



FY 2002-2006
Short Range Transit Plan

Chapter 2

Recent Accomplishments



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Chapter 2 Recent Accomplishments

Financial

Since the last SRTP – and for the first time in recent history – AC Transit has successfully advocated for outside funding for projects and programs that it would like to implement, but for which it has not had the resources. Two recent accomplishments highlight this most clearly: the reauthorization of Measure B and the receipt of Federal earmarks. Additionally, the District has been undertaking several other projects that have helped stabilize its funding base, including the refinancing of the Certificates of Participation, new fareboxes that facilitate transfers, and innovative pass programs with the City of Berkeley and the University of California, Berkeley.

Measure B

In 2000, the voters of Alameda County approved Measure B by a majority of 81%, reauthorizing the county's dedicated sales tax for transportation related programs and projects. This sales tax has historically provided AC Transit with vital operating revenue necessary to keep service running. The 1986 sales tax measure guaranteed the District only 11% of the annual sales tax revenue, but voters authorized the new measure at almost double the allocation for AC Transit's operating funds. They also authorized a number of capital projects,



including enhancements on major corridors used by the District's heaviest routes.

The reauthorization represented a "vote of confidence" that reflected a commitment to transit services as a crucial element of the livability of the East Bay. If sales taxes match anticipated projections, the new revenue will allow AC Transit to keep its operation intact in the coming years – and even allow for some expanded services. However, careful deployment of services is required in order to increase ridership, maximize fare revenue, and ensure efficient use of the new revenue.

The reauthorization represented a "vote of confidence" in transit.

Federal Earmarks

In the past few years, AC Transit has embarked upon a strategy to secure annual Federal budget appropriations (earmarks) for its projects and programs. Each year, the District has proposed several projects to the local congressional delegation during the Federal budget discussions, and has successfully obtained the Federal earmarks. The District received its first earmarks in FY 1998/99, and in FY 2000/01, the District received earmarks for four projects:

- Fuel Cell Vehicle Technology (\$1 million)
- San Pablo Avenue Corridor improvements (\$500,000)



- Access to Jobs Service/Welfare-to-Work (\$500,000)
- SATCOM communications and dispatch related projects (\$500,000)

In FY 2001/02, the District received three earmarks:

- Welfare-to-Work (\$2 million)
- New buses (\$500,000)
- SATCOM communications (\$500,000)

Additionally, AC Transit has been actively participating over the past 18 months in an American Public Transportation Association Task Force effort to shape the transit industry's goals in the reauthorization of the Federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA 21). Congress is scheduled to reauthorize the program in 2003 and it is anticipated that action on this front will begin in the fall of 2002.

Refinancing Certificates of Participation

The District has recently refunded the Certificates of Participation that were originally issued in 1989 to purchase the District's General Office building. As a result of the District's effort, the true interest cost on the entire financing was reduced to 4.41%, resulting in savings to the District of approximately \$5.5 million in present value terms. Over the life of the issue, the District will reduce its debt

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service payments by roughly \$475,000 per year.

Financial Rating

The District was recently reviewed by two financial rating agencies, receiving a A2 rating from Moody's and an A rating from Standard and Poors. In both cases, the score was a substantial improvement on the previous ratings.

Fareboxes

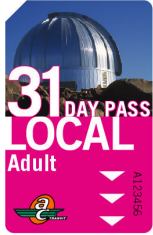
AC Transit installed new GFI Fareboxes with TRiM units (Ticket Reading and Issuing Machine) on its entire fleet in March and April 2000. Paper



transfers were eliminated and replaced by magnetic transfers in August 2000, with the rollout complete by the end of September. The benefit of magnetic transfers was immediately felt in farebox revenue, which jumped by more than eight percent within four months. Additionally, data collection improved dramatically. AC Transit is now able to track transfer usage in all transfer categories including Courtesy Transfers and Transbay Transfers. Also, AC Transit was able to save printing costs by reducing the number of yearly transfers ordered from 35 million to under 12 million.

The magnetic transfer rollout involved many different departments including Operations, Marketing and Treasury. These groups worked together to address many challenging issues

including driver training, patron education, transfer design, and rollout procedures. To date, the magnetic transfers are welcomed by



both drivers and patrons. Based on the success of the magnetic transfer rollout, AC Transit introduced magnetic 31-day passes in July 2001. The new fareboxes also give the flexibility to introduce a wide variety of other new fares, such as unlimited-ride one-day passes.

