



# Transit Implementation Plan (2009 - 2014)

---

---

## INTRODUCTION

LSC has prepared the following Transit Implementation Plan which identifies the implementation steps and financial requirements for the development and installation of the preferred 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 Stakeholders Committee agencies, local government entities, and Opportunity Link Board, a new transit agency should be created to operate the general public transportation services. Opportunity Link has the legal and financial capabilities to ensure the stability of public transportation services within the region in the short term. Until a formal Transportation Authority is established, the new Transit Program (TP) could be housed under Opportunity Link. As the preferred transit service phases are implemented, the TP could become a more independent agency.

## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The preferred transit service alternative for the region includes the creation of three regional routes, two commuter routes, and vanpool service. Details on the preferred transit service alternative were presented in Chapter XIII. Table XIV-3 (at the end of Chapter XIV) presents the financial details of the preferred transit service alternative.

The preferred transit service alternative should be developed in three phases. Phase I (2009 through 2011) has an estimated annual operating cost of \$122,300 with inflation. Phase I costs include regional routes, commuter routes, and van-

pool service. Phase II (2012 through 2013) increases the estimated annual operational cost to \$251,400 with inflation. Phase II costs include improved and expanded regional routes, commuter routes, and vanpool service. Phase III (2014 and beyond) increases the estimated annual operational cost to \$442,800 with inflation. Phase III costs include improved and expanded regional routes, commuter routes, and demand-response zones. Note that the above costs include an annual inflation rate of five percent.

Once Phases I through III are completed and evaluated, the TP could begin the development of expanded service as detailed in Alternative II of Chapter XII. At this time, the Alternative II expanded service is not included in the phasing or financial plans. This was done in order to allow the preferred transit service alternative time to obtain success on a smaller scale before any Alternative II service expansions occur.

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 TP should be developed in 2008.
- Coordination should be created between the TP, human service programs, communities, and tribal programs in 2008 and 2009.
- The first step is applying for MDT, TANF, and FTA Tribal funding. For the purpose of this plan, LSC used only MDT (5311) funding for operations. With this funding estimated at over \$52,000, Phase I of the transit service plan could be implemented in 2009.
- In 2011, the TP should renew coordination with the local agencies, communities, and tribal programs through the budget process in order for the Phase II transit service plan to be implemented.

### **Responsibility**

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

## **Implementation Steps**

- The Stakeholders Committee should create a Transit Council, that should create an intergovernmental agreement to install the TP.
- The TP should apply for the appropriate operational funding for the new transit service.
- 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 TP should create a logo for the new transit service.
- The TP should print and distribute copies of the new transit service schedules and brochures throughout the service area.
- The TP should advertise the new transit service with the local newspaper, radio, and television stations.
- The TP 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 regional and commuter routes, 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 regional and commuter routes. In communities such as Havre and Malta, 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 TP 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 E.

The cost for each bus stop is estimated at \$10,000 to \$15,000. The total estimated cost for the bus stops and shelters is \$271,800. LSC has estimated that the TP could implement about \$39,000 to \$51,000 worth of bus stops and shelters per year, with completion of all the bus stops and shelters in about six years.

### Vehicle Purchase

It is recommended that the TP purchase 15 vehicles over the short term. For Phase I, the TP should purchase three small buses and three minivans. For Phase II, two small buses and one minivan should be purchased. For Phase III, one small bus and two minivans will be required. Replacement vehicles will also need to be purchased in 2013 and 2014.

In the short term, the vehicle cost is estimated at \$817,700. The funding breakdown is \$711,400 in federal funding and \$106,300 in local match funding, based on an 87/13 percent federal/local match split. Details on the recommendations for the short-term vehicle purchases are shown on Table XIV-1. The vehicle costs could be reduced with coordination between the TP and the local human service providers through a vehicle sharing program.

Table XIV-1 Vehicle Purchases (6-Year Plan)						
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
New Body-on-Chassis	3			2		1
Replacement Body-on-Chassis						
New Minivan	3			1		2
Replacement Minivan					2	1
<i>Source: LSC, 2007.</i>						

### New Transit Facilities

A major capital investment is the development of transit facilities. It is recommended that the TP build two bus barns, a maintenance building, and an administrative office. The total cost of these facilities could range widely depending upon the amenities. LSC is currently estimating \$300,000 for two bus storage areas, a

maintenance building, and small offices (including a dispatch room). The funding breakdown is \$261,000 in federal funding and \$39,000 in local match funding, based on an 87/13 percent federal/local match split.

