

INTRODUCTION

Annually, VTA has prepared a Service Management Plan to evaluate performance of the transit system and to provide proposed service change recommendations. In 2007 and 2008, this process was deferred, while VTA engaged in the development of the Comprehensive Operations Analysis (COA). The Annual Transit Service Plan continues the yearly process of service review and recommendations.

The Annual Transit Service Plan is the process and document that implements the policies set forward in the Transit Sustainability Policy. The mandated annual review of transit services includes an evaluation of existing services compared to the Board adopted performance standards contained in the Service Design Guidelines. It also includes a review of potential new services, assessment of opportunities for service refinement and resource reallocation, route specific service changes and recommendations for further analysis and study.

The Quarterly Transit Operations Performance Report provides the VTA Board a report card on the performance of every line in the VTA transit system. Based on these quarterly ridership updates, passenger input and detailed ridership data, the Annual Transit Service Plan proposes modifications to VTA's bus and rail service. These include measures to increase or decrease service hours or frequency, change routing or service span, add new service and increase marketing. The Plan also considers studies for future service options. The ultimate alternative for underperforming lines is deletion and reinvestment of those resources into stronger transit markets.

Comprehensive Operations Analysis

The Comprehensive Operations Analysis (COA) was an 18 month in-depth process to analyze VTA's existing transit services, identify underserved markets and ultimately produce a new structure for bus services. The COA incorporated market research including a survey of VTA bus and light rail passengers as well as a telephone survey of Santa Clara County households. A detailed examination of VTA's existing transit operations and ridership performance was also performed. The VTA Board adopted a new Bus Service Operating Plan at its August 30, 2007 meeting. Implementation occurred on January 14, 2008.

The plan was developed with the goal of a cost neutral revised bus transit network. While reductions occurred in some areas, overall system service levels remained the same. The goal was to increase ridership and improve farebox recovery through more efficient use and distribution of our transit resources. By eliminating or consolidating unproductive route segments, the plan generated resource savings. These resources were then reinvested into areas of the system that were most productive and offered the best opportunities for ridership growth.

Transit Sustainability Policy

The annual service review process was further refined and strengthened when the VTA Board of Directors adopted the Transit Sustainability Policy (TSP) and the accompanying the Service Design Guidelines (SDG). The TSP provides a policy framework for the efficient and effective expenditure of funds in order to achieve the highest return on transit investments. The policy guides the implementation of new transit services as well as the improvement of existing services. The TSP adopted goals and core principles are:

Goals

- Improve system ridership, productivity, and efficiency.
- Improve farebox recovery.
- Improve VTA's role as a viable alternative mode of transportation.
- Use transit investments and resources more effectively.

Core Principles

- Develop a financially sustainable transit system.
- Match capital investment with quantifiable service needs and local participation and commitments.
- Improve customer focus.
- Target markets where transit can compete.
- Improve system integration and efficiency.

In accordance with the Transit Sustainability Policy, all transit services are subject to an evaluation of ridership and operating efficiency, based on Board-adopted performance standards.

Service Performance Standards

The Service Performance Standards are the primary criteria for the TSP evaluation and recommendation process and are applied to service changes, new lines and capital projects. These standards apply to both existing and new services. In the case of existing services, the standards are used to identify low performance lines and make recommendations for improvement. In the case of new service, the standards are used in the development of recommendations for service refinements, modal alterations, or implementation. The following is a summary of the service performance standards:

Primary Standard. **The primary standard is average boardings per revenue hour.** This standard applies to Community Bus, Local Bus, BRT and Light Rail (LRT). For evaluation purposes the standard is calculated for all time-periods for weekdays, Saturdays and Sundays. This standard is recalculated quarterly and may move up or down. This indicator shows how well service is utilized given the hours of service provided.

Secondary Standards. The secondary standards are average daily boardings per station for BRT,

LRT, Commuter Rail and Heavy Rail, and average boardings per mile applied to BRT and LRT modes.

Express Bus Standard. **The express bus standard is 60% of the seated vehicle loading capacity.** This singular standard is needed due to the special characteristics of express bus lines where seat turnover is low.

Minimum Standard. **The categorical minimum standard for any bus transit service is 15 boardings per revenue hour.** Bus lines that consistently operate below this threshold and that are unresponsive to marketing, restructuring, and operational refinements shall be discontinued. There is no minimum standard for existing rail lines since the capital investments in these lines have already been made.

It is important to note that new transit services are also subject to the annual review. However these services are provided with a 24 month “growth” period to enable ridership to mature to expected levels.

Table 1-1: Expected Ridership after Service Change

6 months	70
12 months	80
18 months	90
24 months	100

Service Change Approval Process

VTA implements service changes quarterly in January, April, July and October. Major changes are typically planned for January and July, while minor changes are implemented in April and October. Proposed service changes that meet any of the criteria listed below are submitted to the VTA Board of Directors for review and approval. Changes requiring VTA Board approval are:

- **The establishment of a new transit line or service.**
- **The elimination of a transit line or service.**
- **A route change that impacts 25% or more of a line’s route miles.**
- **Span of service or frequency changes affecting 25% or more of a line’s revenue vehicle hours.**
- **Proposed changes that are anticipated to be controversial with a particular community or interested parties.**

Service change proposals not meeting the criteria for formal approvals described above are handled at the staff level. These proposals are still subject to an appropriate level of public and community review and comment.

Major service change proposals in the Annual Transit Service Plan were presented to the Transit Planning and Operations Committee at the December 2008 meeting as an information item. Public and community meetings and outreach were held during January and February, with the Final Plan submitted to the Committee at the March meeting and to the VTA Board of Directors in April. Implementation will start in July 2009.

Title VI Evaluation

Finally, in order to comply with 49 CFR Section 21.5(b)(2), 49 CFR Section 21.5(b)(7) and Appendix C to 49 CFR part 21, recipients of financial assistance from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) shall evaluate significant system-wide service changes and proposed improvements at the planning and programming stages to determine whether the changes have a discriminatory impact on minority and low income populations.

In accordance with the May 13, 2007 Title VI Circular, a Title VI Evaluation was completed for the major bus service changes proposed in this Annual Transit Service Plan. No changes to VTA's light rail service or fare structure were considered as part of this process.