



CHAPTER I

Introduction

The Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA), on behalf of the Fort Belknap Reservation (FBR), contracted with LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc. (LSC) to prepare a five-year transit service plan as a Technical Assistance Project. The plan focuses on public transportation issues, as well as the transit needs, alternatives, and programs for the FBR and adjacent communities within the study area.

This final report presents the preferred transit service alternative and implementation plan. The report contains a description of the preferred transit service alternative including the level of service, route descriptions, draft route schedules, service plan, capital plan, financial plan, management plan, dispatching methods, and implementation timeline for each of the major elements in the preferred plan.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to analyze and recommend strategies for the implementation of public transit service to meet the needs of local residents. In order to determine the public transportation service needs, the existing conditions were evaluated (including current transportation services, community demographics, and potential transit destinations). A number of transit service options were developed and evaluated. These options were presented to the community; and a preferred transit system plan was selected. The preferred transit system plan was then refined and developed in detail to provide an implementation plan for the new transit service.

REPORT CONTENTS

Chapter II presents the existing community conditions, as well as a transportation system overview for the FBR and adjacent communities. A summary of the community demographics and economics is also provided.



Chapter III presents an overview of the existing transit service that several of the tribal programs operate.

Chapter IV reviews the existing transportation plans and studies for the FBR.

Chapter V presents the mission statement, goals, and objectives developed through the planning process.

Chapter VI presents the transit needs assessment for the FBR and adjacent communities along US Highway 2.

Chapter VII presents the peer communities analysis, conducted in order to determine the operational structures and costs of other Native American Reservations and communities in Montana which are operating public transit services.

Chapter VIII reviews the different types of transit services that the FBR could implement. This information was used in the determination and analysis of the transit service alternatives presented later in the report.

Chapter IX reviews the various transit vehicles that the FBR could purchase for the transit system. The type, size, cost, seating capacity, and general description of the various transit vehicles are discussed.

Chapter X presents coordination strategies for the local human service transportation providers within the study area.

Chapter XI reviews the financial alternatives and funding categories that could be used to fund the preferred transit service.

Chapter XII discusses the organizational alternatives that could be implemented to develop and operate the preferred transit service such as tribal departments, urban transportation districts, transportation improvement authorities, and inter-governmental agreements.

Chapter XIII presents the transit service alternatives. The alternatives are evaluated based on the goals, objectives, and performance measures of the peer communities.

Chapter XIV presents the preferred transit service plan for the study area including the service description, routes, draft schedules, operational costs, cost needs, and preferred types of coordination for the FBR and adjacent communities.

Chapter XV reviews the capital plan and the management requirements needed to achieve the capital plans. Also included are a six-year financial statement and a timeline of the planning, implementation, and feedback schedules for the major elements of the preferred transit service plan.

STUDY APPROACH

As in many regions, the FBR is seeking to find the most effective means of providing public transit service. Formal public transportation services are currently provided within the study area by the FBR and other local human service transportation providers, which each provide limited transportation services to meet the needs of the study area's residents (primarily seniors).

A key element in the preferred transit service plan was to clearly evaluate the unmet needs of the FBR members, local residents, and local businesses. The current effort focused 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 was involving key players such as the

Introduction

Tribal Council, key stakeholders, Montana Department of Transportation, human service agencies, and FBR residents.

Project Team

An initial kick-off meeting was held at Fort Belknap Agency, Montana on July 13, 2006. The meeting was attended by the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) members including the Montana Department of Transportation, Tribal senior programs, Tribal health department, transportation planning department, City of Harlem, Blaine County, Chinook Senior Center, study area residents, and other local agencies which have transportation concerns for the community. The project team met to discuss the project goals, priorities, and timeline 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 August 30, 2006 after the public open house. The purpose of the TAC meeting was to discuss Technical Memorandum #1, in order to provide feedback and comments to the LSC team.

The third TAC meeting was held on October 17, 2006. The purpose of the TAC meeting was to review the transit service alternatives presented in Technical Memorandum #2.

At the November 29, 2006 TAC meeting, the project team selected and made adjustments to the preferred transit service alternative. The results of these adjustments are presented in this final report.