

# Executive Summary

Corvallis Transit System (CTS) is a well-run service that is widely appreciated in the community. Its productivity of 23 boardings per revenue service hour<sup>1</sup> is high for comparable communities, especially given that the quantity of service, measured in service hours per capita, is unusually low. In other words, by the standards of similar cities with similar universities, Corvallis operates relatively little service but gets good ridership on the service it does provide.<sup>2</sup>

The system provides a number of key transportation functions in Corvallis including, but not limited to: providing a transportation alternative to those in the community that have no other option; providing a transportation alternative that has a lower cost and lower impact on the environment; and providing a resource that can be used in times of local emergency for moving groups of citizens, first responders, etc.

As transportation costs related to reliance on petroleum-based fossil fuels continue to increase, demands placed on public transportation systems as an alternative to privately owned transportation are expected to increase significantly.

Although the current system is popular, Corvallis is growing and changing in ways that require the transit service to grow and change. This report provides both short- and long-range service concepts for the future development of the Corvallis Transit System as well as a marketing plan.

## Key Planning Recommendations

To accommodate the growth of the City and its transit demand, several fundamental shifts in the design philosophy of the system are proposed. The shift of focus described by these recommendations is typically required as communities grow and transit demand grows more intense.

First, transit service needs to be designed in a way that more closely reflects patterns of development intensity. The proposed future systems concentrate more services in the corridors where development, and therefore, demand, is more intense. Areas consistently developed at residential densities below seven (7) units per acre<sup>3</sup> and lacking other major transit destinations may not be able to support fixed route service at all. Demand-responsive service can be a solution for providing minimal access to such areas, although even this will be a far less productive use of resources than high-frequency service in more densely developed areas.

Transit service concentrated in higher density areas provides for transit equity by providing service based upon the service hour per capita in a particular area.

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<sup>1</sup> 2003-04 ridership data

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 2, Peer System Analysis

<sup>3</sup> Corvallis Land Development Code residential designations of medium density, medium-high density or high density.

The concentration of service around densely developed areas will make the system more competitive with the automobile because it focuses resources where the demand is greatest and where the automobile is at the greatest disadvantage. It will also make the system more productive because service is concentrated where it will be most heavily used.

Second, transit needs to continue to place a premium on speed. The current system is bogging down under increased demand and rising congestion at certain times of the day. If the system slows down to an unacceptable level, it will become necessary to add buses to maintain the existing service levels or to cut service in some areas to make the routes shorter. Apart from serious cost impact, loss of speed also affects the attractiveness of service to the customer.

At the same time, CTS will continue to fulfill its mission to “provide community access as a social service by providing transportation to youth and elderly, disabled, and low-income citizens.”<sup>4</sup> This is accomplished through maximizing access for as many people as possible by concentrating resources where it can serve the most people who need to use transit. Additionally, CTS will continue to provide paratransit for those who cannot utilize fixed route services.

To integrate these imperatives, the City needs to include transit in the comprehensive planning process in land use and street and transportation system design.

Although any roadway classified as an arterial (primary, major or minor), or collector (both “collector” and “neighborhood collector”) could be a transit corridor, this report identifies a number of proposed Primary Transit Corridors. These would be the arterial and collector streets on which the City should plan to provide its highest level of service with the goal of achieving 15-minute, all-day headways within the 20 year planning window. These corridors are:

- 9<sup>th</sup> Street between downtown and Elks Drive
- Highland between Walnut and Buchanan
- Kings Boulevard between Monroe and Walnut
- Walnut Boulevard
- Monroe between Kings Blvd and downtown
- South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street (Highway 99W) between Rivergreen Avenue and downtown
- Technology Loop between 53<sup>rd</sup> Street and Research Way
- Jefferson between 35<sup>th</sup> Street (Oregon State University campus) and downtown
- 35<sup>th</sup>/36<sup>th</sup>/Witham Hill from Jefferson to Walnut
- Circle Boulevard
- Western/West Hill Rd between 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and 53<sup>rd</sup> St
- Satinwood from Walnut to Elks Drive

