

To **RoseMary Covington**

Cc **Joanne Koegel, Alan Jones**

From **Ian Druce**

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Project Name	Regional Transit TMP	Project Ref No.	207593-A
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Subject **SWOC Analysis - Deliverable 3.3**

Introduction

Sacramento Regional Transit (RT) is undertaking a comprehensive update of its Transit Master Plan (TMP), Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP) and ADA/Paratransit Plan. As a key starting point to this initiative, the Steer Davies Gleave team did an assessment of the wider strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges (SWOC) facing the Sacramento Region. A second SWOC analysis was then undertaken focusing on Regional Transit. These analyses were informed by two main sources of information - interviews with the RT Board members and key staff and an independent review of key background and contextual documents, projects and reports.

This file note includes summaries of the documents reviewed and interviews undertaken concludes with the results of the SWOC assessment.

Board and Key Staff Interviews

A series of meetings and interviews were undertaken with RT Board members and key members of RT staff throughout the fall '07 to inform both the overall direction of the TMP project as well as to help the SDG team better understand some of the daily challenges for RT in delivering its services to the travelling public.

A file note was prepared in September summarizing the key themes of the interviews - including:

- **The TMP should be ambitious and show the way forward for Transit:** The general consensus was that the TMP should be more than a "Transit-only Transit Master Plan". The TMP must address wider land use issues in a growing region and must also set out the case for transit in relation to other transportation modes.
- Many of RT's services are provided as a social service ("lifeline" services) and for RT to be successful, they need to **grow their market share and attract new users** (choice riders). There was a realization that trends in gas prices, congestion, air quality and other factors all required that transit was developed as a real transportation choice. This would not be achieved by a "transit-only" approach to the TMP and would require a focus on partnerships with other agencies to achieve common goals.
- **Successful transit services provide competitive journey speeds, direct routes to key destinations, high(er) frequencies, and punctuality and reliability.** LRT and BRT were viewed as offering these attributes and streetcar solutions were also advocated as a means of attracting ridership. However, there was also a clear recognition for the need to have a strong bus, neighborhood ride and paratransit service supporting the whole, wider network.
- **The need to raise the profile and image of transit:** There was a strong view that the TMP should also address the need to improve the quality and standard of the transit service

provided including: reducing nuisance behaviour on transit, improving network information, marketing, fares & ticketing, transfers between modes and operators and generally making the network more “legible”. The use of new technology was also seen as in-scope for consideration by the TMP.

- **Smart Growth and the *Blueprint* will not be delivered without transit:** the importance of the Blueprint Preferred Scenario was recognized in defining the land-use future for the region. A number of examples were given of a trend towards higher density “urban” lifestyles. However, the largely low-density, suburban form of the region’s existing land-use and the trends for growth in population, housing and employment were seen as major issues for the TMP. The diversity of employment locations and new development locations and the need for transit links was also highlighted. There was a strong view that the TMP has to draw relevant partners/agencies together to ensure that Smart Growth ambitions are realized.
- **We must make Transit seamless, easy, relevant and convenient:** a “Put the Passenger First” approach was supported. This requires the TMP to review the routes, services, frequencies, standards and modes all undertaken within the wider context of the Blueprint and other challenges over the next 30 years. The governance issue was also raised, with a general view that wider transit coordination should be addressed as an alternative to fragmented local service provision. It was felt that a wider approach to service planning & provision could have efficiency savings (maintenance, purchase etc.), and provide benefits for riders through coordinated information, fares/tickets etc. This wider approach to governance does not preclude the option of locally focussed and branded transit services.
- **Transit funding for capital and operations is a major challenge:** A consistent theme raised at all the interviews was the need to address funding both for capital investment and for transit operations. The need for service cuts highlighted the funding issues facing transit service investment, expansion and operations. The TMP has to provide the case for funding, explaining the need for funding increases if the desired outcomes (improved services, higher ridership, greater operating efficiencies, better integrated land use and transit, transit as a real transportation choice, Blueprint objectives) are to be realized in the short, medium and long-term.

