

Historical Perspective

In June 1983 the Urban Mass Transportation Administration—now the Federal Transit Administration— implemented Code of Federal Regulations #49, Part 613, which stipulated that the product of the urban transportation planning process must include a short range transit plan (SRTP). And the state law—California Public Utilities Code, Subsection 1300303—gave the agency and other transit operators the responsibility for short range capital and service planning, which included developing and approving a three to five-year transportation improvement program, with annual updates.

Until 1996, the agency and 16 Los Angeles County municipal bus operators prepared SRTPs. Following the approval by their respective boards, the municipal bus operators submitted their SRTPs to staff for review.

In the last quarter of each fiscal year, the Planning and Programming staff reviewed agencies SRTPs to assure that all Federal, State, and local reporting requirements were achieved; data collection efforts were coordinated; and, budgets were consistent Regional Transit Plan with regional planning policies and funding assumptions. The product of this review was the Countywide SRTP. The Countywide SRTP was then forwarded to SCAG in partial fulfillment of Federal and State requirements.

Until 1997, the Regional Short Range Transit Plans were simply the compilation of 17 documents with little or no collaboration. In contrast, the most recent Plan—called the Regional Transit Plan to avoid confusion with the newly adopted Short Range Transportation Plan— was borne from a collaborative process that emphasized improving interagency service coordination that began in 2001.

After we initiated the Plan, the Bus Operations Subcommittee (BOS) coordinated a

study through an interagency taskforce called the Transit Operators Working Group (TOWG), which began its work by agreeing on three objectives:

- It must be obvious that the Regional Transit Plan is the result of collaboration among all participating operators.
- Planning and implementation efforts must primarily focus on projects that enhance seamless travel between adjacent systems.
- Improving customer service is a very important aspect of this study.

During the course of the two-year process, TOWG worked extensively on issues related to service changes, coordination and customer service, and finally agreed on a list of 14 goals and an action plan for their implementation.

Staff intends to review the Regional Transit Plan annually to determine how well it is being implemented.



Regional Transit Plan—Action Plans

Serving Our Customers

Action Plan #1 – Improving 1-800 COMMUTE

In July 2002, MTA's marketing staff began implementing the agency's "Optimize 1-800 COMMUTE" program. The test period will last approximately three months. The program's primary objective is to reduce call-wait times by spreading calls throughout the day; encouraging people who call at peak times to try calling at non-peak times.

The outreach program includes:

- Printed materials ("Take One" pamphlets and car cards)
- "On-hold messages" indicating: 1) the best times to call and 2) that callers should try using www.mta.net to get their trip information

The cost of the campaign will be absorbed by MTA as part of the agency's regular marketing expenditures for Fiscal Year 2003.

Evaluation Period and Measures of Success

The success of this action plan will be evaluated during September and October 2002. The plan will be considered successful if it meets the following objectives:

1. The average and maximum call-wait times are less than what was measured during April and May 2002, and
2. The number of daily hits at www.mta.net is higher than the average for April and May 2002.

Next Steps

The MTA action plan addresses only the issue of call-wait time. There are, unfortunately, issues with the program that go beyond excessive call-wait time. The BOS should consider undertaking an independent study of the 1-800 COMMUTE program to evaluate:

- Customer satisfaction with the service
- Quality and consistency of the information being provided by representatives
- Cost of the program and options for more cost effective service delivery

The BOS should discuss the need for this study after the MTA finishes its initial evaluation in October.

Action Plan #2 – Improving Bus Stop Signage

The BOS should create a regional bus stop signage subcommittee. The objective of this subcommittee is to develop a detailed improvement plan for signage and display maps at regional stops and transit centers. Given the confluence of routes in downtown Los Angeles, the subcommittee should include representatives from both LADOT and MTA. It should also include at least one representative from a public works department within the region since public works is likely to be the party responsible for fixture installation and/or maintenance at most bus stops.

At a minimum the plan should address:

- Level of information at on-street stops vs. transit centers
- Themes, logos and visual cues
- Who will handle the installation?
- Who will handle the maintenance?
- Implementation schedule
- Costs and potential funding

Next Steps

This action plan will be split into two phases. Phase I will focus on issues for the City of Los Angeles' downtown area. Phase II will focus on the rest of the region.

