



Chapter 2

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2. PROJECT PURPOSE

2.1 RTA Overview

The Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) provides transit service to approximately a half million people in a service area spanning 37 communities and 866 square miles. WRTA provides fixed-route service to the following 17 communities: Auburn, Brookfield, Charlton, East Brookfield, Grafton, Leicester, Millbury, Northbridge, Oxford, Paxton, Shrewsbury, Southbridge, Spencer, Webster, Westborough, West Boylston, and Worcester. All routes operate to and from Worcester, with the majority of the routes serving the Union Station Hub. WRTA also provides paratransit service to eligible elderly and disabled individuals in the region. WRTA maintains a fleet of 51 buses, including six electric, 16 diesel-electric hybrid buses, and 29 clean diesel buses.

WRTA is one of the original eight Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) created in 1974, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 161B of the General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The Authority is given general responsibility to develop, finance, and contract for the operation of mass transportation facilities and services within the territory. The day-to-day business of WRTA is managed by its Administrator, who is appointed by the WRTA Advisory Board. The Board consists of the City Manager of Worcester and a representative of each member community, consisting of the city manager, mayor, the chairman of the board of selectman or the town manager or town administrator. The board meets once a month.

As a subdivision of the Commonwealth, WRTA is funded primarily through federal money such as 5307 and 5311 funding, state funding, local monies, grants, passenger revenue, and advertising revenue. Its annual operating budget is \$20 million, and in 2013 the largest share of the budget – 47.3% – came from the State. Local assessments account for approximately 17.5% of the overall budget and are mostly based on the number of fixed route miles served in that city.

2.1 Core Goals and Objectives

In April 2013, representatives from several RTAs were asked what they wanted their Regional Transit Plans to accomplish. Ideas were developed and ranked by these representatives to create a core list of goals and objectives for each RTA's Regional Transit Plan. The most highly-rated concepts – and those to which each of the Regional Transit Plans will respond – are as follows:

- Better align service with needs
- Improve efficiency and cost-effectiveness of system
- Improve transit access for the public
- Increase ridership levels
- Increase transit frequency and service options
- Increase revenue
- Improve transit access for transit-dependent populations



- Support economic development

While goals outline priorities, objectives are measurable actions that are necessary to realize the goals. The above list can be broken down as follows:

Table 1. Core Goals and Objectives

Goals	Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase ridership levels • Better align service with needs • Support economic development • Increase revenue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase transit frequency and service options • Improve transit access for the public • Improve transit access for transit-dependent populations • Improve efficiency and cost-effectiveness of system

It should be noted that goals and objectives that were ranked favorably by individual RTAs but did not receive an overall high ranking will still be considered in the Regional Transit Plan for those authorities. Section 2.2 explains the goals and objectives that are specific to WRTA.

2.2 WRTA Goals and Objectives

In addition to responding to the core goals and objectives outlined in Section 2.1, the Regional Transit Plan for WRTA is also based on concerns related to their system. In 2009, WRTA prepared a Service Standards document for Fixed-Route Bus Service and Performance. This document was then updated in December 2012. This document highlights the mission, goals, and objectives of the RTA.

Mission Statement:

The WRTA’s mission is to provide convenient, comfortable, safe, reliable, cost-effective mobility services, contributing to the economic vitality of the region.

Goals:

The primary goal of WRTA is to provide timely, quality, clean, and convenient public transportation service within the limits of its financial resources. To meet this goal requires simultaneous attention to the following 8 objectives:

Objective 1: Operate an economically, financially, environmentally, and socially responsible System

Overall, the transit system design should strive to be economically, financially, environmentally, and socially responsible. Proposals for improved transit services should be evaluated for their compliance with these factors.

- Economically, existing and proposed services should show a maximum of total benefit (direct and indirect).
- Financially, existing and proposed services should maximize the effective use of limited financial resources.
- Environmentally, fixed-route service should allocate for accessibility to other modes of transportation, such as commuter rail, walking and biking, minimize congestion



and vehicle miles traveled (VMT) at a regional scale, and promote emission and pollution reduction policy.

- d. Socially, improvements must coordinate with regional development goals, be compatible with growth policies and development adopted by communities served, and have overall benefits demonstrable to decision makers at various levels of government.

Objective 2: Design and operate service to attract passengers

The public transit system should be designed, operated, and maintained so that it will attract passengers in such numbers as to assure its continuing viability as a reasonable alternative to other modes of transportation.

- a. Efforts should be made to attract patrons with all facets of the system including the quality and quantity of service, interfaces with other transportation systems, the convenience of its schedules, the low cost of its fares, optimum use of improved streets and highways, the design and maintenance of shelters, bus stop, and a vigorous outreach program.
- b. Technology should be employed that facilitates the delivery of an efficient and safe operation.

Objective 3: Maintain equipment to minimize accidents

A paramount consideration is the safety of the operator and passenger. Operating practices and vehicle maintenance should be such that any kind of accident will be improbable and fatalities will be extremely rare.

Objective 4: Support Sustainability

The transportation system should be designed to support sustainable land-use patterns, regional smart growth, and neighborhood livability while reinforcing desired economic development.

Objective 5: Provide service to the transit dependent

Service improvements and extensions should be evaluated not only for economic considerations, but also as a required public service to provide mobility for “transit dependent” groups and, in the broader sense, to attract new markets from competing modes.

Objective 6: Procure vehicles of the highest design

Successful new developments and improvements in surface transit vehicle designs should be sought and used as a general policy. Vehicles should be provided which are safe, smooth riding, climate controlled, quiet, easy to get in and out of, well-lit, clean, non-offensive to pedestrians or other travelers and aesthetically attractive.

- a. To insure optimal use of equipment, the quality of performance by operating and maintenance personnel will be a major objective with consistently improving methods of recruitment, training, and education to insure safe, efficient operations by courteous, neatly uniformed personnel.

Objective 7: Alleviate congestion



Transit system improvements should consider the necessary measures to alleviate congestion problems and minimize social disruption without impeding the development of the evolving system as whole.

Objective 8: Minimize travel time

Service should be designed to minimize door-to-door travel time for present and potential patrons. This can be achieved by improving the walk, wait, ride, and transfer elements of the total transit journey.

- a. Patrons should be assured of the fastest possible trip time by a policy of utilizing transit friendly roadways to complete the trip economically.
- b. Transferring should be minimized by continuously seeking more direct routes from origin to destination. Where transfer elimination is impossible, feeder services should be carefully coordinated and adequate facilities should be provided for patrons to switch vehicles with protection from weather.
- c. Walk and wait portions of the trip should be minimized by provision of service frequencies on more heavily traveled main line routes as closely spaced as possible within economic constraints and spacing of routes to provide reasonable walking distance. Technology should be employed to assist patrons in minimizing their wait time for vehicles.

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