Service Standards & Performance Guidelines Overview & Samples

Service Standards and Performance Guidelines are useful tools that can be used to help plan new transit services, make adjustments to existing service and measure how well the transit system is progressing towards achieving its goals.

Service Standards define what transit service should look like for a particular community
Performance Guidelines measure whether goals met in order to recommend further changes

Service Standards

What they are and what they define: Service standards define minimum levels of transit service desired to meet community needs. While this overview provides a sample of common standards, it is important to note that each set of standards is specific to a particular transit system and the communities it serves. Therefore, service standards reflect community values and will vary from place to place.

Service standards usually define features such as a transit system's service span (the hours and days of service when it operates), frequency of routes or groups of routes, walking distance to bus stops, level of accessibility and how new service will be triggered for additional areas of service (subdivision density, population, etc.). Particularly in smaller systems with more limited resources and service levels, service standards may also outline priorities for service, such as market groups like seniors or youth or specific destinations like a college or regional hospital.

Why they matter: The key benefit of service standards are that they assist local governments and BC Transit staff in determining and managing community expectations around the level of transit service to be provided. They also help design the system since they will influence decisions like when to provide new service or increase or decrease existing service.

How they are created and renewed: In order to be effective, service standards need to be approved by a community. Ideally they would be developed as part of a larger community consultation around transit, such as a Transit Future Plan or Service Review. However, communities may elect to define and approve service standards as a separate process in collaboration with BC Transit.

Service standards should be reexamined and renewed periodically (every 5-10 years depending on community size), since standards are evolutionary and should grow with the system and underlying community.

Sample Service Standards

Target Transit Service coverage

Suggested for more urban areas: Transit routes and stops should be within:

- 400 m walking distance of *70/80/90* per cent of the residences,
- 250 m of all future medium and high-density residential developments, and
- 150 m walking distance of all designated senior's residences and major institutional facilities.

Suggested for more rural areas: Transit routes should connect key service centres and built up areas, with stops located in locations of commercial or residential density.

Direct service and transfers

- **Transit routes should connect** residents to their local neighborhood centre and transit trips between neighborhood centres (*or regions*) should be able to be made with no more than one transfer.

Ease of use and accessibility.

- Persons with mobility and cognitive disabilities should be provided with a range of transit options, including *handyDART service, taxi programs, and accessible conventional transit vehicles and bus stops*.
- While all vehicles are accessible, the fleet target is to work toward 80% of vehicles as low floor with side loading ramps. *(or various other percentages or fleet types based on conventional/paratransit/handyDART composition or by service layers/route types).*
- In order to make the transit system easy to understand and use for all passengers, routes should be direct and simple to understand, and service frequencies and schedules should be consistent on each route and during each time period, where possible.
- Customer information should be designed to be straightforward with simple route and schedule information. *(Typically for larger systems: BC Transit will work with the municipality to develop a comprehensive branding package in the future, including:*
    - *Information and branding for the Rapidbus Network and the Frequent Transit Network, including naming convention, logo/identifier, visual identity and style guide for additional livery (vehicle colour schemes or logos), print and electronic channels.*
    - *Identity and numbering for the local transit network and special services. Current livery will remain.*
    - *Strategies for route identification e.g, name/number that align with the layers of service)*

Transit Facilities

- The municipality will aim to create x% of transit stops and facilities as universally accessible.
- On-street passenger facilities, including the provision of bus benches, shelters, lighting, waste receptacles, and route/schedule information will be provided at all exchanges and at x% of stops.
- Transit stops in urbanized areas should be spaced along a corridor at an appropriate interval between 300m - 400m. Transit stops that are spaced too close together lead to slower transit trips and higher transit stop maintenance costs and stops that are too far apart limit passenger access to the system. Outside the urbanized area, bus stops should be limited to major destinations, points of interest, and residential concentrations.
- *For larger communities:* Rapid Transit Network stops/stations should include premium shelters and customer information (real time) with level door boarding and may include bike storage
- *For larger communities:* Other higher activity stops should include on-street customer amenities such as transit shelters, benches and customer information.
- *For larger communities:* Transit Priority measures should be provided on the Rapid Transit Network and Frequent Transit Network to improve travel time and reliability. These measures include, signal timing optimization, transit signal priority, regulatory signage such as yield to buses, and geometric such as queue jumper lanes and transit only lanes.
- *As applicable:* Park & Rides should be provided in rural and suburban areas to cater to rural or semi-rural areas where local service are less frequent or does not exist.

Service Span and Frequency

Example for smaller systems: Service will be adjusted over time to meet the following targets for operating hours, days and service frequencies:

Service Type	Weekdays		Saturdays		Sundays		Stat Holidays	
	Span	Frequency	Span	Frequency	Span	Frequency	Span	Frequency
Main St. Route	7am–7pm	30 min/peak, 60 min/base	8am-6pm	60 min	10am–6pm	120 min	10am–6pm	120 min
All other city routes	7am–6pm	60 min	9am–6pm	60-90 min	No Service		No Service	
Rural community bus routes	7am–6pm	60 min/peak 120 min/base	9am–6pm	120 min	No Service		No Service	
Regional route	8am-5pm	3 trips/day	No Service		No Service		No Service	
handyDART	7am–6pm	2 buses	9am–6pm	1 bus	No Service		No Service	

Service Span and Frequency, cont.

