








Vision Update 2009 - Chapter Two - Status of Recommendations


The Vision report was completed in 1998, updated in 2004 and 2006. Contained within the report was an extensive list of recommendations. These were based on ridership and community information collected as well as community meetings. A summary of the findings and recommendations along with what progress or changes follow.

Key Findings






-  Transit service needs to address changes in people's travel patterns. Hub and Spoke system to enhance better access to destinations other than downtown. But since 2004 the DTA especially with the University has been tying routes together so as to provide a one seat ride. This has been successful. Also, the West to Mall bus has also been successful. The DTA Hubs at UMD and the Mall also have worked very well. The purpose of these hubs is not to force transfers, but to offer more transit destinations.
-  Bus fleet that provides service flexibility (size of buses). This has had limited success. The DTA's major costs are labor. The DTA has used scheduling software to maximize its use of manpower. This however limits the use of smaller buses. The difference in fuel use between heavy duty buses is not significant when compared to labor costs. The key word here however was heavy duty bus. There may be areas and services where lighter duty vehicles can provide an economical service.
-  Route productivity should be consistently evaluated and modified to enhance service effectiveness. This will always be an ongoing process. Services need to adjusted to demand and demand changes are based on many impacts. Additionally, transit funding has been a consistently changing pattern of activity.
-  The intra-city Superior routes have significantly poor productivity, which the DTA is now working to modify. The Duluth/Superior - Itasca route is on the DTA's strongest routes.
-  The DTA should focus on enhancing service offered to customers. This includes not only the service provided, but also how and what people are informed about it to increase its use.
-  Increase marketing resources for both research and promotions. This has not always been done , but DTA has significantly increased the methods by which people are informed about the services provided.
-  Take steps to make transit more "user-friendly".

For public transit to be a viable community transportation alternative, the policies and conditions that enhance public transit's ability to operate effectively and efficiently need to be in place.

Policy Recommendations

-  Educate, promote and lobby the public and city government toward "livable community" policies. This will continue to be a focus. The current City Administration concurs with this strategy as it promotes a more economically viable model for cities.







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-  Promote the creation of transit-friendly developments.
-  Ensure consideration of transit needs in reconstruction of important transit roadways.
-  Encourage mixed-used developments near transit facilities.
-  Support policies that enhance bicycling and pedestrian activities (e.g., snow removal, infrastructure).
-  Advocate planning policies that enhance transportation choices (e.g., efficient parking policies).









Route Specific Recommendations made in 1998

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|--|--|
| * Expand Service to Airpark and Airport. | Yes |
| * Create West Duluth to Miller Hill Mall Route | Yes |
| * Create UMD Circulator | Yes and |
| | modified as per ridership demands |
| * Create Downtown Circulator | Not Done |
| * Hub and Spoke system for the midday, evening, and weekends. | Partial |
| * Work with the City of Superior to further evaluate route options | Yes |

Marketing Recommendations

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|---|------------|
|  Increase marketing resources. | Yes |
|  Enhance “user-friendliness” of system map and information, and improve route information, maps, and time schedules. | Yes |
|  Develop comprehensive “Transit Rider Guide” Booklet. | Yes |
|  Increase pass-purchasing options. | Yes |
|  Enhance current customer complaints system focused on ensuring “customer satisfaction.” | Yes |
|  Enhance bus stop signs and shelters. | Yes |

Marketing Recommendations

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|  Disseminate promotional and informational pamphlets on buses and at Transit Centers. | Yes |
|  Increase security and comfort level at Transit Centers. | Yes |
|  Install video cameras to monitor the outside front area of transit centers. | Yes |
|  Enhance Transit Center aesthetics and encourage more pedestrian activity. | Yes |
|  Continue funding and promotion of downtown community policing. | Yes |
|  Increase CBD commuter marketing effort. | Yes |
|  Increase college student marketing effort. | Yes |
|  Produce and distribute Senior Transit Packet. | Yes |

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☞ Develop “Fun Guide” to work in conjunction with Teen Pass Program.	Yes
☞ Assist regular route usage among persons with disabilities.	Yes
☞ Enhance distribution of Port Town Trolley map and schedule and other DTA information.	Yes
☞ Implement comprehensive Marketing Research Program.	Yes
☞ Solicit customer input and complaints via:	
* Internet web-site	Yes
* Comment cards on buses and at Transit Centers	Yes
* 722-SAVE	Yes
* and on-board survey	Yes
☞ Develop customer database.	In Progress

Technology Recommendations

* Expand pass user options by implementing smart card passes with magnetic strip or contactless format.	Yes
* Smart passes allow customers to buy a pass good for a specific number of days per week as well as a stored value capacity.	Yes
* Implement Automated Vehicle Location (AVL) system, which has been shown to enhance on-time performance and customer information for many transit providers.	Yes

Conclusion

The Duluth Transit Authority has adopted the Transit Vision Plan as a guide for the future of transit in the Twin Ports area. That study offered recommendations that provided direction to the as the Duluth Transit Authority (DTA) addresses changes within the Duluth-Superior metropolitan area.

Many of the recommendations have been implemented and even modified along the way. This is a dynamic process with considerable public input. Recent funding difficulties have also had a significant impact on the service recommendations.

Since the completion of the Vision in 1998 the DTA has done a major study and route evaluation in 2004 as well as Vision updates in that year and 2006. Those reports also had some route specific recommendations.

Service Improvement Plans 2004-2006

This section presents the service proposals on a route level basis within three separate plans. Each of these three plans (Fixed Route Service Enhancement Plan, Miller Hill Mall Area Service Plan and the Duluth Night Service Plan) addresses one of the three areas of concern discussed above. The proposals included in each of the plans are designed to improve the efficiency of

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service and ridership performance of DTA's fixed route system by building upon the service planning components.

Fixed Route Service Enhancement Plan - As part of this study, the adequacy of current fixed route services was analyzed using an established set of service guidelines. Based on this analysis, a set of recommendations was developed for certain fixed routes in Duluth. The Fixed Route Service Enhancement Plan consists of each of these recommendations. This plan includes service change proposals designed to address specific instances in which current routes did not meet one or more of the service guidelines developed for this study.

As part of these studies the DTA developed the JARC (Job Access and Reverse Commute) routes serving UMD as well as Cirrus, United Health, and the Air Park.

The two major projects that impacted the DTA in these past ten years has been the success of the DTA's U-Pass program and the DTA's ITS program. Both have positively increased the DTA's ridership and also impacted the route structure.

Other work at the DTA has pointed to several areas for future work. These include: City of Superior Service; Arrival and Departure Time Analysis; 15c routing and timing analysis.