

Westmoreland County Transit Authority **Strategic Business Plan**



Prepared for:



Prepared by:

In association with:





Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Agency Overview	2
Act 44 Performance Review	2
Strategic Business Plan	3
Strategic Planning Process	4
Situational Analysis	5
Performance Trends	5
Other Trends	8
Mission Statement	9
Vision Statement	9
Strategic Themes and Formulating Goals	10
Strategic Goals and Objectives	12
Workforce	12
Operations	13
Financial	14
Customer	14
Implementation and Communication	15
Appendix A: Financial Snapshot and 3-Year Projections	16
Appendix B: Strategic Business Plan Implementation Scorecard	19

Executive Summary

In 2017, the Westmoreland County Transit Authority (WCTA), using technical assistance from the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC), initiated a planning process to improve public transportation in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania. SPC and WCTA share a recognition that public transportation is a vital component of a successful transportation network. Public transportation plays a key role in reducing the use of personal vehicles in a congested region and serves as a critical safety net for vulnerable populations that do not have access to personal transportation to meet their daily needs.

The results of this planning process in Westmoreland County are presented in three companion documents: a Transit Development Plan (TDP), Transit Service Guidelines, and a Strategic Business Plan. The TDP establishes short- and medium-term improvements to public transportation services and identifies a future direction for transit in Westmoreland County. The Transit Service Guidelines help WCTA's staff, customers, and stakeholders understand how service decisions will be made in the future and foster a culture of continuous improvement. This document, the Strategic Business Plan, focuses on WCTA as an organization and documents a shared vision and specific initiatives that will be undertaken to improve the governance, management, and operations of public transit in Westmoreland County.

Through a multi-step process that involved WCTA staff, its Governing Board, and representatives from the Westmoreland County Commission, the Strategic Business Plan identified four strategic perspectives to improve over the next three to five years:

- Workforce
- Operations
- Financial
- Customers

Goals were created for each of these four perspectives to guide WCTA staff in improving the organization. These goals are:

- Improve Staff Knowledge and Skills
- Improve and Increase Board Oversight
- Improve Productivity
- Improve Community Perceptions through Active Marketing and Branding
- Improve Performance and Meet Act 44 Performance Targets
- Improve/Maintain Fiscal Health
- Increase Ridership and Make Riding Easier
- Ensure Safe and Reliable Service

Each goal has multiple objectives representing steps that must be completed to accomplish the goal and ultimately improve the four strategic perspectives. Objectives have been assigned a performance output or measure, a timeframe for implementation, and a key staff member who is responsible for implementation. To successfully implement these goals, the WCTA Governing Board has reorganized their committee structure to match the four strategic perspectives. Progress made toward implementing the strategic business plan and achieving the agency's goals will be tracked and reported quarterly by WCTA staff.

Agency Overview

The Westmoreland County Transit Authority (WCTA) was formed in 1978 in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania. WCTA oversees public transportation services in the City of Greensburg and the surrounding county. Based on the Authority's charter, WCTA is specifically prohibited from directly operating transit services. As a result, the Authority has contracted with National Express to provide transportation services. WCTA is overseen by a seven-member board appointed by the Westmoreland County Board of Commissioners.

WCTA, through its contractor, operates 18 weekday fixed routes, typically between 5:00 am and 8:30 pm. On Saturdays, WCTA operates on a reduced schedule with five routes. WCTA currently owns and oversees the operation of a fleet of 41 fixed route buses ranging from small 28-passenger buses to 45-foot over-the-road coaches and 40 smaller paratransit vehicles for Shared-ride service.

Act 44 Performance Review

This Strategic Business Plan was preceded by PennDOT's Act 44 Performance Review of WCTA, published in 2015, which enumerated several key issues and challenges and included performance targets for the agency over the subsequent five years. The review noted that the last Strategic Plan was completed in 2000; the need for a current Plan was long overdue. Although the staff at WCTA takes a strong and proactive role in regular contractor oversight and reporting, it was noted that there is a lack of formal performance evaluation of the Executive Director by the Board. In addition, the Review noted that the Board had not attended Board training, had low attendance at Board meetings, and did not show a formal committee structure and roster.



