CHAPTER 3—DRAFT Short Range Transit Plan

Vision and Goals
AC Transit’s Vision, Mission Statement and Goals aim to convey the District’s prime focus on moving people around the East Bay. They emphasize the local responsibility of the District, while providing a broader vision of its position in the region through improving quality of life and improving congestion.

District Vision
AC Transit’s vision is to be the mobility manager for the East Bay; allowing anyone to go anywhere they want safely, quickly and efficiently. We have begun internally, by developing Critical Business Outcomes and emphasizing working together to solve problems. The District will develop coalitions that build a Regional perspective for an effective and innovative transportation system. By improving the quality of life, easing congestion and stimulating economic development in the East Bay, the District will continue to be an integral part of the region’s future.

District Mission
The AC Transit Mission is to provide Safe, Convenient, Courteous and Reliable Transit Service.

District Goals and Sub-Goals
AC Transit has established five high-level goals, covering the core objectives of providing transit service and maintaining a customer focus, along with the financial strength, planning capabilities and employee participation that are necessary to achieve this. These goals, coupled with the Vision and Mission statements, provide the framework for developing sub-goals and individual department goals.

1. Provide High Quality, Useful Transit Service for Customers in the East Bay
   • Improve on-time performance
   • Target specific audiences to increase market share
   • Insure proper staffing at all levels to improve schedule adherence
   • Identify and serve emerging new markets
   • Identify and correct bus scheduling issues/problems
   • Modernize AC Transit’s fleet and services
   • Maximize the use of technological advancements to improve District operation
   • Improve air quality and other environmental impacts of both AC Transit vehicles and facilities
   • Provide sufficient resources to support District budgeted programs and levels of service
   • Insure that a sufficient number of buses are available to meet all bus schedules
   • Retain and promote a high quality diverse workforce that mirrors the diversity of the communities that the District serves
   • Increase ridership
   • Provide high quality paratransit service in cooperation with the East Bay Paratransit Consortium
   • Plan and implement service enhancement projects, including increased service levels and/or route restoration
   • Implement Capital and operating measures that speed up the buses traveling through major corridors
2. Make Sure that Customers are the First Priority
   • Improve content and availability of information about AC Transit to our customers
   • Improve the ability for riders with disabilities to use fixed route accessible service
   • Maintain clean vehicles
   • Treat all customers with respect and dignity regardless of gender, race, color or national origin
   • Promote rider and community involvement in identifying issues for increased District efforts
   • Promote District and public safety awareness
   • Provide for emergency preparedness, including continuation of service during an emergency, whether it is a District emergency or that of another agency.

3. Strengthen Financial Stability
   • Maximize District investments
   • Minimize the District’s exposure to financial risk
   • Increase level of funding that AC Transit receives through sales tax reauthorization, grant sources and/or other innovative funding sources
   • Reduce costs associated with vandalism
   • Minimize fare evasion
   • Minimize the District’s exposure to risk from passenger and employee accidents
   • Provide timely and complete analysis of financial and statistical data to support District operations
   • Ensure that operation of paratransit is cost efficient
   • Be prepared for downturn in local and national economy

4. Plan and Advocate for Funding and Implementation of Future Projects
   • Develop a visible and positive image with public officials and the community at large
   • Complete planning studies for the heaviest bus corridors
   • Promote partnerships between the District and other organizations (unions, government agencies, civic groups, general public, and/or private sector) to support common interests
   • Develop public/private partnership with both businesses and cities to provide enhanced serviced levels
   • Work with City and Local agencies to make transit usage as safe, secure, reliable and quick as possible and to promote transit usage in the planning process
   • Promote “Transit First” development practices and increased funding for transit through transit mitigation funding for new developments
   • Advocate for new funding sources to enhance service levels
   • Explore alternatives to conventional fixed-route transit
   • Promote public involvement to assist in District decision-making processes
   • Position District for federal authorization and appropriations.

