



Transit Implementation Plan (2008 - 2013)

INTRODUCTION

LSC has prepared the following Transit Implementation Plan which identifies the implementation steps and financial requirements for the development and installation of the recommended transit service alternative, as well as the long-term actions to meet the future transportation needs. A timeline has been included to illustrate the transit projects/programs that could be implemented over the short-term planning horizon (the next six years).

ORGANIZATIONAL PLAN

Under the direction of the Steering Committee, a new transit agency should be created to operate the general public transportation services. The Band has the legal and financial capabilities to ensure the stability of public transportation services within the region in the short term. The new Transit Program should be a separate Tribal Program with its own staff. Initially this could be staffed by one experienced project manager. It is likely that this program will grow and need additional future staff to support the administration and operation of the program. The person hired for the position of project manager should be experienced in operating transportation services and have grant writing experience.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The transit service alternative for the region includes the creation of two general public routes and four dial-a-ride zones. Details on the preferred transit service alternative were presented in Chapter XII. Service should start in 2009.

The recommended transit service alternative should be developed over the course of the next year or two. The flex routes will operate general public service from 5:00 a.m. until 3:00 a.m. The operating cost will be contracted from gaming for all hours with the funding used to leverage FTA Section 5311 Tribal Transit funds or

State 5311 funding for general public service if needed for local match. The routes will operate much as they do today; however, they will need to be altered to serve additional general public destinations in Cass Lake and Bemidji, not only the casinos. Tribal gaming will need to work with the new Transit Department to determine route schedules which not only meet gaming's needs, but that of the greater general public. This coordination between gaming and the new general public department will allow federal funds to be leveraged to provide greater services for all residents, both on and off the Reservation. The second route operated is the Grand Rapids Shuttle.

At this time, it is imperative to start small and build upon established services. Once the system is operating both efficiently and effectively, the Transit Department can begin to plan for expansion in future years. This was done in order to allow time to obtain success on a smaller scale before any service expansion occurs. It also allows further discussion between Transit and Tribal Gaming on how best to serve future markets.

Following is a list of activities that need to be completed in order to implement the preferred transit service alternative. There may be additional implementation activities based on the local needs.

Timing

- The new Transit Program should be developed in 2008.
- Coordination should be created between the Transit Program, human service programs, communities, and the other various tribal programs in 2008 and early 2009.
- The first step is applying for state, TANF, and FTA Tribal funding. For the purpose of this plan, LSC used only FTA Tribal funding for operations.
- In 2010, the program should renew coordination with the local agencies, communities, and tribal programs through the budget process in order for the increased transit services to be implemented.

Responsibility

- The Transit Program will be responsible for planning and implementing the preferred transit service plan for the region.

Implementation Steps

- The Advisory Committee should create a Transit Council that should create a tribal agreement to establish the Transit Program.
- The Transit Council should be established under the RTC.
- The Transit Council should begin refinement of the service plan which includes working with the Gaming Department to ensure appropriate service levels are reached and that contracts can be established.
- The Transit Council should refine the preferred service plan to include schedule development, appropriate bus stop placement, hiring of appropriate personnel, and facilities planning and siting.
- The program should apply for the appropriate operational funding for the new transit service using the FTA Tribal Transit Program Funds.
- The Transit Council should work with the tribal programs, local colleges, schools, local human service agencies, and communities throughout the region to secure the additional local match funding through intergovernmental agreements.
- The Transit Program should create a logo for the new transit service.
- The Transit Program should print and distribute copies of the new transit service schedules and brochures throughout the service area.
- The program should advertise the new transit service with the local newspaper, radio, and television stations.
- The program should continue to collect passenger ridership data and evaluate the new transit service on a monthly basis.

CAPITAL PLAN

Bus Stops and Shelters

In order to implement the system, bus stops and shelters should be installed at key locations. The bus stops and shelters will allow the public to easily identify the transit pick-up locations and the routes that serve each location. Bus stops and shelters will reduce the barriers to using the transit system and will increase the public profile of the transit service.

