



# CHAPTER I

## Introduction

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The Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA), on behalf of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation (CSKTFR), contracted with LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc. (LSC) to prepare a five-year transit service plan as a Technical Assistance Project. The plan specifically focuses on public transportation issues for the tribal members throughout the Flathead Reservation. The plan also examines the transit needs, alternatives, and programs for the community within the Flathead Reservation.

This final report presents the preferred service alternative and implementation plan. The report includes a description of the preferred service alternative including the levels of service, route descriptions, draft route schedules, service plan, capital plan, financial plan, management plan, dispatching methods, and implementation time line for each of the major elements of the preferred plan.

### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to analyze and recommend strategies for the CSKTFR transit services which will affect the delivery of public transportation services over the next five years. This final report describes the existing conditions in the Flathead Reservation related to public transit services, discusses transit service and other alternatives for meeting the transportation needs into the future, identifies the locally-preferred set of alternatives, and presents an implementation plan for the next five years.

### REPORT CONTENTS

Chapter II presents the existing community conditions and includes a transportation system overview. A summary of the community demographics and economics is also provided. This is



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based on past studies, including the 2004 Salish/Kootenai Tribes Transportation Needs Report.

A discussion of the CSKTFR's existing transit services and the other transportation providers within the region is presented in Chapter III. The transportation provider information includes a description of services, ridership, fleet characteristics, and finances.

Chapter IV presents the transit needs assessment for Flathead Reservation.

Chapter V presents the results of the onboard interviews.

Chapter VI presents the transit service goals and objectives for the Flathead Reservation for the next five years (short term) and ten years (long term).

Chapter VII offers service alternatives for meeting the increasing future transit demands. The alternatives range from no changes in the existing service to new service functions and operations to an expanded service area. Each alternative is evaluated in terms of its anticipated costs, ridership, and performance as related to the existing operations and the transit service goals and objectives for the Flathead Reservation.

Chapter VIII introduces the transit service's capital needs and alternatives for the Flathead Reservation.

Chapter IX presents the potential financial alternatives, along with their advantages and disadvantages. The existing funding sources are reviewed. Additional funding sources are identified, some of which are based upon the experiences of similar agencies in other states.

Chapter X presents the preferred service plan including the route descriptions, route schedules, operational costs, and capital needs.

Chapter XI covers the implementation plan, which reviews the steps needed to install the preferred service plan detailed in Chapter X. Chapter XI also reviews the capital plan implementation and management requirements needed to achieve the preferred service plan. A six-year financial statement is provided as well as a time line of the planning, implementation, and feedback schedules for the major elements of the overall transit plan.

## **STUDY APPROACH**

As in many regions, the CSKTFR transit service is taking a closer look at public transit services and is seeking to find the most effective means of providing those services. Public transportation is currently provided by CSKTFR and other transit providers, as detailed in Chapter III. A key element in the plan will be to clearly evaluate the unmet needs of tribe members, local residents, and other agencies. The current effort focuses on the feasibility of providing public transit services to meet the community's needs. One important step toward providing an integrated community-wide transportation system is involving key players such as the Tribal Council, key stakeholders, Montana Department of Transportation, human service agencies, and Flathead Reservation residents.

### **Project Team**

An initial “kick-off meeting” was held in Pablo, Montana on July 26, 2005. The meeting was attended by the Tribal Council members, Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) members, Department of Human Resource Development (DHRD), Montana Department of Transportation, S&K College, S&K Housing, Lake County Office of Public Assistance, and other local agencies within the study area who have transportation concerns in the community. The project team met to discuss the project goals, priorities, and time line for completion of the final study. The project team also discussed which local stakeholders would be critical in completing the transit study for the area.

A second TAC meeting was held on October 4, 2005 after the public open house. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss Technical Memorandum #1 and provide feedback and comments to the LSC team.

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The transit service alternatives were presented at the third TAC meeting held on November 18, 2005. At this meeting, the TAC members and LSC team reviewed the alternatives and selected a preferred transit service option.

The fourth TAC meeting was held on December 17, 2005. The preferred transit service and implementation plans were reviewed by the public and the TAC members. The TAC members discussed several adjustments to the preferred transit service plan and the implementation of the transit service. The LSC team updated the preferred transit service and implementation plans to reflect the TAC members' comments.

The results of these meetings are presented in Chapters X and XI of this final report.