TMP Literature and Document Review

In addition to meeting with key RT staff and Board members, the SDG team also undertook its own independent review of previous studies, reports and documents related either directly (e.g. the previous TMP) or indirectly (e.g. work undertaken by SACOG) to the project.

This review included almost 100 documents and the full list was provided in File Note 3.1 - TMP Literature and Document Review. However, for reference, the key documents reviewed were:

- SACOG’s Blueprint Preferred Scenario
- SACOG’s DRAFT Metropolitan Transportation Plan for 2035
- Sacramento Regional Transit, Transit Master Plan 1993
- RT Strategic Plan
- Existing Short Range Transit Plan
- Existing ADA/Paratransit Plan
- Findings of Customer Surveys Conducted for Sacramento Regional Transit

The SWOC Assessment

Both the interviews and the background research and reading providing extremely valuable contextual information to the SDG team and provided the starting point for undertaking the SWOC assessment. In order to better frame the specific strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges, two separate yet related SWOCs were prepared - the first from a macro or regional perspective and the second from a more detailed Regional Transit perspective.

The Macro or Big Picture View

The first SWOC highlights the wider issues that influence RT's ability to provide a high quality transit service. As the capital of California, Sacramento has a strong regional economy and also benefits from a favourable climate. These issues combine to make the area an attractive place to live and work. However, over the last 30 years growth in the area has been relatively low density and suburban in nature. Employment and other opportunities have also tended to disperse. Many of these issues work against the delivery of an efficient transit network.

Looking ahead the inherent attractions of the region are forecast to increase population, employment and households, adding to existing issues relating to congestion and air quality. The Blueprint land use plan has been developed in response to these challenges.

TABLE 1 TMP SWOC ASSESSMENT – THE BIG PICTURE

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Employment • (relatively) low Gas prices • Sacramento's climate & topography • The Blueprint Initiative • State Capital of California 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 years of suburban, low density development • Dispersed, multiple activity centers • High dependency on the automobile • Congestion • Poor Air Quality
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A "smart growth" future • A need for transportation choice • Transit-oriented development • 21st Century information technology • Green/Renewable technology • A state/national/international leader 	<p>CHALLENGES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Big increases in population, employment and households • An aging population • Worsening congestion • Worsening air quality • Climate change • Energy prices & security

Specific Strengths

- Strong employment market (retail 27%, office 42%, industrial 16%, public/quasi-public 15%)
- Blueprint predicts a 20% job growth to 568,000 jobs (retail 25%, office 63%, industrial 8%, public/quasi-public 4%)
- Climate and topography of the region - annual average temp 74° F, 78% possibility of sunshine
- State capital - a center for leaders and decision makers
- One of the most ethnically diverse major cities in the US

Specific Weaknesses

- Air quality - Sacramento ranks in the top 12 areas in the US for the number of days that air quality does not meet federal health standards and is the 6th worst in the nation for ozone pollution
- Continued suburban development making transit provision difficult
- Without any change, time spent driving in congestion forecast to increase by 35%
- 92% of all trips made by car (1% transit, 7% bike/walk)

Specific Opportunities

- Up to 50% of new housing to be ‘attached’ products in Sacramento County
- Blueprint ‘friendly’ General Plans being developed
- Large in-fill developments can provide a ‘show-case’ for transit oriented development
- Higher density & mixed use development is required if transit mode share is to reach Blueprint target (1.1% to 3.3% for region)
- Transit needs to attract lifestyle users. Transportation Choice is a key component of Smart Growth

Specific Challenges

- SACOG forecasts that Sacramento County will continue growing over the life of the TMP:
 - Population - 54% increase (1.2m to 1.9m) by 2035
 - Households - 55% increase (474,000 to 732,000) by 2035
 - Jobs - 80% increase (542,000 to 976,000) by 2035
 - 65+ age - 87% increase to 281,000 by 2025
- Energy prices continue to rise

The Regional Transit View

The RT-related SWOC framework shows an RT infrastructure and organization that provides a comprehensive transit offer, benefiting from investment over a sustained period and with a set of further projects to enhance the scope and quality of services. However, the analysis also highlights the difficulties posed by the wider macro-issues, resulting in a low market share for transit, and a focus on providing “lifeline services for transit-dependent passengers”. These services and the renewal and maintenance of existing assets are delivered against challenging financial targets.

