



Strategic Implementation Plan

INTRODUCTION

LSC has prepared the following strategic implementation plan for Washington County Commuter (WCC) in order to identify the implementation steps to be taken for each phase of the preferred transit service plan. Also included in Chapter III are organizational, management, coordination, and financial plans.

ORGANIZATIONAL PLAN

Under the direction of the Washington County Commissioners, WCC should continue to operate the general public transportation service. The County has the legal and management capabilities to ensure the stability of public transportation services within the region. If additional funding is developed through coordination and intergovernmental agreements, the preferred transit service plan detailed in Chapter II can be implemented.

MANAGEMENT PLAN

After review of the existing management structure, it is LSC's recommendation that the current management structure will be able to administer and oversee the preferred service plan. The existing structure of WCC as a department of Washington County will allow the transit program to continue to have certain advantages (such as not having to hire accounting, legal, or human resource staff and collect taxes). This arrangement allows for a level of economy of scale for the transit service.

WCC staff will need to oversee not only the day-to-day operation and maintenance of the transit service, but will need to make sure that all Title VI requirements and regulations are covered. LSC has developed Title VI information to assist WCC staff in adhering to Title VI regulations. This information is provided in Appendix

B and covers the rights of individuals, WCC complaint process/forms, and the limited-English-proficiency (LEP) planning process.

COORDINATION PLAN

The coordination strategies recommended at this time for WCC and the study area are listed below and were based on input from the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The first step in this coordination plan is to have WCC continue working with their existing contract services.

LSC has developed the following coordination strategies:

- Create a coordination council
- Develop a transportation stakeholders coalition
- Continue to expand the contract services
- Develop agreements that allow WCC to continue as the consolidated transit program
- Improve transit service to the human service providers within the region

A coordination council will represent a step toward achieving coordinated transportation services within the study area. The coordination council should work with the human service providers to develop a basic understanding of the transit issues and how to work together cooperatively. Through this process the area will be able to implement the other coordination strategies of contract services and centralized operational functions. A coordination council meeting should be conducted every quarter. The coordination council will need to set up bylaws and an organizational structure in order to conduct productive meetings. The purposes of the transportation stakeholders coalition are to improve the delivery of transportation services in the region and work toward developing a grassroots effort to increase the local levels of funding and support for public transportation in the region.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Details on the preferred service plan were presented in Chapter II. The preferred transit service plan includes an increase in level of service, the alignment of the urban route to increase system efficiencies/effectiveness, and the development of

rural regional route service. The financial costs of these services are detailed later in this chapter.

Following is a list of activities that need to be completed in order to implement the preferred service plan which will be developed in three phases. Phase I (2010 through 2011) has an estimated annual operating cost of about \$2.9 million with inflation. The Phase I costs include urban route, regional route, and paratransit service. Phase II (2012 through 2013) increases the estimated annual operating cost to about \$3.6 million with inflation due to the increased level of service for the urban and regional route services. Phase III (2014 through 2015) increases the estimated annual operating cost to about \$4.4 million with inflation due to the increased level of service for the urban and regional route services.

In addition, each phase of the implementation plan will require additional staff. As stated in Chapter II, Washington County Commuter will need five additional staff members to meet the existing and future staffing requirements.

Phase I Implementation Steps

Phase I includes the realignment of the urban route service, the continuation of the Hopewell Express, the development of a feeder route for shoppers, and the implementation of a rural regional route to Smithsburg..

Responsibility

- WCC should work with the transit coalition to find ways to increase local funding for the transit service.
- WCC should develop a budget for the Phase I services and present the budget to the Washington County budget office.
- The Washington County Commissioners will need to approve Phase I services and the related funding level. WCC should present this information along with justification for Phase I services.
- WCC should hire additional staff to cover dispatching and the evening/week-end service hours.
- WCC should work with the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to purchase an expansion vehicle to implement the regional route service.
- WCC should work with the County and City Public Works Departments regarding the locations of the bus stops.

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- WCC should work with the malls and shopping centers to allow the new feeder route to circulate through the parking lots.
- WCC should develop a public education program to inform the public about the Phase I transit service changes.

