

Executive Summary



Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

The Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA), on behalf of the Leech Lake Band of the Ojibwe, contracted with LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc. to complete a Technical Assistance project. The plan focuses on developing a public transportation system for Leech Lake Reservation residents, specifically throughout the Reservation boundaries and the surrounding areas. The plan also examines transit needs, alternatives, and programs for the community within the area, and the potential for coordinated transportation services to meet the needs of local residents.

This Final Report presents a summary of the process for developing a general public transit plan for the Leech Lake Reservation and surrounding areas. This Plan represents a blueprint for implementing a phased approach to providing transit services through coordination with the local casino transportation program. There exists a substantial investment by the Band to provide for employee transportation services from outlying areas to the local casinos. The challenge to providing public transit to a greater number of Band members was ultimately accomplished by working with the casino transportation program and using the contracted revenue from several existing routes as a means to provide general public service with demand-response dial-a-ride service. Additional FTA funds will be required to begin services as well as to engage other local entities and encourage future coordination of services for the benefit of residents. This foundation lays the groundwork for establishing a small general public system with hopes of increasing services in the next several years.

STUDY AREA

The Leech Lake Reservation study area is located mainly in Cass County, with portions of the study area located in Itasca, Beltrami, and Hubbard Counties. The Reservation is situated in north-central Minnesota, approximately 100 miles from the Canadian border and approximately 200 miles northwest of Minneapolis. The

Executive Summary

Reservation study area covers a total area of approximately 3,015 square miles. A large percent of the Reservation is covered by lakes, ponds, rivers, and wetlands, making the land area of the Leech Lake Reservation study area 2,667 square miles.

Communities in the Leech Lake Reservation study area include Ball Club, Bena, Boy River, Cass Lake, Deer River, Inger, Inguadona, Longville, Remer, Squaw Lake, and Walker. Surrounding towns and cities are Bemidji to the west of the Reservation, Grand Rapids to the east of the Reservation along US Highway 2, and Brainerd to the south of the Reservation.

Leech Lake Reservation is home to the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Tribe, one of the six members of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe. The Leech Lake Reservation study area has an approximate population of 29,585 people (2005 estimate), of which approximately 44 percent are Native Americans. The overall population density of the study area is approximately 11 persons per square mile.

TRANSIT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Chapter V of the Final Report provides a transportation needs assessment for the area. The transportation needs for the area are significant, especially based on the high elderly population and rural geographic character.

In order to estimate the transportation needs for the Leech Lake Reservation and surrounding areas, it is important to have an approach that considers the local demographics, economics, and service characteristics. Chapter V describes the development of a transit demand model for the study area. The transit demand estimates were based upon the 2000 US Census data and population estimates. These data were used for the 2006 transit demand using the *Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) Project A-3: Rural Transit Demand Estimation Techniques*. The TCRP analysis procedure considers transit demand in two major categories: “*program demand*,” which is generated by transit ridership to and from specific social service programs; and “*non-program demand*” generated by other mobility

needs of the elderly, disabled, and general public (including youth). Examples of non-program trips include shopping, employment, and medical trips.

As presented in Chapter V of the Final Report, the model indicates that if a high level of public transit were available in the area, approximately 72,000 annual trips (non-program trips) would be provided. This should not be construed to indicate the actual ridership that might occur on any particular service. Actual ridership is a function of the level of service that is provided and includes such factors as frequency of service, schedules, fares, travel times, and specific routes.

When combining the program and non-program estimates based upon the TCRP methodology, the total existing transit need for Leech Lake is approximately 300,000 annual trips.

