

Glossary of Terms

○ | ○ | ○ *These terms are commonly used within the transit industry*

A

Accessible Service — Buses operating in regular service with wheelchair lifts, kneeling functions or other devices that permit disabled passengers to use the service.

Alternative Fuel — A liquid or gaseous nonpetroleum fuel, used to power transit vehicles. Usually refers to alcohol fuels, mineral fuels, natural gas, and hydrogen.

AM Peak — The morning commute period (about two hours) in which the greatest movement of passengers occurs, generally from home to work; the portion of the morning service period where the greatest level of ridership is experienced and service provided.

AMTRAK (National Railroad Passenger Corporation) — 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.

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) — The law passed by Congress in 1990 which makes it illegal to discriminate against people with disabilities in employment, services provided by state and local governments, public and private transportation, public accommodations and telecommunications.

Automatic Passenger Counts — A technology installed on transit vehicles that counts the number of boarding and alighting passengers at each stop while also noting the time. Passengers are counted using either pulse beams or step treadles located at each door. Stop location is generally

identified through use of either global positioning systems (GPS) or signpost transmitters in combination with vehicle odometers.

Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) — A system that monitors the real-time location of transit vehicles carrying special electronic equipment that communicates a signal back to a central control facility, locating the vehicle and providing other information about its operations or about its mechanical condition.

B

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 Stop — A curbside place where passengers board or alight transit.

Bus Rapid Transit — Vehicles operating in their own dedicated travel lane or in shared lanes along specific corridors, bypassing traffic congestion on the streets with signal preemption and pedestrian-oriented stations. It combines the quality of rail transit and flexibility of buses.

Bus Shelter — A structure constructed near a bus stop to provide seating and protection from the weather for the convenience of waiting passengers.

C

Capital — Long-term assets, such as property, buildings, rail lines, and vehicles.

Capital Costs — Costs of long-term assets of a public transit system such as property, buildings, vehicles, etc.

Car Pool — An arrangement where people share the use and cost of a privately owned automobile in traveling to and from pre-arranged destinations.

Circulator — When limited to a small geographic area or to short distance trips, local service is often called circulator, feeder, neighborhood, trolley or shuttle service. Such routes, which often have a lower fare than regular local service, may operate in a loop and connect, often at a transfer center or rail station, to major routes for travel to more far-flung destinations.

Commuter — A person who travels regularly between home and work or school.

Commuter Rail — Local and regional passenger train service between a central city, its suburbs and/or another central city, operating primarily during commuter 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.

Corridor — A broad geographical band that follows a general directional flow or connects major sources of trips. It may contain a number of streets and highways and many transit lines and routes.

Crosstown Route — Non-radial bus service that normally does not enter the Central Business District (CBD).

D

Deadhead — There are two types of deadhead or non-revenue bus travel time; (1) bus travel to or from the garage and a terminus point where revenue service begins or ends, and (2) bus travel between the end of service on one route to the beginning of another.

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

E

Enhanced Bus — A catch-up program to improve the region's current limited range of bus and paratransit services. It is a first step to be taken before or in conjunction with any of the fixed guideway projects. This means more frequent service, broader coverage, starting more commuter express bus service, park-and-ride lots, more services for senior citizens, better transit for people with disabilities, extended nighttime service hours, ridesharing programs for employers and more. Enhanced bus also provides feeder service to proposed commuter rail, bus rapid transit and modern streetcar stations.

Express Service — Express service is deployed in one of two general configurations: (1) A service generally connecting residential areas and activity centers via a high speed, non-stop connection, i.e., a freeway, or exclusive right-of-way such as a dedicated busway with limited stops at each end for collection and distribution. Residential collection can be exclusively or partially undertaken using park-and-ride facilities. (2) Service operated nonstop over a portion of an arterial in conjunction with other local services. The need for such service arises where passenger demand between points on a corridor is high enough to support dedicated express trips.

Exclusive Right-of-Way — A right-of-way that is fully grade separated or access controlled and is used exclusively by transit.

F

Fare Box — A device that accepts the coins, bills, tickets and tokens given by passengers as payment for rides.

Farebox Revenue — The value of cash, tickets and pass receipts given by passengers as payment for public transit rides.

Fare Collection System — The method by which fares are collected and accounted for in a public transportation system.

Fare Structure — The system set up to determine how much is to be paid by various passengers using the system at any given time.

Federal Transit Administration (FTA, formerly UMTA, Urban Mass Transit Administration) — A part of the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) which administers the federal program of financial assistance to public transit.

Fixed-Guideway System — A system of vehicles that can operate only on its own guideway constructed for that purpose (i.e., rapid rail, light rail). Federal usage in funding legislation also includes exclusive right-of-way bus operations, trolley buses, and ferryboats as “fixed-guideway” transit.

Fixed Route — Transit service provided on a repetitive, fixed-schedule basis along a specific route, with vehicles stopping to pick up passengers at and deliver passengers to specific locations.

Frequency — The amount of time scheduled between consecutive buses or trains on a given route segment; in other words, how often the bus or train arrives (also known as Headway).