Strategic Business Plan

Strategic Plans are created and used by organizations worldwide to guide management actions and ensure that all levels of the organization are advancing in a shared direction. Strategic Plans are intended to identify the "ENDS," or outcomes (Strategic Goals), that the organization intends to achieve and are "owned" by the Board of Directors. Conversely, Business Plans document the "MEANS," or the activities that are to be completed to attain the "ENDS." Business Plans are generally created and "owned" by management and staff. This Strategic Business Plan combines these two functions and is specifically designed to overcome potential organizational accountability issues and to facilitate the Board's decision-making for the next three to five years. It also serves as a plan to attain the performance targets set in the Act 44 Performance Review.



Strategic Planning Process

The WCTA Strategic Business Plan followed a prescribed process designed to quickly achieve an action-oriented plan to advance public transportation in Westmoreland County. The planning process leveraged work completed through the companion Transit Development Plan (TDP). As part of the TDP, a robust public survey and involvement process was undertaken that engaged more than 2,000 residents of Westmoreland County. This information was used to form a basic understanding of WCTA from the viewpoint of the resident and customer.

Building upon data received from the public, the process focused on engaging WCTA staff and the Authority's Governing Board to define and develop the Strategic Business Plan and to ensure that the overall direction, philosophy, and purpose of the plan is a product of the Board. During the process, a committee was engaged consisting of WCTA staff, board members, and county representatives to examine the following:

- Mission
- Vision
- Agency strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats

The committee then worked to set long-term goals and formulated short-term actions (objectives) to reach the goals. Finally, the committee worked to assign key outcomes to Authority board committees for tracking and management.

The information in this document is to be utilized by WCTA in conjunction with the TDP and Transit Service Guidelines as a starting point for making strategic fixed route and Shared-ride transit service decisions to enhance delivery and performance. This document is intended to be reviewed quarterly and updated annually by WCTA's Board of Directors as they see fit in accordance with their goals for the organization.



Situational Analysis

A situational analysis is the first step in the strategic planning process. It identifies the realities (or situation) of the organization. The situational analysis includes an overview of the services provided, current financial position, system performance, customers, markets, and trends that affect the organization. The situational analysis is a key step to narrowing the focus of a strategic planning process and identifying priority areas for goal setting.

WCTA has an annual operating budget of more than \$10 million, with approximately 60 percent (60%) expended on fixed route-related services and the remainder on Shared-ride demand-response transportation.

Performance Trends

Over the past five fiscal years, WCTA has experienced a trend common in the public transportation industry: rising expenses paired with declining ridership. For WCTA, this has been true in both the fixed route and Shared-ride systems.

In the fixed route system, operating expenses have increased slightly from Fiscal Year 2011-12 to Fiscal Year 2015-16. During the same period, revenue increased slightly, while the subsidy required to cover the full operating expenses remained relatively flat (Figure 1).

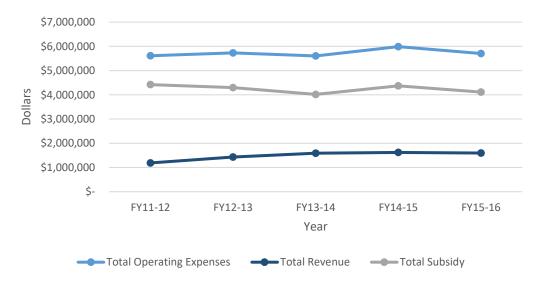


Figure 1: WCTA Fixed Route Operating Expenses, Revenues, and Subsidy

Over the same period, ridership declined nearly 10% while revenue hours increased over 10% (Figure 2).