Benefits

- The residents of Hagerstown and Smithsburg will have increased connectivity and mobility. These residents will have increased access to employment, medical, educational, and shopping facilities within the urban area.

Timing

- Develop budget and funding needs based on the Transit Development Plan in order to obtain increased funding for Phase I services.
- Need approval for the increased funding from the local entities (Washington County, city governments, local human service providers, etc.).
- Hire additional administrative and dispatching staff.
- Purchase one vehicle.
- Install bus stops along the urban routes.
- Develop and conduct public education programs regarding Phase I transit services.
- Implement Phase I in 2010.

Phase II Implementation Steps

Phase II decreases the headways on several urban routes to 30 minutes. Phase II also implements a Boonsboro to Hagerstown rural regional route.

Responsibility

- WCC should continue to work with the transit coalition.
- WCC should develop a budget for Phase II services and present the budget to the Washington County budget office.
- The Washington County Commissioners will need to approve Phase II services and the related funding level. WCC should present this information, along with justification for Phase II services.
- WCC should hire additional administrative and vehicle maintenance staff.
- WCC should work with MDOT to purchase expansion vehicles to implement the Phase II services.
- WCC should continue to work with the County and City Public Works Departments regarding the locations of the bus stops.

- WCC should develop a public education program to inform the public about Phase II transit service changes.

Benefits

- The residents of Hagerstown and Boonsboro will have increased connectivity and mobility. These residents will have increased access to employment, medical, educational, and shopping facilities within the urban area.

Timing

- Develop budget and funding needs based on the Transit Development Plan in order to obtain increased funding for Phase II services.
- Need approval for the increased funding from the local entities (Washington County, city governments, local human service providers, etc.).
- Hire additional administrative and maintenance staff.
- Purchase six new vehicles.
- Install bus stops along the urban routes.
- Develop and conduct public education programs regarding Phase II transit services.
- Implement Phase II in 2012.

Phase III Implementation Steps

Phase III decreases the headways on the urban routes to 30 minutes. Phase III also implements the rural regional routes from Hagerstown to Sharpsburg and Hancock/Clear Spring.

Responsibility

- WCC should continue to work with the transit coalition.
- WCC should develop a budget for Phase III services and present the budget to the Washington County budget office.
- The Washington County Commissioners will need to approve Phase III services and the related funding level. WCC should present this information along with justification for Phase III services.
- WCC should hire additional administrative staff.
- WCC should work with MDOT to purchase expansion vehicles to implement Phase III services.
- WCC should continue to work with the County and City Public Works Departments regarding the location of the bus stops.

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- WCC should develop a public education program to inform the public about Phase III transit service changes.

Benefits

- Residents of Hagerstown, Sharpsburg, Hancock, and Clear Spring will have increased connectivity and mobility. These residents will have increased access to employment, medical, educational, and shopping facilities within the urban area.

Timing

- Develop budget and funding needs based on the Transit Development Plan in order to obtain increased funding for Phase III services.
- Need approval for the increased funding from the local entities (Washington County, city governments, local human service providers, etc.).
- Hire additional administrative staff.
- Purchase six new vehicles.
- Install bus stops along the urban routes.
- Develop and conduct public education programs regarding Phase III transit services.
- Implement Phase III in 2014.

CAPITAL PLAN

New and Replacement Vehicles

LSC recommends that WCC purchase 11 body-on-chassis and nine new small buses over the next six years in order to expand and maintain the preferred service. Details on the recommendations for new and replacement vehicle purchases are shown in Table III-1. The vehicles are shown in the year of delivery and implementation.

Table III-1 Vehicle Replacement (Six-Year Plan)						
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
New Body-on-Chassis	1		1		2	
Replacement Body-on-Chassis	2		4	1		
New Bus			5		4	
Replacement Bus						
<i>Source: LSC, 2009.</i>						

The total cost of the new and replacement vehicles over the next six years for the preferred service plan is \$3.5 million, based on estimated costs of about \$65,000 for a body-on-chassis vehicle and \$230,000 for a small bus. The total local match funding needed for the new and replacement vehicles will be about \$700,000 over the next six years, with the remaining portion funded by Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and state funding.

