

# Transit Expansion



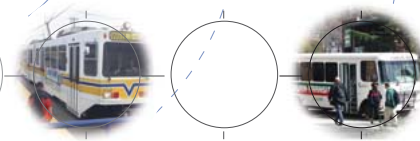
SACRAMENTO REGION

ISSUE BRIEF

OCTOBER 2005

**MTP2030**  
METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN  
THE NEXT STEP IN BLUEPRINT

Expansion of transit services through the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) 2030 requires examination of transit's primary role to serve the transit dependent or provide another choice to those who now choose to drive. Other questions to explore are transit's potential to attract new ridership, cost, sources of funding, and relationship to our regional growth.



## Transit Capacity and Use

Transit service in our region is currently provided by 14 public transit operators and two assisted-ride agencies, offering varied size and types of service. It is primarily a lifeline service for the transit-dependent. Transit currently carries less than 1 percent of all daily trips in the region, about 4 percent of commute trips, and 20 percent of commute trips into downtown Sacramento.

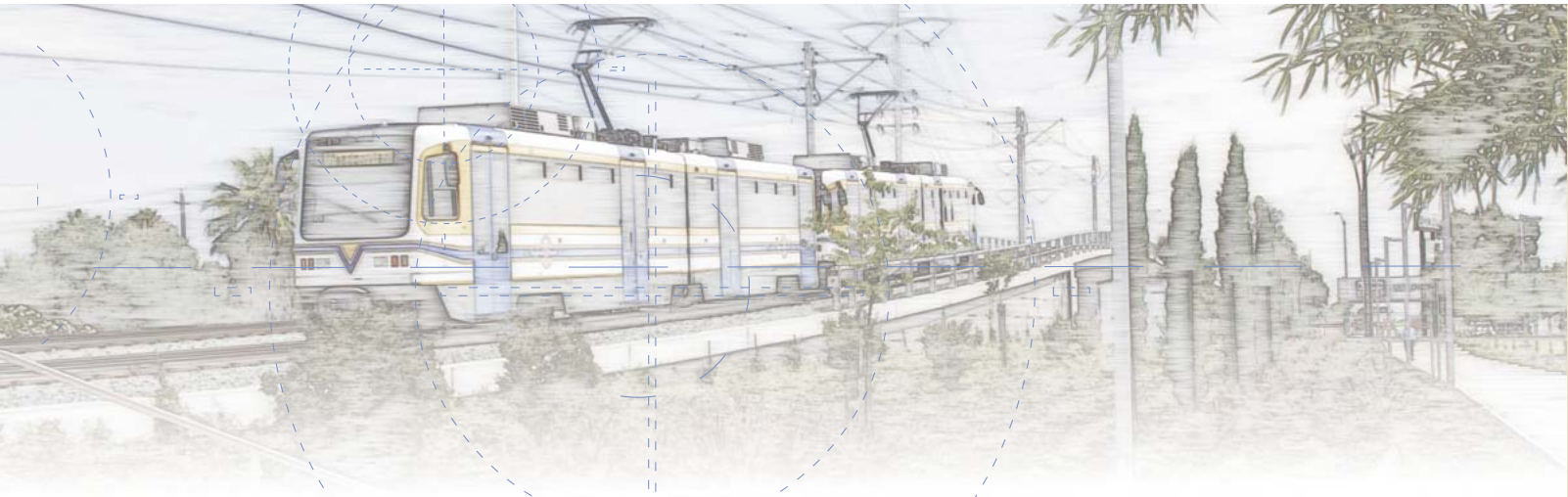
At least half of ridership comes from transit-dependent passengers: youth, elderly, disabled, low income, or those without access to an automobile. The remaining riders are choice riders, who choose transit over other available transportation. Service frequency of 15 minutes or less is considered the minimum to attract those who can choose between auto and transit. Fewer than 10 percent of all existing routes run as often as 15-minute frequency.

Strategic transit expansion will be necessary to increase commute choice ridership and critical to complement and serve more compact Blueprint development patterns.

## Transit Expansion and Land Use

Land use density is fundamental to efficient transit service. Transit use increases dramatically, by as much as 45 percent, for destinations within walking distance. Urban form and transit service must work together. As urban area populations grow beyond

*This brief highlights the transit expansion issues being studied for the MTP2030. For the complete Transit Expansion Issue Paper and a list of MTP2030 Community Workshops visit [www.sacog.org/mtp](http://www.sacog.org/mtp)*



two million, transit and walking become more suitable, highway congestion becomes the expected norm, driving costs increase (delay and parking), and accessibility patterns change.

With Blueprint as a key regional goal, transit expansion and investments can become tools to shape land-use objectives. The transition period is challenging for transit. Infill and compact development require high-level transit service, but that level of service does not operate efficiently until compact development is in place.

