



Glossary

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Accessibility: The extent to which facilities, including transit vehicles, are barrier-free and can be used by people who have disabilities, including users of wheelchairs and other mobility devices.

Activity Center: An area where there is a concentration of commercial and other land uses.

ADA Complementary Paratransit Service: Demand-responsive service operated by public entities in order to accommodate persons who cannot ride fixed-route services due to a disability. Public entities operating fixed-route services are required to provide complementary paratransit services meeting a set of service characteristics specified under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Alignment: The horizontal and vertical ground plan of a roadway, railroad, transit route or other facility.

Allocation: An administrative distribution of funds, for example, federal funds among the states; used for funds that do not have legislatively mandated distribution formula.

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA): Passed by the Congress in 1990, this act mandates equal opportunities for persons with disabilities in the areas of employment, transportation, communications and public accommodations. Under this Act, most transportation providers are obliged to purchase lift-equipped vehicles for their fixed-route services and must assure system-wide accessibility of their demand-responsive services to persons with disabilities. Public transit providers also must supplement their fixed-route services with paratransit services

for those persons unable to use fixed-route service because of their disability.

Amtrak: A quasi-public corporation created by the federal Rail Passenger Service Act of 1970 to improve and develop intercity passenger rail service throughout the United States.

Branch: One of multiple route segments served by a single route.

Bus: A rubber-tired road vehicle designed to carry a substantial number of passengers (i.e., 10 or more), commonly operated on streets and highways for public transportation service.

Bus Shelter: A building or other structure constructed at a transit stop. A transit shelter provides protection from the weather and may provide seating or schedule information or both for the convenience of waiting passengers.

Bus Stop: An area where passengers wait for, board, alight, and transfer between transit units (vehicles or trains). It is usually indicated by distinctive signs and by curb or pavement markings and may provide service information, shelter, seating, or any combination of these. Stops are often designated by the mode offering service, for example, bus stop, car stop.

Capital Costs: Refers to the costs of long-term assets of a public transit system such as property, buildings and vehicles.

Capital Improvement Program: The list of capital projects for a five to seven-year programming period.

Commuter Rail: Local and regional passenger train service between a central

city, its suburbs and/or another central city, operating primarily during commutes hours. Designed to transport passengers from their residences to their job sites. Differs from rail rapid transit in that the passenger cars generally are heavier, the average trip lengths are usually longer, and the operations are carried out over tracks that are part of the railroad system.

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ): CMAQ funds are administered by the Federal Transit Administration with the objective of improving the Nation's air quality and managing traffic congestion. CMAQ projects and programs are often innovative solutions to common mobility problems and are driven by Clean Air Act mandates to attain national ambient air quality standards. Eligible activities under CMAQ include transit system capital expansion and improvements that are projected to realize an increase in ridership; travel demand management strategies and shared ride services; pedestrian and bicycle facilities and promotional activities that encourage bicycle commuting.

Coordinated Transportation Plan: Federal law requires that projects selected for assistance under three programs—Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310), Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC), and New Freedom—be derived from a coordinated transportation plan. Plans must be developed through a process that includes representatives of public, private, and nonprofit transportation and human services providers and participation by the public.

Cost-Effectiveness: Cost effectiveness is the cost per passenger trip. More precisely, it is the amount of money a transit agency spends to provide its service (either as a system or a particular mode of travel, such as bus or rail) divided by the total number of passenger trips. This only accounts for what it costs to provide the service and does not deduct fare revenues from the cost of providing the service.

Cost Efficiency: Cost efficiency of transit measures the economy by which transit operators deliver service; ability to provide service outputs within constraints of service inputs; and the ability to provide service outputs (i.e. vehicle hours, miles, etc.) as a function of the service inputs (i.e. labor, capital, etc.). These measures include operating expense per vehicle revenue mile of service and operating expense per vehicle revenue hour.

Curb-to-Curb Service: A common designation for transit services in which the vehicle picks up and discharges passengers at the curb or driveway in front of their home or destination. In curb-to-curb service the driver does not assist the passenger along walks or steps to the door of the home or other destination, in contrast to door-to-door service, in which passengers may be provided with an escort from the door of their origin to the door of their destination.

