



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Transit
Administration**

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APR 29 2004

Lynne Griffith
Executive Director/CEO
C-TRAN
P.O. Box 2529
Vancouver, WA 98668

S.W. WA. R.T.C.

MAY 4 2004

Dear Mrs. Griffith:

It has come to our attention that C-TRAN is preparing to initiate a study of high capacity transit (HCT) corridors in the Vancouver, Washington region. We understand that you may seek New Starts funding for any transit fixed guideway investment proposal which may result from this study, thus necessitating a request to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to formally approve the locally-selected alternative into preliminary engineering. FTA's approval of preliminary engineering is a significant action, and is based in large measure on the quality of the technical work performed during the alternatives analysis (AA) study.

As you begin your AA study, we would therefore like to remind you about the importance of this stage of the planning and project development process, and of the technical assistance available to you from FTA. Alternatives analysis provides the means by which local decisionmakers weigh the costs and benefits of a full range of investment strategies to solve locally-identified transportation problems and needs, resulting in the selection of a preferred alternative to advance into further development, and, ultimately, implementation. FTA desires to provide early, active, and ongoing technical support to local agencies conducting alternatives analysis to ensure that such studies are generating the types of information necessary to reach informed decisions. We have found that such assistance helps local project sponsors resolve technical and procedural issues early in the AA study process, rather than at the end when it may be too late to resolve them efficiently. Early assistance from FTA during AA further helps project sponsors prepare the information needed to support their request to advance a preferred alternative into preliminary engineering and avoid the lengthy delays associated with incomplete and/or premature requests.

FTA's website, and in particular its page on major investment planning and project development (http://www.fta.dot.gov/grant_programs/transportation_planning/9924_ENG_HTML.htm) provides a wealth of information which will be of great value to you and your staff throughout the alternatives analysis study. FTA plans on issuing additional guidance and training on AA in the near future. In the meantime, and as a first step in the AA study process, FTA recommends the preparation by local agency staff of preliminary information on the following key elements of the study:

- Transportation problems and needs in the study area;

- Conceptual alternatives to be evaluated in the study;
- Preliminary measures for the evaluation of alternatives.

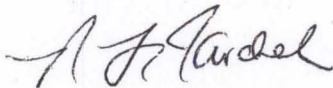
The development of this information, which might be called an AA "start-up package," is not intended to require additional work by study sponsors, but rather to draw upon previous systems planning and other planning efforts and the routine preparatory work necessary to initiate any alternatives analysis study. Further guidance on this start-up package is attached to this letter, along with an example of such a document created for a recent study in the Washington, DC area.

We encourage you to prepare this initial information at the outset of your study, and to submit it to FTA for its review. This information will lay the groundwork for the rest of the study, and FTA's review of it can provide you with valuable insight and assistance which will facilitate the conduct of subsequent AA activities including the development of a sufficient purpose and need or problem statement for the study; the detailing and refinement of transportation alternatives (leading to FTA's required approval of a baseline alternative against which to evaluate the performance of a proposed New Starts project); the establishment of sound travel demand forecasting procedures which result in reliable and defensible estimates of the transportation benefits of studied alternatives; and other dimensions (financial planning, capital and O&M costing, transportation and environmental impact analyses) of the analytical effort.

FTA believes that communication is key to our ability to assist study sponsors, and we ask that you continue to keep FTA informed of and engaged in the progress of your study. If you have any questions related to the contents of this letter and its attachments - or any other aspect of alternatives analysis - please do not hesitate to contact Rebecca Reyes-Alicea at (206) 220-4464.

We look forward to our continued working relationship with your staff.

Sincerely,



R.F. Krochalis
Regional Administrator

Cc: Dean Lookingbill, RTC

Enclosures (2)

Problem Statement, Evaluation Measures, and Initial Alternatives

The Potomac River-North Crossing Study is considering a range of alternatives that would provide an additional connection between the transportation networks of Maryland and Virginia. This “start-up” package of information provides an initial look at three of the principal underpinnings of the study: 1) the problems that it will address; 2) the measures that it will use to judge the merits of alternative ways of addressing those problems; and 3) the starting-point set of those alternatives. The most important purpose of this document is to provide to all participants an early opportunity to help set the scope of the study. Comments on the problem statement, evaluation measures, and initial (conceptual) alternatives will help to identify needed changes and to ensure that the study will develop efficiently the information needed for crucial decisions on accessibility in the area. The document provides some context for the study, describes the transportation problems that motivate the study, identifies the environmental concerns that will be considered, outlines several other considerations that will contribute to the evaluation, and provides a draft list of specific evaluation measures. The document concludes with a brief description of each alternative identified thus far for consideration in the study.

1. Context

The 2001 Transportation Appropriations Act directs the Federal Highway Administration to study ways of reducing congestion in areas of Maryland and Virginia. The purpose of this study is to provide information that can be used by state and local officials to consider the benefits, costs, impacts, and financing of several approaches to congestion relief, including several alternatives that would provide a new crossing of the Potomac River. Decisions on further development and implementation of any alternative would occur after completion of the study and would be made by state and local officials.

The study is proceeding with planning level of detail in the analysis of a broad range of alternatives. Additional steps in the further development of any specific alternative would be its inclusion in the Constrained Long Range Plan for the metropolitan Washington area and its consideration in terms required by the National Environmental Policy Act (including the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement).

2. Transportation Problem

The I-270 Corridor in Maryland and the Dulles Corridor in Virginia are major centers of rapid economic growth in the metropolitan Washington area. Today, these two corridors encompass substantial portions of the population and employment in the region. The two corridors have attracted a large share of the growth in the metropolitan area over the last 10 years and are projected to continue this rapid growth rate through 2025.

Travel from these corridors to other parts of the metropolitan Washington area is partially limited by a substantial discontinuity in the regional transportation system. No highway or transit connections exist across the Potomac River for a stretch of 35 miles from the American Legion Bridge to the Point of Rocks Bridge. As a result, travel from the I-270 Corridor to Virginia and from the Dulles Corridor to Maryland is largely dependent upon the American Legion Bridge and segments of the Capital Beltway. These highway facilities carry over 200,000 vehicles per day traveling between points throughout Maryland and Virginia, as well as longer-distance trips to and from other states. The facilities experience substantial daily traffic congestion, provide unreliable travel times, and have no alternative routing around major traffic incidents. These conditions are projected to deteriorate as traffic on these facilities grows through 2025.