Pass Programs

The eco-pass concept is similar to that of insurance – a large group of people pay a discounted price for transit service, even though not all participants use the service. The District began to use this concept in 1998, when students at the University of California Berkeley elected to add a registration fee – paid by all students – for AC Transit, allowing them to ride the bus by simply showing a valid University I.D. card. This fee has generated about \$600,000 annually for AC Transit. In the fall of 2001, almost 90% of Cal students voted to approve a fee increase to begin in the fall of 2002, which will generate about \$1.2 million annually for AC Transit. Although the District has solicited similar proposals from other colleges in the areas, no other programs have been implemented.

In the fall of 2001, the City of Berkeley and AC Transit approved a one-year “eco-pass” program for City employees. Under this program, the City pays a rate of approximately \$60 per employee for one year, and in return, all City employees will be able to ride buses

by showing their City of Berkeley I.D. card. In approving this program, the AC Transit Board also indicated a willingness to enter into similar agreements with other cities in the area. The City of Alameda has expressed interest in this type of program.

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Service Changes and Expansion

Since the last S RTP, the District has implemented several major service changes and planning efforts, resulting in a renewed interest in bus transit within the jurisdictions in the AC Transit service area. These include:

- Evening and weekend service restorations
- Fremont/Newark service restructuring
- Welfare-to-Work service implementation
- Completion of Phase 1 of a Major Investment Study on one of the District’s most heavily used corridors
- Projects that are included in the Regional Transit Expansion Program (RTEP) developed by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, in conjunction with the 2001 Regional Transportation Plan
- Award of Regional Express Bus funding for vehicles and operating of express services
- Completion of Service Deployment Policies study that resulted in recommendations to restructure and redeploy service in within the District



Service Restoration and Expansion

In anticipation of the reauthorization of Measure B, AC Transit restored service to many of the routes and times of day that were eliminated during the 1995/96 and 1996/97 service cuts. This included the reinstatement and expansion of nighttime services to form an Owl Network, which, in concert with other late running routes, provides a trunk network that operates 24 hours a day.

In addition to the service restorations, the District implemented service expansions throughout the AC Transit service area in 1999 and 2000. This included the initiation of several routes designed to provide access to jobs, and specifically assist Calworks' recipients in their return to the workforce. These specialized routes operate at times of day when other neighborhood buses do not run, providing more direct service from low income neighborhoods to job sites that house sustainable employment. All of the routes are subsidized with Federal and Local funding. The District has received one of the "Ten Top Welfare-to-Work Awards in 2000" from the American Public Transportation Association, and the Federal Transit Administration award for "creativity and innovation with your Welfare-to-Work Program". This program includes services that operate in West and East Oakland, North Richmond, and Hayward.

AC Transit has also implemented a major service restructuring within Special District 2, which encompasses the southern Alameda County cities of Fremont, Newark and Union

City. This plan, entitled the Fremont-Newark Transportation Development Plan, was designed to provide a greater level of service using the revenues that are generated within that Special District. The revised bus lines straighten out previously circuitous routes, and operate on major roads and arterials to provide more direct service. The plan also implemented new services to several employment destinations that were previously unserved. Ridership data for the new service plan is being collected and will be analyzed to determine what modifications might be necessary to improve efficiency or effectiveness.

Future Services

AC Transit submitted six proposals for MTC's Regional Express Bus program, which is funded under the Governor's Transportation Congestion Relief Program (TCRP). Four of these were approved for funding:

- Higher frequencies on the I-80 Richmond Transbay service from the Richmond Parkway Park-n-Ride lot, reducing headways from 15 to 10 minutes
- New I-880 service from Hayward BART to Silicon Valley
- I-80 Richmond Transbay Service which provides Park-n-Ride connections at Golden Gate Fields parking facility
- New Stanford University Service from Fremont Bart across the Dumbarton Bridge, offering 30 minute headways in the peak and 60 minute headways in the off peak

The District will receive up to 33 buses for the above services, which account for one-third of the total buses scheduled to be purchased with Regional Express Bus funds. AC Transit will also receive operating subsidies for the I-80 Richmond Parkway service, and the I-880 service. Additional Measure C sales tax funding from Contra Costa County will be requested to fund the

The operating cost of the new Fremont - Stanford service is completely covered by the University.

balance of the projected cost for both I-80 services. Additional operating funds for the I-880 service will be requested from the new Alameda County

Measure B allocation, which could also be supplemented with private contributions from employers in the corridor. The operating cost of the Stanford service is completely covered by the University. District staff is still evaluating options to procure new vehicles and the timing for the start of the new service.