Dispatching System

It is recommended that WCC employ the use of a new computer software and hardware system for scheduling and dispatching the deviated-route and demand-response service trips. This computerized system will replace the existing manual method and will make scheduling and dispatching much easier, efficient, and effective. The cost for the dispatching system is included in the total administrative and maintenance cost discussed below.

The dispatching system will need to increase the trips from 2.7 to 3.0 passengers per vehicle-hour. This will reduce the overall cost per passenger for paratransit service from about \$24.10 to \$12.00 and allow the paratransit service to carry more trips at the same overall operational cost. The paratransit service will be linked with the fixed routes at the new downtown Hagerstown transfer station in order to increase the level of efficiency and reduce the service's miles and hours.

Administrative and Maintenance

The administrative and maintenance capital includes the purchase of office equipment, hardware, software, dispatching software, radios, and maintenance equipment. LSC has estimated a total administrative and maintenance cost of about \$129,000 over the next six years, with about \$103,200 in federal funding and \$25,800 in local match funding.

Facilities

The cost of the new downtown Hagerstown transfer station has not been included in this capital plan since the new facility should be complete by 2010. LSC recommends that WCC install three enhanced bus stops, at an average cost of about \$15,000 each. LSC also recommends that 400 bus stops be installed throughout

the urban service area. Bus stop spacing depends greatly on the density of the adjacent land uses. For this study, LSC assumed one-quarter-mile spacing. Based on the length of the routes in the preferred service plan, it is estimated that about 400 bus stops will be needed. The estimated overall implementation cost of the bus stops is about \$120,000. The implementation of bus stops is eligible for 80 percent FTA funding.

FUNDING PLAN

This section presents the proposed financial plan for the next six years for the preferred service plan. Table III-2 presents the expenditures and revenues for the years 2010 through 2015, with the assumption of an annual five percent inflation rate.



LSC recommends that WCC continue to apply for federal and state grant funding in order to support public transportation services in Washington County. Federal funding is expected to remain relatively stable over the next few years. WCC should also continue to work toward establishing new revenue sources. Additional funds may be generated by pursuing grants from agencies and foundations other than MDOT or FTA. In the short term, LSC recommends that WCC apply for FTA 5307, 5309, TANF, Medicaid, local, and senior center funding. Under SAFETEA-LU rules, both TANF and Medicaid funding may be used for the local match operational funds.

Federal funding is available for 50 percent of the operating costs for general public transportation services less farebox revenue. For this financial plan, LSC assumed 40 percent from FTA based on the percent of total operating cost that WCC is presently receiving. The remaining operating costs should be divided among the local government entities and local agencies depending on the intergovernmental agreements and contract services. LSC anticipates \$2.9 million in operating costs in fiscal year 2010 and \$3.07 million in fiscal year 2011, with an increase in each of the following years based on implementation of the additional phases.



