

5 Implementation Plan

The Short-Range Transit Plan will guide investment decisions to be made by the Board over the upcoming five-year period. The successful implementation of the SRTP recommendations will require the Board and staff to make a number of key strategic decisions, and staff throughout the organization to coordinate activities. This section of the plan discusses the strategic decisions that must be addressed and highlights the staffing support needed to implement the recommendations.

5.1 *Strategic Operational Issues*

Contracting of services

There are two primary reasons driving the agency to consider contracting for the provision of the expansion services recommended in this plan. First, the origins of these routes are very long distances from the Bus Operations and Maintenance Facility (BOMF), which would result in significant time and mileage associated with deadhead travel, driving up our own costs of operation. There may be cost reductions associated with contracting these services.

Second, the BOMF is not configured to maintain over-the-road (OTR) coaches. The staff is recommending OTR coaches on new Express routes with longer than 30-minute travel times. The vehicle type has an excellent reputation as a commuter vehicle with exceptional seating capacity, excellent comfort, high reliability, and a long useful life.

In considering potential contractors to provide the services, there is likely to be a combination of one or more private providers and existing public transportation providers. Triangle Transit has had a memorandum of understanding with Orange County for two years establishing that Orange Public Transportation will operate fixed-route service between Hillsborough and Chapel Hill, and charge Triangle Transit for 75% of their costs (which are significantly lower than Triangle Transit's costs). In FY2009, the agency will enter into an agreement with the City of Raleigh for the operation of express bus service between Wake Forest and downtown Raleigh. Here, too, Raleigh will charge Triangle Transit less than their full costs, which are already lower than Triangle Transit's estimated costs per revenue hour.

There may be opportunities to introduce other new services through similar partnerships. However, the City of Raleigh has constraints at their current operations and maintenance facility as well, so until their new facility is completed, Triangle Transit will want to consider private contractors in addition to these intergovernmental partnerships.

The agency intends to issue a request for proposals during FY2009 for the provision of new services. As the agency wades into contracting for services, it will likely need to add a contract administrator who will monitor and manage the contractor's performance.

Vehicle acquisition

Another important strategic decision that the agency will address early in the implementation of this plan is to determine the preferred approach to acquiring the vehicles needed for bus, paratransit, and vanpool service expansion. There are choices to be made about whether Triangle Transit will purchase vehicles, lease them, or include them in a contract for operation of service. There are also decisions to be made about whether the timing of

acquisitions will be tied to the award of state, federal, or other grant funds, or whether some acquisitions will be paid for only with local funds.

Triangle Transit has historically directly purchased all the vehicles it operates for all three services (bus, paratransit, and vanpool). Over the past ten years, all expansions of services were timed to coincide with the delivery of newly purchased vehicles. Because of the long lead times associated with the purchase of the vehicles, commitments to expand bus service would need to be made at least 10-12 months in advance of operation. Similarly with vanpool expansion, a lead-time of 90-120 days can be a long wait for a vanpooling group that is ready to start.

A team led by the Finance staff is investigating the merits and drawbacks of the various options for vehicle acquisition.

Partnerships and coordination effects on the timing of service introduction

One of the policy recommendations of the SRTP is to establish financial partnerships for the provision of services. If adopted, this policy has the potential to affect the sequencing and timing of the introduction of new services. If a community or employer desires to contribute to the operating costs of a service earlier than scheduled in the SRTP, then Triangle Transit will need to consider whether it can meet that request. Alternately, if no entity is ready to enter into a financial partnership in the year that a new service is scheduled in the plan, then Triangle Transit will need to consider whether to delay introduction of that service.

Similarly, all of the coordination projects identified to improve current services require the cooperation of one or more local transit agencies. Throughout the development of this plan, we have been communicating with these agencies about the timing of the planning work that will need to occur. However, unforeseen opportunities or obstacles may affect the sequence and timing of these coordination projects.

Annual budgeting decisions by Board

By adopting this plan, the Triangle Transit Board of Trustees is not committing to funding all the recommendations over the five-year period. Each year, a refined funding request for the upcoming fiscal year's recommendations will be included in the budget planning process. These recommendations will be considered along with other agency priorities.

5.2 Planning Support

The combination of recommendations for improvements to current services, coordination with local systems, and expansion of the system will require an effort that is projected to exceed current staff resources. However, since the planning work is likely to be concentrated in the first few years of the plan, staff does not recommend hiring additional permanent staff. Rather, the staff recommends that the agency contract for outside planning resources to support the current planning staff. Specifically, outside resources would assist with planning and implementing the park-and-ride network and amenities installation. Further, outside consulting resources would handle special studies for the Research Triangle Park and RDU Airport service improvements, and bi-annual customer satisfaction surveys.

5.3 Marketing Support

Effective marketing of the service improvements and new routes will be critical to their success. Our recommended approach is to combine individualized marketing strategies at the residential end of new routes with employer-based transportation demand management (TDM) strategies.

Individualized Marketing

Individualized marketing is a strategy that provides specific information options directly to households through mail and telephone communication. The information provided to interested households is then individualized to their specific interests. For example, rather than providing a basic route brochure, the household would receive a stop-specific schedule for the stop nearest their home. This marketing approach also couples information about other travel modes, from bicycling to vanpooling to carpooling, in addition to bus service information. This makes the information relevant to a wider audience than just those who would be interested in a new commuter route.

Triangle Transit was involved in a pilot of this strategy as part of an FTA Demonstration Project in four cities across the country. The results were impressive, with a reduction in reported automobile trips of 7%. The agency is budgeting to replicate this marketing approach in Wake Forest during FY2009. If it proves to continue to be successful, it will be replicated as other new markets are opened with new services.

Transportation Demand Management (TDM)

Consistent with the recommendations of the 7-Year Regional TDM Plan, the service improvements recommended in this plan focus on five “hot spots” where there are concentrations of employment and opportunities to shift travel behavior. These “hot spots” are downtown Raleigh, North Carolina State University, UNC - Chapel Hill, central Durham (including Duke University), and Research Triangle Park. TDM activities in the sixth “hot spot” in northern Raleigh along I-440 will begin in FY2009. Since the 7-Year Regional TDM Plan was created, the Town of Chapel Hill has been added as the seventh “hot spot” of employment activity.

A coordinator will work with employers in each “hot spot” to assist them in the development of TDM plans specific to their needs. Together we will be placing emphasis on the value of the GoPass program and employer-side subsidies for vanpools because of the success that we have experienced with them. These strategies, and corresponding marketing campaigns, also focus on providing tailored resources to employers and individual employees to support their decisions to shift travel away from single-occupant vehicles to transit and other environmentally-friendly options.

This page intentionally left blank.