Plan Participants

Central Indiana Regional Transit Alliance

City of Beech Grove
Town of Brownsburg
City of Carmel
Town of Cicero
Town of Fishers
Town of Fortville
City of Greenwood
Hamilton County
Hendricks County
City of Indianapolis
City of Lawrence
Town of McCordsville
Town of Mooresville
City of Noblesville
City of Shelbyville
Shelby County
Town of Speedway
Town of Southport

Plan Coordination

Central Indiana Regional Citizens League
Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization

Plan Consultants

The Corradino Group
Sverdrup Civil, Inc.
Manuel Padron & Associates
Sharon Persich & Associates
Borshoff Johnson & Company
Crowe Chizek
Executive Summary

Overview

The Central Indiana Regional Transit Alliance (CIRTA), working with the Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), has developed a Regional Mass Transit Service Plan for Central Indiana. This plan has resulted from the initiative taken by many Central Indiana communities who joined together to form CIRTA in April 1998. The plan focuses on a 20-year horizon, with the target year being 2020.

This plan has been developed in concert with two other major transportation planning initiatives conducted in the region. These are the “Transportation and Land Use Vision Plan” prepared by the Central Indiana Regional Citizen’s League (CIRCL) and “conNECTions,” a major investment study being conducted in the Northeast Corridor. The Vision plan, completed during 1999, established community consensus for developing transportation and land use initiatives that enhance all elements of the communities’ quality of life while mitigating negative effects of population growth, urban sprawl, and traffic congestion. The “conNECTions” study in the northeast corridor is being conducted to evaluate highway and transit alternatives that can improve transportation conditions in this heavily traveled corridor.

The fundamental goal of the Regional Mass Transit Service Plan is to ensure people throughout the region have mobility options while also enhancing the regional economy and offering options to single-occupant vehicle use. The plan reflects a truly regional approach in applying public transportation as a tool to sustain the region’s quality of life and economic growth.

1 CIRTA includes: the City of Beech Grove, the Town of Brownsburg, the City of Carmel, the Town of Cicero, the Town of Fishers, the Town of Fortville, the City of Greenwood, Hamilton County, Hendricks County, the City of Indianapolis, the City of Lawrence, the Town McCordsville, the Town of Mooresville, the City of Noblesville, the Town of Plainfield, the City of Shelbyville, Shelby County, the Town of Speedway, and the Town of Southport.
The study area for the plan is the nine-county central Indiana region, or Marion County and the surrounding counties of Hamilton, Madison, Hancock, Shelby, Johnson, Morgan, Hendricks, and Boone (Figure S-1). The development of this plan has involved extensive public outreach including meetings with community officials and leaders; presentations to citizens groups such as the MPO’s Citizen Advisory Committee, the board of the Indianapolis Public Transportation Corporation (IndyGo), regional planning groups; and, meetings with technical groups and organizations involved in transportation.

This plan focuses on a 20-year time frame. The plan assumes, at least for the implementation period, a multi-jurisdiction environment and thus is structured on a county-by-county basis.

**Issues and Goals**

Central Indiana, like metropolitan areas throughout the country, is facing a host of traffic congestion, environmental, and economic development issues driven primarily by the continued dispersed patterns of residential and economic development. These patterns, coupled with a strong economy, have resulted in a virtual explosion of automobile travel that has far exceeded population growth over the last decade. Specifically, the plan has been developed in response to the following issues:

- Traffic is becoming a major concern in many places of the metropolitan area.
- Traditional public transportation is becoming increasingly difficult to provide because of the continuing low-density development in the area.
- Air quality issues (potential ozone non-attainment) associated with expanded automobile travel are potential threats to public health and economic development.
- Roadway right-of-way constraints and air quality issues make it increasingly difficult to solve traffic problems by building more roads.
- The growth of job markets in suburban areas has resulted in a disconnect between entry-level jobs and people needing employment.
• Demographic characteristics, such as the aging of the population, are placing greater pressures on social service agencies to provide transportation for their clients throughout the region.

• Unmet transit needs in the region has been estimated to be as high as 19 million trips annually.

• The costs of unrestrained expansion of personal automobile travel throughout the region could cost as much as $2 billion annually in personal travel time over and above what exists today.