The immediate consequences of these conditions are increasing travel times, limitations on access, and additional travel costs for residents and businesses. In the long run, consequences may also include negative effects on the regional economy, quality of life, and the competitiveness of the metropolitan area in attracting and keeping high-quality employment.

Consequently, it is appropriate at this time to consider a range of strategies for meeting the growing transportation demand for travel across the Potomac River.

3. Environmental Considerations

Like any large construction project, major improvements to the transportation system have the potential to cause adverse impacts on the human and natural environment. Direct consequences may include: the taking of land, residences, and businesses to assemble rights-of-way for new facilities; disruption, noise, exhaust emissions, visual intrusion, and other impacts on communities, parklands, and other land uses located near the new facilities; and impacts on the natural environment, wetlands, floodplains, endangered species, and other natural resources. The study area encompasses a variety of land uses ranging from rural and agricultural land to a broad range of residential and commercial development. The area includes a nationally significant system of federal, state, and local parks located along the Potomac River and its tributaries, linked physically and culturally by the C&O Canal National Historical Park. Consequently, the study will identify transportation improvements that avoid impacts on these resources to the extent possible, characterize any impacts that appear to be unavoidable, and describe the actions that could be taken to mitigate any adverse impacts as part of the implementation of each alternative.

Indirect consequences may include the development of nearby areas, the traffic associated with new development, and the environmental impact of that development. These indirect consequences may not be consistent with policies of state and local governments intended to shape development patterns. In Maryland, statewide policy is to target state funding to existing developed areas as a way of encouraging dense development and redevelopment. Within Montgomery County, the comprehensive plan calls for planned development and maintains an agricultural preserve in rural areas of the county. In Virginia, Loudoun County is currently moving towards controls on growth in western portions of the county and the Fairfax County comprehensive plan calls for lower densities in that county's western locations. From a regional

perspective, the alternatives may influence the relative pace of growth in individual jurisdictions. Consequently, the study will explicitly consider the indirect consequences of the alternatives, their consistency with state and local land-use policies, and their potential implications for the region.

A final environmental concern is regional air-quality and the ability of the metropolitan area to attain national air-quality standards. Air quality affects both the health of residents of the metropolitan area and the availability of federal funding assistance for transportation investments throughout the region. Consequently, the study will examine the likely impacts of the alternatives on exhaust emissions and regional air quality.

4. Other Considerations

Several other considerations will play a role in the evaluation of the alternatives. First, because any transportation improvement should be a cost-effective investment, the study will evaluate each alternative in terms of benefits produced compared to costs incurred. Second, because any toll revenues or transit-farebox receipts generated by an alternative may not be sufficient to cover its costs, the study will identify the potential need for and sources of additional funding for the capital, operating, and maintenance costs of each alternative. Third, because benefits, costs, and impacts may be distributed unevenly across the population, the study will examine each alternative in terms of who benefits, who pays, and who is subject to any adverse impacts.

5. Evaluation Measures

Given the transportation problem, the environmental concerns, and the other considerations outlined in the problem statement, the North Crossing Study will necessarily produce a broad range of information for consideration by state and local decisionmakers and the public. The information will be organized into six perspectives on the performance of each alternative. This section identifies the specific measures that will be developed to quantify performance, to the extent possible, from each of those perspectives.

1. The effectiveness of the alternative in improving accessibility and travel conditions.
 - Total benefits to users of the transportation system
 - Levels of service on principal highway facilities
 - Travel times to selected activity centers: peak and off-peak, highway and transit
 - Accessibility of residents to employment: jobs within specified travel times, highway and transit
 - Accessibility of employers to workers: households within specified travel times, highway and transit
 - Volumes on selected facilities (American Legion Bridge, Point of Rocks Bridge, new crossing, etc.)
 - System redundancy – number of trips “re-routable” between existing and new crossings

2. The impact of the alternative on the regional economy and on the ability of the region to compete nationally for high-quality employment.
 - Total benefits to the regional economy (jobs added, tax base, national competitive standing), as projected by the Expert Panel

- Differences in economic impacts (jobs added, tax base, national competitive standing) across individual jurisdictions within the region, as projected by the Expert Panel
3. The extent to which implementation of the alternative could be accomplished with minimum harm to the human and natural environment, and in a way consistent with local and state land-use policies.

The human environment

- Direct residential/business/farm property impacts – number of takings and acreage required
- Proximity impacts on residences/businesses/farms within 1,500(?) feet of the centerline
- Community impacts – facilities, disruption, barriers to circulation
- Parks and recreation areas – number, acreage required, proximity effects
- National Register sites (listed and eligible) and archeological sites – number, acreage required, proximity effects”

The natural environment

- Streams, wetlands, floodplains – number, nature, likely impacts, implications for approvals
- Chesapeake Bay Critical Areas
- Aquifer(s)
- Known rare, threatened or endangered species habitat
- Forests
- Air Quality (MWWCOG analysis of conformity implications)

Consistency with local and state land-use policies

- Comprehensive plans
- Priority Funding Areas in Maryland – direct impacts and consistency with policy
- Agricultural Reserve – direct impacts and consistency with policy

4. The cost-effectiveness of the alternative in terms of benefits generated per dollar of investment in capital costs, operations, and maintenance of the new facilities.
- User benefits per dollar cost (capital, operating, maintenance)
5. The financial feasibility of the alternative in terms of the availability of toll revenues, fare revenues, existing funding sources, and new funding sources of sufficient magnitude to pay for capital, operating, and maintenance costs.
- Self-financing ability through tolls and benefit-assessment districts
 - Risks and sensitivity to risks in the revenue projections
 - Magnitude of funding needed to cover shortfall in revenue generation
6. The distribution of costs, benefits, and other impacts of each alternative on various population groups with attention to differences in these distributions.
- Characteristics of affected communities
 - Travel benefits by location
 - Characteristics of households directly impacted
 - Distribution of funding costs between users and non-users

As the study progresses, this initial listing of measures may evolve as more information is developed about the performance and impacts of the alternatives, and as additional comments are provided by the public and local officials through the study's outreach efforts.