Cutaway Vehicle: A cutaway transit vehicle consists of a bus-body attached to a small- or medium-sized truck chassis. Cut-away buses are typically smaller than standard buses and are used for lower ridership routes or dial-a-ride or paratransit services.

Deadhead: Term to describe of a transit vehicle while not generating fare revenue or without passengers aboard, often to and from a garage, or from one route to another.

Demand-Response Service: A type of transit service where individual passengers can request transportation from a specific location to another specific location at a certain time. Transit vehicles providing demand-response service often do not follow a fixed route, but travel throughout the community transporting passengers according to their specific requests. These services usually, but not always, require advance reservations.

Density: Density refers to the number of people or the number of employees per square mile.

Disabled Individual: Any person who by reason of illness, injury, age, congenital

malfunction, or other permanent or temporary incapacity or disability is unable, without special facilities, to use local transit facilities and services as effectively as persons who are not so affected.

Discretionary: Subject to the discretion of legislators or an administrator. The federal Section 5309 New Starts Program is an example of a discretionary program.

Door-to-Door Service: A form of paratransit service that includes passenger assistance between the vehicle and the door of his or her home or other destination. Door-to-door service provides a higher level of assistance than curb-to-curb service, yet not as much as “door-through-door” service, in which the driver actually provides assistance within the origin or destination.

Express Service: Service that has fewer stops and a higher operating speed than regular service. Often used an alternative term for limited-stop service; when agencies provide both types of service, the express service tends to have much longer sections of non-stop running.

Fare: Payment in the form of coins, bills, tickets and tokens collected for transit rides.

Farebox Revenue: A public transportation term for the monies or tickets collected as payments for rides. Farebox revenue may include cash, tickets, tokens, transfers, and pass receipts. Farebox revenues rarely cover even half of a transit system’s operating expenses.

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA): The FHWA is an agency within the U.S. Department of Transportation. The FHWA provides stewardship over the construction, maintenance, and preservation of the Nation’s highways, bridges, and tunnels and conducts research and provides technical assistance to state and local agencies in an effort to improve safety, mobility, and livability.

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Flexible Funds: FHWA Flexible Funds (or flex funds) fund transit related activities.

Flex funds are certain legislatively specified funds that may be used either for transit or highway purposes. The idea of flex funds is that a local area can choose to use certain Federal surface transportation funds based on local planning priorities, not on a restrictive definition of program eligibility. Flexible funds include Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) and FTA Urban Formula Funds.

Federal Transit Administration (FTA): A component of the U.S. Department of Transportation that regulates and helps fund public transportation. FTA provides financial assistance for capital and operating costs and also sponsors research, training, technical assistance and demonstration programs.

Fiscal Year (FY): A yearly accounting period designated by the calendar year in which it ends (e.g. FY 2000). The fiscal year for the federal government runs from October 1 to September 30.

Fixed Cost: An indirect cost that remains relatively constant irrespective of the level of operational activity.

Fixed-Route Service: Transit services in which vehicles run on regular, pre-designated, pre-scheduled routes, with no deviation. Typically, fixed-route service is characterized by printed schedules or timetables, designated bus stops where passengers board and alight and the use of larger transit vehicles.

Frequency of Service: The number of transit units (vehicles or trains) on a given route or line, moving in the same direction, that pass a given point within a specified interval of time, usually 1 hour; also known as headway.

General Public: Refers to residents, employees, and visitors in the community.

Human Services Transportation: Transportation related to the provision of human or social services, including transportation for the elderly, people with

disabilities, and low-income individuals when the transportation is provided by an arrangement other than public service available to all. Examples may include dial-a-ride (responding to individual door-to-door transportation requests), the use of bus tokens and/or transit passes for fixed route scheduled services, accessing taxi vouchers and/or mileage reimbursement to volunteers or program participants.

Intercity Bus Service: Provides long distance service between cities, often as part of a large network of intercity bus operators (e.g., Greyhound, Trailways). Both express and local bus service may be provided.

Interline: Transfer of transit vehicles or trains between routes during a day to improve staff or vehicle assignment efficiency.

Intermodal: The ability to connect, and make connections between, modes of transportation.

