



CHAPTER X

Recommendations

INTRODUCTION

Previous chapters have described options for regional services, organizational approaches, and funding. This chapter provides the recommendations for the initial steps to be implemented. Many of the service options require additional funding which is currently not available to begin these services. The recommendations provide for initial steps that will support some new service and facilitate implementation of additional services in the future.

BENEFITS OF TRANSIT

There are a variety of approaches to measure the benefits of transit. These include economic, environmental, and social benefits. The recent report from the Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP), entitled “Measuring and Valuing Transit Benefits and Disbenefits” lists six major categories of transit benefits and disbenefits discussed in recent literature:¹

- Mobility and Access Benefits
- Economic and Financial Benefits
- Environmental and Energy Benefits
- Safety and Security Benefits
- Social Equity Benefits
- Intangible Benefits



As the TCRP report notes, current practice traditionally has been focused on the three areas of operating characteristics of systems—mobility and access impacts of those systems, cost-effectiveness of mobility, and access improvements from a federal grant-making standpoint. They suggest that new and better ways are needed to assess the impacts of transit investment and services on more funda-

¹ Cambridge Systematics, Inc., and Apogee Research, Inc., “Measuring and Valuing Transit Benefits and Disbenefits: Summary”, TCRP Report 20 (1996).

Recommendations

mental concerns such as long-term economic growth, environmental quality, and personal security.

Benefits exist because people believe they are important, whether or not they can be quantitatively calculated. Some communities place a high value on public transit even though it may be difficult to find significant benefits by methods used for other modes of transportation. Perceived benefits can be just as important as traditionally measured qualitative benefits. For example, there may be a strong perception in the community that transit substantially reduces lung disease from air pollution. However, calculations of air quality impacts may show very little actual change in community health.

Transit systems have many impacts for a community, ranging from the basic need for bus stops and fuel to direct effects such as trips made by transit or employment of transit workers. The indirect effects of transit may be changes in land use or changes in people's independent lifestyles. The impacts must be sorted to determine how they relate to one another, whether positive or negative, and their relative importance.

Mobility and Access Benefits

The concepts of mobility and accessibility are fundamentally different. Mobility generally refers to the ease with which one moves, measured in terms of alternatives available and travel time. Accessibility generally refers to the extent to which desired destinations are served, measured in terms of the availability of and proximity of primary destinations to transportation. These benefits are the ability of an individual transit user to move about the community and get to a destination that allows the individual to participate in the community on an independent basis.

Economic and Financial Benefits

Economic and financial benefits and disbenefits are important factors in transit benefit analysis. A financial viewpoint includes benefits that can be recovered as income or that contribute to the rate of return for transit investment. An economic viewpoint assumes benefits can be measured or converted to a monetary unit.

This means the creation of jobs and the increase in personal income, business activity (sales), and tax revenue for the community. As expenditures for transit increase, the effect on the local economy (in terms of business sales, employment, and income) can be measured and contributed to the improvement of transit. The basic assumption is that for every dollar invested in transit operations or capital, the impact on the local economy is between five and six dollars in increased economic activity (based on information from the American Public Transportation Association).

Energy and Environmental Benefits

The Clean Air Act of 1970 began focusing on air quality standards around the country. Since that time, measurement of the impacts of transit projects and plans on energy consumption has become a routine element in the evaluation of proposed transit improvements. Unfortunately, the true energy and environmental quality benefits of a transit alternative cannot be easily quantified and expressed in dollar terms. To do so, the analysis must include health benefits, reductions in the loss of life, impacts on the natural environment and aesthetics, and many more factors.

Many metropolitan areas are using the reduction of emissions to develop standards for their particular area. Reductions in overall travel will lead to lower air pollutant emissions, reduced noise levels, and other effects. It is assumed that the overall benefit of transit on the local environment and the use of energy are decreased level of energy need (fuel consumption), lower level of air pollution, reduced noise level, improved protection of the ecology, and decreased need to consume more land for development.



Safety and Security Benefits

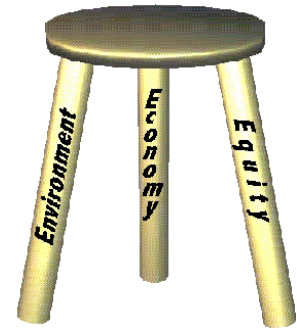
Personal safety and security affect both user and nonuser behavior and attitudes about transit, particularly in major metropolitan areas. Safety characteristics of public transit are widely measured by tracking the type and frequency of accidents that result in bodily harm or property loss. In these terms, transit is one of the

Recommendations

safest of all modes of travel. Using transit reduces the possibility of being in a vehicle accident, particularly on the snow-packed highways to Telluride.

