

# 2013 Annual Strategic Plan

## Overview

Since 2007, the economic recession has caused a dramatic reduction in Spokane Transit's sales tax revenue—a total of \$23 million less funding to date. Big cost-saving measures early in the downturn and service adjustments have allowed us to successfully retain the maximum amount of service while maintaining near-historic levels of ridership. Sales tax revenue, on which we depend for more than 65% of our funding, is expected to be flat in 2013 and the current level of service is not assured indefinitely. We will continue to employ the conservative financial principles and cost-effective operations to meet a still uncertain economic future.

Strong organizations focus not only on near-term challenges but they also make plans to take advantage of future opportunities. In 2013 we will engage the public and employees to identify, evaluate, and prioritize future service and system enhancements that can be achieved when additional funding is available.

In keeping with the Board's commitment to quality, we are continuing progress on several essential multi-year capital projects that will make our organization even more efficient and effective and easier to use by our customers.

The full adult bus fare, which will not change in 2013, covers roughly 40% of the cost of service, including overhead. When reduced fares for seniors, students and customers with disabilities are included, they cover about 21% of the cost. Service levels for Fixed Route bus and Paratransit will remain stable with a small increase in bus ridership projected. With 10 new vehicles we will grow ridership in our Vanpool program, whose operational and administrative costs are fully funded by riders.

We are guided by our Mission and Vision:

### Mission

- We are dedicated to providing safe, accessible, convenient, and efficient public transportation services to the Spokane region's neighborhoods, business and activity centers;
- We are leaders in transportation and a valued partner in the community's social fabric, economic infrastructure, and quality of life.

### Vision

We aspire to be a source of pride for the region.

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## Priorities

We have added a fifth priority, *Exemplify Financial Stewardship*, to the organization's traditional list of priorities. The priority was previously part of another priority, *Earning and Maintaining the Community Trust*. We also have renamed the previous priority, *Provide Employee and Organizational Development*, to the more succinct title, *Enable Organizational Success*. The goal is unchanged.

- Ensure Safety
- Earn and Retain the Community's Trust
- Provide Outstanding Customer Service
- Enable Organizational Success
- Exemplify Financial Stewardship

## Planning for the Future

Completing the **STA Moving Forward** initiative will be our highest priority in 2013. After conducting a comprehensive assessment of future service and system opportunities (begun in 2012) the board will adopt a package of improvements that represents our community's shared vision for additional public transportation investments when revenue is available.

## Service

### Fixed Route

Our goal in 2013 is to increase ridership by 1% over 2012 (for a total of approximately 10.9M trips). Minor service adjustments will predominate in order to make the best use of current resources to meet ridership demand. We will continue the system-wide review to improve connections between routes where there is the greatest passenger transfer activity.

### Paratransit

Our goal is to maintain 2012 ridership levels (approximately 500,000 trips). Initiatives such as Mobility Training and the Special Use Vanpool Program are two ways we help address Paratransit demand. The new In-Person Assessment program also will ensure that eligibility for the expensive, shared-ride service is correctly determined. A new contract service provider will begin service on January 1, 2013. Our primary strategy is to use the contractor to provide night and weekend service while STA's own employees provide service (with some augmentation from the contractor) during the high demand weekdays. All vehicles used in Paratransit service will carry STA branding.

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## Vanpool

We've set an aggressive goal to increase ridership by almost 9% over 2012 (approximately 290,000 total trips). This growth will be enabled by the addition of 10 vans to the program in early 2013, funded in large measure by Washington state grant. That will bring our fleet to 133 vehicles.

## Fares

No fare increases will be implemented in 2013. Fixed Route is expected to meet or exceed the established farebox recovery objective of 20% and Paratransit will meet its objective of 5%. Vanpool customers will continue to cover 100% of the program's operational and administrative costs through the existing fare structure. Our aim is to achieve revenue growth by attracting higher ridership by offering a reasonable fare structure. The last fare increase for Fixed Route was in 2010; for Paratransit in 2011.

We will pursue additional ridership and revenue by expanding our successful pass programs with new partners, including major employers and educational institutions.

## Major Projects

By the end of 2013, we will have completed all the major elements of the **Smart Bus** technology project including systems engineering, a new dispatch center, equipment installation, and testing of customer service information as well as a test on a sub-fleet of fixed route buses. This multi-year investment, funded in part with federal and state grants, will be fully operational in early 2014, and will provide customer access to real-time bus information at the Plaza and major park and ride lots, and by computer and smart phone. Automatic stop announcements will be made for those with hearing and sight impairments and electronic passenger counters will provide data to better inform service decisions.

The initial phases of the **Boone Facility Master Plan** will be complete. Long standing facility deficiencies affecting Paratransit operations, human resources, and the security of our facility will be rectified by moving some functions to the property acquired in 2012 at 1212 West Sharp.

Operational improvements to the outside of the **Plaza** property will be complete. A decision on the reconfiguration of the interior of the Plaza will be made based on a comprehensive review of options. The adopted option will maximize transit operations while minimizing non-productive space.

We will award the contract for the much needed **Business Systems Upgrade** and implementation will be underway.

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## **Staffing**

Our evaluation of other transit agencies over the last five years has underscored the significant understaffing in our fixed route supervisor organization. We have taken a multi-year, incremental approach to address the deficiency in this critical function supporting the effective operation of our bus system. The last step, in the second quarter of 2013, will be to add three supervisors to meet the requirements of the Smart Bus technology implementation.

## **Compensation & Benefits**

We are fortunate to have smart, dedicated and hard-working employees and our objective is to retain them and attract others by providing competitive, market-based compensation. We compare our wages to those of local businesses, a small group of other transit agencies, and local government. While no general wage increase is planned, if resources allow, we will continue to make progress to meet our objective.

In 2011 we restructured employee health benefits to mirror those offered by the Washington State health insurance program, a change that netted the organization significant savings. For long-term rate stability we will decide whether to apply again to join the state's program beginning in 2014.