

2008 Wichita Falls Transit Plan





Wichita Falls Transit System

- City-owned and operated
- Open to the general public
- Route Deviation/Demand Response service
- Annual ridership of 300,000
- 6 routes (1 express route for SAFB)
- Transfer station located at Sikes Senter Mall



Overview

- Work on the WFTS Transit Study began in June 2006 with the selection of the consulting firm: Moore & Associates.
- Participants Included:
 - City of Wichita Falls
 - Director of Aviation Traffic and Transportation
 - Transit Administrator
 - Wichita Falls MPO
 - Transportation Policy Committee
 - Technical Advisory Committee
 - MPO Staff
 - Moore & Associates



Public Outreach

- The key component of the study was public outreach and participation.
 - A Community Telephone Survey of households throughout Wichita Falls was completed in one week during July 2006. (Valid sample of 384)
 - An Onboard Survey was administered during the same week.
 - In July 2006, focus group meetings were held with various agencies and citizens to discuss issues and challenges facing the system.



Focus Group Meetings

- **Medical**

- URHCS
- Health South Rehab.
- Kell West
- Red River Hospital
- Clinics of North Texas
- North Texas State Hospital
- Wichita Health Department
- Wichita Valley Rehab.

- **Key Employers**

- Wal-Mart
- AT&T / Cingular
- PPG
- Vetrotex
- United Supermarkets
- Howmet
- Budget Rent-A-Car
- Blue Cross / Blue Shield

- **Education**

- WFISD
- YMCA
- Boys & Girls Clubs
- Camp Fire
- Straight Street
- City View ISD
- MLK Center / Child Care Inc.
- Vernon College

- **Special Needs / Social Services**

- Circle of Hope
- The ARC
- Salvation Army
- Child Protective Services
- Beacon Lighthouse
- Texas Workforce Commission
- Helen Farabee Centers
- Wichita Adult Literacy



Focus Group Meetings

- **Elderly / Assisted Living**

- Red Door
- Midtown Manor
- 50+ Zone
- Merrill Gardens
- Social Security Administration
- Area Agency on Aging
- Rolling Meadows
- Wichita Home Health

- **Recreation / Entertainment**

- Cast Away Cove
- Parker Square / Cinemark
- Sikes Senter Mall
- WF Downtown Proud
- The Plex
- Texas Restaurant Association
- Hotter N Hell 100
- CVB

- **Special Target Groups**

- MSU
 - Administration, Public Relations Office, Student Government, MSU Police, Students, ADA Students, and Exchange Students
- SAFB
 - Family Outreach, Training Staff, and Base Personnel
- WFISD
 - Superintendent, PIO, Board Trustee, Finance, Hirschi and Zundy Principals. District Athletics, and Student Achievement.
- Interfaith Ministries
- Community Action Committee
- WF Housing Authority
- BCI



Areas Targeted for Improvement

- Hours of Operation
 - Nights and weekend service.
 - Improved service for SAFB personnel.
- Greater Service Area Coverage
- Safety
 - Use designated bus stops for boarding and exiting buses.
 - No more “flagging down” buses anywhere along routes.
 - Continued emphasis on driver safety training and customer service.
- Transfers and System Connectivity
- Reliability of Service
 - Create achievable pick-up and drop off times.
- Fare Structure
 - Institute additional options for purchasing tickets and ride passes.



Development of Transit Plan

- The public outreach process identified areas of concern and those were noted during the development of the new plan.
- Staff used the results of the surveys done by Moore & Associates to develop the proposed **2008 Wichita Falls Transit Plan**.
- In February of 2008, the final 2008 Wichita Falls Transit Plan was presented to the public at Sikes Senter Mall for their input and feedback.



Public Participation – Sikes Senter Mall

- February 25th to March 1st (10 am to 6 pm)
- All route plans, financials and the fare structure proposal were presented to the public
 - Current System
 - Route deviation/demand response service
 - Fixed Route
 - With complimentary paratransit
 - 6+1 System
 - Expanded route deviation service
 - Add additional route and transfer hub
 - New Fare structure
 - Streamlined
 - Includes more purchasing options



Transit System Options

- **Current System**

- Cycle times for the 6 routes
 - 45 to 65 minutes.
- On-time performance and reliability are “questionable”.
 - Routes take 60 minutes or longer to run
 - Flag stop policy (reduces on-time efficiency and safety)
- Deviations for ADA service are limited.
 - 2 block limit (coverage area is constrained)
- Routes have been gradually stretched to serve new commercial and residential areas over last 20 years.
 - No new routes were added to the system
 - The transit system and staff are stressed to meet “on-time” performance
- Under performing areas were never removed from the system.