6. Transportation Alternatives

This section provides an initial list of the transportation alternatives that will be considered in the study. This list may change as additional input is provided by the public and local officials, as alternatives are added or dropped in response to initial findings on the performance of the alternatives and the conditions in the corridor, and as the definitions of the alternatives are refined throughout the course of the study.

Alternative #1: No Build: The Constrained Long Range Plan

The No-Build alternative would provide no new Potomac Crossing but would include all projects in the most recently approved and adopted Constrained Long Range Transportation Plan for the National Capital Region. Major projects in the Plan for the North Crossing Study area include:

Maryland - Highway

- I-70, construct/widen to 6 lanes, Mt. Phillip Rd. to MD 144FA, 5.3 miles, 2010
- I-270 Spurs, interchange improvements, 2000, 2010
- I-270 interchange at Watkins Mill Rd., 2025
- I-270, interchange at MD 117 with Park and Ride lot, 2003
- MD 28, widen to 6 lanes from Riffleford Rd. to Great Seneca Highway, 3.36 miles, 2004

Virginia - Highway

- I-495, widen to 10 lanes, Dulles Toll Road to American Legion Bridge, 2008
- VA 7, Leesburg Pike, widen to 6, 8 lanes from I-495 to Rolling Holly Drive, 2001, 2010
- VA 7, Leesburg Pike, widen to 6 lanes from Lakeland Drive to VA 228, 2001
- VA 7, Leesburg Pike, upgrade and widen to 6 lanes, including interchanges from VA 7/US 15 east to Algonkian Parkway, 2003, 2005
- Dulles Access Road, widen to 6 lanes from airport to VA 123, 2010
- Dulles Greenway, widen to 6 lanes from VA 772 to VA 28, 2010
- Fairfax County Parkway, construct, 4, 5, 6 lanes from VA 123 to VA 7, 2000, 2001, 2010, including interchange at Monument Dr./Fair Lakes Parkway, 2005

Maryland – Transit

- MARC rail extension from Point of Rocks to Frederick, 2002

Virginia – Transit and HOV

- Dulles Fixed Guideway Transit, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), 2003
- Dulles Fixed Guideway Transit, Rail, 2010
- Fairfax County Parkway/Franconia Springfield Parkway HOV, 2010
- I-495 HOV, from I-95/I-395 interchange to American Legion Bridge, 2006, 2007, 2008

The No-Build alternative also includes routine maintenance and safety improvements along the various facilities. **Unless otherwise noted, the components of the No-Build alternative are also included in all of the “Build” alternatives.**

Alternative #2: Point of Rocks Crossing

This alternative would widen existing US 15 and replace the existing bridge at Point of Rocks – expanding the highway and bridge from their current 2-lane configuration to a maximum of 6 lanes. The alignment would remain generally the same as the current alignment with some localized adjustments to meet current design standards.

Alternative #3: Beltway Widening

This alternative would provide additional highway capacity by adding lanes to the Capital Beltway. In Maryland, this alternative would widen the existing 8-lane roadway (4-lanes in each direction) to 10 lanes. The additional 2-lanes would be designated HOV lanes. In Virginia, this alternative would widen the existing 8-lane roadway (4-lanes in each direction) to add a concurrent-HOV facility (10 lanes), a barrier-separated HOV facility (12 lanes), or an express/local facility (10 lanes with HOV). This alternative would also widen the American Legion Bridge from its existing 10-lane configuration (8 general purpose lanes and 2 auxiliary lanes) to 12-lanes. These additional lanes would be designated HOV lanes rather than general-purpose lanes.

Alternative #4: Express Bus on Existing and Proposed HOV Lanes

This alternative would provides new express bus service to connect key Maryland and Virginia residential and employment activity centers within the North Crossing Study area. This new bus service would take advantage of the existing and proposed high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes on I-270, the Capital Beltway (I-495) and the Dulles Toll Road.

HOV lanes currently exist on I-270 and the Dulles Toll Road. On I-270, the southbound HOV lanes begin near I-370, continue along both spurs, and tie into the Capital Beltway. The I-270 northbound HOV lanes begin at the Capital Beltway, continue along both spurs, and terminate near MD 121. Ongoing studies are considering the extension of the southbound HOV lanes to be consistent with the MD 121 northbound terminus. On the Dulles Toll Road, the westbound HOV lanes begin immediately beyond the first toll plaza and terminate in the vicinity of VA 28. The eastbound HOV lanes begin in the vicinity of VA 28 and terminate between the last eastbound toll plaza and the Capital Beltway.

HOV lanes on the Capital Beltway are already under study by both Maryland and Virginia. Each state is investigating varying typical sections, but all include a minimum of one HOV lane in each direction. This includes HOV lanes on the American Legion Bridge.

Alternative #5: New Fixed Guideway Transit – “The Purple Line”

This alternative would construct a new Metrorail line to extend Metrorail service to key residential and employment centers generally along I-270 and the Capital Beltway. The new rail line would tie into the Red Line at Grosvenor. It would head in a westerly direction to the I-270 West Spur where it would turn south and follow I-270 to the Capital Beltway. The line would then follow the Capital Beltway across the Potomac River (adjacent to the American Legion Bridge) into Virginia. Continuing along the Capital Beltway, the line would tie into the proposed Dulles Metrorail line near Tysons Corner.

Alternative #6: New Roadway between the Fairfax County Parkway and a mid-point connection to I-270 (between Rockville and Gaithersburg)

This alternative would add a new Potomac crossing and roadway connecting the Fairfax County Parkway in Virginia and I-270 in Maryland in the vicinity of I-370. The roadway and crossing would have a maximum of six lanes using “parkway” and “Thinking Beyond the Pavement” cross section elements such as landscaping, bike paths, and so forth. The roadway and crossing may include HOV lanes. Regardless of lane use, the entire facility would charge tolls to permit private financing.

