

Institutional Assessment

Washington County Transit Study

Institutional Assessment

Purpose

This document presents an assessment of the current Washington County public transportation institutions, identifies new, alternative institutional arrangements, and considers the respective merits of these alternatives.

The assessment is mindful of the study's overall goal to *provide efficient, quality transportation services that contribute to the human, social, and economic vitality of Washington County and the surrounding area*. In other words, the alternative institutional arrangements will be assessed on the basis of what is best for the county overall.

Assessment of Current Washington County Public Transportation Institutions

In Washington County, three public institutions are responsible for providing public transportation services. They are the City of Washington, the Mid Mon Valley Transit Authority, and the Washington County Transportation Authority. These organizations assumed responsibility for public transportation at different times under different circumstances. Each was set up to provide a specific set of services within a specific geographic area. Consequently, each one was structured differently and has functioned quite differently. Each one has

- Boards/governance that are different;
- Secured federal and state funding from different authorizations with different eligibility requirements;
- Derived (any) local match money from different sources.

The discussion below presents pertinent and compelling characteristics about the 3 transportation institutions. Table 1 below summarizes key characteristics of the public transportation institutions. More detailed information is provided in the Institutional Profile.

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Table 1 – Current Washington County Public Transportation Institutions

	<i>City of Washington (GG&C Bus Co.)</i>	<i>Mid Mon Valley Transit Authority</i>	<i>Washington County Transportation Authority</i>
Origin	1980, by agreement between PennDOT and City of Washington	1985, incorporated by 21 municipalities located in the Mon Valley area of Washington, Fayette Westmoreland, and Counties	2001, incorporated by Washington County Commissioners; replaced Human Services Authority
Geographic Focus	City of Washington and some nearby communities	21 municipalities located generally along Route 88 corridor in Washington, Westmoreland, and Fayette Counties	All Washington County
Service Focus	Local fixed-route service in City of Washington and commuter service into Pittsburgh	Local fixed-route service in Mid Mon Valley and commuter service to Pittsburgh	Shared ride service countywide
Board/ Governance	Mayor and City Council	21 member board; each member municipality appoints a board member	9 member board, appointed by County Commissioners, represents affected constituencies
Administration	GG&C staff	Mid Mon Valley Transit Authority staff	Washington County Transportation Authority staff
Funding	City of Washington has been recipient of federal and state funding for fixed route services; local funds provided by GG&C and municipalities located near Washington City that receive service	MMVTA has been recipient of federal and state funding for fixed route services; local funds provided by member municipalities, Washington County, and Westmoreland County	WCTA receives federal and state funding for shared ride services through agreements with agencies whose clients it serves; no local match has been required.
Vehicle Operations and Maintenance	GG&C	88 Transit	GG&C, Tri-County Access, White Line Taxi, Laidlaw Transit Services, SW PA Area Agency on Aging

Board/Governance

- The City of Washington provides public transportation services through a long-standing relationship with GG&C Bus Company. The City of Washington is the official grantee for all federal and state funding. GG&C provides fixed route transit services, maintains the vehicles, and handles all planning and administrative matters.

GG&C’s relationship with the City of Washington is unique in Pennsylvania. In some ways, GG&C functions like a department of the City. In other ways, GG&C provides a specialized professional service much like a municipal solicitor or municipal engineer. The

City and GG&C do not have the typical contractor-contractee relationship like that between MMVTA and 88 Transit Company. The relationship between City and GG&C has been possible because the City of Washington, as a Third Class City, has not been obligated to competitively bid for transit services.¹

Finally, none of the nearby communities served by the City of Washington/GG&C participate in the governance of the transit operation.

- WCTA's board is appointed by the Washington County Commissioners. Pursuant to its by-laws, the members represent 4 geographic sectors of the county as well as defined, constituent interests. The Board meets monthly and is actively engaged in strategic planning, performance monitoring, and financial oversight.
- MMVTA, as required by the PA Municipalities Authority Act, has a 21 member board representing each of its incorporating municipalities. Therefore, for so long as MMVTA is a creature of numerous local governments, a large board will govern the Authority. Large boards can be unwieldy, and this has proven to be true for MMVTA. The Board has occasionally dwelt on unsubstantial issues as well as the usual and important matters. Decision-making has been slow. In 2007, MMVTA's leadership changed when new board officers were selected. More expeditious governance has resulted, providing a good precedent – but not a guarantee – for the future.

Federal and State Funding

Each of the three public transportation providers has received federal and state funding through different authorizations. Briefly stated, these monies have been designated specifically for certain classes of transit organizations, types of transit service, and geographic areas. PA Act 44 substantially changes these circumstances with respect to the state – not the federal – funds. Pertinent and compelling factors follow:

- PA Act 44 eliminates the earlier programs that directed specific state funding to specific transit agencies and classes of transit organiza-

1. PA Act 44 now requires the City of Washington to competitively bid the contract for transit services. GG&C as well as other private companies can be expected to seek this contract.

tions. In other words, the legislation that guaranteed state funding specifically for the City of Washington or MMVTA no longer exists. Changing the public organization providing local fixed route transit service will not require a change in state law.

- PA Act 44 changes the allocation of transit funding. It will be based in part upon previous allocations and in part upon system performance. State funding will support continuity in transit service while including strong incentives for efficiency and effectiveness. Poorly performing transit organizations could eventually lose their state funds.
- Federal funding designated for MMVTA can only be spent in the Monessen Urbanized Area. If the responsible local officials wish to change the recipient of those monies, this could be accomplished through an administrative process involving the affected organizations and the Federal Transit Administration.