5. Increase Employee Participation and Pride in the Agency
   • Strengthen internal communication at all levels
   • Become a ‘can-do’ agency
   • Provide employees with all of the necessary tools to continually improve knowledge, skills and abilities
   • Promote organizational development that prepares the District for the future
   • Provide employee support systems that enhance morale and minimize stress

Service Deployment Policies
Overview
Service deployment policies provide a transit agency with the correct blend of flexibility and structure necessary to ensure that their transit system is an efficient and effective
community resource. Consistent policies allow the agency to focus its resources to best meet the needs of its constituents, including riders, employers, workers, schools and businesses.

Although several policies and practices guide AC Transit in the daily deployment of service – including the vision and goals described above – a unified set of guidelines provides value in assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of the District’s service network. Following on from work completed during the Strategic Planning effort in the late 1990s, and a consultant effort begun in 2000 to assist the District in determining effective Service Polices, AC Transit has developed such a set of guidelines that spell out criteria for both increasing and reducing services in the future, as circumstances changes.

**Background: The Strategic Plan**

The origin of the Service Deployment Policies began with the year-long strategic planning effort to develop a vision of East Bay transit service and AC Transit’s role in providing that service, undertaken by the District in 1996. Among other things, this Strategic Plan was intended to incorporate a systematic policy structure for service design and for allocation of service hours within a broader context of the agency’s mission and resources.

The development of the Strategic Plan – along with Board and staff discussion of its policy options – occurred against a backdrop of severe financial stringency and service reductions. A major concern was the potential for additional service reductions, and the policy framework in which those would be carried out. Policy recommendations intended to assist the Board in making those potentially painful decisions were taken to the Board and discussed, but were deferred, pending additional analysis of the impacts on the system. During the Strategic Planning process, the financial picture brightened somewhat, and a high-level Peer Review encouraged the District to assert a bolder vision of its possibilities, instead of preparing for the District’s demise.

Based on work from the Strategic Planning effort, the staff’s policy recommendations were grouped around several related themes. These reflected a consistent vision of the dynamics of public transportation and their application in the AC Transit network:

- Service should be planned and allocated according to an overall policy, rather than essentially basing service decisions on responses to complaints.
- Allocation of service must reflect some consideration of geographic equity, but ultimately productivity and usefulness of the service should be given greater weight.
- A more productive and useful service will have certain characteristics, including:
  1. More frequent service in core corridors;
  2. Greater route spacing in some geographical areas, causing elimination of service on some routes;
  3. Later service in some areas; and
  4. More routes in operation on weekends and holidays.

**Guiding Principles**

In 1999, ridership was growing and there was the possibility of new funding available from the reauthorization of Measure B. The District Board thus directed staff to retain a consultant to complete the work begun in the Strategic Planning effort by developing service deployment policies. The consultant’s work provided a background and context for
service policies, a comparative analysis of other transit agencies’ policies, and an assessment of District operations. It also developed evaluation measures and goals that could be used to test the effectiveness of the District’s service and any proposed Service Deployment Policies.

In September 2000, the AC Transit Board of Directors adopted a set of Guiding Principles to assist in the development of service policies, shown in Table 3-1. With these principles as a base, the Board adopted the Service Policies in December 2000, shown in Table 3-2.

**Figure 3-1** Guiding Principles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guiding Principles</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. AC Transit, working with other transit operators in its service area, will increase annual per capita transit trips to 100 by 2005.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. The transit system will aggressively pursue transit priority and transit preferential measures at the most important locations to improve street operation of the transit system, to decrease transit passenger travel times, to improve reliability, and to reduce overall system operating costs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. To achieve this first objective, AC Transit will not only act as a provider of a social good, but as an aggressive instigator of service and an overall mobility manager for the East Bay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. The transit system must be seamless to the passenger regardless of the operator. Services, transfers and fares must be transparent to the passenger.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. To meet these overall mandates, AC Transit will develop a straightforward and marketable transit system, one that is easily understood by the public, easy to use and which runs frequently enough so that passengers do not need a schedule to use the system on a large part of the service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. The transit system route network will allow for modal conversions, when and if those are appropriate, and the service planning effort must complement the District’s other planning work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. AC will be the lead transportation agency as the center East Bay core cities increase density, leading to more demands for transit services. AC Transit will support these smart growth and in-fill efforts by designing routes and services to meet this new demand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. Service must be prioritized to those areas with the greatest potential for transit use, with good patronage rewarded by better service and shorter waits.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3-2**

