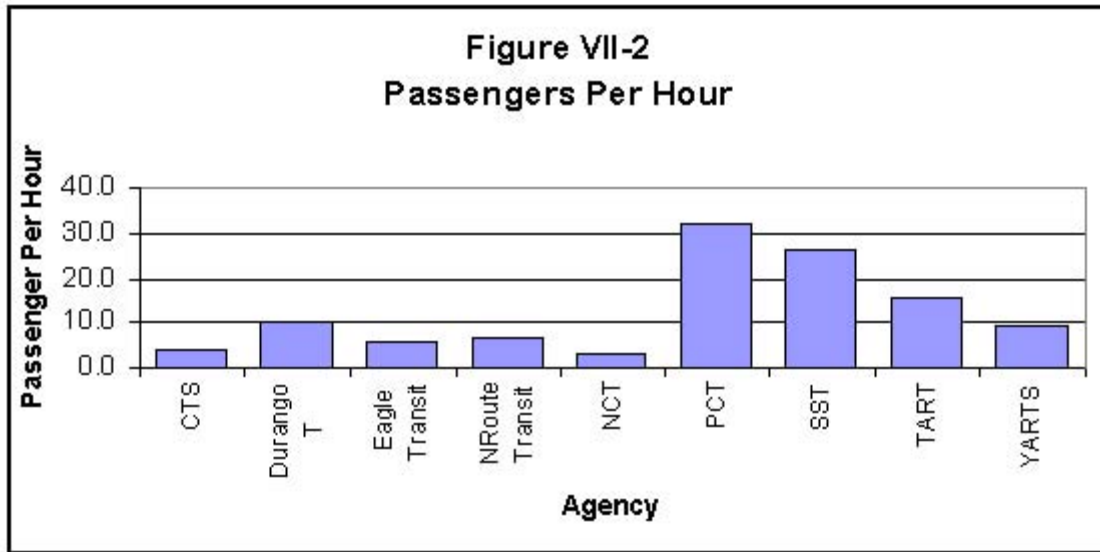
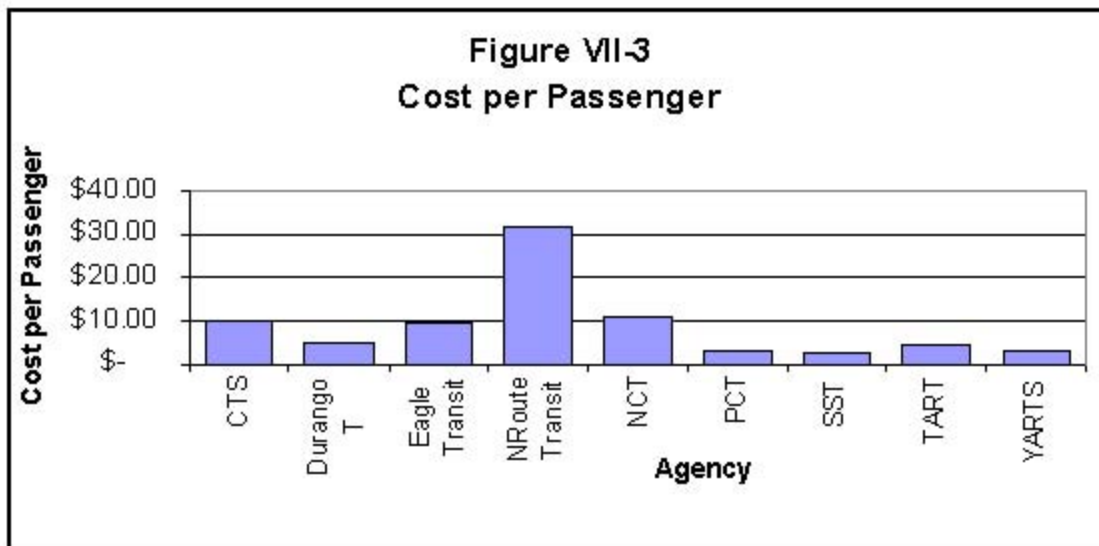


Figure VII-2 shows the comparison of passenger-trips per hour by agency. Passenger-trips per hour were calculated for each of the nine agencies, with an average of 18 passengers per hour. It is generally held that a productivity measure of less than five passengers per hour or less is the threshold for conducting demand-response operations. If a system exceeds ten passengers per hour, the system should consider fixed-route service in order to be able to meet those needs. Between these two thresholds a hybrid service may be considered. Five of the nine transit systems which had less than ten passengers per hour were Community Transportation Services (CTS), Eagle Transit, NRoute Transit, North Country Transit (NCT), and YARTS. These systems have a fixed-route deviation or a checkpoint service with the exception of YARTS. Park City (PCT) had the highest passenger-per-hour rate with 32 passengers per hour. As mentioned, the high passengers per hour for PCT, SST, and TART are because of the tourists that represent a key transit market segment in these communities.



