Alternatives for transit operations

E. Beimborn, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Overview

- There are a broad array of options for modification of transit operations to make it more cost effective and efficient.

- These are typically examined to deal with financial pressures or to improve the quality of service to customers.

- The options listed can be used to reduce costs or to increase revenues. Costs depend on how many vehicles are operated.
What is the cost of one vehicle?

- Assume it will operate for two drive shifts (16 hours per day) and operate 300 days per year (weekdays, Saturdays, some holidays)
- The vehicle operates 4800 hours per year. Costs depend on the hourly operating costs of a vehicle.
- At $50 per hour, this gives an annual cost of $240,000.
- Thus, adding or removing a vehicle from service can change the costs of transit operations substantially.

What is the revenue if one more person uses transit?

- A new user that uses transit regularly will add revenue to the system at very little or no additional cost.
- If the person uses transit twice a day for 5 days per week and pays an average fare of $1.00, this generates $500 per year of new revenue.
Cycle time

- The time it takes for a vehicle to return to the beginning point of the route.
  - Travel the length of the route outbound, layover at point A, return and layover at point B
  - Or sum of running time in both directions plus layover.
- Number of vehicles required (cost) is cycle time / headway
- Example: a 100 minute cycle time and a 20 minute headway requires 5 vehicles
- Must be an integer, i.e. a 30 minute headway requires 4 vehicles, not 3.33

Headway vs. quality of service

- If headways are large, a reduction of one vehicle on a route has a big impact on wait time and convenience.

![Graph showing tradeoff between level of service and costs](image)
Level of Service Alternatives - 1

- Increase headways (cut buses from routes)
- Change hours of operation
- Change days of operation (Saturday, Sunday, summer)
- Add new routes
- Eliminate routes
- Turn back buses
- Split routes
- Use shorter routes

OPERATING STRATEGIES
1. Turnbacks or short-turning
2. Route branching or splitting
3. Zone scheduling
Route profiles

ROUTE PROFILES – BY LOCATION

Number of passengers

Shopping Center  University  Central Area  Industrial  Shopping Center

End  Central Area

3 buses  6 buses

Level of Service Alternatives -2

- Reroute
- Eliminate overlapping portions of routes
- Change running time
- Change deadhead routes
- Improve schedule coordination with improved transfer facilities, coordinated with trip generators
- Express service
- Running time improvement
- Modify layover time
Revenue Alternatives -1

- Increase base fares
- Increase pass fare
- Increase tickets or token price
- Zone fares
- Change fares for special groups

Revenue Alternatives -2

- Change transfer policies
- Change hours for special fares
- Peak/off-peak pricing
- Employee pass sales
- Marketing campaign
- Special Events Service
Equipment Changes
- Equipment Changes
- Small bus/large bus
- Articulated buses
- Taxicab substitute; route ends, off peak
- Improved maintenance

Other Changes
- Renegotiate labor contract
- Use of part-time labor
- Change phase in period for new employees
- Pool insurance risk
- Cooperative purchasing
- Cooperative maintenance
- Use private contractors if it reduces cost (including contract administration)
Acknowledgements

- Some of this material was developed as part of work being conducted by the Great Cities University consortium under the lead of the University of Alabama at Birmingham using funds provided by the Federal Transit Administration of the U.S. Department of Transportation.

- The opinions expressed are the product of independent university work and not necessarily those of the sponsoring agencies or of the agencies supplying data for the project.