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Click anywhere on the above image to view Editor-in-Chief Scott Bogren and Editor Rich Sampson share their reflections on transit in small urban areas.
Voices from the Community

In this small urban edition of DigitalCT, the CTPodcast page features two important conversations. To subscribe to the CTPodcast, go to http://ctpodcast.blogspot.com/ or search “The CTPodcast” in iTunes. Click on the microphone beside each entry to listen.

Small Urban Transit Legends Les White and Hugh Mose

Les White and Hugh Mose both recently retired from transit management after lengthy stints at Santa Cruz (Calif.) Metro and Centre Area Transportation Authority (State College, Pa.), respectively. Prior to that, the list of small cities in which they led transit agencies covers Kalamazoo, Mich., Vancouver, Wash., Fort Wayne, Ind., Iowa City, Iowa, Fresno, Calif., and Olympia, Wash. Here, Les and Hugh talk about what they learned along the way, and how each system and community was unique. They highlight what real transit leadership looks like, how things have changed and why they loved leading small city transit operations.
The perfect compliment to Digital CT is our bi-weekly E-Newsletter, CT Fast Mail. Delivering the latest news on transit policy from the nation’s capitol, developments from across the country, research and analysis publications and information on resources and technical assistance from the Community Transportation Association and other partners, CT Fast Mail is the most direct location for the most relevant news and updates in the industry.

And it’s free to sign-up! Simply send an email to fastmail@ctaa.org and you’ll be connected with the next issue of CT Fast Mail. In the meantime, view the latest edition at www.ctaa.org.
What Is a Small Urban Area Anyway?

In this special edition of *DigitalCT* focusing on small urban areas, it’s important to define exactly what we mean when discussing these kinds of communities. Our definition of a small area is the one established by the U.S. Census Bureau and applied by the Federal Transit Administration to its funding programs: urban communities ranging in population from 50,000 to 199,000. For reference, the map on the following page (from 2009, the most recent version available) illustrates the breadth of the nation’s metropolitan regions.

Of course, many cities of over 200,000 residents consider themselves to be small towns and some communities of just under 50,000 population share many of the same urban traits as their only slightly-larger counterparts. Recent population trends and future predictions suggest more people are moving from rural areas to urban areas of all kinds – both small and large – at the same time as health care and employment destinations are increasingly regionalized within metropolitan areas. It’s these confluence of trends that make reliable, responsive and efficient mobility options in communities of all sizes more vital than ever.
In addition to the complete small-urban transit coverage in this special edition of DigitalCT, the publication has featured a number of small-urban transit profiles in recent editions. Here's a rundown with links to those pertinent articles.

**DigitalCT Magazine Articles**

**Athens, Georgia:** The Head of the Class: Transit in Athens Leads the Nation. Georgia Transit Tour

**Macon, Georgia:** Macon Terminal Station Revitalization Marks Larger Mobility Resurgence. Georgia Transit Tour

**Hinesville, Georgia:** Liberty Transit: More Than a Name. Georgia Transit Tour

**Logan, Utah:** Building Regional Connectivity in Utah's Cache Valley Through Intercity Bus Partnerships. Summer-Fall 2013

**St. Cloud, Minnesota:** A Natural Fit: Metro Bus Captures the Spirit of St. Cloud. Minnesota Transit Tour

**Duluth, Minnesota:** Duluth: A City and Transit System in Sync. Minnesota Transit Tour

**Blacksburg, Virginia:** Beyond the Campus: Virginia Tech's Award-Winning Alternative Transportation Programs. The Future of Connectivity Today.

**Jacksonville, North Carolina:** Q&A with Wave Transit Director Albert Eby. Elements of Innovative Transit Leadership

**Flagstaff, Arizona:** Q&A with NAIPTA Planning Director Erika Mazza. Elements of Innovative Transit Leadership

**Monterey, California:** New Technology Connects Transit and Community in Monterey Through Jazz. Illuminating New Solutions

**Santa Fe, New Mexico:** Santa Fe Trails: A Clear Commitment to Clean Air and Connectivity. New Mexico Transit Tour

**Las Cruces, New Mexico:** RoadRUNNER Transit: A Strategic Vision for Serving Las Cruces. New Mexico Transit Tour

**Morgantown, West Virginia, Ames, Iowa and Flagstaff, Arizona:** A Roundtable Discussion on Campus Transit. Transit in Campus Communities

**Blacksburg, Virginia:** Beyond the Campus: Virginia Tech's Award-Winning Alternative Transportation Programs. The Future of Connectivity Today.

**Charleston, West Virginia:** Urban Transit West Virginia-Style. West Virginia Transit Tour

**Morgantown, West Virginia:** Mountain Line Transit Authority: Making Connections in Real Time. West Virginia Transit Tour

**CTPodcast Episodes**

**Ames, Iowa:** Nathan Shimanek, Driver, CyRide.

**Flagstaff, Arizona:** Jeff Meilbeck, GM, Northern Arizona Intergovernmental Public Transit Authority.

**Duluth, Minnesota:** Jim Heilig, Cold Weather Tips.

**Athens, Georgia:** Butch McDuffie, GM, Athens Transit.

**Monterey, California:** Carl Sedoryk, GM, Monterey-Salinas Transit.

**Gulfport, Mississippi:** Kevin Coqgin, GM, Coast Transit Authority.

**Nampa, Idaho:** Terri Lindenburg, Treasure Valley Transit.

**Columbia, Missouri:** Brittany Perrin, Tiger Transit Movement.
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Despite Growing State Investment, Federal Leadership Still Key for Transit’s Future

By Rich Sampson

The adoption of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) on July 6, 2012 and its subsequent extension earlier this year until May 31, 2015 marks a low point in federal investment in the nation’s surface transportation network. For the better part of the past half-century, surface transportation legislation – ranging from the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964 through the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), which expired in 2009 – had continuously grown investment in the nation’s transit system and network of roadways, enjoying strong bipartisan support.

However, due to the recent insolvency of the highway and transit trust funds which delivered revenue to the various programs included in the legislation and nearly complete political gridlock in the nation’s capital, federal leaders in both parties have been unable to match their predecessors’ standards with reasonable levels of investment in surface transportation infrastructure and services. Between the first year of SAFETEA-LU authorization in 2005 to the initial year of the MAP-21 authorization in 2012, the percentage of total transit spending derived from the transit trust fund has dropped from 87.5 percent to 80 percent. Meanwhile, the federal gas tax – 18.4 cents per gallon – has been unchanged for 21 years. MAP-21 fell well short of funding levels needed to maintain – let alone expand – vitally needed surface transportation programs. According to multiple bipartisan or nonpartisan sources (see here, here and here) that shortfall measures in tens of billions of dollars, a gap that is unable to keep pace with inflation (see chart on next page – ed).