The facilities should be planned and designed in 2008 in order for construction to begin in 2009. The facility could be completed by the end of 2011 depending on funding. The bus storage barn located in Havre could be constructed with the maintenance and administrative buildings. The second facility will be a bus barn located in Choteau.

### **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 \$34,000 over the next six years. The funding breakdown is \$27,200 in federal funding and \$6,800 in local match funding, based on an 80/20 percent federal/local match split.

## **FUNDING PLAN**

The following section presents the funding plan for the next six years. Table XIV-3 (at the end of Chapter XIV) presents the detailed expenditures and revenues for the preferred transit service alternative for 2009 through 2014, with the assumption of a five percent inflation rate.



### **Federal Funding**

Federal funding is expected to remain relatively stable over the next few years. It is recommended that the TP apply for funding (such as MDT, TANF, and FTA Tribal grants) in order to support public transportation services in the study area. Any TANF and Medicaid funding that the TP receives through intergovernmental agreements should be used as the local match for Phases I through III. With intergovernmental agreements, the Native American Indian Reservations in support of the regional transit service could apply for FTA Tribal funding. The TP should also continue to work toward establishing new revenue sources. Additional funds may

be generated by pursuing grants from agencies and foundations other than MDT and FTA.

## Local Funding

Federal funding is available for 54 percent of the operating costs for general public transportation services. The remaining operating deficit of 46 percent should be funded by the counties, local communities, and local match with other agencies. The tribal programs, agencies, and communities in the region could each contribute to the annual funding of the transit service by developing intergovernmental agreements with the TP. The TP 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.

The 2009 to 2014 Transit Implementation Plan anticipates \$122,000 in operational costs in fiscal year 2009, with an increase in each of the following years based on implementation of Phases I through III. Additional funds will allow the TP to provide increased transit service for the region.

Table XIV-2 presents the estimated local match share by county for each phase. This is only an estimate of the possible level of local funding needed by each county, and greatly depends on the level of participation by the human service programs and the tribes within the study area. The local match shares were based on the number of annual revenue-hours of service for each county.

County	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III
Teton	\$19,415	\$20,093	\$20,593
Cascade	\$14,043	\$16,786	\$27,889
Judith Basin	\$7,880	\$8,880	\$9,101
Chouteau	\$2,509	\$27,113	\$38,472
Hill	\$2,509	\$12,766	\$27,518
Blaine	\$2,509	\$3,658	\$13,122
Phillips	\$2,509	\$3,658	\$13,122
<b>Cost</b>	<b>\$51,373</b>	<b>\$92,955</b>	<b>\$149,817</b>

Source: LSC, 2007.

## **MANAGEMENT PLANS**

### **Organizational Management**

The Stakeholders Committee should form a Transit Council. The Transit Council should include the Stakeholders Committee, senior centers, human service agencies/programs, veterans association, and major employers. The Transit Council should coordinate the intergovernmental agreements throughout the region for improved transit services, and meet the MDT's goal of developing a single transit capital grant and single transit operational grant for the region. The Transit Council should develop a TP under the direction of the Opportunity Link Board in the short term. Once a formal Transportation Authority is developed, the new Transportation Authority Board will oversee the direction of the TP.

The TP should hire a manager/transit coordinator. The TP 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 Drivers License (CDL). It is estimated that the TP will need one manager/transit coordinator, four to five full-time drivers, one part-time driver, and one full-time dispatcher/office administrator.

The TP should coordinate the shift of funding from other programs to the TP. This should be done through the county, human service agency, and Tribal Council 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 MDT funding. The tribes participating in the transit program could apply for FTA Tribal funding.
- The purchase of vehicles or office equipment should be consolidated into a cooperative effort with the MDT.
- The new facilities, bus stops, and shelters should be implemented.

- The TP should coordinate marketing efforts, including the development of public education and promotional materials.
- The TP 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.
- The transit operating hours and services should be publicized regularly.

## **Marketing Programs**

The TP 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. The TP may want to consider developing a brochure as presented in Appendix F.

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 TP should print and distribute improved schedules throughout the region for the new transit service.

The second focus of the marketing program should be on residents and visitors. A new brochure reflecting all of the transportation resources available in the region should be created and introduced as soon as possible. A draft brochure example is shown in Appendix F. Brochures should be displayed at the local hotels, Chambers of Commerce, schools, medical offices, major employers, stores, and human service agencies/programs.

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 TP 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 TP 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 communities 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 TP and human service agencies/ programs.

