

2017 Strategic Plan

Adopted December 15, 2016

Introduction

On November 8 voters approved funding for STA's bold vision contained in the 10 year Moving Forward plan. Each of the two dozen projects represents remarkably better access to new places and new vitality for residents and visitors to the region. But the real story is found in the dramatic way the entire system will be transformed starting in May 2017 when the Spokane region will begin to see the kind of robust public transportation befitting a county whose population will eclipse ½ million people in the next several years.

As we enter into this decade long plan, we will continue to be guided by the organization's vision, mission and priorities which are the foundation of our commitment to excellent customer service, financial stewardship and retaining community trust.

Vision

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

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.

Priorities

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

Background

In some ways 2016 was not unlike other years as we focused on delivering cost effective and efficient service to the region's residents: connecting them to employment, education, and services. For the 11th straight year, the annual audit performed by the State Auditor's Office was 'clean', meaning there were no findings. Ridership, though lower than expected, continues to beat other areas of the state, except by King County Metro service, in numbers of rides per hour of service. Operating costs are below budget, largely because of lower fuel costs. Actual sales tax revenue, projected to grow 3

percent, is about 5.5 percent higher than budget. As planned, revenue above expenses is used to fund capital projects.

The difference in 2016 is what followed the narrow loss of Proposition 1 in the April 2015 election, the measure to fund the 10-year Moving Forward plan. The Board took seriously the lessons from that election, re-affirmed the plan and accelerated the implementation of new service. Most importantly, the Board developed a way to fund the plan with fewer new resources. One year later, in April 2016, the Board passed a resolution to return the measure to voters in November. That ballot passed providing 1/10th percent increase in the sales tax rate starting in April 2017 and another increase of 1/10th in April 2019. Both increases will sunset in 2028, unless voters approve to extend them.

Also in 2016, we expect to complete two essential capital projects. First is the multi-year **Smart Bus** project which includes Computer Aided Dispatch/Advanced Vehicle Locators (CAD/AVL), with real-time traveler information for customers, a minimum of eight on-board cameras, automatic passenger counters and automated annunciators that call out bus stops. The **STARS** project (new organization-wide business system) consumed significant staff resources, but the technology represents a sea of change in the way we do budgeting, maintenance and human resources functions. We successfully began using the financial system on January 1, 2016. The majority of the maintenance and human resources functions will 'go live' January 1, 2017, but we expect to make modifications in our business processes as we gain familiarity with the tools.

2017 Plan

1. Introduce New Service

The first investments in Moving Forward are associated with the introduction of:

- a. Later Saturday night service system wide (affecting both fixed-route bus and Paratransit)
- b. More trips and buses on weekend service in Airway Heights;
- c. A new route in Spokane Valley serving destinations on Indiana Avenue and Broadway Avenue east of Sullivan Road on days, nights and weekends;
- d. Better weekend service on Wellesley Avenue in North Spokane;
- e. An upgrade to HPT-Lite service between Spokane and Liberty Lake, including more mid-day weekday trips and new night and weekend service;
- f. New Sunday service on North Nevada

2. Increase Ridership

Similar to bus ridership across the country, bus ridership is down in the Spokane region. Low fuel prices are thought to be drawing away some in the college and university markets in spite of students being able to use their school ID for unlimited travel as part of the Universal Transit Access Pass (UTAP) program.

- a. Current service is expected to produce the same ridership as 2016, but new and improved bus service is projected to add between 50,000 and 120,000 rides. It takes 18

to 24 months for ridership to fully develop on new routes. This will require continued robust marketing efforts during 2017.

- b. Increase Paratransit ridership 0.5% over 2016; and
- c. Sustain Vanpool ridership.

3. Begin Implementation of STA Moving Forward Capital Projects

Central to the *STA Moving Forward* Plan are investments in the High Performance Transit Network, adding service, passenger amenities and improving reliability increases ridership. Investments across the country in bus rapid transit and other frequent service transit alternatives have consistently proven the community, economic and passenger benefits of such investments. Of the six corridors prioritized for investments in *STA Moving Forward*, two will see improved service in 2017, two others will see construction activity, and the remaining two will be engaged in design activities.

