



CHAPTER 5

Developing a Transit Vision, Goals, and Objectives

Introduction

This chapter presents the importance of developing a vision for the transit service and having specific objectives. It provides examples of mission statements, goals, and objectives that have been developed by tribal transit agencies. Emphasizing the need for quantifiable service measures, it also discusses how such measures can be useful in the operation and expansion of a tribal transit program.

Determining a Vision for Transit Service

Understanding Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

An analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis) is an effective way of identifying internal and external forces that affect your transit system. A SWOT analysis often is the first step in developing a vision for a transit service. It reveals ways that transit service can support your tribe's other priorities. Carrying out an analysis using the SWOT framework also will help you focus your activities on areas of strength and where the greatest opportunities lie.

To carry out a SWOT analysis, write down answers to questions in all four categories, as follows:

Strengths:

- What is positive in the transit service?
- What does the service do well?
- What do other people see as the system's strengths?

Consider these questions from the provider's point of view and from the point of view of the people you deal with. Be realistic.

Weaknesses:

- What could be improved?
- What should be avoided?

Consider these questions from both an internal and external point of view for the organization. Do other people perceive weaknesses that you do not see? Be realistic.

Opportunities:

- What good opportunities can you identify for the transit service?
- What interesting trends are you aware of?

When thinking about opportunities for transit, consider changes in technology and markets; changes in government policy; and changes in social patterns, population profiles, lifestyles, and local events.

Threats:

- What obstacles does the service face?
- What stands in the way of success?

Carrying out this analysis may illuminate both what needs to be done and how to put problems in perspective.

How Does Transit Support the Tribe’s Other Activities

Public transit should be seen as a service to support other tribal programs, whether those are providing health care for members or access to jobs. Either separately or as part of the SWOT analysis of the transit service, transit planners and community leaders, staff, and tribal members should conduct a SWOT analysis for the tribe and the communities in the system’s service area.

Mission Statement

Establishing a Mission Statement

A good mission statement is compelling, passionate, and energizing. It should be risky and challenging, but also achievable. A mission statement isn’t written in stone and is likely to change over time as an organization grows and market conditions change. Think of your mission statement as a short statement of why the transit service exists.

Writing a mission statement can be a difficult and challenging task. If you don’t know what principles you operate from and how you will treat those who come in contact with your organization, then it’s an impossible task. Similarly, if you’re not excited about what you are doing and lack a passion for your service, then it’s an impossible task. Instead of trying to just “write it” or “get it done,” devote some serious thought and soul-searching to your mission statement. It must boldly state what you, your organization, and its future are all about. It is worth the effort.

Mission:

The mission of the Road to Work Program is to provide transportation to all Native Americans within the Chickasaw Nation and to the general public in a comfortable, simple, and easy-to-access fashion.

Succinct Statement of What Transit Accomplishes

An effective mission statement should require little or no explanation, and its length is less important than its power. One of Nike’s now-famous mission statements was “Crush Reebok.” This statement required no explanation, but it motivated everyone associated with Nike, and the objective was unmistakable. Nike could have stated its mission as “to be the best shoe company with the best customer service,” but that would have done little to inspire the “troops.” Don’t make that mistake with your own mission statement—make it passionate and inspiring, not bland and boring. Consider two other famous mission statements: PepsiCo’s—long-held, unofficial mission statement—“Beat Coke”—and Honda’s early-1980’s mission statement, translated as “We will crush, squash, and slaughter Yamaha.”

Attempt to keep your mission statement simple, but this doesn’t necessarily mean it should be short. Shorter mission statements tend to be better because the message can be conveyed easily and embraced by all employees from top management to the person sweeping the garage floor. Every mission statement should be different. Write a mission statement that reflects your values, individuality, creativity, and uniqueness. Use a tone that best reflects the culture of your organization, and get as many people as possible involved in its construction.

A Worksheet for Drafting a Mission Statement

1. What traits do we consider worthwhile? What are our highest priorities, our deeply held driving force?
2. How do we want the transportation service to interact with our customers (riders, employees, our community)?
3. What kind of transportation do we need?
4. Who are our principal customers, riders, or users?
5. Why should we exist (what is our basic purpose)?
6. What is unique or distinctive about our community?
7. What should our principal services be, both now and in the future?
8. What are our principal market segments, at present and in the future?
9. How do our needs differ from what they were between 3 and 5 years ago?
10. What is likely to be different about our needs 3 to 5 years in the future?
11. What are our principal economic concerns, and how are they measured?
12. What philosophical issues are important to our tribe and our future?

