



Section 5 – Service Options and Recommendations

The basis for any transit plan is the development of an effective and appropriate service strategy. The types of service provided, their schedules and routes, can effectively determine the success or failure of a transit organization. Based upon the service plan, capital requirements, funding requirements and appropriate institutional and management strategies can be determined. A summary of transit service types can be seen in **Appendix C**.

Transit service encompasses a wide range of alternatives. Traditionally, people think of transit service as vehicles operating on a strict schedule over a predetermined route. Several transit service options exist, including fixed-route, demand-response and route-deviation. Once the Transportation Committee settled on a bus transit system for the City of Easley, they also concluded that route-deviation service would be the most economical to start a system.

The route deviation form of public transportation is being used more frequently, especially in new service start-ups. Route deviation buses deviate from an established fixed route to accommodate demand-response trips for riders meeting certain Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) eligibility requirements. Riders requesting route deviations must schedule pick-ups via telephone and are typically charged a premium fare. Service along the fixed route would not require an advance reservation. This approach is close to fixed-route service, but eliminates the requirement to provide complementary paratransit services.

The elimination of the complimentary paratransit services as a stand-alone service is the greatest advantage of the route-deviation type of service. A separate complimentary paratransit service is very expensive to operate and requires additional capital expenditure for vehicles that must be maintained on a regular basis. Conversely, the great disadvantages of route-deviation service, compared to fixed-route service, are its relative inconvenience for fixed-route passengers and the need for a more highly-skilled dispatcher to ensure on-time performance of the system. Nonetheless, successful route-deviation systems have been established in communities throughout the nation. In order to maintain a reasonable level of service, it is necessary to restrict the deviation service to those passengers who qualify for ADA service with origins and destinations within three-quarters of a mile of the established routes.



Recommendations

In addition to determining the type of transit service that would best meet the City of Easley residents’ needs and would be financially responsible, there are several other factors that will determine how transit service is provided. The first decision involves the organization responsible for the operation of the proposed transit service. The existence of two other transit agencies in the area gives the City several options. First, the City could contract with one of the existing agencies, assuming that they are interested, to provide vehicles and service to the Easley residents. The other option is for the City of Easley to operate as an independent service, keeping in mind to coordinate whenever possible. A comparison of the 2 options is shown in **Table 5.1**.

Table 5.1 Organizational Options Comparison

City of Easley Transit Service	Contract Transit Service
City of Easley Council would have complete control of service levels, schedules, vehicles, etc.	Contracting agency could determine service levels, schedules, vehicles, etc. based on service needs not affecting Easley
All decisions made at local level	Some decisions made outside of City of Easley’s control
Size of vehicles based on need and preference	Size of vehicles based on fleet availability and preference
Financial decisions made by City Council	Financial issues determined outside of Easley’s control
City of Easley must identify or hire staff that would handle administration and maintenance duties	Administration and maintenance are the responsibility of the contractor
Upgrade, expand or build new maintenance shop	Maintenance facilities would be the responsibility of the contractor
Responsive to citizen requests for service changes/additions	Response to citizen requests could be delayed

Recommendation #1: The transit service should be provided by the City of Easley.

In determining the best course of action for the City of Easley, the URS team evaluated all of the advantages and disadvantages of each option. Although the City of Easley would be taking on more administration and maintenance responsibility for the transit service, the financial responsibility lies with the City in either option. If the City leaders are willing to commit the necessary funding for the proposed transit service, the URS



team has determined that the City should provide the transit service and supporting functions and not contract with another agency for this service.

Recommendation #2: The City leaders should identify a dedicated source of revenue for the proposed transit service.

Regardless of the organizational option taken by the City, the City of Easley will be required to provide funding for the expenses not covered by State and Federal grants. Based on the results of the survey conducted for this study, there is not a clear alternative to this issue. When asked about funding options for the transit system, 27% of the respondents to the survey chose “None of the above”. Of the viable options, sales tax was the only choice to receive any considerable support (24%). Should the City decide to implement any or all of the transit service proposed in this report, the City leaders will need to identify an annual source of funding for the service. The financial plan in Section 6 outlines the estimated costs and funding options for the City.

