

CITILINK TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN UPDATE - June, 2010

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Transit Development Plan (TDP) Update for Citilink provides a comprehensive review of the system's operations and the demographics and attitudes of its users. The purpose of this update is to analyze system strengths, validate and/or recommend changes to the 2004 TDP and present additional opportunities for improvement.

The plan synthesizes data and public and stakeholder input on all facets of Citilink services to provide a sound approach to short term improvements based on operating efficiencies and public interest.

Specific route/schedule/service area coverage recommendations presented in this TDP Update include a review of the recommendations contained in the 2004 TDP and an update on steps taken to implement those recommendations. Some of the route/schedule/service area recommendations from the 2004 TDP have been carried forward into the Update. This is a result primarily of the lack of funds available to implement new initiatives that continue to be supported by the system needs analysis.

The Citilink Community

The city of Fort Wayne has a population of 248,637 (Census Bureau 2006 estimate), a 21% increase from the 2000 Census data. The city is surrounded by the Fort Wayne Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) and Allen County. The Fort Wayne MSA has a 2008 estimated population of 411,154 and the county has a 2008 estimated population of 350,523. Fort Wayne is the major city in Allen County and is considered to be the activity center for the area (an activity center is an area within a region, neighborhood or intersection of several neighborhoods that serves as a formal or informal gathering place).

According to Census estimates, the population for the City of Fort Wayne has increased by 21% from 2000 to 2006. In the same time period, the state grew in population only 4% and Allen County grew only 3%. These statistics show that county residents from areas other than Fort Wayne were re-locating into the city limits. Allen County's population is projected to grow by 19% between 2008 and 2040. Similarly, the Fort Wayne MSA population is projected to grow by 18% during the same time period.

Service employment, which grew steadily in Fort Wayne during the early 2000s, is expected to continue its climb in upcoming years. Manufacturing, in contrast, has experienced some decline, but still remains an essential part of the Fort Wayne economy, comprising a large percentage of Fort Wayne employment - approximately twice that of the national average. While these growth rates appear modest, regional growth is important primarily because of the impact that it has on employment and travel patterns.

Public Participation

This plan relies on an extensive public participation program designed to solicit input from members of the general public, current users of the system, community leaders, key policy decision-makers and other transportation stakeholders in the Citilink service area. This program included an on-board customer survey, individual stakeholder interviews, a general public telephone survey, and an internet survey to solicit feedback from users and non-users alike.

All of this input was used to complement operating data collected and guide the planning process throughout the study. A number of common themes emerged through the stakeholder participation process related to service frequency, convenience, and service span. The following were the most frequently cited needs:

1. More frequent service
2. Faster travel times
3. A more convenient and comfortable transfer hub
4. Add Sunday service
5. Operate later hours

Customers were complimentary of many of the service aspects, including courtesy of drivers and other employees; easily understandable route schedules; condition of the vehicles and bus stops; and, security on the bus and at the stops.

Service Analysis

A thorough review of a transit system's existing conditions serves as the foundation for eventual operating recommendations in a Transit Development Plan Update. This study details the current operations of the Citilink System, financial and operating data, and staffing and organizational structure. The study team also reviewed demographics throughout Allen County; the current route network's geographic coverage; proximity to major trip origins and destinations; and relationship to overall transit needs in the community.

Citilink operates a "hub and spoke" transit service that provided 1,837,479 unlinked passenger trips in 2009. Daily ridership is approximately 6,000 trips a day. Citilink maintains a fleet of 58 buses and 13 vans.

The Citilink organization structure is headed by a Board of Directors. The board oversees the operations of the Citilink system. The board employs a private management company, McDonald Transit Associates, Inc., for professional oversight of the agency. Citilink employs 78 full-time drivers and 6 part-time drivers. The Operations staff provides over 129,848 hours of transit service annually on three transit modes. The Maintenance staff is responsible for the daily maintenance, repair, and servicing of their transit and support vehicles in operation in excess of 1,660,550 miles per year.

Recommendations

The strong productivity of many routes and of the Citilink System as a whole provides a solid foundation for route recommendations aimed at future transit development in Fort Wayne. However, as funds are not currently available to sustain any additional service, the recommendations are limited to what is feasible. By reducing bus route duplication or clearly unproductive services, enhancing frequencies, and increasing service on the most productive routes, Citilink will benefit from the cost-effectiveness of a more streamlined system.

Based on the route analysis, field investigations, stakeholder input, and customer and general public outreach, the Transit Development Plan Update recommends the following service enhancements:

1. Perform a comprehensive origin and destination study that will evaluate current performance in a segment-by-segment manner provide specific route modifications to enhance system productivity.

2. Perform a Saturday service analysis to evaluate the productivity and efficiency of offering transit service. The analysis will include recommended improvements based on customer needs and a productivity review.
3. Perform a fare collection analysis to determine the effectiveness of the fare change in 2008 and monitor changing needs.
4. Pursue funding opportunities to allow service initiatives to be funded and sustainable.
5. Reinstate Route 3 service to 30 minutes during peak hours to provide better connection with CampusLink.
6. Reinstate Route 2 service to 30 minutes during peak hours to provide better connection with Route 22.
7. Reinstate Route 1 Waynedale service to 30 minutes to serve the Social Security Office.
8. Discuss with ARC and AWS the options to incorporate current ridership of Route 31X into existing Routes 8 and 9.
9. Closely evaluate the effectiveness of Route 5 with the possibility of re-routing other service to meet the needs of current Route 5 riders in conjunction with route restructuring for the new downtown transit center.
10. Closely evaluate the effectiveness of Flexlink routes 21 and 22 and make service improvements that can increase efficiency and on-time performance for this service in conjunction with the implementation of the new mobile data computer scheduling system.
11. Seek additional operating efficiencies for the Citilink Access service in conjunction with implementation of the new routing and scheduling system
12. In conjunction with the development of the new downtown transit center re-evaluate all routes to modify structure as necessary to ensure timely transfers for all passengers.

Summary

The Transit Development Plan Update is typically designed to consider a five-year planning horizon. However, because of funding constraints, this update has focused on improvements that can be implemented in the current funding climate. The Transit Development Plan Update delivers the following focal conclusions:

1. Citilink provides good service to those in the community that are transit dependent and to the students of Ivy Tech and IPFW.
2. Frequency of service is a major concern of Citilink users and non-users.
3. Enhancements to current routes can improve efficiency and customer convenience.
4. Citilink must increasingly address the needs of shift workers and those who work non-traditional work hours as part of the regional economic development initiatives.
5. Citilink would benefit significantly from public-private partnerships.
6. Further expansion of service should be considered only after issues of funding, frequency, route efficiency, hours of service have been addressed.