

## CHAPTER II

# Plan Review

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There are four major transportation plans that have studied the development of a transit system in Gallatin County, Montana. This chapter reviews the four plans, along with their results and recommendations, in order to obtain a basic understanding of the previous work that has been completed regarding the development of a transit system in Gallatin County. The plans are as follows:

- Greater Bozeman Area Transit Development Plan, 2001
- Greater Bozeman Area Transportation Plan, 2001 Update
- Feasibility Report: Bozeman Area Transit, 2002
- Bozeman Area Transit Plan, 2003

### **GREATER BOZEMAN AREA TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN, 2001**

The following is the summary of the 2001 Greater Bozeman Area Transit Development Plan. This document reviewed the community's needs and existing transit providers, and then developed transit alternatives based upon community input.

#### **Community Overview**

The greater Bozeman area is in need of community transit service. Gallatin County is one of the fastest growing areas in Montana. It is expected that over 10,000 new homes will be built in the area over the next 20 years. There will also be significant increases in population and employment. Most of this growth will occur within the study area of the plan. This growth translates into additional need for a public transit system. The implementation of community transit service would help provide for the transportation needs of the elderly, low-income, students, and disabled as well as help alleviate the need for additional roads as the community expands.

#### **Current Transit Providers**

Currently, there are a number of specialized transit providers within the Bozeman area that provide transit service to different segments of the population. The two

largest transit service providers are Bobcat Transit and Galavan. Bobcat Transit provides transportation to Montana State University for students, faculty, and staff when the school is in full session. Galavan serves the elderly and disabled population. A number of other transit providers are available for charter services and other specialty needs.

There is no municipally-sponsored transit service for the general public within the greater Bozeman area. Bobcat Transit is open to the general public while Galavan is available only to certified individuals (elderly and disabled). Both systems are designed to meet the specific transit needs of their clients and, therefore, are rarely used by the general public.

## **Results of Community Input**

A survey conducted of Bozeman residents indicated that the vast majority of residents believe the area needs some sort of public transportation system. Two-thirds of the people who responded said that they would utilize a public transportation system if one existed.

Any public transportation system created for the Bozeman area should implement a number of different goals to meet the needs of the community. These goals include the following:

- Improve the transit system that serves the Montana State University (MSU) students, faculty, and staff. Although Bobcat Transit currently serves the riders traveling to and from MSU, this service is poorly advertised and therefore under-utilized.
- Bozeman needs to help Galavan expand its service to accommodate the growing elderly population within the community.
- The community needs a reliable year-round transit service for the general public.
- The community needs to capitalize on federal grant money for public transit systems. These funds are available at a 50/50 federal/local split for operating costs and an 80/20 split for capital costs.
- There is a need for rural transit service between many of the smaller communities and the Bozeman area.
- The community needs to work with and support the existing taxi service.

## **Transit Alternatives**

There are numerous alternatives for creating a public transit system which could involve combining different existing transit services. The preferred alternative would be to create a municipal transit authority that works collectively with Galavan and Bobcat Transit. The transit authority would create a transit system for the general public that also provides all of the services currently provided by Bobcat Transit. Galavan would operate as part of the transit authority and continue to provide services to the elderly and disabled. The distinct advantage of this alternative is that it would enable the community to maximize the amount of available federal transit funding. It would also allow for the most efficient operations due to the necessary coordination involved.

The changes in the structure of Galavan and Bobcat Transit have significant financial benefits. According to the federal guidelines on transit assistance, there can only be one recipient of federal funds for rural general public transit per community. By combining the principal public services under one transit authority, federal funding assistance for operations and purchasing equipment can flow through the transit authority for both the fixed-route and door-to-door services.

It was recommended that a Bozeman Area Transit Authority (BATA) be created. The purpose of a BATA would be to organize and manage public transit within the greater Bozeman area. It was recommended that the city take the lead role in establishing a BATA. In order to create a BATA, the City of Bozeman and Gallatin County would need to determine the best way to provide the necessary financing. Local funding alone would be insufficient to provide an adequate transit system. Fortunately, there are existing federal programs managed by the Montana Department of Transportation to help fund the local transit systems.

## **GREATER BOZEMAN AREA TRANSPORTATION PLAN, 2001 UPDATE**

The Greater Bozeman Area Transportation Plan - 2001 Update is the overall transportation guide for the greater Bozeman area. This particular document set down the goals and objectives for the short-term and long-term development of all modes of transportation within the Bozeman area. The section on transit and transit development (Chapter 7 - Transit Analysis) pertains to the current review. Chapter

7 is similar in content, although less detailed, to the 2001 Greater Bozeman Area Transit Development Plan which was already reviewed in the above section.

## **FEASIBILITY REPORT: BOZEMAN AREA TRANSIT, 2002**

The 2002 Feasibility Report: Bozeman Area Transit reviewed the results and input from the transit task force, possible implementation options, and system design and cost.

### **Transit Task Force**

The report presented the findings of the City of Bozeman's transit task force to the City Commission. The task force recommended that the city work with Gallatin County, Montana State University, and Associated Students of Montana State University to establish a public transportation system for the region.