Moreover, the measure and its extension rely on a slew of one-time-only revenue sources derived out of a bipartisan political avoidance of consideration of any significant new or increased revenue streams, such as increasing the federal gas tax, cap-and-trade mechanisms, vehicle miles traveled fees or congestion pricing schemes, among other ideas. On both occasions, the Senate’s Banking Committee identified a set of obscure revenue tools to compensate for the insolvency of the trust funds, which were agreed to as the full Senate, along with House of Representatives and the Obama Administration held their collective noses to the long-term futility of another patchwork, short-term solution.
The Declining Purchasing Power of Federal Transit Investment

- Transit Apportionment (in millions of U.S. dollars)
- Change in inflation (by percent)

2009: $10.338
2010: $10.529
2011: $10.529
2012: $10.458
2013: $10.578
2014: $10.691

Inflation rates:
- 2009: 0%
- 2010: 3.7%
- 2011: 7.4%
- 2012: 11.1%
- 2013: 14.8%
- 2014: 18.5%
In *DigitalCT* – and our counterpart publication, *RAIL Magazine* – we take a broad and long-term perspective on the development of community and public transportation operations, projects, policies and issues. That coverage ranges from a focus on local and regional transit providers – like our profiles in this edition of the Northern Arizona Intergovernmental Public Transportation Authority (page 16) or Cape May Fare-Free Transportation (page 22) – or analysis of policies and legislation like the federal Small Transit Intensive Cities (STIC) program on page 30. Historical background as well as analysis of both converging and diverging trends is essential to understanding the context of the nation’s mobility needs and options. From that vantage point, it’s disappointing that so many elected officials and political observers that are leading and participating in the discussion of our nation’s surface transportation policy take such a limited and in-the-moment perspective on matters that impact millions of people over many years.

It is in this current federal leadership void on surface transportation that state governments found themselves with few choices other than assembling their own investment sources to support transportation infrastructure projects and mobility services. Recent studies by national nonprofit organizations reflect this growing need for state-level transportation funding. The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) released a report last May chronicling increasing state investment trends through Fiscal Year 2012. Meanwhile, Transportation for America tracks state transportation funding plans since 2012, noting the 12 states that successfully approved transportation funding measures, as well as another 19 that fell short of achieving new state-level investment (see map on the next page for state-by-state levels of gasoline taxes – ed).

Some political leaders and advocacy organizations claim that the onus for new transportation investment should be borne more greatly – or even solely – by the states. Quite the opposite is true: federal leadership on surface transportation investment and policy is absolutely essential. While states that have delivered new investment mechanisms to support surface transportation – along with those that were unsuccessful – should be commended for their initiative in confronting this growing crisis, it’s simply not enough for a nation that claims to be the leader of the global economy.

For as many elected officials and political commentators – particularly those who like to fashion themselves as conservatives – that boast about American exceptionalism, their words speak frequently louder than their actions. They claim the United States to be the greatest nation on earth (although the founding fathers likely understood exceptionalism to mean profoundly different, not profoundly better) and yet brutally resist any effort to invest in the big-picture items that truly make a nation distinctive, like health care, education, the environment, immigration, energy and, yes, infrastructure. Their inaction on these issues verges on cowardice at best and hypocrisy at worst. Regardless, it falls well sort of the high-minded exceptionalism they claim to champion.

We simply cannot compete on a global scale as a nation by divvying-up infrastructure investments on a state-by-state basis. The federal government has precedent and a legacy of supporting a national transportation network, from the first post roads stipulated in the Constitution to Abraham Lincoln’s Transcontinental Railroad and the Dwight D. Eisenhower Interstate Highway network. The history of multi-year surface transportation...
GASOLINE TAXES
COMBINED LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL (CENTS PER GALLON)
Rates Effective 10/01/2014

The Commentary

Disclaimer: This report is posted for informational purposes only and should not be relied upon or used for compliance purposes.
legislation prior to MAP-21 reflected this reality, especially the ground-breaking partnership of the federal government, the states and the private sector outlined in the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991. A new vision for surface transportation has been needed since the expiration of SAFETEA-LU. The Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) outlined its vision for such a fundamental rethinking of surface transportation policy in this document in 2009. As mandated by SAFETEA-LU, the National Surface Transportation Infrastructure Financing Commission did thorough work in its findings – released that same year – to restructure how the surface transportation programs are funded. Its recommendations went nowhere with the Congress or the Obama Administration. No similar, comprehensive look at the policy-related questions of surface transportation legislation ever occurred.

It’s time for Congress and the Administration to retake their mantle of responsibility as heirs to this legacy. It’s also crucial that local leaders, transit professionals and advocates make their case directly to their members of Congress for the urgent need for restored federal leadership on surface transportation policy and investment (CTAA has developed this easy-to-use tool to help you communicate with your U.S. Representatives and Senators – ed)

Here’s why:

### 1. Great Nations Need Great Infrastructure

While states can and do make worthwhile investments in their communities’ transportation and infrastructure networks, a strong federal presence allows those communities to adapt new and innovative service strategies, technology and projects cultivated elsewhere. Although numerous communities developed demand-response systems to serve rural residents in the early-to-mid 1970s, it was growth of the federal Section 18 program – today’s Section 5311 – that encouraged more areas to launch rural mobility networks. And when San Diego first experimented with its now-iconic Trolley in 1981, the light-rail movement it helped foster was only made possible with federal investment through the New Starts program. Similar trends have fueled the return of streetcars and the adoption of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) mode. Meanwhile, international observers love to chastise the United States for is glacial adoption of sustainable community theories, but there’s little recognition of this nation’s global preeminence in treating people with disabilities with dignity via the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990, which – to this day – remains a trendsetting piece of legislation. These and other instances of innovation and commitment exemplify both the need and benefit of thorough and stable federal leadership. That innovation is made possible by the federal government’s ability to assemble and disburse large sums of investment and guarantee that investment over a multi-year period.

### 2. All For One

“We must, indeed, all hang together or, most assuredly, we shall all hang separately.” Ben Franklin’s famous pep talk to American revolutionaries for solidarity still frames the value of a cohesive group of diverse interests, a union of the many states. While Franklin spoke of unity to withstand Great Britain’s accusations of treason, the need to hang together as a nation has very serious implications to the livelihoods of the millions of Americans who use community and public transit every day to access life-saving medical care like chemotherapy and dialysis, obtain or maintain employment, reach childcare and otherwise lead fulfilling, productive lives. This is true at the federal level because separate revenues collected across all the states becomes more valuable when pooled collectively and then returned to communities. Even a rudimentary understanding of how an investment bank returns interest to its investors exemplifies why national-level investment yields greater returns than a hodgepodge of individual states doing their own thing. It is true that basing the nation’s revenue collection method on a gas tax no longer makes fiscal sense at a time when vehicles are more
fuel efficient and fewer miles are being driven because of greater reliance on transit, bicycling, walking and telecommuting. That does not absolve Congress and the Administration of their duty to find an alternative solution. In fact, it heightens their responsibility.

States, regions and localities all play important roles in responding to the mobility needs of their residents. Leaders at these levels of government should be applauded for their initiative in recognizing the vacuum of leadership at the federal level on transportation and infrastructure investment. Nonetheless, there are numerous places where people access crucial – and often life-saving – services that lie beyond state boundaries. Regional medical centers, employment hubs, tribal communities and much more often draw people from surrounding states. This is especially true for places like VA Medical Centers and dialysis clinics. By accessing a vital destination that may be just a few miles across a state border – instead of one hundreds of miles away, albeit in the same state – community and public transit providers can not only offer better service to customers but also realize significant cost savings, serving as responsible stewards of the public’s investment.

