

CAPITAL TRANSIT

Transit Development Plan, 1996

Executive Summary *



Prepared by

***Capital Transit,
The City and Borough of Juneau
10099 Bentwood Place
Juneau, Alaska***

With the assistance of

***Weslin Consulting Services
Bellevue, Washington***

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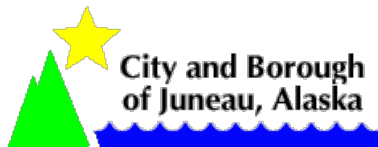
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***City and Borough of Juneau
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Juneau, Alaska 99801
(907) 586-5324***



Executive Summary

1. Introduction

Capital Transit, the municipally owned and operated transit system serving the City and Borough of Juneau, has completed an update of the Transit Development Plan. The Transit Development Plan is intended to provide guidance for the management of the Capital Transit System, including the Care-A-Van paratransit service, during the coming five years. The objectives of the plan are:

1. To provide the City and Borough of Juneau with an up-to-date Transit Development Plan, including a schedule of capital investments needed for the completion of the plan, for the coming five year period.
2. To provide decision-makers within the City and Borough of Juneau accurate information on which to base decisions regarding the future of Capital Transit and to express those decisions in a comprehensive document, including statements of policy and objectives.
3. To provide the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities and the Federal Transit Administration with accurate information on which to base future capital grant decisions concerning Capital Transit.

The Capital Transit Development Plan consists of the Background Report; Volumes 1, 2 and 3, and; the Transit Development Plan 1996. In addition Working Papers 1, 2 and 3 were prepared during the process. These reports are available at Capital Transit.

2. Community Involvement

A series of meetings and focus groups were held with various segments of the community in November 1996. These meetings were held in Centennial Hall and were well attended. The process began with a public meeting advertised in the newspaper and open to all. The next meeting was with a selected group of persons representing Juneau employers. These employers ranged from the Baranof Hotel to the State of Alaska and included representatives of Fred Meyer's and the Nugget Mall. A workshop with a selected group of bus riders was next. A Visioning Workshop with the Transit Development Plan Steering Committee and City, State and Federal agency representatives was the last in the series. This provided an opportunity to review technical input on the system as well as the suggestions outlined from the public meeting and focus group processes. Major policy findings and a series of service and capital program improvements were developed or refined.

3. Key Findings

Public Transit works in Juneau. That statement is very evident in this work. Capital Transit has been very popular and successful since its inception in 1971. Now, after 25 years of continuous bus service, many residents have grown up using Capital Transit, and many others have grown to depend on it. They have structured their lives around the Capital Transit bus schedule, or the Care-A-Van service. It would be difficult to imagine Juneau without Capital Transit. The question to be answered is: Where do we go with Capital Transit in the future? What is the next logical step in the continuing development of public transit in Juneau? The following overview presents key findings which led to the recommendations contained in this Plan.

3.1. Geography

Juneau's setting at the base of the Coast Mountains and along the Inland Passage significantly influences our transportation options. Transportation corridors are few, major areas of the community are served by single links, and new roads are costly to develop.

3.2. Population

Projected population growth in Juneau during the planning period is negligible; however, certain developments, such as the Kensington Mine, could dramatically change this. Juneau continues to adapt to significant growth during the past decade, 37% from 1980 to 1990 and 11% since. Growth in traffic has been greater, up 41% from 1980 to 1990, and has contributed to increased peak period traffic congestion. Improving peak period commuter bus service and encouraging carpooling are strategies to reduce the growth in traffic.

3.3. Employment

There has been a significant shift in employment occurring since 1990. All growth in employment has been in the private sector and private sector jobs now outnumber the public sector by 30%. Private sector jobs are more dispersed within the community and work schedules are more varied. Transit needs to respond to this shift by providing an adequate frequency of service throughout the day, and improving the route structure to more uniformly serve the community.

3.4. Travel Habits

Juneau residents have a demonstrated propensity to carpool and use the bus. Capital Transit should build upon this base of positive travel habits through the provision of park and ride lots and a carpooling program.

3.5. Major Destinations

Developments occurring during the past decade have significantly increased the number and location of major destinations along the route. The current route structure has limited Capital Transit's ability to respond with convenient service. The Mendenhall Valley route needs to be redesigned to provide more convenient and uniform service to major destinations.

3.6. Travel Patterns

Travel to and from Downtown Juneau remains the predominant pattern among transit users. This should be reflected in the design of transit service. Improved peak and midday service, more direct service between the Mendenhall Valley and Downtown, and improved facilities for transit use are needed to enhance and maintain this pattern.

3.7. Major Employers

Major employers within the community realize the importance of transit and the need to increase service frequency. Thirty minute bus service, more bus passenger shelters, and later bus service were among their recommendations. Employer-sponsored transit pass and carpooling programs should be provided by Capital Transit.