Studies and Plans

Several studies recently completed by AC Transit have provided the basis for short-term service restructuring and future investment plans. These have included studies of Bus Rapid Transit and Enhanced Bus options for various corridors, and the development of Service Deployment Policies that will guide future decisions on where to allocate resources.

Phase 1 of the Major Investment Study for the Berkeley/Oakland/San Leandro Corridor resulted in the selection of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) as the locally preferred alternative. The

study engaged both the elected officials and the community in the cities along the corridor in selecting a mode and alignment for capital improvements, and reviewed service and operational characteristics to determine the most appropriate and feasible alternatives for both near-term implementation and long-term planning. The recommendations included Enhanced Bus improvements, which can be made in a short time frame prior to BRT construction, and the continuation of environmental clearance work for a potential bus-only lane or light rail line.

The selection of the BRT alternative, which will now be the subject of further environmental studies, has also been included in MTC's Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Regional Transit Expansion Plan (RTEP). The BRT Corridor is listed in Track 1 of the RTP, which places it in the running for anticipated Local, State or Federal funding allocations, as well as in the RTEP, which serves as an advocacy plan for future funding. What is noteworthy is that the District is the only operator with bus projects in the RTEP, which has traditionally been a Regional rail plan.

The Service Deployment Policies study, meanwhile, was completed in 2001, and has already provided direction to AC Transit and MTC during their development of the RTP. These policies, which are described in detail in the following chapter, are intended to help make choices about the types and levels of service that would provide the most benefit to the community, and assist the District in allocating resources both when new funds are generated and when times are lean.



The Service Deployment Policies give a high priority to improving the corridors that have the greatest potential to increase ridership. As a result, BRT and Enhanced Bus corridor improvements were submitted to MTC for capital improvements in the development of the RTP and RTEP. Investment on these corridors, such as Hesperian, Foothill and MacArthur Boulevard would provide benefits along the heaviest arterials in the most dense parts of the region. In addition, the District has included frequency increases on core routes, recommended in the Service Deployment Policies, in its ten-year budget projections.

Fleet and Facilities

The last few years have seen substantial modernizations and enhancements to the District's vehicles and facilities. These have included a commitment to an all low-floor fleet for local services, the introduction of new over-the-road coaches for express and Transbay routes, and the investigation of fuel cell technology. On the facilities side, the Eastmont TownCenter Transit Center has been completed, and the formation of the Transbay Terminal Joint Powers Authority has laid the foundation for major improvements to Transbay service.

New Vehicles and Vehicle Technology

In the last several years, AC Transit has begun procuring new types of vehicles for both local and Transbay/Express service. These include luxury over-the-road coaches with high-back seats and luggage racks for use on some Transbay and Express routes, and low-floor

vehicles for local services that allow easy boarding. Currently, these low-floor vehicles can be seen on the San Pablo Avenue Corridor, painted with a unique green paint scheme, as well as in parts of southern Alameda County with the standard AC Transit colors. The District has re-affirmed its commitment to an all low-floor fleet for local service, including articulated coaches.

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EUROPEAN-STYLE VEHICLES

The AC Transit Board recently authorized is considering the procurement of a European-style vehicle made by Van Hool (Belgium) that is significantly different from those in its current fleet. This vehicle would be comfortable, sleek and modern looking, with large windows to make it appear more open. It would be equipped with double-wide doors and an extra set of doors on each bus to facilitate boardings. All these physical features, combined with special signage and perhaps special colors, would result in a distinctive image that could be used to identify the Bus Rapid Transit or Enhanced Bus corridors. The District recently awarded a contract for the procurement of up to 270 standard low-floor vehicles and up to 120 articulated low-floor vehicles. The District anticipates delivery in 2003/04.

