

Chapter 2 - Goals, Objectives, and Standards

TASKS AND ISSUES FOR THE TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

An important first step in the development of the TDP was to learn from committee members and CSPDC staff what community transportation issues were the most important to explore within the TDP, as well as what goals these stakeholders had for the study. A discussion of goals and issues was held during the TDP kick-off meeting on October 23, 2014. Committee members and staff articulated both issues and study goals in a number of different topic areas. These are summarized by topic area below and are not prioritized.

Intercity Bus/Commuter Bus

- Explore the need for intercity bus service and commuter bus service in the region, connecting Harrisonburg, Staunton, Waynesboro, and Charlottesville. The purpose of this type of service would be to connect to Amtrak and Greyhound, as well as to provide access to employment, educational, and medical destinations.
- Such a service would ideally serve park and ride lots as well as downtown destinations.
- It was noted that Megabus recently declined to provide service to James Madison University (JMU).
- DRPT may have available funds for intercity bus service from the S.5311 (f) program. An Intercity Bus Plan was completed for DRTP in 2013 and the findings with regard to this corridor may be referenced.

Community Awareness and Connectivity

- The community is not necessarily aware that the urban and rural services connect. It is not readily obvious that the various transit services in the region are provided by a single operator and are one system.

- When conducting the re-branding task, committee members would like to see an umbrella brand that is unified, with specific services maintaining their current brand (BRCC shuttle, in particular).

Regional Growth

- There is a need to look at system growth, given the recent MPO/urbanized area designation.
- Stuarts Draft is a high growth area.

Organizational Issues

- With the urbanized area designation, a result of the 2010 Census, significant parts of the transit service area became eligible for S. 5307 urbanized area funding. Grantees under this program must be public bodies, so the PDC took on this role. VRT's role became that of contractor for the urbanized area services. The current contract runs through June 2015, with an extension option. VRT continues to be the designated sub-recipient of rural funds, but this may change. Both the urban and rural programs are likely to be administered by the PDC in the future, which will require contractual changes.
- With the change in transit oversight, the TDP will need to discuss the best way to handle ownership of both fixed facilities and vehicles. The TDP will explore the cost/benefit issues of ownership versus leasing, as well an examination of which roles are appropriate for the public agency (the grantee) and the contractor (operator of service). There will also need to be a review of how the change in grantee status affects the Fishersville transit facility.
- A full exploration of organizational options with regard to the development of a new transit organization is not desired at this time, but perhaps in a future TDP.

Financial Issues

- The TDP should include an examination of cost allocation for the participating funding agencies. Historically the funding agreements from the partners have not been tied to a particular level of service. The PDC would like to see the development of a cost allocation model that it can use when approaching potential funding partners. There may need to be a provision to "grandfather in" existing partners.
 - For example, all college students with ID ride free, but only some colleges are funding partners (from student fees). The Augusta Health stop is free for everyone.

Specific Service Gaps and Issues

- The following specific service gaps were noted by committee members and staff:
 - Service for 8 a.m. BRCC classes, Monday -Thursday BRCC evening classes, and Saturday classes for students coming from Waynesboro and Stuarts Draft.
 - Access to Augusta Health and associated services in the vicinity.
 - The 250 Connector needs more Saturday service, Sunday service, and an elimination of the current mid-day break and evening break.
 - The 250 Connector needs to be restructured because the schedule is too tight. It cannot keep to the hour.
 - There is a need for additional connectivity to and from Harrisonburg.
 - Only a portion of Augusta County (Craigsville area) is served with demand-response service on Fridays only.
 - There is no countywide demand response in Rockingham County.
- The route design within Staunton and Waynesboro needs to be reviewed. The current loop routes can be inconvenient and inefficient. Bi-directional routing should be examined.
- The transit program should attract choice riders, in addition to transit-dependent riders.
- Vehicle tracking technology is desired.
- Trolleys may not be the best vehicles for daily fixed route service.
- Many of the bus stops are not signed. There are flag stops permitted throughout the service area, which raises safety concerns.

These issues and goals were explored to the extent feasible during the TDP process.