Alternative #7: New Roadway between the Fairfax County Parkway and a northerly connection to I-270

This alternative would add a new Potomac crossing and roadway connecting the Fairfax County Parkway in Virginia and I-270 in Maryland in the vicinity of MD 27/Father Hurley Boulevard. The roadway and crossing would have a maximum of six lanes using “parkway” and “Thinking Beyond the Pavement” cross section elements such as landscaping, bike paths, and so forth. The roadway and crossing may include HOV lanes. Regardless of lane designations, the entire facility would charge tolls to permit private financing.

Alternative #8: New Roadway between VA 28 and a mid-point connection to I-270 (between Rockville and Gaithersburg)

This alternative would add a new Potomac crossing and roadway connecting VA 28 and I-270 in the vicinity of I-370. The roadway and crossing would have a maximum of six lanes using “parkway” and “Thinking Beyond the Pavement” cross section elements such as landscaping, bike paths, and so forth. The roadway and crossing may include HOV lanes. Regardless of lane designations, the entire facility would charge tolls to permit private financing.

Alternative #9: New Roadway between VA 28 and a northerly connection to I-270

This alternative would add a new Potomac crossing and roadway connecting VA 28 and I-270 in the vicinity of MD 27/Father Hurley Boulevard. The roadway and crossing would have a maximum of six lanes using “parkway” and “Thinking Beyond the Pavement” cross section elements such as landscaping, bike paths, and so forth. The roadway and crossing may include HOV lanes. Regardless of lane designations, the entire facility would charge tolls to permit private financing.

Additional Guidance on Local Initiation of Alternatives Analysis Planning Studies

This memorandum provides enhanced guidance to local transit operators, metropolitan planning organizations, state Departments of Transportation, and other local transportation and public agencies on the procedures for initiating a corridor-level planning study that includes the consideration of fixed guideway transit alternatives (and which may require 49 USC Section 5309 New Starts funding). This memorandum supplements guidance previously issued by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) on *Advancing Major Transit Investments through Planning and Project Development (Version 1.1)* by specifying the basic information that local study sponsors should submit to FTA at the outset of their alternatives analysis study. FTA requests this information in order for it to better understand the nature of the corridor problems and the conceptual alternatives the local alternatives analysis study intends to address.

Background

Alternatives analysis has been a key part of FTA's process for advancing local fixed guideway transit projects for over 25 years. 49 USC 5309(e)(1)(A) requires that projects seeking New Starts funding be based upon the results of an alternatives analysis (and later, preliminary engineering). More importantly, an alternatives analysis has been a part of established transportation planning practice for several decades. At its core, alternatives analysis is about serving local decisionmaking. An effective alternatives analysis answers the questions: What are the problems in a corridor? What are their underlying causes? What are viable options for addressing these problems? What are their costs? What are their benefits?

Alternatives analysis is a locally managed study process that relies to a large extent on the information on regional travel patterns, problems, and needs generated as part of the metropolitan transportation planning process, as specified by 23 CFR Part 450 *FTA/Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Joint Final Rule on Metropolitan and Statewide Planning*. Local agencies participating in an alternatives analysis have broad latitude in how the study is to be performed, including the choice of whether to conduct the analysis under the review process established by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). For studies initiated under NEPA, FTA plays an early and active role in the alternatives analysis, as specified by 23 CFR 771 *FTA/FHWA Joint Final Rule on Environmental Impact and Related Procedures*.

FTA strongly desires to play such an early and active role in all alternatives analysis studies, including studies initiated outside the NEPA process. FTA has found that such involvement in local alternatives analysis studies yields the

greatest benefits. Specifically, FTA's early, active involvement in local alternatives analysis studies is intended to:

- 1) Assist local agencies in addressing technical and procedural issues early in the study process, rather than at the end when it may be too late to solve them efficiently;
- 2) Ensure that project information required for FTA's evaluation is developed consistent with good planning practice and FTA guidance;
- 3) Allow FTA to gain sufficient understanding of the resulting project to support FTA's decision later to advance it into preliminary engineering and, ultimately, final design.

If the alternatives analysis is done outside of NEPA, FTA's participation is further intended to help ensure that study results, including any elimination of alternatives from further consideration, are adequately supported and will likely "stand up" when NEPA review is initiated.

Requested Information

FTA therefore requests that local agencies that have recently initiated, or intend to initiate, an alternatives analysis that may result in the selection of a transit fixed guideway project proposed for funding under the Section 5309 New Starts program to notify their FTA Regional Office in writing of such studies. Prior to formally initiating the study (or as soon as possible for studies that have already been initiated), FTA requests the opportunity to review the following information:

Description of Study Area, Transportation Problems, and Needs. No two alternatives analyses studies are completely alike, because the analysis must respond to the unique conditions of the corridor under review. Because of its inherent national perspective, FTA cannot fully appreciate the context of any alternatives analysis study absent at least a basic understanding of the local study area and the specific problems and needs to be addressed in the study.

A well-specified statement of the problem for which alternative solutions are being analyzed is a key early step of the corridor planning process. When undertaken as part of the NEPA process, a study "purpose and need" establishes the problems that must be addressed in the analysis; serves as the basis for the development of project goals, objectives, and evaluation measures; and provides a framework for determining which alternatives should be considered as reasonable options in a given corridor. More fundamentally, the statement of purpose and need serves to articulate – and justify - why an agency is proposing to spend potentially large amounts of taxpayer's money to study and implement a project that may cause significant environmental impacts, and why these impacts are acceptable.

For studies performed outside of NEPA, the same type of information should be generated. Like the purpose and need statement, this information provides the context for performing the analysis and for identifying the measures against which alternatives strategies will be evaluated. It also serves as an introduction for decisionmakers (like FTA, but also local and state agencies), stakeholders, and the general public to the study area and its transportation problems and needs.

