

# INTERCITY TRANSIT STRATEGIC PLAN

## 2019 - 2024

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## Chapter 1: Background and Purpose

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of our Strategic Plan is to define levels and types of public transportation services to be offered to the citizens of Thurston County over the next six years and to determine the amount and sources of the revenue to finance the services. The 2019-2024 Strategic Plan is in abbreviated form as the Authority concludes the multi-year short and long range planning process, which included a significant public engagement process, and awaits the outcome of the November 6, 2018 vote on Intercity Transit Proposition 1. Goals and policy positions, other than establishing the level of fixed-route and Dial-A-Lift (DAL) services have been identified. With the agency in flux regarding its finances, the proposed 2019 budget assumes a status quo level of service. It is anticipated the Authority will alter that assumption based on the outcome of the election. The plan also outlines a capital program and specific services for the six-year period.

The 2019-2024 Strategic Plan assumes Intercity Transit will stay at the current sales tax level of 0.8%. We recognize, with the loss of federal funding, our long range financial picture is not enough to sustain our current level of service. This is the first strategic plan where the maximum allowable sales tax for Intercity Transit is 1.2%. A 0.4% increase in sales tax is a tax of four cents on a ten dollar purchase and generates approximately \$16 to \$20 million per year in revenue.

While the economy and sales tax revenue has recovered, it is still important to note the loss of approximately \$14 million dollars in sales tax revenue between 2008 and 2014. Sales tax revenues in 2009 were 10% below 2008 levels and 13% below 2007 levels. Both 2010 and 2011 sales tax revenues were essentially equal to the 2009 level. Sales tax recovered moderately in 2012 with sales tax revenues approximately 1% above the level of the previous year. We saw sales tax growth in 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 with approximately 3.8%, 4.1%, 9%, 9.36% and 5.71% respectively above the level of the previous year. While the economy is more stable, this still represents a significant loss of revenue. It is difficult to forecast future sales tax revenue which makes long-term planning a challenge as this represents approximately 80% of our budget. Along with the potential volatility of sales tax, fuel pricing, the four-year elimination of federal funding for bus and bus facilities and the return of funding as of December 2015 but at a significantly reduced rate makes replacing vehicles and maintaining current service levels a challenge.

The first Strategic Plan adopted by the Intercity Transit Authority was the 2002-2007 Strategic Plan adopted in late 2001. The goal of the 2002-2007 Strategic Plan was to

define and implement a set of routes and services that would be implemented by 2006, which could be maintained with the proposed level of sales tax and other revenues.

The 2002-2007 Strategic Plan required several bold initiatives including reducing the boundaries of the Public Transportation Benefit Area (PTBA) and doubling the level of sales tax devoted to public transportation. The boundaries were reduced in early 2002 to an area approximating the boundaries of the cities of Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater, and Yelm and their Urban Growth Areas. In September 2002, voters within the new PTBA approved an increase in the sales tax from .3% to .6%. This allowed the adoption of the service plan that expanded service over a 3- year period.

Growth in sales tax revenue and lower than expected expenses in the 2003 to 2006 time period combined to allow an additional service expansion in 2008. An expansion of approximately 12% was implemented in February 2008. This was in addition to the service expansion identified in the 2002-2007 Strategic Plan. The major capital projects outlined in the plan were also completed.

In 2002, the need for additional funding was driven by the loss of Motor Vehicle Excise Tax (MVET) funding. The increase in sales tax essentially replaced this funding and allowed for a restoration of services. In 2009, the Authority again faced a significant reduction in sales tax revenue due to the steep economic downturn. Fares were increased 33% in January 2009, and the Authority requested voters consider a 0.2% increase in the sales tax in August 2010. This increase was approved by 64% of voters and allowed Intercity Transit to implement a modest service increase in February 2010 and to continue major capital projects.

With the passage of the Federal FAST Act, there is more certainty regarding federal support through 2020 but the levels of funding remain below the previous funded levels. And there continues to be uncertainty about the level of state funding that will be dedicated to public transportation. Intercity Transit receives a relatively small amount of state funding for operating. This is used for special needs transportation for our Dial-A-Lift service. Intercity Transit has received \$2 million in state funding in the 2017-2019 biennium for final design of the Pattison Street Renovation and Expansion, \$885,000 in the 2017-2019 biennium for replacement vanpool vehicles, \$375,000 for the first time in many years in support of DASH service as well as \$993,612 to fund gaps in service on route 612 between Thurston and Pierce County through June 2019.

A major challenge facing Intercity Transit is the increasing demand for both local and express service and not having the funding to support it. A critical challenge is finding the funding to rehabilitate and address capacity concerns at the Operations/Maintenance/Administrative base facility so we can continue to provide

service as well as address the growing needs of our community. The community has expressed the need to provide fixed route and Dial-A-Lift services within our current boundaries to areas currently unserved. In addition, the community has requested we start service earlier, end later and increase frequency. The demand for express service connecting Thurston, Pierce and King Counties continues to grow. The elimination of all Pierce Transit express service in the highly congested I-5 corridor resulted in Intercity Transit adding a number of additional trips in 2011. This additional service significantly impacted Intercity Transit budget. It was hoped that Pierce Transit would resume service but to date there is no indication that they will do so.