According to Transportation For America’s state funding tracker, 12 states have enacted new transportation revenue legislation since 2012. Of those, only five New England and Mid-Atlantic states – Maryland, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Virginia – include significant investment in community and public transportation. All the rest passed measures intended new revenues to be mostly or solely devoted to roadway and highway maintenance and improvements. Now, transit vehicles nearly always operate on public roads, so their upkeep is essential to providing safe and reliable community and public transportation options. Even before MAP-21’s reduction of growth in overall surface transportation funding, the majority of states received more than half of their statewide transit investment from federal programs. A handful of states – such as Alabama, Arizona, Hawaii and Utah – regularly provide no state-level funding for transit. And yet people in those states need access to medical care, employment opportunities and their communities as a whole just as much as states that strongly support mobility providers, such as New York, California, New Jersey and the District of Columbia. An active, reliable federal role in supporting transit is essential everywhere in America.

Observers, economists and historians only need look back as far as the epic recession of 2007 – 2009 to note the devastating impacts that national and global economic downturns can wreak on state budgets. The waning years of the SAFETEA-LU authorization provided some cover as state investment imploded, but community and public transportation providers faced paradox of surging transit ridership as gas prices skyrocketed while facing declining levels of state support for both operations and capital needs. Although local and state economies have gradually recovered alongside the national economy, MAP-21 and its extension provides no safeguards should sub-national economies once again quiver. Moreover, many states function under constitutional balanced budget requirements, meaning cuts are mandatory when projected revenues fall short. The federal government is under no such restriction, allowing it to help the entire nation better withstand the lean years. The predictability of long-term federal surface transportation legislation allows mobility providers to continue to offer efficient and responsive mobility options in good times, in bad times and all the time.
Rapid Success: NAIPTA Builds a Regional Transit Triumph

By Scott Bogren

The timeline is nothing short of breathtaking. In just 13 years the Northern Arizona Intergovernmental Public Transportation Authority (NAIPTA) in Flagstaff has turned a small human service transit agency into one of the nation’s most decorated and thriving small-urban transit operations. It’s a trip from just over 400 daily riders and six vehicles to 1.8 million passengers and 22 buses. And along the way the system received a vote of confidence from local residents — in the form of five passed ballot initiatives (each with more than two-thirds voter support) to continue and expand transit investment — of which few systems can boast.

What was once Pine Country Transit has become the combined Mountain Line (fixed-route bus), Mountain Lift (complementary paratransit) and Mountain Link (a high-frequency bus operation connecting downtown Flagstaff with Northern Arizona University), collectively known as NAIPTA.

“Our goal has been to grow not only bigger but better” says NAIPTA CEO and General Manager Jeff Meilbeck. “We provide service that is convenient, comfortable and environmentally friendly. NAIPTA has become an integral part of what makes Flagstaff great.”

The statistics that NAIPTA has rung up since 2001 are hard to fathom. Since 2001, annual system ridership has increased from 200,000 to 1.8 million — a more than 800 percent increase. During the same timeframe, NAIPTA’s cost per passenger has dropped from $6.23 to $2.84 — a 54 percent savings. National recognition in the form of transit system of year awards from both CTAA and APTA, as well as Meilbeck being recognized as the 2014 Community Transportation Manager of the Year, are further proof of NAIPTA’s incredible achievements.

Next up for NAIPTA is its Dec. 1 move into a brand new 23,000 square-foot operations
About Flagstaff

When conjuring Arizona, many think of such images as arid desert sands, 100+ degree temperatures and the saguaro cactus. But that is clearly not Flagstaff, which sits just 20 miles south of the state’s highest mountain peak and feels a lot more like Colorado than Phoenix — as the city’s 100+-inch average annual snowfall attests. The city is an hour’s drive south of the Grand Canyon’s south rim and is for many Americans the gateway to the Grand Canyon National Park. Tourism has become a prime ingredient in the Flagstaff economy.

Like the transit agency that serves it, Flagstaff has seen its share of rapid, recent growth. The city’s population has doubled since 1980 and increased by nearly 25 percent between 2000 and 2010. It’s this sizable population growth and expansion that’s fueling transit ridership.

Meilbeck knows NAIPTA’s success is about far more than population. “The Flagstaff population grew about 25 percent and transit ridership grew 900 percent over a 14 year period,” he notes. “There is little correlation between population and transit growth. Rather, there was latent demand and the demographics and growth management activities of the community provided a fertile environment for a transit system. In all candor the NAIPTA culture owes a great debt of gratitude to our Community Services Department roots.”

One specific segment of the population growth is a key transit ridership factor: students. Northern Arizona University (NAU) was founded in Flagstaff in 1899 (then called the Northern Arizona Normal School) and today has more than 23,000 students.

“The city estimates that fully 40 percent of the Flagstaff population will, at least once a day, be involved in some way with NAU,”
says NAIPTA Planning Manager Erika Mazza. “So yes, the university has and will continue to have an important role in how the city grows and how transit serves the community.”

Transportation has played a key role in Flagstaff history. Originally, it was the city’s location along an intercontinental east-west railway (a surveying party used one of the region’s notoriously tall and straight ponderosa pines to fly the US flag in 1855, giving the city its name) and later it would be the famed Route 66’s emergence in the 1920s, where transportation intersected with the city’s development. But if the folks at NAIPTA have anything to say about it, the next transportation mode to reach iconic status in Flagstaff will be a bus.

Promises Made, Promises Kept

A key demarcation point in transit’s emergence was the 2008 passage of no fewer than five ballot measures in support of NAIPTA and community and public transportation. Few transit systems have enjoyed such resounding local support, but it never would have occurred without diligent communications and education in the community and was far from a slam dunk. In 2006, in fact, a similar initiative had failed.

“In hindsight, I am surprised the 2006 initiative received 47 percent of the vote that it did. We asked voters to double the tax levy and make it permanent, but our public education campaign was non-existent,” recalls Meilbeck. “Thankfully, we had great political leadership from elected officials and we applied the lessons learned in the 2006 failure and in 2008 ran a public involvement and education campaign by the book. Tax initiatives are an entire magazine in themselves, but listening to the community is the absolute most important thing we did.”

“Jeff was everywhere during the run-up to the 2008 election,” recalls Mazza, who at the time worked for the city of Flagstaff and not only attended, but presented at, many of the same informational meetings where Meilbeck discussed the transit initiatives. “He made the case with so many people about the benefits of transit here in Flagstaff, his passion for transit was clear.”

Here’s what passed on May 20, 2008:
NAIPTA

Proposition 401: 78 percent of voters favored continuing for another 10 years a local sales tax to continue to fund NAIPTA. Since passage, the agency has increased ridership by 95 percent.

Proposition 402: With a 71 percent passage rate, voters approved a new tax dedicated to purchasing hybrid electric buses for the Mountain Line fleet. Today, 90 percent of the system’s buses are hybrid electric and another four such buses are due to come online in 2016.

Proposition 403: A resounding 72 percent of voters approved a tax to fund a bus rapid transit route in Flagstaff’s central business district. NAIPTA’s Mountain Link service was launched in August, 2011 and now produces more than 4,000 daily trips.

Proposition 404: To expand Mountain Line service into new areas of the city, voters approved by a 68-32 margin a sales tax increase. Since the vote, NAIPTA has done precisely that, adding several new routes serving previously underserved or unserved communities and neighborhoods in Flagstaff.

Proposition 405: The last of the 2008 ballot measures — a tax to be used to increase frequency of transit service — passed with 67 percent of voters in favor. Since, the agency has increased frequency to 20-minute headways on some of its most popular routes.

Five Years Out... and Beyond

Beyond moving into its brand-new facility in December, NAIPTA is developing both five-year and long-range plans to continually improve its transit service in Flagstaff and the surrounding communities.

