



Review of Management and Organizational Structure

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to review the organizational structure, operational procedures, maintenance procedures, and administrative procedures. Of particular interest, this chapter focuses on what needs to be done administratively to prepare HATS for the enhanced and coordinated service described in this study.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Before the first transit passenger can be served, before the first bus can be purchased, and before the first dollar of funding can be generated, an institutional structure must be developed to manage and operate the transit service. The identification of a cost-effective and geographically appropriate institutional form for the provision of transit is thus a key element in the improvement of public transportation services. Obviously, HATS has an existing organizational structure; however, the purpose of this section is to describe possible organizational structures HATS may wish to investigate.

HATS operates its public transit service using a combination of FTA grants, contracts with other entities, passenger fares, and local government financial support. The present organizational structure has managed to support the provision of public transit service over the years and should be able to operate the system into the future.

An important objective of this study is to present recommendations for an institutional framework and a financing plan for public transit that are acceptable to the parties involved and that can be realistically implemented. With this goal in mind, the following discussion presents an analysis of the most appropriate alternatives and a basis for decision-making.

Criteria for Institutional Structures

Transit services throughout the United States have a variety of organizational homes, from independent agencies (such as Huntington, West Virginia; Aspen, Colorado; and Crested Butte, Colorado) to transit districts (such as the Dawson County Transit District, Montana and Utah Transit Authority) to departments of a municipal government (such as Pocatello, Idaho) to departments of county government (such as Summit County, Colorado) to nonprofit corporations (such as Casper, Wyoming).

Based upon the history of transit organizations serving scattered urban areas and areas with low population densities, the following criteria should guide the selection of the institution for managing and operating improved transportation services within the greater Helena planning area.

The institutional structure should be an entity:

- whose structure is legitimate.
- whose policy-making actions are authorized and defensible.
- which can limit the exposure of the participants to suits and claims of liability.
- which can be responsive to the complete policy-making and management needs of the transit organization.
- which has the political and financial support to endure more than one year at a time.
- which can annually perform proactive planning to improve the system, and can effectively identify and implement improvements regularly and easily.
- which has a full-time management/coordinator position that deals with all operational and administrative issues for transit and works to improve the visibility of transit within the community through an aggressive marketing program.

Alternatives for HATS

Department of Local Government

The advantage to a department of local (city or county) government organizational structure is that the local government system has the broadest possible tax base. The disadvantages of a local government-operated system are that transit may not

be a high priority and there may be little long-term stability in transit service funding. Lewis and Clark County could fill this role for HATS. Social service agencies could then contract with the County to provide those additional county services.

As mentioned in the 1997-2001 TDP, this alternative has a host of advantages and disadvantages. The greatest advantage would be the leveraging of additional city or county funding if increased service throughout the area was a goal of the Commissioners. It is also a significant advantage that this structure is in place with HATS as part of city government.

Urban Transportation District

Urban transportation districts are complex organizations. The organizational structure is determined in part by statute and in part by the intergovernmental agreement creating the district. There is considerable flexibility in designing an organization that has the support of the member governments and the public. One significant advantage of the UTD is the capability to bring several municipalities and counties together in funding and operating a transit system. The UTD must be approved by the local residents, which requires a significant grassroots public education effort to rally support for public transportation.

- Under Title 7, Chapter 14 of the Montana Statutes, urban transportation districts may be established to supply transportation services within the district boundaries.
- Residents must petition for an election to establish the UTD.
- The district is governed by a board and has the authority to provide transportation services, to levy a property tax, and to borrow money.
- The board is required to employ a “qualified administrative officer” for the district.

Intergovernmental Transit Agency

An intergovernmental transit agency is the last alternative presented for HATS. The intergovernmental agency could be formed by the City of Helena, East Helena, Montana City, Jefferson County, Lewis and Clark County, and other communities in the area. The governing board would have equal representation from each

entity. This type of agency has been successfully implemented in other locations. If provided with strong and long-term intergovernmental funding agreements, the intergovernmental transit agency structure provides stability and helps ensure the continuation of transit service within the community.

Organizational Structure Summary

Table IX-1 ranks each institutional alternative according to four factors: legal capability, revenue generation capacity, administrative impacts, and political acceptability. Legal capability refers to the existence of statutory authority. Revenue generation capacity refers to the capability of funding sources to generate adequate funding levels relative to the projected subsidy requirements. Administrative impacts refer to the level of effort involved in implementing a funding mechanism and the ability to provide coordinated service throughout the area. Political acceptability refers to the likelihood of a given funding mechanism to be accepted by the public and the local elected officials.

Table IX-1 Institutional Alternatives Comparison Matrix				
Institutional Alternative	Legal Capability	Revenue Generation Capacity	Administrative Impacts	Political Acceptability
Local Govt. Department	■	■	□	□
Urban Transportation District	■	■	■	◐
Intergovernmental Agency	■	◐	◐	◐
Legend:	■ = strong/acceptable ◐ = moderate/satisfactory □ = weak/unacceptable			
Source: LSC, 2006.				

The first column (legal capability) in Table IX-1 shows that all of the alternatives are permitted legally, with each alternative having the same authority to engage in certain activities related to revenue generation. The second column (revenue generation capacity) indicates that there is a range from strong to moderate of the

alternatives' abilities to generate funding under existing state law. The third column (administrative impacts) reflects that there would be various administrative impacts to providing transit under a new framework. A UTD is rated as the most acceptable because it requires the inclusion and participation of all governing bodies within the district. An intergovernmental transit agency is rated as having moderate administrative impact, while a department of the city or county is rated the weakest. There are both advantages and limitations to a department of the city, such as difficulty in serving large areas outside the city limits, with little or no county funding. A city department structure would limit the available service to only within city limits. A joint city/county department may work well; however, cost sharing of service across jurisdictional boundaries becomes difficult due to funding constraints. Allocation of service becomes tricky with a joint government department when various government decision-makers are involved.