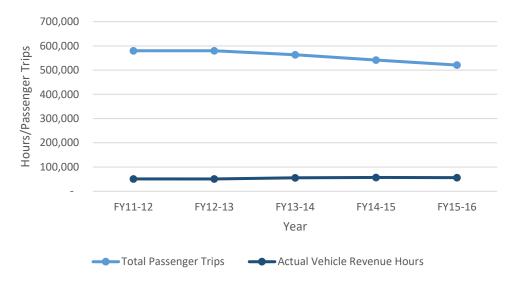


Figure 2: WCTA Fixed Route Operating Statistics

In the Shared-ride system, WCTA consolidated operations and eliminated the utilization of multiple contractors between Fiscal Year 2012-13 and Fiscal Year 2013-14. This caused an immediate increase in operating expenses which is slowly normalizing (Figure 3). Due to the significant increase in operating expenses, WCTA was forced to utilize fixed route funds to subsidize the Shared-ride system. Trends over the last two fiscal years and the current position in Fiscal Year 2017-18 indicate that major improvements have been made and the system has stabilized. Shared-ride ridership has declined, but WCTA has responded with reducing the total amount of service provided. For Fiscal Year 2011-12 and Fiscal Year 2012-13, operating statistics are unreliable due to reporting by multiple subcontractors (Figure 4).

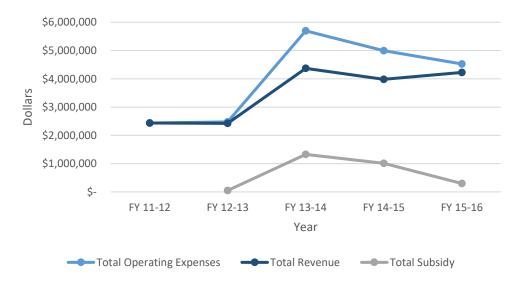


Figure 3: WCTA Shared-Ride Operating Expenses, Revenues, and Subsidy

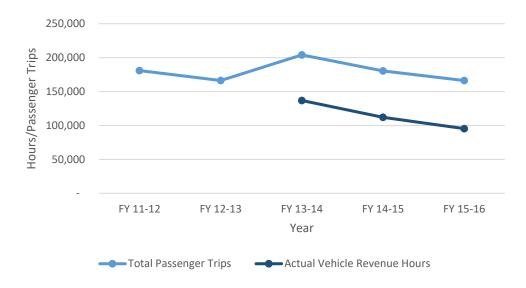


Figure 4: WCTA Shared-Ride Operating Statistics

These trends identified above are consistent with those identified in WCTA's Act 44 Performance Review mentioned earlier in the document. By comparing the current year's statistics to the same-year targets set by the Act 44 Performance Review, it is evident that the performance of the agency is falling short of the targets (Table 1). This fact, combined with performance trends, necessitates a concerted focus on identifying ways to increase ridership (number of passengers) and control costs.

Metric	Target	Actual Performance
Passengers / Revenue Vehicle Hour(RVH)	12.38	11.03
Operating Cost / RVH	\$123.76	\$124.38
Operating Revenue / RVH	\$34.34	\$33.11
Operating Cost / Passenger	\$10.00	\$11.28

Table 1: Act 44 Performance Review Targets FY 2015-16

Other Trends

Throughout the TDP process and the strategic planning process, general trends emerged that form a picture of Westmoreland County and impact both the current state and future of public transportation. The following is a list of trends that affect the agency on an ongoing basis. These trends were identified by the WCTA Governing Board, and are supported by research completed through the TDP; sources are noted where appropriate.