The cost per passenger was calculated for each of the nine agencies, with an average of \$3.54. Figure VII-3 shows the comparison of the cost per passenger. The most cost-effective transit system of the peer communities was Steamboat Springs with a cost of \$2.48 per passenger. The most costly peer community was NRoute Transit with a cost of \$31.62 per passenger which may be because this new system has not achieved the full potential ridership.



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Other averages calculated were the passengers per mile (one passenger), the cost per passenger (\$3.54), the cost per hour (\$66.63), cost per mile (\$4.33), and the trips per capita (28 trips). The operating budget was also reported by each agency, with an average of \$1,273,229.

SUMMARY

In the analysis of the information presented in Table VII-1 and the previous figures, a pattern does arise. Based on the peer community analysis, the new transit program in Carroll County will need to decide the type of service and service area depending on budget, population, and tourist locations. Ridership and trips per capita, on the other hand, are highly dependent on the quality, type of service, and the potential tourist market in a community.

**Table VII-1
Peer Community Analysis
Performance Measures**

Transit System - Location	Area Population	Service Characteristics	No. of Vehicles	Annual Miles	Annual Hours	Annual Ridership	Operating Budget	Pass per Hour	Pass per Mile	Cost per Pass	Cost per Hour	Cost per Mile	Trips per Capita
Community Transportation Services (CTS) - Newport, NH	19,420	Fixed-Route Deviation/ Demand-Response; Door-to-Door Paratransit Service	7	128,000	8,250	33,825	\$330,100	4.1	0.26	\$9.76	\$40.01	\$2.58	1.74
Durango Transit (T) - Durango, CO	15,501	Fixed-Route, Demand-Response, and Paratransit	14	394,074	26,633	275,530	\$1,270,659	10.3	0.70	\$4.61	\$47.71	\$3.22	17.77
Eagle Transit - Flathead County, MT	36,202	Checkpoint /Demand-Response	9	95,403	8,165	47,730	\$444,525	5.8	0.50	\$9.31	\$54.44	\$4.66	1.32
NRoute Public Transit - Vicksburg, MS	25,752	Fixed-Route Deviated Service	6	45,000	3,000	19,000 *	\$600,800	6.3	0.42	\$31.62	\$200.27	\$13.35	0.74
North Country Transit (NCT) - Coos County/ Northern Grafton County, NH	32,000	Fixed-Route Deviation/ Demand-Response	12	146,253	17,268	55,808	\$602,298	3.2	0.38	\$10.79	\$34.88	\$4.12	1.74
Park City Transit (PCT) - Park City, UT	11,000	Fixed-Route, Demand-Response	36	654,130	43,533	1,415,787	\$4,153,643	32.5	2.16	\$2.93	\$95.41	\$6.35	128.71
Steamboat Springs Transit (SST) - Steamboat Springs, CO	20,036	Fixed-Route/ Paratransit Services	23	531,559	38,417	1,019,581	\$2,527,101	26.5	1.92	\$2.48	\$65.78	\$4.75	50.89
Tahoe Area Regional Transit (TART) - North Lake Tahoe, CA/ NV	14,800	Fixed-Route	14	417,612	19,386	301,396	\$1,292,811	15.5	0.72	\$4.29	\$66.69	\$3.10	20.36
Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS) - Merced, CA	52,292	Fixed-Route (Merced to Yosemite)	4	237,121	7,339	70,000	\$237,121	9.5	0.30	\$3.39	\$32.31	\$1.00	1.34
AVERAGE	25,223		14	294,350	19,110	359,851	\$1,273,229	18.8	1.22	\$3.54	\$66.63	\$4.33	28

Note*: This Ridership is for ten months from the time this system started in July 2006

Sources: Information provided by respective transit agencies, 2000 Census, LSC 2007.