

FOREWORD: WELCOME TO 'TRANSITACTION' -
SACRAMENTO'S NEW TRANSIT MASTER PLAN

Sacramento Regional Transit Master Plan

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Foreword: Welcome to 'TransitAction' - Sacramento's New Transit Master Plan

Sacramento Regional Transit (RT) last updated its Transit Master Plan in 1993. Since then, many changes have occurred in the Sacramento region, including the continued expansion of the Light Rail network and bus services, but also continued urban sprawl and increasing congestion.

Preparations for this new long-term Transit Master Plan started in early 2006 with the issuance of a Request for Proposals from consultants to provide specialist services to work with the agency in developing the Plan. RT's challenge to them was to develop a Transit Master Plan that was both visionary and pragmatic and there was a need for an ambitious long-term 'Vision for Transit' in the Sacramento region over the next 25 years. At the same time, RT also wanted clear guidance on how to fund and deliver the resulting Plan.

When RT embarked on the new TransitAction Plan process, it was evident that transit faced a series of major challenges, not least of which were declining support from the State and steadily rising ridership. Partners like Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SAGOG) and the local jurisdictions had developed a long-term land use vision, the Blueprint, which sought an alternative future for the region based on smart growth principles which emphasized more compact land use with mixed-use developments and high quality design standards. Transportation choice, including greater access to transit services, is a key component of the smart growth approach and as such Regional Transit fully supports the Blueprint.

The Blueprint offers a more sustainable future, recognizing long-term trends that will see major increases in the region's population, its number of

households and employment opportunities, and changes in the demographics of the region as the 'baby boomers' add to the proportion of elderly within the region of Sacramento.

But RT now faces even more urgent challenges, regionally, and as a nation. Since early 2006, when this TransitAction Plan process began, there have been unprecedented changes in the economy. The 'credit crunch' has had a major impact on the housing market across the country and within this region, new house-building has virtually stopped. As the State has faced a funding deficit, it has diverted funds that would otherwise have supported ongoing transit service. As a result, Regional Transit has endured a series of budget cuts that have resulted in service cuts and fare increases.

At the same time, gas prices spiked at over \$4/gallon which led to unprecedented increases in transit ridership as people looked to more affordable means of transportation. The Sacramento transit market has moved from 'transit-dependents' to new 'choice riders' as the Sacramento region's vulnerability caused by extensive low density land use and dependence on the automobile was exposed.

At a national and even global level, further major changes have taken place. No one could have foreseen the scale of the changes for our financial sector or our automotive industry. As we entered a major economic recession, there was a growing realization about the need to address the concerns around climate change, air quality, energy prices and security.

However, there is cause to be positive in these changing times. The new federal administration has recognized the challenges with its economic stimulus package and a renewed focus on cities and infrastructure, along with a need to address climate and energy issues. California is also leading the way in tackling climate change. In this context, the role of transit in our communities has never been more important and the timing of the Transit Master Plan could not have been better.

With inputs from a wide range of partners and stakeholders, RT has developed a clear Vision which requires a new approach for Regional Transit. The Vision advocates greater partnership between agencies and with the public, and it lays out an 'Integrated Transit Solution' which focuses on a comprehensive approach to sustainable land use planning and complementary transportation demand management (TDM) measures. A 'transit-only' approach to transit planning and investment will no longer be a good enough response to the new challenges we face.

This more comprehensive approach to transit planning and service provision will have many benefits but will inevitably cost more to build and operate. The Plan sets out a range of funding options that will need to be discussed as the Plan moves forward.

This new Plan has been developed through a major outreach program and RT is grateful for the support it has received from a wide range of stakeholders and the public in its development. It is The People's Plan.

I am proud to present this 'TransitAction Plan' and its long-range delivery strategy. It is what you, Sacramento, told us you wanted and now we need to make it happen.

Mike Wiley

General Manager, Sacramento Regional Transit

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