The final design and engineering for the rehabilitation and expansion of the Pattison Street maintenance and operations facility had been delayed due to the elimination of bus and bus facility funding under the 2012 federal transportation legislation. One of the unfortunate results of the elimination of funding is the need to individually pursue needed rehabilitation work with local dollars. Staff completed the approximately eight million dollar project to replace old underground storage tanks (UST) which did not meet environmental standards and we were in danger of losing insurance coverage. Staff is focusing on the final design and permitting elements for the Olympia Transit Center. The construction is estimated to be complete in late 2019. Grant funding has been secured for this project. Staff is also focused on the master plan and next phase of design and construction for the Pattison Maintenance, Operations and Administrative facility. While the award of a 9.7 million dollar federal grant will help us move this project forward, the soaring cost of construction means more dollars are required to keep up with inflation.

In the midst of major planning and public engagement projects, preparing for and implementing the short range goals with a September service change, having a proposition on the ballots and leaping forward with multiple major facility design and construction programs, we have taken a step back from our formal ISO 14001 program. Intercity Transit continues its focus on sustainability and environmental management and will evaluate the need and desire to move forward with formal designation. Regardless, we will continue to focus on aligning best practices, agency activities and technologies towards a more sustainable future.

## PLAN ORGANIZATION

The plan is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 1** describes Intercity Transit's Strategic Plan efforts beginning in 2001 and continuing with the development of this plan covering the period 2019 through 2024.
- **Chapter 2** defines Intercity Transit's role in our community, and the Mission and Vision Statements. Key principles defining the levels and types of service needed by the community are also presented.
- **Chapter 3** identifies policy issues facing Intercity Transit today and over the next six

years. Specific actions are stated for each issue. These actions include actions to take place in 2019 and actions for the 2020 to 2024 time-period.

- **Chapter 4, Chapter 5 and Chapter 6** are addressed in the 2018 Long Range Plan and dependent upon the outcomes of the November 2018 election.

## **BACKGROUND**

In January, 2000, the funds Intercity Transit received from the Motor Vehicle Excise Tax (MVET) were eliminated. Intercity Transit received approximately \$8 million per year or 42% of its revenues from this source prior to 2000. Intercity Transit acted quickly to respond to this loss of revenue. In March 2000, Intercity Transit reduced the amount of service by over 40% and reduced its workforce by the same level. In May 2000, the Washington State Legislature provided a one-time allocation of funding to help transit systems adjust to the loss of MVET funds. Intercity Transit used this funding, approximately \$2.8 million, to reinstate Sunday service and some other services. The net reduction in service after this restoration was 35%.

The level of service restored in May 2000 required expenditures above the revenue provided by the local sales tax and other sources. The Intercity Transit Authority elected to operate a level of service that could be maintained for three years by drawing from reserve funds. This three-year period would be used to determine if the Legislature would restore some level of funding and to work with the community to determine the appropriate levels of service and funding for Intercity Transit.

Intercity Transit worked with the Thurston Regional Planning Council, the Transportation Policy Board, the Intercity Transit Citizen Advisory Committee, and the Intercity Transit Authority to develop a Strategic Plan for Public Transportation service in Thurston County. This Strategic Plan was adopted in early 2002. It addressed the role Intercity Transit should play in the community, and the levels and types of services that should be provided. The service improvement and capital programs included in this plan were implemented in three phases with the third phase completed in February 2006.

The Authority updated the Strategic Plan in 2006 and included additional service improvements in February 2008. This was possible due to the significant increases in sales tax revenue and ridership between 2003 and 2008. The need for an additional service change was anticipated in 2010 or 2011; however, it was recognized this would be dependent on the state of the local economy and growth in sales tax revenue. In 2008 there were sharp increases in fuel prices to over \$4.00 per gallon. This increased ridership by over 18% in 2008 while also sharply increasing the cost of fuel in terms of our expenditures. The Authority reacted to this cost increase by increasing fares 33% on January 1, 2009. The economy saw a significant downturn in 2009 with sales tax revenue dropping over 12% in a single year.

The reduction in sales tax revenue resulted in Intercity Transit facing a 22% reduction in service without an increase in revenue. The Authority considered a sales tax increase as part of the 2009–2014 Strategic Plan but delayed the election until a later date. The issue was considered again as part of the 2010-2015 Strategic Plan, and the Authority elected to place a 0.2% sales tax increase on the August 2010 ballot. The measure was approved by the voters with a 64% positive vote. This allowed current service to be maintained and a 3% service increase in February 2011. Additional service changes occurred in 2011 to address the elimination of express service to Thurston County by Pierce Transit, to eliminate unproductive Dash service and to revise several routes to address on-time performance issues. The net result of these additional service changes was a very small increase in revenue hours.

In July 2012, MAP-21, the federal transportation authorization bill, provided formula allocated funding for Intercity Transit but eliminated discretionary funding for major capital projects and revenue vehicles. Previous Strategic Plans assumed the Pattison Street Maintenance, Operations and Administrative facility renovation and expansion as well as new buses would be primarily funded at 80% with federal discretionary funding. That was totally disruptive to our historical funding model requiring we dedicate significantly more local dollars to capital expenses. In December 2015, the federal FAST Act restored a portion of the bus and bus facilities dollars but at a far reduced level.

Even with limited federal bus and bus facility funding, the Authority directed staff to seek both state and federal funding to pursue the completion of the Pattison Street facility renovation and expansion; a project for which initial planning began in 1998. In the 2017 legislative session, Intercity Transit was awarded \$2 million through the Regional Mobility Grant competitive process to complete final design. As part of our 4-year grant application, and with the approval of the 2019-2021 state legislature, Intercity Transit is slated to receive \$3.9 million for construction of the \$27 million Pattison Street facility renovation and expansion project. In addition, many years after the state and the City of Olympia ended our funding partnership for DASH services, the state legislature approved a one year grant in the amount of \$375,000 to operate the service in 2016/2017. The state legislature renewed that funding partnership in the 2017/2018 legislative session.