TRANSIT PROGRAM MISSION

A mission statement is “a written declaration of an organization's core purpose and focus that normally remains unchanged over time.”¹ It is a sentence or two that describes what the agency does and who the agency serves, defining why it exists. The mission statement for the CSPDC is:

“To help communities and agencies within the Central Shenandoah Valley work together by providing high quality planning, technical assistance, and facilitation services that address local, regional and state needs in an innovative, timely and cooperative manner.”²

The current transit program in the region does not have an adopted mission statement, which is understandable as it is a collection of services provided under the umbrella of VRT Mountain Division. As the program is re-branded and moves forward, it will be helpful to have a mission statement to focus the program. KFH Group drafted several different mission statements, each with a slightly different style, as a starting point for discussion with the TDP Committee. The mission statement chosen by the TDP Committee is:

“To deliver quality, accessible public transportation services that link people, jobs, and communities in the Central Shenandoah Valley.”

TRANSIT PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

It is important that a transit program has specific goals and objectives, and service standards to guide and measure if the system is accomplishing its mission. The current transit program does not have formally established written goals or objectives to focus its efforts. Goals and objectives for the transit program have been developed as part of this TDP process. The development of these goals and objectives is described below.

During the first TDP Advisory Committee meeting, committee members were asked to indicate some important topic areas that should be included within these goals. The following topic areas were discussed:

- Creating a cohesive, comprehensive system that reflects the diversity of the community
- Providing mobility for people who cannot afford personal transportation, while remaining affordable
- Working with area human service agency providers

¹ Business Dictionary.com

² CSPDC website.

- Finding a balance between serving transit dependent and choice riders
- Reaching out to new markets without reducing service for existing riders
- Supporting the economic development goals of the localities
- Supporting urban re-development through intercity/commuter service (i.e. connecting lower cost housing in Waynesboro with jobs in Charlottesville)

The first two topic areas listed above were included as part of a mission statement. From the remaining topic areas, the following goals and associated objectives were drafted for the transit program.

Goal 1: Provide coordinated, cost- efficient and effective public transportation services that support the mobility and economic development goals of the communities served.

Objectives:

- Evaluate and monitor system-wide performance to ensure appropriate allocation of resources
- Consider changing or eliminating service that does not meet established performance standards
- Consider the establishment of new services to meet regional mobility and economic development goals

Goal 2: Maintain the current ridership base while seeking opportunities to increase ridership and serve new markets.

Objectives:

- Sustain and improve current public transit services to serve both transit-dependent and discretionary riders
- Identify opportunities to better serve existing markets, such as providing service on additional days or extending hours of service
- Identify opportunities to serve new markets by fully exploring the demand for service to Harrisonburg and Charlottesville

Goal 3: Maintain strong relationships with area human service transportation providers and neighboring transit programs to maximize mobility options in the region.

Objectives:

- Meet regularly with area human service agencies and other providers in the region to continue to improve mobility options for agency clients and the public, while reducing duplication where it may exist
- Coordinate service and transfer opportunities with other transit providers in the region, where feasible
- Develop a standard rate to use when providing human service agency transportation

Goal 4: Establish, strengthen, and market a brand identity for the transit program.

Objectives:

- Choose a brand identity for the transit program that represents the diversity of current services and markets under the Central Shenandoah umbrella
- Build and strengthen the chosen brand identity through marketing and advertising efforts
 - Create a system website
 - Maintain accurate and up-to-date transit information on the CSPDC and VRT websites, as well as the websites of the local financial partners
 - Distribute system brochures throughout the communities served.

Goal 5: Responsibly leverage federal and state funds with local funds and fare revenue to ensure the financial viability of the system.

Objectives:

- Develop and monitor a multi-year financial plan
- Research available federal and state funding programs to ensure the region is maximizing its federal and state transit funding opportunities

- Review the fare structure annually to determine if fares are both affordable for riders and economical for the operations of the system
- Explore additional partnership opportunities with local businesses, employers, educational institutions, and other community stakeholders to maximize financial support for transit
- Identify and explore strategies to secure new revenue sources, such as advertising, fundraising, and/or other grant opportunities

Goal 6: Provide a safe and secure transit system.