Recommendation #3 – The City of Easley should implement the 4 transit routes as shown in the implementation schedule in Section 6.

Based on the information collected through surveys, public meetings and research, the URS team has designed four transit routes for the City of Easley. The proposed routes are intended to meet the identified needs of the City residents for transportation options. Each of the routes is recommended for Monday through Saturday service. During the week the buses would run from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. and on Saturday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Each route is described as follows:

- **Route 1**
 - Length – 6.2 miles
 - Frequency – 30 minutes
 - Major Destinations – Downtown Easley, Palmetto Baptist Hospital, Easley Senior Center, West Gate Apartments
- **Route 2**
 - Length – 5.8 miles
 - Frequency – 30 minutes
 - Major Destinations – Downtown Easley, U.S. Post Office, J.B. “Red” Owens Recreational Complex, Walmart/BI-LO Shopping Center
- **Route 3**
 - Length – 5.8 miles
 - Frequency – 30 minutes
 - Major Destinations – Downtown Easley, Palmetto Baptist Hospital, several apartment complexes, City Hall
- **Route 4**
 - Length – 9.8 miles
 - Frequency – 60 minutes
 - Major Destinations – Downtown Easley, U.S. Post Office, Walmart/BI-LO Shopping Center, several apartment complexes, Rock Springs Baptist Church, Saco Lowell site, Captain Kimberly Hampton Memorial Library



Placeholder for Figures 7 through 11



One vehicle is proposed to run on each route, with the exception of Route 4. In order to match the other routes' frequency, Route 4 would require 2 vehicles. With 2 vehicles, Route 4 could meet the 30 minute standard used for the other routes. If the City decides to limit Route 4 to 1 vehicle, schedules could still be designed so that the buses would meet downtown at the same time.

Recommendation #4 – The City of Easley should identify and upgrade a “transfer point” in the downtown area.

The proposed routes are shown on the overall system map (**Figure 7**) to meet at a predetermined downtown location. The Old Market Square, located behind the downtown buildings, would be an excellent “transfer point” for the routes. The square's proximity to the downtown shops and restaurants makes it a primary destination for residents using the transit service.

Recommendation #5: The City of Easley should develop a bus shelter capital program, including an “Adopt-a-Shelter” element.

In addition to a “transfer point” downtown and the initial bus purchases, the City will need to consider two other major capital improvements. First, bus shelters will need to be located along each route to provide protection from the elements for the waiting riders. The location of the required bus shelters should be determined through public input and identification of major stops along the routes. The bus shelter quality, size and design will be factors in the overall cost of this capital project. However, the City will be eligible for Federal funding that will cover 80% of the total cost of the shelters. Additionally, “Adopt-a-Shelter” programs have been successful in other communities, especially in downtown areas and for shelters near major shopping areas. Shelter programs can also assist the City in minimizing the cleaning and maintenance of the shelters.

Recommendation #6: The City of Easley should develop a sidewalk capital program to improve the sidewalk system to and along the proposed transit routes.

The second capital improvement program that the City should consider, along with the implementation of the proposed transit service, involves upgrading the existing sidewalk system. Providing a safe sidewalk system to and along the proposed transit routes is beneficial to the citizens of Easley and the City government. The citizens benefit from the installation of sidewalks through the safe passage to the transit stops. The installation of an integrated and connected sidewalk system eliminates some of the physical barriers for physically handicapped and wheel chair dependent transit riders. By eliminating some of the physical barriers, the City will benefit from a reduction in route deviations for ADA eligible individuals. Sidewalks that are built in support of a transit system are eligible for Federal funding at the standard 80% reimbursement rate. Prior to the construction of sidewalks under this program, the City should seek preliminary approval by the Regional FTA office. The existing sidewalk system, in relation to the proposed transit routes, is shown in **Figure 12**.



Placeholder for Figure 12