Intercity Transit submitted a \$12 million request for federal Bus and Bus Facility funding in August 2017. This is an extremely competitive grant with \$201 million dollars available nationwide. Intercity Transit was granted \$1,375,000 through this process. Intercity Transit submitted another grant in 2018 and received one of the largest grants in the nation at \$9.7 million dollars.

## Chapter 2: Intercity Transit Mission and Vision

### MISSION STATEMENT

The completion of the implementation of the 2002 Strategic Plan led the Intercity Transit Authority to review the agency's mission and vision statements, originally adopted in 1996.

The Authority discussed the key ideas that should be included in the mission statement, and in August 2006, adopted a draft statement for review by employees and the Citizen Advisory Committee. Following their review and comments, the Authority adopted a final statement in September 2006, with revisions in May 2010.

*“Our mission is to provide and promote transportation choices that support an accessible, sustainable, livable, healthy, prosperous community.”*

### VISION STATEMENT

“Vision” and “Mission” are often confused and sometimes used interchangeably. However, there are important differences. The Mission Statement outlines why an organization exists. The Vision Statement reflects what organizational success looks like. It serves as our guide to action. It is consistent with the organization's values. It challenges and inspires us to achieve our mission.

The Authority, in tandem with the revision of the mission statement, drafted a new Vision Statement, and sought review from the Citizen Advisory Committee and employees.

Following this review, the following Vision Statement for Intercity Transit was adopted:

*“Our vision is to be a leading transit system in the country, recognized for our well trained, highly motivated, customer-focused, community-minded employees committed to enhancing the quality of life for all citizens of Thurston County.”*

### GOALS AND END POLICIES

The Intercity Transit Authority adopts a new set of goals each year. These goals continue to be clarified and the list expanded upon. These goals are listed below:

**Goal 1** –Assess the transportation needs of our community throughout the Public Transportation Benefit Area.



**End Policy** - *Intercity Transit Authority, staff, and the public will have access to clear and comprehensive information related to the transportation needs of our Public Transportation Benefit Area.*

**Goal 2** - Provide outstanding customer service.

**End Policy** - *Customers and the community will report a high level of satisfaction.*

**Goal 3** - Maintain a safe and secure operating system.

**End Policy** - *Focus on the continual improvement for the safety and security of all customers, employees and facilities.*

**Goal 4** - Provide responsive transportation options within financial limitations.

**End Policy** - *Customers and staff will have access to programs and services that benefit and promote community sustainability, focused on serving the mobility needs and demands of our community.*

**Goal 5** - Integrate sustainability into all agency decisions and operations to lower social and environmental impact to enhance our community.

**End Policy** - *Resources will be used efficiently with minimal negative impact on the environment and the community.*

**Goal 6** - Encourage use of our services.

**End Policy** - *Educate and encourage community members to explore, appreciate and utilize the benefits of our services and programs.*

**Goal 7** - Build partnerships to address and jointly find solutions to the mobility needs and demands in our community.

**End Policy** - *Work with governmental, private, for profits and not-for-profit community partners to understand our joint responsibility to insure great mobility options and opportunities in our community.*

## **INTERCITY TRANSIT'S ROLE IN THURSTON COUNTY**

The 2002 Strategic Plan included the following summary of the role that Intercity Transit should play in Thurston County. This statement remains valid today and for the six-year period of this Strategic Plan.

Intercity Transit is the leader, major advocate, and prime source of information for public transportation in Thurston County. In this capacity, we are charged to balance several important functions:

- Providing primary transportation for people without an alternative, including those with a physical or mental disability;
- Offering high-quality alternative transportation for people with options;
- Providing a stimulant to economic growth;
- Serving as a partner in building livable communities; and,
- Being a ready resource able to respond to community emergencies.

We do this by providing effective and efficient services maximizing the public benefit from invested resources. This is done by:

- Regularly evaluating the performance of all services and balancing life-line services with the allocation of resources to those that generate the greatest number of riders per unit of invested resources;
- Pursuing new investments in community resources including capital facilities and intelligent transportation systems that will allow better use of transportation resources;
- Supporting efforts by local jurisdictions that encourage transit supportive development; and,
- Striving to expand services in order to keep pace with the community's growth and to address unmet transportation needs in the community.

## **INTERCITY TRANSIT'S FOCUS ON PERFORMANCE**

Major housing and commercial developments are occurring on the edges of our service area and "infill" development is occurring. This places increasing demands upon Intercity Transit. Residents of developing neighborhoods and commercial areas request new bus routes. Those in established neighborhoods want existing services to operate more frequently and increase the span of services, starting earlier in the morning and ending later at night. Regional commuters increasingly look to Intercity Transit as a way to avoid having to drive on the region's crowded freeways. Ridership, on the other hand, initially slowed in 2009, grew again in 2011 as local and national economies continued to decline and set a new annual record in 2012. Since then, with a 25% increase in fares in 2013, lower fuel costs and lower enrollment at local colleges, ridership has declined. By the end of 2016 fixed route ridership dropped (3.96%).

Even with additional revenues, demands for service will likely outstrip our ability to provide them, forcing difficult choices. Intercity Transit focuses on productivity, measured by the passengers per revenue hour on a route, as the best way of determining service effectiveness and for allocating available resources. This focus on

performance forms the basis for numerous established policies and is continued by this plan. However, there is recognition by the Authority that this focus on productivity must be balanced with the issue of coverage and life-line services.

There are some areas of the PTBA that are difficult to serve, and routes serving these areas may never reach the productivity level of other Intercity Transit services. The Authority must continually determine if certain portions of the PTBA will receive service regardless of productivity of the route serving the area.

