A New Approach to Public Transportation in the Rock Region

May 2015
WHO will benefit?
WHAT will it look like?
WHEN will it happen?
HOW much will it cost?
HOW do we make it happen?
WHO will benefit?
Kelly

I tried the express bus to downtown Little Rock once and it was pretty nice, but it didn’t seem very “express.” Sherwood’s a great place to live and raise a family, but it would be awfully nice if I didn’t always have to drive my kids everywhere!
David

Central Arkansas can’t become what we want it to be without investing in transit. It’s hard for me to justify financing a mixed-use development if the closest bus route runs every 40 minutes.
Jeannette

Riding the bus allows me to be independent. I don’t have to rely on anyone to help me get where I need to go. The drivers are nice and the buses are clean, but I wish they ran more often like the buses in Nashville.
Annette

I like being able to bike around town, walk places to meet my friends, and hop on the streetcar to go to a concert. I ride the bus, but it’s not always convenient. I live just a few blocks from my office in Little Rock and enjoy not having a car.
Charles

To get from Pulaski Tech to my job at McCain Mall means I have to ride to downtown Little Rock on Route 13 and then back out on Route 10. I usually try to get a ride with a friend instead.
Ernie

I just moved my packing business out to West Little Rock, but lost a lot of employees who can’t get here because there’s no bus service. There’s a lot of growth in this area, but you have to have a car to get to jobs here.
WHO will benefit?
WHAT will it look like?
WHEN will it happen?
HOW much will it cost?
HOW do we make it happen?
Existing System
Short Term: Modest Changes

Create hierarchy of service

Tier I: 30-minute service all day

Tier II: 30-minute peak service/hourly off-peak service

Tier III: hourly service all day

Flex Service: service on-demand all day

Express Service: peak-period service + one mid-day trip
Short Term: Modest Changes

Off-peak service frequency (6-8 hours per day)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color</th>
<th>Frequency (minutes)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Green</td>
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Peak service frequency
(Six hours per day)

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Enhanced Bus Service (Main, JFK and McCain Avenue) and Cross-town service in North Little Rock

West Little Rock Express

Community Shuttles (Maumelle, Sherwood, Jacksonville and West Little Rock)

Expanded Flex Service
Enhanced Bus Service (Main, JFK and McCain Avenue) and Cross town service in North Little Rock

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Expanded Flex Service

Option 2 enhancements

BRT in Little Rock (Markham, West 12th Street and University Avenue)
Enhanced Bus Service (Main, JFK and McCain Avenue) and Cross town service in North Little Rock

West Little Rock Express

Community Shuttles (Maumelle, Sherwood, Jacksonville and West Little Rock)

Expanded Flex Service

Option 2 enhancements

Light Rail in Little Rock (Markham, West 12th Street and University Avenue)
### Off-Peak Period Frequency

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**Longer Term:**

**Investment Plan**

2 3 4

**Off-Peak Period**

**Weekday Off-Peak Route Frequency**

- 15 Minute Frequency
- 20 Minute Frequency
- 30 Minute Frequency
- 60 Minute Frequency
- Limited Express Service
- Demand Response
**Peak Period Frequency**

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Enhanced Bus Corridor: Main Street, JFK Boulevard, McCain Boulevard
Two Crosstown routes:
- Parkway to McCain Boulevard
- Pulaski Tech to McCain Mall
Three Mini-Hubs:
- Pershing, McCain/JFK Boulevard and Wal-Mart
Longer Term: Investment Plan

Little Rock

“Rapid” Service on Markham, University Avenue and W. 12th Street
WHO will benefit?
WHAT will it look like?
WHEN will it happen?
HOW much will it cost?
HOW do we make it happen?
Bus Rapid Transit

- 11 miles of roadway improvements
- 22 stations with level platform boardings, off-board fare collection
- 14 bus rapid transit vehicles
- Transfer hub at University and Markham

Light Rail

- 11 miles of rail track
- 22 stations with level platform boardings, off-board fare collection
- 14 light rail vehicles
- Transfer hub at University and Markham

**High-Capacity Transit Investment: Annual Capital Costs**

- **Bus Rapid Transit**: $9 M per year x20
- **Light Rail**: $25 M per year x20

**Longer Term: Investment Plan**
### Investment Plan: Annual Operating Costs

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<td>Operating Cost</td>
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<td>$27,982,317</td>
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<td>Operating $ Needed</td>
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### Investment Plan: Annual Total Costs

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<td>$250,000</td>
<td>$8,900,000</td>
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WHEN will it happen?
HOW much will it cost?
HOW do we make it happen?
Existing Funds

- CATA depends on grants from the FTA to fund about 13% of operations and about 75% of capital projects.
- The funds that support operations remain flat.
- Federal grants for major capital projects like BRT or streetcars are limited and competitive.
What is Needed?

- Predictable, reliable source of revenue for operations.
- Dedicated local source for capital improvements.
- Flexibility to enhance services based on needs or new growth.
- Minimize uncertainty for investment along fixed transit routes.
- Ensure affordable transportation alternative.

Successful transit systems rely on dedicated funding.
Challenges

- Current system requires annual appropriation from members and no direct capital financing
- Sales tax for transit is limited to \( \frac{1}{4} \) cent = $18.2M
- Property tax is at legal capacity for local members (5 mils)
- Improvement District (intended by state law for transit) has onerous requirements
- Changing current limitations cannot occur until 2017 State legislative session
Currently Available Funding Sources

- **.25% Sales Tax**: $18.2
- **1% Tourism Tax**: $5.9
- **Funding Partners**: $12.7

Equates to:
- Little Rock: 2.4 mils
- North Little Rock: 2.2 mils
- Pulaski County: 0.3 mils
- Maumelle: 0.2 mils
- All Others: 0.2 mils
Funding Service Options

Capital Costs

Operating Costs

Funding

Tourism $5,900
Funding Partners $12,700
Sales Tax $18,200
Existing $5,700

Service Enhancements

2

$250

$17,210

Service Enhancements + BRT

3

$250

$17,210

$8,900

Service Enhancements + Light Rail

4

$250

$21,600

$24,000

Thousands

$50,000

$40,000

$30,000

$20,000

$10,000

$0

$24,000

$25,000

$21,600

$8,900

$250

$17,210

$5,700
# Funding Service Options

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<td>+ $17.5 Million</td>
<td>+ $30.5 Million</td>
<td>+ $49.0 Million</td>
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Funding Tool:
- Federal and State Funds, and Fares
- Sales Tax Revenues
- Funding Partner Contributions
- Tourism Tax

OR

Funding Tool:
- Federal and State Funds, and Fares
- Funding Partner Contributions
- Sales Tax Revenues
- Tourism Tax
- Additional $6.5 Million
Long-Term Funding Options

• Legislative changes to enhance State funding for transit

• Improvement Districts:
  – Create new definition tailored to needs of transit

• Sales Tax:
  – Change cap on public transit from $0.25 to $0.50

• Make Rock Region METRO a Taxing Authority
Conclusion
Conclusion

• Many transit service options exist
• Several funding options exist: short- and longer-term options; all are achievable
• Requires broad support for success
  – Urban, suburban and small city residents
  – Employers, developers and civic boosters
  – Coalition of leaders and organizations
THANK YOU!

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jgoldman@nelsonnygaard.com