

## Purpose and Need Statement

### Project Description

The Spokane Transit Authority (STA), in cooperation with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), is completing an Interchange Justification Report and Design Plans in order to implement one element of its High Performance Transit (HPT) Network near the SR 902/Medical Lake Interchange with Interstate 90 (I-90) at Exit 272.

This report documents the Purpose and Need for the project, provides a summary of why transit improvements are needed in this area, including a new West Plains Transit Center with freeway flyer stops for local and express bus connections to meet area needs.

### Purpose

The purpose of the West Plains Transit Center is to expand connectivity to the West Plains communities and improve travel times to and from the City of Cheney and Eastern Washington University by providing improved high quality, higher performance and cost effective transit services that will address mobility needs for an expanding population and employment base west of Spokane. Multi-modal transportation services will be enhanced through:

- Improving connectivity between cities and to the West Plains area;
- Providing easy and fast connections to HPT service along the I-90 corridor;
- Improving transit access to residential and employment areas adjacent to Exit 272 by providing convenient transfers between local and express bus services; and
- Reducing congestion by providing an attractive alternative for single occupant vehicle (SOV) users.

As part of this project, an Interchange Justification Report (IJR) will be completed to determine the preferred solution for the West Plains Transit Center project, in cooperation with FHWA, WSDOT, SRTC, Spokane County, and the Spokane International Airport. The results of the IJR will enable the project stakeholders to assess options and opportunities to improve the transportation system within the project area.

### Need (Problem Definition)

Between 1990 and 2012, STA's total annual ridership increased 65 percent.<sup>1</sup> Changes in land use and lifestyle choices have influenced the demand for competitive travel options in the West Plains area and to Eastern Washington University in Cheney.

In the West Plains area, several specific problems should be addressed as part of this project to help retain and increase ridership on the current network and improve STA's competitiveness with other modes of transportation – expressed by travel time. This is especially true as related to serving the increasing demand for competitive travel alternatives between Spokane and Cheney/Eastern Washington University (nearly 20 percent of travelers on SR 904 between I-90 and Cheney are on an STA bus). For example, currently, travel time for transit users between Spokane and Eastern Washington University is 52% more than automobile travel and yet nearly 20% percent of travelers on SR 904 (the main State Highway connecting the University to

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<sup>1</sup> Connect Spokane. A Comprehensive Plan for Public Transportation, May 2014, page 11.

I-90 and on into Spokane) use the existing bus transit route. There is an increasing demand for more frequent and reliable transit service between Spokane and Cheney. The “needs” STA plans to meet by completing this project include:

- Improve travel times for all users;
- Provide more direct bus service for the West Plains area to Eastern Washington University;
- Reduce operating costs;
- Respond to increased demand for service as a result of population and employment growth;
- Provide more direct transit connections between major employers in the West Plains “service area.”

## Goals and Objectives

Four purpose statements have been developed to guide this process, including a set of goals and objectives as shown in the table below. The Purpose and Need Statement, including the associated goals and objectives, were developed by a Technical Committee made up of representatives of participating agencies, including STA, WSDOT, FHWA, Spokane County, the Spokane Regional Transportation Council (SRTC), and the Spokane International Airport (SIA). This Purpose and Need Statement was adopted by the Core Stakeholder Group, made up from most of these same agencies, and will be presented to the public for comment as part of the outreach process.

Purpose Statement		Goals & Objectives
1	Improve connectivity between cities and to the West Plains area.	Expand the HPT Network along I-90.
		Integrate local circulator buses with the HPT Network.
		Improve pedestrian and bicycle interconnectivity to the HPT Network.
2	Provide easy and fast connections to express bus service along the I-90 corridor in the West Plains area.	Improve transit speed and reliability.
		Improve the waiting and boarding experience.
		Provide a high level of pedestrian safety.
3	Improve transit access to residential and employment areas adjacent to Exit 272 by providing convenient transfers between local and express bus services.	Provide a park-and-ride facility for transit and shared-ride users.
4	Reduce congestion by providing an attractive alternative for SOV users.	Improve operational efficiency by reducing bus circulating and stop time.

## Summary

To meet these principles, STA must provide fast and convenient service through the West Plains area and provide competitive travel times as compared to SOVs. To provide this service, STA’s buses should minimize time on local roads and in the transit center. By routing buses through the proposed West Plain Transit Center, buses will be off I-90 for 8 to 11 minutes for each stop at the transit center, as compared to less than two minutes to access the transit station with flyer stops along I-90.

By not providing freeway flyer stops, it will be more difficult for STA to provide competitive transit service to maintain existing riders, attract new riders and meet the goals associated with the West Plains Transit Center project. By incorporating flier stops along I-90 in the West Plain area, STA will be better equipped to provide fast and convenient service and meet their goals and objectives.