## **DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR THE NEXT SIX YEARS**

In developing recommendations for the Thurston County Public Transportation Benefit Area (PTBA), we identified seven general design principles. These principles guide development of a public transportation system appropriate for our PTBA today and over the next six years. These principles provided guidance to the development of a Short and Long-Range Service Plan.

### **Design Principle #1**

*Operate a range of services, each designed to meet the needs and capabilities of the neighborhoods it serves.*

Intercity Transit traditionally employed a route classification scheme that matches service levels to the characteristics of the neighborhoods being served. In the past, local fixed-route services were divided into five general groups – trunk, primary, secondary, rural, and circulator routes. Circulator routes are those routes designed to serve major activity centers or downtown areas such as the “Dash,” which serves downtown Olympia and the Capitol Campus.

### **Design Principle #2**

*Strengthen service operating along major corridors.*

Over two-thirds of Intercity Transit’s fixed-route patronage is recorded on the system’s seven trunk routes. This fact reflects the high concentrations of housing, employment and commercial activity along the corridors they serve. Our goal is to provide more frequent service, later night service and expanded weekend service along the key corridors. This is designed to make transit easy and convenient to use, and competitive with automobile usage when traveling in the major corridors.

### **Design Principle #3**

*Reduce customer travel times.*

It is very difficult for public transportation to compete with auto travel times. Whether they ride local fixed-route service or use vanpools or express buses, patrons must

typically go to a centralized pickup point, wait for a prearranged departure time, and are then further delayed whenever other patrons get on or off. This all affects the competitiveness of public transportation.

Strategies to reduce travel time include:

- Express services;
- Priority treatments for transit vehicles;
- More direct services linking major points of origin and destination; and,
- Fare policies that speed boarding times.

Each is a valid strategy for reducing public transportation's travel time disadvantage. The potential of each of these strategies is discussed in Chapter 3.

#### **Design Principle #4**

*Keep pace with development.*

New development is taking place outside Intercity Transit's core of urban services. Developments in the Northeast Lacey, Hawks Prairie, South Tumwater, Briggs Nursery, and Kaiser Road areas hold special challenges for Intercity Transit, because bus travel times tend to be long and service levels are low. If Intercity Transit does not effectively serve these major developments, we will reduce the number of residents who can realistically use public transportation. Intercity Transit should continue to support quality infill projects, and the strengthening of existing downtown and employment areas that take advantage of existing public transportation services. At the same time, system plans should provide for new services that reach out to major new developments outside our traditional service area. To date, lack of equipment and operating funds have limited our ability to provide service.

#### **Design Principle #5**

*Expand regional express routes.*

Thurston County is becoming more closely linked to the Central Puget Sound region. Citizens increasingly suggest commuter rail service be established between Tacoma and Thurston County, or Thurston County join the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority (Sound Transit). While both projects are outside the six-year timeframe of this plan, Intercity Transit still recognizes the increasing need to improve inter-county travel opportunities. For now, that need is most appropriately addressed through expanded express bus, vanpool and ridesharing services. The completion of the Lakewood Center Park-and-Ride facility, the expansion of the Martin Way Park-and-Ride lot and the opening of the Hawks Prairie facility significantly increased available parking for these services.

## **Design Principle #6**

*Support a range of transportation alternatives.*

Because fixed-route transit services consume the largest part of Intercity Transit's budget, they receive the most attention in agency plans. At the same time, they represent only one part of Intercity Transit's overall product mix. Greater opportunities to use alternative transportation helps Intercity Transit provide better public transportation services by offering more means for customers to reach its routes and facilities. Increased use of transportation alternatives also serves two of the major purposes of public transportation, reducing traffic congestion and air pollution. Three initiatives are proposed to continue:

- Intercity Transit will continue to support and expand its active vanpool and ridesharing programs. Together, these services already support significant reductions in travel by single-occupant vehicles at a modest public cost per passenger trip.
- Intercity Transit will continue to promote bicycling, walking, ridesharing and telecommuting as alternatives to driving alone. All of these modes complement public transportation use and can help Intercity Transit pursue its mission.
- We should support public and private sector initiatives that encourage alternate mode usage. Intercity Transit should continue to review and comment on community plans and proposed developments, highlighting ways both can better support alternative transportation modes. We should also support ongoing Commute Trip Reduction and Transportation Demand Management efforts being pursued by the state and local jurisdictions. Additionally, Intercity Transit should demonstrate its commitment to these efforts by advocating the importance of commute trip reduction to our own employees.

## **Design Principle #7**

*Provide fixed facilities and equipment that support the region's public transit infrastructure.*

Effective public transportation demands an investment in capital facilities that promotes customer comfort, speeds travel and increases safety. To succeed, express services need adequate park-and-ride capacity, equipment and technology that allow integration with regional transit systems. And local services need ADA compliant stops, shelters and customer information. The entire system needs reliable, safe and efficient equipment. The capital improvements that are identified in Chapter 5 attempt to fulfill these needs.

## **Chapter 3: Intercity Transit Policy Positions**

The Intercity Transit staff worked with the Intercity Transit Authority and the Citizen

Advisory Committee to develop a list of policy issues that will face Intercity Transit during the following six years. These issues fall into five general categories:

- Fixed Route Service and Service Design
- Capital Investments
- Financial
- Other Intercity Transit Services
- General Policy Issues

The issues and list of actions for 2019 and 2020-2024 are presented below. These are updated from the 2018-2023 Strategic Plan.

**1. Should Intercity Transit maintain service levels in 2019 or consider new or expanded local transit services needed to serve the growing population?**

Direction regarding service levels is directly related to the outcomes of Intercity Transit Proposition 1 on the November 2018 ballot.