### Transit Expansion and Travel

Transit fares are a key factor for most transit-dependent riders, who tend to have lower incomes. For the choice rider, transit must compete with auto on travel time, convenience, out-of-pocket cost and perceived comfort. Without competitive travel time, few drivers are willing to park and switch to slower transit services once they get behind the wheel.

As the baby-boom generation ages, our region will see significant growth in the senior population and changing demand for transit services.

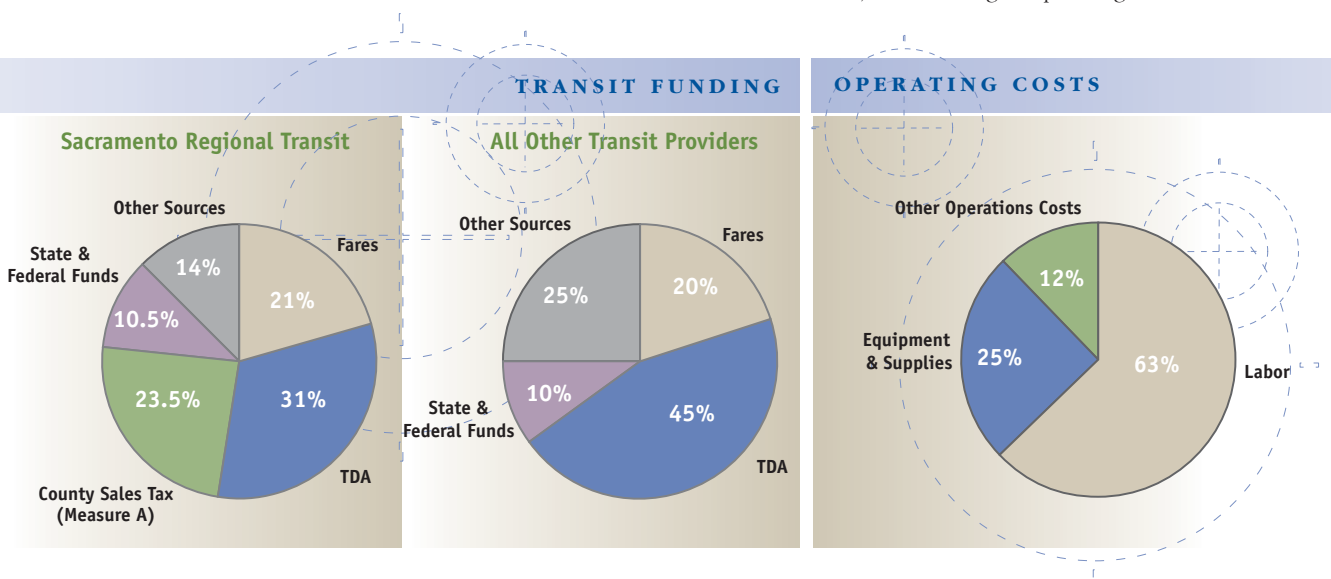
### Service Expansion

For the same dollars, bus service allows broader area coverage whereas rail transit provides high capacity in limited areas along higher-density corridors. Service coverage and frequency are two primary, but often conflicting, considerations in transit service expansion. Public funding to support operations is the most critical component of service expansion, and presently limits the amount of transit service that can be deployed in the region.

Modeling of the Preferred Blueprint Scenario shows peak transit demand of 140,000 morning and afternoon trips by 2030, four times larger than today. Both increased service frequency and coverage will be necessary to reach Blueprint objectives for 4 percent transit mode share.

### Environmental Effects of Transit

Public transportation, while a large user of fuel and energy, can contribute to energy conservation; a bus carrying seven or more riders is more efficient than driving alone. Electric rail transit vehicles and trolleybuses emit little or no pollution at the point of operation; modern buses, running on alternative, cleaner fuels such as compressed natural gas (CNG) or clean diesel fuel, are becoming less polluting.





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## Transit Service Options

Services customized for particular travel markets can attract riders more effectively. Transit encompasses a wide spectrum of services, some now operating here and some not: urban rail/light rail, commuter rail, streetcar, express bus, bus rapid transit, local service bus, neighborhood shuttle bus, dial-a-ride, assisted paratransit for the disabled, subscription bus, and jitneys. Quality of service, including better access, more comfortable ride, smoother transfers, and nicer stops, can also help.

## Funding for Transit Expansion

The Sacramento region has limited financial capacity to expand transit service, and most additional funding must come from local sources. Transit cannot operate in a funding vacuum, and fares typically provide only 20 to 30 percent of the revenues needed to fund transit service at today's ridership levels. Capital and operating costs vary widely, and both matter significantly in considering how to expand transit. Sales taxes and fares pay for most operating costs, while federal and state funds can help pay for equipment and facilities. With 75 to 85 percent of operating costs going into labor, service arrangements that can minimize labor cost become critical.