

Chapter 10. Implementation

Several actions are required to implement this plan, including services, marketing, amenities, and – perhaps most important – the supporting land use and transportation demand policies that will ensure the best possible fit between transit service and the growth in Fort Collins.

This chapter outlines recommended implementation efforts.

Implementation of Service Improvements

Several steps are identified to successfully implement the proposed Transfort service redesign:

- **Phasing.** Because the City of Fort Collins may be able to contribute more money toward transit services over time, the service plan provides a phasing strategy. The different scenarios represent different levels of investment in the transit system.
- **Achieving Plan Implementation.** Several steps are required to receive adequate public input on service changes that will not be implemented for several years. Likewise, it is important to understand how the city responds to that input with revisions to the plan as needed – so that the Fort Collins City Council is comfortable directing staff to implement each service change outlined in the plan.
- **Key Implementation Considerations.** Many issues that affect the implementation of the recommended scenarios require careful coordination and planning.
- **Monitoring After Implementation.** Once a new service is in place, performance should be monitored.

Phasing

The service scenarios comprise four phases to a significant route restructuring. The first two scenarios assume overall operating costs similar to current costs. Scenario 1 assumes that only minimal redesign is required for its implementation. Scenario 2 is developed on the assumption that College Avenue service will essentially be shifted to the Mason Street Corridor. The result is annual budget growth at one and one quarter times the current budget.

The latter scenarios address the transition to a service that is more comprehensive – and costly – than what is currently offered. Scenario 3 not only assumes the implementation of the Mason Street corridor, but also other service enhancements and budget growth equal to slightly more than one and one half times the current budget. The 2010 Restructuring, Scenario 4, assumes the implementation of a full transit grid and the Mason Street corridor with services operating at nearly double the current level of resources.

Although Transfort can implement Scenario 1 with relative facility (new schedules, driver training, stop and facility relocation, etc.), Scenario 2's introduction of the Mason Street Corridor will require the adoption of some new service standards and operating procedures. Nevertheless, Scenario 2 is a relatively simple and very logical transition from Scenario 1.

The transition to Scenario 3, however, will be perhaps the most dramatic shift in the provision of service for Transfort. As described in the service plan, the emphasis is on optimizing service within the existing service area and eliminating inefficiencies in the previous service design. The effort involves the combination and realignment of lines to provide high frequencies along a limited number of key arterials with the highest propensity for transit ridership. Challenges associated with this phase include not only what is required of operations staff, but also the potentially contentious public acceptance of a new transit service. Fortunately, Mason Street would continue to serve as the backbone of the Transfort system, so even with many changes system-wide, a significant piece of the Scenario 3 system would already be in place.

For Scenario 3, the service restructuring cannot be phased route by route because all of Transfort's resources would be used in a new, more efficient combination. Much like the anticipated transition from current service to Scenario 1 service, the shift to Scenario 3 should take place with a high level of public outreach and information, and be uniformly implemented at once.

The eventual transition to Scenario 4 is the logical maturation of Scenario 3, with further increased frequencies and simple, clean routes. Scenario 4 provides, dramatic improvements in terms of productivity and overall transit effectiveness in meeting goals identified in City Plan. The target of 130,000 annual revenue hours is not currently fundable, but the City would like to see if they might be funded by 2010.

Achieving Plan Implementation

Council review, staff revision, and public comment are all key components of the eventual implementation of the recommended scenarios.

The City Council

The Fort Collins City Council has been involved in the Service Plan development and review process of the Strategic Operating Plan. Council members were introduced to the productivity-orientation of the scenarios and have spoken with staff about various aspects of transit services in Fort Collins. As early as a meeting in May 2000, the Council generally agreed with two concepts presented by City staff regarding the service plan:

- To focus Transfort service on "productivity," providing service in transit markets, between activity centers, and in areas that maximize Transfort ridership.

- To provide new transit service alternatives to areas and transit markets that do not support efficient and productive fixed route service where possible.

The Council has reviewed each of the scenarios and made recommendations for changes. The Council will continue to have a role in the implementation process as further steps are taken to implement the latter scenarios.