Importance of Employee Support of Mission

If everyone doesn't buy into the mission statement, then it will not effectively shape the organization and its actions, and it will have limited effectiveness. If someone reads your mission statement and comments, "Great, but who cares?" consider rewriting it and adding some passion. The passion and excitement you demonstrate in your mission statement will carry over, not only to the rest of your business plan, but also to the day-to-day operations of your organization. Ask yourself the following questions:

Does your mission statement

- describe the nature and concept of your community transportation future?
- establish what those providing transportation plan to do and for whom?
- provide clarity of the transportation purpose?
- provide a point of reference for planning decisions?
- promote commitment internally and externally?

Goals

Goals are statements created to help focus your efforts to carry out your mission statement. Goals are guidelines that direct where your transit system is going. Goals are generally broad statements that identify focus areas for accomplishing the mission.

Objectives

Objectives are statements of specific actions that will be taken to achieve the goals. Well-crafted objectives are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and have a specific time frame. An objective must be measurable so that it is possible to determine if the objective has actually been achieved. Being achievable and realistic means that it is feasible to accomplish the specific goal with the resources that are available. A specific time for completion should be set for achieving each objective. Table 5.1 illustrates a useful way to organize your objectives in a way that helps answer the following questions:

- What are we really trying to do?
- What are the issues?
- Who is responsible?
- How will we know if we achieved our goal?

Sample Mission, Goals, and Objectives

The following is an example of a mission statement with corresponding goals and objectives developed for Menominee Public Transit of the Menominee Indian Tribe in Wisconsin.

Menominee Public Transit Mission Statement

Menominee Public Transit strives to encourage the improvement, efficiency, and use of the Menominee Public Transit system within the Reservation and County in order to enhance access of employment, health care, recreation, education and public services for the Menominee People.

Menominee Public Transit Goals

Goal 1: Continue to build a positive, professional, and customer-responsive organization to help ensure that Menominee Public Transit is recognized as the leading proponent and advocate for mobility on the Menominee Reservation/County.

Objectives of Goal 1:

1. Training and Education: Continue and improve training programs for all employees of Menominee Public Transit.
2. Intergovernmental Relations: Foster programs to improve communications with all local jurisdictions, departments, and services, including regular meetings with departments and programs that either directly or indirectly impact Menominee Public Transit.
3. Marketing and Advertising: Conduct both internal and external activities to improve overall image, supporting a professionally operated system. Emphasis will be placed on user aides—i.e., printed schedules, bus stop signs, and bus shelters.

Goal 2: Respond to changing operating conditions and changing population characteristics by modifying existing service as needed, increasing or decreasing service as needed, and promoting flexible services to meet reservation, county, and regional needs.

Objectives of Goal 2:

1. Establish fixed schedules and fixed-route service along with ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act] paratransit to better meet the needs of riders and potential riders as revealed by the transit survey conducted in January 2006.
2. Establish regular service to Green Bay and Milwaukee, and coordinate with reservations and communities along the route to increase revenue and to carry more passengers.
3. Purchase appropriate rolling stock for improved fixed-route service and ADA paratransit service.

Goal 3: Develop partnerships with businesses, tribal departments, and other governmental units to more efficiently and effectively provide mobility options.

Objectives of Goal 3:

1. Promote the use of employer-provided transportation, including the transit pass benefit program under Section 132 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.
2. Partner with the Menominee Tribal Clinic to develop coordinated programs for transporting persons to doctor and clinic appointments with the overall purpose of providing more trips to those in need at an overall lower cost.
3. Acquire the necessary certifications and contracts to become a Medicaid provider, with the overall goal of increasing available services to residents of the area and lowering costs to the tribe and county.
4. Partner with the Menominee Aging Division to refocus services as needed to meet the needs of the elderly and work to maximize the number of passengers per trip.

Goal 4: For a community to have a successful transit service, it must first have a rational and complete system of walkways and pedestrian amenities, so this goal is to help improve the overall pedestrian activities on the reservation/county.

Objectives of Goal 4:

1. Help facilitate better sidewalks, trails, and paths along with curb cuts to make it easier to walk and travel on the reservation/county.
2. Add bus shelters with heat for winter and lighting for comfort and safety of persons using the bus services.
3. Identify and mark bus stops and locations in buildings so that passengers can safely wait for the bus.

Goal 5: Promote stable funding to ensure a sound financial foundation for Menominee Public Transit.

Objectives of Goal 5:

1. Establish a Transit Advisory Committee consisting of interested elected officials, program partners, and rider customers of our service.
2. Provide detailed quarterly reports to tribal elected officials to enhance understanding of services.
3. Host an annual open house and potluck dinner at Menominee Public Transit headquarters to show appreciation to riders and supporters of service and enable non-riders to understand how service is provided and with what type of equipment.
4. Establish a Transit Commission.

