



CHAPTER VII

Recommended Plan

INTRODUCTION

Based on discussion and feedback regarding the alternatives presented in Chapter VI, LSC has prepared a recommended plan for service in the Five Valleys region. The service recommendations are based on the identified level of demand in each corridor. Implementation of the recommended services may be phased as funding becomes available and demand is verified. The recommended phasing and costs are shown in Table VII-2 which is included in the summary section at the end of this chapter.

RIDESHARE PROGRAM

The first recommendation is to strengthen the rideshare program operated by MR TMA. This program should build on relationships with Missoula in Motion and local employers. In each corridor there is a significant pattern of formal and informal ridesharing. Additional outreach efforts should be made in each corridor and particularly with major destinations outside Missoula. A funding increase of \$5,000 annually is recommended for the MR TMA rideshare program to enhance outreach efforts and increase the level of participation.

The rideshare program of MR TMA and the one promoted by the Associated Students of the University of Montana should be consolidated into a single effort. Two separate efforts to promote ridesharing do not serve the potential users well. Those using one system do not have access to participants in the other program and therefore have a reduced potential for finding rideshare partners. Efforts should be made to strengthen a single program and market it among all possible participants.

VANPOOLS

The second recommendation is to build upon the existing vanpool program operated by MR TMA. There are waiting lists for vanpool service in the region. Previous work with MR TMA showed that the majority of vanpool participants prefer vanpools over bus service and would not change to bus service if it was provided. Many of these participants would use their own vehicles if vanpools were not an option. Vanpools should continue to be one of the transportation options in the region to meet the needs of multiple market segments.

At least three new vanpools should be set up—one operating from Missoula to Hamilton, one from Polson to Missoula, and one from Polson to Kalispell. The total estimated cost of these three vanpools is \$38,000 per year.

BUS SERVICE

Limited bus service is recommended in the US 93 South corridor and should be implemented in phases to ensure there is sufficient demand and to obtain adequate funding.



Phase 1: Commuter Service – Lolo to Missoula

The first phase of bus service that should be considered is between Lolo and Missoula. The recommended approach is to start with a commuter service operating during the morning and afternoon peak commute periods.

The estimated operating cost for this service is \$38,000 per year, and the projected demand is 8,200 annual passenger-trips. The suggested approach for starting this service is to set up a subscription service where passengers would commit and purchase a monthly pass in advance. Once a minimum number of passengers have indicated a commitment, the service could be started. Potential passengers should be contacted through the MR TMA vanpool waiting lists and employers in Missoula. Outreach efforts should be used in Lolo to publicize the new service and attract subscription riders.

A potential operator for this service would be Mountain Line. Mountain Line currently serves much of the urbanized area and could extend service to Lolo although the community is currently outside the Urban Transportation District.

Phase 2: Commuter Service – Hamilton to Missoula



Phase 2 of the US 93 South service is to add commuter service from Hamilton to Missoula. Again, subscription service should be considered for the initial implementation to ensure that demand is sufficient to support the service.

Assuming that the demand is sufficient in Lolo to support one vehicle operating between Lolo and Missoula, cost for this service reflects two additional vehicles in service. Two vehicles will be required to operate two morning and two afternoon trips. Vehicles should be stored overnight in Hamilton. During the day, these vehicles should be available for use on service in Missoula.

The estimated operating cost for this service is \$172,000, and the projected demand is 20,100 annual passenger-trips. The suggested approach for starting this service is to set up a subscription service where passengers would commit and purchase a monthly pass in advance. Once a minimum number of passengers has indicated a commitment, the service could be started. Potential passengers should be contacted through the MR TMA vanpool waiting lists and employers in Missoula. Outreach efforts should be used in Hamilton, Stevensville, and along the corridor to publicize the new service and attract subscription riders.

This service could be operated by either the Ravalli County Council on Aging or Mountain Line. Both have the capability to operate the service. The Council on Aging serves Hamilton and Ravalli County and provides trips to Missoula. Either agency could extend service to provide this link.

Phase 3: All-Day Service – Lolo to Missoula

Once the commuter service between Lolo and Missoula is established and performing well, additional hours of service may be added to provide a connection between the communities throughout the day. This service will not require additional vehicles as the vehicles for the commuter service may be used. The addi-

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tional cost will be for operating the service during the additional hours. The core ridership in this corridor will continue to be commuters, but the additional hours of service will meet the needs of those who must travel to Missoula for a portion of the day. Those who must access medical facilities in Missoula would be an example of these passengers. The recommendation is to provide hourly service with one vehicle.

The estimated cost for this service is \$260,000 with an annual demand of 14,000 passengers. No additional vehicles will be required.

Phase 4: All-Day Service – Hamilton to Missoula

Service throughout the day between Hamilton and Missoula should be implemented as the fourth phase of this service. This service will provide access to facilities in Missoula for residents of Ravalli County. The recommended frequency of service is 90 minutes, which can be provided by two vehicles.