The BOS should identify Phase I subcommittee members before the end of November 2002. The group should plan on having a report ready for the BOS by March 2003. Final recommendations and requests for funding could be ready by April 2003.

Phase II issues and action items will be explored during FY 2003/04.

Action Plan #3 - Expanding Regional Rapid Bus Services

In mid-September the MTA Board will be asked to approve the first part of the Rapid Bus Phase II program. If approved, the six corridors in Phase IIA could begin receiving Rapid Bus service as early as FY 2004.

The question then becomes...where to go from there? MTA has identified an additional 17 corridors throughout the region that it believes warrant some level of Rapid Bus service. Nearly all of the transit operators agree that the Rapid Bus program is a high priority for the region and should be moved forward quickly. However, not all of them agree on: 1) the criteria used for determining a Rapid Bus corridor and 2) the current prioritization of the corridors.

It is recommended that the BOS create a Regional Rapid Bus subcommittee. At a minimum the subcommittee should include:

- MTA (Chief Planner - MTA Rapid Bus Program)
- IOE Municipal Operators (4 representatives from potential Rapid Bus operators)
- Local or regional traffic departments (at least two people)
- Representatives from the Local Transit Systems Subcommittee (LTSS)

The objectives of this group should be:

- Review and reach consensus on Rapid Bus Corridor evaluation criteria¹
- Update the cost estimates for each corridor prepared by MTA
- Reach consensus on the prioritization of the selected corridors
- Develop guidelines for determining which agencies should operate which corridors
- Determine what the major obstacles are to implementing services
- Develop draft regional guidelines to address the signal prioritization needed for Rapid Bus deployment
- Develop draft regional guidelines to address on-street issues (traffic enforcement, parking, bus lanes, bus bays, etc.)
- Reach consensus on performance criteria and measures of success

Next Steps

Given the high priority of this program the subcommittee should plan on having its first meeting no later than the end of November. A preliminary report from the subcommittee outlining findings, issues and preliminary recommendations would be due to the BOS sometime during the first quarter of 2003.

Action Plan #4 – Pasadena Gold Line Bus/Rail Interface

The opening of service on the Pasadena Gold Line LRT will likely require changes to the bus services provided by MTA, Foothill Transit, City of Pasadena, Montebello Transit, and LADOT. These operators are already working together on a coordinated plan to address the issue of bus/rail interface.

Next Steps

The preliminary plan will be ready by August 2002. Community meetings will be held in August and September. During the month of September there will also be meetings

¹ MTA has already developed an initial set of screening criteria.

scheduled with the affected operators (MTA, Foothill, Montebello, etc.) as well as with representatives from the Cities of Sierra Madre and Arcadia, which have expressed interest in operating shuttles. Information from the on-going outreach efforts will be used to prepare an updated plan that will be reviewed during a public hearing in January 2003. The final plan is scheduled for approval by the MTA Board in March 2003, and the service changes will be ready by the time trains begin operating in July 2003. This assumes, of course, that the operators are successful in identifying and securing the additional funds needed for implementation.

Action Plan #5 – Fare and Transfer Programs

The UFS program is being overseen by the MTA with input from a regional consortium. The current implementation schedule for improvements on the MTA bus and rail network is shown in Figure 5-1. A detailed timetable for the municipal operators is still being drafted, but full implementation is expected during FY 2004/05.

Figure 5-1 UFS – MTA Implementation Schedule

Milestone	Date
Notice to proceed issued	March 02
	April 03
Complete pilot testing for MTA bus and rail system	June 03
	October 03
	March 04
	April 04
	July 04
	February 05

Access Services has implemented Free Fare agreements with fixed-route transit operators that allow Access Paratransit riders to board fixed-route buses and rail for free. Systems currently participating in the Free Fare program include Azusa Transit, Big Blue Bus (implementation delayed due to technical issues), Carson Transit, LADOT DASH and Commuter Express, LACMTA bus and rail, Monterey Park Spirit Bus, Norwalk Transit and Hollywood Transit.

Next Steps

The EZpass program should undergo a complete review at the end of FY 2002/03 to determine its level of success.