FUEL CELL TECHNOLOGY

The advancement of new bus engine technology has been a District focus for the last several years. Hydrogen fuel cells offer the promise of emission-free, quiet public transportation. Though still in its infancy, this technology could profoundly change the way we travel, equivalent to the transition from horse and buggy to automobile.

AC Transit's efforts in developing fuel cell technology will serve as a model for bus systems throughout the world.



In November 1999, AC Transit hosted one of the first real world tests of the XCELLSIS ZEBus, a prototype 40-foot standard-size, zero-emission bus. Shortly after the ZEBus test, AC Transit joined the California Fuel Cell Partnership, bringing its many years of experience as a leading urban bus operator to this consortium of vehicle and fuel cell manufacturers, fuel companies, and government agencies. AC Transit will play a vital role in developing and testing methods for operating an entire fleet of fuel cell buses under the demands of a large and busy system.

In the next two years, the District will build a \$3 million hydrogen fueling and maintenance center and acquire as many as nine buses. This demonstration is designed to show how fuel cell buses can be fueled and maintained efficiently, and perform consistently. Maintenance personnel will study patterns of performance to determine whether a particular problem is due to random failure or from conditions unique to the route.

Over the next several years the District will be providing information and data that fuel cell manufacturers need to make this technology cost-effective and competitive with diesel and compressed natural gas (CNG). The District will be developing entirely new procedures for fueling and maintaining these buses, and our efforts will serve as a model for bus systems throughout the country, and indeed the world. We will also apply for additional funding to expand the initial fleet.

REPOWERED ENGINE REPLACEMENT PROGRAM

Because many years may pass before we see an entire fleet of fuel cell buses, the District is enacting an immediate, interim solution: replacing old, conventional diesel engines with new high-tech, low-emission diesels on approximately 120 vehicles. These "low-e" engines significantly reduce ozone-producing chemicals and diesel particulate pollution. In addition, their fuel mileage is superior to older engines by almost 50%.

The District has implemented a program to replace its two-stroke engines with state-of-the-art four-stroke engines. The newer engines will replace relatively high pollution



units operating at 3.3 MPG with engines achieving 4.0 MPG with significantly reduced pollution.

It is anticipated that this new technology will reduce operating costs as well as provide a significant contribution to the improvement of air quality in the Bay Area. The District received funding from the Port of Oakland and the Federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program to replace approximately 50 engines. The District will continue to seek funding to complete replacements on all of the remaining vehicles with two-stroke engines.

Facilities

EASTMONT TOWNCENTER TRANSIT CENTER

In March 2001, the Eastmont TownCenter Transit Center was completed. The new

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facility on Foothill Boulevard, next door to the Eastmont Police Station, constitutes a major improvement for passengers compared to the on-street bus stops formerly spread throughout the

immediate neighborhood. Not only does it greatly improve the bus riders' experience and the neighborhood's ambiance, it provides AC Transit operators with restroom facilities and a safe off-street location for lay-overs and transfers.

Bus connections are now consolidated in nine bus stops — seven in the center plus two more

on Foothill Boulevard — that place connecting routes very close together. This layout makes it easier for riders to transfer between buses. Additionally, passengers have remarked that they have experienced an increased sense of safety because the police station is right next door.

Three years in the making, the transfer station was built at a cost of about \$2.5 million, funded largely by Federal ISTEA (Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act) dollars supplemented by matching funds from Regional bridge tolls.

TRANSBAY TERMINAL

The recently established Joint Powers Authority between AC Transit, the City of San Francisco and Caltrain will oversee the design, construction and management of a new Transbay Terminal facility. Following



preliminary design work completed this past year, the cost is forecast at approximately \$900 million. The project will primarily be funded by proceeds from the development potential of the surrounding land, coupled with tax increment funds that are available because the site is in a redevelopment district within San Francisco. This project is included in Track 1 of the RTP and the RTP.

Caltrans had originally not intended to replace the critical Eastern Ramp at the current Transbay Terminal, after it had been partially removed for the Bay Bridge seismic retrofit. This would have severely impeded bus

operations at the terminal, and AC Transit was joined by People on the Bus, a host of East Bay cities and both Alameda and Contra Costa counties in filing a lawsuit to prevent the ramp from being permanently removed. With help from local Assemblywoman Dion Aroner and other members of the East Bay delegation, Caltrans recently agreed to replace the ramp.