At least one bus stop and shelter should be placed in each community along the routes. In communities such as Cass Lake, Bena, Walker, and Bemidji, several bus stops may need to be installed. The bus stops and shelters should be placed at key locations such as major employment, shopping, and medical destinations. In the short term, 20 bus stops and shelters should be placed throughout the

region. The program should work with the tribal program and local human service agencies on the bus stop implementation.

Each bus stop should include a sign on a pole which displays the schedule and route that serves the location. Each bus stop should also have a concrete pad (for the transit users to stand on), bench, and shelter structure. Bus stop and transit facility diagrams are presented in Appendix D.

The cost for each bus stop is estimated at \$500 per stop at a minimum. The total estimated cost for the bus stops and shelters is \$10,000.

Vehicle Purchase

It is recommended that the new program purchase 10 vehicles over the short term.

In the short term, the vehicle cost is estimated at \$650,000. The vehicle costs could be reduced with coordination between the Transit Program and the local human service providers through a vehicle sharing program. Table XIII-1 provides the vehicle replacement schedule.

Table XIII-1 Vehicle Purchase Schedule						
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Replacement Buses						
New Buses	8					
Spare Buses	2					
<i>Source: LSC, 2007.</i>						

New Transit Facilities

A major capital investment is the development of transit facilities. It is recommended that the Transit Program build a barn/administrative office. The total cost of these facilities could range widely depending upon the amenities. LSC is currently estimating \$1.5 million for the bus storage area, a minor maintenance area, and small offices (including a dispatch room).

The facilities should be planned and designed in 2010 in order for construction to begin in 2011-12. The facility could be completed by the end of 2012 or 2013 depending on funding. The bus storage barn has been discussed to be located centrally in Bena. There may be existing facilities which could be used, such as an existing building or, at a minimum, available land. This central location would enable the Transit Program to have one centrally located facility in the middle of the Reservation from which to operate. Additionally, there are tribal functions which may move to Bena in the future.

Administrative and Maintenance

The administrative and maintenance capital includes the purchase of office equipment, hardware, software (including dispatching software), cell phone or radio communications equipment, and maintenance equipment. LSC has estimated a total of \$40,000 over the next six years. This is a gross level estimate of needs; however, as the program is developed these requirements will likely need to be revisited.

FUNDING PLAN

The following section presents the funding plan for the next six years. Table XIII-2 presents the detailed expenditures and revenues for the recommended transit service alternative for 2008 through 2013. Costs are held constant with no inflation assumed. This provides for easy comparison from year to year as the plan progresses. This is a very aggressive schedule to provide for services.



Table XIII-2 Leech Lake, 2008-2013 Recommended Service Plan (Constant Dollars)							
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
EXPENSES							
OPERATING							
Flex-Route Service	\$ -	\$371,404	\$ 371,404	\$ 371,404	\$ 371,404	\$ 371,404	\$ 1,857,019
Weekday Demand-Response Service (Mon-Fri)	\$ -	\$278,288	\$ 278,288	\$ 278,288	\$ 278,288	\$ 278,288	\$ 1,391,442
Marketing Program	\$ 25,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 50,000
General Public Operating Cost	\$ 25,000	\$ 654,692	\$ 654,692	\$ 654,692	\$ 654,692	\$ 654,692	\$ 3,298,462
CAPITAL							
Install Transit Stops	\$ 10,000	\$ -	\$ 2,500	\$ -	\$ 2,500	\$ -	\$ 15,000
New Transit Buses	\$ 650,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 650,000
Bus Bike Racks	\$ 2,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,000
Bus Storage Space and Administrative Offices	\$ -	\$ -	\$1,546,000	\$ -	\$ 2,000	\$ -	\$ 1,548,000
Communication and Office Equipment	\$ 20,000	\$ -	\$ 20,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 40,000
General Public Capital Cost	\$ 682,000	\$ -	\$ 1,568,500	\$ -	\$ 4,500	\$ -	\$ 2,255,000
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 707,000	\$ 654,692	\$ 2,223,192	\$ 654,692	\$ 659,192	\$ 654,692	\$ 5,553,462
REVENUES							
FTA/STATE Revenues and Grants							
5311 Tribal Transit Program Operating	\$ 25,000	\$ 283,288	\$ 283,288	\$ 283,288	\$ 283,288	\$ 283,288	\$ 1,441,442
5311 Tribal Transit Program Capital	\$ 682,000	\$ -	\$ 1,259,300	\$ -	\$ 4,500	\$ -	\$ 1,945,800
Subtotal	\$ 707,000	\$ 283,288	\$ 1,542,588	\$ 283,288	\$ 287,788	\$ 283,288	\$ 3,387,242
Local Revenues							
Contract Revenue from Gaming	\$ -	\$338,919	\$ 338,919	\$ 338,919	\$ 338,919	\$ 338,919	\$ 1,694,596
Fares	\$ -	\$32,485	\$ 32,485	\$ 32,485	\$ 32,485	\$ 32,485	\$ 162,423
Additional Required Revenue	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 309,200	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 309,200
Subtotal	\$ -	\$ 371,404	\$ 680,604	\$ 371,404	\$ 371,404	\$ 371,404	\$ 1,857,019
TOTAL REVENUES	\$ 707,000	\$ 654,692	\$ 2,223,192	\$ 654,692	\$ 659,192	\$ 654,692	\$ 5,244,262