One of the best marketing efforts that the TP could begin is to reach out to commuters. The TP should develop elements in the new brochure and advertisement which are focused on the commuters who travel from the rural communities

throughout the region to Havre, Great Falls, or Malta for employment, medical, school, and shopping purposes. The brochures should promote the benefits of transit in terms of the economic and environmental benefits of regional commuter service and the overall transit services.

The TP 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 developed 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 TP 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 TP. 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 TP 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 neighborhoods 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.
- ***Cooperation with utility company:*** A good way for the TP to keep abreast of new residents is to pursue an arrangement with the utility companies to be notified of requests for new utility service. The new residents could then be targeted for direct mailing.

### 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 tax-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 TP 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 TP should prepare monthly reports

in spreadsheet or database format and present the reports to the Transit Council, TP 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 V. The TP 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. When a bus moves from route to route, the count should return to zero. Runs should also be counted individually. This will allow the TP to track the service demand not only by route, but also by hours (peak and off-peak hours).

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

### Provide Comment Cards and Boxes

LSC recommends that the TP, in coordination with the Transit Council, provide comment cards and comment boxes on each transit vehicle so that the passengers have an opportunity to provide input regarding the transit system.

## **IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE**

Financial details of the implementation plan are shown in Table XIV-3. Figure XIV-1 presents a timeline of the information from Table XIV-3. 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 TP evaluate each project or program after implementation.

In the timeline, LSC recommends the planning and implementation of Phase I by the end of 2009. Phase II, which requires more coordination between agencies and the transfer of funding, should be planned in 2011 and implemented by 2012. Phase III has additional coordination, thereby increasing the complexity of the service implementation. For this reason, LSC recommends the planning for Phase III in 2013, with implementation in 2014. Each phase should be evaluated prior to implementation of the next phase.

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 MDT and FTA funding, the transit maintenance and administration facility should be planned and designed in 2007 and 2008. Construction should begin in 2009, with completion by the end of 2011. Until then, the transit vehicles could operate out of the participating communities or the facilities for the human service agencies/programs.

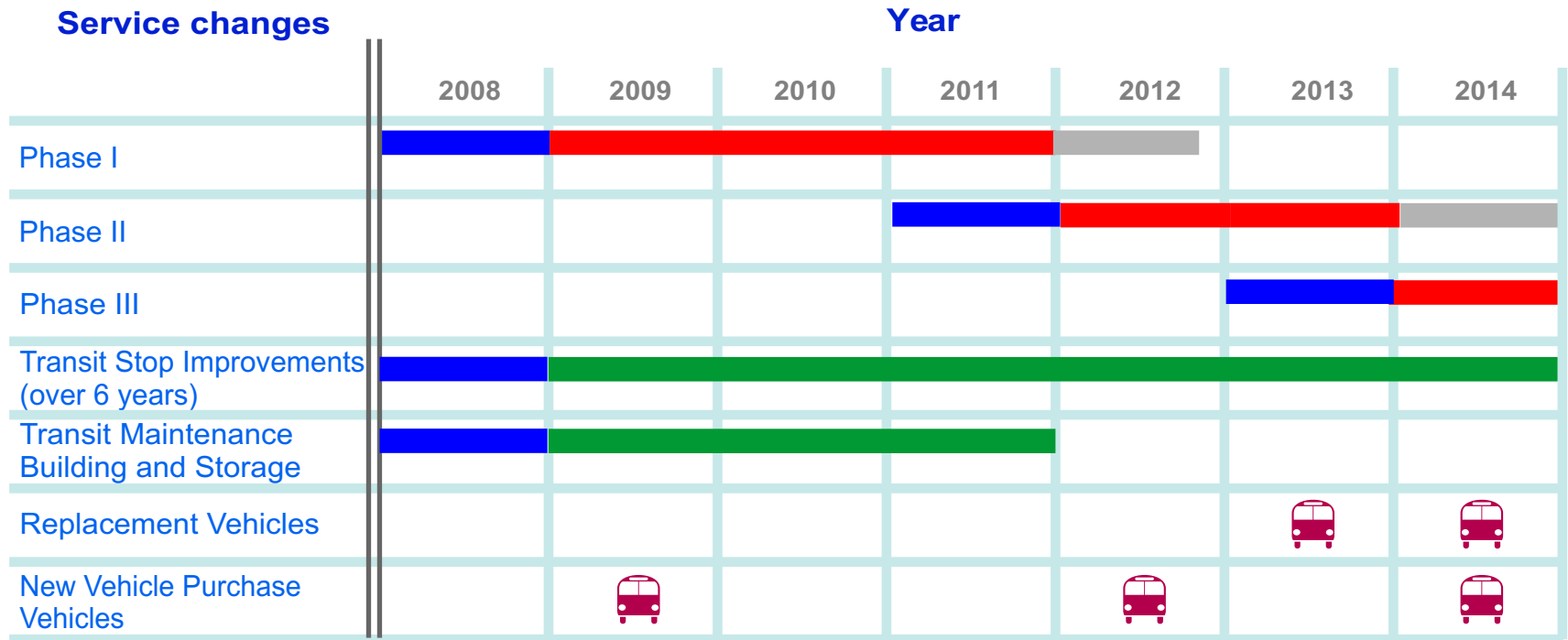
The timeline is designed to implement the preferred transit service alternative over the next six years. This timeline allows the transit programs and local agencies which are planning to dedicate funding to the transit system the time to shift funding toward those efforts. The timeline also allows for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