A key component in this vision is expanding the current Mountain Link BRT line into a crosstown transit spine by extending it north to the Flagstaff Medical Center and east to Fourth Street and the Flagstaff Mall, with 15-minute service headways during peak operations.

“The Mountain Link extension is critical. We need to continue to go beyond local bus service and provide the highest quality BRT service possible, says Meilbeck. “Costs of rail, though I love it, are prohibitive for a community our size. But BRT could provide many of the benefits — permanence, right of way acquisition, dedicated lanes, frequent service — without the cost. Small Starts is essential. I am hopeful NAIPTA can position itself as a model community and that we can build success here that is replicable elsewhere.”

To connect neighborhood routes to the upgraded Mountain Link high-capacity transit spine, NAIPTA hopes to utilize three transit hubs — Downtown, Fourth Street and the Flagstaff Mall — to streamline service for passengers. Further, the system has targeted new service to Switzer Canyon, the YMCA, the South Sunnyside neighborhood and the Industrial/Steves Corridor.

To facilitate more corridor- and commuter-based operations, NAIPTA is considering a new route with 20-minute headways, connecting Northern Arizona University and Coconino Community College, as well as direct service between the Cheshire neighborhood north of the city and downtown Flagstaff. Eventually, plans call for service to reach Flagstaff Pulliam Airport.

In 2020, many of the ballot initiatives that passed in 2008 will have to be renewed by local voters. Six years out, NAIPTA and its staff are already looking at how best to position the agency for that eventuality.
A New Home

NAIPTA currently occupies a former auto dealership that the agency rehabilitated in 2008. It’s not big enough anymore, and it never offered the system the ability to store buses indoors.

“When we had 13 vehicles, we could make it work,” says Mazza. “But with 22 buses and with our fleet growing, it just doesn’t work as well.”

NAIPTA leadership, led by Meilbeck, sought federal investment to build a new facility, including competing in such discretionary programs as the former State of Good Repair.

“We scored really well in the State of Good Repair program competition,” recalls Meilbeck. “But the whole program was way oversubscribed and we didn’t get funded.”

With MAP-21’s passage in the summer of 2012, NAIPTA leadership hoped the new Section 5339 Bus and Bus Facilities formula program might provide the necessary federal investment to get started on a new operations and maintenance facility. But the meager funding — locked into a strict formula — meant it would take 20 years to parcel together the necessary investment.

Thankfully, the Arizona Department of Transportation was able to repurpose some lapsing Section 5307 investment in fiscal years 2013 and 2014, and suddenly, plans that had been placed on hold were re-ignited.

“We’re just a couple of months away from moving into our new facility,” says Meilbeck, “and we never would be here without ADOT’s help and assistance.

The new 23,000-foot facility will allow for both storage of buses and pre- and post-trip activities under an all-weather cover. It also will feature a fueling station and bus washing capabilities.

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“We look at the new facility as another way to build upon the agency’s positive local image,” says Mazza. “We’re a real partner in local redevelopment efforts, it’s where we can be a real game changer and where we live up to our name.” So, too, is the system’s constant readiness to expand and grow.

A Long Way in a Few Short Years

If the past is prologue, then the Flagstaff region will continue to grow dramatically and its full-service transit provider, NAIPTA, will to grow right alongside it.

“Mountain Line grew from 200,000 to 1.8 million in 13 years, a growth pattern that would not be sustainable unless our name were Facebook,” says Meilbeck. “Seriously, we may be able to quintuple in the next decade, perhaps even reach 10 million, but our exponential growth pattern is over. Keeping the system growing will require sustaining excellent service and continuing to improve the service level. I am optimistic that we can do it.”

On Dec. 1, NAIPTA will occupy its new operations and maintenance facility.
NAIPTA

Born from two of the most notable transportation lines in American history — The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad and Route 66 — Flagstaff is now building a transportation history focused not on moving people from Chicago to Los Angeles, but on moving Flagstaff residents in the most convenient, affordable and environmentally sensitive way: community and public transit. With what has been accomplished here in just 13 years, there’s no telling what’s to come in the future.

“NAIPTA’s path needs to be one in which we remain passionate, hold true to a vision, and take measured risks to continually improve. Playing it too safe would be a mistake,” says Meilbeck. “The bottom line for the future is that we must remain connected to the community, getting them where they want to go and when they want to get there. This means ongoing planning, active participation in community discussions, and continual, incremental improvement. If we continue to do our jobs well, the renewals will take care of themselves.”

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CTAA has developed the CSSO program as the first step in a two-part process to provide certification to transit organizations in the critical areas of safety and security. In its essence, this protocol allows for assessments by Certified Safety and Security Officers (CSSO) of their respective transit systems prior to an on-site review by the CTAA accreditation panel. Following the review and assuming the transit organization meets all eight areas of the program’s benchmarks, CTAA will then issue the organization a Community Transportation Safety and Security Certificate of Accreditation, valid for three years. An excellent way to comply with the elements of FTA’s Transit Bus Safety Program!

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For information on course offerings, scheduling a session directly or developing customized training, email training@ctaa.org or visit www.ctaa.org/training
Summer on the South Jersey Shore is the best of times. Beachgoers all along the heart of the Northeast Corridor – from New York City to Washington, D.C., and beyond – pack-up their SUVs and hybrid sedans to partake of the state’s sandy beaches and extensive boardwalks. Roadside stands offer “Jersey fresh” produce, ranging from corn to peaches, while seaside communities like Cape May and Wildwood swell with visitors sampling saltwater taffy, toting beach towels and umbrellas on the way to the ocean’s edge.

Of course, along the South Jersey Shore are not always carefree. In 2012, Superstorm Sandy wrought levels of devastation only exceeded by the damage done to the Gulf Coast by 2005’s Hurricane Katrina. Businesses and homes were heavily damaged – if not destroyed outright – while numerous local roads, power lines and water distribution systems were shredded. Still, storms of that magnitude are not common. But even in less tumultuous years, the crowds that cram the region’s beachtowns from May to September largely vanish from fall through winter and into spring, nose-diving from a summer peak of more than 800,000 to a year-round population of 102,000.

Serving this seasonally-small urban community – including 16 distinct municipalities – is Cape May Fare-Free Transportation, a county-wide mobility provider since 1973 that has operated without fares since its in-
ception. More than four decades later, Fare-Free – as it’s universally known by the county’s year-round residents – is as unmistakable to South Jersey’s identity as boardwalks and seafood shacks.

**From a Single Bus: Cape May Charts a New Mobility Course**

As city dwellers in New York, Newark, Trenton and Philadelphia looked for less hectic communities to spend their retirement years – particularly those retiring during the early 1960s through the late 1970s – they recalled the charm and ambiance of the South Jersey’s seaside communities from their youth, places like the cities of Cape May and Wildwood. But not long after these urbanites-turned-beachcombers were settled as permanent residents of the Jersey Shore, they found their ability to move around during the offseason was predicated on their ability to own and drive a car. That was a far cry from the transit-rich environments they were accustomed to in the large cities where they had spent much of their lives.

In the early 1970s, a group of Cape May County retirees had secured a retired Air Force bus they used to provide a trip once a week to local shopping centers between the county’s Lower and Middle Townships (the Campus Transit program at the University of Georgia began along similar lines, as we describe in the Georgia Transit Tour edition of DigitalCT – ed). They all chipped in to support the upkeep and fuel for the bus, but didn’t charge an official fare for each trip. By 1973, the well-worn bus was becoming unreliable and the group asked the Cape May County Board of Freeholders to help arrange funding for a replacement vehicle. The Freeholders agreed, but under the condition that they would oversee its use.

