Agenda Item No.

2:00 PM

PALM BEACH COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

WORKSHOP SUMMARY

Meeting Date:	March 27, 2012
Department:	Palm Tran

I. EXECUTIVE BRIEF

Title: Transit Development Plan (TDP) -Service Funding

Summary: Palm Tran's TDP was prepared by Kittelson and Associates to meet Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) requirements. This ten-year plan was approved by Palm Tran's Service Board (PTSB), the Palm Beach County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), and by the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) on November 15, 2011. Chapter 4 of the Plan focuses on the need to improve existing Fixed Route service from current service levels and basically establishes that Connection is generally performing as well as or better than its peers, and that Palm Tran devotes an above average amount of funding to Connection. Chapter 5 of the Plan recognizes that there is a high level of uncertainty in existing Palm Tran funding sources and recommends the need to find additional funding sources by 2015 to fund this Plan. The options are presented in the attached staff report for BCC discussion and direction. Staff will provide greater detail on the recommendations as contained in the TDP and on the associated issues. Countywide (DR)

Background and Policy Issues: Ridership on our Fixed Route bus system has been skyrocketing. Palm Tran's weekday ridership, now averaging 40,000 passengers per weekday, and our service performance, now averaging 29.3 passengers per service hour, have both increased by 22% since 2008. This is in sharp contrast to the national transit average that experienced a ridership decrease of 1.8% in calendar year 2010 and has seen only a 2% increase in 2011. This dramatic increase in ridership has also had a negative impact on service reliability (on-time performance) and in certain cases on our ability to board all customers waiting for the bus. With gas prices forecasted to continue to increase, we see no reason to expect this demand to decrease. The good news is that we have a relatively new fleet of Fixed Route buses that include 26 hybrid buses and six new 60-foot articulated buses that will soon be placed in service.

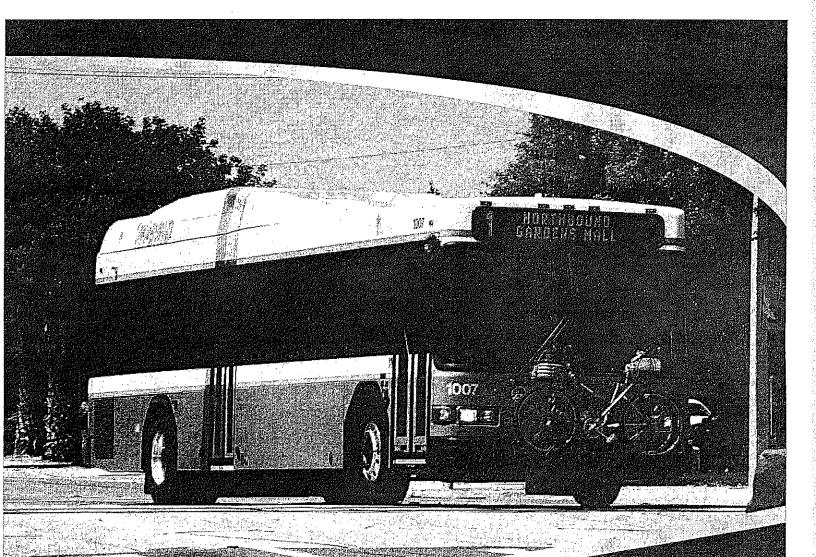
Ridership on Connection from 2007 – 2010 either declined or remained stable. Staff has worked hard to improve and hold down costs through improved service efficiency, with a 45% improvement in passengers per trip since 2005 (based on February 2012 performance). Ridership has again started to increase, up almost 3% last year and 5% this year.