**2. What is Intercity Transit's role in providing regional mobility?**

Direction regarding service levels is directly related to the outcomes of Intercity Transit Proposition 1 on the November 2018 ballot.

**3. What role should Intercity Transit play in serving the core areas of Olympia, Lacey, and Tumwater areas?**

Direction regarding service levels is directly related to the outcomes of Intercity Transit Proposition 1 on the November 2018 ballot. The Long Range Plan will help to define how to implement a reduction or an expansion of service.

**4. Is there a role for local express service in the current service area?**

Direction regarding service levels and the implement of new service is directly related to the outcomes of Intercity Transit Proposition 1 on the November 2018 ballot.

**5. Should transit priority measures – signal priority, queue bypasses, bus lanes – be considered?**

**Actions – 2019-2024**

- Implement the pilot signal preemption project in the Martin Way and Capital corridors.
- Partner with jurisdictions to enhance the safety and speed of bus movement.

- Proceed with the partnership created with the Thurston Regional Planning Council, the City of Olympia, the City of Lacey and Thurston County to explore improvements to the Martin Way corridor to improve pedestrian access to transit stops and increase transit vehicle speeds and reliability.
- Intercity Transit should work with the Thurston Regional Planning Council, the City of Olympia, the City of Lacey, and Thurston County to develop the Martin Way corridor as a “smart corridor.”
- Intercity Transit should work with the Thurston Regional Planning Council, the City of Olympia, the City of Lacey, City of Tumwater and Thurston County to expand the number of intersections and buses equipped to enable signal preemption.
- Continue to partner with jurisdictions to enhance the safety and speed of bus movement.

#### **6. Should Intercity Transit pursue efforts to coordinate service with local school districts?**

The issue of coordination between local school districts and the public transportation provider is one often raised. Both school districts and transit systems have large fleets of buses and the school district vehicles are generally used only during peak periods. In addition, the vehicles often operate on the same roadways and appear to offer duplicative service. In some communities, students primarily use the public transportation system for travel to and from school. There are several barriers that make coordination between the services difficult. These include:

- The peak periods of both the public transportation system and the public school system generally coincide. There is little excess capacity in either system in the peak periods.
- School buses and public transportation vehicles are very different in design and requirements. Public transportation vehicles must be fully accessible, provide more space per passenger, provide more passenger amenities and be able to operate up to 16 hours per day. School buses are lighter duty vehicles designed to operate four to six hours per day and on residential streets. They are designed to maximize capacity rather than comfort.
- School bus routes tend to be circuitous routes focused on a particular school. School buses often operate on neighborhood streets. Public transit routes tend to be more direct and operate on major and minor arterials. Public transit service generally expects passengers to walk longer distances than school bus routes.
- School buses are able to stop traffic, so students may safely cross a street. Transit vehicles do not have this ability. Students are trained to cross in front of a school bus. This is not the case for transit passengers.
- There is a reluctance to place younger students on public transportation where there is limited ability to monitor their interaction with other customers. Federally

funding prohibits transit buses being used for “charter services” or restricting use to students only. Efforts to coordinate service are generally limited to middle and high school students. Intercity Transit staff and regional school districts’ staff should work together to determine if there are coordination opportunities.

#### **Actions - 2019-2024**

- Continue the Youth Education program.
- Continue to work with schools and youth to teach skills for safe biking, walking and transit use.
- Continue to market public transportation and the use of transportation alternatives to students.
- Work with school districts to encourage the location of schools in areas served by public transportation and to develop safe paths for walking, biking, and access between transit routes and school facilities.
- Continue to focus on coordinated emergency management response.
- Explore the desire and the cost to increase the reach of the youth education program.

#### **7. What level of passenger infrastructure (bus shelter, benches, lighted stops, passenger information) is appropriate?**

Direction regarding our capital program will be influenced by the outcome of Intercity Transit Proposition 1 on the November 2018 ballot.

#### **Actions - 2019**

- Prioritize bus stop improvements by the level of passenger activity. An emphasis should be given to stops located near facilities serving elderly persons or others with special transportation needs, as well as to stops located on major corridors.

#### **8. What additional investments in technology should be made beyond the current Advanced Communications System project?**

Pursue enhancements to our fleet and systems management software to enhance the efficient administration of the agency and insure compliance with state and federal requirements. Research and upgrade our radio communications systems to serve both our daily as well as our emergency operational needs. Continue to address operational glitches with our Advanced Communications System and pursue either an upgrade or replacement of this aging system.

Space was leased from WSDOT to address server room capacity issues in 2014 as opposed to building a new server room at Pattison. The telephone system was replaced in 2016. An improved website was released in 2017 with additional



improvements anticipated in 2018.

#### **Actions - 2019-2024**

- Pursue replacement of our radio communications system.
- Work to complete website upgrades.
- Continue to work with the CAD-AVL system manufacturer to correct glitches.
- Research an upgrade or replacement of our CAD-AVL system.
- Study replacement and implement new communication system.
- Pursue either an upgrade or replacement of our CAD-AVL System.
- Continue improvements to the Web site.
- Update review of the Information Systems function.
- Develop a plan to address longer term server room issues and to provide adequate space for computer and other communications equipment.