Not long after the new county-sponsored vehicle hit the roads, other residents elsewhere in the county inquired with their local Freeholder as to why they couldn’t also access a service to help them get to shopping, doctors appointments, community services and other destinations. The then un-named program quickly grew to serve all 16 municipalities in Cape May County at least one day per week as additional vehicles were purchased and drivers hired by the county. By 1975, demand for the service was growing so steadily that then-Director Jack Salvesen – who’d been appointed by the Board of Freeholders to administer the program – worked first to acquire decommissioned school buses to support operations. He then, along with colleague Mary Rowe, negotiated with the various county-supported human service programs to directly operate their vehicles that were well-used to transport clients during mornings and afternoons, but lightly-used mid-day. That year, all county-supported mobility options were united under Salvesen’s leadership within the Cape May County Department of Transportation – coordination in action, decades before the term became trendy among bureaucrats elsewhere.
More Than a Name: A First in the Nation

Although the investment needed to support the system’s operations grew as the program corroboratively expanded, the Freeholders approved Salvesen and Rowe’s recommendation that installing a fare collection system would not generate enough revenue to outweigh the cost of acquiring fareboxes and administering a fare accounting process. As a result, in 1976, the Board of Freeholders approved a permanent fare-free system and formally named the service to both recognize and promote the community’s investment. It was the nation’s first officially-designated fare-free community or public transportation program.

Federal and state support for operations followed in the late 70s and early 1980s, allowing Fare Free to make the service available to the general public. By the end of the system’s first decade of operation, it had grown to an operation of more than 40 vehicles, 36 drivers and six support staff – substantial growth for an effort that began with a single bus trip organized by a handful of private citizens. Today, Fare Free’s reach is even greater, serving more than 220,000 annual riders with 53 employees operating 52 total vehicles, the largest system of its kind in South Jersey. The system also provides the county’s Meals on Wheels service.

“The Challenges of Seasonal Small Urban Transit

In many ways, seaside communities like those in Cape May County are like inverse versions of college towns: a staggering influx of activity sets routines and patterns for a good portion of the year, then the bulk of those folks leave for a stretch, but come back again the following year. Such cyclical ebb and flow could play havoc on transit operations, but systems like Fare Free are well-versed in how to serve their year-round riders while negotiating the crowded streets closest to the water and backups on highways as beachgoers scurry to and from the Shore around weekends. According to current Director Dan Mulraney, Fare Free relies on a combination of technology and experience to respond to Cape May County’s mobility needs regardless of season. He points to the system’s use of RouteMatch scheduling and dispatching software paired with the institutional knowledge of drivers, dispatchers and mechanics, many of whom have worked for Fare Free for decades.

“We have a good blend of employees who have been doing this a while – drivers and dispatchers who know the riders by name and how they take their coffee – and technology that can fill in some of the gaps for better efficiency,” says Mulraney, a recently-retired police captain in the Borough of Stone Harbor, within Cape May County, who assumed the system’s leadership this past June. Mulraney notes he attended CTA’s EXPO 2014 in St. Paul, Minn., just a few days on the job and found the experience helpful in learning a great deal about the community transportation industry in a short amount of time. He also credits New Jersey Council on Special Transportation (NJCOST) President Michael Viera with facilitating connections with other transit managers in the state to help him learn the nuances of transit New Jersey (Viera was recognized for his transit advocacy with the Dr. & Mrs. William and Budd Bell Award at EXPO 2014; listen to his perspective on transit in the aftermath of Sandy in the CT Podcast – ed).

Cape May County Fare Free dispatchers help drivers navigate congested roads during summer beach season.
Among those nuances is an operation served by unionized employees except Mulraney as the Director. Although it functions like most community transportation systems by providing demand response and deviated fixed-route service, Fare Free employees are represented by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees’ (AFSCME) Local 3596 District Council 71 – unusual for a system of its size in a national context, but not that unique for a transit provider in New Jersey. For Mulraney and Fare Free, the relationship cultivated by his predecessors with the South Jersey AFSCME District has been a stable and productive partnership for both the system and its employees.

“We have a strong relationship with AFSCME and regular communications with its local leadership,” says Mulraney, who was a union representative for the Police Benevolent Association Local #59 during his patrol days and dealt with that same union as an administrator on the other side of the table when he became Captain. “It’s part of life in New Jersey and all our employees do a great job.”

Part of Fare Free’s ongoing effort to both support its employees and provide better service to its customers is a refocused effort under Mulraney’s leadership to review and update the system’s operations policies and procedures – some of which were first introduced with the program’s creation more than 40 years ago – and a special focus on training, safety and security. Aided by longtime employees such as Supervisor Steve McKeeena and Chuck Guhr, CSSO, Mulraney is prioritizing consistency in operations to ward off complacency that can develop in an organization that’s been around as long as Fare Free and to make room for future innovations.

“We are reviewing what we can do better so that we can provide better service to our riders, remain accountable to the Freeholders and our other funders and determine where we can introduce new tools and strategies to ensure this system remains a key asset for Cape May County in the future,” explains Mulraney.

Regional Connections Beyond Cape May

With a legacy of service spanning four decades, permanent residents and warm-weather guests alike are well-served by Cape May County’s investment in Fare Free to move people around the county and its 16 communities. But how about those who wish to take advantage of transit options to reach Cape May from elsewhere in the Northeast? Enter New Jersey Transit’s (NJ Transit) statewide bus network, which offers seasonal linkages.
“We have a good mix of local and regional options through both our service and NJ Transit’s routes,” says Mulraney. “The different focuses allows us each to narrow in on complementary strengths: Fare Free’s localized, customer-focused trips and NJ Transit’s routes to and from Cape May County.”

“It’s a good partnership, one of many we have across the New Jersey with local systems serving as the first and last miles of our bus routes,” adds Alan Mairman, Deputy General Manager for Bus Service Planning for NJ Transit.

Although operating support through the state’s Casino Revenue Fund – which, by law, designates 8.5 percent of revenues to community transportation service – has been declining for several years due to the rise in online gaming and casinos opening in nearby Mid-Atlantic states, Fare Free is working with NJ Transit’s Office of Community Mobility to determine new revenue sources, such as advertising and participating as a provider in the state’s Medicaid program. The Board of Freeholders is continuing to hold the line on maintaining the system’s fare-free identity.

“We have employees who take a lot of pride in what they do and our customers notice,” says Mulraney. “It’s impressive to see how this community values this system.”

Always A Trendsetter

As one of the nation’s oldest community transportation providers operating in small urban areas, Cape May County Fare Free Transportation has always done things a little differently. Rather than growing out of a social service program, it was initiated by a small group of private citizens. Instead of charging fares, it provides trips for free. With an even keel, it withstands the Jersey Shore’s alternating seasons of calm and chaos, providing reliable, customer-focused mobility options the same in January as it does in July. Accordingly, it’s not too hard to tease out the rugged pride that defines so much of the Jersey identity in the mission of Fare Free.