The MTA and the regional consortium should continue working on the issues linked to UFS. Special emphasis should be placed on developing a plan to control the escalating costs and identifying funds to help the municipal operators implement the program.

The MTA and IOE Municipal Operators recently re-adopted their interagency transfer policy agreement. A new and more detailed agreement should be evaluated during the next twelve months.

Access Services will continue to work with member agencies, including the municipal operators not already in the free fare program, as well as Metrolink, to look at the feasibility of finalizing agreements during FY 2003.

Action Plan #6 – Regional Owl Stop Program

Not all of the transit operators are convinced that the Owl Stop program will be a valuable and cost effective service to passengers. There are still a number of issues to resolve before this program can move forward. Policies must be developed to describe the workings of the program, including guidelines for the operators. Notification must be made to any bus operator unions affected. A marketing program must be developed to inform the public. Customer relations staff must be informed and prepared to answer questions from the public regarding the program.

Next Steps

The MTA has been taking the lead on this issue. It is recommended that MTA convene a subcommittee of transit operators, and possibly 1 or 2 outside members from the public or social service agencies, to further evaluate the advantages, disadvantages and issues related to the program. The subcommittee should plan on presenting a draft report to the BOS before the end of FY 2003/04.

Action Plan #7 – Regional Transit Centers

The MTA has identified the need for additional regional transit centers as a high priority for the region. The objective of developing additional transit centers is to improve regional service connectivity and operational efficiency.

During the development of the MTA FY 2004-2008 Short Range Transit Plan, criteria will be developed to help prioritize transit center needs within the sectors for consideration during the regional funding process. These criteria will consider things such as mobility, service of key regional trip generators and activity centers, existing bus layover capacity shortages and operational efficiency opportunities. The goal is to have the new criteria available for the Call For Projects in early 2004.

Next Steps

By September 2002, the MTA will establish a committee with representatives from the BOS and the Local Transit Systems Subcommittee (LTSS) to develop an outline of the transit capital application. The outline will be reviewed with the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), BOS and LTSS by October. Later this fall, the MTA will report back to the BOS on specific transit center needs identified for each of the MTA's service sectors.

Action Plan #8 – Managing Regional ADA Costs

In September 2002, the MTA Board directed staff to look at service costs and governance issues related to Access Services, and to report back to the Board with any recommendations by December 2002.

Next Steps

Access Services will have its plan ready for the MTA Board to review by mid-December 2002. The Plan should also be shared with the BOS.

Transit Operator Coordination

Action Plan #9 – Regional Coordination

MTA is rapidly moving ahead with the completion of its Service Sectors Initiative. It is anticipated that all five sectors will be operational by October 2002. The sector plan should have a positive impact on transit operator coordination throughout the region.

The formation of the TOWG has also had a positive impact on regional coordination. It is important that the momentum created by the TOWG be carried forward. The question is how to do this?

Currently, there are five sub-committees of the MTA Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). Two groups focus on transit issues:

- BOS – Bus Operators Subcommittee
- LTSS – Local Transit Systems Subcommittee

The BOS is made up of representatives of the larger transit systems that receive formula funds. The LTSS is comprised of representatives from the smaller, community-based systems.

The LTSS is an important resource that should be more involved in addressing regional service coordination issues, especially those involving the interface between community-based systems and the regional bus network.

Next Steps

It is recommended that the LTSS immediately begin participating in the Regional Short Range Transit Plan process. This would include participation in the RS RTP working group plus involvement in several action plan teams including:

- Action Plan #1
- Action Plan #2

- Action Plan #4
- Action Plan #5
- Action Plan #8
- Action Plan #12
- Action Plan #14

Action Plan #10 – Updating the Operator SRTP format

A TOWG subcommittee reviewed the operator SRTP format and developed a new format which the group feels will make these planning documents more useful for anyone who uses them.