The Public

The public has also been provided opportunities to review and comment on the scenarios. Nevertheless, when Transfort eventually approaches the implementation of the latter phases, Scenarios 3 and 4, high levels of public notification and opportunities for comment are encouraged. Because these scenarios are still several years away from implementation, modifications to the service plans may be required based on any number of factors, including:

- Changing bus ridership/demographics in Fort Collins;
- Reductions in funding for transit due to economic circumstances or other unforeseen cutbacks;
- Significant increases in available funding;
- New fast-track developments in areas not currently programmed for development;
- Changes in City of Fort Collins or CSU parking policies (parking restrictions, availability, etc.). These are currently being considered as part of a separate University transportation management study.

The key to effective notification is to maximize both the number and diversity of people who have the opportunity to comment. To introduce the service concepts in Scenarios 3 and 4, the following steps are recommended:

1. **Notify the public of the proposed change.** Good notification requires outreach not just to “already interested” parties, such as current riders, but also to parties who may not know they are interested. Outreach typically includes press releases to trigger media coverage, presentations to community, civic, neighborhood groups, and “open house” style public meetings where people can speak individually with City staff and Transfort representatives. The most effective tools include a brochure presenting the proposed changes (both the big-picture goals and the details), as well as a PowerPoint presentation that covers the same material.
2. **Collect input over a specified period with a clear deadline.** All outreach materials should state this deadline. They should provide an array of opportunities for the public to find out more and to comment. Comments can be welcomed by mail, phone, e-mail, or through a City of Fort Collins website.
3. **Review and modify.** Review comments, summarize areas of major concern, and develop proposed modifications to the service design to address those concerns.

4. Public Hearing/Council Session and Adoption.

Public Hearings and Service Modifications

In developing this plan, Fort Collins staff has made an effort to address concerns of elected officials and the public. There are, however, opportunities for further concerns to arise and it may be necessary to make some modifications to the recommended services.

If major concerns are eventually raised by large numbers of people, staff should ask: "Can the concern be resolved in a way that does not compromise the key principles of the plan?" The key principles, based on extensive comment from stakeholders and meetings with Council, are increases in service "productivity," higher service frequencies for primary corridors, and route simplification.

If yes, then staff should develop a proposed change to the plan that resolves the concern. If the answer is no, staff should develop a proposed change, but should first ask Council whether it wants to

- Reverse the study's basic principles so as to make the change,
- Refuse to make the change based on the study principles, or
- Make an exception to the principles solely for the complaining party.

Staff should present these issues. Each issue should have a potential resolution and a clear description of whether that resolution is consistent with the principles and whether that resolution creates other problems that could generate other complaints. Should additional funds be used for coverage-oriented services? How far can Transfort go to accommodate "management by complaint"?

Additional testimony at a Public Hearing may raise new issues. Beginning the public hearing with a presentation of issues already raised can help reassure attendees that they have been heard. This can allow them to focus their testimony on possible solutions and the real tradeoffs these solutions imply.

When Council is prepared to make a final decision about service modifications, there are four key options:

1. Adopt the plan as previously proposed, and direct staff to implement it.
2. Adopt the plan with specific changes selected from the issues list. Each change is studied by staff in advance, and is ready to implement.
3. Direct staff to study changes other than those that appear on the issues list. This choice should be necessary only if staff has failed to respond to a major issue. It also may result from a new issue raised in the Public Hearing process that the City Council feels must be addressed. If the issues remaining are small, it still may be possible for staff to address them in quickly and present a revised plan for final adoption to meet the target implementation date. Every effort should be taken

during the outreach process to reduce the likelihood for surprises when the Council makes its decision.

4. Shelve the plan and elect not to implement any major changes to the present system. In this case, the City Council should revisit the initial discussion of service design principles and Fort Collins' emphasis on a more productive transit service. This will give staff direction toward developing new service change ideas for later implementation. Since the Council was consulted several times throughout the development of the service changes, outright rejection of the plan should be a last resort.

Key Implementation Considerations

For each of the four scenarios, there are a number of considerations, particularly for Transfort and City staff. This section identifies a series of operational and planning issues, as well as guidelines for some of the tasks that will need to be accomplished.

Start of New Service

When scenarios are introduced to Council, they should include a specific calendar date for implementation. Many considerations go into this decision. Typically, late summer implementation is ideal for fixed route operations in university communities, because drivers can test the service before they encounter school demand and winter weather. Other things that can affect a service implementation date include the delivery of vehicles or the completion of a new transit facility.