Study Goals, Objectives, and Preliminary Evaluation Measures. The establishment of study goals and objectives articulates the desired “end-state” of whatever transportation investment results from the alternatives analysis. It also drives the definition of the evaluation measures to be used in the study. Typically, evaluation measures are selected to assess how well (or poorly) each alternative meets the goals and objectives defined for a transportation improvement in the corridor.

Common categories of goals, objectives, and (therefore) measures include:

- 1) *Effectiveness* - the extent to which alternatives solve the stated transportation problems in the corridor;
- 2) *Impacts* - the extent to which the alternatives impact --- positively or negatively - nearby natural resources and neighborhoods, air quality, the adjacent transportation network and facilities, land use, the local economy, etc.;
- 3) *Cost effectiveness* – the extent to which the costs of the alternatives are commensurate with their benefits;
- 4) *Financial feasibility* – the extent that funds required to build and operate the alternatives are likely to be available; and
- 5) *Equity* – that is, the costs and benefits of the alternatives are distributed fairly across different population groups.

FTA notes that the development of at least a preliminary set of evaluation criteria at the beginning of the alternatives analysis helps ensure that the study generates the kinds of information that policymakers need to select a locally preferred alternative, while at the same time limiting the data collection and analysis effort to only that information that will be used to support decisionmaking.

Description of Conceptual Alternatives. The development of alternatives to be considered in the alternatives analysis study closely follows the explanation of the corridor problem and definition of study goals and objectives. Properly developed alternatives help ensure that the study produces the full set of information needed by decisionmakers. Naturally, the alternatives should address the study’s problem statement and goals and objectives. In addition, the alternatives should be structured

to isolate the differences among potential solutions to the transportation problem and to highlight the trade-offs inherent in the selection of a preferred alternative.

The development and definition of alternatives is typically an iterative process. The first step in this process is the conceptual definition of a broad range of strategies for improving conditions in the corridor. These conceptual alternatives are ideally produced in system planning and then reviewed at the earliest stages of the alternatives analysis study. For each alternative, the conceptual definition includes the preliminary identification of candidate alignments and operating strategies. Defined operating strategies – as distinct from detailed operating plans developed as planning and project development proceeds – give general ideas of overall bus service levels, service standards, and guideway service options. These definitions are sufficient to address such general concerns as ranges of costs, ridership potential and financial feasibility. More basically, they provide the information necessary for decisionmakers and other stakeholders to confirm that no reasonable alternative (in terms of meeting corridor needs) is being excluded from the analysis, as well as understand the magnitude of the costs and benefits associated with the various options for improving conditions in the corridor.

Subsequent evaluation and screening of these conceptual alternatives will narrow the range of viable alternatives to a manageable number to carry forward into a detailed analysis. This analysis includes the development of more detailed definition of alternatives, including an adequate transportation system management alternative likely to serve as the project's Baseline Alternative for New Starts reporting purposes.

FTA notes that the information it is requesting is not intended to require any additional work on behalf of the study sponsor, but rather draw upon previous planning studies and the routine preparatory work necessary to initiate any comprehensive multimodal planning analysis. Furthermore, if the information specified in this guidance has not already been disseminated (in whatever format) to local study stakeholders, it is suggested that the information submitted to FTA also be made available to these parties to enhance their understanding of the study and the context within which it is being performed.

There is no specific format for the preparation and submission of this information. FTA anticipates that a memorandum or similar document of no more than 10 to 15 pages would satisfy its information needs.

FTA does not "approve" this submission, but will review it and may provide suggestions intended to enhance the alternatives analysis study, and better prepare the study sponsor for developing the information required to support a later request to advance a locally preferred alternative into preliminary engineering.

This information should be sent to the FTA Regional Administrator for the area being studied. The Regional Administrator will then forward the information to the FTA Office of Planning and Environment, which will review and provide comments. FTA may further initiate a conference call with the study sponsor to discuss the submitted materials and outline "next steps" in the conduct of the alternatives analysis study.

Additional Information

Additional information on alternatives analysis and the planning and project development process for major transit capital investments is available at http://www.fta.dot.gov/grant_programs/transportation_planning/major_investment/9924_ENG_HTML.htm, or from the FTA Regional Office.



20-Year Transit Development Plan

A C O M M U N I T Y V I S I O N F O R T H E F U T U R E

In 1999, C-TRAN's funding was reduced by 40% with the passage of Initiative 695. Since then, C-TRAN has maintained service by drawing on its reserve funds. Money saved to pay for buses and transit facilities is now being spent on daily operations. At the current service level, C-TRAN will exhaust its available reserves in 2005.

C-TRAN is limited by State legislation to a locally approved sales tax for any additional funding (not to exceed 0.9%). Currently, C-TRAN collects 0.3% sales tax that partially funds existing services. Any increase in sales tax could only be approved through a county-wide vote.

In developing its first ever 20-Year Transit Development Plan, C-TRAN has asked the community to determine how and at what level we should operate in the future. This resulted in the development of five different service and funding alternatives. Following significant public involvement and input, the C-TRAN Board of Directors recently approved the following:

- Adopted Alternative #2 as the preferred alternative (0.3% sales tax increase for a county-wide transit system—equal to three cents on a ten dollar purchase);
- Instructed staff to develop a final service and implementation plan for Alternative #2;
- Instructed staff to develop a final service and implementation plan for Alternative #1 (no new revenue/service reductions); and
- Directed staff to submit a ballot question for the November 2, 2004 general election for a 0.3% sales tax increase (equal to three cents on a ten dollar purchase).