“We have employees who take a lot of pride in what they do and our customers notice,” says Mulraney. “It’s impressive to see how this community values this system.”
Today there is never-before-seen complexity in the non-emergency medical transportation field. Limited funding combined with growing patient loads has states seeking intermediaries that can control costs through competition. Community and public transportation providers must become efficient, safe, cost-effective and accountable to maintain these important medical transportation services. The Community Transportation Association, in response to requests from its members, is introducing a new initiative this fall — the Competitive Edge — which will give community and public transit providers the tools, resources and benefits they need to make them central players in this new medical transportation environment. Here’s what the Competitive Edge encompasses:

1. The Competitive Edge Training
   CTAA has developed an all-new training course that combines and emphasizes the following topics:
   • Value: Determining the true cost of service
   • Pricing: Lowering your costs to be competitive
   • Negotiation: Winning through persuasion
   • Accountability: Building a recordkeeping and reporting process
   • Training: Focusing on the patient

2. Access to the Transit Industry’s Best Resources and Training
   You don’t need to have all the answers, you need to have access to them when you need them. Here’s how the Competitive Edge helps:
   • Peers and Information Sharing: CTAA will put you in contact with your industry peers, where you can learn from experience
   • On-Line Library and Resource Holdings: The most timely resources, news and research, all housed on CTAA’s medical transportation website
   • CTAA staff: Our professional staff are always available to offer analysis and insight

3. Valuable CTAA Member Benefits
   As part of the Competitive Edge initiative, the Association has developed a cohesive set of benefits to ensure your operation is efficient and cost-effective:
   • The Insurance Store: Through an exclusive agreement with Newtek, members can access the best coverage at the lowest price.
   • Energy Program: CTAA members pay less for fuel and energy with our FleetCards program and other energy management initiatives

Please go to www.ctaa.org/competitiveedge to learn how you can bring the Competitive Edge to your state. As always, CTAA training staff are available to help tailor this new program to your precise needs. Please call Charles Dickson at 202.247.8356 or email dickson@ctaa.org for all the details on this unique opportunity!
Proven Performance: The Small Transit Intensive Cities Program

By Scott Bogren

Through the course of the most recent surface transportation authorization processes for both the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) of 2005 and Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) of 2012, leaders and staff in both the U.S. Congress and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) have proposed performance measures to determine the effectiveness of transit investment. Needless to say, many in our industry are concerned that these measures will not reflect the important distinctions between different mobility options and will adopt the one-size-fits-all approach that CTAA and its members consistently resist. To illustrate the most extreme example, the same measures used to determine the effectiveness of the New York City Subway should not be applied to a demand response operation in rural Nebraska.

Fortunately, a useful model of applying performance measures to a federal transit investment program has emerged in the form of the Section 5307 set aside for the Small Transit Intensive Cities (STIC) program. Rather than a set of punitive restrictions, STIC incents transit providers in smaller urban areas to develop more extensive service in exchange for increased investment.

When CTAA’s Small Urban Network (SUN) leadership team first outlined legislative priorities in 2013, increasing the set aside for the STIC program emerged quickly as a key objective. The idea was to further reward small urban transit operators — serving populations between 50,000 and 200,000 — that continue to generate ridership figures like systems serving communities with populations in the millions. SAFETEA-LU set the STIC set-aside at 1.5 percent. The SUN is aiming for 3 percent.

Of course, discussions in the nation’s capital have largely been limited, thus far, to overall surface transportation investment and revitalizing the Highway Trust Fund. Policy details, like the STIC program, have yet to be addressed. That said, CTAA’s SUN did lead an effort to develop and disseminate a Congressional Dear Colleague letter — one with significant bi-partisan support in the U.S. House of Representatives — to increase the STIC set-aside. From the beginning, STIC has proven that industry agreed-upon performance measures can create positive transportation outcomes.

STIC: Responding to a Real Need

The origins of the STIC program are in 1998, when the TEA-21 transportation law required a study looking at expanding investment in small urban transit systems generating disproportionate levels of ridership. Prior to STIC, all small urban transit formula funding was based solely on population and population density, actual service or ridership levels played no role. This created a natural concern for small-urban areas that were investing in transit systems and infrastructure — many of which proved to be college towns.
Why should a community that’s not interested in transit be funded similarly to one that’s creating millions of annual trips, just because their populations are comparable, was the common refrain.

The FTA issued its study, entitled, The Urbanized Area Formula Program and the Needs of Small Transit Intensive Cities, in September 2000. In this landmark report, FTA concluded that, “sufficient issues exist to suggest that changes to the existing urbanized area formula grants program should be considered.”

Of course, it took far more than an FTA report to see the creation of the STIC program through to fruition. Rich Steinman at FTA, according to many small city transit advocates, was instrumental in this report and Joyce Rose, then with the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, provided leadership on Capital Hill. Rose, in fact, crafted the name STIC. Rep. Sam Farr (D-Calif.) and his staff member Debbie Merrill also were vital STIC champions right from the outset.

Using the report and the support of the above-mentioned individuals, transit leaders and advocates in small-urban communities around the nation worked with their elected officials and Congressional leaders in 2003 and 2004 to craft the legislation that became the STIC program with SAFETEA-LU’s passage in 2005. The new program would be funded at one percent of the funds made available to the Section 5307 urbanized area formula grant program each year.

Right away, FTA set six service factors for the STIC program, developing them in conjunction with small-urban transit leaders:

- Passenger miles per vehicle revenue mile
- Passenger miles per vehicle revenue hour
- Vehicle revenue mile per capita
- Vehicle revenue hour per capita
- Passenger miles per capita
- Passenger trips per capita

Simply put, if a small-urban transit operation exceeded the average in urbanized areas with populations 200,000-999,999 for one of the factors, then it qualifies for the STIC program.

Right away, the program made a difference. Les White, then-General Manager of Santa Cruz (Calif.) Metro acknowledges that his system would never have been able to replace a facility damaged in the Loma Prieta Earthquake without the influx of STIC funds. On the other side of the country, Hugh Mose — who led the Centre Area Transportation Authority in State College, Pa. — says the STIC money became vital operating funds, without which the agency would surely have had to cut service and raise fares in the face of retreating state and local investment. Across the country, STIC funds helped small cities buy new buses, launch new services and keep up with local demand. The program’s almost immediate success, in fact, threatened to water down its impact.

Two years ago, in response to concerns that the increasing amount of STIC participation was actually lowering the amounts small-urban systems were receiving per qualifying factor, MAP-21 bumped up the set-aside to 1.5 percent — a major shift in what was, for all practical purposes, a flat-funded bill. Once again, the STIC program’s impact was unmistakable.

In 2014, small-urban transit systems that qualify for STIC received $192,016 in additional Section 5307 formula investment for each qualifying factor, with a maximum potential of $1,152,096 available to a system meeting all six factors. Out of a total 319 small-urban areas, 124 systems (39 percent) qualified in 2014 for at least one STIC factor, representing 40 states and Puerto Rico.

The STIC program is particularly effective in university and college communities, like Boulder, Colo., State College, Pa., and Davis, Calif. (shown below).
Califoria enjoys 18 STIC grantees, the most in any one state. The following communities qualified for all six STIC factors last year:

- Davis, Calif.
- San Luis Obispo, Calif.
- Santa Barbara, Calif.
- Santa Cruz, Calif.
- Seaside-Monterey, Calif.
- Boulder, Colo.
- Danbury, Conn.
- Waterbury, Conn.
- East Stroudsburg, Pa. - N.J.
- State College, Pa.

Another 23 small-urban areas qualified for at least four of the six factors, thus making STIC a vital component in the system’s budget.

Doubling Up?