Attachments: 1. TDP Executive Summary	
Recommended By:	March 21,2012
	Date
Approved By: Al Uu	3/01/12
	Date

II. FISCAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

A. Five Year Summary of Fiscal Impact: **Fiscal Years** 2012 2013 2014 20--20--**Grant Expenditures Operating Costs External Revenues Program Income** (County) In-Kind Match (County) **NET FISCAL IMPACT** # ADDITIONAL FTE **POSITIONS** (Cumulative) Is Item Included In Current Budget? Yes ____ No <u>X</u> Fund ____ Dep't. ____ Unit ___ Object ____ **Budget Account No.:** Reporting Category _____ Program _____ Recommended Sources of Funds/Summary of Fiscal Impact: B. Departmental Fiscal Review: C. John Murphy, Finance Manager III. REVIEW COMMENTS OFMB Fiscal and/or Contract Dev. and Control Comments: A. Contract Dev. and Control 3-23-12 B Wheeler Legal Sufficiency: В. 3-26-2012 Assistant County Attorney C. Other Department Review:

Department Director



December 2011

PALM TRAN TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2011-2021





KITTELSON & ASSOCIATES, INC.

In association with: 17



Executive Summary

CHAPTER 1

Chapter 1 of the Transit Development Plan (TDP) describes Palm Beach County demographics and Palm Tran service and rider characteristics. The TDP process requires a significant amount of background data in order to draw widely applicable conclusions about existing service and potential improvements.

Palm Beach County is a challenging area from the perspective of a transit provider. It is the largest county in Florida, but it does not have a clearly dominant central business district. Commercial and residential land uses are generally separated, but the sidewalk and bicycle networks are limited or non-existent in certain parts of the county. In addition, Palm Beach County has many gated communities and low-density residential neighborhoods. The lower densities and segregated land uses create a challenging environment in which to provide efficient transit service.

Palm Tran is a very successful transit agency given that it serves a large area with a diverse population living in both urban and rural settings. Palm Tran currently offers over 740 miles of bus routing. Fixed-route service covers most of the urbanized portion of the county with the exception of the SR 7 corridor and some of the mid-western communities. CONNECTION, Palm Tran's complementary paratransit service, is offered in all areas of Palm Beach County that are within ¾ mile of an existing Palm Tran route. The City of Wellington, The Acreage, West Boca Raton (unincorporated), and West Riviera Beach (unincorporated) are the areas within Palm Beach County that have the highest unserved population densities.

The Palm Tran TDP process included gathering demographic information and evaluating existing service, as well as public involvement, accomplished through rider and employee surveys, stakeholder interviews and e-mails, and public open houses. In addition to a Palm Tran fixed-route system-wide rider survey, a rider survey was completed in western Palm Beach County to supplement the system-wide findings. Most surveyed riders had lower annual incomes and ride Palm Tran because they do not have a car available. Most indicated that they ride Palm Tran to get to work, and more than 20 percent of them are dependent on Palm Tran fixed-route service for transportation. In addition to the rider surveys, a fixed-route operator and employee survey was conducted to gain insight on rider perceptions. There were some similarities in the improvement areas identified by both the riders and employees, including:

- More frequent service on Saturdays;
- More frequent service on Sundays;
- More frequent service on weekdays; and
- Service that starts earlier/runs later.

The operators and employees also identified improvements that were not as prevalent in the rider survey, including:

- New routes in areas without service today;
- Better scheduled running time;
- Better communication between operators and administration;

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- Improved route and schedule information;
- Added shelters along existing routes;
- Added lights at shelters; and
- Cleaner, better maintained buses.

Palm Tran CONNECTION riders and operators were also surveyed as part of the TDP process in order to obtain information about rider perceptions of existing service. Most CONNECTION riders use the service to get to work or to a medical appointment, and nearly 50 percent of them are dependent on CONNECTION for transportation. Overall, the results of the survey indicate that riders have a positive view of CONNECTION service, and the highly positive responses suggest that improvements are not needed. However, the results of the CONNECTION operator survey revealed three primary improvement areas, including:

- Better scheduling;
- Improved/additional vehicles; and
- Improved working conditions for employees (regarding respect, wages, etc.).

Additionally, the CONNECTION operators identified several supplemental improvement areas, including:

- Improved routing;
- Communication with/training for customers;
- Better vehicle checks/maintenance;
- Providing GPS in all of the buses/updating the GPS information; and
- Better communication (with riders, dispatch, etc.).