All of the alternatives are rated as having moderate or weak political acceptability, including the existing local government department. Based on the above information, it may be reasonable to investigate the formation of a UTD within the area.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

At this time the general manager of HATS splits time as the city Fleet Superintendent. In addition, the system has one administrative employee who mainly handles the dispatching of the system. The Planning Team believes that these positions should be reconfigured and recommends the following job descriptions for each position.

Transit General Manager (Reports to the Helena Area Transportation Council and Joint Commissioners)

1. Develops and administers operational policies and procedures; enforces compliance with rules and regulations.
2. Develops, administers, and monitors the transit budget to include overseeing and approving purchasing procedures.
3. Researches and resolves complaints and problems; develops customer surveys to determine customer satisfaction.
4. Represents HATS at meetings and on committees for transportation; provides administrative and technical support for the HATC.

Review of Management and Organizational Structure

5. Supervises staff to include: assigning and reviewing work, ensuring staff are properly trained, evaluating performance, approving time off, handling disciplinary actions, and making hiring and termination recommendations.
6. Acts as HATS' liaison on transit matters with the Montana Department of Transportation and the Federal Transit Administration.
7. Prepares transit reports; researches and applies for local, state, and federal funding.
8. Actively promotes public transportation within the community and develops marketing strategies to increase ridership and positive public perception.
9. Develops transit goals and objectives; develops short- and long-range plans.
10. Performs contract management to include: negotiating contracts, preparing contracts, and making or receiving payments.
11. Develops Annual Report on transit operations.

Transit Supervisor/Administrative Assistant (Reports to Transit General Manager)

1. Supervises and coordinates daily transit operations to include: coordinating usage of vehicles, developing methods of operation to meet the public demand for service, monitoring and assigning work of staff, and completing performance evaluations.
2. Assists in the development and administers operational policies and procedures; enforces compliance with rules and regulations.
3. Researches and resolves complaints and problems concerning transit operations.
4. Participates in meetings and serves on committees for transportation/transit issues.
5. Assists in preparing the transit budget and tracks the budget.
6. Assists in the development of reports and oversees data collection.
7. Participates in purchasing materials and supplies.
8. Performs other duties of a similar nature or level.

Lead Dispatcher (Reports to Transit Supervisor)

1. Assigns and monitors work; provides employee training on proper methods and procedures.
2. Coordinates the repair and maintenance of fleet vehicles by development of work orders, scheduling and monitoring work, service schedules, and tracking expenditures.
3. Orders and picks up supplies and other materials.

4. Completes and maintains required reports which include updating databases, coding and tracking expenditures, and informing supervisor of daily divisional activities.
5. Conducts daily road supervision and responds to vehicle accidents involving transit vehicles.

The existing administrative budget would need to plan for the expansion of this additional dispatch personnel. The new administrative structure will also establish a clear chain of command. This was also recommended through the previous TDP planning effort.

DISPATCHING AND SCHEDULING

HATS operates a checkpoint service in which one route has been established that serves Helena, an East Valley route, the Trolley, and local dial-a-ride. A schedule is then developed using Microsoft Word that shows the time, date, pick-up location, destination, name of the customer, the customer's phone number, and columns that the driver needs to fill out to show if the customer rode the trip or if they cancelled.

HATS is looking into the purchase of a computer software and hardware system for scheduling and dispatching paratransit trips. This computerized system would replace the existing manual system currently in place and would make scheduling and dispatching much easier, as well as more efficient and effective. This type of system may help in allowing HATS to better facilitate the requests for service with which they are now having difficulty.

Transit systems receiving FTA funds, such as HATS, are going to be required to report data to the National Transit Database (NTD). Urban systems have to report the following:

- Total Annual Revenue
- Sources of Revenue
- Total Annual Operating Costs
- Total Annual Capital Costs
- Fleet Size, Type, and Facilities

- Revenue Vehicle Mileage
- Ridership

Most of these data can be collected using the computerized dispatching software, thereby eliminating time-consuming manual input of data. The software can also be programmed to place these data into report formats.

Other high tech advancements to aid flex routing, demand-response, and para-transit service are the Mobile Data Terminal (MDT), Automatic Vehicle Locator (AVL), and the Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) system. Once dispatch develops the automated schedule, a manifest is transmitted to the MDT onboard each van. The MDT video screen continuously updates and reviews, as necessary, the pick-up and delivery points for the day, and guides the driver with a visual map that also broadcasts directions using the GPS.

The MDT also provides continuous electronic updates to each driver's route, such as reporting a bus out of service that means additional pick-ups for other vehicles, a customer cancellation, or a delay. It allows drivers and dispatchers to interact quickly and efficiently to provide effective public transportation service.

The AVL is a GPS-based system that picks up signals every second via a satellite beam, records the bus's location and speed at one-minute intervals, and simultaneously communicates the information to operations so dispatchers can optimize efficiency when they have to adjust daily schedules. A great advantage of this technology is the ability for customers to make "real time" reservations.

MAINTENANCE PROCEDURES

At this time we recommend no significant changes to the existing procedures for maintenance. Maintenance is done through Public Works and has worked well. Maintenance functions in the future will be done primarily at the new transit facility. Likely, an additional employee, either full- or part-time, will be needed for this function.