Local Match

MMVTA and the City of Washington/GG&C have been able to meet their local match requirements differently. WCTA is not required to provide local match funds for its paratransit services. PA Act 44 significantly changes the local match requirements for fixed-route transit systems. Some of these requirements are ambiguous and will be clarified once the program regulations are issued. It now appears that

- Local match requirements for current, fixed route transit services will gradually increase to 15% of the state allocation.
- Waivers for local match will no longer be granted to the transit provider in a distressed community.

These circumstances have substantial implications.

- The City of Washington has relied upon GG&C to pay the local match. GG&C pays the expenses that exceed state and, where applicable, federal -- grants. It is premature to assess GG&C's ability to meet increasing local match requirements for existing service and to provide the local match for service expansions.

- MMVTA's by-laws require each of the municipalities receiving transit service to contribute a share of the local match in proportion to the services received. For practical purposes, this requirement has not been uniformly observed. The annual fair share for some communities amounts to less than \$100, and many of these towns are severely distressed. In fact, all of the Mid Mon Valley is designated as a distressed area, and so MMVTA has not had to pay the full amount of local match. PA Act 44, as previously stated, no longer grants a waiver to distressed communities. For the current year (FY 07 -08) MMVTA must pay a larger local match than what was previously required; and the match payment will gradually increase to 15% of the state allocation as required for all other state grantees. Most important, the amount of local match now paid by the larger municipalities, Washington County, and Westmoreland County is not expected to be sufficient to meet the new requirements.
- WCTA, providing only paratransit services, is not required to pay local match. Should WCTA offer fixed route services, it would need a source of local match.

Institutional Alternatives

Five institutional alternatives for providing public transportation services in Washington County are presented below. The alternatives present a range of choices and vary by the

- Degree of institutional change
- Source of local matching funds
- Ease or difficulty of implementation

The alternatives also reflect what, in the judgment of the consultant team, appears to be practical in light of the past performance and current circumstances of Washington County's public transportation providers.

1. **No change.** No institutional changes to the existing transportation organizations are made. The three current providers continue to exist as they are today. This alternative does not preclude the possibility that each transit organization periodically would modify its current services, offer new types of services and/or expand the geographic area it serves. This alternative also does not preclude the possibility

that each transit organization might change its administrative structure and/or procedures. For example, MMVTA could be restructured with a smaller board; the City of Washington, through a competitive bidding process, could select a different transit company than GG&C and then monitor the contract in a more traditional manner. Each operator would continue independent and autonomous decision-making from the other two regarding fares, policies, funding, etc. Coordination among the transit organizations, including resolving any conflicts among the transportation organizations, ensuring service coordination, identifying and meeting new transit demands, and obtaining local match monies, would be handled on a case-by-case, ad hoc basis.

2. **Washington County Transit Coordination Council.** The three providers of public transportation would create a coordinating body to jointly conduct selected planning and administrative functions. The governance of each transit provider would remain unchanged. The participating organizations would enter into an agreement that defined the purposes of the Council. The by-laws would stipulate who would represent each transportation organization on the Council; identify any additional Council members; determine the funding obligations; and set forth other appropriate operational rules and conditions.

While lacking direct authority, the Transit Coordination Council could do several useful functions. It could convene regular interagency consultations; encourage unified policies; facilitate coordination and expansion of services; centralize information about routes, fares, and schedules; do joint purchasing; and share other administrative tasks.

Like the No Change alternative, this alternative includes the possibility that each transit organization would periodically modify its current services, offer new types of services, and/or expand the geographic area it serves. As services change, the Coordination Council would provide a venue for resolving any conflicts and promoting coordination. In addition, this alternative also does not preclude the possibility that each transit organization might change its administrative structure and/or procedures as described in the No Change alternative.

3. **Partial Consolidation.** WCTA provides all transit services for all of Washington County except for the Mid Mon Valley. WCTA assumes

responsibility for the public transportation services provided by the City of Washington as well as any new fixed route services outside the area served by MMVTA. WCTA continues to provide county-wide paratransit services. It would engage a private operator for fixed route services through a competitive bidding process. One change to the board structure would be appropriate: transferring the board seat designated for a private transportation provider to the City of Washington. This change would ensure that the City is adequately represented, while eliminating any conflict of interest as WCTA expands its transit responsibilities. The County would pay the local match as a nearly county-wide service would be offered. This arrangement avoids the time-consuming and uncertain process of soliciting funds from the many communities being served.

This alternative recognizes the distinctly different transit demands in the Mid Mon Valley. It eliminates the City of Washington's responsibility for providing transit services, while maintaining its oversight. And, this alternative recognizes WCTA's record of strategically improving all aspects of its operation, which bodes well for its capacity to undertake fixed route services. Finally, this alternative constitutes a less radical change than full consolidation.

MMVTA would continue to provide fixed-route transit services for the Mid Mon Valley.