The stakeholder interviews, stakeholder e-mails, and open houses, coupled with the rider and employee surveys, provided a wide range of feedback that touched on bus stop infrastructure, transit-oriented development (TOD), agency administrative matters, funding, bus features, parkand-ride lots, behavior of captive and choice riders, paratransit scheduling and routing procedures, and fare collection methods. Overall, the common improvement areas identified by the riders, employees, stakeholders, and the public were the following:

- Bus service frequency improvements are needed.
- Service span extensions are needed.
- Some areas/populations in the county are underserved.

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CHAPTER 2

Chapter 2 of the TDP proposes goals, objectives, and strategies to guide Palm Tran's planning and operations. The goals and objectives are as follows:

- Goal 1: Improve Service Quality
 - Objective 1-1: Improved fixed-route service quality (e.g., more evening and weekend service, more frequent buses, and route extensions).
 - Objective 1-2: Improve paratransit service quality (e.g., better on-time performance and shorter wait times).
 - Objective 1-3: Improve the quality of customer information.
- Goal 2: Improve Operational Efficiency
 - Objective 2-1: Fill funding gaps through more efficient operation.
 - Objective 2-2: Encourage paratransit customers to use fixed-route services when possible.
 - Objective 2-3: Explore opportunities for public/private partnerships.
 - Objective 2-4: Implement Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) technologies that improve data collection and operations analysis.
- Goal 3: Improve Mobility for Residents in Palm Beach County and Southeast Florida
 - Objective 3-1: Increase transit mode share in Palm Beach County
 - Objective 3-2: Provide better intermodal connectivity.
- Goal 4: Support Development and Economic Growth in Palm Beach County and Southeast Florida
 - Objective 4-1: Enhance transit service in transit-supportive areas.
 - Objective 4-2: Coordinate transportation services and land use planning.
 - Objective 4-3: Provide transit service to major activity centers and high-density residential areas.
 - Objective 4-4: Improve transit access to major tourist destinations.
- Goal 5: Improve Quality of Life for Palm Beach County Residents
 - Objective 5-1: Improve transit access to recreational facilities.
 - Objective 5-2: Ensure that low-income residential areas are adequately connected to major employment centers.
 - Objective 5-3: Provide services that optimize independence for the elderly and disabled.
- Goal 6: Demonstrate Exemplary Environmental Stewardship and Reduce Reliance on Non-Renewable Energy
 - Objective 6-1: Minimize vehicle emissions.
 - Objective 6-2: Continue to explore alternative energy sources.

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- Objective 6-3: Support land use that will reduce trip lengths.
- Goal 7: Enhance Safety and Security for Palm Tran Customers and Employees
 - Objective 7-1: Continue to provide safety and security training for Palm Tran operators.
 - Objective 7-2: Maintain a system-wide safety, security, and emergency service plan.
 - Objective 7-3: Ensure that all Palm Tran vehicles and facilities undergo routine safety inspections.
 - Objective 7-4: Locate transit stops to optimize safety and security.
 - Objective 7-5: Design transit stops for use by the disabled and elderly.
- Goal 8: Improve the Public Image of Existing Palm Tran Services
 - Objective 8-1: Upgrade and maintain existing infrastructure where appropriate.
 - Objective 8-2: Improve customer service.
 - Objective 8-3: Evaluate potential for high-capacity premium transit service.
 - Objective 8-4: Revisit the Palm Tran brand and marketing plan.
- Goal 9: Identify Available Funding Sources to Help Palm Tran Grow
 - Objective 9-1: Ensure that all planning and operational practices are consistent with state and federal funding requirements.
 - Objective 9-2: Identify transit projects eligible for state and federal grants and funding programs.
 - Objective 9-3: Promote consideration of transit needs in transportation impact fees.
 - Objective 9-4: Promote consideration of transit-supportive infrastructure in planned and programmed roadway improvement projects.
 - Objective 9-5: Establish a dedicated transit funding source.

The above goals and objectives, along with associated strategies, will further align Palm Tran's planning priorities with those of the Federal Transit Administration. Moving forward, the focus will be on continued improved performance, efficient spending, coordinating transit service with land use, and provision of high-quality service and better mobility for Palm Beach County residents.