**Service Deployment Policies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Allocation Criteria</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• AC Transit shall maintain service levels in Districts 1 and 2 commensurate with revenue generated in that District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The District should ensure that Transbay service is self-sufficient (cost neutral)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Accessibility Criteria
- The District shall operate accessible equipment
- The District shall advocate for accessible bus stops or shelters
- The District shall coordinate fixed route service with paratransit needs and investigate flexible service opportunities

Service Effectiveness Criteria
- The District should provide frequent, fast, through, coordinated, reliable, and easily accessible service on trunk routes
- The District should coordinate service with land use

Service Efficiency Criteria
- The District should maintain and enforce minimum route productivity standards
- The District should advocate for and/or implement transit priority and transit preferential measures in congested locations
- The District should maintain and enforce minimum bus stop spacing

Network Design Criteria
- The District should adopt service allocation policies based on density, ensuring that the policies or their outcome do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin or disability
- The District should implement limited stop service based on demand
- The District should implement express bus service where beneficial
- The District should implement Transbay bus service where beneficial
- The District should encourage intra-east bay ridership on Transbay lines
- The District should investigate flexible service options
- The District should maintain and enhance owl service on its trunk corridors
- The District should maintain minimum route spacing / coverage
- The District should adopt span of service definitions for different service types
- The District should provide seamless transfers (time, location, provider)
- The District should reorganize branching routes in favor of better connections
- The District should operate only one bus line per corridor when possible
- The District should schedule consistent headways
- The District should re-number the routes so that they have a logical numbering system

Fare Policy Criteria
- The District should provide seamless transfers (fares, fare media, provider)
- The District should implement proof-of-payment on trunk routes

Network Design
Overview
The basis of the Service Deployment Policies discussed above is a network design that focuses resources on the core routes that carry most riders. The District aims to allocate 70% of its resources to demand-based services, with the remaining 30% contributing to ensuring a basic level of geographic coverage. In this way, patronage will be maximized and, by extension, fare revenue will be increased.

AC Transit’s current route system is characterized by five lines that carry more than 40% of the entire system’s local patronage. Not surprisingly, these lines serve the most
developed and dense part of the region, with population densities approaching 10,000 – 12,000 persons per square mile on the busiest arterial streets.

Because the majority of riders use only a handful of AC Transit’s routes, the District can build upon these successes and improve these services to attract even more passengers, which would in turn create more political support for the system. AC Transit’s emphasis will therefore be on improving and increasing service on these core routes and trunk corridors that operate in the most dense areas of the service district, or operating new service in emerging high density corridors. In either case, adopting a logical and internally consistent method of allocating service helps to further the goal of creating a useful and efficient transit system.

With this service design, AC Transit intends to create a system of strong, high frequency routes connecting with a clear crosstown network at multiple transfer locations. In the more suburban locations, where there are fewer trips in a less dense area, the timed-transfer system will be employed. In all cases, the District aims to design routes with clarity and logic in mind – for example, the San Pablo bus should travel on San Pablo Avenue. Branches will be avoided, since they tend to create both informational and operational problems. They may be hard for passengers to understand and can result in poor service frequencies and scheduling problems, as well as operational issues relating to supervising buses diverging and merging while trying to operate on a common schedule.

Anything that is hard for passengers to understand can lead to a reluctance to use the transit system. For this reason, having basic service delivery criteria, which includes the standards for span of service and frequency discussed below, can lead to a more easy to understand system for the consumer.

While the majority of the District’s resources will be focused on productive routes, geographic equity considerations are also important. Most notably, the District is divided between Special District 1 (the original District) and Special District 2 (Fremont, Newark). In keeping with recent District actions, revenue credited to Special District 2 will be spent on service in that area.

**Density Criteria**

One of AC Transit’s main criteria for service allocation is the density of land uses along a route. The denser the area, the more frequent the service that will be provided, the closer routes will be spaced together, and the later into the evening service will run.

Density of land uses is one of the most important determinants of transit ridership. Obviously, the more people in a given area, the more people will ride transit if it is available. Density is also important for transit operations. The higher the density, the more origins and destinations there are likely to be in a given area. Well-planned routes, then, can have a high level of productivity in short distances.