Transit System Options

- **Fixed Route/Complimentary Paratransit**
 - Buses operate on a fixed route schedule stopping at set locations along the route.
 - Mandatory curb-to-curb complimentary paratransit service for those people living within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of the fixed routes.
 - WFTS must operate both systems concurrently to meet FTA performance guidelines in order to maintain Federal funding.
 - 90% performance requirement (FTA).
 - Must provide vehicles and drivers to meet performance measures.
 - Example: Abilene has 16 paratransit buses for peak-hour service.
 - Some communities have added elderly service, which doubles the size of a paratransit fleet.
 - Maximum allowable paratransit fare: double the regular adult fare (i.e. \$1.00 = \$2.00)



Transit System Options

- **6+1 System**

- 6 regular routes plus the Sheppard Express
- Add additional 7th route
 - Acts as a connector route
 - Circulates between Sikes Senter Mall and the downtown transfer station.
- Serves 8 additional miles of “street coverage”
 - Serves more residential and commercial areas
- Improves route deviation service for up to ¼ mile of identified routes
 - Serves more paratransit customers
- Manageable “on-time” performance
 - 45-50 minute headways
 - Built in timing stops to increase on-time efficiencies



Proposed Fare Structure

- New Daily Fares Will Include 1 Free Transfer
 - Adult Full Fare – \$1.00
 - Disabled, Elderly & Student Fare – \$.50
 - Sheppard Express – remains at \$1.00
 - ADA Deviations – \$2.00
- 20-Ride Pass Option (Includes Transfer)
 - Full Fare/20 Rides – \$18.00
 - Disabled, Elderly, Student/20 Rides – \$8.00



Proposed Fare Structure

- Monthly Pass – Adult Full Fare
 - \$30.00 - Unlimited rides/good for 30 days from the date of issue
 - Cannot be used for route deviations
- Monthly Pass – Disabled, Elderly & Student Fare
 - \$15.00 - Unlimited rides/good for 30 days from date of issue
 - Cannot be used for route deviations

Sikes Senter Presentation Results



- Public feedback was overwhelmingly in support of the **6+1 Plan**.
- “Bus Stop” over “Flag Stop” policy received extremely favorable comment
- Support for Sheppard Express to pick-up and drop-off passengers at downtown transfer station
- Nearly 60 comment sheets received



Staff Recommends:

- Implementing the **6+1 Plan**.
- The transit system be reviewed annually to:
 - Identify unproductive portions
 - Locate new passenger generators
 - Provide immediate feedback on any pending changes
- Not to pursue Complementary Paratransit at this time because:
 - Cost is a big factor
 - Federal and State rescissions are affecting transportation funding
 - Funding shortages would have to be “made-up” using the general fund or other funding sources
 - Many Fixed-route systems are interested in the cost benefits and feasibility of switching to a route-deviation system
 - The need for Complimentary Paratransit can still be reviewed annually
 - WFTS can develop alternate programs to assist the disabled and elderly population.
 - Grocery Run Program (3 times per week)



Staff Recommends:

- Purchasing 29 & 35 Foot Low-Floor Buses
 - Low-floor buses provides easier access and egress for wheelchair passengers.
 - Eliminates the need for wheelchair lifts, which breakdown frequently.
 - Documented evidence reveals that smaller buses have durability and maintenance issues.
 - Reduces route delays
 - Time needed to board and secure wheelchairs is reduced.



Staff Recommends:

- Continuous monitoring of the fare structure to provide more options for purchasing tickets and ridership passes.
- Entering into discussions with WFISD to increase student ridership in order to support athletics and after-school programs.



Conclusion

- Staff stands ready to implement all proposed changes to WFTS
- Target date for start of new service: July 7, 2008
- Questions?