Objectives:

- Ensure that safety sensitive staff members are adequately trained and monitored
- Provide refresher training for drivers
- Monitor the incident and accident data on a monthly basis
- Ensure that security equipment is properly maintained

SERVICE AND PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Service standards are benchmarks by which service performance is evaluated. Service standards are typically developed in several categories, such as service coverage, passenger convenience, safety, fiscal condition, productivity, and passenger comfort. The most effective service standards are straightforward and relatively easy to calculate and understand.

Service standards are also used as a measure of compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, to ensure that services are provided equitably to all persons in the service area, regardless of race, color, or national origin.

CSPDCs Title VI Plan details the system-wide service standards meant to ensure this equity, including standards on vehicle load, vehicle headways, on-time performance, and service availability.

The following standards are included in the agency's Title VI Plan:

- Maximum vehicle load: 1.3 (ratio of passengers to total seats) for all vehicle types. For example, if there were thirty seats on the bus, the maximum vehicle load would be 39 passengers (39 divided by 30= 1.3)
- Vehicle headways: every sixty minutes, weekdays and weekends (if applicable)
- On-time performance: ninety percent or greater (a vehicle leaving a scheduled time point no more than 1 minute early or five minutes late is considered on-time)
- Service availability within the urbanized area: eighty percent of all residents in the service area are within a ½-mile walk of bus service

These standards have been incorporated into a more comprehensive set of service standards that are presented in Table 2-1.

PROCESS FOR UPDATING GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STANDARDS

These goals, objectives, and service standards were developed for the system as a component of the TDP process. Prior to this effort, the only standards in place were those recently developed for the CSPDC's Title VI Plan. Given that these goals, objectives, and service standards are new to the program, they should be examined on an annual basis to ensure that they are appropriate and in keeping with what the system is experiencing. If additional goals are envisioned, or if specific goals, objectives, or standards are no longer appropriate, represent under-achievement, or cannot reasonably be attained, the CSPDC can update the measures to reflect current circumstances.

It is recommended that the annual review of goals, objectives, and service standards take place as part of the grant preparation cycle. Any changes for these measurement tools can be included in the annual TDP update.

Table 2-1: Service and Performance Standards

Category	Standard
Availability within the Urbanized Area	<p>Service Coverage: 80 percent of all residents in the service area are within a ½ mile walk of bus service.</p> <p>Frequency: Every 60 minutes, weekdays and weekends (if applicable).</p> <p>Span: Weekdays- 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.</p>
Patron Convenience	<p>Maximum Vehicle Load: 1.3 (ratio of passengers to total seats) for all vehicles.</p> <p>Bus Stop Spacing: 5 to 7 stops per mile in core; 4 to 5 per mile in fringe, as needed based on land uses</p>
Dependability	<p>On-time Performance: 90 percent or greater (a vehicle leaving a scheduled time point no more than 1 minute early or 5 minutes late is considered on-time).</p>
Productivity (Pass./rev. hour)	<p>Review and modify, if possible, services that exhibit less than 60% of average</p> <p>Review and modify, if warranted, routes between 60% and 80% of average</p> <p>Fixed-route average is currently 12.09 trips per revenue hour</p> <p>Demand-response is currently 1.8 trips per revenue hour</p>
Cost Effectiveness (Cost per trip)	<p>Review and modify, if possible, services that exhibit less than 60% of average</p> <p>Review and modify, if warranted, routes between 60% and 80% of average</p> <p>Fixed route average is currently \$ 4.83 per trip</p> <p>Demand response is currently \$ 32.70 per trip</p>
Passenger Comfort	<p>Waiting Shelters: Available where there are 25 or more boardings per day.</p> <p>Vehicles: Working heat and air conditioning</p>
Safety (1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety Incidents per 100,000 miles 	<p>0.30 or fewer “reportable incidents” per 100,000 miles, as defined by the National Transit Database. A reportable incident is one in which one or more of the following conditions apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fatality • Injuries requiring medical attention away from the scene for one or more persons • Property damage equal to or exceeding \$25,000(2)
Public Information	Timetable, maps, and website current and accurate

(1) For NTD reporting years FY11,12, 13, there were 5 incidents over 1,325,310 miles; a rate of .38 per 100,000 miles.

(2) National Transit Database, Rural Reporting Manual.

