

Challenges

Matching Capacity to Demand

With ridership gains on many of our core routes, CDTA faces the somewhat enviable position of not having the capacity to meet demand. As we continue to improve the system and make it easier to understand and use, we expect that demand will continue to outpace capacity, requiring resources for additional human and capital requirements.

As CDTA struggles to meet capacity demands, operating costs continue to rise: last year CDTA budgeted \$5.2 million for fuel (8% of our operating budget). This year, we project our fuel costs will rise to \$6.8 million or 10% of the budget. A little known issue - as more people choose transit, state funding for transit (through the petroleum business tax line item) actually goes down.

Meeting Mandates

CDTA is committed to meeting required mandates, but faces meeting some mandates with no funding support. These include:

- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) applies requirements to our STAR service. There is no federal, state or local funding for STAR, but we expect to spend over \$7 million this year on STAR operations.
- The Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) mandates transit authorities to retrofit existing diesel powered buses with the best available technology for emission control. This will require the installation of particulate filters on diesel-powered buses. We estimate that each retrofit will cost about \$15,000 per bus, with the total cost of this program expected to exceed \$1.2 million.

Safety and Security

In addition, limited and insufficient funding is available to respond to security issues and concerns at our rail stations and on the transit system.

Contact Us

For more information about CDTA, please visit us at www.cdta.org, or contact Raymond J. Melleady, CDTA Executive Director at raym@cdta.org or by calling 437-8310.

Driving Tomorrow's CDTA





About CDTA

The Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA) was created in 1970 by the New York State Legislature to fulfill an important mandate and to execute a clear transportation vision. CDTA is to serve as a public benefit corporation that provides regional transportation services by bus, rail, water and air.

Today, CDTA is the premier mobility provider in the Capital Region, operating regular route bus services, suburban shuttle systems and service for people with disabilities (STAR). CDTA also operates the Northway Express commuter service between Saratoga County and Albany, and coordinates Medicaid transportation services through its Access Transit Services subsidiary. CDTA owns and operates two essential regional gateways, the Rensselaer Rail Station and the Saratoga Springs Train Station. Close to 800,000 people boarded trains at these stations last year.

While CDTA focuses on service specifics, like route planning, fare media and the delivery of efficient services, its broader subject is people—the almost 800,000 people who live in the region; more than 35,000 daily customers; and the 650 people who work at CDTA—to deliver an effective and efficient transportation system to the Capital Region.

What we are doing

Last year, close to 13 million people used CDTA bus services. More than halfway through this fiscal year, CDTA is on pace to exceed 13 million boardings and all indicators point to additional ridership gains. In addition to the social and economic factors that are fueling ridership, CDTA has launched new services and programs to increase ridership, and has detailed a strategic plan to meet the region's transportation challenges of tomorrow.

CDTA is playing a vital role in the region's growth. We are working with state, regional and local organizations to make the region a better place to live and work by advocating for transit-oriented development. We are improving CDTA's service delivery by using creative recruitment and employee development programs to improve the competencies of our workforce.

Ridership is on the rise and more people are looking to CDTA than in recent memory. Our challenge is to keep pace with demand and to provide continued product and service improvements. This requires creativity, resources and a commitment to excellence by our employees.

Growth, Expansion and Progress

Ridership is up throughout the transit system.

- For the first 8 months of this fiscal year, there were about 500,000 more boardings on regular route buses than for the same period last year, a 6% increase in ridership and revenue.
- Ridership on STAR, our service for people with disabilities is up more than 20% from last year.
- With gas prices over \$3.00 per gallon, we see no signs of this abating. In fact, many of our routes are overcrowded and require additional resources for us to respond.

“Demand will outpace capacity, requiring additional resources.”

Planning for Transit

Completed last year, CDTA's Transit Development Plan evaluated the transit system and its relationship to regional development. The TDP—developed with broad community involvement—recommended that core routes could generate more ridership with increased spans and improved frequencies. It also provided service design guidelines and a roadmap for reallocating resources while maintaining our commitment to serving those who need us most.

The plan generated immediate initiatives:

- Saratoga Service – by doubling the amount of service available in Saratoga and making the system easy to understand and use, ridership has almost tripled. With positive ridership, we recently added 2 more routes to the service complement and responded to the community with service to the Victorian Streetwalk and to the First Night celebration on New Year's Eve.
- Schenectady Service Redesign – using TDP design principles we have initiated the public outreach component of the Schenectady service redesign. We expect to enhance the core routes that connect the city to the region and to redesign neighborhood services to be consistent with development patterns in Schenectady County. This effort, scheduled for implementation late in 2008, will require a 25% increase in service hours in Schenectady.

Making transit easier to use

Starting with a dynamic shift from white to blue buses, CDTA spent most of 2007 re-branding the system to make it easier to recognize, understand and use. While the more obvious changes are taking place under the heading of iRide, we are also updating all of our communication and outreach materials. Making our system more inviting is attracting new customers and generating inquiries from people who are considering CDTA as a transportation alternative.

Replacing an aging fleet

As part of a five-year strategic fleet replacement plan, CDTA purchased 22 new buses last year from the Gillig Corporation, and plans to buy up to 25 new buses over the next four years. Most of our current buses are clean burning diesel models and six are hybrid-electric models—from now on, all new buses purchased by CDTA will be hybrid-electric. The 100-bus purchase—critical to system effectiveness and expansion to meet regional needs—will require over \$40 million to complete, and not all of the funding is currently in place.

“Making the system easier to recognize, understand and use is attracting new customers.”

Improving the environment

As people continue to choose CDTA, fewer cars will be on the roadway, a critical step in saving the environment. CDTA's Green Program also includes the purchase of hybrid-electric buses which use 30% less fuel and reduce emissions by close to 90%. Other CDTA green initiatives include clean burning diesel engines, bike racks on all buses, solar powered bus stop signs and new materials that explain how using CDTA helps the environment.

Becoming the employer of choice

Employee recruitment is critical to service expansion and the introduction of new vehicle technologies. CDTA has responded with several initiatives to make CDTA a premier regional employer, including a collective bargaining agreement with the union that represents most of our employees as well as a financial boost to our employees' ailing pension plan. CDTA has launched Project Empire, a comprehensive education and training program which features innovative career ladder and apprenticeship units. Together, these programs are working to bring us as close to full employment levels as we have seen in the past 10 years.

A community partnership

CDTA is meeting with a wide audience of elected officials, community leaders, business associations, employers and customers to promote the benefits of transit, introduce services that are available today and to discuss what the Capital Region could look like in the future with even better transit services. Our materials can be found at our redesigned website, www.cdta.org.