CTAA’s SUN leadership, in its very first gathering, took up the charge of increasing the STIC set-aside. The same factors that led to the MAP-21 increase — namely, increased STIC participation around the nation — continue to dilute the program’s impact. Of course detailed discussion of the STIC program, along with a great many other transit program details, has ground to a halt as Congress agreed to extend MAP-21 through May 31, 2015 last summer.

“I think that the program has lots of support
in Congress, but like every other proposal, it is difficult to sell in a flat-funded bill,” says Chris Giglio, a small-urban transit advocate based out of Washington, D.C., who was involved in both the creation and growth of STIC. “I think a good conclusion for us would be gradual steps up, like a 0.5 percent increase each year over four years.”

Of course, STIC will stand little chance of growth without a concerted effort from SUN members from around the nation. Simply put, there is no substitute for transit leadership and advocates from a given community reaching out to their elected officials and informing them about the key role the STIC program has played in local transit development. The talking points are clear:

• The STIC program is a performance-based incentive program that rewards small urban systems that are generating significant ridership;

• STIC funding can be flexibly used by local transit leaders to best meet local needs; and,

• Increasing the STIC set-aside in Section 5307 does not necessitate any increase in federal transit spending, it simply allocates existing funding where it is most needed.

To join CTAA’s SUN program and take advantage of our special 2014 member rate, please contact CTAA’s Caryn Souza. For more information on the SUN’s STIC legislation agenda, contact Scott Bogren.

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For many transit professionals, asset management is a nebulous, bureaucratic phrase that is often a checkbox on a list of requirements. Here, we offer an introduction to how mobility providers can utilize asset management strategies, followed by a usable, understandable best practices guide from outside our industry. With many federal officials focusing on introducing concepts such as performance measures and asset management to community and public transportation rules, regulations and reviews, proactive adaptation of easy-to-implement asset management approaches can not only outpace regulatory burdens, but also yield better budgetary justifications for much-needed vehicles, facilities and equipment – ed.

By Todd Litman

Asset Management refers to special polices and programs designed to preserve the long-term value of assets such as vehicles, roads, transit systems and buildings. It emphasizes careful planning, preventive maintenance and resource management, rather than waiting for problems to develop before responding. Asset Management tends to give more consideration to the efficient operation and management of existing transportation facilities and systems, and so tends to support Transportation Demand Management (TDM). It is important for all forms of transportation, including nonmotorized, transit and roadway equipment and facilities.

Asset Management typically requires:

- Identifying the organization and individual responsible for managing each asset;
- Detailed lifecycle cost analysis (that is, taking into account total costs over each assets' operating life) during planning and procurement, so options with the lowest overall long-term costs can be selected;
- Institutional Reforms to correct biases that favor new construction and capacity expansion over operations, maintenance and management of existing facilities;
- Fix It First policies, which mean that maintenance, operations and incremental improvements to existing infrastructure is given priority over construction of new facilities;
- Establishing preventive maintenance and replacement schedules;
- Training and certifying operating and maintenance staff;
- Having appropriate tools and replacement parts available for each asset; and
- Establishing and enforcing restrictions on damage-causing activities, such as operation of overweight vehicles.

Asset Management often results in higher design, construction and repair standards.
(so equipment and facilities last longer), and increased funding for maintenance and minor repairs (to prevent minor deterioration from becoming severe). This type of preventive maintenance tends to reduce lifecycle costs as well as improve travel conditions, reliability and safety. Asset Management reflects Least Cost Planning and Sustainability principles.

How It Is Implemented

Asset management is usually implemented by organizations responsible for transportation facilities, including transportation agencies, transit agencies, road authorities and municipal engineering departments. It can also be implemented by private organizations, such as a bus or taxi company.

Asset Management: A Best Practices Guide

(This introduction is excerpted from the Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Water and is a thorough introduction to the challenges, benefits and assessment strategies of a comprehensive asset management approach as applicable to community and public transportation providers as it is water system managers – ed.)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Challenges faced by Water Systems</th>
<th>Benefits of Asset Management</th>
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<td>• Determining the best (or optimal) time to rehabilitate/repair/replace aging assets.</td>
<td>• Prolonging asset life and aiding in rehabilitate/repair/replacement decisions through efficient and focused operations and maintenance.</td>
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<td>• Increasing demand for services.</td>
<td>• Meeting consumer demands with a focus on system sustainability.</td>
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<td>• Overcoming resistance to rate increases.</td>
<td>• Setting rates based on sound operational and financial planning.</td>
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<td>• Diminishing resources.</td>
<td>• Budgeting focused on activities critical to sustained performance.</td>
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<td>• Rising service expectations of customers.</td>
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<td>• Increasingly stringent regulatory requirements.</td>
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<td>• Responding to emergencies as a result of asset failures.</td>
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Asset management is maintaining a desired level of service for what you want your assets to provide at the lowest life cycle cost. Lowest life cycle cost refers to the best appropriate cost for rehabilitating, repairing or replacing an asset. Asset management is implemented through an asset management program and typically includes a written asset management plan.
Implementing Asset Management: Five Core Questions Framework

A good starting point for any size water system is the five core questions framework for asset management. This framework walks you through all of the major activities associated with asset management and can be implemented at the level of sophistication reasonable for a given system. These five core framework questions provide the foundation for many asset management best practices. Several asset management best practices are listed for each core question on the following pages. Keep in mind that these best practices are constantly being improved upon.

1. What is the Current State of My System's Assets?

The first step in managing your assets is knowing their current state. Because some of this information may be difficult to find, you should use estimates when necessary. Over time, as assets are rehabilitated, repaired or replaced, your inventory will become more accurate.

You should ask:

- What do I own?
- Where is it?
- What is its condition?
- What is its useful life?
- What is its value?

Best practices include:

- Preparing an asset inventory and system map.
- Developing a condition assessment and rating system.
- Assessing remaining useful life by consulting projected-useful-life tables or decay curves.
- Determining asset values and replacement costs.

Flow Chart: The Five Core Questions of Asset Management Framework

This flow chart shows the relationships and dependencies between each core framework question.
## 2. What is my required “sustainable” level of service?

Knowing your required “sustainable” level of service will help you implement an asset management program and communicate to stakeholders what you are doing. Quality, quantity, reliability, and environmental standards are elements that can define level of service and associated system performance goals, both short- and long-term. You can use information about customer demand, data from utility commissions or boards, and information from other stakeholders to develop your level of service requirements. Your level of service requirements can be updated to account for changes due to growth, regulatory requirements, and technology improvements.

You should ask:

- What level of service do my stakeholders and customers demand?
- What do the regulators require?
- What is my actual performance?
- What are the physical capabilities of my assets?

Best practices include:

- Analyzing current and anticipated customer demand and satisfaction with the system.
- Understanding current and anticipated regulatory requirements.
- Writing and communicating to the public a level of service “agreement” that describes your system’s performance targets.
- Using level of service standards to track system performance over time.
3. Which assets are critical to sustained performance?

Because assets fail, how you manage the consequences of failure is vital. Not every asset presents the same failure risk, or is equally critical to your water system’s operations. Therefore, it is important to know which assets are required to sustain your water system’s performance. Critical assets are those you decide have a high risk of failing (old, poor condition, etc.) and major consequences if they do fail (major expense, system failure, safety concerns, etc.). You can decide how critical each asset is and rank them accordingly. Many water systems may have already accomplished this type of analysis in vulnerability assessments.