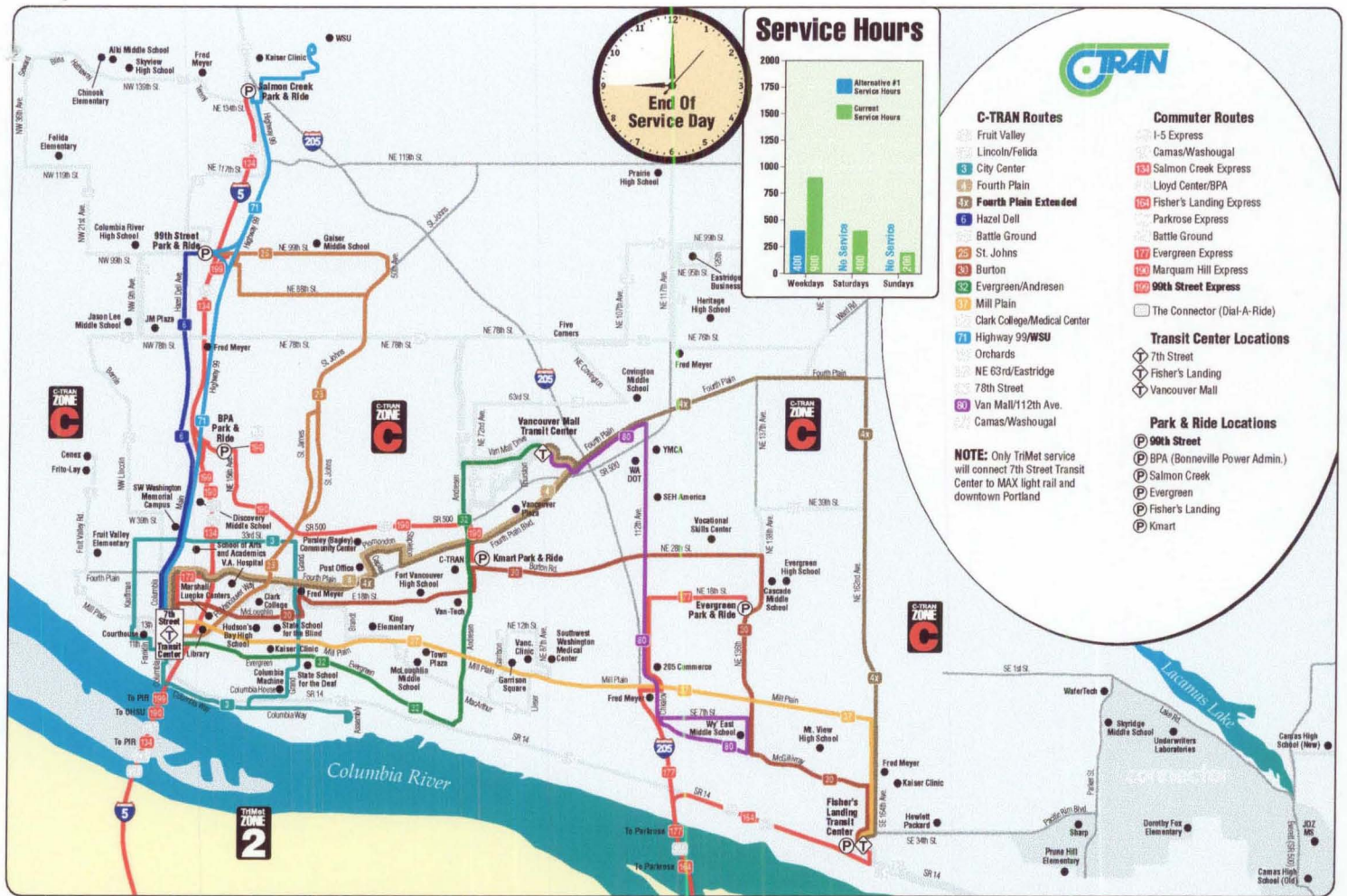
The following pages include information on both service alternatives that were developed as part of the 20-Year Transit Development Plan.

General Introduction/Disclaimer

- Routes shown on the following pages are conceptual.
- Actual routes and service will be developed based on travel needs, public input, funding, and growth.

Fare Assumptions Common to Both Alternatives

- Fares raised to keep pace with inflation and cover more costs.
- Paratransit service (C-VAN) meets federal American with Disabilities Act (ADA) Standards. C-VAN fares increased to maximum allowable under ADA.



Alternative #1 No Sales Tax Increase: Reduced Service

Service and taxing boundary: Vancouver Urban Growth Boundary (UGB). This excludes: La Center, Ridgefield, Yacolt, Battle Ground, Camas, and Washougal.

Concept: Reduction in service equivalent to current level of sales tax.

Comparison with Current Service:

- Frequency of bus service: Decreases by an average of five minutes during commute periods.
- Peak hour/commuting service reduced by 1/2 hour for most routes.
- Evening service: Reduced one hour.
- Weekday service: Reduced by 44%.
- Weekend service: Eliminated.
- No Dial-a-Ride service provided (such as the Connector)
- Vanpools eliminated unless funded through private sources.

Commuter Service:

