



# CHAPTER I

## Introduction

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The Sweetwater County Transit Authority Resource (STAR) contracted with LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc. to complete a Transit Enhancement Plan. The plan studies the public transportation issues in Sweetwater County with specific focus on the communities of Green River and Rock Springs. The plan also examines the transit needs, alternatives, and programs for the communities within Sweetwater County.

This report presents the information that was developed over the planning process. The report includes a review of the communities, existing public transportation services, transit service alternatives, a preferred transit service plan, and an implementation plan. The report focuses on transportation for the general public, elderly, disabled, and student populations. General public transportation service in Sweetwater County is currently provided by STAR. For some residents, this service is their only link to work, shopping, health care facilities, and other necessary services.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The main purpose of this study is to analyze and recommend strategies for the STAR service which will affect the delivery of public transportation services over the next 10 years. This final report describes the existing conditions within the region related to public transit services, discusses transit services and other alternatives for meeting public transportation needs into the future, identifies the locally-preferred set of transit service alternatives, and presents an implementation plan for the next 10 years.

## **REPORT CONTENTS**

Chapter II reviews the goals and objectives developed during the planning process in work sessions with the stakeholders. Chapter III summarizes the community demographics and economics. Chapter IV reviews the existing transit service by STAR and the other transportation providers within the study area.



Chapter V presents the transit demand estimates and needs, based on demand-response and fixed-route transit modeling. Chapter V also includes an analysis of the community areas that possess the greatest transit need. Chapter VI documents the peer community analysis that LSC conducted. Chapter VII presents the results and analysis of the onboard survey that the STAR staff conducted in May, and reviews the results of the communitywide questionnaire conducted during the planning process. Chapter VIII presents the evaluation criteria developed with the stakeholders to aid in the transit service alternatives analysis.

Chapter IX details the various types of transit service for the STAR service area. Chapter X presents the transit vehicle types. Chapter XI discusses the coordination strategies that STAR can implement. Chapter XII provides an overview of the different funding categories that can be used to implement the transit service. Chapter XIII presents the possible organizational structure that can be implemented. Chapter XIV details the preferred transit service plan. Chapter XV reviews the implementation plan.

## **STUDY APPROACH**

As in many regions, STAR is taking a closer look at their public transit services and is seeking to find the most effective means of providing those services. Currently, public transportation is provided by STAR and the other transportation providers detailed later in this report. A key element in the plan is to clearly evaluate the unmet transportation needs of the local residents and businesses. The plan focuses on developing efficient and effective public transit services to meet the community's needs now and into the future.

## **Stakeholders Committee**

An important step toward providing an integrated communitywide transportation system is involving key players such as STAR staff, Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT) staff, City Council members, planning staff from the area communities, human service agencies, and area residents. Individuals from each key stakeholder group served as members of the Stakeholders Committee for this planning process.

## **Project Team**

An initial kick-off meeting was held in Rock Springs on April 25, 2007. The meeting was attended by key stakeholders from STAR, WYDOT, City Councils, and other local agencies within the study area who have transportation concerns for the communities. The project team met to discuss the project goals, priorities, and a time line for completion of the final study. The team also discussed the other local stakeholders who would be critical in completing the transit study for the area. Throughout the planning process, LSC has conducted several Stakeholders Committee meetings, public open houses, and one set of meetings with the County Commissioners, Rock Springs City Council, and Green River City Council. The agendas and sign-in sheets for these stakeholder meetings are included in Appendix A.

## **Opportunities for Public Involvement**

Public involvement throughout the planning process is key to the success of the STAR Transit Enhancement Plan. At critical points during the planning process, public meetings were announced and held where citizen participation was openly welcomed and appreciated. LSC held three open houses and three public hearings. The Stakeholders Committee and LSC also conducted a communitywide questionnaire about the need for transit in the study area.

The open houses offered area residents an opportunity to provide public input regarding the transportation issues which should be addressed as part of the STAR Transit Enhancement Plan. The area residents were asked to comment on the existing and future transit services in Sweetwater County, and were given the oppor-

tunity to state which transportation services and other alternatives they think are necessary to address the identified issues and meet the established goals.

## **SUMMARY OF THE ISSUES**

During the April 2007 meeting, LSC briefed the Stakeholders Committee on the study process to be undertaken over the six-month period. The major issues and concerns regarding public transportation were discussed in a goal development work session. These issues were then used to develop the goals and objectives.

Following are summaries of the major public transportation issues:

1. Transportation to and from employment locations in Rock Springs and Green River.
2. Mobility of the elderly and disabled populations to medical appointments, work, and shopping.
3. Student population transportation to and from educational institutions, after-school programs, and the Head Start program.
4. Access to work, medical, and shopping locations for the low-income population due to the lack of private vehicles.
5. Funding alternatives for the transit system.
6. Sustainable long-term funding.
7. Implementation of the transit service in the short term.
8. Maintenance of the transit service over the long term.
9. Regional service that links Sweetwater County with communities outside the study area.
10. Level of capital investment in vehicles and infrastructure (new transit transfer station, benches, bus stops, and bus facility).
11. Public education on the transit service within Sweetwater County, in order to promote the transit system as a benefit to the community for the community leaders and general public.
12. Service area has gaps and does not cover the needs of the transit-dependent population.
13. Service hours and level of service are not effective in meeting the needs of the transit-dependent population or the community as a whole.
14. Land use policies do not currently include transit service in the development process.
15. Develop a fixed route to serve the major employment center in Rock Springs.
16. Develop local regional service between Rock Springs and Green River.

17. Develop park-and-ride lots in Rock Springs and Green River for the local regional service.
18. Maintain the door-to-door service for the elderly population.
19. Access to employment, shopping, and recreation events in the evenings and on weekends.