You should ask:

- How can assets fail?
- How do assets fail?
- What are the likelihoods (probabilities) and consequences of asset failure?
- What does it cost to repair the asset?
- What are the other costs (social, environmental, etc.) that are associated with asset failure?

Best practices include:

- Listing assets according to how critical they are to system operations.
- Conducting a failure analysis (root cause analysis, failure mode analysis).
- Determining the probability of failure and listing assets by failure type.
- Analyzing failure risk and consequences.
- Using asset decay curves.
- Reviewing and updating your system’s vulnerability assessment (if your system has one).
4. What are my minimum life cycle costs?

Operations and maintenance (O&M), personnel, and the capital budget account for an estimated 85 percent of a typical water system’s expenses. Asset management enables a system to determine the lowest cost options for providing the highest level of service over time. You want to optimize the work O&M crews are doing, where they are doing it, and why. An asset management program helps make risk-based decisions by choosing the right project, at the right time, for the right reason.

You should ask:

- What alternative strategies exist for managing O&M, personnel, and capital budget accounts?
- What strategies are the most feasible for my organization?
- What are the costs of rehabilitation, repair, and replacement for critical assets?

Best practices include:

- Moving from reactive maintenance to predictive maintenance.
- Knowing the costs and benefits of rehabilitation versus replacement.
- Looking at lifecycle costs, especially for critical assets.
- Deploying resources based on asset conditions.
- Analyzing the causes of asset failure to develop specific response plans.
5. What is my best long-term funding strategy?

Sound financial decisions and developing an effective long-term funding strategy are critical to the implementation of an asset management program. Knowing the full economic costs and revenues generated by your water system will enable you to determine your system’s financial forecast. Your system’s financial forecast can then help you decide what changes need to be made to your system’s long-term funding strategy.

You should ask:

- Do we have enough funding to maintain our assets for our required level of service?
- Is our rate structure sustainable for our system’s long-term needs?

Some strategies to consider:

- Revising the rate structure.
- Funding a dedicated reserve from current revenues (i.e., creating an asset annuity).
- Financing asset rehabilitation, repair, and replacement through borrowing or other financial assistance.

Implementing Asset Management: Follow-up and Continuing Steps

The five core questions framework for asset management is the starting point for asset management. Beyond planning, asset management should be implemented to achieve continual improvements through a series of “plan, do, check, act” steps.

- Plan: Five core questions framework (short-term), revise asset management plan (long-term).
- Do: Implement asset management program.
- Check: Evaluate progress, changing factors and new best practices.
- Act: Take action based on review results.
Logan, Utah: The Cache Valley Transit District has developed a community session for older adults interested in learning how to utilize the bus system or learn about other transportation options. Participants will learn about the Cache Valley Transit bus system and how and where it operates, as well as other options for transport. System leaders are on-hand to answer questions about riding the bus and take a field trip on a bus to the CVTD Transit Center, then onto Logan Regional Hospital.

Decatur, Ill.: On Sept. 12, Decatur Public Transit celebrated its one millionth passenger in 2014 — three days earlier than it had reached the same milestone in 2013. The lucky passenger, Danny Tyus, was awarded a free one-year bus pass. Decatur Transit Administrator Paul McChancy noted ridership has increased steadily every year since 2001, even as the city’s total population has declined.

Champaign-Urbana, Ill.: The Champaign Urbana Mass Transit District was awarded in September a $15.7 million federal TIGER grant to rehabilitate the heavily travelled transit corridors between Champaign and Urbana that link to the University of Illinois — a project known as the Champaign Urbana Multimodal Corridor Enhancement Project.

A collection of breaking small urban transit news from around the country, culled from the @CTMag1 Twitter account. Follow @CTMag1 for all the latest transit news, resources and more.
Jefferson City, Mo.: Jefferson City Mayor Eric Struemph announced a more than $300,000 increase in investment in city’s public transportation system — JeffTran — for the coming fiscal year. The investment includes funds to expand service to a medical facility set to open in November.

Harrisonburg, Va.: The Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation is working in cooperation with the local ARC to teach local residents with disabilities how to use its services. “Independence is often thwarted because people don’t have a way to get around,” said Shea Godwin, executive director at The ARC.

St. Cloud, Minn.: The local newspaper recently ran an opinion piece extolling the success of St. Cloud’s Metro Bus — including its winning CTA’s 2014 Urban Community Transportation System of the Year, its transition to Minnesota’s first fully CNG-fueled transit operator, its innovative mobility training center, and more.

Santa Cruz, Calif.: Local transportation planners have moved ahead with a study looking at the viability of passenger rail service along the Pacific Coast on a rail line already owned by the state of California. The proposed line would run through the heavily populated center of the county.

Grants Pass and Medford, Ore.: Weekday bus service between two small-urban areas in Oregon — Grants Pass and Medford — was initiated on Sept. 2. Dubbed the Rogue Valley Commuter Line, the 30-mile one-way trip is now offered five times daily, Monday through Friday with a one-way fare of $2.

Prescott, Ariz.: Public transportation has returned to Arizona’s Prescott Valley with expanded service from Yavapai Regional Transit. Local interest in the service, according to system leadership, has been expanding and hopes are to increase the number of stops throughout the year.

Topeka, Kansas: Topeka Metro has launched a How-to-Ride program to teach residents of Kansas’ capital city how to best take advantage of their local transit service. Focusing on areas with heavy bus ridership, the program seeks to simply answer questions and assuage fears.
Bremerton, Wash.: Bremerton’s Kitsap Transit is seeking input from the public to guide the development of its business plan and long-range strategy for passenger-only ferries that would connect the community with Seattle.

Eugene, Ore.: Eugene’s Lane Transit District found a unique way to celebrate being named best mid-size transit agency by APTA. Local craft beer brewer Falling Sky Brewing has developed a special Mash Transit Ale in honor of LTD. The brewer is also selling a special t-shirt which confers upon wearers free rides on Sundays through the end of 2014.

Monterey-Salinas, Calif.: In August, Monterey-Salinas Transit announced a major service expansion at California State University at Monterey Bay for the coming school year. Fully funded by the university, MST buses will now operate through campus on 25-minute headways and will operate seven days a week.

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Salisbury, Md.: Salisbury’s Shore Transit, a division of the Tri-County for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland, reported an increase of more than 20,000 passengers in Fiscal Year 2014. System leadership attributes the growth to an improving local economy as well as medical assistance transportation trips.

Santa Fe, N.M.: Over the summer, the city of Santa Fe announced new efforts to upgrade its downtown transit center, at Sheridan Avenue, with LED signage, and an electronic message kiosk.

Macon, Ga.: In July, the Macon-Bibb County Transit Authority initiated service from neighboring Houston County into Macon, serving workers coming into the city. The system also expanded service into nearby Warner Robins serving the Robins Air Force base.
Where’s Transit Notes?

Many long-time readers of *Community Transportation Magazine* – in both its print and digital formats – might recognize that this is the first edition of the publication in more than a decade to not include a *Transit Notes* section. This is no oversight. CTAA now provides both daily and bi-monthly collections of national transit news and notes in its twitter feed and FastMail e-newsletter, respectively. In other words, you don’t have to wait for the next edition of *DigitalCT* to get the community and public transportation news coverage you’ve come to expect from us. Just follow @CTMag1 on twitter or subscribe for free to FastMail right on the CTAA website homepage at www.ctaa.org.
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