City of Loveland

Bus service supply, demand meet

Loveland’s efforts to better meet community transit desires have been successful. Ridership during 2008 increased by 21 percent. More buses, more routes and more destinations serviced more riders; a total of more than 135,000 passenger rides on the City’s three regular fixed route bus routes last year. Major changes in the bus system were launched in August. A third Loveland bus route began and the two existing routes were extended. Service was expanded a bit to serve east and west Loveland, respectively. All three buses meet at two central locations for passenger transfers.

And to misquote presidential candidate and newspaper editor Horace Greeley, the transit system now enables Loveland riders to “go east, young man!” into Horace’s namesake community. The Loveland system connects at Centerra with the new 3X4 Xpress route into Greeley. The Fox Trot bus to Fort Collins continues to run every hour, with its transfer station now at the Orchards Shopping Center. Even more of Loveland’s most popular destinations—for work, play or shopping—are served by the bus system. Medical visits, grocery shopping, recreation centers, schools and many other locations are available by bus. Schools are especially popular because students who don’t live far enough away to qualify for school bus service are frequent riders of City buses. Getting to and from class on a non-yellow school bus is convenient, warm and very inexpensive.

In addition to the fixed route services, the City’s ParaTransit bus system continues to be busy, providing door-to-door service for qualified riders. Almost 11,000 ParaTransit trips were provided to senior citizens and persons with qualifying disabilities.

Bus rides a bargain for passengers

“Step 3. Call. Have I got a deal for you! 92 percent of the cost for your transportation needs, that’s right, just 8 cents on the dollar.”

So sales for motocycles, scooters, bicycles and almost everything else that brings a person from Point A to Point B by street at a discount price like that. Yet that’s the real deal for Loveland transit system customers...bus rides. The individual cost to riders when they travel to their destinations to pay for fares or buy a multi-trip bus pass is just a smidgen of the actual cost for the service. Out-of-pocket fares make up only 9 percent of the total cost of the City of Loveland Transit operating budget.

Where does the rest come from? Basically, City and federal funds. Federal monies pay more than half the cost of the General Fund monies paying more than a third.

On a typical day, six buses are running 7-12 hour shifts. Three are the Blue, Green and Orange fixed route services. Three are the Blue, Green and Orange fixed route services. Three are the Blue, Green and Orange fixed route services.

During 2008, 135,917 total rides for fixed route and ParaTransit were provided at a cost of $970,302, resulting in an average fare of $6.67 per rider. During the math, 8 percent of $6.67 equals a 53-cent average fare paid by riders.

A more exact breakdown shows the average fixed route rider cost was $5.49 while the ParaTransit cost was $28.69—no, that’s not a typo. Actual fares costs vary widely. Different fixed route fares are offered for individual trips, multiple passengers, seniors, students and others. Highest is $1.25 for an individual ride, lowest ride cost is free for young children, and a popular option for students is a year-long unlimited-ride pass for $25. ParaTransit fares have fewer options and cost a bit more, but still far below the actual cost. These costs range from $2 to as low as $3.94 per ride with a multi-ride pass.

Paratransit door-to-door without a meter

Loveland resident are 60 and older or residents with a qualifying disability can get door-to-door transportation service and there’s never a meter running. For a flat rate of no more than $2 per trip, a City of Loveland Transit Paratransit bus will take riders anywhere in Loveland.

Paratransit riders can reserve a ride up to 14 days in advance. At least 72 hours advance notice is highly recommended because the service is booked on a first come-first-served basis. Unlike possible or holiday weekends or holidays that can be accommodated if a prior reservation is cancelled.

Residents will be picked up, depending upon time and destination. Group rides are provided several times a week. Group rides include the Civic Center Mall, grocery stores and general merchandise stores.

Paratransit riders are only those residents for transportation to medical appointments or dialysis treatments but does not necessarily require individuals to be residents of Loveland. Riders within Loveland are provided for any reason; to visit family, lunch with a friend, downtown shopping, going to the movies, whatever.

By providing this type of service a federal requirement for communities that provide fixed route bus service and receive funding from the federal government. The minimum requirement calls for paratransit service within 1/2 mile of the fixed route system but Loveland exceeds this by providing service throughout the entire Loveland city limits. Six days a week, up to three Paratransit buses provide service about 12 hours a day.

Transit plan moving forward

The cities of Loveland and Fort Collins along with the Poudre School District are working on a Strategic Transit Plan for public transportation in the area. The three-tiered approach will offer suggestions ranging from simple modifications to more comprehensive operations to be accomplished during the next 10 years or so.

Needless to say, many factors come into play. Perhaps none is larger than dealing with the program’s wishes versus funding sizes.

While different government partners are working together to foster regional connections and program efficiencies, adoption of the plan and implementation of recommendations is not an all-or-nothing necessity. The cities are committed to a vision which is to be able to move ahead with specific elements of the plan.

The plan is primarily an update of Fort Collins’ 2002 transit plan and Loveland’s 2004 plan. Many committee meetings and public input opportunities have occurred since the other began last summer, with more to come as the plan proceeds toward review and approval by the Fort Collins and Loveland city councils this summer.

A professional consulting firm paid by both cities is preparing the plan.