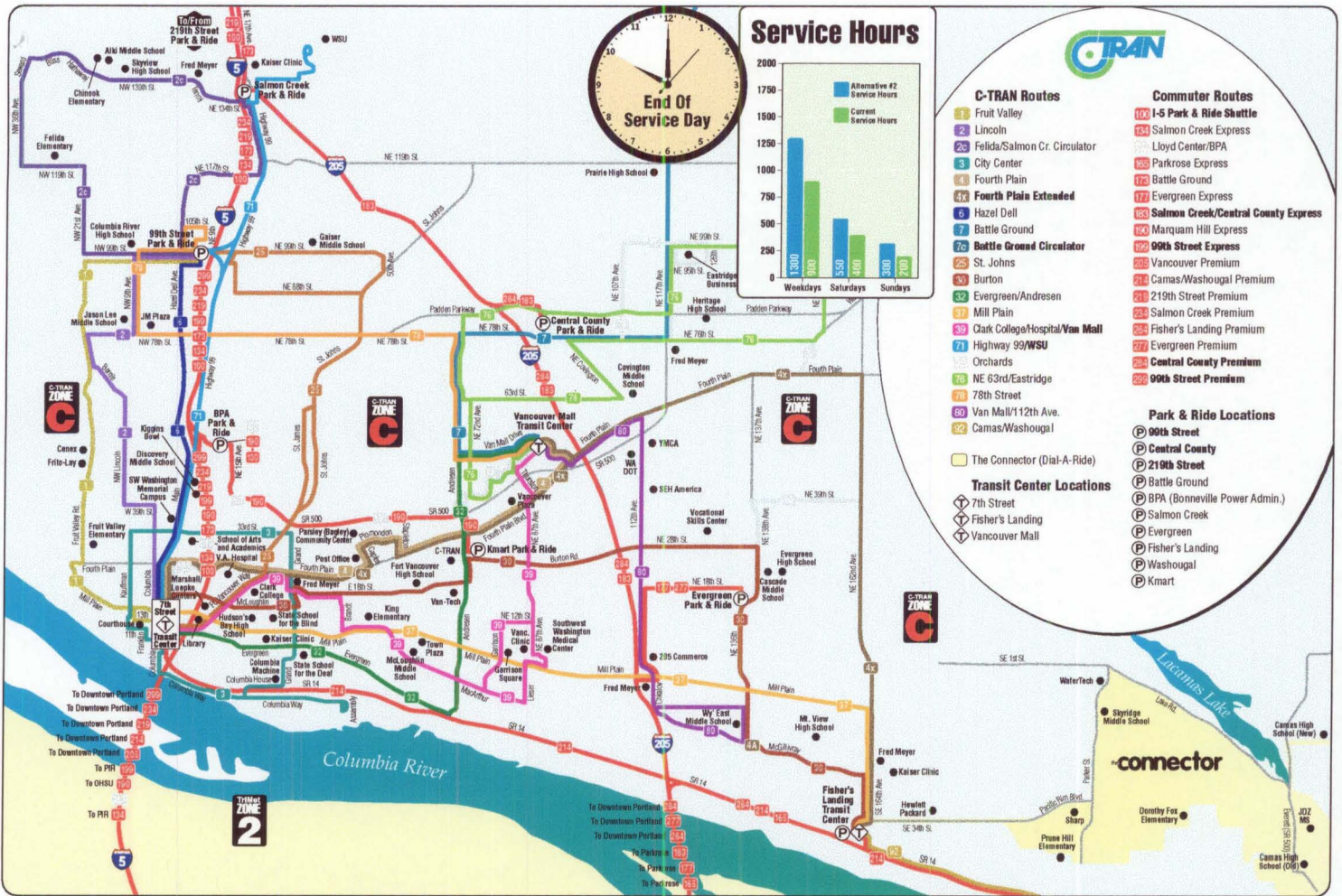
- Commuter service connects to MAX stations. No service to downtown Portland.

New Facilities:

- Construction of 99th Street Park & Ride Facility.
- Minimal improvements to rider amenities.

Benefits:

- High-ridership routes retained.
- No new funding required.



Alternative #2 0.3% sales tax increase: Improved County Service

Service and taxing boundary: Clark County

Concept: Improves service frequency and geographic coverage.

Comparison with Current Service:

- Frequency: Increases by an average of three minutes during commute times, is about the same during mid-days and evenings.
- Evening service: Most service to 10 PM.
- Weekday service: Increases by 44%.
- Weekend service: Increases by 42%.
- Most current bus service retained, some routes modified.
- Dial-a-Ride service (like the Connector) provided for riders not well served by fixed route service.

Commuter Service:

- Commuter routes connect to MAX stations with regular fare.
- Direct bus service to downtown Portland with premium fare.
- New mid-day and evening commuter bus service from light rail stations.

New Facilities:

- Construction of 99th Street Park & Ride Facility.
- New park and rides at I-5/219th St. and I-205/Central County.
- Improvements to rider amenities include bus stop pads, shelters, benches and lighting.

Benefits:

- New bus service added (e.g., Battle Ground Circulator, I-205 commuter routes to Portland).
- Enhanced service and facilities serving much of Clark County.
- High ridership corridors (e.g. #37, #71) have traffic signal improvements to reduce travel times for riders.

ALTERNATIVES COMPARISON

	2003	2023	2023
	Current	Alt. #1	Alt. #2
	Current Service	Reduced Service	Improved Service
Sales tax increase	NA	0.0%	0.3%
Taxing/Service Area	County-wide	Vancouver	County-wide
Serves projected growth areas	Fair	Poor	Good
Number of routes	26	15	35
Innovative service zones	1	4**	9
Peak Hour Frequency (average minutes)*	27 minutes	33 minutes	24 minutes
Mid-day Frequency (average minutes)	28 minutes	37 minutes	28 minutes
Evening Frequency (average minutes)	30 minutes	39 minutes	31 minutes
End of Service Day	9-10 PM	9 PM	10 PM
Weekday service hours	900 hours	400 hours	1300 hours
Saturday service hours	400 hours	0 hours	550 hours
Sunday service hours	200 hours	0 hours	300 hours
New/Existing park and ride facilities	0/6	1/5	3/7
Choice of commuter services	Express, MAX	MAX	Express, MAX
Mid-day and evening commuter service	No	No	Yes
Improved signalization for faster service	Limited	Limited	Limited
Limited stop/express local buses	No	No	No
Paratransit Service	Yes	Yes	Yes

*Frequency on highest ridership routes (#4, #37 & #71) every 10-15 minutes (except for Alternative #1).

**Only Vancouver Urban Growth Boundary area served.

Spring 04 -- Update

Project Accomplishments:

- Purpose and Need, Goals and Objectives
- Evaluation Factors
- Alternatives Development, Screening and Refinement
- Work with Kenton on Denver Connector alternative
- Traffic and Design work nearly completed – by June

Project Schedule:

- Summer 04 - environmental analyses
- Fall 04 – full results – public involvement, draft recommendations, mitigation and enhancement
- Spring 05 – Public Hearing on EA
- Summer 05 - Final Recommendations/Revised EA
- Fall 05 – FHWA findings

C-TRAN
Board of Directors Meeting

C-TRAN's MISSION: Provide, safe, reliable, efficient mobility choices
Focus Areas: Customers, employees, resources, quality, community outreach

DATE: Tuesday, September 9, 2003

TIME: 5:15 p.m.

PLACE: Rose F. Besserman Community Room, Fisher's Landing
Center, 3510 SE 164th Avenue, Vancouver, Washington (360-696-4494)

C-TRAN's Fisher's Landing Facility is accessible by C-TRAN Routes #30 - Burton; #37 - Mill Plain; #80 - Van Mall/Fisher's; and #92 - Camas Washougal.

