

# Appendix I: Regional Transit Priorities

## Regional Transit Priorities

In 2011 the RTA launched a series of initiatives designed to increase ridership, maximize cost efficiencies and improve strategic decision making. Pace, along with the CTA and Metra under RTA's aegis, is moving forward to identify and capitalize on opportunities of mutual benefit. As these projects come to fruition their impact will be incorporated into the operating and capital budgets of the Agencies. Due to the recent launch of this effort there is limited immediately identifiable impact on the 2012 budget for Pace, however as we move forward we expect the savings and benefits to accrue to our bottom line in 2012, resulting in our continued excellent budget performance.

## RTA Priorities and Vision for Transit

The RTA's long-term objectives in the region are to increase mobility, provide more accessible transit, modernize technology and provide better customer service. However, the economic recession continues to challenge funding levels for public transit and the State's fiscal condition has delayed funding to the region's transit system by as much as \$380 million. The RTA, CTA, Metra and Pace have all taken measures to trim budgets while trying to minimize the impact to customers. In light of very real financial challenges, it remains critical that we maintain an interagency commitment to growing the role of transit in the region and achieving these long-term objectives.

In response to this, the RTA has launched a series of key priority initiatives with input from the Service Boards intended to advance a collective vision for the region's transit system and establish a strategic, coordinated means of identifying areas for cost savings and greater efficiency. Goals outlined in the priority initiatives include developing a strategic capital approach focused on reducing overall operating expenditures; harnessing the Authority's and Service Boards' purchasing power to achieve cost savings and improved efficiency; pursuing opportunities to maximize the use of the transit system; improving the customer experience; and creating a unified marketing, outreach and government affairs agenda.

The RTA and Service Boards commitment to these key initiatives act as an underlying yet driving theme of the 2012 budget. RTA is working closely with the Service Boards to ensure that the goals and standards outlined below are achieved.

## Strategic Capital Investment

The goal of this initiative is to reduce operating costs by identifying capital projects that could result in reductions in operating costs to the transit system.

### *Projects include:*

- *Evaluating the Impact of Capital Projects on Operating Costs* - Each Service Board has been asked to include a formal estimate of the operating cost impacts of 2012 capital projects in their 2012 budget as a means of identifying cost savings and efficiencies. Pace is developing these estimates and expects to incorporate them into the final budget for 2012.
- *Unexpended Capital Funds* - The RTA is working with the Service Boards to review grants with unexpended funds and determine if these funds can be reassigned to other, potentially higher priority projects within each agency's budget.
- *Traffic Corridor Optimization and Traffic Signal Priority Program* - The RTA is working with the Service Boards to implement a 5-year program starting in 2012 that allows buses to have longer, more frequent green lights. RTA secured \$32 million in Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds for this purpose. Projects have been completed on Western, Harlem and Cicero Avenues. Future projects are slated to begin on Milwaukee Avenue and Dempster.
- *Capital Investment Decision Tool* - A task force comprised of RTA and Service Board members is working to test the Decision Tool, a computerized method used for planning yearly budgets and prioritizing projects. The computer software is expected to be fully implemented for use by all agencies in 2012.

## Economies of Scale

The goal of this initiative is to identify areas where coordinated purchasing efforts on fuel, insurance or utilities could achieve cost savings and improve efficiency.

### *Projects include:*

- *Joint Procurement of Energy Management System Software* - Track commodity consumption (electricity, natural gas and fuel) and make use of CTA's independent provider of renewable energy solutions to identify and evaluate potential savings for Metra and Pace (i.e., opportunities like fuel hedging).
- *Knowledge Database* - Enable agencies to benchmark pricing and compare contracts. Database will include a discussion forum to foster the exchange of methods, data and ideas. Procurement staff can use the forum to ask questions of the other Service Board/s and their staff. Launch date is set for Fall 2011.
- *Joint Contract to Provide Fuel* - Evaluate the potential for joint contracting to generate operating costs savings. CTA has included language in its 2012 invitation for bids to purchase diesel fuel that allows Metra and Pace to join the agreement if it is beneficial to their agencies.
- *Healthcare Coverage* - RTA, CTA, Metra and Pace are reviewing the healthcare coverage available through the healthcare consortium to determine if it offers savings compared to their current healthcare coverage.