#### **9. Should the vanpool program continue to expand to keep pace with demand?**

The Authority increased vanpool fares approximately 18% in January 2009, to match Pierce Transit's vanpool fare. Vanpool staffing also increased in 2009 with the hiring of a Commuter Services Assistant to allow continued growth of the program. The Intercity Transit vanpool program grew to 220 active vanpools by the end of 2012 and we increased staffing for 2013 by an additional Vanpool Coordinator. With a 10% fare increase in January 2013, the program for the first time began to lose riders and vanpool groups. With continued slow jobs growth and low fuel pricing, the program continued to lose groups ending 2016 with 177 groups and 2017 with xxx groups. As the economy and job creation improves, the population grows, fuel prices rise, and we experience increased congestion as the demand to travel to and from Thurston County increases we anticipate the program will grow. Vanpool supports economic development in that it is a cost effective and efficient way to get employees to work sites. It is a service that supports residents and businesses located in both urban as well as the more rural parts of the county.

Many of the vehicles to replace and expand the program have been funded through a Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) grant and local dollars. Beginning in 2012, Intercity Transit began receiving federal funding allocated to the Puget Sound Regional Council based on service provided to Pierce County and King County. Intercity Transit receives Federal 5307 funds for travel into or out of the Seattle UZA.

#### **Actions - 2019-2024**

- Focus on obtaining grant funds to support an educational campaign to saturate the market with vanpool information and show the value proposition.
- Continue to pursue WSDOT Vanpool Improvement Program grants to fund

replacement vehicle purchases.

- Utilize federal 5307 funds through the Puget Sound Regional Council for travel into the Seattle UZA.
- Focus on building the program to previous numbers of active groups and thereafter plan on adding an average of 10 new groups each year over the six years of this plan.
- Purchase expansion vehicles when necessary.

**10. Are there capital purchases or other projects that are needed to allow future growth? What is the appropriate timeline for these projects?**

Historically Intercity Transit has obtained 80% federal funds for the purchase of all buses and for capital improvement projects. With the four-year elimination of federal bus and bus discretionary funding under MAP-21, and the very limited federal funding opportunities under the FAST Act, opportunities will continue to prove a significant challenge to simply replace our current fleet and provide the existing levels of service let alone purchase additional vehicles to allow for growth.

Intercity Transit has been successful in obtaining federal funding for all other major capital projects with the exception of the renovation and expansion of the Pattison Street Operating and Maintenance facility. The unfortunate result is the need to individually pursue needed rehabilitation work incrementally, which is more expensive, and the need to pursue them with local dollars, which could have been dedicated to other purposes. As an example, the Authority dedicated five million dollars to replace old underground storage tanks (UST) which do not meet current environmental standards and were in danger of losing insurance coverage.

Another challenge was should Intercity Transit dedicate additional local funds to complete the final design for the Pattison Street Facility, potentially placing us in a more competitive position should funding become available. With the passage of the FAST Act, there was renewed focus on finalizing the design and obtaining the funds to complete the ultimate goal of full renovation and expansion and the ability to leverage local dollars with state and federal grant funds. In 2017 the Authority dedicated additional local dollars towards the completion of final design and received a matching grant from WSDOT to do so. In 2018, Intercity Transit completed the Pattison Street Facility UST project and received an additional \$1,375 million and \$9.7 million to focus on the rehabilitation and expansion of the facility.

**Actions - 2019**

- Finalize design for the Pattison Street Facility Rehabilitation and Expansion project.
- Continue to seek funding opportunities to complete construction of the Pattison Street Facility.
- Develop a long-term capital funding plan.

#### **Actions - 2020-2024**

- Continue to pursue funding for the Pattison Street project, new buses and other projects.

#### **11. Should Intercity Transit pursue additional park and ride facilities?**

While additional park-and-ride locations would prove beneficial to the PTBA, as well as region as a whole, this plan urges caution in dedicating capital funds for additional park-and-ride facilities at this time. The dedication of monetary and human resources should focus on moving higher occupancy vehicles, and therefore more people, more quickly throughout the region. This would encourage the use of vanpool and buses and reduce congestion. Capital and operational dollars should be focused first on enhancing the span and frequency of service and encouraging the creation of HOV lanes and other alternative methods to incentivize higher occupancy travel.

WSDOT Regional Mobility Grant funds were obtained to expand the Martin Way Park-and-Ride by 170 parking spaces and build the 325-space Hawks Prairie Park-and-Ride facility in 2012. There is still room at these facilities to support express bus, vanpool, and ridesharing programs.

#### **Actions - 2019**

- Partner with WSDOT if an opportunity becomes available.
- Pursue joint use agreements as necessary to secure park-and-ride space to support ridesharing, express bus and local transit services.

#### **Actions - 2020-2024**

- Continue to pursue joint use agreements as necessary to secure park-and-ride space to support ridesharing, express bus and local transit services.
- Continue to monitor and work with local jurisdictions and the Washington State Department of Transportation regarding potential locations for a park-and-ride facility.

#### **12. How do Village Vans, Community Vans, the Surplus Van Grant and Discounted Bus Pass programs fit into Intercity Transit's future plans? Are there other programs of this type that should be considered?**

These four programs should be continued in future years. All of these programs are very successful and allow us to assist many community partners. These programs are relatively low cost for Intercity Transit with grant and program revenues covering some of the cost. The grant funds previously utilized for Village Vans had been eliminated under MAP-21. Intercity Transit was successful in obtaining a two year federal WorkForce Development grant. In addition to these programs, the Authority

expressed a desire for staff to work with schools on pass programs and promotions.

**Actions - 2019**

- Offer 50% discounted bus passes to organizations and agencies serving low income clients up to \$400,000.
- Continue to seek replacement grant funding for the Village Van Program.
- Work with schools to develop pass programs and promotions.

**Actions - 2020-2024**

- Continue support for the Village Van, Surplus Van Grant, Community Van and Discounted Bus Pass programs.
- Advocate and monitor potential funding for continuation of the Village Vans program.