**Table XIV-3  
Transit Plan, 2009-2014 (assumed 5% inflation)**

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total
<b>EXPENSES</b>							
<b>OPERATING</b>							
Vanpool Program	\$20,820	\$21,861	\$22,954	\$36,153	\$37,961	\$53,146	\$192,895
Regional Service	\$48,690	\$51,124	\$53,681	\$112,729	\$118,366	\$276,651	\$661,241
Commuter Service	\$47,754	\$50,141	\$52,648	\$96,741	\$101,578	\$106,657	\$455,520
							\$0
Marketing Program	\$5,000	\$5,250	\$5,513	\$5,788	\$6,078	\$6,381	\$34,010
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$122,264</b>	<b>\$128,377</b>	<b>\$134,796</b>	<b>\$251,412</b>	<b>\$263,982</b>	<b>\$442,835</b>	<b>\$1,343,665</b>
<b>CAPITAL</b>							
Transit Buses (Minivans)	\$105,000	\$0	\$0	\$42,543	\$89,340	\$140,710	\$377,592
Transit Buses (Body-on-Chassis)	\$195,000	\$0	\$0	\$158,016	\$0	\$87,106	\$440,122
Transit Stop Improvements (20 stops over 6 years)	\$39,960	\$41,958	\$44,056	\$46,259	\$48,572	\$51,000	\$271,804
Transit Maintenance Building and Office	\$75,000	\$150,000	\$75,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$300,000
Office / Administration / Maintenance Eq./Radios	\$5,000	\$5,250	\$5,513	\$5,788	\$6,078	\$6,381	\$34,010
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$419,960</b>	<b>\$197,208</b>	<b>\$124,568</b>	<b>\$252,605</b>	<b>\$143,989</b>	<b>\$285,198</b>	<b>\$1,423,528</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$542,224</b>	<b>\$325,585</b>	<b>\$259,364</b>	<b>\$504,017</b>	<b>\$407,971</b>	<b>\$728,033</b>	<b>\$2,767,194</b>
<b>REVENUES</b>							
<b>Operation</b>							
FTA 5311 Operational / State Grant Funding	\$52,769	\$55,407	\$58,177	\$110,531	\$116,057	\$196,404	\$589,345
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$52,769</b>	<b>\$55,407</b>	<b>\$58,177</b>	<b>\$110,531</b>	<b>\$116,057</b>	<b>\$196,404</b>	<b>\$589,345</b>
<b>Capital</b>							
FTA 5311 Capital	\$365,365	\$171,571	\$108,375	\$219,767	\$125,270	\$248,122	\$873,105
FTA 5310 Capital	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$365,365</b>	<b>\$171,571</b>	<b>\$108,375</b>	<b>\$219,767</b>	<b>\$125,270</b>	<b>\$248,122</b>	<b>\$873,105</b>
<b>Local Revenues</b>							
Operational (Local Match)	\$56,769	\$59,657	\$62,690	\$115,319	\$121,135	\$201,786	\$617,355
Capital (Local Match)	\$54,595	\$25,637	\$16,194	\$32,839	\$18,719	\$37,076	\$185,059
Advertising	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$6,000
Fares (10% Farebox Return)	\$11,726	\$12,313	\$12,928	\$24,562	\$25,790	\$43,645	\$130,966
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$124,090</b>	<b>\$98,607</b>	<b>\$92,812</b>	<b>\$173,720</b>	<b>\$166,644</b>	<b>\$283,507</b>	<b>\$939,379</b>
<b>TOTAL REVENUES</b>	<b>\$542,224</b>	<b>\$325,585</b>	<b>\$259,364</b>	<b>\$504,017</b>	<b>\$407,971</b>	<b>\$728,033</b>	<b>\$2,401,829</b>

Source: LSC, 2007.

# Figure XIV-1 Short-Term Plan Timeline



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