Jobs Access and Reverse Commute Program (JARC): A federal funding program for work-related transportation for low-income individuals, authorized in the TEA-21 transportation funding act. The purpose of this grant program is to develop transportation services designed to transport welfare recipients and low-income individuals to and from jobs and to develop transportation services for residents of urban centers and rural and suburban areas to suburban employment opportunities. Emphasis is placed on projects that use mass transportation services.

Layover: Layover time serves two major functions: recovery time for the schedule to ensure on-time departure for the next trip and, in some systems, operator rest or break time between trips. Layover time is often determined by labor agreement, requiring “off-duty” time after a certain amount of driving time.

Local Match: For many Federal, State, and other grants, “local match” is required, meaning funding (public or private) that is generated in local places and/or by local

agencies that is used to “match” other funds, per the grant requirements.

Local Service: Transit service that involves frequent stops and consequent low average speeds, the purpose of which is to deliver and pick up transit passengers close to their destinations or origins.

Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD): The Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) program is part of the Center for Economic Studies at the U.S. Census Bureau. The LEHD program produces new, cost effective, public-use information combining federal, state, and Census Bureau data on employers and employees under the Local Employment Dynamics (LED) Partnership.

Medicaid: A healthcare program for low-income and other medically needy persons, jointly funded by state and federal governments. The Medicaid program pays for transportation to non-emergency medical appointments if the recipient has no other means to travel to the appointment.

Medicare: Medicare is a national social insurance program administered by the U.S. federal government since 1966. Medicare provides health insurance for Americans aged 65 and older who have worked and paid into the system. It also provides health insurance to younger people with disabilities.

Metropolitan Planning Organization: The organizational entity designated by law with lead responsibility for developing transportation plans and programs for urbanized areas of 50,000 or more in population. MPOs set coordination standards and manage processes for selecting projects to be funded through federal transportation programs.

Metropolitan Statistical Area: A Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is a geographic region with a relatively high population density. MSAs are defined by the Office of Management and used by the Census Bureau and other federal government agencies for statistical purposes.

Mobility Management Program: Mobility management is a strategic approach to service coordination and customer service that allows transit service operators to collaborate, create partnerships, and expand the range of viable transit options in communities.

Mode: A transport category characterized by specific right-of-way, technological and operational features. A particular form of travel, for example, walking, traveling by automobile, traveling by bus, traveling by train.

Mode Split: The proportion of total person trips that uses each of various specified modes of transportation.

New Freedom Program: A new program under the SAFETEA-LU federal transportation funding act, New Freedom is intended to provide capital and operating funding for service and facility improvements that go beyond those required by the ADA in addressing transportation needs of persons with disabilities.

Operating: Maintaining the ongoing functions of an agency or service. “Operating expenses” include wages, benefits, supplies, and services. “Operating assistance” is used to pay for the costs of providing public transit service.

Operating Assistance: Funding that helps support the day-to-day costs of operating or providing services; in transportation settings, this category often includes driver salaries and operating staff expense, as well as fuel, and other routine, ongoing costs of having and operating a transportation service.

Operating Costs: Non-capital costs associated with operating and maintaining a transit system, including labor, fuel, administration, and maintenance.

Operating Expenditure per Capita: Operating expenditure per capita refers to the amount of transit operating dollars spent per person in a city, region, or state. This metric is often used to compare funding levels across different regions or locales.

Paratransit: Types of passenger transportation that are more flexible than conventional fixed-route transit and as such are able to meet a variety of more specialized transportation needs. Paratransit includes demand-response transportation services, shared-ride taxis, carpooling and vanpooling, jitney services and other service models. This term is most often used to refer to wheelchair accessible, demand-response van service.

Passenger: A person who rides a transportation vehicle, excluding the driver.

Passenger Miles: The total number of passengers carried by a transit system for a unit of time multiplied by the number of miles (kilometers) they travel. The ratio of passenger miles (kilometers) and seat or place miles (kilometers) provides a measure of efficiency.

Peak/Off-Peak: “Peak” refers to the period of time when the maximum amount of travel occurs—usually also the time when the demand for transportation is the highest. The morning and evening peaks occur when the majority of commuters are traveling to and from school or work. “Off-peak” refers to the time outside peak travel periods.

Propensity/Transit Propensity: Transit propensity is a concept that measures the likelihood of using public transit. Indicators of transit propensity typically include low-income households, minority status, households with zero cars, and age.

Revenue Mile: Miles operated by vehicles available for passenger service.