Current Trends

- Declining population in the City of Greensburg and County since 1990 (Source: U.S. Census)
- Median income in the region is flat (Source: U.S. Census)
- Public perception of transit in local area is not positive (Source: feedback at public outreach events and in the community)
- Service-coverage area is geographically dispersed over a large service area (668 square miles with service to Johnstown, Cambria County)
- Fares have not changed for a period of time (last fare increase was in 2014)

Future Trends/Facts Impacting the Agency

- State and Federal funding is expected to remain relatively flat (Source: SPC)
- Projections indicate negative cash flow position in near future (Source: WCTA internal projections)
- Cost of operations are rising, particularly labor costs (Source: WCTA financial analysis)
- Service contract is expiring and needs to be renegotiated
- More government regulation is expected in the future (Source: FTA and PennDOT)

Mission Statement

Mission statements communicate the purpose of the organization to both external stakeholders and the organization's workforce. Mission statements are core elements of both planning and implementation. They serve as a means for managers and others to make decisions. Statements must be clear, concise, relevant, and easy to understand.

The mission statement answers the questions:

What do we do? Provide transportation.

How do we do it? Through safe and reliable transportation options.

Who do we do it for? Residents of Westmoreland County.

What value do we provide? Meet needs and improve quality of life.

The mission of WCTA is to serve the residents of Westmoreland County by providing safe and reliable transportation options designed to meet their needs and improve their quality of life.

This statement serves as a litmus test for goals, objectives, and measures. Each goal must relate to the stated mission. All elements of the statement must be reflected in the strategic business plan.

Vision Statement

A vision is a clear, compelling, and shared picture of the future an organization seeks to create. It clarifies the purpose and direction of the organization and tests the assumptions made in the mission statement development process.

In three years, the Board sees a financially stable WCTA providing varied, customer-centric transportation services, and leading the region in integrated transportation services.

Strategic Themes and Formulating Goals

As part of the strategic planning process, the consultant team and the strategic planning committee completed a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis. SWOT analyses evaluate internal and external positive and negative facts or perceptions that affect the organization.

Strengths – <u>Internal</u> positives that are accomplished particularly well or unique assets as compared to similar or competitive organizations. *Strengths need to be preserved, built on, and leveraged.* WCTA is seen to be strong for the following reasons:

- Good management team
- Good facilities
- Strong relationship with contractors (better than in previous years)
- Financially sound in the short term

Weaknesses – <u>Internal</u> challenges that are not accomplished particularly well, hinder or prevent attaining desired performance, or are acutely lacking or need to be improved. *Weaknesses need to be addressed and remedied.* WCTA is seen to have the following weaknesses:

- Lack of technology
- Lack of positive public perception
- Declining ridership
- Lack of Board attendance

Opportunities – <u>External</u> positives that can be captured to help realize the mission and vision of the authority. *Opportunities need to be seized or capitalized on.*

- Increasing partnerships, especially with colleges and universities
- Emergence of Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) like Uber and Lyft
- Availability of better technology

Threats – <u>External</u> challenges that can threaten the realization of the mission and vision of the authority. Threats need to be mitigated or, if possible, eliminated.

- Rural geography
- Declining county population
- Operating contract expiration (leading to higher costs)

Using the information in the SWOT analysis, broad themes can be developed that lead toward the development of strategic goals and objectives for the authority to work on over the next three to five years. These broad themes include:

- Attract new riders by making riding easier
- Improve service capabilities and service productivity
- Improve customer perceptions and outreach
- Increase Board involvement

- Pursue active marketing and re-branding
- Increase institutional partnerships
- Improve revenues
- Increase use of technology

The transition from the SWOT themes to the Strategic Goals involves categorizing these into four organizational perspectives, which correspond to common organizational responsibilities of WCTA staff and the Board. The four perspectives—workforce, operations, financial, and customers—are not independent, but rather support each other to achieve the authority's mission and vision. For example, a transit authority with a skilled workforce can successfully execute operations, attract customers, and become a financial stable organization.