AGENDA

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF AUGUST 12, 2003

CITIZEN COMMUNICATIONS

1. LETTER FROM THOMAS D. MUSSER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CLARK COUNTY FAIR, 17402 NE DELFEL ROAD, RIDGEFIELD, WA 98642

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Transmittal of claims numbered 059463 through 059533 plus payroll for July 2003 for a grand total of \$1,554,588.74.
2. Transmittal of claims numbered 059534 through 059747 for a grand total of \$739,376.55.
3. SPECIAL SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE VACANCIES, C-TRAN STAFF REPORT #03-028

To fill two vacancies on the Special Services Advisory Committee (SSAC) for Community-at-Large and Visually Impaired Representatives.

Continued . . .

SW Region	9-8-2003
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Regional Administrator
	Executive Secretary
	Project Development
	Plans & Design
	Envir. Landscape
	Utilities
	P.E.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Transportation Planning Mgr.
	Communications Mgr.
	Operations Engineer
	Traffic Operations
	Administrative Operations
	CapFac TEF
	Special Projects
	M.S.
	Construction Engineer
	Construction Support Eng.
	Construction Assistants
	Materials Lab
	P.E.
	Program Manager
	Proj. Cont. I.T.
	Accounting
	Personnel
	Affirmative Action
	Credit Consultant
	Safety & Health
	Transit
	Real Estate Services
	File

Federal Transit Administration's New Start Process

www.rtc.wa.gov

Outline

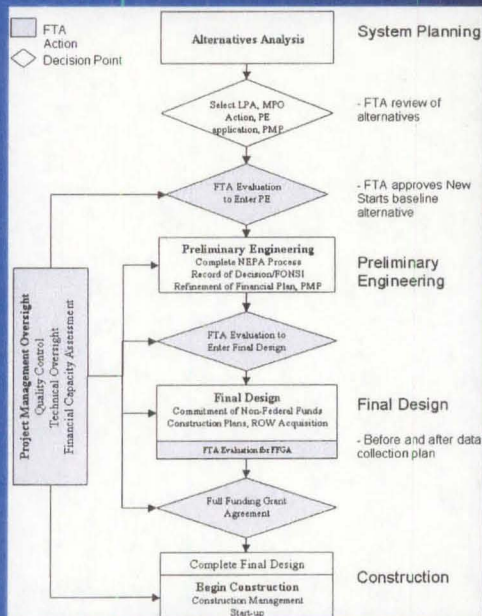
- Policy Overview of FTA's New Start Process
- Why Fixed Guideway? ...
- Next Steps

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But First: How did we get here?

- Adopted Metropolitan Transportation Plan, 1994 to 2001
- I-5 partnership recommendations
- Amended MTP in 2002 to include a strategic plan element
- In 2003 submitted congressional earmark request for \$2 million for Alternatives Analysis

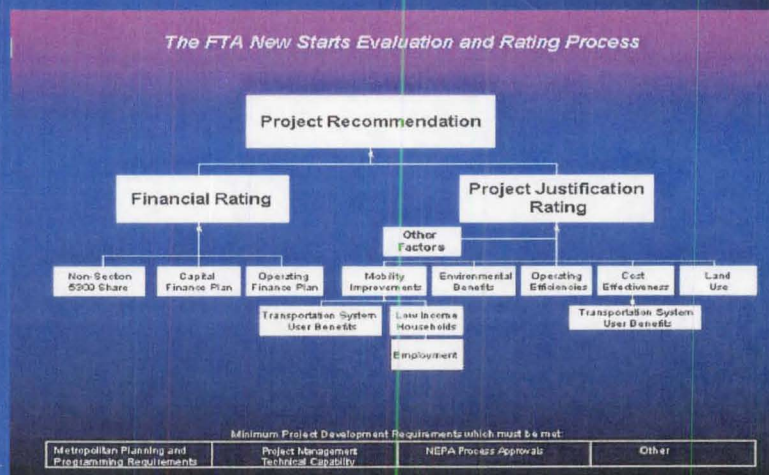
New Start Process



New Start Process, What Really Matters

- Transit user benefits
- Cost effectiveness
- Transit supportive land use

New Start Evaluation and Rating Process



New Start- #1 Transit User Benefits



- Calculated by travel model, measure includes shift in transit mode share (base case compared to guideway alternative) that is converted to travel time benefits
- Highest user benefits (fixed guideway system) are in corridors with high transit use and has current transit capacity limitations
- Congestion relief not measured, but high congestion corridors tend to show high transit user benefits

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New Start- #2 Cost Effectiveness



- Annualized incremental (bus base case compared to guideway alternative) capital and annual operating costs divided by mobility benefits = costs per hour of benefits
- Congressional pressure on New Start program means projects with a low cost effectiveness will not receive FTA funds

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New Start- #3 Land Use

- FTA believes transit supportive land use is a key part of a successful project
- Current land use in proposed corridor
- Planned land use policies (regional and station area)
- History of supportive land use policies
- Future land use impacts of the project

New Start- Overall Project Rating

- Combination of project justification and financial ratings
- Medium-high to medium rating on project justification and financial support is required to receive a “highly recommended” to “recommended” final FTA rating.
- New Start projects with less than “recommended” rating are unlikely to be funded

Alternatives Analysis (AA)

- First step in FTA New Start process
- Determine and define range of transit alternatives
- Evaluate alternatives in terms of alignments, ability to meet mobility needs, benefits, costs, and impacts
- Recommend Locally Preferred Alternative

Why Fixed Guideway? ...

- Statement of why we need to pursue the project including its economic benefits
- Identify the problems to be addressed
- Match the problems to the proposed fixed guideway project

Next Steps

- Secure \$2 million New Start earmark request
- Meet with federal agency partners; FHWA and FTA
- Identify critical related transit system issues, service and financing
- Identify key land use decisions, current and future

Next Steps (cont.)

- Inform the community
- Explore need to have a top level elected official and/or staff policy group
- Identify land use, transit, and regional transportation decision making roles/responsibilities
- Determine agency/staff roles/responsibilities