Ridership and Customer Service Impacts

Ridership may drop in the first months of redesigned service, but this does not indicate failure. Typically, the shock of a major change causes a small ridership drop, usually less than five percent, before ridership starts to build as the benefits of the new service are noticed.

In addition to a likely ridership drop, some customers may be vocal. In some communities, a storm of complaint will arise with the implementation of new service. Transfort should note that this does **not** indicate failure. Those who are inconvenienced by a change will complain at once, while those who benefit will notice the improvements gradually and may never express appreciation. As a result, negative feedback is always louder than positive feedback in the wake of the service change, regardless of the overall benefit of the change to the community. Ridership, after several months, is a better indication than public comment of whether the service change is succeeding.

Further Service Revisions

Upon implementing Scenarios 1 and 2, some service modifications may be identified within the first several months and these minor changes can be implemented within a few

months of the service start. In the case of Scenarios 3 and 4, we recommend that significant service changes not be made for one year because major service restructuring must operate for a year before significant changes are made. Ridership resulting from new service patterns takes a year to develop, and a complete cycle of seasonal variations must also be observed.

It should be noted that service redesigns are irreversible. By the time the system is ready for further redesign, the new system will have been running for a year, memories of the “old” system will be fading, and enough travel patterns will have changed that “going back to the old system” will itself be a disruption to many riders.

Despite potential complaints – even negative statistics in the first months – there are only three reasons to make service changes in the first year of a major restructuring.

- **Cycle Failure.** If a line is failing to cycle in the scheduled amount of time, causing timed connections to be missed or providing inadequate driver breaks, service may be streamlined to eliminate this problem. Staff has already tried to minimize the chances of this by field-testing the plan.
- **Safety.** As always, a safety problem should be corrected immediately. Before implementation, staff will try to minimize the chances of this by extensive field-testing of the plan, and should continue to monitor for safety during implementation steps such as the placement of bus stops. However, some safety issues are not foreseeable, such as those arising from land use activities that may affect bus stops or movements.
- **Overloads and Pass-ups.** If buses are overloaded beyond Transfort’s standard, or must pass up passengers due to lack of space, immediate corrective action is required. Transfort passengers must have complete confidence that they will be able to board the bus of their choice. Exceptional pass-ups can be covered by the “extra board” of spare drivers and vehicles, or by spare paratransit capacity. Chronic pass-ups may require corrective action such as additional service. While this would be a cost item, Transfort should welcome this “embarrassment of riches,” and rush to save the riches and eliminate the embarrassment.

Facility Needs

The Capital Plan identifies additional costs for vehicle replacement and acquisition, and discusses how Transfort’s facility can accommodate vehicles. This issue is of high importance when services are programmed for expansion in Scenarios 3 and 4. Depending on the availability of funding for Transfort’s bus parking facility, there really are four options for accommodating vehicles.

- **Use the current or new facility sub-optimally.** Transfort may be able to “squeeze” buses in to the facility or existing parking facilities by parking buses nose-to-tail or sharing bays.
- **Locate some buses at another City facility,** such as a corporate yard.

- **Find an adjacent parcel of land to purchase or lease.** This alternative is noted in the Capital Plan.
- **Build a new facility.** Because Transfort currently has plans for a new facility, accommodation of an expanded vehicle fleet is encouraged. It would be unfortunate and costly if the new facility does not have the capacity to maintain or house its fleet.

Transfort should consider that this is not only an equipment issue. The facility must also be able to accommodate the increased number of drivers and dispatchers.

Responsibilities of Transfort Staff

When a service change is implemented, staff must be ready to undertake a series of accelerated actions in every department. Most actions are simply amplified versions of things that staff does anyway, such as training drivers on lines or moving bus stops, but the amplification of staff effort can be dramatic. A detailed review of staffing should be conducted well in advance to ensure maximum staff availability in the timeframe for the implementation tasks, and to identify the level of staffing needed to implement the plan.