Performance Measures

Performance measures are quantifiable indicators of service to measure the accomplishment of objectives. When objectives are set, they should be measurable. The indicators used for this measurement are the performance measures.

The benefits and impacts of public transportation on a community are complex, subtle, and not easily separated into discrete units of measurement. Some indirect benefits to individuals and their activities do not fit into standard measurements like time savings or willingness to pay. Even these measurements are not well-defined; people place widely varying values on their time and on how much they will pay to use public transportation. Captive users who have no alternative will value their time and money differently from people who have other travel options.

Some benefits of public transportation are difficult to assign value. What numbers or percentages can be placed on independence, mobility, or quality of life? Other benefits, such as land-use impacts and safety, require such complex measurement that they usually are not evaluated correctly. Public transportation impacts often are interrelated and therefore not easily categorized. For example, commuters using public transportation could have the benefits of trip reductions, less air pollution, less congestion (or perhaps more in downtown areas where transit and cars mix), lower fuel consumption, time savings, stress reductions, lower insurance rates, and lower expenditures, particularly if the use of public transportation negates the need for a second car in the family. These benefits cannot stand in isolation, but have to be viewed as an integrated whole. Interrelated benefits are more difficult to communicate to the public, planners, and funding sources. However, the synergy of communities and public transportation cannot be ignored in favor of standard measurements that are misleading and inaccurate.

Benefits are in the eye of the beholder. What people perceive to be a benefit is a benefit. This truism closely parallels people's view of traffic congestion: if people think their roads are congested then their roads are congested, no matter the actual traffic counts or comparisons with other areas that have even more congestion. For a wide-ranging service like public transportation,

Why Measure Performance?

- To evaluate the effectiveness of your program
- To provide feedback to funding sources
- To evaluate quality of service

the perceived benefits might be even more important to people than the actual, quantifiable benefits. Many people want public transportation in their community because it is perceived as a symbol of civic progress and pride. The usual attitude is that public transportation should be supported as a social good for people who have no other means of travel. Usually these are “other” people. Many public transportation supporters have no intention of using the services themselves, but want the option of being able to take the bus or ride the shuttle in case they find themselves unable to use a personal vehicle.

For some individuals, the unscripted contact with other people and close interaction with a community that the use of public transportation requires is a great benefit, while for others such contact is a horror to be avoided at all costs. Even within the public transportation spectrum, stratification of acceptability exists. Rail travel is generally perceived to be a more acceptable and positive way to travel than bus travel. The perception exists that rail travel is safer, cleaner, more comfortable, and more attractive than bus travel. Whether or not this is true is difficult to measure because people’s perceptions are so highly personal and amorphous. Yet these perceptions are just as relevant as statistics on ridership or age and condition of a system’s vehicles. Public transportation cannot be severed from its close connection to local politics and personal perceptions.

Typical Performance Measures

Performance measures are not to be confused with the goals and objectives of transportation providers. Measures are necessary to determine if the objectives and goals are being fulfilled in a safe, reliable, and efficient manner. Even the most obvious items should be subjected to measurement because guesswork and hunches are often in error. In general, measures should be meaningful, appropriate to the operation or system, suitable to analysis, easily interpreted, and relevant for decision making. Each objective should have a performance measure.

Performance measures that do not relate to the goals and objectives of the transit service typically are ignored and become meaningless. Although it is possible to collect and measure large amounts of data, measures are important only when they are tied to what a transit system desires to achieve.

Continuous—or at least regular—evaluation allows systems to adjust their operations or modify their objectives to keep improving without pursuing unrealistic goals. Care should be exercised when comparing measurements from different operations because so much depends on local conditions, the size of each system or area served, and the purpose of each system.

At the least, the service quality, productivity, and efficiency of public transportation operators should be measured. Performance can be measured as the kind and level of service delivered by the system. Overall measures of service quality may include the number of days of service, hours of service each day, type of service, percentage of service-area population served, on-time performance, safety, vehicle cleanliness, and attitudes of drivers.

Productivity can be measured as the actual use of a system’s resources and facilities compared to their potential use, given the geographical area covered and type of service offered. What are the vehicle-miles per vehicle? What are the load factors and the passenger-miles per vehicle-hour?

Efficiency can be measured as how much service is being provided and at what cost in time, resources, and facilities. Efficiency measures are cost per vehicle-mile; fare revenues as a percentage of cost; and cost of overhead, administration, operations, maintenance, or equipment as percentages of total expenditure.