4. **City of Washington – WCTA Contract.** The City of Washington enters into a contract with WCTA to provide their fixed route, public transit services. WCTA contracts with a private company to operate and maintain the buses that the City owns. WCTA provides the administrative and planning services. Several assumptions are made with this alternative. First, WCTA, with the agreement of the City of Washington, could implement the recommended service improvements within the City. Second, WCTA could implement the services recommended for rural communities and communities in the I-79/Route 19 corridor. Third, this alternative presumes that the City of Washington could end its relationship with WCTA if it proved to be unsatisfactory. (In the event that the City of Washington would terminate the contract with WCTA, this alternative presumes that WCTA would continue to implement the services recommended for rural communities and communities in the I-79/Route 19 corridor, in or-

der to maintain continuity of service. Further, the City of Washington would be advised to have a contingency plan in place to minimize the disruption of transit service within the City while a new institutional arrangement was being determined.)

In effect, this alternative provides a trial basis for a partial consolidation of transit institutions (an alternative discussed below), and delays – if not avoids -- the process of changing the current institutional arrangement. Finally, this Alternative presumes that the County would provide the local match for all County transit services. County matching funds appear to be necessary and appropriate, because (a) the City of Washington/GG&C local match arrangement may not be sustainable over the long term; (b) securing local match monies from the several communities being served is a time-consuming and uncertain process; and (c) the county has adequate fiscal capacity.

5. **Full Consolidation.** WCTA provides all fixed route and paratransit services for Washington County. The City of Washington/GG&C would no longer offer transit services and MMVTA would be dissolved. WCTA would enter into agreements with Westmoreland and Fayette Counties to provide continued transit services to their respective Mid Mon Valley communities. Westmoreland and Fayette Counties would directly – or indirectly through community assessments – pay the proportionate share of local match. Washington County would provide the local match for its municipalities. This arrangement avoids the time-consuming and uncertain process of soliciting funds from the many communities being served.

Before proceeding to assess these alternatives, it should be noted that two other institutional arrangements were initially considered.

- The City of Washington not only undertakes an enhanced oversight role, but also directly provides transit service. In other words, the City of Washington operates and maintains the buses as well as handling all planning and administrative responsibilities.
- A new county-wide organization is created to manage policies, planning, and funding for all public transportation services. The three existing organizations would provide the services through contracts with private companies.

These alternatives were rejected as they have significant practical flaws:

- Having serious financial difficulties at present, the City of Washington is unlikely to be able to assume substantial administrative and operational responsibilities.
- A new countywide organization to oversee all county public transportation services would probably be structured much like WCTA. At the same time, it would create another layer of bureaucracy which could be avoided through partial or full consolidation.

Special Considerations for MMVTA

If the Full Consolidation Alternative is not selected, two issues might give reason to reorganize MMVTA: the large size of its board and payment of the local match.

MMVTA, as now constituted, must have a 21-member board. Large boards, as previously discussed, often are unwieldy, and the MMVTA board has proven to be so. And, as previously reported, some of the member municipalities have had difficulty paying the local match.

MMVTA could be reorganized as an authority of Washington, Fayette, and Westmoreland Counties for purposes of providing services to the Monessen Urbanized Area and being the designated recipient of federal transit funding specifically authorized for this area. Under the Municipalities Authorities Act, at least each of the 3 incorporating counties must be represented on the Board. However, a 7-member board would be advisable to ensure adequate and proportionate representation of the areas being served. Eligible board members would be required to be residents of the Mid Mon Valley, do business in the Mid Mon Valley, and represent a compelling interest of transit riders. The counties would pay the local match in proportion to the transit services they receive.

Assessment Criteria

Based on their experience and judgment, the consultant team selected the 10 criteria presented below to evaluate the merits of the institutional alternatives. These criteria explain the intent of the study goal to *provide efficient, quality transportation services that contribute to the human, social,*

and economic vitality of Washington County and the surrounding area. In other words, the alternative institutional arrangements will be assessed on the basis of what is best for the county overall.

1. **Accountability.** By virtue of its mission to serve the public and its receipt of public funding, a public transportation agency should be accountable to responsible elected officials and the public entities that finance it. Public accountability can be accomplished by having elected officials appoint the members of the agency board or directly oversee and manage the transit operations. Examples of the latter include a municipality contracting with a service provider or running the service as a department of municipal government. In addition, funding agencies conduct routine reviews and require independent audits of the transit organization's financial and operational performance.
2. **Jurisdiction.** Jurisdiction is the geographic area that the transit agency has authority to serve and the type of service it has authority to provide. State laws and municipal ordinances restrict the municipalities to be served and the services to be provided. For example, MMVTA has jurisdiction to provide transit services only for certain municipalities within the Monessen Urbanized Area. Hence, MMVTA does not have jurisdiction to provide the recommended transit services in the I-79 and Route 19 corridor.
3. **Ability to Implement Transit Service Recommendations.** Another important consideration is the suitability of the alternative organizations to carry out the service recommendations of this study.
4. **Efficiency and Effectiveness.** The public reasonably expects its transit services to be both efficient and effective. While past performance records do not necessarily guarantee future performance, for better or worse, they do indicate what can be expected. Notably, PA Act 44 sets standards for efficiency and effectiveness that must be met in order for a transit organization to be eligible for state funding.

Efficiency and effectiveness can be measured in a number of ways. Cost efficiency indicators measure the resources expended relative to the amount of service provided. Cost per mile and cost per hour typically are used. Service effectiveness indicators measure the extent that the transit output is used or consumed. Appropriate metrics are passenger per mile and passengers per hour.

