

CHAPTER 11 – PROJECT SUMMARY AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

This chapter provides a summary of key findings of the Transportation Development Plan (TDP) for Chatham Area Transit (CAT), outlines an implementation plan with recommended phasing of recommendations, and includes a financial plan with budget guidelines for the five-year plan period.

Summary of Significant Findings

Throughout the course of the TDP study process, several themes and specific service and policy concerns emerged to shape the recommendations included in this report. At its core, the CAT system is well-run and provides excellent service coverage within the City of Savannah. Selected areas of Chatham County are provided valuable service by the fixed route network, particularly the Abercorn Street corridor south of Savannah, Bay Street and Route 21 west, and Route 17 to the southwest. The Transit District (CAT's authorized service area) limits comprehensive service throughout Chatham County because individual municipalities have elected not to contribute to the system and receive bus service.

The Teleride paratransit service is a county-wide program, and the contracted operator of this service provides effective transportation for the elderly and disabled passengers who are unable to travel regularly on traditional, fixed route buses. Lower density development in much of Chatham County limits the operational and financial effectiveness of the service. As a policy decision, this is acceptable as more county residents have access to this vital form of transportation.

Among the most successful fixed routes are the 14 Abercorn, 2 West Chatham, 3A/3B Augusta Avenue, and the 27/28 Waters Avenue services. The 2 West Chatham and 14 Abercorn in particular were seen as routes that could benefit from expanded service hours or frequency. The 2 West Chatham currently only operates in the morning and afternoon periods, however mid-day service could greatly improve mobility for the growing number of customers who commute to employment destinations west of Savannah and who work varied shift schedules. The 14 Abercorn, arguably the backbone of the CAT system, provides both short and long-distance travel in the north/south corridor from downtown Savannah. A new express service was designed to improve on-time performance of all buses on the routes (by allowing some trips to short-turn between Oglethorpe Mall and the Downtown Loop) while also providing selected trips with faster travel times between the transit hub of Oglethorpe Mall and downtown Savannah.

Conversely, low-productivity areas south of Oglethorpe Mall and Montgomery Cross Road do not warrant continued fixed route service on the 13 Coffee Bluff/20 Montgomery routes. These areas are candidates for demand response or feeder services to hubs such as Oglethorpe Mall. CAT's Teleride service can be expanded to include more general public ridership, bridging the

gap between areas suitable for fixed route transit and those that include residential and/or commercial development but lack the density to support regularly scheduled service.

Among other concerns identified through the study, both in stakeholder and public interviews as well as from the on-board survey, is the fact that CAT's fare policy does not offer transfers to passengers. Roughly half of all regular passengers transfer from one bus to another at least once during their day, and thus are required to pay the full fare each time they board. This TDP proposes a modification to CAT's fare policy that includes an increase in the base cash one-way fare in conjunction with the introduction of free transfers between routes as part of one, one-way trip. This fare alternative is expected to result in only a modest ridership loss (due to the base fare increase), while avoiding any loss of revenue for CAT. The introduction of free transfers should be welcomed by many of CAT's customers and in the long run may lead to increased ridership.

The Teleride fare policy does not maximize the revenue potential for this service. At \$1.20, the one-way Teleride fare is only \$0.20 higher than the one-way fixed route CAT fare. This provides little incentive for passengers who may otherwise be able to use the fixed route bus network to consider that as an alternative. In fact, a door-to-door Teleride trip is less expensive than a one-way fixed route trip that requires one or more transfers. It is recommended that Teleride make its eligibility certification process more stringent for the paratransit service and that the one-way trip fare be increased to generate additional revenue for CAT, particularly given the larger Teleride service area and resulting lower productivity.

Opportunities for Service Expansion

Geographic expansion of the CAT system is constrained by the boundaries of the Transit District. Growing employment areas within independent municipalities such as Pooler will not figure into the planning process until sufficient local support is generated to expand the Transit District. At present, CAT serves the core market of the City of Savannah and certain unincorporated areas of Chatham County very well. To become a truly county-wide system, however, the Transit District must be expanded.