## Maximize Use of the Transit System

The goal of this initiative is to maximize the use of the existing system by presenting a system-wide approach to improving coordination among the service boards; likewise, improving access to reverse commute markets and weekend and evening services.

### *Projects include:*

- *Improve the Transit Benefits Program* - Streamline the Transit Benefits Program and transition the transit voucher to a credit/debit card system. The RTA will solicit private vendor proposals to implement and administer the program in Fall 2011, with the intention of introduc-

ing the new program in 2012. The roll out of the new program will also be accompanied by a broad marketing effort to increase program visibility and participation.

- *Grow the Reverse Commute* - CTA, Metra and Pace have committed to reserving parking spots for vanpools at outlying rail stations when requested by vanpool participants. Vanpools are a cost effective way to provide last mile connections for the reverse commute.

## Enhance the Customer Experience

The goal of this initiative is to increase focus on targeted capital and technology related projects, interagency and way-finding signage, e-signage service improvements, service information and fare payment coordination to best serve transit customers.

### *Projects include:*

- *Improve Regional Real-time Travel Information* - Implement "one-stop shopping" web and mobile phone applications. Integrate Bus Traker, Train Traker and Pace travel information on goroo.com.
- *Downtown Connections* - Install interactive signage at downtown Metra stations that will provide coordinated interagency service and connection information. Installation is slated to begin in 2012 at Ogilvie and Union Stations.
- *Regional Open Standards Fare System* - Implement "account-based" regional fare payment system to provide fare acceptance via personal credit, debit and transit-only reloadable smartcards on all fixed-route services. RTA secured \$340,000 in CMAQ funds to develop a Regional Interagency Fare Model to evaluate interagency fare products. RTA is also awaiting the outcome of the CTA's Open Fare Payment Collection System procurement expected in Fall 2011. The Illinois legislature requires an open fare system be in place by 2015.

## Coordinate Government Affairs, Marketing, Outreach

The goal of this initiative is to better coordinate with the Service Boards when providing customer information. It is also intended to increase coordination and leveraging of partners and other stake holders.

### *Projects include:*

- *Determine Common Advocacy Goals* - The Government Affairs departments will meet and outline common advocacy goals to communicate to elected officials and work together to implement a legislative agenda on a local, state and federal scale.
- *Collaborate with Service Boards on Public Hearings* - Make it easier for citizens to attend public hearings by holding RTA hearings in conjunction with Service Board hearings.
- *Coordinate Marketing Events and Initiatives* - Partner with Service Boards and coordinate our efforts to educate citizens on the benefits of transit. Develop a unified marketing campaign for events like Green Fest or Fiesta at Arlington Park and the Transit Benefit Fare Program.
- *Coordinate Transit Map Production and Distribution* - Consolidate system maps; produce coordinated maps for CTA, Metra and Pace.
- *Centralize Customer Service* - Streamline the Customer Service experience and introduce a consolidated phone number customers can call to reach RTA, CTA, Metra and Pace. Develop a one-stop, centralized Customer Service Center for RTA, CTA, Metra and Pace.

## Conclusion

The RTA, CTA, Metra and Pace are working together to advance these interagency projects. Some of the initiatives are new and their merits are still being assessed and some of these initiatives have already been in the works but are now being pursued with more vigor under this collaborative effort. It is important to note that it is unlikely that these efforts will result in cost savings that will significantly address the budget difficulties facing the region in 2012. However, as difficult decisions need to be made about balancing the regional budget, it is increasingly important that we demonstrate our commitment to improving the customer experience and to creating efficiencies within the regional transit system.

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