### **Plan Recommendations**

It was recommended that the system have the following characteristics:

- A system of modern, handicap-accessible, attractive buses serving Bozeman with commuter service to Four Corners and Belgrade.
- A bus service designed to serve as an attractive alternative for people who can drive their own car ("choice riders" such as commuters, university students, older high school students, and downtown visitors).
- A bus service that improves access to schools, jobs, medical appointments, services, shopping, and social activities for people who cannot drive their own car (such as the elderly, disabled, low-income residents, and middle-school students).
- A level of service for the Montana State University students, staff, faculty, and visitors that will be no less than the service currently provided by Bobcat Transit.
- A level of service for current Galavan customers no less than the service currently provided by Galavan.
- Door-to-door paratransit services required by the Americans with Disabilities Act which will be contracted to Galavan.
- A complementary transportation demand management program that will coordinate, promote, and implement strategies such as carpooling, van-pooling, bicycling, pedestrian transportation, telecommuting, and flexible work hours to help reduce peak congestion.

## Implementation

Based upon their research, the task force generated the following consensus:

- A transit system for the Bozeman, Belgrade, and Four Corners area should be implemented via an Urban Transportation District (UTD).
- A Transportation Management Association should be developed to implement innovative solutions for encouraging alternatives to driving alone (such as park-and-ride, carpooling, and vanpooling).
- A bus system should be implemented in four phases as follows:
  1. System refinement and public vote on the UTD – through November 2003
  2. System startup – July 2005
  3. Infrastructure emplacement – through June 2009
  4. Full system operation – 2010

## System Design and Cost

The task force developed an estimate of the minimum required service/system. This was the smallest system that the task force believed would provide enough service to make it attractive to potential users. The system design was viewed as the best opportunity to make a favorable first impression on potential riders and needed to consist of well-run, well-designed routes.

The task force recommended a system with the following characteristics:

- A minimum of three routes serving Bozeman, and one route running from Montana State University to Four Corners and Belgrade.
- The highest frequency of service available. It was assumed that two routes will have 30-minute headways (maximum wait times) and two routes will have one-hour headways.
- Service hours from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Monday through Friday with potentially shorter hours on Saturday.
- Paratransit service provided throughout the area with service contracted to Galavan.
- Continuous outreach, marketing, and system improvement.

Based upon these parameters and a preliminary sketch of routes, it was calculated that seven buses (five operating buses plus two spare buses) were needed for the fixed-route system. Cost and revenue estimates are shown in Table II-1.

<b>Table II-1 Initial System Cost Summary</b>		
<b>Costs</b>		
Operating Costs	\$ 866,040	
Local Annualized Capital Costs	40,576	
Total Annual Costs	\$ 906,616	
<b>Revenue</b>		
Limited Fed Ops Match	\$ 346,802	
Full Fed Ops Match	558,171	
<b>Local Share</b>		
Limited Fed Ops Match	\$ 559,814	
Full Fed Ops Match	348,445	
<b>Mill Levy</b>		
Limited Fed Ops Match	9.25 mills	\$32 per \$100,000 assessed taxable value
Full Fed Ops Match	5.76 mills	\$20 per \$100,000 assessed taxable value

According to the Gallatin County Treasurer, the value of one mill in the proposed Urban Transportation District would be approximately \$60,540 or \$3.46 per \$100,000 residential assessed taxable value (\$32 per \$100,000 at 9.25 mills, or \$20 per \$100,000 at 5.76 mills). The estimated local taxpayer share for the full system is \$348,445 per year, assuming full federal funding.

The task force envisioned that Bozeman Area Transit would be in full operation with the following characteristics by the year 2010:

- Additional routes for a total of nine routes.
- In-town service for Belgrade.
- Potential commuter service to Manhattan and Three Forks.
- Three additional routes serving Bozeman.
- Coordination with or development of potential transit services for Gallatin Canyon, Livingston, Paradise Valley, Bridger Bowl, Big Sky, West Yellowstone, and Yellowstone National Park.

- Half-hour service for destinations within the higher density portion of Bozeman.
- Half-hour service during commute times between Bozeman and Belgrade.
- A potential transfer center.
- A bus storage, maintenance, and washing facility.

### **System Design and Outreach Study**

The task force also recommended that a system design and outreach study be conducted in order to implement a bus system within the Bozeman area. The task force recommended that the City of Bozeman and Gallatin County contribute a total of \$60,000 for this purpose. It was also suggested that the city and county establish a Joint City-County Stakeholders Board for overseeing this effort.

### **BOZEMAN AREA TRANSIT PLAN, 2003**

The 2003 Bozeman Area Transit Plan was developed by the Western Transportation Institute College of Engineering at Montana State University in Bozeman. This document refines the results of the previous plans by evaluating the plans' results and recommendations both quantitatively and qualitatively.

The quantitative method generated an origin and destination analysis of major employment areas and traditional transit users (low income, elderly, disabled, and households with no vehicles). These origins and destinations were then plotted, resulting in the development of the following five alternative systems:

- Hub-and-spoke system based at Montana State University
- Hub-and-spoke system based Downtown
- Special interest modal system
- Opposing loops system
- Deviated routes system

The five alternative systems were then presented to the public during the qualitative process. This process resulted in a final recommendation that was different from the previous plan. The final design of the system stated that all routes would be on one-hour headways rather than 30-minute headways as in the previous plan. The results also stated that the new system would consist of a hub-and-

spoke system based in Downtown with four recommended routes, and a trunk line (high frequency transit corridor) operating between Downtown and Montana State University along Willson Avenue. The document recommended that additional research be conducted in order to refine the potential ridership and cost of the system. This would provide the community's voters a more accurate and defined recommendation of the new system and the costs associated with operating the transit system.

## **SUMMARY**

All of the studies reviewed agree that there is a quantifiable need for public transportation service in the Bozeman area. Although the recommendations for the service differ in the details, there is similarity in the type of service recommended. However, none of the previous studies have developed detailed estimates of demand for the service options. This gap in information was recognized in the most recent report and is a recommendation for additional research.