In the meantime, this TDP has focused on route and scheduling recommendations within the current service area that will improve operations and generate additional ridership. Service frequency is the primary tool for increasing ridership, along with maintaining an appropriate span of service that allows transit riders to access jobs with varied schedules. Streamlining inefficient routes and improving service frequency on CAT's well-used routes will benefit customers system-wide and provide additional incentive for new customers.

Service Plan

The service plan includes the recommendations put forth in this TDP and focuses on route and service changes including:

- Modifications to existing CAT bus routes
- Implementation of new routes and services
- Potential operational impacts from Transit Station development
- Fare policy changes

Throughout the TDP effort, an emphasis was placed on short-term improvements and efficiencies for the existing fixed route network. A strong core system provides a better foundation for eventual service expansion, thus the recommendations in this report focus on enhancing productive segments of the existing network and identifying areas of lower productivity for improvement or possible elimination.

To that end, many of the service recommendations can be implemented in the first full plan year (FY 2008), particularly the cost-neutral recommendations focusing on the redistribution of resources without adding operating hours. Proposals involving a modest increase in service hours are included in year 2 of the plan, including expanded service on the 2 West Chatham and modifications to the 10 and 24 services to Wilmington Island and Savannah State University.

The primary new service included in the route planning is the route 14 express, which provides express service on the 14 Abercorn between Oglethorpe Mall and downtown Savannah. This recommendation is included in year 3 of the five-year service plan, along with other recommendations that seek to enhance the current service levels on targeted routes. The added service levels on the route 14 represent a significant operating cost to CAT, however these proposals are considered a priority and could be implemented earlier in the five-year plan if possible.

CAT is encouraged to monitor the performance of all routes throughout the five-year plan horizon. Furthermore, customer feedback through public drop-in sessions such as those held during this TDP, along with targeted rider surveys, will help CAT assess the success of the changes implemented and make any necessary adjustments. The recommended phasing of implementation is summarized in Table 11-1 on the following page.

**Table 11-1
Five-Year Service Plan Summary**

	Modifications to Existing CAT Services	New Services	Fare Policy Changes	Other Actions
Year 1 (FY 2008)	Implement cost-neutral route changes from TDP: Routes 13/20 (eliminate), 27, 28		Implement fare policy Alternative 2A*	Conduct public outreach in advance of service changes, assess results of Teleride policy changes
Year 2 (FY 2009)	Implement enhanced service TDP recommendations: Routes 2, 3A, 3B, 10, 11, 24, 29, 31			Monitor productivity of route modifications, conduct public outreach to market service changes
Year 3 (FY 2010)	Continued implementation of service enhancements: Routes 6, 14	Route 14 Express		Monitor productivity of route modifications, conduct public outreach to market service changes
Year 4 (FY 2011)	Continued implementation of service enhancements: Routes 17, 25			Replace 2 Chance Trolleys, monitor productivity of route modifications, conduct public outreach to market service changes
Year 5 (FY 2012)			Revisit fare policy, e.g., base fare increase to \$1.75, unlimited ride passes increase proportionally	Conduct public outreach, analyze impacts of proposed fare increase

* Fare Policy Alternative 2a: Base fare increase to \$1.50, free transfers, \$16/60 weekly/monthly passes

Financial Plan

Table 11-2 provides a summary of the anticipated operating and financial impacts of the service recommendations included in this TDP. The table shows the net impacts, i.e., the change from current operations taking into account increased or decreased vehicle miles and hours, estimated ridership changes, and the resulting revenue and net cost on an annual basis. This allows CAT to evaluate the proposals developed in Chapter 6 – Route Recommendations as a whole or individually, understanding that some route changes impact the ridership and revenue of other routes. For example, changes to routes 10 and 24 are intrinsically linked, whereas additional service on route 2 is independent of other proposals. The program's cost impacts range from a possible savings of \$275,000 annually (through service cuts) to an expansion of up to \$1.5 million annually.

