



CHAPTER I

Introduction

The Central Area Rural Transit System, Inc. (CARTS) contracted with LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc. to provide transit planning assistance to update the Central/Southern Kenai Peninsula Public Transit Human Services Community Coordination Plan, hereafter referred to as the Central Area Plan. The original study for the coordinated service was prepared during August 1998 through April 2000. CARTS was created as a new transportation provider to fill an identified gap among providers in existence at the time. While the grant funding and contract for this study are channeled through CARTS, the plan is independent of CARTS and is being developed, bottom-up, from the local Central area needs and interests.



This study has a base year of 2010 and looks forward to 2020. When this study began in January 2010, the service area included the communities of Kenai, Soldotna, Sterling, Nikiski, and Kasilof. During February, the rest of the central and western peninsula communities, at their request, have joined and been added to this plan's study area. This is inclusive of communities between Homer and Kasilof—Kachemak City, Homer, Diamond Ridge, Anchor Point, Nikolaevsk, Happy Valley, Ninilchik, and Clam Gulch. The plan specifically focuses on transportation coordination issues resulting from the growth in demand for services exceeding the growth in resources. The plan also examines transit needs, alternatives, coordination implementation options, and programs for the communities within the service area.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to analyze and recommend strategies for the existing transportation providers and customers that will improve delivery of public transportation services. This Final Report describes the existing conditions in the region related to public transit services, discusses service and other alternatives

for meeting public transportation needs in the future, identifies the locally preferred set of alternatives, and presents an implementation plan for the next six years.

REPORT CONTENTS

Chapter II presents the public involvement efforts that have been undertaken during this study. This includes a brief summary of previous public meetings and a description of the outcomes.



Chapter III presents a review of existing community conditions. This includes population and employment characteristics, including trend information. It also includes a review of past transportation studies and relevant portions of community plans such as comprehensive plans, transportation plans, and economic development plans.

Chapter IV describes additional information collected about existing transportation services in the Central Peninsula and Southern Peninsula areas. Existing service providers were given the opportunity to conduct customer satisfaction surveys. For those agencies/organizations that elected to do the surveys, results are presented. Chapter II also describes the performance characteristics of peer organizations operating services in a community similar to the combined service area of the Central Peninsula and Southern Peninsula communities. From peer information and from CARTS operating information, this chapter wraps up by describing a cost model used in later chapters.

Chapter V presents current and future demand based on several models of estimation. The product of this chapter is a clear picture of transit demand based on quantitative models. These models were adjusted to reflect actual conditions observed in the Central Kenai Area. This chapter also includes qualitative needs that were identified during the initial kick-off meeting and/or by the transportation providers.

Chapter VI introduces coordination opportunities that *might* be possible for the Central Peninsula and Southern Peninsula. These opportunities are listed and

described as options for purposes of discussion *and are not to be taken as recommendations*. This chapter introduces possible communication/public relations/marketing strategies, possible technical assistance/training/planning ideas, vehicle coordination ideas, and service coordination concepts.

Chapter VII develops service concepts that were suggested during March meetings with the Working Group and the public. Again, at this point, these are options, not recommendations. The intent of this chapter is to provide more information, have more dialogue, and then make a recommendation. Service options explored include fixed-route and route-deviation bus service, modifications to or extension of the CARTS demand-response service, and ridesharing. Some connection options to Anchorage are also considered.

Chapter VIII looks at financial, institutional and organizational options that might either be needed or be useful in delivering the service concepts from Chapter VII.

Chapter IX presents the preferred plan for the Southern Peninsula area. This chapter provides information regarding the recommended service, including cost estimates. Similarly, Chapter X examines the same information for the Central Peninsula area.

STUDY APPROACH

As in many regions, agencies and providers in the Central Peninsula and the Southern Peninsula are taking a closer look at public and human service transportation and are seeking to find the most effective means of providing those services. A key element in the plan has been to clearly evaluate the unmet transportation needs of local residents and clients. The current effort focuses on the feasibility of providing public transit services to meet the community's needs based on coordination efforts already completed. One important step toward providing an integrated community-wide transportation system is involving representatives from existing transportation organizations. Individuals from over 30 stakeholder agencies have served as members of the Working Groups for this planning process.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This section reviews the background information that led to the current planning process starting with an overview of the legal reasons, followed by a description of the steps and processes that have occurred in past years.

In August 2005, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act - A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) was signed into law. SAFETEA-LU established a federal mandate for public transit/human service coordination planning. Starting in fiscal year 2007, SAFETEA-LU requires that a regional public transit/human service coordination plan be in place before transportation service providers may acquire funding under the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310), Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC - Section 5316), and New Freedom (Section 5317) programs. The Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) defines coordination as “*a process by which two or more organizations interact to jointly accomplish their transportation objectives*” (2004). These organizations may include public, private, and not-for-profit transportation services, human services providers, and other entities that represent citizens who have special transportation service needs. Citizens with specialized transportation needs are an important focus of the coordination planning process as the FTA has provided guidance that coordination plans should “*identify the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with limited income, laying out strategies for meeting these needs, and prioritizing services.*”

This new regulation led to the development of the *Locally Developed Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan*. The purpose of this plan was to create a list of comprehensive strategies to assist agencies, transportation service providers, and stakeholders in coordinating public transit and human service transportation efforts in the Central Peninsula and Southern Peninsula areas. The specific goals for the plan include:

- Identifying unmet transportation needs, service gaps (i.e., unserved and underserved areas), and service redundancies.
- Completing an inventory of existing public and human service transportation providers.

- Identifying strategies to maximize the use of limited transportation resources through coordination.
- Preparing an implementation plan to schedule, fund, and deliver the services identified in the plan.