

## Chapter 1 Introduction

### Purpose of the Report

This report provides a *Strategic Transit Master Plan* for public transportation on behalf of the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) and the Nashville Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The *Strategic Transit Master Plan* establishes a short (2009-2015), mid (2015-2025) and long-term (2025-2035) vision and provides a set of priorities and a list of projects to be implemented in those time periods. This report also provides the background information and analysis and summarizes the public input from an extensive public outreach effort.

### About the MTA

The Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) was formed in 1973 for the purpose of stabilizing existing public transportation services and meeting other transportation needs of the citizens within Davidson County and visitors who visit the city and local areas.

The Nashville MTA provides public transportation services, local and express routes, to citizens and visitors within the Metropolitan Nashville area and is a component unit of the Metropolitan Government of Nashville & Davidson County. MTA operates 36 bus routes throughout Metro-Davidson County and now provides more trips than at any other time in recent decades. Nashville MTA reached a milestone in ridership by providing our community with 9.4 million rides in fiscal year 2008.<sup>1</sup> This is nearly an 11 percent increase over the previous fiscal period and almost 1 million additional trips when compared to the previous year. Average rides per weekday are 30,000. Nashville also has contracts with the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) to provide management services for the RTA and to run bus service to Murfreesboro and the Music City Star bus shuttles. In addition, the Nashville MTA provides special door-to-door paratransit services (AccessRide) for seniors and people with disabilities that are unable to ride the larger buses on the fixed routes.

MTA has formed several unique EasyRide transit partnerships with organizations which pay for their employees transit commute to and from work and school. Metro Government has recently joined others such as Vanderbilt University and Medical Center, Belmont University, the State of Tennessee, Bass, Berry & Sims, LP Building Products, the U.S. Corps of Engineers, U.S. Bankruptcy Court, U. S. Probation Dept., and area hotels such as Holiday Inn Select Vanderbilt, Renaissance Hotel, Hilton Hotel and Hampton Inn in participating in the Easy Ride program.

In October 2008, MTA opened Music City Central (MCC) Station which is a multi-level indoor transfer facility in the heart of downtown Nashville. This indoor facility has customer waiting rooms, a ticketing and information booth, and a coffee shop. A new state-of-the-art 800 MHz radio and data transmission system for all buses is also being implemented in phases over the next year. Once completed, this system will give customers access to “real time” bus arrival and departure information via digital signage around town, at the MCC, and in the future, via the internet.

Nashville MTA currently has 137 fixed route buses, 63 AccessRide buses and 475 employees. A five-member Board of Directors, appointed by the Mayor and approved by the City Council, governs the Nashville MTA. A management team, headed by a Chief Executive Officer (CEO), oversees the day-to-day operations. Nashville MTA's receives funding from federal, state and local governments.

### Project Approach and Report Organization

This project began with an extensive analysis of existing data on the MTA region and transit service. The project used purchased data sets from ESRI (2007 Block Group information for Davidson County); Dun and Bradstreet (employers and employees); land-use information from Metro Planning; data on transportation networks,

transportation analysis zones (TAZs), trip information, future population and employment forecasts from the MPO, and extensive data on transit performance and finance from both MTA and the National Transit Database. The analysis of the existing demographic trends is described in Chapter 2 of this report. Chapter 3 presents trends in public transportation in Nashville, and Chapter 4 compares Nashville MTA transit service and funding with that of other peer communities.

One of the early tasks in developing information on the market for transit was the development of a ridership analysis model for MTA. This model, called the MTA Service Analyzer, has been developed with 2006 TAZ trip tables and a detailed representation of transit service in the community. It has the capability to use future trip tables as well. Appendix A describes MTA Service Analyzer and some of the insights gained through it.

The project also included extensive public outreach with five public workshops in November of 2008 as the project was getting underway, five workshops in January of 2009 with a partial report on the market analysis and initial opportunities, and a final set of workshops in of the summer of 2009 to introduce the draft plan. In addition, MTA held a meeting of a large number of transit stakeholders in December of 2008 which considered priorities and alternative futures for the MTA. A summary report on the public outreach is contained in Appendix B.

A *Service Delivery Policy* was developed as part of the *Strategic Transit Master Plan* process and that policy is contained in Appendix C. Chapter 5 of this report provides an analysis of current MTA service compared to the *Service Delivery Policy*.

Chapter 6 considers the regional vision as contained in the long-term transportation plan and mission statements of organizations concerned with regional transportation planning and service. The MTA mission and priorities are considered in coordination with the larger regional vision. Based on market analysis, public input and other sources Chapter 6 provides an approach to prioritizing projects and spending,

Chapter 7 provides an analysis of options for implementing a Bus Rapid Transit service on Gallatin Road, MTA's highest ridership route. Actions are discussed for improving the speed and image of service. Chapter 8 provides information on opportunities where MTA can improve service as well as opportunities for environmental initiatives. Chapter 9 concludes the *Strategic Transit Master Plan* by providing a plan for phasing identified opportunities into short, mid and long term time frames.

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<sup>1</sup> The 9.4 million rides includes fixed route service, AccessRide Service and special events service.