Many aspects of public transportation are difficult to measure, but some aspects are more easily counted and categorized. The most basic of these are input measures: what facilities exist for public transportation. To plan public transportation in accordance with the desires of the citizens of the tribe (as expressed in the issues identified in public meetings), planners must know what facilities exist with which to provide services.

However, simply measuring the “hardware” without measuring user satisfaction or user opinion—considered output measures—is meaningless. Users’ opinions about public transportation are as important to measure as the number of maintenance facilities. Both input and output measures are needed to understand public transportation. On the following pages, recommended input and output measures are grouped in tables, as follows:

- Table 5.2. Suggested input measures: overview of transit system.
- Table 5.3. Evaluation criteria: vehicle characteristics.
- Table 5.4. Evaluation criteria: maintenance, dependability, system, and safety.
- Table 5.5. Possible input and output measures: role of public transportation.
- Table 5.6. Possible input and output measures: coordination, infrastructure, and promotion of public transportation.

Table 5.2. Suggested input measures: overview of transit system.

Evaluation Criteria	Measures	Purpose
System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of active vehicles • Estimated vehicle replacement costs • Estimated vehicle rehabilitation costs • Capacity • Fare structure and collection • Responsiveness to users with special needs • Funding needs and sources • Level of service (e.g., demand-response service, fixed-route service, or other type of service) 	Assists in determining if the organizational structure of providers is capable of delivering safe, reliable service
Facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type • Age • Condition • Number and purpose • Replacement costs • Rehabilitation costs 	Assists in determining if transit providers' infrastructure is adequate to deliver satisfactory service
Vehicle description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type and age • Manufacturer and model number • Fuel type • Seating configuration and capacity • Mileage • Expected lifetime • Estimated vehicle replacement costs • Estimated vehicle rehabilitation costs • Ownership arrangements 	Assists in determining if available transit assets are sufficient to satisfy current and projected demand
Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of vehicles operating at maximum capacity • Number of breakdowns • Service disruptions caused by breakdowns 	Assists in determining reliability and safety of vehicles
Dependability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malfunctions and breakdowns, measured in terms of months or years, vehicle-miles, or operating hours • Type, cause, location, time of year/day of malfunction or breakdown • Repair time 	Assists in determining if providers can deliver safe, consistent service
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response time of support services • Response time of emergency services • Effectiveness of safety equipment • Driver training in first aid and defensive driving • Driver training in passenger assistance techniques • Crime number, location, type, persons involved, costs, and resolutions 	Assists in determining if transit providers can assure passenger safety

Table 5.3. Evaluation criteria: vehicle characteristics.

Measures	Definitions	Purpose
Type	Automobile Vans 12–16 passengers Bus < 36 passengers Bus < 67 passengers School Buses	Assists in determining if available transit assets are sufficient to satisfy current and projected demand
Age	The year the vehicle was made.	
Manufacturer and model number	General Motors Ford Chrysler Dodge El Dorado Other:	
Fuel type	Gasoline Diesel Liquefied natural gas Methanol Ethanol	
Seating configuration and capacity	Number of seats installed in the vehicle	
Mileage	0–50,000 50,001–75,000 75,001–100,00 100,001–125,000 125,001–150,000 150,000 and above	
Expected lifetime	Period of active service expected from acquisition to retirement	
Estimated vehicle replacement cost	How much each vehicle would cost to replace at market rates	
Estimated vehicle rehabilitation costs	Costs for repairs to avoid vehicle replacement	
Ownership arrangements	Owned Leased under purchase agreement* Leased** Leased or borrowed from others***	
<p>* Vehicles leased under a closed-end agreement in which the lease acquires the capital appreciation of the vehicles as lease payments are made. At the end of the lease, the vehicles are owned by the lessee.</p> <p>** Vehicles are leased so that the lessee does not acquire the capital appreciation of the vehicles as the lease payments are made.</p> <p>*** Vehicles that are leased or borrowed through a public agency or entity as a result of governmental or legal agreements. For example, vehicles may be owned by the state or county and leased to a public transit authority which is legally prohibited from owning the vehicles.</p>		

Table 5.4. Evaluation criteria: maintenance, dependability, system, and safety.