Table III-2 Transit Plan, 2010-2015 (assumed 5% inflation)							
	Phase I		Phase II		Phase III		Total
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	
EXPENSES							
OPERATING							
Urban Service	\$2,871,639	\$3,015,221	\$3,451,642	\$3,624,224	\$4,023,395	\$4,224,564	\$21,210,684
Rural Service	\$47,014	\$49,364	\$159,041	\$166,994	\$410,818	\$431,359	\$1,264,591
Marketing Program	\$10,000	\$10,500	\$11,025	\$11,576	\$12,155	\$12,763	\$68,019
Subtotal	\$2,928,652	\$3,075,085	\$3,621,708	\$3,802,794	\$4,446,368	\$4,668,687	\$22,543,294
CAPITAL							
Transit Buses	\$0	\$0	\$1,397,832	\$0	\$1,232,888	\$0	\$2,630,720
Transit Buses (Body-on-Chassis)	\$214,988	\$0	\$395,040	\$82,958	\$174,212	\$0	\$867,198
Office / Administration / Maintenance Eq./Radios	\$100,000	\$5,250	\$5,513	\$5,788	\$6,078	\$6,381	\$129,010
Transfer Station / Bus Stops	\$20,000	\$35,000	\$20,000	\$35,000	\$20,000	\$35,000	\$165,000
Subtotal	\$334,988	\$40,250	\$1,818,384	\$123,746	\$1,433,178	\$41,381	\$3,791,928
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$3,263,640	\$3,115,335	\$5,440,093	\$3,926,540	\$5,879,546	\$4,710,068	\$26,335,222
REVENUES							
Operation							
FTA 5307 Operational	\$1,167,461	\$1,225,834	\$1,444,273	\$1,516,487	\$1,773,685	\$1,862,370	\$8,990,110
ARRA Funding	\$79,053						
Subtotal	\$1,246,514	\$1,225,834	\$1,444,273	\$1,516,487	\$1,773,685	\$1,862,370	\$8,990,110
Capital							
FTA 5307 Capital	\$267,990	\$32,200	\$1,454,707	\$98,997	\$1,146,542	\$33,105	\$3,033,542
State Capital Grant	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$60,000
Subtotal	\$279,990	\$44,200	\$1,466,707	\$110,997	\$1,158,542	\$45,105	\$3,093,542
Local Revenues							
Operational (Local Match)							
Local Government	\$761,102	\$878,813	\$1,116,078	\$1,172,482	\$1,449,355	\$1,518,699	\$6,908,527
ADA Program	\$193,886	\$203,580	\$213,759	\$224,447	\$235,669	\$247,453	\$1,318,793
STAP Program	\$170,163	\$178,671	\$187,605	\$196,985	\$206,834	\$217,176	\$1,157,434
DSS Program	\$194,750	\$204,487	\$214,712	\$225,447	\$236,720	\$248,556	\$1,324,671
Capital (Local Match)	\$54,998	\$0	\$351,677	\$12,749	\$274,636	\$0	\$694,059
Advertising	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$72,000
Fares	\$350,238	\$367,750	\$433,282	\$454,946	\$532,106	\$558,711	\$2,697,033
Subtotal	\$1,737,136	\$1,845,301	\$2,529,112	\$2,299,056	\$2,947,319	\$2,802,594	\$14,172,517
TOTAL REVENUES	\$3,263,640	\$3,115,335	\$5,440,092	\$3,926,541	\$5,879,547	\$4,710,068	\$26,256,169

Source: LSC, 2009.

Benefits

- Local funding displays a level of commitment on the part of the local governments and citizens.
- Local match funding is needed to help secure matching federal funds.
- The funding helps to provide a service needed by the local citizens.

Timing

- WCC should immediately begin the process of obtaining funds for the preferred service plan from the local governmental entities and human service providers within the service area.
- The local communities' budgetary offices should be prepared to incorporate local transit funding when the transit budget is presented for the fiscal year 2010-2011 budget cycle.

Responsibilities

- WCC should present the initial funding information to the Washington County Commissioners, city councils, other local governmental entities, and human service providers to obtain political support and build support for local transit funding.
- WCC should develop the transit budget and present the budget to the Washington County Commissioners.
- WCC should educate the public on the benefits of the new transit services in order to obtain political support and build support for local transit funding.

Implementation Steps

- WCC should meet with the local governmental officials and human service providers to present the need for local transit funding.
- WCC should prepare the detailed transit operating budget for approval by the Washington County Commissioners.
- A grassroots group should be created and should meet every month. The grassroots group should develop public education programs regarding the benefits of supporting the intergovernmental agreements and the level of local commitment to transit service.

PERFORMANCE MONITORING PROGRAM

Monitoring of the transit service should continue. Data collection is essential to evaluating the service performance, determining if the service is in compliance with the Title VI requirements, and deciding if changes should be made to the transit services. WCC should continue to collect information on service quality and system performance (such as trips per hour and mile). WCC will need to track the

number of trips per route to determine if each part of the community is receiving a fair portion of the total transit service. This can be done by tracking the boardings and alightings of each route, and comparing the results to the overall demographics of the community.

