

# Preliminary Recommendations

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## INTRODUCTION

LSC has prepared a set of preliminary recommendations based on the analysis of the various alternatives presented in the previous chapters. The recommendations will be reviewed by the PanTran Board and in a roundtable process. Comments will be solicited from members of the community. Following this review and the corresponding input, LSC will develop an implementation plan which incorporates the preferred alternatives that best meet the community's needs. The implementation plan will be submitted in the draft Final Report.



The following recommendations are summaries from Chapters II through V. To avoid repetition, details are not listed below. Please refer to the individual chapters for detailed information.

## INSTITUTIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

LSC recommends that PanTran remain the primary general public transportation provider for the next five years. PanTran has the legal and financial capabilities to ensure the stability of the public transportation services within the community. For the long term, PanTran should work toward the development of dedicated funding sources.

## SERVICE RECOMMENDATIONS

### Hub-and-Spoke System with Demand-Response Service

LSC recommends that PanTran restructure the existing route system into a hub-and-spoke system with demand-response service. This alternative system would increase the access and mobility of the transit users and would increase ridership within the existing service area. The alternative system achieves all of the plan's

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operational goals while also reducing the need for the fixed-route service to deviate 1.5 miles off the route. The alternative system reduces the amount of time that the fixed-route buses could lose in deviation, thereby increasing the efficiency of the system. The alternative system achieve the plan's goal of providing high quality, customer-oriented services.

The hub-and-spoke system with demand-response service is more conservative, but it allows for expansion into the future with less modification over time. As the forecasted ridership is more conservative, the ridership is more possible to achieve within the next three to five years. The alternative system would also be able to obtain greater political support for a ballot issue in the next three years.

### **Downtown Shuttle**

PanTran should develop a downtown shuttle in the City of Martinsburg in order to reduce congestion and parking problems in the downtown area. The people working and shopping in the downtown area could park and ride the shuttle to their various destinations. The service could be funded under a contract with the downtown businesses and the Martinsburg Chamber of Commerce. The shuttle would be also eligible for Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) federal funding since the Eastern Panhandle Region is a non-attainment area.

### **Commuter Service**

PanTran should coordinate with the MARC Train, West Virginia Rail Authority, and Berkeley and Jefferson Counties in order to provide commuter transit service. The service could be funded by local agencies and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The commuter service would link Berkeley and Jefferson Counties to the MARC train stations from park-and-ride lots located throughout the region.

### **Rideshare Broker Program**

A rideshare broker program should be developed for the Eastern Panhandle Region, with PanTran as the leading agency. The rideshare broker program could begin with carpool and vanpool services, and expand if there is a warranted demand. Developing the rideshare broker program involves a large amount of

coordination, so it may take several years to obtain agency involvement throughout the Eastern Panhandle Region.

## **Regional Service**

Once the above service recommendations are implemented and PanTran has a dedicated funding source, the regional transit service could then be implemented.

## **CAPITAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Vehicles**

PanTran will need to continue to replace buses over the next five years. A bus replacement schedule will be included in the draft Final Report. The FTA should be the primary source for the bus replacement funding, with 20 percent coming from local match.

PanTran should purchase a transit marquee sign for each bus. The signs would allow the transit users to know which route a bus serves and the direction of each bus. The signs would also allow the transit system to interline buses between routes without changing the route destination, thereby improving the efficiency of the overall transit system.

PanTran should provide bicycle racks on each bus in order to provide residents with another multimodal form of transportation.

### **Transit Stops**

PanTran should purchase benches and shelters as needed. The benches and shelters could be implemented through a contract with a local outdoor advertising firm. The benches and shelters could be leased to the advertising firm. The revenue should cover the maintenance costs, and generate revenue that could be used for operations and local match funds. At key locations PanTran may have to work with the counties' public works departments to develop bus pullouts. This will increase efficiency and safety at high traffic locations by reducing bus-to-auto conflicts.

## **Facilities**

PanTran should install a bio-diesel fuel tank system at the maintenance facility. This would allow PanTran to reduce pollution and help improve the region's air quality. CMAQ funding could be used to cover 80 percent of the costs for the installation and vehicle upgrades.

PanTran should work with the West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT), MARC Train, West Virginia Rail Authority, and Berkeley and Jefferson Counties to develop park-and-ride lots. At first, the park-and-ride lots could be shared lots located at existing commercial/retail locations. As the service improves, dedicated park-and-ride lots could be developed. The cost of the park-and-ride lots could be funded using Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), FTA, and CMAQ funding at 80 percent, with a 20 percent local match.

