

To: Marketing, Planning, & Legislative Committee

Date: October 30, 2014

From: Laramie Bowron, Manager of Planning

Reviewed by:

SUBJECT: Systemwide Title VI Service Standards and Policies

Summary of Issues:

In preparation for County Connection's Title VI update, which is due to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in February 2015, County Connection is required to adopt and then apply the following Systemwide Service Standards and Policies to fixed route service. Some of these standards and policies already exist; some need updating, and some need creating. This document establishes standards to be used in the 2015 Title VI Plan and will supersede those previously adopted. The required Title IV standards are:

- System-wide Service Standards
 - a. Vehicle Load
 - b. Vehicle Headways
 - c. On-time Performance
 - d. Service Availability

- System-wide Service Policies
 - a. Vehicle Assignment
 - b. Transit Amenities

Staff has developed draft standards and policies and included them within this document for the committee to review.

Systemwide Service Standards

Vehicle Load

Vehicle Load Factor is described as follows by FTA Circular 4702.1B:

Vehicle load can be expressed as the ratio of passengers to the total number of seats on a vehicle. For example, on a 40-seat bus, a vehicle load of 1.3 means all seats are filled and there are approximately 12 standees. A vehicle load standard is generally expressed in terms of peak and off-peak times.

County Connection calculates Vehicle Load Factor by dividing the average peak passenger load on each route by the fleet's average seating capacity. Vehicle Load Factor is monitored regularly and used to determine whether additional capacity needs to be added to specific trips or routes based on changing demand patterns.

Proposed Standard:

Staff proposes implementing a maximum Vehicle Load Factor of 1.25 during peak and 1.00 during off-peak times.

Vehicle Headway

Vehicle headway is described as follows by FTA Circular 4702.1B:

Vehicle headway is the amount of time between two vehicles traveling in the same direction on a given line or combination of lines. A shorter headway corresponds to more frequent service. Vehicle headways are measured in minutes (e.g., every 15 minutes). Headways and frequency of service are general indications of the level of service provided along a route. Vehicle headway is one component of the amount of travel time expended by a passenger to reach his/her destination.

County Connection calculates headway by determining the average length of time between buses on each route. In the event a route regularly exceeds Vehicle Load Factor standards, County Connection will evaluate whether headways should be reduced within the confines of funding levels.

Proposed Standard:

Staff proposes implementing a maximum vehicle headway standard of 2-hours.

On-Time Performance

On-time performance is described as follows by FTA Circular 4702.1B:

On-time performance is a measure of runs completed as scheduled. This criterion first must define what is considered to be "on time." For example, a transit provider may consider it acceptable if a vehicle completes a scheduled run between zero and five minutes late in comparison to the established schedule. On-time performance can be measured against route origins and destinations only, or against origins and destinations as well as specified time points along the route. Some transit providers set an on-time performance standard that prohibits vehicles from running early (i.e., ahead of schedule) while others allow vehicles to run early within a specified window of time (e.g., up to five minutes ahead of schedule). An acceptable level of performance must be defined (expressed as a percentage). The percentage of runs completed system-wide or on a particular route or line within the standard must be calculated and measured against the level of performance for the system.

County Connection defines a bus as late if it departs the "time point" five or more minutes later than the published time. Buses are considered early if they depart from a published time point at any time prior to the scheduled departure.

Current Standard:

County Connection has an adopted on-time performance goal of 95 percent. On-time performance is tracked and included within monthly performance reports to the County Connection's Board of Directors.

Service Availability

Service availability/transit access is described as follows by FTA Circular 4702.1B:

Service availability is a general measure of the distribution of routes within a transit provider's service area. For example, a transit provider might set a service standard to distribute routes such that a specified percentage of all residents in the service area are within a one-quarter mile walk of bus service or a one-half mile walk of rail service. A standard might also indicate the maximum distance between stops or stations. These measures related to coverage and stop/station distances might also vary by population density.

County Connection will determine transit availability by mapping all active bus stops within the system and then calculating the population that resides within one-half mile radii of those stops. This information is then compared to the total service area population.

Proposed Standard:

Staff proposes implementing a goal of ensuring 70 percent of county residents live within one half mile of a bus stop.

Systemwide Service Policies

The FTA requires fixed-route transit providers to develop a policy for each of the following service indicators. The following policies differ from service standards in that they are not based on meeting a quantitative threshold, but rather qualitative evaluation results.

Vehicle Assignment

Vehicle assignment is described as follows by FTA Circular 4702.1B:

Vehicle assignment refers to the process by which transit vehicles are placed into service in depots and on routes throughout the transit provider's system. Policies for vehicle assignment may be based on the age of the vehicle, where age would be a proxy for condition. For example, a transit provider could set a policy to assign vehicles to depots so that the age of the vehicles at each depot does not exceed the system-wide average. The policy could also be based on the type of vehicle. For example, a transit provider may set a policy to assign vehicles with more capacity to routes with higher ridership and/or during peak periods.

County Connection currently has three general types of buses in the fleet, all of which are maintained to the same strict standards:

- 30-foot heavy-duty transit buses
- 35-foot heavy-duty transit buses
- 40-foot heavy-duty transit buses

Proposed Policy:

All buses have the same level of amenities (i.e. air conditioning, wheelchair lifts, automated stop announcements), available to riders. Buses are not assigned to specific communities within County

Connection's service area based on vehicle age, but rather to serve specific routes that call for vehicles of differing lengths based street limitations. Many of the routes serve multiple communities with diverse populations. Given County Connection's strict standards with respect to maintenance, age does not serve as a viable proxy for diminished quality.

Transit Amenities

Transit amenities are described as follows by FTA Circular 4702.1B:

Transit amenities refer to items of comfort, convenience, and safety that are available to the general riding public. Fixed-route transit providers must set a policy to ensure equitable distribution of transit amenities across the system. Policies in this area address how these amenities are distributed within a transit system, and the manner of their distribution determines whether transit users have equal access to these amenities. This...is not intended to impact funding decisions for transit amenities. Rather, this...applies after a transit provider has decided to fund an amenity.

Proposed Policy:

Transit amenities are distributed on a system-wide basis. Transit amenities include shelters and benches. The location of transit amenities is determined by factors such as ridership, individual requests, staff recommendations, and vendor preference (in the case of shelters which feature advertisements).

Staff seeks to distribute benches and shelters to match the distribution of minority Census tracts.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends the committee review the Title VI Systemwide Standards and Policies and forward them to the Board for adoption.