The most labor-intensive implementation tasks for a major service change are as follows:

- Developing new informational materials for the new service, not only describing the service but also promoting the service in the best light.
- Distributing informational materials and responding constructively to inquiries.
- Hiring new drivers as needed.
- Finalizing schedules and runcutting. Runcutting is the process of dividing the bus schedule into pieces of work for the drivers.
- Training drivers on the new services, so that they can not only drive the new lines but also answer questions about them.
- Identifying new bus stops and erecting bus stop signs and shelters. This is a particularly labor-intensive task because it must be done rapidly to avoid confusing customers prior to implementation. A huge effort on the weekend prior to service startup is typically the best way to achieve bus stop sign revisions. This is the most common area of failure in implementations, simply because agencies often underestimate the magnitude of the task. More information about stops is presented below.
- New overhead signage. Transfort's simpler lines should generally permit simpler signage that advertises the service in addition to identifying it.

To do all of this while sustaining day-to-day operations may require additional staff, and a special management structure for the implementation activities. A common mistake is to assume that the existing staff can handle implementation alongside their ongoing duties.

This assumption inevitably causes implementation errors that reflect badly on the agency and on the service changes.

Bus Stops

One of the most predictable pitfalls of a major implementation is bus stop signage replacement. There are three categories of bus stop changes that occur due to a service change:

- Deleted stops
- New stops
- Stops that are retained, but with new route information.

Recommended steps for changing stops are as follows:

Deleted stops. As early as possible in the implementation process, and no later than one month in advance, place a decal on each sign at a deleted stop. The decal should say: "No service to this stop after ___ (date). For information, call ____." Some agencies use a bag to cover the sign with a decal on the bag. This gives customers plenty of warning that service is changing, so that people are not standing at abandoned bus stops on opening day. The decals will remain informative after implementation. As time permits, deleted stops should then be uninstalled. Stops with amenities are located in key locations and are unlikely to be deleted, although there may be some exceptions. These amenities can be moved to other locations.

New stops. New signs can be posted at new stops at any time prior to implementation, though the later the better. Typically, these signs are covered with plastic bags marked "New Transfort service begins ___ (date)", with the phone number. In this case, all the bags must be removed the night before implementation.

Changed stops. Stops that are remaining in service, but with different routes serving them, present the greatest challenge, especially since these are likely to include the busiest stops in the system. There are two ways to handle changed stops:

1. Treat a changed stop as a new stop and a deleted stop at the same location, dealing with each as described above. This is the most capital-intensive approach, since it requires replacing all signs (and briefly having two signs on the same pole), but it is also the easiest to implement accurately, offers the best promotional value, and requires the least intensive overtime effort in the days before new service begins. It also permits the whole system to be "re-inaugurated" with a new look, including new signs everywhere.
2. Use decals to change the route number information on each existing sign. At stops where old information must be removed, this effort must occur intensively in the 24 hours before implementation. Decals announcing new service can be added earlier, so long as the decals identify the start date of the new service. We

recommend using a different “look” for the decals identifying the new service. Service that is unchanged would get these decals last, after all other implementation tasks are complete.

In addition to new stops and stop relocation, new service implementation provides an opportunity for Transfort staff to refresh the image of the system. A good bus stop sign is not just an indicator, but also a small advertisement. It not only tells you that the bus stops here, but also gives you some information about where it goes and why you might want to use it. Transfort might consider acquiring new bus stop signs that not only provide the service schedule, but also identify the arterials that the bus travels and destination in a new typeface. Likewise, new signage provides Transfort an opportunity to reflect the plan’s emphasis on high-frequency, productivity-oriented service. This can be done either by showing primary routes in a different color or by adding a decal that advertises “15 minute service.” This prominent and catchy symbol should be carried through the information system, including the Transfort Bus Schedule brochure.

Monitoring After Implementation

Once the new service is in place, performance should be monitored. Close attention should also be given to running times, to ensure that the routes are cycling as planned. Small schedule adjustments, such as shifting a few minutes from one time point to another, are sometimes in order after three months of observations. However, as noted above, no significant changes should be made for one year except in cases of cycle failure, safety problems, or overloads and pass-ups.

As noted above, Transfort should anticipate potential ridership drops immediately following a significant service change. Determining how successful a service change is should be based on a review of many service performance factors over a one-year period. These factors include items currently monitored by Transfort such as ridership, passengers per hour, and farebox recovery.