5. **Quality of Service.** While a somewhat subjective measure, quality of service can be assessed objectively through consideration of safety; vehicle comfort and cleanliness; predictable schedules (i.e. on-time performance); availability of easy-to-use route and schedule information; and for customers of paratransit and deviated route services, ease of making reservations.
6. **Responsiveness.** Public transportation agencies should respond to customers' evolving transit needs; opportunities to attract more customers; public policies and investments; and changing funding levels. Certainly, schedules, contracts, funding, and other circumstances can inhibit change. Still, a public transportation agency can enhance its responsiveness by having governing bodies that represent its constituents' interests and by having a regular process for seeking input from customers.
7. **Adaptability.** Not only should a public transportation agency be responsive to changing conditions, it should have a culture of adaptability. Adapting to change means periodically adjusting established routes and schedules to accommodate new travel needs; experimenting with new services; and continuously seeking improvements in operations and customer relations.
8. **Adequate and Stable Local Funding.** "Adequacy" in this context refers to the relative taxing/revenue generating capacity of the source of local funds. Furthermore, the simpler and more direct the process for securing local funds, the better. Local funding is required to leverage (i.e. match) federal and state funding for transit operations and capital investments. In effect, it is a measure of the public's support for the transit operation and is another means of accountability.
9. **Regional Cooperation and Coordination.** Meeting the work, medical, and other needs of Washington County residents increasingly requires inter-county travel. For transit riders, cooperation and coordination among the public transportation agencies is needed to maximize efficiency for both the traveler and the operator. SPC's Transit Operators Committees already provides a venue for such cooperation and coordination to occur.
10. **Ability to be Implement Organizational Change.** Any change is difficult, and changing any long established transit organization certainly will be difficult. The ability to implement any alternative depends

upon general public support as well the support of county and local officials. Practically, change is accomplished through resolutions of the affected county and local governments. Once resolutions are in place, an administrative process would proceed to implement the approved changes.

Assessment of Institutional Change

The following discussion presents the assessment of the transit institutional alternatives using the above ten criteria. This assessment is based upon information gathered during the study process and either reported previously or documented in the technical report evaluating existing transit services. The findings are summarized in Tables 2 and 3 below.

No Change.

Overall, this is the least satisfactory alternative. It would have the most difficulty meeting the study's overall goal to *provide efficient, quality transportation services ... (for) Washington County and the surrounding area*. It leaves unchanged the current arrangement between the City of Washington and GG&C whereby GG&C effectively functions like a department of the City. It leaves in place current local funding responsibilities which appear to be inadequate to meet PA Act 44 requirements; and current funding arrangements are not sufficient to finance the moderate- and high-cost recommended transit improvements. Finally, the No Change alternative does not provide a clear structure for the sort of countywide cooperation required to implement the recommended intra-county service improvements.

The No Change alternative fulfills the evaluation criteria to the extent that each individual public transportation provider meets them. This evaluation follows.

Accountability

The City of Washington's unique relationship with GG&C lacks procedures for accountability customarily found where municipalities contract with private companies for transit services, such as competitive bidding of the contract, and planning and oversight functions conducted by a dedicated municipal staff person. This is not to suggest that GG&C operates without oversight. GG&C complies with the many formal reporting and audit requirements established by the Public Utilities Commission, PennDOT, and

the Federal Transit Administration. Further, GG&C's representative communicates regularly with various City officials, providing information about transit system operations and addressing questions from city officials and the public as they occur. Indeed, a senior city official has indicated that the City of Washington is generally satisfied with this arrangement.

The success of this arrangement depends, however, on the relationship of trust that has developed over the years between GG&C's representative and the City. Should circumstances ever result in another person taking on this role, the same relationship would not be present. The potential for a conflict of interest inherent in a position that in effect straddles the public agency and the private vendor would become harder to overlook.

Of course, the City of Washington could choose at any time under the No-Change alternative to modify its arrangement with GG&C to provide a more distinct separation between City and bus company and more formal lines of accountability. In fact, the City of Washington and GG&C have indicated that they will institute a competitive bid process to award the contract for its transit services in early 2008.

WCTA and MMVTA have more typical institutional structures for providing transit services. The WCTA board is accountable to the public it serves through its structure and appointment by the County Commissioners (who are elected officials). The MMVTA board, through its structure and appointment by the municipalities served, is accountable to the public as well. Each authority uses a competitive bid process to contract with private operators for the desired transit services and hires professional staff to provide active oversight and management of transit operations.

Jurisdiction and Ability to Implement Transit Service Recommendations

The No Change alternative could hypothetically provide for sufficient jurisdiction to implement the study's transit service recommendations. Each transit agency has appropriate jurisdiction within its existing service area and has or could secure such jurisdiction outside its service area in order to implement the intra-county recommendations.

WCTA, with authority to provide all transit services to all of Washington County, already has the jurisdiction to provide the recommended intra-county transit service improvements. If it became the agency to provide those services, WCTA would need to closely coordinate with the other pub-

lic transportation providers (particularly the City of Washington/GG&C) to ensure proper integration of intra-county and local transit services. It would also need to secure a source of local match.

Furthermore, because WCTA has no experience with fixed route services, it would be prudent for the Authority to incrementally implement the service improvements and consider hiring staff with experience in overseeing fixed-route service.