3.8. Downtown Parking

Community leaders have identified parking availability Downtown as a major long term priority. Enhanced public transportation alternatives including a downtown circulator bus, park and ride programs, and improved peak hour service are seen by many as a means of solving the problem.

3.9. Tourism

Visitors to Juneau use Capital Transit and have a significant impact on the service. The future growth in tourism and particularly the increase in the number tourists and ship's crew arriving Downtown will create a need for additional bus service and capacity.

3.10 Service Analysis

Capital Transit service is well used. Ridership on the system is more than twice the per capita average of a selected group of peer systems. Many runs are filled to standing capacity throughout the year and occasionally passengers are refused service due to full buses. Standing loads exceeding 60 passengers are common. Some routes average more than 50 passengers per revenue hour. Average route speeds on the Mendenhall Valley route are high for local service and drivers report difficulty in maintaining schedules. The one-way loop structure of the Mendenhall Valley route provides only a 2-hour service frequency and does not provide useful service for many passengers and destinations. More frequent service will reduce loads and restructuring routes can provide for additional time to reduce operating speeds and provide better service within the Mendenhall Valley.

The neighborhoods along Riverside Drive represent some of the highest density development in the Mendenhall Valley, yet, some neighborhoods are more than a quarter mile from the current route along the Mendenhall Loop Road. Future developments along Riverside Drive such as Dimond Park, the new high school and Riverbend Elementary School, and the low income housing just north of the Post Office will significantly increase the need for adequate transit service to this area.

There is increasing interest in transit service north of Auke Bay; both fixed route and paratransit service. The potential development of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration facility will create additional demands for service here.

3.11. Fares and Revenues

Capital Transit fares are high, relative to National averages, and Capital Transit passengers perceive them as high. Sixty percent of users report that increasing fares would reduce their use of the bus. An increasing number of passengers, the elderly and persons with disabilities, use the bus and Care-A-Van at no cost. Other operating revenues including State and Federal support are nonexistent, or diminishing. Capital funding should continue to be available for the duration of this Plan. Federal support of 90% of capital expenditures is expected to continue.

3.12. Care-A-Van Service

Care-A-Van is a demand response transportation service provided to the elderly and persons with disabilities. The system provides Capital Transit's complementary paratransit service as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The Care-A-Van service has gone through a period of transition with the implementation of the ADA beginning in 1992. In existence since 1981, until the ADA, the Care-A-Van was accessible to elderly persons and persons with disabilities on an equal basis. The ADA shifted the primary focus of the Care-A-Van to persons with disabilities. The elderly are now largely unable to use the system unless they are also disabled. Persons with disabilities have benefited through better access to the Care-A-Van service and are now the primary users. The number of passenger trips declined during this period even as more service was provided. The increased demands of boarding and alighting persons with significant disabilities meant that the system could provide fewer trips.

Though the transition has been difficult at times, it has resulted in a complementary paratransit system in compliance with the regulations of the ADA a full two years ahead of the Federal mandate and a user group that reports a high degree of satisfaction with the system. Fiscal year 1996 saw the first increase in passenger trips provided by the Care-A-Van since 1992 and may signal a turning point in the service. More than 24,000 passenger trips were provided, an increase of more than 16%.

4. Recommendations

4.1. Service Improvements

The plan presents a phased development of improvements designed to address the key findings. The short term service improvements called "Enhanced Hourly Service" and the long term improvements, the "Optimum Plan."

Enhanced Hourly Service Plan – Years 1 through 4

This plan features a redesign of the fixed route system.

It creates:

1. A separate route to serve the Airport, Auke Bay, University of Alaska Southeast and the Back Loop Road, and;
2. A separate route to serve Riverside Drive and the Loop Road.

It revises:

1. Local service between the Nugget Mall, Lemon Creek and Downtown to allow service to Costco and Channel Drive.
2. Eliminates the need to transfer for passengers traveling between the Mendenhall Valley and Express to Downtown. Trips destined to and from Downtown comprise the majority of passenger trips originating in the Valley.

It retains:

1. The Douglas and North Douglas routes in their current configuration.
2. Hourly service frequency, with half hourly peak period trips on the Mendenhall Valley and Douglas service.

Advantages:

1. Timed transfers; four routes all meet at the Nugget Mall at the same time:
 - Auke Bay - University of Alaska Southeast - Back Loop Road
 - Riverside Dr. - Loop Road
 - Lemon Creek Local
 - Express
2. True hourly service to all points on all regular routes.
3. Simpler schedules and route structure. The schedule is consistent throughout the day for all points along the route.
4. New hourly service all day to the Riverside Drive area.
5. Provides hourly service to neighborhoods in the Back Loop Road area, and adds service to Montana Creek Road.
6. Local service to the airport terminal and University of Alaska Southeast Auke Lake Campus during all service hours and days of service with quick connections to the Downtown.
7. More local service to allow increased access to areas in the Mendenhall Valley, Auke Bay, Lemon Creek, retailers and employers.
8. Connecting hourly service between the Mendenhall Valley and Auke Bay.
9. No transfer necessary between Mendenhall Valley service and Express service for downtown.