**13. Are our services - Dial-A-Lift, Travel Training, and Accessible Fixed-Route Buses adequate to serve persons with disabilities?**

Intercity Transit continues to improve its service to persons with disabilities focusing on travel training, bus buddies and improved bus stop locations. Market Research of Dial-A-Lift services to measure customer satisfaction and the need for service improvements was completed in 2015, with results released in early 2016, showing a very high level of satisfaction with the Dial-A-Lift service. Staff recommends Market Research of Dial-A-Lift services be conducted every 3 to 5 years.

Eighteen vehicles in the Dial-A-Lift fleet were replaced in 2011. Ten vehicles were replaced in 2013. Replacement of the eight fixed-route vans and ten standard floor coaches in 2008 greatly increased the accessibility of the fixed-route vehicle fleet for all users. Twelve propane powered vans were delivered in 2018. Advanced Communication System features such as automated stop announcements, transfer protection, and improved customer information also improved customer service for all fixed-route passengers.

Though Intercity Transit fixed-route buses are accessible, many individuals are still unaware of just how easy it is to use fixed-route. By expanding the Travel Training program and enhancing it with Bus Buddies, Intercity Transit increases its focus on educating persons with disabilities and senior citizens on the accessibility of the fixed route, increasing personal independence and reducing costly Dial-A-Lift trips.

**Actions - 2019**

- Continue to focus on expanding the Travel Training program and the Bus Buddies program.

**Actions - 2020-2024**

- Continue to pursue improvements in scheduling software and use of technology to improve productivity and service.
- Replace most unreliable vehicles.
- Continue the effort to make all bus stops accessible and to provide shelters and other amenities at stops serving persons with disabilities.
- Apply the principles of Universal Design to all capital purchases and projects, and explicitly consider accessibility and usability for the widest range of individuals when evaluating equipment and technology.

**14. Is the current fare policy appropriate?**

Staff recommends we retain our policy to review fares every three years. The fare structure, effective February 2013, is as follows:

Category	Per Ride	Daily	Monthly
Adult	\$1.25	\$2.50	\$36
Youth (6-17)	\$1.25	\$2.50	\$15
Reduced	\$.50	\$1.00	\$15
Dial-A-Lift	\$1.25	\$2.50	\$36 or \$15

The Authority has agreed it is prudent at this time to continue with our current fare structure.

**15. Should Intercity Transit’s planning for the next six years be financially constrained?**

The majority of Intercity Transit’s funding is from the local sales and use tax. This was increased from 0.6% to 0.8% in August 2010. This allowed Intercity Transit to maintain current service levels and make modest service improvements. Effective in 2018, the Authority has an additional 0.4% sales tax authority that could be levied at a future date. The financial forecast included in this plan is based on the current 0.8% sales tax. In 2017, Intercity Transit undertook a significant public engagement process and continued to focus on this extensive community engagement and conversation in 2018 to help define what public transit should look like in our community. The outcome of the November 2018 ballot will focus the future planning and implementation efforts for Intercity Transit.

**16. What role should Intercity Transit play in local transportation projects-Commute Trip Reduction, Youth Education Programs and the Bicycle Commute Challenge?**

Intercity Transit was the lead agency for the Thurston County Commute Trip Reduction prior to 2001. The loss of MVET funds in 2000 made it difficult to maintain this role. In 2001, the local jurisdictions contracted with a private firm to coordinate the

program. Intercity Transit remained an active partner and provided Employee Transportation Coordinator training and outreach to major worksites as part of its marketing programs. In 2005, the Thurston Regional Planning Council became coordinator of the CTR program, and Intercity Transit was contracted to provide marketing, training, and support service. In 2006, Intercity Transit received a Trip Reduction Performance Program (TRPP) grant to provide expanded CTR services in the Tumwater Town Center area. This program was completed in mid-2007. Intercity Transit received an additional TRPP grant for 2008 and 2009 to implement a marketing program aimed at commuters traveling from outside Thurston County to the Capitol Campus and the Olympia downtown area. This program, "Capitol Commutes" was completed in June 2009. TRPC received grants to expand CTR activities in Thurston County and contracted with Intercity Transit to assist with these efforts.

Intercity Transit established several successful community and youth outreach programs over the past several years. Two of these – the Bicycle Commuter Contest and Smart Moves youth education program – were assumed by Intercity Transit in 2005 when the program and funding were in danger. Since then, Intercity Transit developed these into strong, ongoing programs with significant community support. Key to this success is a full-time Youth Education coordinator and a Bicycle Commuter Challenge coordinator who works six months of each year. The 2018 budget includes one part-time, grant-funded position and several grant-funded "intern" positions to assist in implementing youth education activities. The opportunity to consolidate program and storage space for the Youth Education Program became available in 2018 with the availability of space directly across the street from the Olympia Transit Center.

#### **Actions 2019**

- Continue to support grant-funded positions to assist in implementing youth education activities in 2019.
- Continue to support cycling safety and bike maintenance in 2019 and find additional sources for bike donations.
- Continue to pursue grant opportunities to supplement the Youth Education program and the Bicycle Commuter Challenge.
- Focus on providing education and outreach options and opportunities to our senior population.
- With the new location and additional space in downtown Olympia, find ways to be of more benefit to the community through our youth outreach programs.

#### **Actions - 2020-2024**

- Work with the Thurston Regional Planning Council, the State of Washington and the affected local jurisdictions to improve the Commute Trip Reduction Program.
- Pursue relationships with private employers to educate about the benefits of

commute alternatives and better serve their needs and the needs of their employees.

- Continue to market alternative transportation to youth and in schools, as well as in the larger community.
- Continue to coordinate the Bicycle Community Contest and seek grant funding to expand its efforts.
- Aggressively market high frequency corridor service.