Figure 3-3 shows the preferred service levels for different densities, established in AC Transit’s 1987 Comprehensive Service Plan. These provide a clear set of density criteria for service span, route spacing and route frequency decisions.
Table 3-3
Density Criteria for Service Allocation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persons per Square Mile</th>
<th>Route Spacing</th>
<th>Route Structure</th>
<th>Weekday Base Frequency</th>
<th>Weekend Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20,000 and over (High Density) [such as International Blvd., Telegraph Ave.]</td>
<td>¼ mile</td>
<td>Grid</td>
<td>Trunk: 10 min.</td>
<td>Trunk: 15 min. Sat and Sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Crosstown: 15 min.</td>
<td>Crosstown: Sat: 15 min Sun: 30 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20,000 - 10,000 (Medium Density) [such as grid sections in Oakland and Berkeley]</td>
<td>¼ - ½ mile</td>
<td>Grid</td>
<td>Trunk: 10 min.</td>
<td>Trunk: Sat: 15 min Sun: 30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Crosstown: 15 min.</td>
<td>Crosstown: Sat: 30 min Sun: 60 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000 - 5,000 (Low Density) [such as Hayward, Castro Valley, some areas of Richmond, Fremont]</td>
<td>½ mile</td>
<td>Focal Point Timed-Transfer</td>
<td>Trunk: 15 min.</td>
<td>Trunk: Sat: 30 min Sun: 60 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Crosstown: 30 min.</td>
<td>Crosstown: Sat: 30 min Sun: 60 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,000 - 0 (Suburban Density) [such as areas of Fremont and hills]</td>
<td>1 mile</td>
<td>Focal Point Timed-Transfer</td>
<td>No Standard</td>
<td>No Standard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Service Definitions and Span of Service

Many of AC Transit’s service allocation policies refer to trunk routes, core routes, feeder routes, and other types of service. These distinctions are important when putting into practice such concepts as focusing resources on demand-based services. However, since service types can vary by geographic area, it is important to provide clarity regarding their definitions.

Service definitions used by AC Transit are shown in Figure 3-4. A basic distinction is made between demand-based and coverage-based services. Note that some service types (for example feeder and crosstown) can be either demand-based or coverage-based.

Demand Based Services
Core Services: Routes that fall into this category represent the routes that should operate at the most frequent levels of service possible, for the longest span of service. These include: East Bay trunk, major corridor, crosstown and/or feeder routes providing high levels of service, frequencies and passenger amenities operating on the densest portions of the East Bay. Providing these services is based on the user demand or ridership. About 70% of the District’s resources should be dedicated to provide this type of “user-earned” service.
A. **Trunk Routes**: Provide the backbone of the transit system; operate along the arterial streets and provide a high level of local and limited stop service (10 minute Frequencies or better). These routes have the highest priority for capital improvements. Includes the following corridor routes:

- San Pablo (existing)
- E. 14th/International/Telegraph
- MacArthur
- College/University
- Bancroft
- Shattuck/Alameda

B. **Major Corridor Routes**: Complement the trunk route network, providing a high level of local stop service (10-15 minute frequencies or better). These corridors also are candidates for capital improvements to assist in bus operations. Includes remaining major corridor routes:

- 6th/Hollis
- Hesperian
- Macdonald/MLK
- Mission
- Sacramento/Market

**Feeder/Crosstown Routes**: Feed either BART or other AC Routes, or serve neighborhood circulation functions with a high level of service (15 minute frequencies or better). Includes all other high productivity routes.

Figure 3-5 shows the span of service and peak frequency that AC Transit will seek to provide for each service type. In many cases, the span of service goal is significantly wider than that provided at present, as later evening and night service is increasingly important for a strong transit network. Potential passengers cannot easily take transit if service is unavailable for either end of their journey. With changing work patterns, more people need to travel at non-traditional hours. Additionally, inadequate early morning, evening, night or weekend service may disproportionately impact the working poor whose jobs often do not coincide with nine to five shifts.