Source: LSC, 2007.

Federal Funding

Federal funding is expected to remain relatively stable over the next few years. It is recommended that the Band apply for funding (such as state, TANF, and FTA Tribal grants) in order to support public transportation services in the study area. Any TANF and Medicaid funding that the Band receives can and should be used as part of the local match or revenue for the system. With tribal agreements and coordination with the Gaming Department, Community Health Representatives, Head Start, and other departments, the Band could apply for FTA Tribal funding. The program should also continue to work toward establishing new revenue sources, such as contract revenue from Gaming, or a dedicated transit budget from the RTC and Band. Appendix E provides FTA Tribal Transit funding frequently asked questions and answers. FTA 5311 Tribal Transit funding could potentially cover the entire cost of establishing the system. These grant funds are new sources of funds which are highly competitive. It will be imperative that a grant application be completed and reviewed by numerous departments for clarity and that the application references this planning effort and the information contained in this document. Much of the information for the grant application can be extracted from this Final Report.

Local Funding

Federal funding is available for the operating cost of general public transportation services. It remains to be seen how much funding will be available for Leech Lake. The remaining operating deficit, if one exists, should be funded by the Band and additional local communities not on the Reservation. The tribal programs, agencies, and communities in the area could each contribute to the annual funding of the transit service by developing intergovernmental agreements with the Band and Transit Program. The Program could also develop an agreement with the local colleges for a portion of the student fees which could be used to fund the transit services. During startup of service, the two routes under contract would use approximately \$370,000 from the Gaming Department. This is the current fixed-route casino cost to operate these two routes. Additionally, the purchase of ten new body-on-chassis lift-equipped transit buses, as well as additional operating cost and capital requirements, may require an additional amount of revenue in local tribal funding. This amount can come from a variety of sources,

including additional grants. Additional phases of implementation only provide local match from Gaming for the route structure. It will be up to the Transit Council and both Gaming and Transit Departments to determine a cost sharing for future route structures. Likely, a portion, if not all, of the future routes can be contracted from Tribal Gaming to the Transit Department. Additionally, there are numerous additional departments and agencies which can contribute to this cost if the Leech Lake Band cannot support the match out of general funds. The LSC Team recommends a fare price of between \$0.50 and \$0.75 per trip to be implemented. This would generate needed local revenue for the system. Fare box revenue is estimated at five percent of the annual operating cost, a conservative level. However, at that level fares will generate approximately \$30,000 annually.

MANAGEMENT PLANS

Organizational Management

The Advisory Committee should form a Transit Council. The Transit Council should include the stakeholders, senior centers, human service agencies/programs, veterans department, and major employers. The Transit Council should coordinate the agreements throughout the region and Reservation for the provision of transit services. The Transit Council should develop a Transit Program under the direction of the Planning Department in the short term. Once a formal Transportation Department is developed, a new Transportation Authority Board would oversee the direction of the Transit Program, likely from members of the Transit Council.

The new Transit Program should hire a manager/transit coordinator. The manager should hire the transit staff, including a dispatcher/office administrator and drivers. All members of the staff, including the manager, should have their Commercial Driver's License (CDL). It is estimated that the program will need one manager/transit coordinator, four to six full-time drivers, one part-time driver, and one full-time dispatcher/office administrator.