Both the City of Washington/GG&C and MMVTA would need to enter into agreements with the affected communities to obtain necessary jurisdiction to provide any of the intra-county service recommendations. This type of arrangement raises several issues, however. First, it would make service continuity vulnerable to changing political circumstances and fiscal conditions. Second, in the case of the City of Washington, it would create a situation in which a municipality with its own interests would be providing a vital public service to a number of other municipalities, with their own (potentially conflicting) interests. This may be acceptable for smaller communities and for limited types of service (such as the existing commuter bus service along the Rt. 19 corridor, or the proposed Rover Bus service). But growing communities along the I-79 corridor, for instance, for whom transit service could be a key tool for guiding development, may well prefer an institutional arrangement in which their interests are more clearly accounted for. One example of such an arrangement would be a governing body that is ultimately accountable to the voters of those communities.

Should the City of Washington/GG&C become the agency to provide the proposed intra-county services, it would need to engage in a pro-active process of county-wide coordination and communication to ensure that the new intra-county services continue to meet evolving needs of the transit customers and their communities. Again, these several concerns are particularly applicable in the rapidly-growing I-79/Route 19 corridor.

MMVTA would also need to coordinate closely with affected communities outside its current service area should it provide any of the proposed intra-county services (the only intra-county services it would be likely to provide would be the Rover Bus services).

Efficiency and Effectiveness

The City of Washington/GG&C, compared to transit operations statewide, has low efficiency and effectiveness. Its productivity (the number of

originating passengers per vehicle hour) for FY 04/05 was second lowest among all Class 3 systems in Pennsylvania; the City of Washington/GG&C had 4.0 passengers/hour, while the statewide average for Class 3 systems was 18.5 passengers/hour. Cost per passenger data is available for FY 05/06. The City of Washington/GG&C's cost per passenger in that year was second highest among its peers: \$14.92 per passenger, far above the \$3.32 average cost per passenger for this class of transit operations.

MMVTA, while more productive than the City of Washington, also has relatively low efficiency and effectiveness. In comparison to other Class 3 operations in Pennsylvania, MMVTA ranked fourth lowest, with 7.5 originating passengers per hour, below the statewide Class 3 average of 18.5 passengers/hour average. Cost per passenger (FY 05/06) was \$8.13, substantially lower than the City of Washington/GG&C, but far higher than the statewide Class 3 average of \$3.32.

WCTA's paratransit services are relatively efficient. The cost per passenger is \$13.55, just below the statewide average (\$14.02 per passenger) for comparable Community Transportation operators. Its effectiveness – measured as passengers per paid driver hour -- is not as strong, ranking 14th lowest among all Community Transportation systems. Productivity has declined in recent years; the number of scheduled passenger trips per vehicle hour decreased from 1.90 to 1.81, a drop of 4.8 percent, from 2004 to 2006. (The decrease in passenger trips per hour can be linked in part to an increase in the number of Medical Assistance Transportation trips, which tend to be longer than the average trip length for other programs. These trips also tend to only involve one passenger, thus decreasing productivity. This is due to a shift in Medical Assistance Transportation guidance in recent years that enables the consumer to have choice in where he/she receives medical services.)

Improvements in efficiency and effectiveness under the No Change alternative would depend on the actions of the individual transit agencies. The accountability structures of WCTA and MMVTA provide formal institutional support for a process of ongoing improvements in performance. The City of Washington/GG&C relationship lacks key formal elements of accountability (such as competitive bidding of the transit contract and management and oversight by a dedicated city staff person), but has shown the ability to make some service improvements, particularly in recent years.

Quality of Service

The City of Washington/GG&C, WCTA and MMVTA all regularly assess rider satisfaction and find that customer satisfaction is positive and customer complaints are few in number and insignificant. The quality of GG&C's service currently is diminished, however, by limited service spans for local service that do not accommodate typical work trips, the lack of route signs and marked bus stops, poor on-time performance, and inadequate printed route information.

Improvements in quality of service under the No Change alternative would depend on the actions of the individual transit agencies. The accountability structures of WCTA and MMVTA provide formal institutional support for a process of ongoing improvements in performance. The City of Washington/GG&C relationship lacks key formal elements of accountability (such as competitive bidding of the transit contract and management and oversight by a dedicated city staff person)), but has shown the ability to make some service improvements, particularly in recent years..

Responsiveness and Adaptability

Each transit agency has demonstrated a capacity for responsiveness and adaptability. With GG&C's recent ownership change, the company began a process of modifying and improving its overall operations. To date, the school bus, taxi, and paratransit services have been addressed. Attention to the fixed route services was put in abeyance pending completion of this study, according to company officials.

Over the past few years, WCTA has also exhibited responsiveness and adaptability. Following its Strategic Plan, WCTA has modified and improved its scheduling, fare structure, internal management, marketing, and rider information systems.

MMVTA, despite its slow decision making process, has been able to respond and adapt to changing needs and opportunities. The Authority has constructed an attractive and functional transit center; maintained an up-to-date, accessible public information system; and begun to revise its bus schedules and routes. Notably, MMVTA implemented this study's service recommendations prior to the study's completion.

Adequate and Stable Local Funding

As noted above, the increased requirement for local match funds under PA Act 44 will present challenges for all of the public transportation providers in providing existing fixed-route services. All local match requirements will gradually rise to 15 percent of the state allocation. The transit service recommendations of this study will in many cases create the need for additional local match funds as well.

