

CHAPTER I

Introduction

The Board of Gallatin County Commissioners contracted with LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc. to prepare an implementation plan for the development of a public transportation system in Gallatin County. The plan specifically focuses on the area around Bozeman, Belgrade, and Four Corners. This report



presents a summary of the existing conditions related to transit services and estimates the transit demand within the study area. Information in this report includes a description of the communities, review of the existing transportation providers within the study area, review of past transit planning efforts, and results from several surveys conducted as part of these efforts.

The study focuses on transportation issues within Gallatin County related to the general public, Montana State University students, elderly, disabled, and school children. There is no general public transportation service in Gallatin County. There are several transportation providers that provide specialized transportation to certain groups within the Gallatin County population. A more detailed discussion of these transit providers will be provided in later chapters.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to determine the feasibility of and appropriate boundaries for an Urban Transportation District (UTD), along with the types of service which are best suited to the different areas within those boundaries. Several different types of service were evaluated. The costs and level of demand for each type of service were determined. This Phase One report provides recommendations regarding the feasibility of an UTD based upon transit demand and community attitudes. The report contains conclusions and recommendations regarding the following:

Introduction

- Boundaries of the UTD
- Costs of operating the UTD
- UTD demographics and potential transit demand
- Public and private support for formation of the UTD
- Service plan

STUDY APPROACH

As in many regions, Gallatin County is taking a closer look at public transit services and is seeking to find the most effective means of providing those services. Currently, public transportation is provided mainly by Montana State University (Bobcat Transit) and Galavan, which are detailed later in this document. A key element in the plan is to clearly evaluate the unmet needs of the local residents and businesses. 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 Stakeholders Board, City of Bozeman, Gallatin County, human service agencies, school districts, and Gallatin County residents.

The following are the major steps in the analysis and development of recommendations for the implementation of the Gallatin County Urban Transportation District (UTD) and the service options within the boundaries of the UTD:

- Review previous studies and planning efforts.
- Examine the 2000 US Census demographics by block groups.
- Identify the major activity centers.
- Assess the existing transit providers.
- Determine the need for transit along with the origin and destination points of transit trips by conducting several community surveys (Montana State University survey, employer survey, and employee survey).
- Analyze the existing and future transit demand based upon the 2000 US Census block groups.
- Conduct public involvement meetings at key points during the study in order to obtain public input on study results and direction.
- Develop and evaluate transit service scenarios based upon the above information.
- Assess the financial impacts of the recommended transit service scenario.

Project Team

An initial “kick-off” meeting was held with the Stakeholders Board in the City of Bozeman at the Gallatin County’s community room on May 12, 2004. This discussion included project goals, priorities, and a timeline for completion of the final study. The project team also identified a group of local stakeholders who would be critical in completing the transit study for the area.



A second Stakeholders Board meeting was held on June 25, 2004. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss Technical Memorandum #1 and provide feedback and comments to the LSC team. These comments and feedback provided direction on Technical Memorandum #2 which covered the service scenarios and implementation plan. Goals for transit service were also discussed at this meeting.

Additional meetings were held on September 14 to review Technical Memorandum #2 and November 9 to review Technical Memorandum #3. The draft Phase One report will be presented January 4, 2005.

Stakeholders Meetings

The group of local stakeholders identified by the Stakeholders Board for individual contacts included the following various organizations:

- Gallatin County
- City of Bozeman
- Montana State University
- Bobcat Transit
- Galavan
- Human Resource Development Council (HRDC)
- City of Belgrade
- Other transportation entities

These groups represented both organizations that provide transportation services and those that may have a specific transportation need. As part of the process to identify local transportation issues, these stakeholders were contacted to provide input for the transit study.

Opportunities for Public Involvement

Throughout the planning process, public involvement is key to the success of Gallatin County’s transit plan. At critical points during the process, public meetings will be announced and held where citizen participation is openly welcome and appreciated. Three public meetings were held in June, September and November. In June, four meetings were held on June 24 and 25 with one after hours with the Four Corners Chambers group. The meetings offered community members an opportunity to provide public input regarding transportation issues which should be addressed as part of the development of the Urban Transportation District and the implementation plan for the future transit system options. Community residents were asked to comment on the existing and future transit service in Gallatin County. The public was also given the opportunity to state which services and other alternatives they think are necessary to address the identified issues and meet the established goals.

REPORT CONTENTS

Chapter II reviews the previous studies that have been conducted regarding the development of a regionwide transit system and Urban Transportation District.

Chapter III details the goals and objectives that need to be achieved in order to develop, maintain, and expand the public transportation system for the Bozeman area.

Chapter IV presents the existing community conditions, community demographics, and Gallatin County transit economics.

Chapter V reviews the existing transportation providers within Gallatin County.

Chapter VI describes the results of the community surveys that were conducted as part of this report.

Chapter VII details the modeling analysis that the LSC team conducted to determine the existing and forecasted transit demand throughout Gallatin County.



Chapter VIII describes each of the transit system alternatives and recommends the preferred option.

Chapter IX is the proposed Transit Service Plan which details the steps, costs, and funding for the implementation of the new transit system.