## **FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS**

LSC recommends that PanTran continue to apply for federal funding each year to support the public transportation services within the Eastern Panhandle Region. Federal funding is expected to remain relatively stable over the next few years for both the FTA 5307 and 5309 programs. PanTran should continue to augment their existing revenue sources and establish new revenue sources. Additional funds may be generated by increasing the number of grant applications sent to agencies and foundations, in addition to WVDOT and FTA.

Berkeley and Jefferson Counties should contribute revenue to cover a portion of the costs for the general public transportation services within the two counties. Federal funding is available for 50 percent of the operating costs for general public transportation service. LSC can develop a formula for allocating the local share of system costs based on the annual revenue-hours that the transit system serves each community. PanTran should work with the local agencies and businesses in order to create partnerships and contracts. PanTran should approach the cities of Martinsburg and Charles Town for funding assistance in the future. PanTran should also approach the hospital and several of the major businesses in the region regarding the creation of an Eco-Pass program. The Eco-Pass program allows businesses to provide discount transit passes to their employees. The

business would receive a tax write-off as an incentive for using the Eco-Pass program. The Eco-Pass program will be detailed further in the draft plan.

The above recommendations are short-term funding options. PanTran would need to develop a dedicated funding source in order to implement and maintain the transit service now and into the future. In order to do this, PanTran should aid in the development of a transportation coalition. The coalition should coordinate with the local government agencies and businesses to develop a public education program, promoting the benefits of transit to the voting public. The end goal of this effort is to place a referendum on the ballot. LSC recommends that the referendum be an intermodal ballot question that includes transit, roadways, and maintenance. The intermodal referendum traditionally has a better chance of obtaining voter approval than a referendum for just transit.

## **MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**

LSC recommends that PanTran effectively coordinate services with Head Start, nursing homes, senior centers, and others as needed within the county.

PanTran should enhance their marketing program for the general public transportation service. The marketing program should involve community contact through presentations, appearances, and visits to local organizations. The marketing strategies will require a large amount of dedicated time. Therefore, additional staffing may be required in the future.

The main purpose of the marketing program in the short term should be to inform the community and the existing transit users of the new changes in the transit system. This can be achieved by developing new route brochures and placing advertisements on the bus shelters and benches.

The second focus of the marketing program should be toward residents, visitors, and MARC train passengers. The marketing information could be disseminated through a new brochure. As the rideshare broker program is developed, additional marketing tools will be needed to make it a successful program. A coalition should

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be created to develop a ridershare broker program for the Eastern Panhandle Region.

PanTran should make comment cards and comment boxes available to passengers on each transit vehicle so that passengers have the opportunity to provide input regarding the system.

PanTran should continue to monitor the service performance measures for the system, in order to track service quality and performance.

The marketing program must fit within budgetary limitations. According to the American Public Transit Association, transit providers typically budget between 0.75 and 3.0 percent of their gross budget for marketing promotions (excluding salaries). Based on the budget information in Technical Memorandum #1, the 0.75 to 3.0 percent for marketing is estimated at \$2,800 to \$11,300 annually. Although this is less than most private sector businesses, public sector organizations can rely more heavily upon media support for their public relations programs.

## **LAND USE PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS**

LSC recommends that PanTran be included in the review of development proposals for facilities that will generate transit trips. PanTran should be allowed to provide comments regarding their ability to provide transit service based on the proposed location and facility design.

Community leaders should be educated about the characteristics of transit service. Services are best provided and costs are the lowest when transit trips can be concentrated in developments. Changes in development patterns occur very slowly and will require a long-range vision to direct the growth so that transit service may be provided when and where it is needed in the future.

## **SUMMARY**

The above recommendations will be presented to the PanTran Board members and the roundtable participants. LSC will work with the Board members to review the recommendations and select the preferred alternatives. An implementation plan will be designed after the review process and will be presented as part of the draft Final Report.



The combination of the recommendations meet the goals and objectives developed by the PanTran Board members through the planning process. The recommendations improve the efficiency of the system and increase the mobility and access of the transit users to the major activity centers. The recommendations allow the transit system to serve the choice rider. This opens the door to allow PanTran to develop a working coalition that can build the support for a transportation ballot. The focus of the recommendations is to move PanTran to a more financially sustainable system while meeting the community's needs now and into the future.