Passenger Amenities

Several projects have been initiated to enhance the passengers' experience and increase ridership. These include the advertising shelter program, the on-street passenger information (NextBus) demonstration project, the Fremont/Newark Public Information Campaign, and City of Berkeley bus stop improvements.

Advertising Shelter Program

The District's Advertising Shelter Program is intended to address the need identified by passengers for well maintained shelters. It aims to generate advertising revenue sufficient to offset the installation, maintenance and administrative costs of providing bus shelters. The overall goals of the program are to increase transit visibility, improve passenger convenience and safety, disseminate transit information, and increase public transit's contribution to urban and suburban "livability". The shelters will house informative inserts with a system map, schedules and other transit information. They will also have appropriate lighting that will help our riders identify AC Transit and our services.

The program is operated under a Joint Powers Authority between AC Transit, six cities in Alameda County (Albany, Berkeley, Fremont, Hayward, San Leandro and Newark), and the unincorporated portions of Alameda County. Several cities in Contra Costa County are currently negotiating with the District to join the program. In 1999, a contract was awarded to Lamar Advertising for the installation and maintenance of the advertising shelters in the participating jurisdictions. Thus far, 120 shelters have been erected in the cities of Fremont, Hayward, San Leandro, and Newark. The cities of Berkeley and Albany, and the unincorporated areas of Alameda County have adopted an agreement with Lamar and are now in the permitting process for designated shelter locations, or are selecting site locations for the first phase of installation.

On-Street Passenger Information Demonstration

A demonstration project for NextBus has begun operation along San Pablo Avenue, providing passengers with real-time information on the predicted arrival times of buses. Bus arrival predictions can currently be viewed by the public at bus stops at two BART stations in the corridor that have been equipped with the displays, and via the Internet at www.nextbus.com. After the demonstration project, the District will determine how to extend this concept throughout the service area, and to include options to obtain the information through cell phones or Personal Digital Assistants.



Fremont/Newark Information Campaign

When services were restructured in the Fremont/Newark area, a marketing campaign was launched that has changed the way public timetable information will be distributed in the future. The District developed a Timetable Book that compiled all of the routes and timetables for service in that geographical area in one single booklet. Following an enthusiastic reception by the public, any future large-scale service changes are planned to be accompanied by a similar booklet, starting with the Central County service restructuring, scheduled for implementation in 2002.



Berkeley Bus Stop Improvements

A pilot program in Berkeley is providing passengers with transit information in an eye-catching new format: in wraparound displays on bus stop poles. The displays, installed at test sites along University Avenue and at the transit center in downtown Berkeley, show days and hours of operation, plus scheduled

trip times for buses on each line serving a particular stop. The next step in this program is to gauge customer reaction to this information format as a precursor to developing further bus stop improvements.

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Human Resources

One of AC Transit's five key goals is to increase employee participation and pride in the agency, including strengthening internal communication, enhancing morale and providing employees with all of the necessary tools to continually improve their skills. The District's continued success in national competitions for mechanics and operators, and the overall organizational development process, reflect the success in meeting this goal.

APTA Roadeo Awards

For the third year in a row, AC Transit's operations team took "Best of the Best" honors at the 26th annual American Public Transportation Association International Bus Roadeo. District mechanics and operators out-performed competitors from more than 50 North American transit systems in a national competition that tested both driving and

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mechanical skills of operators and mechanics from across the country. Roadeo driver entrants vie against a stop watch and a tough 13-obstacle road course, with similar tests occurring for mechanic teams.

The team's "Best of the Nation's Best" honors, derived from the combined Operator and Maintenance competition score, once again put AC Transit's Roadeo performance at the top of the list of the nation's major transit systems.

Organizational Management

The FY 2001/02 budget was framed by Critical Business Outcomes (CBOs) developed at the executive level of the organization to provide the agency as a whole and each employee with direction and focus grounded in the District's main purpose and values. The agency has been involved in the organizational development process, and budget allocations for staff development are intended to support this effort.

The organizational development process emphasizes the importance of developing and maintaining high quality public transportation services; creating committed, loyal, productive and engaged employees; cultivating an image as the Bay Area's premier transportation provider; using best business practices; and building broad stakeholder support for District Business Outcomes.