Int	ernal	External		
Workforce	Operations	Financial	Customers	
The skills of the people, or competencies	How the organization executes its operational processes	The attainment of the organization's financial results	The satisfaction of customers	
Hiring and recruiting people with the right skills	Infrastructure (including IT systems)	Current financial resources	How the organization is seen by customers; marketing and branding	

As part of the strategic planning process, the WCTA Board agreed to reorganize their committee structure to reflect and react to the four organizational perspectives. This reorganization is discussed in the implementation section later in this document.

Strategic Goals and Objectives

Strategic Goals represent the primary areas of work for the organization over the next three to five years. Goals are specific enough to be measured but broad enough to stretch the organization to achieve better results. Goals must support the WCTA mission and advance the organization towards achieving the vision that was set at the beginning of the strategic planning process.

Each goal consists of objectives or strategic actions, small steps that must be taken to achieve the goal identified. Objectives are assigned to specific staff members who are responsible for managing their completion.

Goals were created to advance each of the four organizational perspectives and to address the themes developed through the situational and SWOT analysis. The goals are identified on the following pages.

Workforce

Workforce Goals support all agency endeavors and focus on the most basic resource of the agency: its people. An opportunity exists in these goals to align talent with current and future needs. The Workforce Goals are:

Go	Goal W-1: Improve Staff Knowledge and Skills				
	Objectives	Output/Metric	Responsibility/Timeframe		
1.	Produce staff development plan	Staff training plan	Alan Blahovec / Year 1		
2.	Develop management succession plan	 Management Succession Plan 	Alan Blahovec / Year 1		
Go	al W-2: Improve and Increase	Board Oversight			
	Objectives	Output/Metric	Responsibility/Timeframe		
1.	Board attend PPTA Board training	Completed Training Modules (PPTA)	Board Chair / Year 1		
2.	Document/Update Board Policies	Complete set of board policies	Board Chair / Year 1		

Operations

Operations Goals reflect the need for WCTA to develop internal systems and processes that support its mission, including both customer and financial stewardship goals. It must also take advantage of advances in technology to increase its internal productivity. The Operations Goals are:

Goal O-1: Improve Productivity					
	Objectives	Output/Metric	Responsibility/Timeframe		
1.	Adopt and implement Transit Development Plan	 TDP recommendations adopted 	Alan Blahovec / Year 1		
2.	Finalize new contract to minimize cost increases and ensure sufficient staffing	New contract signed containing cost-reductions	Alan Blahovec / Year 1		
3.	Develop Technology Plan	Technology Plan including potential options and benefits	Meghan Yuhouse / Year 2		
Go	al O-2: Improve Performance	and Meet Act 44 Performance Tar	gets		
	Objectives	Output/Metric	Responsibility/Timeframe		
1.	Identify Performance Measures for key agency functions (including Act 44 performance targets)	 Key performance indicators identified 	Alan Blahovec / Year 2		
2.	Implement performance measure data	Report measures used to improve performance on a quarterly basis	Alan Blahovec / Year 2		
3.	Adopt and implement service standards	 New/revised routes in compliance with service standards 	Alan Blahovec / Year 1		
4.	Conduct Annual Route Performance Review	Annual route performance review report	Alan Blahovec/ Year 1		
Go	al O-3: Ensure Safe and Reliab	le Service			
	Objectives	Output/Metric	Responsibility/Timeframe		
1.	Implement safety and reliability measures	Safety Manual	Alan Blahovec / Year 2		

Financial

Financial Goals provide a path to funding customer and market outcomes. This includes goals both in productivity and revenue as well as seeking financial support for the operations and workforce initiatives necessary to achieve Customer Goals. The Financial Goals are:

Goal F-1: Improve/Maintain Fiscal Health					
Objectives	Output/Metric	Responsibility/Timeframe			
Actively explore additional funding sources	Funding sources identified and pursued	Ashley Cooper / Year 3			
2. Optimize budget	Balanced budget created	Alan Blahovec / ongoing			