**Figure 3-5 Service Span and Frequency**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Route Type</th>
<th>Span of Service</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Core Trunk and Major Corridors</td>
<td>5 am to Midnight</td>
<td>10 minute peak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Crosstown</td>
<td>5 am to 10 pm</td>
<td>15 minute peak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Feeder</td>
<td>5 am to 10 pm</td>
<td>30 minute peak (or peak only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coverage Based Crosstown</td>
<td>5 am to 10 pm</td>
<td>30 minute peak (or peak only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coverage Based Feeder</td>
<td>5 am to 10 pm</td>
<td>30 minute peak (or peak only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owl (modified Trunk route)</td>
<td>5 am to Midnight</td>
<td>30-60 minute</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Social Equity and Environmental Justice**

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ensures that minority persons and communities are not discriminated against in the level and quality of service that is received. As such, the
District has a responsibility to ensure that the level and quality of service that it provides is distributed without regard to race, color, national origin or disability. In turn, any policy that provides direction for the provision of service must ensure that its outcome does not discriminate based on color, race or national origin.

A productive and useful system maximizes the number of people using the service, though patronage may be concentrated in fewer areas than in a network that emphasizes coverage rather than productivity or need. Creating a productive and useful system is a key to ongoing financial stability. By carrying more people without running more service, AC Transit can increase its fare revenue as a percentage of operating cost.

Yet, there are also important social equity implications to this approach. The most productive parts of the system – those with the highest level of use and highest fare revenue – tend to be located in areas with higher population density and higher transit dependence.

The District has a commitment toward furthering the consideration of Environmental Justice issues – projects or programs that would place a disparate negative impact on a community based on income, race, color or national origin. In developing the service policies, service restructuring plans and service reduction plans, great care is taken to ensure that the District’s low income and minority populations will not be discriminated against on any of these bases.

Over the past few years, the District has undertaken many steps to further its commitment to Environmental Justice principles. In November of 2000, the District hosted a forum on Environmental Justice in transportation for the San Francisco Bay Area, that was the first such conference in the region. In 2002, the Board of Directors authorized Resolution 2033, which affirms the District’s commitment to the civil rights and environmental justice principles and values ensured by the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This resolution assures that the needs of the people in the District are fully considered in decisions pertaining to service design, policy, and operations and that there is meaningful community involvement regarding these decisions.

To ensure that any future service policy would not discriminate against any one community, all of the existing service policies – both formal and informal – were reviewed during the Service Deployment Policies effort conducted in 2001. Additionally, when service reductions were being planned in 2003, Environmental Justice issues were again reviewed. In both of these efforts, social equity was not simply an after-thought, or a pass/fail screen that was used after service policy recommendations were made. Rather, Environmental Justice issues were among those first considered and addressed in developing how service would be deployed as part of both a financially constrained operating model, or if additional resources were available for a more robust operating scheme.

As part of the both the service policies process as well the service reduction process, the District’s Board of Directors reviewed analyses that supported the commitment to Social Equity issues. Maps that depicted low income and/or autoless households (often a surrogate for poverty or disability) were compared to recommended routing or frequency changes to determine general and/or specific impacts to those populations. In most cases,
recommended improvements to the network directly and positively impacted those neighborhoods with the highest concentrations of both low income and Calworks households. Service reductions primarily were considered in neighborhoods that had a low concentration of minority households.

The most productive corridors in AC Transit's system – those with the highest level of use and proportionately least reliance on external “subsidy” tend to be located in areas with higher population density and higher degree of transit dependence due to low income. Thus, service design policies that place a somewhat greater emphasis on productivity also have the effect of “rewarding” higher densities of urban development, and also have economically progressive impacts. Generally, the areas with lower productivity and a corresponding lower density do not have the concentrations of individuals who are either transit-dependent or chose to take transit. They are also areas that are not generally characterized by a high concentration of minority residents. These areas may be better served by other types of flexible services to provide a basic level of mobility.

However, the routes that are recommended here for significant operating and capital improvements transect areas of the District that currently have high proportions of low income and minority residents. As such, improving transit service in the urban core and on trunk lines as recommended by District policies contributes to social equity and Environmental Justice by improving the mobility of lower income residents.