Productivity Measures

Productivity measures should indicate the number of passengers per revenue-hour and revenue-mile by service area. Actual productivity should be compared with system standards. In order to monitor productivity, it is essential that passenger ridership data be collected on an ongoing basis. The simplest approach for collecting 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. Cost information should include the ridership, cost per passenger, cost per revenue-mile, and average fare. The data should be collected and tracked based on each route of the transit system.

Monthly reports on productivity and costs should be prepared in spreadsheet or database format in order to analyze each service type. The data will help WCC establish ridership patterns and operating cost trends, and determine if transit system changes are needed. WCC can then determine the appropriate policy direction and recommend funding decisions to the Washington County Commissioners.

Mobile Data Terminals

In order to gather passenger information by route, WCC will need to implement an Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) such as Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs). MDTs include features such as recording each passenger by fare category as they board, which should be programmed into the software as it is implemented. MDTs



MDTs in use

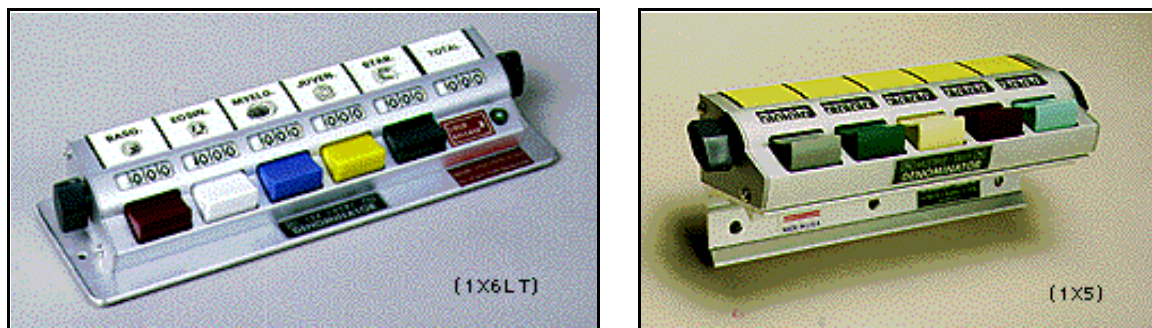
also allow both data and voice communication between the drivers and dispatcher. It is similar to having an alphanumeric pager on the dashboard. Several successful agencies across the country have implemented MDTs including Central Ohio Transit Authority, Colorado Springs Mountain Metropolitan Transit, Tri-Met

Oregon, Milwaukee County Transit System, Ann Arbor Transportation Authority, and Montgomery County Transportation Authority.

Passenger Counters

Passenger boarding data can also be collected using tally boards on the buses. Two sample counters are shown in Figure III-1. Sufficient buttons are required to record passengers in each fare category. A driver's log sheet should then be used to record passengers in each fare category. A driver's log sheet should then be used to record the passenger counts at the end of each trip. An effective approach is to prepare the driver's log sheet for each of the driver's runs. This will provide pre-printed route and trip information and the driver will only need to record the date and the passenger count data.

Figure III-1
Manual Passenger Boarding Counters



Boarding and Alighting Count

Once a year, a full boarding and alighting count should be completed for each bus stop. If passenger boardings are counted using the MDTs and integrated with Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL), the data can be recorded automatically. If it must be done manually, this is a more intense effort and will require the use of additional personnel. A boarding and alighting count is useful in determining if bus stops are appropriately placed and what amenities should be provided. If a bus stop has little or no activity, it will not warrant a bench or shelter and may not even be appropriate as a designated bus stop.

Comment Cards and Boxes

LSC recommends that WCC provide comment cards and comment boxes on each transit vehicle so that passengers have an opportunity to provide input regarding the transit system.

Rider Survey

LSC also recommends that a rider survey be conducted after one year of operation for each phase of the preferred transit service plan.

RECOMMENDED ADDITIONAL PLANS AND STUDIES

LSC has developed a short list of additional studies and plans that WCC will need to conduct over the next few years.

- Onboard survey and analysis of the new urban and rural route service in order to identify possible adjustments to the transit service to comply with Title VI requirements for monitoring the transit system.
- Transit Development Plan 2014 to 2020 in order to update this planning document in five years.