

Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
Selection Committee to Appoint the CAMPO Representative to the Capital Metro Board

Applicant Answers

July 22, 2008

1. What is your relevant experience applicable to this position?

I have worked in public transit for 20 years. In that time, I have had job functions covering nearly all aspects of the public transit industry including driving; training; dispatching; route and service planning, and management.

My academic studies have focused directly and indirectly on skills assisting in the provision of public transit. These include public administration; route and service planning and GIS.

I've also served as a State delegate to the Community Transportation Association of America; the Rural Transit Assistance Program as a board member and President; as a teaching Fellow to the Rutgers National Transit Institute; and oversee the operation and program development of Texas State University's bicycle cooperative.

2. Capital Metro currently out-sources some operations to Veolia Transportation and First Transit, both of which have more inexpensive labor contracts than StarTran. Capital Metro has sought to lower operating costs by shifting some operations away from StarTran and towards these lower-cost providers. Do you support this strategy as a cost control method? If so, why, or if not, why not?

As a cost control strategy, yes. At a time when traffic congestion, toll roads, and fuel prices are driving more folks to auto alternatives, it will become increasingly difficult to expand service to meet those needs without developing lower-cost service alternatives. In my direct work in the provision of bus transit, I've worked with several contract service providers and have seen very good, and not so good service. In selecting a contractor, (or extending service contracts), the bottom-line of price can not be the sole selection or retention criteria. If, (for instance), your contractor is *only* interested in safety, customer service and on-time performance may suffer.

Capital Metro management must develop safeguards to assure that contracted operations provide the same quality for safety, maintenance, and service, (the same service philosophy), as those provided in-house.

3. Would you be willing to use public transportation as your major mode of commuting for 1 year (home to work and work to home - not for non-work time)? And, also be willing to ask that Capital Metro's upper management do the same?

Yes! This is something I've been doing for some time. I've always seen the personal value in incorporating public transit and my bicycle as part of my commute solution. Late last summer, August 15th to be exact, I made a personal commitment to expand the number of days I used these alternatives from 2-3 per week to full-time. My decision was to park my pick-up truck; forgo the purchase of a work parking permit; and use the Bobcat Tram and/or bicycle to get to and from work. For meetings or after work activities in Austin, I

now take the Capital Metro bus and/or bicycle from one of the Bobcat Tram stops in Austin. Since that personal pledge, I have only found three days where that was not practical. My personal goal began as a way to commute 50 miles round trip and still only fill up my vehicle once a month; since making that decision, I have stayed true to my commitment. With summer weather and increased daylight, (allowing more and earlier bicycle departure times), I last filled up my vehicle on May 1st. I've definitely dumped the pump!

Yes, I support asking Capital Metro management to do the same. There is value in the message that riding your own system sends to operations, (dispatch, drivers, and mechanics). Additionally, it is difficult to truly know the quality of the equipment or the service you've put on the street if you don't use that service on a regular basis.

4. State the reasons why your membership on the Board will better enable Capital Metro to achieve its mission.

My mission in all transit systems I've been a part of has always been to provide service that is:

- Safe
- Effective
- Efficient
- Reliable
- Customer oriented; service that will encourage new passengers to be return customers.

I bring hands-on experience and have *been* a driver; dispatcher; trainer; operations manager; and director. It is a rare opportunity to appoint a board member with direct experience. I believe this experience, and my passion for the success of alternative transportation will help Capital Metro thrive.

5. How do you envision the CAMPO representative facilitating a working relationship between Capital Metro and CAMPO? How should Capital Metro interact with CAMPO? With Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority? With other transportation providers in the region?

The CAMPO representative should, in addition to their direct board duties, serve as a liaison between that board and the CAMPO Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). Capital Metro should interact with CAMPO by sharing route and ridership data in great enough detail and frequency to allow for annual reports on ridership, trends, and demographics.

CAMPO should provide up to date roadway construction information, (through TxDOT), coordinate and share transportation planning analysis, and raw ridership data. Some of these exchanges already take place, but it is not clear that a process has been developed to assure this exchange is perpetual. So doing could provide Capital Metro better route planning information and serve as a reporting process to feed data to the CAMPO long-range plan.