As Palm Tran continues to serve those who rely on transit for their transportation needs, it will also seek opportunities to serve a greater number of people who do have other transportation options. By increasing its mode share, Palm Tran can improve conditions for all other transportation modes across the county.

CHAPTER 3

Chapter 3 of the TDP describes existing transit services in Palm Beach County. These services include 36 Palm Tran fixed-route bus service, door-to-door Palm Tran CONNECTION demandersponse service, Tri-Rail commuter rail and shuttle service, Amtrak rail service, Broward County Transit (BCT) fixed-route bus service, and numerous local municipality shuttle services.

Chapter 3 also provides a performance review of Palm Tran service through performance measures targeted at historical Palm Tran trends and comparisons to transit agency peers. The peer

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comparison is not a report card; it is an illustrative means of better understanding strengths and weaknesses to find areas of improvement.

A group of seven fixed-route agency peers was chosen. Four of the agencies selected were Florida peers, while the remaining three agencies reflect a representation of the country including the West Coast, East Coast, and Midwest. A group of eight demand-response agency peers were chosen. Four of the agencies selected were Florida peers, while the remaining four agencies reflect a representation of the country with southwest, east coast, and Texas agencies.

Palm Tran's transit investment per capita generally places it in the middle of the selected peers for the total of both modes. However, Palm Tran devotes a greater proportion of resources to demandresponse service (approximately 34%) than does its peer and has a correspondingly smaller investment in fixed-route service. This higher-than-average funding commitment to demandresponse is logical, as Palm Beach County also has the largest population of senior citizens of all peers.

Although Palm Tran devotes a smaller percentage of total operating costs to fixed-route service when compared to agency peers, it does provide significant fixed-route coverage. However, with reduced fixed-route operating funds available, the available service on existing routes is the lowest among peer groups. Relatively infrequent service is likely the biggest contributor to Palm Tran's low fixed-route ridership relative to its peers. This is particularly true in that Palm Tran's fixed-route fare average is second-lowest among peers—a measure that typically attracts ridership. In short, Palm Tran's effort to focus on transit coverage occurs in two ways: extensive demand-response service and extensive fixed-route service coverage. This results in few remaining resources left to operate the higher-frequency fixed-route service that would attract more choice riders. However, the service that is provided gets used at a rate near the peer average.

Palm Tran's average fleet age is approximately the same as the peer mean; however, the fixed-route service does have higher maintenance expenditures per vehicle than the peer average. Palm Tran's fixed-route fuel economy, although below the peer average, was in a group of five agencies with very similar results. Palm Tran has the highest fixed-route expense per revenue hour among the peers. Labor and maintenance expenses are the largest component of those overall expenses. While cost of living differences is a contributor to Palm Tran's higher costs, it is not the primary cause.

Palm Tran's demand-response service is generally performing as well as or better than its peers. The operating expense per passenger trip is below the peer average, and the average fare paid is above the peer average. Likewise, Palm Tran demand-response ridership is higher than the peer average and its ridership per capita is the second highest of all peers. In summary, Palm Tran devotes an above-average amount of funding and resources to demand-response service to serve an above-average number of users, and, in turn, provides a demand-response service that is one of the best performing of the selected peers.

CHAPTER 4

Chapter 4 summarizes Palm Tran improvements identified through stakeholder input and quantitative analysis, prioritizes the improvements, and forms a basis for developing a financial plan that accounts for the improvements anticipated to be needed over the 10-year span of the TDP. Chapter 4 also summarizes demand forecasts for fixed-route service and CONNECTION paratransit service.

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The criteria assessed in Chapter 4 in order to identify needed improvements are route functional classification, existing ridership, ridership growth, productivity (riders per revenue hour), service frequency, span of service, transit-supportiveness, transit-dependency, relationship to planned and programmed improvements, stakeholder input, and relationship to strategic initiatives (i.e., the goals and objectives of Chapter 2).