Development of the plan is guided by the following goals:

• Meet regional mobility needs

• Enhance economic development opportunities

• Reach consensus on a plan

• Provide sufficient ridership to reduce single-occupancy vehicle usage

• Effectively use public resources

• Enhance natural and urban environments.

Process

The development of the Regional Mass Transit Service Plan incorporated technical analysis, public education, outreach, and hands-on public involvement. The Plan was initiated in January 1999. The planning process has included more than 50 meetings with community representatives throughout the region; participation in workshops associated with the Vision Plan and the conNECTtions Major Investment Study; and presentations to groups (Figure S-2) such as:

• Citizens Advisory Committee
• Mobility Advisory Council
• Transportation Advisory Council
The consultant team worked with representatives of IndyGo, CIRCL, and CIRTA throughout the project. Draft elements of the plan were mailed to area plan commissions, local governments, and participants in the planning process at key points in the study.

**Service Plan Recommendations**

The recommended plan (Figure S-3 through Figure S-5) calls for development of a multimodal transportation resource throughout the region. The components of the recommended plan are presented in detail in Appendix A. Key service recommendations include:

- Expansion of IndyGo services in Marion County to include cross-county routing, transit centers, park-and-ride services, regional connections, and Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) applications.

- Development of Countywide Demand-Response services based on coordination of existing social service agency transportation resources.
Figure S-3
Regional Mass Transit Service Plan
Figure S-4
Rail Corridor Preservation

[Map showing rail corridor preservation with various rail lines and cities labeled]

Legend:
- Red: Should be preserved for future rail use (high priority)
- Blue: Should be monitored for future rail use (medium priority)
- Green: Abandoned/Dedicated Should be preserved for bike/pedestrian use
- Orange: Maintained for Rail or Bike Pedestrian use
Figure S-5
Bicycle/Pedestrian Linkages
• Creation of the Central Indiana Vanpool Initiative, which will focus on providing transportation linkages for employment sites throughout the region as well as commuter traffic into Marion County.

• Establishment of Flex-Route services that link the regional counties with IndyGo’s services.

• Development of linkages between the transit systems and the bicycle/pedestrian network.

• Preservation of rail corridors for future passenger transportation and/or recreational use and support of ongoing recreational trail development efforts.

• Continued exploration of rail and high-capacity transit alternatives through the Major Investment Study process.

• Support of transit-oriented land use initiatives.

The plan provides a mechanism for meeting immediate transportation needs, addressing air quality considerations in the near future, and providing a framework for reducing future traffic congestion. It is estimated that in 2020, the annual ridership produced by the plan will be approximately 4.9 million, which combined with current ridership of IndyGo and the other systems in the region would yield almost 15 million total public transportation passenger trips.

Costs and Funding

The operating and capital costs required for plan development are shown in Table S-1. The annual operating cost at the end of 20 years (approximately $13.9 million in current dollars) represents about 40 percent of the current operating expenditure for public transportation in the region. (IndyGo, City of Anderson Transit System, TRAM, and Access Johnson County had about $33 million in annual operating costs in 1999.) The capital costs to create and maintain the transit service plan will be approximately $46 million, or an average of $2.3 million per year.
Funding for the Regional Mass Transit Service Plan will come from federal, state, and local (public and private) sources. The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) is the current legislation guiding the federal transit program. Under TEA-21, the Federal Transit Administration administers formula and discretionary funding programs that are applicable to the Indianapolis region. State funding for transit comes from the Public Mass Transportation Fund. This fund is supported by a portion of the state sales tax (0.76% of total sales tax revenue) that generates about $27 million annually and is distributed by formula to eligible transit systems throughout the state. Combined federal and state sources will account for approximately $3.0 million of the operating costs at year 20 in the plan. For capital requirements, which include vehicles and vehicle replacement, federal sources will account for approximately $37 million, or average $1.85 million per year.

Local operating costs in year 20 will be about $8.5 million. These funds could come from several sources including property taxes, sales taxes, gasoline taxes, employment taxes, parking taxes, and impact fees. State and local capital requirements would be approximately $9.3 million, or an average of $465,000 per year. Similar to operating requirements, additional revenue sources will need to be established to fund the capital program.
Benefits Versus Costs

The Regional Mass Transit Service Plan can benefit the entire nine-county area, not just those who use the service. The benefits include:

- Reducing the total vehicle miles traveled with corresponding traffic congestion and air quality mitigation benefits.
- Saving personal travel time and automobile operating costs.
- Helping meet air quality requirements in the nine-county region.
- Increasing mobility for all people in the nine-county area.
- Providing transportation to connect employees and jobs.