Funding from other programs should be shifted to the Transit Program. This should be done through the RTC budget process on an annual basis.

Implementation Steps

- A Transit Council should be developed in order to increase the political support for local funding from all of the regional communities in order to develop the transit services.
- The Transit Council should develop intergovernmental agreements with each county, community, tribe, and human service agency/program willing to participate in the transit program.
- Through the Transit Council, a capital grant and an operational grant should be developed for FTA funding.
- The purchase of vehicles or office equipment should be consolidated into a cooperative effort with the Band procurement process.
- The new facilities, bus stops, and shelters should be implemented.
- The Transit Program should coordinate marketing efforts, including the development of public education and promotional materials.
- The Transit Program should distribute transit brochures to the human service agencies/programs, which should use the transit services to promote client independence and self-sufficiency.
- The new transit service should begin operations in 2009.
- The transit operating hours and services should be publicized regularly.

Marketing Programs

The new program should coordinate the marketing, promotional, and public education programs. The promotional efforts should allow the residents to obtain information on all available transit services within the region. Information should be provided in such a way that the public sees an integrated transit system.

Short-term marketing efforts should focus on promoting the new transit services. A marketing plan for presentations to the local agencies regarding the new transit service should be implemented. The Transit Program should print and distribute schedules throughout the area for the new transit service.

Obviously, the marketing program must fit within the budgetary limitations of any organization. According to the American Public Transit Association, transit providers typically budget between 0.75 and 3.0 percent of their gross budget on marketing promotions (excluding salaries). Although this is less than most private sector businesses, public sector organizations (such as transit service) can rely more heavily upon media support for their public relations programs.

Marketing should be viewed as a management philosophy focusing on identifying and satisfying the customers' wants and needs. The basic premises of successful marketing are providing the right product or service, offering it at the right price, and adequately promoting and communicating the existence and appropriateness of the product or service to potential customers. Unfortunately, the word "marketing" is often associated only with advertising and promotional efforts that accompany selling the product or service to a customer. Instead, such promotional efforts are only a part of an overall marketing process. Without a properly designed and developed product or service offered at the right price, the expenditure of promotional funds is often ill-advised.

The best marketing approach is to provide services that people want. Enhancing service is an element of marketing because it provides a desirable service to those who will use it. In order to provide good service, it is essential to have information which may be used by management for evaluation of the service and for continuous improvement of the service. The Transit Program must maintain customer orientation in every part of the transit service plan.

Promotional Activities

Several specific promotional activities have been identified which could enhance the overall implementation and marketing efforts.

The Transit Program should work with the local newspaper and radio stations to provide periodic human interest stories which can be used to reinforce the benefit of transit service for the com-



munities in the region. Examples of good stories are individuals who are able to work or attend school because of the availability of public transportation. Another example is someone with a disability who is able to make a contribution within the community because of public transportation or who is able to obtain medical treatment because of the coordinated efforts between the Transit Program and human service agencies/programs.

The Transit Program should also make use of news advisories for significant events and employee accomplishments. The most cost-effective way to reach large groups of the general population is via the news media. A system should be devel-

oped to disseminate news advisories to the media announcing new schedules, fares, services, community involvement activities, outstanding employees, safety records, major management changes, or awards. It is important to keep in mind, however, that the media should not be overwhelmed with too much information that is not meaningful and which might otherwise dilute the attention paid to other more important communications.

Service Evaluations

The most often overlooked element of a marketing plan is an evaluation effort. Evaluations should be performed in terms of the stated marketing objectives. The process should provide the data and procedures by which the success of the marketing program can be determined. In addition to statistical data (such as ridership) collected over the year, the data should include a survey of the general public in order to establish the level of public awareness and image regarding the transit service. The evaluation process is crucial because it allows future objectives and strategies to be refined.

Marketing Strategy

The new Transit Program should create a transit marketing strategy which includes the following:

- Distribution of schedules and brochures at the local senior centers, schools, medical offices, major employers, stores, businesses, and human service agencies/programs.
- Regular radio advertisements that emphasize any current promotions.
- Regular newspaper advertisements that emphasize the same promotions as the radio announcements.
- Presentations at key community organizations.
- Development of programs that promote communication between the passengers and drivers.
- Development of a clean bus program where the interior and exterior of each vehicle are cleaned daily. During the course of the day, the drivers should clean up litter in the aisle and under the seats.