**17. Should Intercity Transit’s current marketing approach and level of effort be continued?**

Intercity Transit’s marketing and communications program include marketing, broad community outreach, ongoing corporate communications, branding, public involvement and media relations.

Intercity Transit completed a significant customer satisfaction and market research effort in late 2015 and early 2016 that indicated high customer satisfaction and the need to raise awareness of all our mobility services. The research confirmed our key markets continue to be commuters and young people. Customer satisfaction and market segmentation survey work is critical to our success and should be done every 3 to 5 years.

**Actions - 2019**

- Focus on strategic community outreach, engagement, messaging and use of available channels to develop our market.
- Expand the web site to better serve our various constituents and to continue to be a relevant business and communications tool for the agency.
- Intercity Transit should continue to pursue outreach communications through social media platforms.

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**Actions - 2020-2024**

- Intercity Transit should aggressively market the high level of service offered in major corridors.
- Intercity Transit should continue its marketing and communications efforts to educate the community about services and the value of public transportation to the community Intercity Transit serves.
- Intercity Transit should continue to make use of customer information technology to enhance the customer experience and support service value. A real-time bus arrival service, such as OneBusAway, should be an ongoing program available to Intercity Transit bus riders.

**18. What steps should Intercity Transit take to reduce emissions and the negative environmental impacts of our operations?**

Intercity Transit took a number of steps to reduce emissions from its vehicle fleet. Intercity Transit was one of the first transit agencies in the country to use biodiesel in its entire fleet.

One of the most important steps Intercity Transit took was to remove older engines from service and to retrofit older engines with emission reduction equipment. This was largely accomplished in 2007, with the purchase of 18 new, replacement vehicles. Intercity Transit also received a grant from the Department of Ecology to install diesel oxidation catalysts and crankcase ventilation filters on the 12 oldest Intercity Transit coaches that would still be in the fleet after 2007. The purchase of six hybrid buses in 2010, seven more in 2012 and ten more in 2014 significantly reduces emissions through 26 percent better fuel economy.

Intercity Transit's policy is to use "environmentally friendly" chemicals and materials in its entire operations. Intercity Transit developed and adopted a formal Environmental and Sustainability policy in 2011. This policy focuses on actions we take to protect the current environment, primarily through compliance with environmental regulations and practices, and use of materials that do not adversely impact the natural environment. The policy also includes a sustainability element designed to enable us to meet the needs of current residents and of future growth without compromising a future that includes a healthy environment, economy, and society.

A Sustainability Plan was presented to the Authority in October 2009. This plan includes an inventory of current emissions and recommendations to improve our practices and processes. Intercity Transit completed the training in the Federal Transit Administration's Environmental Management System program and has continued to develop and enhance our system. ISO 14001 certification of Intercity Transit's Environmental and Sustainability Management System (ESMS) program started in 2013. We earned certification starting in 2014.

Intercity Transit should take an active role in local land use planning to encourage transit-oriented development and to ensure new development supports increased use of public transportation. Intercity Transit should continue to support the Thurston Regional Planning Council's efforts including the Sustainable Thurston County project, the Smart Corridors project, Thurston Here to There, and other projects. The Authority and staff should be involved in local jurisdiction comprehensive plan updates.

#### **Actions - 2019**

- Increase involvement in local and regional land use planning efforts and advocate for transit-oriented development and other development that encourages the use of transportation alternatives.



- Seek funding partnership with Puget Sound Energy to reduce energy and water usage and waste production.
- Continue to utilize environmentally friendly chemicals and materials in all operations, and require their use to the maximum extent possible by vendors and contractors.
- Continue partnerships with the Thurston Green Business group and Puget Sound Energy's Green Power program.
  - Consider adopting the Sustainable Thurston targets.

**Actions - 2020-2024**

- Continue implementation of the Sustainability Plan and update as needed.
- Continue to evaluate alternatively fueled vehicles and more sustainable products and equipment

**19. What should be Intercity Transit's policy and actions related to expansion of the PTBA?**

**Actions - 2019-2024**

- Maintain the current policy which is not to expand the PTBA.

The focus is to enhance service in areas that support increase frequency and span of service and to serve areas currently not served within the existing PTBA. Funding does not lend itself to providing service beyond the existing boundaries. The Intercity Transit Authority should consider annexation of new areas only if representatives of these areas request the Authority take steps to hold an annexation election and demonstrate that there is support for the action in the area to be annexed.

**20. Should Intercity Transit seek alternative funding sources involving stakeholders in an extended dialogue to determine if a mutually acceptable strategy can be derived?**

**Actions - 2019-2024**

The Intercity Transit Authority should bring together community stakeholders (schools, private business, non-profits, state and local governments) in having a greater role in providing alternative funding for transit services rather than relying on federal funding.

**Chapter 4: Recommended Service Plan**

**SERVICE RECOMMENDATIONS**

Please refer to the 2018 Short and Long Range Plan which identifies service principles

and priorities for the future. The implementation of the long range plan will be dependent upon the results of the November 2018 election.

### **Chapter 5: Capital Plan and Other Plan Elements**

Intercity Transit will continue to pursue the rehabilitation and expansion of the Pattison Street Facility and the technical advancements identified in this plan and in the 2019 budget. The extent of these investments and vehicle replacement schedules will be further defined by the outcome of the November 2018 election.

### **Chapter 6: Financial Plan**

#### **FINANCING THE STRATEGIC PLAN**

The goal of the 2019-2024 Strategic Plan is to implement capital improvements and a level of service by that can be sustained for the foreseeable future.