Along the corridors, the City (with the cooperation of the Oregon Department of Transportation on state highways and Benton County on county roads) should pursue an integrated strategy of improving transit orientation, including strategies such as:

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<sup>4</sup> Corvallis Transportation Plan, Section 5, adopted August 5, 1996 (Ordinance 96-26)

- encouraging future transit-dependent development to locate along these corridors rather than elsewhere, including dense housing, secondary schools, retail, medical facilities, and government facilities serving the public.
- requiring transit-oriented building orientation and appropriate treatments for pedestrian safety and access.
- including in the street functional classifications the goal of *protecting current transit operating speeds* even as traffic increases. Over time, this may trigger the need for new transit-preferential treatments to protect transit from congestion-related delays. Examples are: transit signal priority, queue jumps, queue by-pass lanes, and exclusive transit lanes.
- express routes

Along the corridor(s) located primarily on the Oregon State University (OSU) campus, the City, with the cooperation of OSU, should pursue an integrated strategy of improving transit orientation, including strategies such as:

- transit-oriented building orientation and appropriate treatments for pedestrian safety and access.
- maintaining bus stops at appropriate locations, approximately 800 to 1,000 feet apart.
- on-campus parking pricing and availability to encourage transit use.
- providing bus stop amenities, such as passenger shelters.
- ensuring no/minimal obstructions to efficient transit ingress/egress and bus traffic flow (no speed bumps, priority bus lanes, for example).
- Coordinating CTS services with the on-campus shuttle service

These strategies are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6 and in the Transportation Alternatives Analysis Report in the Corvallis Transportation Plan.

By pursuing these goals along all of the primary corridors, the City can ensure that transit will be highly competitive and productive there, and thereby reduce the pressure for automobile use even as the City grows.

### **Long-Range Plan**

The long-range plan, Chapter 4, presented in this report envisions a substantial growth in the amount of transit service. To keep up with demand, transit service must grow faster than population because as cities get larger, transit demand per capita tends to rise. The long-range plan, of course, will require expanded funding to implement, which will require a long-term process of building consensus in the community about the consequences of growth and the benefits of public transportation.

Chapter 4 provides two scenarios for different levels of investment and different land use patterns. The Low Growth Scenario expands the system, providing more frequent service along most corridors. The High Growth scenario expands the system more dramatically and would provide about one service hour per capita at 80,000 population. These scenarios are envisioned for the study year of 2030. The Corvallis Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), adopted September 2006 anticipates similar increases in CTS service and has projected which decade it anticipates these increases to occur. Again, any increase in service is dependent on funding.

The long-range plan scenarios are most efficient in a future land use pattern in which most new transit-oriented development<sup>5</sup> occurs within the *current* city limits or along existing and designated future transit corridors. This includes any and all high-density housing (above 7 units per acre) as well as significant retail, hospitals, secondary schools, colleges, medical facilities, and government offices that do business with the public. If any of these uses are developed outside the current city limits or in areas outside the primary service corridors of the long-range system, then the costs of transit to serve them will be greater and the cost-effectiveness of the system will be dramatically less.

### **Short-Range Plan**

A short-range plan for enhancing CTS in the short term is included in Chapter 5 and moves in the direction of the long-range strategy. One scenario maintains the current service hours and one scenario adds one additional bus.

The proposed short-term redesign includes the following features:

- Restructuring of some routes to concentrate service where the highest demand exists.
- The addition of demand-responsive service in low-density areas currently served by transit.

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<sup>5</sup> “Transit-oriented development” generally consists of residential and commercial development mixed and organized to provide optimal walk access to transit. Transit-oriented development requires moderate density around transit stops with apartments located closer than single-family houses. It also requires commercial buildings to be oriented for direct access from the street. Finally, transit-oriented development must be consistent with CTS’s need to protect operating speed. Therefore, it does not require awkward deviations, and its attendant street design supports transit’s speed goals.