G

Garage — The place where revenue vehicles are stored and maintained and from where they are dispatched and recovered for the delivery of scheduled service.

H

Headway — The scheduled time interval between any two revenue vehicles operating in the same direction on a route. Headways may be LOAD driven, that is, developed on the basis of demand and loading standards or, POLICY based, i.e., dictated by policy decisions such as service every 15 minutes during the peak periods and every 30 minutes during the base period.

Heavy Rail — An electric railway with capacity for a “heavy volume” of traffic, and characterized by exclusive rights-of-way, high speed and rapid acceleration. Heavy rail is different from commuter rail and light rail.

High-floor Vehicles — Require riders to climb two or three steps from street level. Such vehicles accommodate wheelchair-bound and other riders who cannot climb steps by using a retractable lift (usually formed from the vehicle’s steps) that raises and lowers persons and equipments between street and floor levels.

HOV Lane — A traffic lane in a street or highway reserved for high occupancy vehicles, which may include two person vehicles in some applications.

I

Intermodal — Switching from one form of transportation to another.

Intermodal Facility — A building or site specifically designed to accommodate the meeting of two or more transit modes of travel.

L

Light Rail Transit (streetcar, tramway or trolley) — Light-weight passenger rail cars operating on fixed rails. Light rail vehicles are typically driven electrically with power being drawn from an overhead electric line via a trolley or a pantograph.

Low-floor Vehicles — Vehicles that eliminate the steps at the front entrance and have a level floor in the front part of the vehicle. Only a short retractable ramp is necessary to accommodate wheelchairs and those who cannot bridge the gap between the vehicle and street level. Some models have a level floor the entire length of the vehicle and no steps at the rear door.

M

Mode — A particular form of travel (i.e., bus, light rail, train, bicycle, walking or automobile).

Mode Split — The proportion of people that use each of the various modes of transportation. Also describes the process of allocating the proportion of people using modes. Frequently used to describe the percentage of people using private automobiles as opposed to the percentage using public transportation.

Model — An analytical tool (often mathematical) used by transportation planners to assist in making forecasts of land use, economic activity, and travel activity.

N

New Starts — Federal funding granted under Section 5309 (B) of the United States Code. These discretionary funds are made available for the construction of new fixed guideway systems or extensions of existing fixed guideway systems.

O

Off-Peak — Non-rush periods of the day when travel activity is generally lower and less transit service is scheduled.

Operating Cost — The total costs to operate and maintain a transit system including labor, fuel, maintenance, wages and salaries, employee benefits, taxes, etc.

Operating Revenue — Revenue derived from passenger fares. See also Farebox Revenue.

Operator — An employee of a transit system who spends his or her working day in the operation of a vehicle, i.e., bus driver, streetcar motorman, trolley coach operator, cablecar gripman, rapid transit train motorman, conductor, etc.

P

Paratransit — Transportation service required by ADA for individuals with disabilities who are unable to use fixed-route transit systems. The service must be comparable to the fixed-route service.

Park-and-Ride — A parking area for automobile drivers who then board vehicles, shuttles or carpools from these locations.

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

Peak Hour/Peak Period — The period with the highest ridership during the entire service day, generally referring to either the peak hour or peak several hours (peak period).

R

Radial Service — Local or express service designed primarily to connect the Central Business District with outlying areas.

Revenue Vehicle 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. Calculated for each route.

Revenue Service — When a revenue vehicle is in operation over a route and is available to the public for transport.

Revenue Miles — Miles operated by vehicles available for passenger service.

Reverse Commute — Movement in a direction opposite to the main flow of travel, such as from the Central City to a suburb during the morning commute hour.

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

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

Road Call — A mechanical failure of a bus in revenue service that causes a delay to service, and which necessitates removing the bus from service until repairs are made.

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.

S

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 (i.e., 6 am - 10 pm or 24 hours). Service span often varies by weekday, Saturday or Sunday.

T

Time Point — A designated location and time that a bus or LR vehicle can arrive before – but not leave earlier than – the stated time as indicated in the route schedule.

Transfer — A slip of paper issued to a passenger that gives him or her the right to change from one transit vehicle to another according to specified limitations.

Transit Center — A fixed location where passengers transfer from one route to another.

Transit Dependent — Someone who must use public transportation for his/her travel.

Trip — The one-way operation of a revenue vehicle between two terminal points on a route. Trips are generally noted as inbound, outbound, eastbound, westbound, etc. to identify directionality when being discussed or printed.

U

Urbanized area (UZA) — An area defined by the U.S. Census Bureau that includes one or more incorporated cities, villages and towns (central place) and the adjacent densely settled surrounding territory (urban fringe) that together have a minimum of 50,000 persons. The urban fringe generally consists of contiguous territory having a density of at least 1,000 persons per square mile. UZAs do not conform to congressional districts or any other political boundaries. Most U.S. government transit funding is based on urbanized areas.

W

Wheelchair Lift — A device used to raise and lower a platform in a transit vehicle for accessibility by handicapped individuals.