The new format is centered on four guiding principles:

1. Keep the planning process simple
2. Avoid “reinventing the wheel”
3. Create documents that will be used by staff on a regular basis
4. Create documents that the public can easily understand

Each SRTP will now be reformatted into two sections:

Section 1 – Services and Actions

This section provides a brief description of the service and is separated into Fixed Route and Dial-A-Ride operations. The section will include:

- Route information
- Service area
- Maps and Schedules
- Changes since previous SRTP
- Planned service improvements for the next three years (include most recent Line by Line Analysis or Business Plan)
- A description of how the operator satisfies ADA requirements
- A description of agency participation in any of the following six coordination initiatives – reduce passenger travel time, improve customer information services, improve passenger travel experiences, improve the ability to track resources efficiently, advances in area of joint procurement
- Descriptions of any significant land acquisition, fleet acquisition, new technology, changes to facilities or other large capital purchases
- Any significant legislative activities

Section 2 – Required Tables

Section 2 will contain the required Financial or “L” tables:

- L-1 Current Fare Structure
- L-2 Fleet inventory
- L-3 (A&B) 2001 Audited plus 2002 and 2003
- L-4 2001 Audited plus 2002 and 2003
- L-5 2001 Audited
- L-6 Response to recommendations from last performance audit
- L-7 Capital project Summary – 2003, 2004 and 2005

Next Steps

None. The new format is already in use.

Action Plan #11 – Coordinating Service Change Dates

Establishing uniform service change dates and policies is not going to be an easy task, especially considering the restrictive nature of existing union contracts. However, there are enough benefits to warrant moving ahead with this concept.

Next Steps

A BOS subcommittee should be created during FY 2003/04 to explore this issue in greater detail and to develop an action plan for implementing any recommendations. At a minimum the group should explore:

- Developing uniform service change policies
- Developing uniform service change date(s)

The subcommittee should be prepared to report back to the BOS during the first half of FY 2003/04.

Using Resources Wisely

Action Plan #12 – Reducing Service Duplication

As noted in Chapter 4, the MTA has already taken a first pass at identifying corridors where potential service duplication might exist. Admittedly the identification of corridors was not based on any in-depth analysis, and there is still much debate regarding the definition of “duplication”. However, this initial list does provide a good starting place for the operators. This is an issue that should be pursued as soon as possible so that any “excess” resources can be reallocated to new services like Rapid Bus or community circulators.

Next Steps

Each of the MTA service sectors, in conjunction with their local transit partners, should study the issue of service duplication in more detail. At a minimum the groups should:

- Review the MTA's current list of duplicative services
- Reach consensus on a regional definition of duplicative service
- Reach consensus on reduction targets (e.g. annual service hours)
- Prepare an updated list of target corridors and services
- Prepare an action plan for implementing the service reduction program

Each sector group should be prepared to present its recommendations to the BOS before the end of FY 2002/03.

Action Plan #13 – Joint Procurement

The TOWG should organize a work group to identify and analyze joint procurement opportunities and implementation strategies. The members of the group should include representatives of both large and small agencies. Some should have backgrounds in purchasing or maintenance.

Currently transit maintenance managers from southern California agencies meet periodically during the year to share information. Such a forum could be used as a starting point for a work group. The group focus should be on starting a few small-scale joint procurement projects involving a limited number of operators to gain experience on how such projects are managed.

The work group should identify a list of potential items or categories that have joint procurement possibilities. For example:

- Bus parts in conjunction with an interagency inventory system
- Add-on equipment such as fareboxes, radios and ITS
- Facility equipment such as lathes, grinders, washers, computers, office furniture, etc
- Bulk supply contracts for fuels, lubricants, soaps, etc
- Services for oil analysis, towing, long distance telephone and Internet communication.

The group should develop some working rules and an administration plan for the small-scale joint procurements, and also analyze feasibility, costs, and benefits for specific joint procurement items.

Next Steps

Long Beach Transit (LBT) has expressed an interest in taking the lead on this action plan. LBT, with assistance from the BOS, should convene a working group during the first quarter of FY 2003/04. The group should be prepared to provide the BOS with a status report by March 2004 that identifies the first phase of joint procurement opportunities.

Action Plan #14 – Establishing Regional Performance Standards

A regional committee chaired by the MTA is already working on a number of issues related to regional standards and measures. A first draft of the committee's work is contained in **Appendix D**. *This list has not been reviewed by the BOS as of October 2002.*

Next Steps

The proposed standards and definitions should be presented to the BOS for review, comments and a decision on next steps before the end of October 2003.

An implementation matrix showing each of the action plans can be found in Appendix E.