Each agency has at least three options under any of the alternatives for securing local matching funds needed in the future. The first option would be to require local communities receiving service to provide the funds. (In the case of the City of Washington/GG&C, this would include the possibility that GG&C would continue to pay some or all of the local match requirements for new and/or existing service.) The second option would be a joint effort to persuade Washington County to provide all local matching funds for public transportation service in the county. The third option would consist of a combination of the first two.

Each of these options presents potential difficulties. Annually, obtaining the local match from the communities served requires a time-consuming and uncertain process of negotiating payments. Most transit systems that depend on this local funding arrangement experience some difficulty securing continuing and consistent support. From time to time, different municipalities refuse to pay their local share and so the buses do not open their doors in those towns. A conflict with a small community does not significantly impact operations; conflict with a large community does. Further, such instability undermines the stability of service needed to build ridership. This would be a concern particularly for intra-county transit services that would depend upon the support of several communities.

For the City of Washington, current financial difficulties severely limit its ability to provide any local match funds. GG&C currently meets local match requirements out of its own resources and perhaps could meet the requirements for some future service expansions in the City of Washington. It is premature to know whether this arrangement is sustainable over the long term, however, or sufficient to support more extensive service improvements. Also, since the City essentially receives transit services for free, its incentive to ensure accountability and performance is reduced.

Funding from Washington County would have many advantages (assuming it could be obtained), including being adequate, reasonably stable, and

less administratively burdensome. Yet Washington County may be reluctant to provide the local match without receiving a substantial degree of oversight and control over public transportation in exchange.

Regional Cooperation and Coordination

Each public transportation institution is a member and regular participant in the SPC Transit Operators Committee and is committed to continuing this role.

Ability to be implemented

The No Change alternative inherently is the easiest one to implement. However, pressures to expand transit services into the rapidly growing sections of Washington County may in turn create pressures to modify the existing public transportation institutions and/or the way they work together.

Washington County Transit Coordination Council.

This alternative constitutes a relatively minor change from the No Change alternative, because it leaves in place the current public transportation organizations. This alternative does provide some advantages compared to No Change and has modest potential to meet the study's goal.

The following assessment focuses only on those criteria which would change from what was reported for the No Change alternative. The assessment with respect to the other criteria (accountability, jurisdiction, ability to implement the service improvements, and adequate and stable local funding) is not repeated.

Efficiency and Effectiveness, Quality of Service, Responsiveness and Adaptability

Acting in an advisory capacity, the Coordination Council could provide a useful venue for setting countywide standards for efficiency, effectiveness, responsiveness, quality of service, etc. While non-binding, these standards would respond to the study's goal. In addition, the Coordination Council provides an excellent venue for developing a uniform public information system for transit riders. The Coordination Council also provides an opportunity for orderly expansion of transit services. Decision making, or course, would remain the prerogative of the respective transit institutions.

Regional Cooperation and Coordination

The Coordination Council provides a venue and good opportunity for Washington County to maintain a unified and consistent voice in the SPC Transit Operators Committee.

Ability to be Implemented

The Coordination Council would be relatively easy to implement; it is much less disruptive than the City of Washington-WCTA Contract, Partial Consolidation, or Full Consolidation alternatives. The Coordination Council could be established through a voluntary agreement among the three organizations that would define the purposes of the committee, funding obligations of the participating organizations, and management and operational principles

Partial Consolidation: WCTA Provides All County Public Transportation Services Except in the Mid Mon Valley.

This alternative presents substantial advantages over No Change. It provides a sound basis for meeting the study's goal.

Accountability

This alternative would provide high accountability by virtue of WCTA's board structure and the County Commissioners' appointment of the board members. Implementation of the same formal procedures for accountability and oversight that it currently uses for its paratransit services would extend this accountability to the transit operator.

Jurisdiction and Ability to Implement the Recommended Service Improvements

WCTA's Articles of Incorporation give it the appropriate jurisdiction to meet this expanded role and provide the recommended expansions in transit service. This county-wide jurisdiction, together with county-wide accountability, would provide a sound institutional basis for effectively implementing county-wide transit service recommendations.

Efficiency and Effectiveness

With appropriate lines of accountability and a demonstrated commitment to continuous strategic planning and related administrative and service im-

provements, it is reasonable to expect WCTA to employ competent personnel and institute the operational systems necessary for effective and efficient fixed route services. Initially, WCTA could be expected to contract with one or more private operators to provide the fixed route services.

Adequate and State Local Funding

As a county-wide entity, WCTA is well-positioned to enter into funding agreements with the municipalities being served under the proposed intra-county service recommendations. Of course, the previously mentioned administrative difficulties could be expected. More importantly, the issue of providing the local match for Washington City services would remain. If GG&C were to remain as the bus operator, it could conceivably continue to provide the local match; but, as noted above, this solution does not seem to be sustainable over the long term. This would be the case particularly if a new bus operator were ever selected in the future.

On the other hand, since WCTA is an organization that is ultimately accountable to the Washington County Commissioners, this alternative would hold out the best chance of securing county funding for the local match.

Regional Cooperation and Coordination

Partial Consolidation would streamline Washington County's representation in SPC's Transit Operators Committee.

Ability to be Implemented

Practically, this alternative could be implemented relatively easily. WCTA and the City of Washington would adopt authorizing resolutions, and then proceed to transfer the City's transit assets to WCTA. The City of Washington could be given a seat on WCTA's board by changing the By-Laws. Finally, state funding now allocated to the City of Washington could be shifted to WCTA through an administrative process. The main difficulties would be political, however. The ability to implement this alternative will depend ultimately upon the City of Washington's willingness and desire to make this change, as well as Washington County's willingness to provide local match funds for all transit services in the county.