Technological Advancements

Within the last several years, AC Transit has strived to take advantage of technological

advancements to improve service. Even though technological changes sometimes outpace an agency's ability to embrace them, the District has been a regional leader in several high-tech applications, including development of an Information Technology Strategic Plan intended to take advantage of all the high-tech solutions available, and the implementation of several high-tech programs such as SATCOM and the District's new Scheduling Software.

Information Technology Strategic Plan

Information technology systems provide the tools necessary to improve on-time performance, adapt to changing service plan requirements, optimize the number of vehicles on the street, and improve the content and availability of information to AC Transit customers. In December 2000, the District engaged a consultant to develop and articulate a consensus vision and action plan for managing information technology at AC Transit, leading to the recommendation of a new governance structure for IT management. In response, an Information Technology Department has been created under the leadership of a Chief Technology Officer who sits at the executive level of the organization. In addition, a newly formed IT Steering Committee will review appropriate technology standards in order to guide AC Transit's IT investment.

SATCOM

The SATCOM computer-aided-dispatching and automated-vehicle-locating system (CAD/AVL) began road testing in 2001. Much of the fleet



has already been outfitted with SATCOM equipment, with installation throughout the remainder of the fleet proceeding at the rate of five buses per day. It is anticipated that the entire fleet should be outfitted early in 2002.

The computer driven SATCOM system accurately tracks the location of buses to within a few feet, displaying this information at the District's Central Control Unit. This allows the fleet to be managed more efficiently, and is invaluable in locating a particular bus if the operator reports an emergency. SATCOM's communications facilities include text messaging and voiceless automated communication, allowing operators to report minor issues – such as farebox problems – with just a touch of the button. AC Transit's contractor on the project Orbital Sciences – continues to develop the higher-level functions of the system. These include schedule and route adherence capabilities, automated stop announcements, vehicle subsystem interfaces and wireless vehicle programming.

Translink

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) has been working with Regional transit operators for several years to develop a ticket that can be used on all Bay Area transit systems. The fruits of this work are now being realized, with the selection of the Motorola Corporation as MTC's contractor to implement the "Translink" SmartCard, and a six-month pilot program due to begin in early 2002. AC Transit is one of a



handful of Bay Area operators who will participate in the TransLink pilot, and equipment has been installed on all 124 buses at the Richmond Division.

The ergonomics of the installation provide advantages for passengers and operators. Placing the readers to the left of the front entrance allows SmartCard users to pay their fare and take a seat without waiting for other riders at the farebox to complete their transactions. The operator's console has been placed above and to the left of the operator's seat where it will not impair visibility or obstruct normal operation of other bus subsystems.

Schedule System Upgrades

The Scheduling Department is upgrading its fixed route scheduling software to improve the District's run-cutting abilities, substantially reducing staff time. The software will also increase scheduling capability, especially after it is interfaced with the District's Digital Mapping System, provided by Thomas Brothers, that provides a geographical layout of planning areas. Once the scheduling system is upgraded, it will be interfaced with Transtar – the Regional trip planning system – and with the District's webpage and SATCOM. This software will also provide a modern data collection network, allowing the District to obtain and analyze high quality data for both financial and operational purposes.

The East Bay Paratransit Consortium, through which AC Transit and BART jointly provide Paratransit Service in the East Bay, purchased new paratransit scheduling software in the fall

of 2001. This state-of-the-art software provides more flexibility in making paratransit trip reservations, and helps to match demand with availability so that trip schedule reliability can be improved.

PeopleSoft

The District's human resources and payroll systems are being moved to a PeopleSoft software platform. In 2000, the PeopleSoft Human Resources and Payroll systems were installed, which allowed the District to better access and report data, with specific modules devoted to Time Reporting, Payroll, Human Resources and Benefits. The District also anticipates replacing the Financial System with PeopleSoft version 7.5 at a later date, bringing a number of benefits including better support for budget planning and forecasting, and ensuring compliance with State and Federal project management rules. The software will also improve asset tracking and accounting systems, reduce the potential for fraud, and speed up and improve the accuracy of financial reporting.

Successful implementation of the PeopleSoft Financial System will depend on its smooth integration with the Enterprise Asset Management System (Purchasing, Materials, Maintenance, Electronic Documents and Workflow) currently being installed.