The Regional Mobility Authority should have a place on the TAC to allow input into the long-range plan; should have access to long-range planning information collected or

modeled by Capital Metro or CAMPO; and should be invited to periodically share their direction, goals and accomplishments with CAMPO's TAC or Policy Board and the Capital Metro board.

Capital Metro has already been working with the Regional Transportation Coordinating Committee (RTCC) to identify coordination strategies with public and private transit service providers in the CAPCOG region. While this process began as a Texas Legislative mandate contained in HB3588, the committee has used this process as an opportunity to identify and act on coordination alternatives between regional service providers. Work within this committee would appear to be the best conduit to improving coordination in the CAMPO region.

6. What is the core function of Capital Metro? And who do you consider the core constituency of Capital Metro? How does rail fit within the functions of Capital Metro?

The core function is to provide public transportation alternatives to residents and visitors within the Austin city limits and participating communities; and to reduce congestion and the need for parking and roadway development within their service area.

The core constituency are the transportation disadvantaged. This includes those with 0-1 car per household; households at 150% of the poverty level; senior citizens; students; and persons with disabilities.

Rail should be developed along high volume corridors to serve as the service spine; buses, park-and-ride lots, and bicycle amenities should be developed along these spines and radiate out to major trip generators.

7. If appointed, what actions will you take to ensure that Capital Metro remains (or becomes) an efficient and cost effective regional transportation authority?

First, determine where Capital Metro performs within their peer-group using standard Federal Transit Administration performance indicators for effectiveness and efficiency, (cost per mile, passengers per hour, passengers per capita, etc). In short, determine to what extent Capital Metro is already meeting or exceeding median standards within their peer group.

Second, identify opportunities and liabilities. Ask the planning staff: If you were to redeploy 5% of your least productive route service to unserved or underserved areas, where would you make service cuts and additions?

Finally, analysis of routes is important to assure continued system success. I would request of the Capital Metro board that this exercise be repeated on an annual basis.

8. How does Capital Metro fit into a regional mobility and transportation plan with CAMPO and other regional partners?

Capital Metro is, and should be, the leader in non-auto passenger mobility within the CAMPO district. Rural, interurban, and interstate transit connections should feed into the Capital Metro system. Future regional service partners, such as the ASA rail corridor council, should work closely with Capital Metro and CAMP to assure that station stops are located in close proximity to trip generators.

9. What is the optimal service area for Capital Metro and how is that optimal area achieved?

The answer is relative; it depends on what balance is struck between effectiveness and efficiency and the current political limitations preventing Capital Metro from serving areas within the Urbanized Area (UZA) who are not "contributing members" of the Capital Metro district.

An equitable solution would include a *minimum* level-of-service to the entire UZA, (whether they are contributing to the tax base or not). That minimum level-of-service would be determined based on how much funding is received from the Federal Transit Administration on their behalf; if they choose to contribute to the sales tax collection, service would be raised proportional to the percentage of their total tax obligation. This would take legislative action to become a legitimate option to allow Capital Metro to serve areas who receive FTA funds, but who do not, (and who may not be able), to contribute to the tax base.

10. What type of funding mechanisms would you contemplate to facilitate an increase of more transit options?

There are several alternatives. One would be to redirect, (or keep in house), those funds that Capital Metro currently manages such as Job Access Reverse Commute-New Freedom, (JARC-NF). The more difficult, but financially rewarding, would be to ask for legislative help in advancing HB3588 coordination objectives by identifying the transportation component within other funding, (such as, but not limited to Medicaid transportation), and allow those funds to flow directly to Capital Metro.

Another would be to work aggressively in Washington, D.C. during the FHWA/FTA funding reauthorization, (currently named SAFETEA-LU). This legislation is due to expire next year, and could provide an infusion of capital for park-and-ride; bus/bicycle; rail, bus, and infrastructure funding which would allow locally collected tax revenue to provide more service.

11. What are the issues underlying the labor difficulties at Capital Metro and how should those issues be addressed?

You identified one of those earlier: Service is contracted out to non-Capital Metro employees. Internal labor can hardly see this as a good sign to job security. As indicated earlier, needing to meet the challenge of cost increases, this might be needed; one must still realize the adverse affect on labor relations that will result.

Another is the division of labor into two companies. This division lends itself to a "them" and "us" mentality. I understand that this is required as a result of the State law; this would be another area where approaching the legislature might allow for a more streamlined system where labor and management feel like they're part of the same team.