Technical Advantages:

1. Route redesign improves on-time performance.
2. Allows more scheduled time to board wheelchairs and bicycles.
3. Design positions the system to better serve future residential and commercial growth.

4. Allows adequate layover/recovery time for buses.

Figure 1 shows the principal route and schedule characteristics of the Enhanced Hourly Service Plan.

[Figure 1](#)

Enhanced Hourly Service Plan - Principal Characteristics

Optimum Service Plan – Year 5

This service plan is built upon the route and schedule structure of the enhanced hourly service plan with the following additional improvements:

1. Buses every thirty minutes all day Monday through Saturday on the Route A Riverside Drive/Loop Road, Route B Lemon Creek and Route E Douglas route.
2. Buses every thirty minutes on Sunday service 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. on these same routes and Care-A-Van service hours extended from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on Sundays.

Advantages:

In addition to the advantages outlined under the Enhanced Hourly Service Plan, the Optimum Service Plan increases service reliability and appeal by providing more frequent bus service and a longer span of service on Sunday.

4.2. Supporting Investments

The major investments recommended in this plan include:

1. 115 new bus stop signs. All bus stops will be signed.
2. Fifteen new Passenger Shelters, implementing the 1994 Bus Passenger Shelter Design and Location Study.
3. Two new Transit Centers:
 - Nugget Mall area; to facilitate transfers between Route A Mendenhall Valley, Route B Lemon Creek, and, Route D Auke Bay.
 - Downtown Juneau; to improve Downtown circulation, provide a focus for transit in the Downtown and provide a location for bus layover and driver relief.
4. A maintenance program to improve the appearance of all transit facilities.
5. Additional vehicle storage for four buses is required for the implementation of the Optimum Service Plan.
6. The creation of an ongoing marketing program

6.1. Implementation and Financial Plan

New and enhanced services are introduced in a phased timeline. The implementation of the Enhanced Hourly Service Plan is proposed during the first year; the Optimum Service Plan would be implemented during the last year of the planning period. Start up of the Optimum Service Plan is dependent upon the purchase of four additional vehicles. Acquisition of new vehicles could take as much as three years.

[Figure 2](#) compares the annual operating cost, in fiscal year 1998 dollars, between the current fiscal year 1998 budget; implementation of the Enhanced Hourly Service Plan, and; the cost to implement the Optimum Service Plan in fiscal year 1998.

Implementation of the Enhanced Hourly Service Plan will increase total costs for transit service by approximately \$900,000 to \$3.3 million annually. Additional revenues from passenger fares will be minimal during the first year, covering about 7% of this increase. An additional \$850,000 annually in local support is necessary for implementation of the Enhanced Hourly Service Plan.

Implementation of the Optimum Service Plan in fiscal year 2002 will more than double current costs of providing transit, to approximately \$5.5 million annually. Growth in ridership will generate additional fare revenues of \$260,000 annually. An increase of nearly \$2 million, annually, in local support for transit will be necessary for implementation of this element in fiscal year 2002. Figure 3 presents estimated costs for transit service for the planning period.

Figure 4 shows ridership projections for the current system versus the Enhanced Hourly Service Plan in its first year, and by its fourth year of operation,

and; the Optimum Service Plan in its first and fourth year of operation. These ridership estimates are achievable provided the system consistently markets the service as described in the marketing plan outlined in this report.

Figure 3 – Budget Estimates

Item	Current 1998 Budget	Projected Budgets by Fiscal Year				
		1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Expenses						
Route Costs	\$2,044,100	\$2,900,000	\$2,987,000	\$3,077,000	\$3,169,000	\$4,930,000
Care-A-Van Costs	\$352,800	\$352,800	\$370,500	\$389,000	\$409,000	\$500,000
Marketing Program	\$22,600	\$75,000	\$77,000	\$80,000	\$82,000	\$85,000
Total Operating Costs	\$2,419,500	\$3,327,800	\$3,434,500	\$3,546,000	\$3,660,000	\$5,515,000
Revenues						
Fares	\$535,000	\$597,000	\$626,500	\$658,000	\$691,000	\$794,000
Other Revenues	\$23,000	\$23,000	\$24,000	\$25,000	\$26,000	\$27,000
State Section 18 Grant	\$90,000	\$90,000	\$90,000	\$90,000	\$90,000	\$90,000
Operating Subsidy	\$1,771,500	\$2,617,800	\$2,694,000	\$2,773,000	\$2,853,000	\$4,604,000
Total Revenues	\$2,419,500	\$3,327,800	\$3,434,500	\$3,546,000	\$3,660,000	\$5,515,000

Figure 4

Ridership Estimates

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