- Valley/I-90 East Corridor – we will introduce additional mid-day service on Route 174, which connects Liberty Lake, Spokane Valley and the City of Spokane to improve service quality and reliability.
- Central City Line Corridor – Project development will continue on this six-mile corridor-based Bus Rapid Transit route through 2017 and 2018. In the first quarter 2017 we plan to submit the application to the Federal Transit Administration for a Small Starts capital grant. The local capital share of approximately \$18M, which included \$15M from the state, has been secured to match the federal \$54M grant. This means the project, which is already in the FTA grant pipeline, is anticipated to be included in Federal Transit Administration’s 2018 annual report/budget and in the Administration’s budget in Federal Fiscal Year 2019. Service is planned to commence in 2021.
- Cheney Corridor – The centerpiece of this corridor is the West Plains Transit Center. Capital funding is complete for the West Plains Transit Center and real estate has been authorized for purchase. Final design and engineering will be completed early in 2017. Construction is expected to begin summer 2017 and be completed in 2018. Work will begin on safety improvements at The Four Lakes Station. The overall corridor will enter into design in preparation for a 2020 implementation.
- Division Corridor Improvements – Route 25 Division carried over 1 million passengers in 2015, a slight increase over 2014 figures. The current project includes filling in gaps in the sidewalk network along the route and increasing the number of sheltered bus stops.
- Monroe-Regal Corridor Improvements – This project is scheduled to be completed in 2019. Work in 2017 will include property acquisition for the Moran Prairie Park and Ride, and design of bus stop improvements.

- Sprague Corridor Improvements – While the project is not expected to be completed until 2023, there is an early opportunity to partner with the City of Spokane in making improvements to bus stops in the East Sprague Business District.

4. Update Connect Spokane, STA Comprehensive Plan

Last updated in 2015, the Comprehensive Plan is a guiding planning policy document, an educational tool, and a vision of what transit may look like across the Spokane region over the coming years and decades. The goal is to set forth a vision and policy framework to guide decisions made by the STA Board of Directors and staff which will further STA’s mission and vision for at least 30 years. This update is the appropriate place to assess new trends and technologies in transportation and opportunities to leverage the public’s investment in transit including the opportunities created by transportation network companies (TNCs) among other emerging trends.

5. Finalize Emergency Operations and Business Continuity Plans

6. Maintain essential capital projects

- **Fare collection:** Complete mid-life upgrades planning and begin implementation. Existing fareboxes were installed in 2006.
- **Plaza Renovation:** Is underway to support a vibrant downtown and improve the transit center’s functionality for our customers. The project will be complete mid-year with all customer-related services, including customer service, retail and public restrooms, located on the first floor. Overall project is in sync with input from customers and downtown partners.
- **Northwest Garage:** This new facility will be used to maintain and store vehicles to accommodate the existing fleet and to make room for growth resulting from service expansion in STA Moving Forward. It will be located on property purchased from Spokane County immediately to the north of the auxiliary employee parking. The facility will be under design in 2017 and completion is projected for 2019.

Another important activity will be preparing for and participating in the Federal Transit Administration’s Triennial Review, now called a Comprehensive Review, which audits compliance with federal regulations and is a requirement for those transit agencies receiving federal transit funds.

We also will be managing the transition of a number of long-tenured, senior employees who are retiring or otherwise leaving. This presents a significant challenge, even if we are successful in recruiting top talent, as the majority of positions are in the Operations division.

Fares

The first of two board-approved fare increases for Bus and Paratransit service will be effective in July when a regular adult fare will go from \$1.50 to \$1.75. A second increase to \$2 will go into effect in July 2018. After the second increase, the farebox recovery (the portion of costs paid by riders) is expected to meet the Board’s objective to cover 20% of the cost per trip.