Estimates of the benefits of transit investment in communities show that public transit can yield a return of nearly $2 for every dollar spent. Therefore, the operating investment alone could yield a return of $27.5 million annually in year 20 in economic benefit throughout the nine-county region. Combined with the one-time capital expenditures, the total economic stimulus of the plan is estimated to be $500 million over 20 years.

Implementation

Implementation of the Regional Mass Transportation Service plan has been phased over a 20-year period. Table S-2 presents types of projects to be implemented by improvement category and county for the next five years, years 6 to 10, and years 11 to 20.

During the first five years, the following actions are recommended:

- CIRTA coordinates with IndyGo to apply for funds to establish the Central Indiana Vanpool Initiative.
- CIRTA establishes a specific rail corridor to develop funding for a future Major Investment Study.
Table S-2
Improvement Options by County
(numbers indicate implementation year/start year is 2001)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Boone</th>
<th>Hamilton</th>
<th>Hancock</th>
<th>Hendricks</th>
<th>Johnson</th>
<th>Madison</th>
<th>Marion</th>
<th>Morgan</th>
<th>Shelby</th>
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<tr>
<td>B1 – Fixed-Route Bus</td>
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<td>B2 – Flex-Route Bus</td>
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<td>High Capacity Options* – MIS/Potential Implementation</td>
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\*High Capacity options are: Exclusive Busway, Light Rail, Commuter Rail, Heavy Rail

*Current project underway; */1-5 indicates expansion considered.

- CIRTA works with social service agencies to create the recommended countywide demand-response services.
- CIRTA works with communities to begin implementation of a community shuttle program.
- CIRTA works with IndyGo to develop a capital vehicle program to support the regional transportation initiatives.
- CIRTA supports CIRCL’s land use initiatives.
- CIRTA resumes exploration of the Regional Transit Authority initiative.

**Organization**

Regional cooperation in the delivery of public services usually occurs when: the participants recognize the benefits to be derived from such efforts; there continues to be an element of control by the participant; there is equity in financial commitment; and, there is clear linkage between...
services received and the payment for those services. Regional service delivery and cooperation often result from a perceived or real crisis. Such issues as they relate to transit may be the impact of traffic patterns and congestion on air quality, productivity and roadway deterioration. A sense of urgency to confront these matters does not exist today in the Indianapolis metropolitan area. The most compelling reason currently is the need for workforce transportation to the significant employment sectors of the region. Other factors, such as the aging of the population and land use/urban sprawl issues, will continue to increase the sense that there is a need for transportation alternatives.

It is anticipated that the current IndyGo funding sources along with the ad hoc funding programs for isolated service areas will be used in the near term. The transit needs for each potential participant in a regional transportation authority varies from community to community. New service areas will most likely be added to serve a niche market or need, and the funding is anticipated to be tailored to that particular community. Currently, there is very limited financial home rule authority for Indiana counties and municipalities, which creates significant reliance on the property tax. Having alternatives to fund transit initiatives will be important in those areas that require significant investments and to maintain the region’s competitiveness.

A uniform local funding approach does not seem possible until there is significant expansion and broad-based delivery of services. Immediate needs will be focused in the urbanized areas of the region and in no county outside of Marion does this area exceed half of the county’s area. For the reasons cited above, it is anticipated that expanded service in the near term will occur through a series of interlocal cooperation agreements. Each community will “buy” the services it needs and pay for them, as it deems appropriate. The key will be the coordination of these services in the intermediate to long-term horizon. Eventually, inter-local agreements among numerous communities will become too cumbersome and will prompt a regional solution.

A Regional Transit Authority (RTA) is the most likely means to provide coordination of transportation services, as its formation is well defined in Indiana statute. Over the next five years, the establishment of an RTA should be reconsidered. The RTA would then be responsible for managing cross-county services and would also recommend an appropriate equitable funding source to the legislature.
Conclusions

Central Indiana has the opportunity now to make appropriate investments in a multimodal transportation resource that will afford greater levels of regional mobility, meet unmet transportation needs, contribute to economic development and growth, and be one part of a regionwide strategy to deal with traffic growth and congestion. Public transit can be a vital component of the transportation network that supports the quality of life in the region.