Partial Consolidation, with one important exception, would not affect MMVTA. With its distinct and different transit routes, satisfactory record of efficiency, effectiveness, responsiveness, quality service, adaptability, and

participation in the SPC Transit Operators Committee, there is no compelling reason for change. County funding of WCTA's operations does present an issue of fairness, however. Communities in the Mid Mon Valley would reasonably expect the County to pay its transit costs if it does so for all other Washington County municipalities. And, if the County assumes this obligation, it could expect a commensurate degree of control of and accountability by MMVTA.

City of Washington – WCTA Contract

This alternative is more advantageous than No Change. It institutes a more traditional relationship between the transit organization and the bus operator. This alternative is more likely to ensure adequate and stable local funding. Finally, this alternative has some potential to meet the study's goal.

Once again, the following assessment focuses on those criteria which change under this alternative.

Accountability, Efficiency/Effectiveness, Responsiveness, Adaptability, Ability to Implement the Transit Service Recommendations

Based on WCTA's past performance, this alternative could be expected to introduce traditional practices of formal accountability and oversight procedures for transit operations in the City of Washington that would provide the basis for ongoing improvements in performance. WCTA's county-wide mandate and accountability would also facilitate implementation of the intra-county service recommendations and their integration with existing services in the city.

Adequate and Stable Local Funding

The options for providing local match funds for Washington City service would remain unchanged. Concerning the intra-county transit service recommendations, WCTA may find it easier as a county-wide entity to enter into funding agreements with the municipalities being served. For the same reason, WCTA may be more successful in securing match money from the County.

Ability to be Implemented

This alternative would be relatively easy to implement through resolutions adopted by WCTA and the City of Washington. A follow-on contract would address matters concerning use of the City-owned buses, operational standards, and other pertinent matters.

Full Consolidation: WCTA Provides All Transit Services for Washington County

This alternative offers similar advantages as the Partial Consolidation alternative. It too provides a sound basis for meeting the study's goal. However, its ability to be implemented is more difficult than Partial Consolidation.

Full Consolidation institutes the advantages of the Washington County Coordination Council and offers one important addition to Partial Consolidation. The alternative gives the County full accountability for transit service in Washington County.

The following discussion reports additional issues of concern, not previously discussed.

Accountability; Efficiency and Effectiveness; Quality of Service

It is not clear that WCTA oversight of transit services within the Mid Mon Valley would be more effective than that of the MMVTA. Both board structures provide workable mechanisms for ensuring accountability. WCTA oversight could facilitate the coordination of services in the Mid Mon Valley with services in the rest of Washington County. Yet the existing MMVTA services as well as this study's recommended service improvements are focused largely on meeting local transportation needs in the Mid Mon Valley and providing commuter service into Pittsburgh. The issue of intra-county coordination thus does not appear to be a crucial issue for the Mid Mon Valley at this time.

Ability to be Implemented

Full Consolidation would require an extensive and possibly contentious administrative process. Each of MMVTA's member municipalities would be required to pass a resolution approving dissolution of the Authority. These municipalities may be reluctant to cede control of their transit services to a county-wide entity. Mid Mon Valley communities may be concerned whether WCTA would have the same sense of responsibility to the Mid

Mon Valley as MMVTA. The Valley has always had a separate identity from the remainder of Washington County. In addition, WCTA would need to enter into agreements with Fayette and Westmoreland Counties to authorize WCTA to provide transit services to their Mid Mon Valley communities and pay their respective shares of the local match. These agreements should not be controversial, however, as the services and match would not change.

Table 2 – Advantage of Alternative in Comparison to the No Change Alternative

Criteria	Transit Coordination Council	Partial Consolidation	City Contracts with WCTA	Full Consolidation
Accountability	○	●	●	●
Jurisdiction	○	●	○	●
Efficiency and Effectiveness	○	●	●	●
Quality of Service	○	●	●	●
Responsiveness	○	●	●	●
Adaptability	○	●	●	●
Local Funding	○	●	○	●
Regional Cooperation & Coordination	◐	●	○	●
Ability to be Implemented	Easy	Difficult	Somewhat Difficult	Difficult
Ability to Implement Service Recommendations	◐	●	○	●
OVERALL	○	●	◐	●

