

1992
BOWLING GREEN PUBLIC
TRANSPORTATION
STUDY

Prepared by

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Mayor and Commission
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A comprehensive study of public transportation needs in Bowling Green has been completed by the City's Engineering Division at the request of the City Commission. The study developed goals and objectives of a transit system; inventoried Census data, previous studies, existing service providers, and operations in similar cities; analyzed the relationships and implications of that data; designed four alternative systems; evaluated the extent to which each alternative met the goals and objectives; reached conclusions, and made recommendations to the Commission.

The study found that most transit trips would be made by persons who have no automobiles available to them, including elderly, handicapped, and economically impacted persons. About one of every seven households in Bowling Green has no auto, according to the 1990 Census, and three out of four of those households are within two miles of City Hall in the central portion of the city. However, the remaining needs are spread throughout the city, and many key destinations, such as shopping malls and industrial parks, are near the edges of the city limits. The City itself has an exceptionally low density, making transit more expensive.

The study looked at four alternatives: 1) a traditional fixed route, fixed schedule system, 2) a demand-responsive (or "Dial a Ride") system providing door-to-door service, 3) a "user end" subsidy of the existing taxi service, and 4) the null alternative of no action. Costs ranged from \$112,500 to \$230,000 per year in local funds.

Analyses showed that Bowling Green has existing public transportation services, but those services are either too expensive or too restrictive to meet needs of those without automobiles available. Especially lacking are options for low income persons. Park and ride services for Western Kentucky University students, however, are very good.

All cities surveyed operated systems at substantial deficits. While the federal government funds up to half of the operating losses, the local governments are responsible for the remainder. Revenues typically cover only 15 to 25 percent of cost, since the true cost of providing an urban trip is about five dollars and fares are about one dollar.

Recommendations of the study:

Public transportation should be recognized as an unmet need of the City of Bowling Green and included in future needs assessment and financial planning by the City. Information on present services should be made available to the public on a consistent basis.

When long-term financial conditions permit, the City should establish a user-end (taxi) subsidy system for a six month trial duration. The service area would be the City of Bowling Green. Fare subsidy up to \$2.50 for a trip for a city resident for a trip beginning and ending within the City would be provided. The City would provide a \$40,000 local match Based on the results of the demonstration, a determination would be made by the City as to a permanent service area and continuation of the service.

The City should encourage and stress cooperative and coordinated services among local social service agencies through the Southern Kentucky Community Action Agency.

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