	Measures	Definitions	Purpose
Maintenance	Number of vehicles operating at maximum capacity		Assists in determining reliability and safety of vehicles
	Number of breakdowns and service calls	Annual number of responses to breakdowns on vehicles in service	
	Service disruptions caused by breakdowns	Missed trips or missed routes caused by breakdowns of vehicles	
	Fleet condition	Excellent—No repairs needed Good—Only regular maintenance needed Average—Major repairs needed Poor—Major reconstruction of vehicles needed to continue service	
Dependability	Malfunctions and breakdowns, measured in terms of months or years, vehicle-miles, or operating hours	Number of fleet breakdowns per annual fleet vehicle-miles	Assists in determining if providers can deliver safe, consistent service
	Repair time	Average length of time required to repair vehicles	
System	Number of active vehicles	Vehicles available to operate, including those out for routine repair	Assists in determining if the organizational structure of providers is capable of delivering reliable service
	Number of ADA-accessible vehicles	Number of vehicles that meet ADA guidelines	
	Responsiveness to users with special needs	Existence of and adherence to ADA service plan	
	Capacity	Annual number of passengers that could be carried by fleet operating at maximum capacity	
	Fare structure and collection	How much passengers pay to use service	
	Funding needs	At existing level of service, how much money is required to operate	
Funding sources	In actual figures and in percentages of total budget, what are the funding sources for the service		
Safety	Accidents per 100,000 miles	Number of vehicular and personal accidents per 100,000 miles	Assists in determining if transit providers can assure passenger safety
	Response time of support services, emergency contingency vehicles	Time taken by emergency contingency vehicles to reach disabled vehicle to take on passengers and continue trip	
	Effectiveness of safety equipment		
	Driver training in first aid, defensive driving, passenger assistance		
	Crime number, location, type, persons involved, costs, resolutions		

Table 5.5. Possible input and output measures: role of public transportation.

Area of Interest	Evaluation Criteria	Measures	Purposes
Social role of public transportation	Community coverage	Percentage of total community accessible by transit systems	Allows identification of gaps in service and need for additional resources
	Clientele coverage		Permits identification of effective service providers and establishment of averages for service standards
	Level of service	Hours of service per day	Assists in deciding if service expansion is needed
	Resource utilization	Passengers per vehicle-mile Passengers per vehicle-hour Passengers per service day Passenger miles per vehicle-trip Vehicle-miles per vehicle Vehicle-hours per vehicle	Pinpoints under and over use of vehicles and need for fleet expansion or service redesign
	Costs per services used	Cost per one-way passenger-trip Cost per passenger-mile Cost per loaded vehicle-hour	Demonstrates efficiency and cost-effectiveness
Future role of public transportation	Demographics	Current figures on age, socio-economic characteristics, car ownership, employment status, travel patterns and ridership on transit services Projected changes in the above demographics and ridership on transit services	Allows tracking of impact of demographics so ratio of funding can be maintained

Table 5.6. Possible input and output measures: coordination, infrastructure, and promotion of public transportation.

Area of Interest	Evaluation Criteria	Measures	Purpose
Coordination between existing systems	Number of providers	Spheres and levels of activity of all passenger transportation providers in the service area - transit systems, taxis, vanpools, etc.	Excellent resource information for identification of gaps and overlapping services as well as potential providers of service
Intermodal public transportation facilities	Passenger movement	Ease of transfer between modes Ease of ticketing procedures Interline agreements Schedule coordination, explicit or serendipitous	Assists determination of degree of coordination among systems and highlights areas where transfers are difficult
	Access	Location and number of exclusive transit parking spaces at rail or air facility or special lanes or allowances for transit	A tangible measure of transit-friendliness of infrastructure
Transit-friendly infrastructure	Land-use development	Historical patterns compared to future growth projections and impact of both on transit Future road construction plans and impact on transit compared to historical patterns	Helps determine the amount of transit-friendly growth and development patterns
	Design and placement	Building codes or zoning requirements that do not promote ease of use of multiple occupant vehicles Current patterns of placement, size, shape of buildings Availability of sidewalks or pedestrian walkways	Recognizes interrelatedness of all infrastructure and allows monitoring of impact of construction on transit
	Population	Current population distribution and demographics Projected future population and demographic trends	Recognizes the basis of demand and need for services is related to population and population distribution and must be known for cost-effective resource allocation
Promotion of public transportation	Information	Knowledge of services as assessed by survey	Assists in identification of gaps in information dissemination and need for communication program
	Marketing	Effectiveness of marketing campaigns in terms of desired result (such as increased ridership)	Allows effective marketing tools to be measured for use at other locations

Valuable material for establishing performance measures also can be found in *TCRP Report 88: A Guidebook for Developing a Transit Performance-Measurement System* and *TCRP Report 141: A Methodology for Performance Measurement and Peer Comparison in the Public Transportation Industry*.

For More Information

Weaver, P. *BizPlanIt.Com's Free Monthly Newsletter*, May 1998. KU Transportation Center, University of Kansas (further adapted and used with permission by Peter Schauer, January 2001).

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