

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Rockland County Department of Public Transportation commissioned this study in order to assess the existing conditions of transit operations on the Route 59 Corridor in Rockland County, New York, and to develop alternatives and policies that will enhance and improve the level and quality of transit service in this area.

New York State Route 59 serves as the primary local east-west travel Corridor in Rockland County. The route connects several of the County's largest business districts, including Suffern, Airmont, Monsey, Spring Valley, Nanuet, West Nyack, and Nyack. The intensity of commercial and residential activity along and near the Route 59 Corridor has produced heavy volumes of private vehicular traffic and a high demand for public transit services. In 2006 Transport of Rockland (TOR) Bus Route 59 boardings accounted for approximately one-third of the more than 3 million riders recorded system-wide. Other TOR routes, COACH USA, Rockland Coaches' Short Line, Monsey Trails, Clarkstown Mini-Trans, and Spring Valley Jitney also operate on portions of the Route 59 Corridor.

Population growth, continued land development, and traffic congestion present challenges to operating efficient, reliable transit services in the Route 59 Corridor.



This study identified the existing conditions of transit operations through an extensive data collection effort, produced ridership forecasts for TOR 59 services, developed transit demand analyses for select improvement

scenarios, and recommends improvements to be made in short-term and mid-term periods.

Data Collection

In order to assess existing conditions for transit operations in the Route 59 Corridor area, a several-task data collection effort was undertaken.

- Traffic and turning movement counts were collected to assess traffic conditions.
- Transit boarding and alighting counts were conducted on TOR 59 services in an effort to identify major sources of passenger demand along the Corridor.
- The results of a transit passenger origin-destination survey identified relationships between ridership generators and presented data on travel habits and demographics of TOR 59 riders.
- A park-and-ride utilization analysis was performed to assess commuter utilization of transit services throughout the Corridor.

The data collection effort found that land use and development patterns in the Route 59 Corridor area contribute to traffic congestion and transit delays. TOR 59 ridership represents a transit-dependent portion of the Rockland County population. Most riders use TOR 59 to reach employment centers such as Palisades Center Mall and require services during late night and weekend periods to match work schedules. Transit operational issues such as flag-down service and current fare collection policies contribute to transit delays. The data collected indicates that there is a demand for cross-county direct or express services.

Transit Improvement Alternatives

Improvement alternatives were developed for short-term (1-5 year implementation horizon) and mid-term (6-10 year implementation horizon) outlook periods.

Short-term improvement alternatives include:

- Transition to fixed-stop service
- Addition of a TOR 59 Direct service
- Coordinating routes and schedules to remove service overlaps
- Transitioning to exact-fare collection
- Implementing automated fare collection
- Implementing Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) passenger information systems technologies
- Improving signal timing at select intersections

Mid-term improvement alternatives include:

- Queue jump bypass lanes at strategic locations
- Addition of a TOR 59 Express service
- Implementing transit signal priority
- Improving signalization Corridor-wide

Transit Demand Analysis

The effects of the improvement alternatives on future TOR 59 ridership were tested in a transit demand analysis. The analysis utilized a pivot-point logit model to calculate the change in ridership based upon the change in the utility of the transit service that the improvements induce. Baseline ridership figures for 2010, the horizon year for short-term improvements, and 2015, the horizon year for mid-term improvements, were developed based upon existing ridership figures and projected population growth. The model determined that by 2010 the short-term improvements would result in a 22.8 percent

increase in ridership over the 2010 baseline ridership forecast. By 2015, ridership would be 36.7 percent higher than the baseline forecast if the improvements were implemented.

Recommended Implementation Plan

A plan for applying improvement alternatives was developed and presented in a chronological order of implementation.

Year 1:

- Transition to fixed-stop service.

Years 2-3:

- Initiate TOR 59 Direct service in addition to existing TOR 59 services.
- Coordinate schedules with other TOR routes and other services to avoid overlaps.
- Implement exact-fare policy.

Years 3-5:

- Apply AVL/Passenger Information System technologies to vehicles and bus stop facilities
- Initiate study in cooperation with NYSDOT to improve signal timing in the Nanuet area, Spring Valley, and Monsey.

Years 6-10:

- Initiate TOR 59 Express service in addition to TOR 59 and TOR 59 Direct services.
- Implement Corridor signal improvements.