The cost to operate this service will be \$425,000 with an annual demand of 34,000 passengers. No additional vehicles will be required. Vehicles used for the commuter service could be used to provide the additional hours of service. Stops should be designated at the established park-and-ride locations in the corridor.

Plains to Missoula

Service is currently provided from locations in Sanders County to Missoula one or more days a week. There are body-on-chassis vehicles located at senior centers in Sanders County. These vehicles may travel to Missoula from one or more of these communities on any day. The recommendation is to coordinate this service so that a single vehicle provides transportation from the communities in Sanders County and Mineral County. Other vehicles in the counties may be used to bring passengers from various communities to meet and transfer to the bus traveling to Missoula. If funding is available, an additional vehicle should be purchased to provide this service so that the existing vehicles will be available to provide local service in their communities each day. The current approach takes the vehicle out of the community on those days when Missoula is served.

There is an opportunity to coordinate this service with Mountain Line in Missoula. For those passengers traveling to Missoula, a day pass or transfer could be provided to enhance their mobility while in Missoula. While some passengers would be taken directly to their destinations, others may prefer the option of using the local transit service throughout the day to reach multiple destinations.

The estimated cost of operating this service is approximately \$75,000 annually with an estimated annual demand of 3,100 passengers. Much of this cost is already incurred. There is a potential to save costs by having only one vehicle travel to Missoula rather than multiple vehicles.

Polson to Kalispell

There is demand for service between Polson and Kalispell, both for employment trips and to access services in Kalispell. The recommendation is to start service in this corridor with service twice a day. As demand increases, additional days of service could be offered.

The annual cost of operating one vehicle twice a week from Polson to Kalispell is approximately \$69,000 with an estimated demand of 6,000 annual passengers.

CAPITAL PLAN

The capital requirements are shown in Table VII-1. The table shows the number of vehicles required to implement the service. Depending on the selected operator, vehicles may be available in the region to operate the service without purchasing additional vehicles.

Table VII-1 Capital Plan			
Service Element	Vehicle Type	Quantity	Cost
Vanpools	Modified 15-passenger vans	3	\$120,000
Lolo to Missoula Commuter	Small Bus	3	\$390,000
Hamilton to Missoula Commuter	Small Bus	2	\$260,000
Plains to Missoula	Body-on-Chassis	1	\$65,000
Polson to Kalispell	Body-on-Chassis	1	\$65,000

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

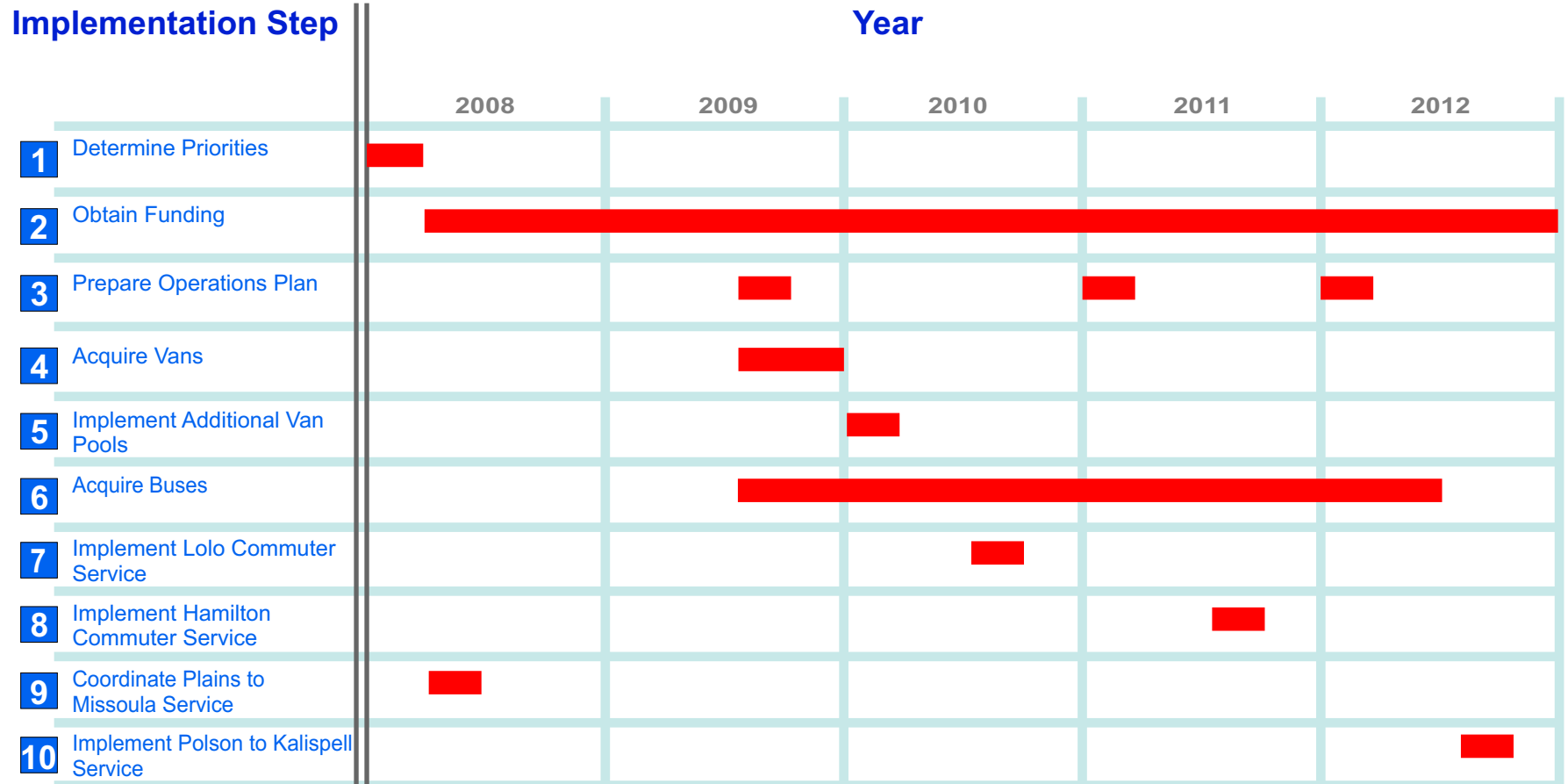
The following steps have been identified for implementation of the recommended services. The timing for these steps are shown in Figure VII-1.