No Substantial Improvement
 Moderate Improvement
 Significant Improvement

Institutional Assessment

Table 3 – Key Findings Assessment of Institutional Alternatives

	No Change	Coordination Council	Partial Consolidation	City of Washington Contracts with WCTA	Full Consolidation
Accountability	<p>Unique relationship between City of Washington and GG&C; hard to replicate if bus operator would change.</p> <p>WCTA board appointed by County Commissioners.</p> <p>MMVTA board appointed by member municipalities.</p>	No change.	<p>The boards of WCTA & MMVTA have appropriate organization and structure to provide oversight. Designate the seat assigned to a transportation provider to City of Washington to ensure adequate representation.</p>	<p>WCTA board appointed by County Commissioners.</p> <p>City of Washington retains right to renew or terminate contract.</p>	<p>WCTA's board has appropriate organization and structure to provide proper oversight. Designate the seat assigned to a transportation provider to City of Washington to ensure adequate representation</p>
Jurisdiction	<p>City of Washington and MMVTA could extend service areas by entering into agreements with additional municipalities; WCTA has countywide authority.</p>	No change.	<p>WCTA & MMVTA already have authority to serve their respective areas and implement the recommended transit improvements.</p>	No change.	<p>WCTA already has authority to provide all transit services to all of Washington County. WCTA has the authority to implement the recommended transit improvements.</p>
Efficiency & Effectiveness	<p>COST PER PASSENGER: City of Washington: \$14.92 MMVTA \$7.53 Class 3 average: \$3.32. PASSENGERS PER HOUR: City of Washington: \$14.18 MMVTA:\$7.53 Class 3 Average: \$3.32. WCTA: \$13.32 Class 5 Average: \$14.02.</p>	<p>Enhanced communication among organizations (e.g., sharing of ideas, lessons learned) may promote some service improvements Recommendations are advisory, however.</p>	<p>WCTA†, through competitive bidding for service contractor, has opportunity to improve effectiveness and efficiency. WCTA has expertise and equipment useful for deviated route services. MMVTA: no change.</p>	<p>WCTA†, through competitive bidding for service contractor, has opportunity to improve effectiveness and efficiency.</p>	<p>WCTA have a good record of accomplishment that can be expected to continue. WCTA has expertise and equipment useful for deviated route services.</p>
Quality of Service	<p>GG&C, MMVTA and WCTA: customer complaints few in number & not substantial. City of Washington: service diminished by lack of bus stop and route signs, short period of daily operation.</p>	<p>Enhanced communication among organizations (e.g., sharing of ideas, lessons learned) may promote some service improvements Recommendations are advisory, however.</p>	<p>Both MMVTA and WCTA have a good record of accomplishment that can be expected to continue.</p>	<p>WCTA‡, through competitive bidding for service contractor, has opportunity to improve quality of service.</p>	<p>WCTA have a good record of accomplishment that can be expected to continue.</p>

†The City of Washington likewise has opportunity to bid for services and improve effectiveness and efficiency

‡PA Act 44 now requires the City of Washington to competitively bid the contract for transit services. GG&C as well as other private companies can be expected to seek this contract.

Institutional Assessment

	<i>No Change</i>	<i>Coordination Council</i>	<i>Partial Consolidation</i>	<i>City of Washington Contracts with WCTA</i>	<i>Full Consolidation</i>
Responsiveness	All three providers have recently initiated improvements to services and/or facilities.	Enhanced communication among organizations (e.g., sharing of ideas, lessons learned) may promote some service improvements. Recommendations are advisory, however.	Both MMVTA and WCTA have a good record of accomplishment that can be expected to continue.	WCTA‡, through competitive bidding for service contractor, has opportunity to ensure adequate performance standards and operating practices.	WCTA have a good record of accomplishment that can be expected to continue.
Adaptability	All three providers have recently initiated improvements to services and/or facilities.	Enhanced communication among organizations (e.g., sharing of ideas, lessons learned) may promote some service improvements. Recommendations are advisory, however.	WCTA has initiated efforts to take responsibility for services offered by City of Washington. MMVTA's new executive committee could improve adaptability.	WCTA, in cooperation with the City of Washington, can be expected to continue strategic planning and operational improvement process.	WCTA has initiated efforts to take responsibility for services offered by City of Washington. WCTA has potential to likewise take responsibility for MMVTA's services.
Local Funding	Act 44 will increase local match requirements. Ability to obtain sufficient funds from communities served or from Washington County is uncertain.	No change.	Washington County Commissioners may be more likely to provide local match funds to countywide transportation authority that is accountable to them.	No change.	Washington County Commissioners may be more likely to provide local match funds to countywide transportation authority that is accountable to them.
Regional Cooperation & Coordination	Each provider is represented at SPC transit operators committee.	Promotes consistent county voice in regional matters.	Facilitates consistency in Washington County policy within the region and facilitates changes in inter-county operations.	No change. Maintains status quo.	Ensures a uniform voice for Washington County within the region. Facilitates changes in inter-county operations.
Ability to be Implemented	Reflects existing situation - no implementation required	Relatively easy to reach agreement to form the Council. Requires agreement of 3 public transportation providers.	Requires approval by City of Washington WCTA, which may be difficult. The administrative changes are relatively easy to accomplish. Operational changes best facilitated through incremental actions.	Requires approval of the City of Washington and WCTA.	In addition to challenges of Partial Consolidation alternative, dissolution of MMVTA would require extensive administrative effort, including resolutions by each of the member municipalities.
Ability to Implement Transit Service Recommendations	Suitable for no cost and low cost recommendations; questionable for service expansion recommendations (many of which are regional and all of which require additional local match funds)	Suitable for no cost and low cost recommendations; questionable for service expansion recommendations, although regional perspective and coordination could be improved.	Suitable for both no/low cost recommendations and service expansion recommendations. Provides regional accountability, facilitates regional planning and coordination of service	Same as Partial Consolidation.	Suitable for both no/low cost recommendations and service expansion recommendations. Provides regional accountability, facilitates regional planning and coordination of service

†The City of Washington likewise has opportunity to bid for services and improve effectiveness and efficiency

‡PA Act 44 now requires the City of Washington to competitively bid the contract for transit services. GG&C as well as other private companies can be expected to seek this contract.