Table 11-2
Summary of Proposed Service Changes
Net Operating Impacts (Change from Base Year FY 2005)

Route	Miles	Hours	Ridership	Revenue	Net Cost
2 – West Chatham	25,668	1,673	7,774	\$17,032	\$118,153
3A/3B – Augusta Ave	(26,366)	1,837	6,254	\$33,151	\$117,631
4 – Barnard	0	0	0	\$0	\$0
6 – Crosstown	13,785	1,310	(8,144)	\$3,129	\$7,248
10 – East Savannah	(25,903)	646	(58,397)	(\$34,333)	\$98,253
11 – Candler	(13,913)	766	17,422	\$24,122	\$57,662
12 – Henry	0	0	1,634	\$18,560	(\$1,454)
13 – Coffee Bluff/20 Montgomery	(77,634)	(3,640)	(23,151)	(\$20,604)	(\$275,332)
14 – Abercorn	55,483	8,211	41,894	\$98,182	\$624,169
17 – Silk Hope	(21,288)	(41)	(5,624)	\$10,248	\$9,732
24 – Wilmington Island	10,912	1,060	49,919	\$50,990	\$33,955
25 – MLK Jr. Blvd/ Chatham Parkway	102,122	6,171	2,213	\$26,926	\$505,388
27 – Waters Ave	0	0	2,706	\$2,408	(\$2,408)
28 – Waters Ave	0	0	4,189	\$3,975	(\$3,975)
29 – West Gwinnett/ Cloverdale	(1,881)	671	232	\$8,435	\$64,488
31 – Skidaway	11,079	517	24,316	\$36,065	\$23,662
Regular Route Total	52,064	19,181	63,237	\$278,286	\$1,377,172

Looking forward, the five-year, phased financial plan is based upon projections of various operating statistics, the use of unit operating costs from CAT's own reporting, and ridership and revenue estimates based upon recent trends and the anticipated impact of operating changes and fare policy changes. These factors are summarized in Table 11-3, where CAT's 2006 actual and 2007 estimated budget and operating figures are included as the baseline from which plan years 1 through 5 are generated. This table reflects the staggered implementation of the route recommendations, as outlined in Table 11-1.

**Table 11-3
Five-Year Financial Plan FY 2008-2012**

System Characteristics	2006 Actual	2007 Estimated ¹	Year 1 2008 ²	Year 2 2009	Year 3 2010	Year 4 2011	Year 5 2012
Total Service Miles	2,529,544	2,543,456	2,479,812	2,473,046	2,555,916	2,650,808	2,665,387
Total Service Hours	196,415	200,933	201,914	213,728	228,165	239,543	245,052
Base Fare	\$1.00	\$1.00	\$1.50	\$1.50	\$1.50	\$1.50	\$1.75 ³
Passenger Trips	3,935,048	3,990,139	3,872,585	3,975,955	4,065,368	4,118,872	4,176,536
Passenger Revenue	\$3,585,198	\$3,491,529	\$3,727,016	\$4,054,344	\$4,344,182	\$4,583,361	\$4,796,487

Conclusion

Ultimately, this TDP is designed to provide CAT with a variety of research and tools to assist in planning and operations in the coming years. The on-board customer survey and ridership counts conducted at the individual bus stop level provide a measure of detail and a snapshot of system usage that is not typically feasible on an annual basis. While ridership totals will vary from year to year, a picture of where and when the system is most active will continue to be relevant in the coming years. From the public outreach, service analysis, and market research conducted over the course of the study, the TDP delivers six focal conclusions:

1. CAT's existing route structure is effective and serves downtown Savannah well
2. Expansion of the Transit District should be considered to provide true regional service
3. Modest enhancements to current routes can improve efficiency, customer convenience
4. Transit must increasingly address the needs of shift work and non-traditional work hours
5. CAT's fare structure requires change to achieve better equity and customer convenience
6. Regional parking and development policies encourage automobile use over transit and should be addressed

Public transportation is a critical component to our community's mobility, and as such plays an important role in the local economy, connecting people with jobs, healthcare, and social and commercial opportunities. The continued maintenance of a strong public transportation system and commitment to its growth, in conjunction with infrastructure and development expansion, will provide Savannah, Chatham County and the region with an invaluable service.

¹ FY2007 figures are based on CAT budget estimates.

² 2008 and subsequent plan years are based on average change (trend) since 2002 and impacts of proposed service/fare policy changes.

³ Suggested base fare increase, subject to further review by CAT in plan years 4-5. Ridership and revenue estimates for plan year 5 do not include fare change.