Revenue Service: Transit service excluding deadheading or layovers or any service scheduled for passenger trips. Also known as service hours.

Reverse Commute: A commute in the direction opposite to the main flow of traffic, for example, from the central city to a suburb during the morning peak. Increasingly common with growth in suburban employment. Valuable to operator as

provides additional passengers and revenue at little or no marginal cost.

Ridership: The number of rides taken by people using a public transportation system in a given time period.

Ridesharing: A form of transportation, other than public transit, in which more than one person shares in the use of the vehicle, such as a bus, van, or automobile, to make a trip.

Rolling Stock: The vehicles used by transit agencies to operate service, such as buses, vans, cars, railcars, locomotives, trolley cars and buses, and ferry boats, as well as vehicles used for support services.

Route: A specified path taken by a transit vehicle usually designated by a number or a name, along which passengers are picked up or discharged.

Route Deviation: A type of transit service that operates as conventional fixed route bus service along a fixed alignment or path with scheduled time, points at each terminal point, and key intermediate locations. Route deviation service is different from conventional fixed route bus service in that the bus may deviate from the route alignment to service destinations within a prescribed distance of the route. Following an off-route deviation, the bus must return to the point on the route it left.

Scheduling: The planning of vehicle arrivals and departures and the operators for these vehicles to meet consumer demand along specified routes.

Service Area: A geographic area which is provided with transit services. Service area is now defined consistent with ADA requirements.

Service Span: The span of hours over which service is operated, e.g., 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. or 24 hr (owl). Service span often varies by weekday, Saturday, or Sunday.

Shuttle Service: Fixed-route service that connects a small number of fixed stops and operates at a high frequency, over a repetitive route.

Surface Transportation Program (STP): The Surface Transportation Program is the largest potential source of flexible funds from the Federal Highway Administration. It can be used for a broad array of highway purposes and flexibly used for major transit purposes. A few examples include buying buses, rail vehicles, or constructing fixed guideway systems like light rail or heavy rail.

Total Miles: The total miles include revenue, deadhead, and yard (maintenance and servicing) miles.

Transfer: A passenger's change from one transit unit (vehicle or train) or mode to another transit unit or mode.

Transit Center: A transit stop or station at the meeting point of several routes or lines or of different modes of transportation. It is located on or off the street and is designed to handle the movement of transit units (vehicles or trains) and the boarding, alighting, and transferring of passengers between routes or lines (in which case it is also known as a transfer center).

Transit Dependent: Those having to rely on transit services instead of the private automobile to meet one's travel needs; also known as a captive rider.

Transit Reliant: Someone is transit reliant when they have no other option for transportation.

Transit Riders per Capita: The number of people who ride transit compared to the total population in a city, region, or state.

Trip: A one-way movement of a person or vehicle between two points. Many transit statistics are based on "unlinked passenger trips," which refer to individual one-way trips made by individual riders in individual vehicles. A person who leaves home on one vehicle, transfers to a second vehicle to arrive at a destination, leaves the destination on a third vehicle and has to transfer to yet another vehicle to complete the journey home has made four unlinked passenger trips.

Unlinked Trip: The boarding of one transit vehicle in revenue service; also known as an unlinked passenger trip, or any segment of a linked trip.

Useful Life: The expected lifetime of property, such as vehicles, or the acceptable period of use in service when properly and regularly maintained. Useful life is used interchangeably with “service life.”

Vanpool: A prearranged ridesharing service in which a number of people travel together on a regular basis in a van. Vanpools may be publicly operated, employer operated, individually owned or leased.

Variable Cost: A cost that varies in relation to the level of operational activity.

Vehicle Hour: Vehicle hours include revenue hours plus the time it takes a vehicle to travel from the garage to the end of the line.

Vehicle Miles: The number of miles traveled by a vehicle, usually calculated by mode.

Vehicle Revenue Hour: The measure of scheduled hours of service available to passengers for transport on the routes, equivalent to one transit vehicle traveling in one hour in revenue service, excluding deadhead hours but including recovery/ layover time.

Vehicle Revenue Mile: Miles operated by vehicles available for passenger service.

Wheelchair Lift: A device used to raise and lower a platform in a transit vehicle for accessibility by individuals using wheelchairs.