Determine Priorities for Implementation

This study provides recommendations for services to be implemented, but priorities for the specific services must be determined by local elected officials. The Policy Group for this study was made up of local elected officials and the represented policy bodies will need to make a final decision on the priorities. These priorities will also set the direction for funding of the services.

Local officials must also decide which agency will operate each of the services. Vanpools would be most appropriately operated by MR TMA while bus service could be operated by either Mountain Line or Ravalli County in the US 93 South corridor. The Polson-to-Kalispell service could be operated by Eagle Transit. Factors to consider include which agency has the capacity, operating costs, and availability of local funding.

Figure VII-1 Implementation Schedule



Obtain Funding

No funding has been identified for implementation of the proposed services. Local funding will be required to match any grants which may be obtained. Funding options have been identified in Chapter VI. Possible local funding may come from ASUM or the Mountain Line Urban Transportation District. Representatives from each have indicated strong support for transit in the region, particularly in the US 93 South corridor. Initial implementation of these services may require 100 percent local funding with the possibility of obtaining JARC or CMAQ funding in the future.

Prepare Operations Plan

An operations plan will be required for the transit service options identified in this chapter. This study has looked only at the feasibility of service. A detailed operations plan is needed to determine appropriate stops, schedules, and operating characteristics.

Acquire Vans

Additional vans will be needed to begin the new vanpools. These should be purchased as soon as funding is available.

Implement Additional Vanpools

The additional vanpools should begin as soon as the vehicles are available and there is a sufficient number of participants.

Acquire Buses

Additional buses may be required to operate the transit service options depending on which agency is selected to operate the service and availability of existing vehicles. If buses must be purchased, this will require development of specifications and procurement of the vehicles.

Implement Transit Service

Each phase of the service will require planning for start-up of the new service. This will include development of the operations plan, acquisition of vehicles, and marketing and promotion.

SUMMARY

Table VII-2 summarizes the recommended services. Implementation of these services will require new funding above the funding that is currently available. Chapter VI described some of the possible funding sources that could be pursued.

Table VII-2 Summary of Recommendations			
Recommended Service	Annual Cost	Annual Passengers	Cost per Passenger
Ridematching	\$5,000		N/A
Vanpools			
Missoula to Hamilton	\$10,328	5,000	\$2.07
Polson to Missoula	\$16,065	5,000	\$3.21
Polson to Kalispell	\$11,934	5,000	\$2.39
Bus Service			
Plains to Missoula	\$74,880	3,100	\$24.15
Commuter Lolo to Missoula	\$38,000	8,200	\$4.63
Commuter Hamilton to Missoula	\$172,000	20,100	\$8.56
Polson to Kalispell	\$68,640	6,000	\$11.44
All-Day Lolo to Missoula	\$260,100	14,000	\$18.58
All-Day Hamilton to Missoula	\$425,000	34,000	\$12.50

For comparison, the cost of a one-way trip by private automobile was calculated between these same destinations. Assuming the typical vehicle occupancy of 1.1 passengers per vehicle and cost to operate the vehicle of \$.48 per mile, the costs are shown in Table VII-3.

Table VII-3 Operating Cost of Private Vehicles	
Corridor	Cost per Person
Missoula to Hamilton	\$19.64
Polson to Missoula	\$33.60
Polson to Kalispell	\$22.69
Lolo to Missoula	\$5.24
Plains to Missoula	\$32.73