Customer

Customer Goals reflect outcomes that will drive long-term sustainability in the marketplace and support a customer-centric culture. WCTA's Customer Goals focus on determining customer needs and expectations and identifying and engaging stakeholders and new markets. The Customer Goals are:

Goal C-1: Increase Ridership / Make Riding Easier					
Objectives	Output/Metric	Responsibility/Timeframe			
Identify Rider and Non- Rider customer attitudes and needs	Multiple Customer Surveys	Ashley Cooper / Ongoing			
Establish and Monitor Quality Controls	Quality Control Oversight Process	Meghan Yuhouse / Year 1			
Goal C-2: Improve Community F	Perceptions through Active Market	ing and Branding			
Objectives	Output/Metric	Responsibility/Timeframe			
1. Develop a Marketing Plan	Marketing Plan	Ashley Cooper / Year 1			
2. Execute Marketing Plan	Marketing Plan implementation initiated	Ashley Cooper / Year 2 & 3			
3. Develop Branding Identity	Branding Identity designed	Ashley Cooper / Year 3			

Implementation and Communication

WCTA's Strategic Business Plan makes considerable progress in charting the organization's strategic direction. Although the intent of the plan is to cover the next three to five years, the initial plan is much more short-term-oriented due to the extensive activities to be defined and implemented, based on identified shortcomings over the recent past.

By defining a vision of what they want the future to be, and then thoroughly examining WCTA's capacity for achieving this vision, the Board framed a plan that incorporates a roadmap to get WCTA started on its journey.

The goals and objectives identified in this report provide an initial framework for implementation. As a next step, it is important for the entire Board to follow through, develop metrics, and commit resources where needed.

The Strategic Business Plan is a living document that must be continually monitored and updated to reflect progress and organization changes. As part of the implementation process, the Board has agreed to reorganize committees to specifically focus on the goals identified above. The new Board committees are:

- Executive Committee Workforce Goals
- Service Committee Operations Goals
- Budget Committee Finance Goals
- Marketing Committee Customer Goals

The WCTA Board has agreed to revisit the Strategic Business Plan on a **quarterly basis**, with board training occurring in the interval meetings. For these quarterly revisits to be effective, the responsible WCTA staff member assigned to a strategic objective should prepare a report on progress and present to the relevant Board Committee prior to the full Board meeting in which the strategic plan progress is reviewed.

For ease of implementation and reporting, a "scorecard" spreadsheet has been included at the end of this document and in electronic format. The WCTA staff should update the scorecard on a quarterly basis and to use it as a tool for implementation reporting.

Appendix A: Financial Snapshot and 3-Year Projections

Agency	Westmoreland County Transit Authority					
Reporting Year	State Fiscal Year 2015-16					
Annual Operating Statistics*	Fixed Route ADA S		Shared-ride	Total Fixed route and Shared-ride)		
Vehicles in Maximum Service (VOMS)	31	64	64	95		
Operating Cost	\$5,703,718	\$403,097	\$4,524,627	\$10,631,442		
Operating Revenues	\$1,518,299	\$76,244	\$4,224,564	\$5,819,107		
Total (Actual) Vehicle Miles	1,435,016	213,798	1,983,945	\$3,632,759		
Revenue (Live) Miles of Service (RVM)	935,468	184,182	1,683,137	\$2,802,787		
Total (Actual) Vehicle Hours	63,874	11,530	105,531	\$180,935		
Revenue (Live) Vehicle Hours (RVH)	45,856	10,516	95,321	\$151,693		
Total Passenger Trips	505,618	15,258	166,198	\$687,074		
Senior Passenger (Lottery) Trips	71,512	N/A	86,213	\$157,725		
Act 44 Performance Statistics						
Passengers / RVH	11.03	1.45	1.74	4.53		
Operating Cost / RVH	\$124.38	\$38.33	\$47.47	\$70.09		
Operating Revenue / RVH	\$33.11	\$7.25	\$44.32	\$38.36		
Operating Cost / Passenger	\$11.28	\$26.42	\$27.22	\$15.47		
Other Performance Statistics						
Operating Revenue / Operating Cost	26.62%	18.91%	93.37%	54.73%		
Operating Cost / Total Vehicle Hours	\$89.30	\$34.96	\$42.87	\$58.76		
Operating Cost / Total Vehicle Miles	\$3.97	\$1.89	\$2.28	\$2.93		
Total Passengers / Total Vehicle Hours	7.92	1.32	1.57	3.80		
Operating Cost / RVM	\$6.10	\$2.19	\$2.69	\$3.79		
RVM / Total Vehicle Miles	65.19%	86.15%	84.84%	77.15%		
RVH / Total Vehicle Hours	71.79%	91.21%	90.33%	83.84%		
Operating Subsidy / Passenger Trip	\$8.28	\$21.42	\$1.81	\$7.00		