Social Equity Benefits

Social equity refers to the distribution of benefits and disbenefits among segments of the population. Transit benefit analysis pertains to two concepts. The first concept refers to achieving fairness or the distribution of costs and benefits so that no segment of the population is unfairly burdened or aided. The second concept refers to transit's benefit on pre-existing social and economic inequities outside the scope of transportation. This may include achieving fairness by overcoming barriers to education, economic opportunity, or health care. This also concerns environmental justice in that all segments of the population have the same opportunity to use transit.



Social equity benefits are based on evaluation measures applied to population subgroups and then compared to each other, a guideline, or a normative standard to determine whether or not equity objectives are being met. These typically numerical measures focus on income levels, auto ownership, ability to use traditionally configured modes of transportation, and other factors.

Intangible Benefits

Transit impacts and the perception of transit benefits and disbenefits are not always well defined. Generalized characterizations of transit system impacts tend to be substituted for immediate and detailed analysis of system performance and financial or budgetary impacts that preoccupy managers and policy makers in the short run. In recent years, greater systematic quantification has been attempted to assess characteristics such as quality of life, livability, and sustainability. These attempts identify linkages between economic, environmental, and social characteristics. The perceived benefits must be considered and may or may not be measurable or quantifiable. These benefits weigh directly on the goal of becoming more environmentally friendly.

SERVICE FEASIBILITY

There are several key decisions that need to be made to address the feasibility of operating and sustaining regional services in the four-county area. Currently, there are several local providers who are providing some regional services. These services are paid for by local businesses in the Telluride area and San Miguel County. The subsidy that the employees receive can help fund the regional service and ensure the services are designed to meet these needs. The following major conclusions can be drawn regarding feasibility of regional service.



First, there is certainly a demand for services and a peak-season demand during the winter. However, there is also some demand for those employees who work the majority of the summer season in the construction field. This demand is certainly lower than what could be anticipated in the winter.

Second, it appears there is local support for the expansion of services.

Third, transit services are not meeting all the needs of the community. While there are services designed to meet some level of employment need, these are only aimed at getting people into Telluride. There is still a latent need for services aimed at the low-income, disabled, and otherwise transit-dependent individuals which is not being met. However, with the formation of All Points Transit and the coordination with Delta County, some of this need may be met in the future.

Finally, the institutional framework for future services can be defined several ways, as documented in Chapter VIII. The identification of a sustainable framework for funding and operating services will continue to be a major component of the planning process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are provided as recommendations for the initial steps toward improved regional service. The Coordinating Council will form the institutional

Recommendations

structure for coordinating existing services and prioritizing future enhancement of regional service.

Coordinating Council

The first recommendation is to form a regional Coordinating Council. The Council will be formed through an agreement of the participating counties and municipalities. The primary focus of the Council will be to coordinate efforts among the many transportation providers and pursue opportunities to enhance the existing services. The Council should be responsible for submitting coordinated grant applications for regional services.

The Council should also function as the Transit Committee of the Regional Planning Commission in the Gunnison Valley Transportation Planning Region. This will further enhance the efforts to coordinate regional transit services.



The Colorado Department of Transportation has developed guidelines for the formation and functions of local Coordinating Councils. These guidelines should be used, incorporating regional priorities and goals, to establish the Coordinating Council.

Delta-Montrose Service

All Points Transit serves Montrose and Delta Counties. This service should be established as a general public service and obtain funding for rural public transit services. Many of the passengers will continue to be the elderly and persons with disabilities, but this is an opportunity to provide a regional connection for anyone to use.

Montrose-Telluride Service

The existing services between Montrose and Telluride should be supported by the Coordinating Council. While private shuttles may be feasible for passengers traveling in and out of the Montrose airport, the service may require financial support from employers or local governments.

The Coordinating Council should continue to work with the local shuttle service and employers to ensure the viability of service between Montrose and Telluride, particularly for commuters. This may require financial support from employers, local governments, and the Colorado Department of Transportation.

Regional Vanpool Program



The final recommendation is to establish a regional vanpool program. There are existing vanpools in the region, but these are not part of coordinated effort. The Coordinating Council should work with the existing vanpool efforts to develop a coordinated program. This should include publicity of the vanpool program and expansion to include additional employers. The vanpool program may require staff time to coordinate the efforts and publicize the program. The staff time is eligible for partial funding through the Federal Transit Administration programs administered by the Colorado Department of Transportation.