

## **Prioritizing Transit Service Enhancement Recommendations**

### **A. Create new routes within current area served by the Rapid <sup>1,7</sup>**

Right now, routes cover most of the six cities that comprise the Rapid service area (East Grand Rapids, Grand Rapids, Grandville, Kentwood, Walker and Wyoming). However, there are some places that are missed, such as Walker Ave. to the northwest and parts of 36<sup>th</sup> Street in the south end. New routes could fill these gaps in service.

### **B. Create express routes connecting the city centers and commercial areas within the wider metropolitan area <sup>1,2,7</sup>**

Current service runs in a traditional manner along the set routes. That is to say that busses stop at all marked bus stops when some one is waiting to be picked up or if a passenger requests a stop. An express route would run between two activity centers with few, if any, stops along the way. As an example, an express bus could pick passengers up at Woodland Mall or Rivertown Crossings Mall and then take them directly to the Transit Center or the other mall via the quickest route. The bus would make no stops, or at most one or two more, between the malls and the Transit Center.

### **C. Create a single access system that will result in seamless and coordinated human service transportation system for seniors and others who utilize current services (e.g. Red Cross and Senior Neighbors) <sup>4,5,7</sup>**

Current service is relatively uncoordinated for riders needing specialized service beyond the main line busses. Multiple calls to the multiple providers can be necessary to get a trip for medical appointments or other destinations. A single access system could have one phone number for riders to call and then the ride would be assigned to the most appropriate provider to get the person to where they need to go. The funders of these services could allocate resources to the providers on a per trip basis.

### **D. Create service that more effectively serves rural communities in the wider metropolitan area, e.g. dial-a-ride centered in Rockford, Lowell and Jenison <sup>1,4,5,7</sup>**

The populations centers outside of the current Rapid service area, e.g. Rockford, Lowell and Jenison, could have service that is focused on their business districts and commercial centers. For example, there

could be dial-a-ride service or circulator routes based in these cities providing trips between, for example, destinations in Rockford and Sparta or Jenison and Hudsonville.

**E. Build commuter rail to neighboring communities outside of the wider metropolitan area boundaries (e.g. Holland, Muskegon and Lansing) <sup>2</sup>**

Commuter rail would be a high capacity service running on existing rail lines between a location or two within the wider metropolitan area and city centers outside this area. Lines could run from Grand Rapids to Holland, Muskegon, Lansing and Kalamazoo. This service would have very few stops between these city centers. For example, a line between Grand Rapids and Holland could only have stops in Grandville, Hudsonville and Zeeland.

**F. Create a single transit agency for the wider metropolitan area with area-wide public transportation planning (includes eastern Ottawa County) <sup>2,7</sup>**

In order to ensure the most effective and efficient transit services in the wider metropolitan area, one transit authority would exist to provide all the services (other than volunteer and other specialized service). People in the area would know where to look for information and know that the various parts of the system (e.g. rural circulators, urban mainline and express routes) would be integrated. In addition, all area wide planning would be completed by the same, single agency.

**G. Increase frequency of busses on current routes served by the Rapid <sup>1,7</sup>**

Busses currently run on week days every thirty (30) minutes on most routes and some routes have busses every fifteen (15) minutes during peak hours. On Saturdays, busses run every thirty (30) minutes during peak hours and forty-five (45) minutes at other times. On Sundays, busses run every forty-five (45) minutes. With increased frequency, the system is more useable for riders who would be able to navigate the system without the need for complex schedules.

**H. Increase passenger amenities (e.g. more bus shelters and bike lockers)<sup>1</sup>**

Additional passenger amenities would increase the usability of the system. For example, more bus shelters would provide coverage for persons using the system during our areas more challenging weather days. Bike lockers at the bus stop or transit center would allow for bike storage while a person was at work or shopping.

**I. Move forward on major transit investment in the corridors identified by the Great Transit, Grand Tomorrow study (South Division and southeast from downtown Grand Rapids to the airport) and with the modes recommended (Bus Rapid Transit or streetcars)<sup>1,2,3,7</sup>**

The Rapid has been studying the viability of a major investment within a specified corridor. As of today, there are two possible modes still being explored, bus rapid transit and street cars, along with two corridors still being explored, Division Ave. south and downtown to the airport. An earmark (or set aside) has been made in the most recent federal transportation bill to help pay for the next phase of this project. Such an investment would require a realignment of routes to better feed into the higher density corridor.

**J. Lengthen hours of service on weekdays within the Rapid service area for mainline and Go!Bus<sup>1,7</sup>**

Buses currently run between 5:00am and 11:30 pm on week days on most routes. Go!Bus has similar hours. With increased hours of service, the system would be more useable for riders who need to get to work earlier or stay later in addition to making the system more user-friendly for social events and other activities that occur outside of those hours.

**K. Expand weekend transportation service by increasing the number of routes in service and increasing the hours of service for mainline and Go!Bus<sup>1,7</sup>**

Currently, busses operate on a reduced schedule of routes on the weekend. This is especially so on Sundays when approximately only half of the routes are in service. In addition, busses currently run between about 5:00am and 10:00 pm on Saturdays and between 7:00am and 7:00pm on Sundays. With increased routes in service and increased hours of service, the system would be more useable for riders who need to get to work earlier or stay later in addition to being more usable for those needing the system for social events and other activities that occur outside of those hours.

**L. Increase use of technology that will enhance usability of mainline and Go!Bus service (e.g. real time bus location information via phone and internet)<sup>1</sup>**

The more that is done to give riders better information, the more user-friendly the system will be. One such enhancement could be the installation of a system like in Ottawa, Ontario where each bus stop has an assigned phone number. A person simply calls that number and is

told when the next bus will be at that stop. This would allow some one to avoid waiting for a bus delayed by traffic or an equipment failure.

**M. Expand non-motorized transportation options, including accessible sidewalks and bike paths <sup>1,6</sup>**

Riders need a safe, accessible path to the bus stop. With expanded sidewalks and bike paths, people can more easily get to the bus lines in order to travel around the metropolitan area.

**N. Develop and implement service throughout the entire wider metropolitan area <sup>1,4,7</sup>**

While this recommendation may seem redundant with others, its focus is to ensure that we do have service throughout the entire metropolitan area that is integrated, affordable and meets the needs of citizens in the various communities.

**O. Enhance intercity (outside of wider metropolitan area) transportation options through increased intercity bus service, development of commuter rail and/or creation of high speed passenger rail service <sup>6</sup>**

This recommendation is similar to E above. However, that recommendation only focused on commuter rail between a location within the wider metropolitan area and city centers outside this area. This recommendation also looks at expanding intercity bus (e.g. Greyhound and Indian Trails) and the development of other options from Grand Rapids to Holland, Muskegon, Lansing and Kalamazoo. One other such service could be a better connection between Grand Rapids and a planned high speed rail line through Kalamazoo (connecting Chicago and Detroit).

Sources:

<sup>1</sup>Interurban Transit Partnership: FY 2003 to FY 2007 Short Range Public Transportation Plan.

<sup>2</sup>Metro Mobility 2020.

<sup>3</sup>GT2 Review April 2005.

<sup>4</sup>Emergency Needs Task Force, Reports for 2003, 2004, 2005 ([www.accesskent.com](http://www.accesskent.com)).

<sup>5</sup>Creating Communities for a Lifetime, Transportation recommendations.

<sup>6</sup>West Michigan Strategic Alliance – The Common Framework.

<sup>7</sup>Down the Road... The Future of Public Transportation in the Greater Grand Rapids Area. Citizens League of Greater Grand Rapids: April 1990.