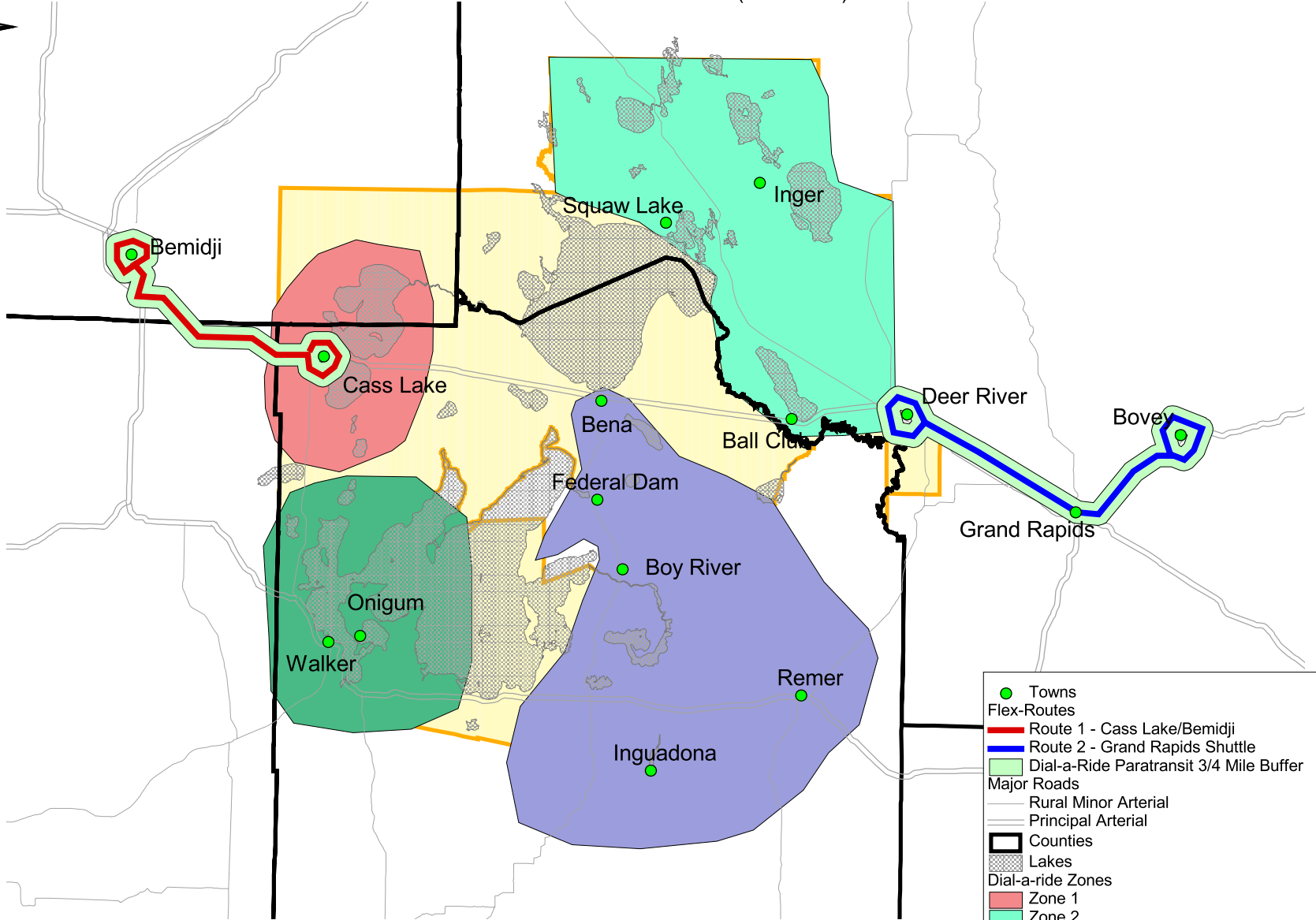
At this time, few non-program trips are provided, but some of the 200,000 program trips are likely being met by human service agencies and volunteer groups. However, the exact number of trips provided is unknown. The result shows that there is a large unmet need for transit trips.

RECOMMENDED TRANSIT SERVICE PLAN

Chapter XII reviews the details of the recommended transit service alternative including the levels of service, operational costs, capital needs, and capital costs. The preferred service alternative will be developed as demand increases in future years. It will take time to facilitate the coordination and development of transit service in the study area and a new Transit Program that will operate the recommended transit service alternative.

The recommended alternative has an estimated annual operating cost of \$650,000. The recommended service plan includes two flex routes operating general public service from 5:00 a.m. until approximately 3:00 a.m. Additionally, four demand-response zones have been planned. At this point it is envisioned that one vehicle will operate in each zone on a daily basis. An alternative is to share vehicles between zones and operate on alternating days of the week. Figure ES-1 and Table ES-1 provide a summary of the Service Plan.

Figure ES-1
Recommended Service Plan (2008-2013)



- Towns
- Flex-Routes
 - Route 1 - Cass Lake/Bemidji
 - Route 2 - Grand Rapids Shuttle
- Dial-a-Ride Paratransit 3/4 Mile Buffer
- Major Roads
 - Rural Minor Arterial
 - Principal Arterial
- Counties
- Lakes
- Dial-a-ride Zones
 - Zone 1
 - Zone 2
 - Zone 3
 - Zone 4
- Leech Lake Tribal Boundary



**Table ES-1
Leech Lake, 2008-2013 Recommended Service Plan (Constant Dollars)**

EXPENSES	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
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	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
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.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Chapter XIII of the Final Report lists the activities that need to be completed in order to implement the preferred transit service alternative. Under the direction of the Steering Committee and RTC, a new transit department with its own staff 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. Initially this could be staffed by one experienced project manager. The person hired for the position of project manager should be experienced in operating transportation services and have grant writing experience.

Coordination and consolidation of services allow local entities to provide additional and enhanced services to the community using the existing resources. Based on existing information, LSC has developed the following coordination strategies for the study area:

- Create a coalition of transportation stakeholders
- Complete the Community Self Assessment
- Share vehicles to reduce overall capital costs
- Organize joint training programs with other providers

A coalition will represent a step toward achieving a coordinated transportation system within the study area. The coordination council or coalition should work with the human service providers to develop a basic understanding of the transit issues and how to work together cooperatively. Through this process, the region will be able to implement the other coordination strategies of sharing vehicles, developing joint grants and training programs, and centralizing operational functions.

The implementation timeline is designed to implement the preferred transit service alternative over the next five to six years. This timeframe allows for forming an implementation task force, acquiring funding, hiring staff and training drivers, marketing, identifying the facility, purchasing buses/equipment, and advertising the system. Recommendations are also provided for marketing the service and performance monitoring.