Westmoreland County Transit Authority Financial Statements

3 Year Forecast Assumptions:

2018-2019 - Revenue Drop by 1/2% 2019-2020 - Revenue Even

2020-2021 - Revenue Growth by 1% Expenses - 5% Increase Year-over-year

		2018-2019			2019-2020			2020-2021	
	<u>Fixed Route</u> <u>Budget</u>	Shared-Ride Paratransit Budget	MATP Budget	Fixed Route Budget	Shared-Ride Paratransit Budget	MATP Budget	Fixed Route Budget	Shared-Ride Paratransit Budget	MATP Budget
<u>Grant Revenue</u> Total Grant Revenue	4,527,354	4,774,832	300,593	4,527,354	4,774,832	300,593	4,572,628	4,822,581	303,598
Operating Revenue Total Operating Revenue	1,263,919	381,881		1,263,919	381,881		1,276,558	385,699	
Other Revenue Total Other Revenue	154,225	:=:	-	154,225	<u> </u>	-	155,767	-	1-
Grand Total Revenue	5,945,498	5,156,713	300,593	5,945,498	5,156,713	300,593	6,004,953	5,208,280	303,598
Expenses General & Administrative									
Salaries & Wages:	287,084	312,456	103,761	301,438	328,079	108,949	316,510	344,483	114,397
Fringe Benefits:	125,082	153,351	51,740	134,807	165,461	55,801	145,330	178,573	60,198
Services:	141,449	30,848	10,036	146,163	31,925	10,417	151,050	33,044	10,813
Materials & Supplies:	35,220	19,227	5,466	36,497	19,883	5,638	37,834	20,571	5,817
<u>Utilities:</u>	34,814	49,526	9,813	35,650	50,865	10,057	36,509	52,242	10,308
Casualty & Liab. Insurance:	15,150	11,363	3,788	15,302	11,476	3,825	15,455	11,591	3,864
Marketing & Promotions:	37,130	27,030	-	37,777	27,061		38,441	27,093	
Other:	67,390	8,340	-	69,879	8,695	-	72,471	9,064	·
Total General & Admin.	743,319	612,140	184,603	777,513	643,445	194,688	813,599	676,662	205,396
Operating Fixed Route: Total Fixed Route	5,450,186		5	5,642,829			5,842,664		1.5
Paratransit: Total Paratransit		4,848,000	-	<u> </u>	5,109,840	-		5,386,327	
<u>Direct MATP:</u> Total Direct MATP	<u>-</u> _,	·	125,700	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	124,472			123,318
Total Operating	5,450,186	4,848,000	125,700	5,642,829	5,109,840	124,472	5,842,664	5,386,327	123,318
Grand Total Expenses	6,193,505	5,460,140	310,303	6,420,342	5,753,285	319,160	6,656,263	6,062,989	328,714
Revenue Over (Under) Expenses	(248,007)	(303,427)	(9,711)	(474,844)	(596,572)	(18,568)	(651,310)	(854,709)	(25,115)

Appendix B: Strategic Business Plan Implementation	on Scorecard