Looking ahead, RT has many opportunities and significant challenges to address. The role of transit is central to the delivery of a sustainable and prosperous Sacramento region. The growth forecasts and the Blueprint plan will not succeed without a high quality transit network relevant to the 21st century lifestyles of its existing and future inhabitants.

TABLE 2 TMP SWOC ASSESSMENT – THE RT VIEW

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mature existing Transit System • The Light Rail Network • Modern Bus Fleet • RT Staff • Overall passenger growth • A range of new “expansion” projects • The Blueprint land use plan 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transit Market Share • Decline in Bus Patronage • 21.5% farebox recovery • Perception of a “lifeline” service offer • Finances are tight • Delivery timescales for new projects
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RT as a leader/innovator - information technology, carbon footprint etc. • Changing public opinion - - from “Lifeline” to “Lifestyle” • Genuine Transportation Choice • “New Transit” as the key to a Smart Growth Future • Integrated Transport Solutions • Working with “tomorrow’s travellers” • More people means more passengers 	<p>CHALLENGES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance & renewal of existing facilities & infrastructure • Providing a Transit System for an expanding & dispersed Region • Responding to a changing demographic- an aging population • How can RT “help save the planet” ? • Finding the Funding • Government and public’s willingness to pay for transit improvements

Specific Strengths

- 97 bus routes, 36 mile light rail system
- Serving 1.4 million potential customers covering a service area of 418 square miles
- Ridership more than doubled in last 20 years - from 14 million in 1987 to 31.2 million passengers (fiscal year to end June 2006)
- Paratransit services provided by Paratransit Inc. - ridership doubled since inception in 1993

Specific Weaknesses

- Transit only carries a small share of the overall travel market (1.1%)
- Ridership on the RT bus network is declining (1% per year)
- Cost recovery is 19% on buses and 22% on the light rail (approximately \$30m out of a total operating cost of \$148m)
- Perception of RT services as ‘social service’ rather than mass transit
- RT only one of 14 regional transit agencies

Specific Opportunities

- Up to 50% of new housing to be ‘attached’ products in Sacramento County
- 20% of RT’s passengers use transit to get to school
- Patronage on the system is continuing to grow (4-7% per year) and existing riders rate the system positively (72%)

- SACOG's analysis predicts:
 - Region-wide transit trips will grow from 93,000/day to 629,000/day by 2050 - this would mean circa 120 million passengers for RT by 2050
 - Region-wide trips into the Sacramento downtown will rise by approximately 40%

Specific Challenges

- RT's light rail vehicles are approaching mid-life refurbishment and will need to be replaced during the 'life' of the TMP - 60% of the fleet is between 17-20 years old
- RT provides and maintains 3,600 bus stops but only 40% have benches (1,470) and less than 10% have shelters (332)
- The number of seniors predicted to double increasing demand for fully accessible transit and Paratransit services

The SWOC in Practice

The SWOC assessment was not only undertaken to provide useful context and a starting point for updating the TMP, but also to inform the review and update of the RT Strategic Plan and, in parallel, to help set the overall vision and objectives for the TMP.

Included within the Strategic Plan and the TMP will be a set of updated Key Performance Indicators for monitoring RT's services and projects to ensure that over the 28-year life of the TMP, RT and its partners continue to work towards building and delivering a better transit service that will attract choice riders, support the delivery of the Blueprint and ensure RT remains a financial stable transit organization.