Recent research has cataloged the marketing efforts that have helped transit systems around the country increase their public exposure and ridership. Some of these successful initiatives may be useful for the Transit Program. Many systems

have found print advertising (newspapers, flyers, and direct mail) to be the most effective use of advertising dollars. Examples of successful marketing strategies are listed below.

- **Volunteers to assist potential riders:** A volunteer is used to explain the transit system to the potential patron and to accompany the person on a round-trip ride. Such programs have resulted in a newfound independence for residents, particularly elderly persons and persons with disabilities who are now able to travel throughout the community without relying on friends and family.
- **Publish transit schedules and service hours in the newspaper:** The publication of the transit system's schedules and basic information in the local newspaper twice a year is a cost-effective way to ensure that the residents are familiar with the transit service. The Transit Program should look into the local newspaper printing the schedule as a public service. Alternatively, some transit systems have covered the cost of such an initiative through a reciprocal agreement to carry advertising for the newspaper on the buses.
- **Direct mail program:** If new areas are added to the transit service area, it may be advantageous to institute a direct mail campaign to households within the new areas. Such a campaign ensures that the new residents know about the transit service. It is useful to include coupons in the mailing to encourage residents to make their first transit trip.

Support and Improve Service Quality

LSC recommends continuous efforts to create and support quality transit service. A key precept of marketing is to provide a quality product. In the case of public transit, a reputation of providing quality service encourages increased ridership and increases public support for transit. Both community-based funding and fares become more acceptable when service quality is high. A key marketing effort, therefore, is to begin other measures to improve on-time performance, passenger amenities, and peak-time service.

Enhance the Public Education Programs

Public education programs inform the public of the benefits (for the individual and the community) of the transit services available in the region. Such benefits include improved mobility and access for the transit-dependent population, decreased congestion, improved air quality, and reduced fuel and energy consumption. There are significant studies and reports that detail the benefits for an improved transit system. According to the FTA and American Public Transportation Association (APTA), for every dollar invested in transit (in either capital or

operations), the community could generate three dollars in return. According to APTA, improved transit usage can also save the transit system anywhere from \$.50 to \$2.00 in transportation cost savings per mile.

A Transit Council could be formed to identify the benefits of an improved transit system in the study area. The Transit Council should present these benefits to the key stakeholders and community leaders in order to develop financial and political support for funding of the transit system. Public education materials (such as presentations and brochures) should be created to inform the general community of these benefits in order to gain community support for the funding and expansion of the transit system.

Service Monitoring

System Performance Measurement

LSC recommends that the program monitor the service performance and quality of the transit system. A monitoring program is essential to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of the service being provided. The new Transit Program should prepare monthly reports in spreadsheet or database format and present the reports to the RTC, Board, and Stakeholders Committee. In addition, a rider survey should be conducted every other year.

Productivity measures should indicate the number of passengers per revenue-hour and passengers per revenue-mile by service area. The actual productivity should be compared with system standards. For the short term, these productivity measures should be compared to the peer communities presented in Chapter VI. The Program Manager should also measure cost information including the cost per passenger, cost per revenue-mile, ridership, and average fare based on each route of the transit system.

In order to monitor productivity, it is essential that passenger ridership data continue to be collected on an ongoing basis. The simplest approach for collecting the ridership data is to equip each bus with manual counting devices that allow the drivers to register each passenger who boards by the appropriate fare category.

The ridership data should be collected by route and not by bus, so that each route can be compared to the whole system.

The performance measurement data will assist the Manager to establish ridership patterns and characteristics. The Transit Program, Transit Council, and Stakeholders Committee could then determine the appropriate policy direction and recommend funding decisions to the RTC.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

Figure XIII-1 presents a timeline for implementation. LSC has also included the planning phase for each recommended project and program. The planning phase is conducted the year before implementation. LSC recommends that the Transit Program evaluate each project or program after implementation.