Example for larger systems with a Transit Future Plan:

Service will be adjusted over time to meet the following targets for operating hours, days and service frequencies as described by the Transit Future Plan Network Layers:

By Layer of Service	*Rapid Transit Network*	*Frequent Transit Network*	*Local Transit*	*Targeted: handyDART*	*Targeted: Niche market services*
Service Description	Routes are designed to move large volumes of passengers between major destinations and stop less often than frequent and local transit service	These routes generally operate on arterial roads and serve corridors with mixed land use and provide connections between urban centres	These routes generally serve less densely populated areas with a focus on connections to local centres and more frequent transit routes	Demand responsive service for people with disabilities who cannot use the regular accessible conventional transit system some or all of the time.	These routes are created to provide targeted service to areas such as schools, universities and/or peak commuter trips
Existing Routes in This Category	None.	1, 3, 5	2, 4, 6, 7, 8	n/a	98, 99
Future Routes in this Category	1, 2	3, 4, 5, 6	7, 8, 9, 10	n/a	70, 71, 72, 98, 99
Service Span	7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m., on weekdays, extended based on demand	6:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m., on weekdays, extended based on demand 7:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m., on Saturdays, extended based on demand 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m., on Sundays, extended based on demand	Typically 7:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m., on weekdays, extended based on demand. *Minor Routes in urban and suburban areas will operate* 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., on Saturdays and 9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., on Sundays, extended based on demand. No service in rural areas on weekends	7:30am – 4:30pm weekdays, 10am – 4:00pm Saturdays	Peak only
Service Frequency	15 - 30 minutes or better between 7:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m., on weekdays with additional frequency based on demand	15 - 30 minutes or better between 7:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m., on weekdays with additional frequency based on demand	2 hours or better with additional frequency based on demand	n/a	Varies depending on service
Stop interval	Limited stops at key locations. Stops are typically spaced 800m to 2km apart	Frequent stops along a corridor, 300m - 400m apart	250m - 400m	n/a	400m to 2km apart depending on whether express
Vehicle Type	High capacity buses	Standard or High Capacity bus	Standard or small bus	Standard or High Capacity bus	Small bus

Community Objectives for Transit *(Primarily for Smaller Communities)*

- While transit will try to serve the needs of all community members as much as possible, its primary focus will be on serving the transportation needs of *seniors / people with a disability / youth / commuters, etc.*

Performance Guidelines

What they are and what they define: Performance guidelines are a tool by which numerical thresholds and targets are set for a particular system and its routes and services. For instance, the guidelines may set a target for the system in terms of cost recovery ("at least 25% of service costs will be recovered through revenue from passenger fares") or it may set minimum and maximum thresholds for routes ("community bus routes will be considered for potential service adjustments if ridership fall below 7 rides per hour or will be considered for service by a larger vehicle if ridership is above 16 rides per hour.")

In larger systems, guidelines may also define goals and thresholds by service layer or route class (Rapid Transit, Frequent Transit, Local Transit, etc.) or by specific corridors of service (Main Street, etc.)

Why they matter: Working in tandem with service standards, performance guidelines are a tool that can be used to evaluate existing services, identify trends in performance and--based on this evidence--determine how service and supporting features (fares, marketing, facilities, etc.) should be changed to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the system.

How they are created and renewed: Performance guidelines are normally created and renewed in tandem with service standards. Performance results are intended to be delivered through BC Transit's annual performance reporting process.

Sample Performance Guidelines

The following tables outline sample performance targets set for a system and categories of routes. As well as monitoring existing performance against these guidelines, historical trends will also be monitored to determine if the system or routes are becoming more or less efficient over time. Significant variance (+/ – 25%) from the targets will place a route on an action list for further investigation which will require more detailed analysis. Routes that fall below the 25% variance will be candidates for corrective action and routes that fall above the 25% variance will be candidates for service improvement.

System Level

Performance Criteria	Target Threshold	Minimum Threshold
Passenger trips per service hour	35	12
Passenger trips per service kilometre	1.5	0.5
Cost per passenger trip	$2.50	$7.00
Cost recovery	35%	15%
Passengers trips per capita	30	10

Route Level: Rapid & Frequent Network

	Target Threshold	Minimum Threshold
Boardings per service hour	35	25
Boardings per service km	1.5	1.0
Cost recovery	35%	25%

Route Level: Local Network

	Target Threshold	Minimum Threshold
Boardings per service hour	25	12
Boardings per service km	1.0	0.5
Cost recovery	25%	15%

More questions on service standards and performance guidelines?

Please contact BC Transit's Planning Department at 250-508-0842.