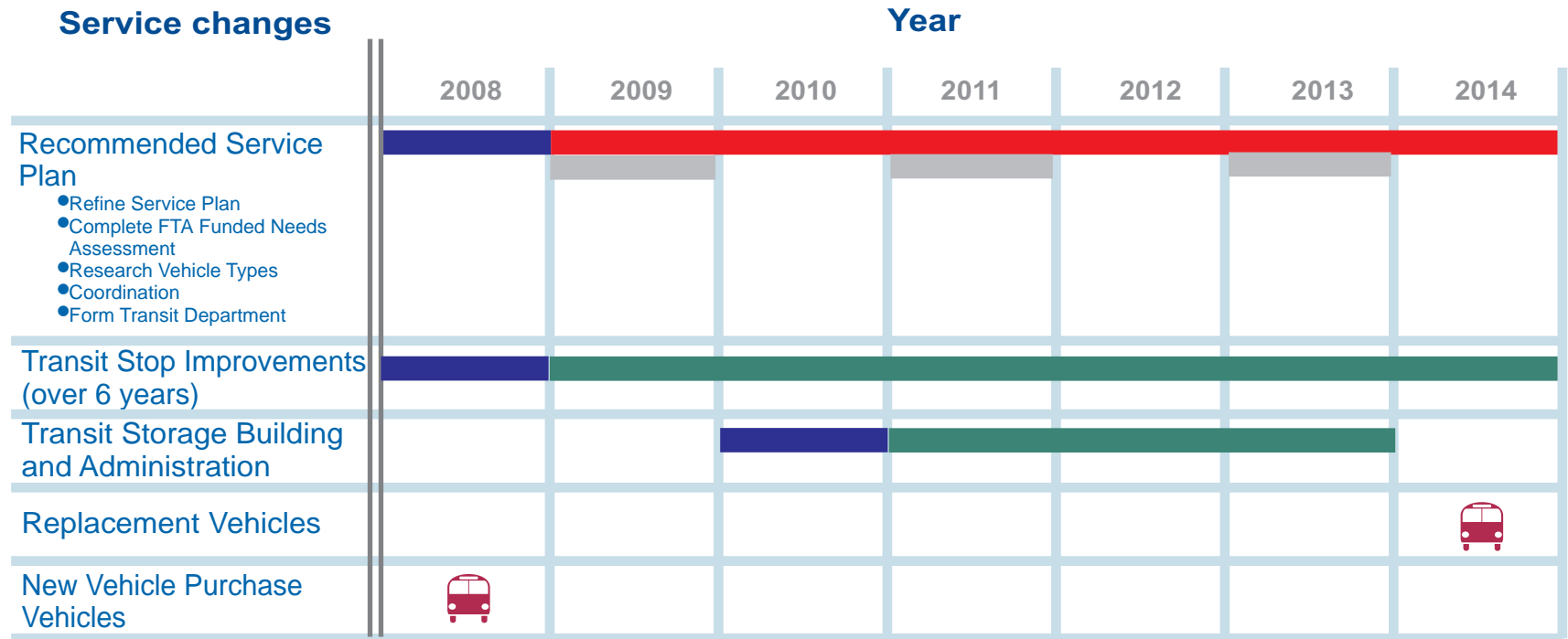
In the timeline, LSC recommends planning and implementation of the recommended services be completed by the end of 2008, with service to begin in 2009.

On the capital side, LSC recommends the development and installation of 20 bus stops over the next six years located throughout the region.

Depending on the funding, the transit bus storage and administration facility should be planned and designed in 2009 and 2010. Construction should begin in 2011, with completion by the end of 2012 or 2013. Until then, the transit vehicles could operate out of the participating communities or the facilities for the human service agencies/programs.

The timeline is designed to implement the preferred transit service alternative over the next six years. This timeline allows the transit programs and local agencies which are planning to dedicate funding to the transit system the time to shift funding toward those efforts. The timeline also allows for the refinement of the transit services as well as the development of the bus stops and transit facilities that will be needed.

Figure XIII-1 Short-Term Plan Timeline



- LEGEND**
- Planning Phase / Local Agreements
 - Implementation/Construction Year
 - Full Year of Operations
 - Feedback
 - Purchase Vehicles