The recommended 10-year improvement plan is shown in the table and the figure below. The following guidelines were used to identify projects for the 10-year plan:

- Focus on improving existing service to better serve existing riders and to attract choice riders.
- * Focus on implementing advanced technology to improve data collection and operations analysis so that service can be provided more efficiently.
- Focus on Major North-South Routes and Major East-West Routes.
 - Major North-South Routes are Routes 1, 2, and 3. For these, a minimum 20-minute peak service frequency and a minimum 30-minute off-peak service frequency are recommended standards.
 - Major East-West Routes are Routes 31, 40, 43, 46, 62, 63, 73, 81, and 91. For these, a minimum 30-minute peak service frequency and a minimum 60-minute off-peak service frequency are recommended standards.
- Routes with high ridership, positive ridership growth since 2006, and productivity greater than 20 riders/hour should be considered for improvement.
- Service span increases are recommended to build ridership on the Express routes. A longer service span (i.e., more trips) is expected to give riders more flexibility in their travel schedules and greater assurance that they will not be stranded if they miss a bus.
- Assume that enhanced beach access will be provided by municipal shuttle services (which are indicated in the 2035 Needs Plan).

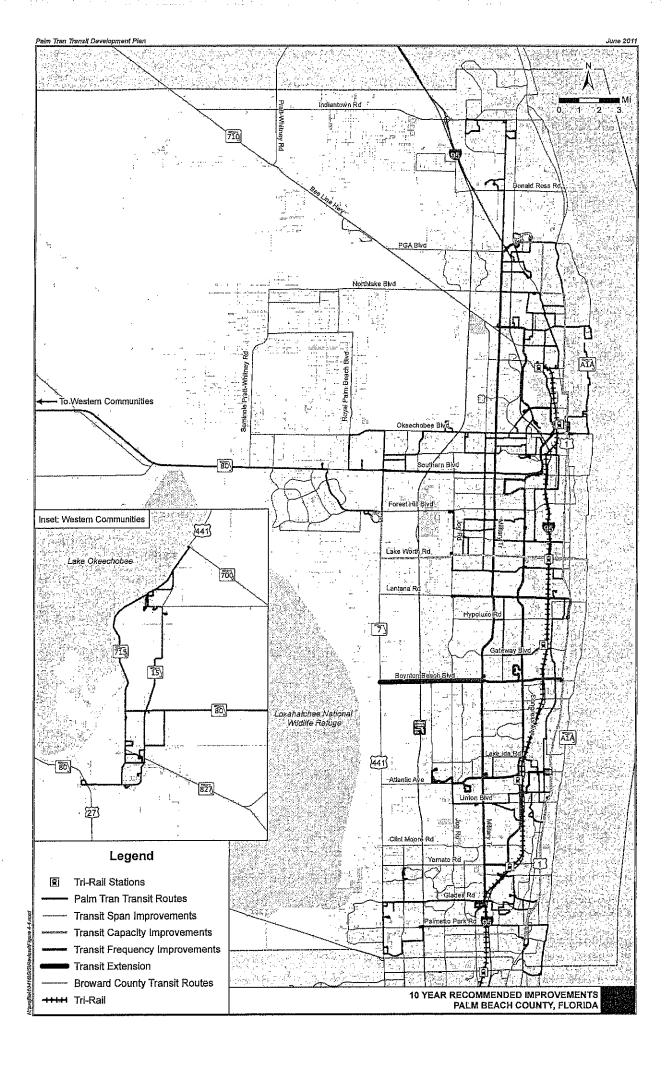
Chapter 4 also identifies long-term projects that are outside the 10-year time frame of the TDP. Tier One long-term improvements are expected to be just outside the 10-year time frame of the TDP and should be considered for addition to the TDP with each annual update. Tier Two long-term improvements are projects that are expected to be farther outside the 10-year time frame of the TDP but within the 2035 horizon of the LRTP.

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Recommended 10-Year Improvements for Palm Tran

Recommended 10-Year Improvements for Palm Tran								
Funding Status	Year	Route	Recommended Improvement(s)	Justification	Cost			
Cost- feasible	2012	N/A	■ Install APCs on remainder of fixed-route fleet Data collection Efficiency Strategic initiative (Goal 2)					
Cost- feasible	2012	N/A	Develop a program for use of AVL and APC data	Data collection Efficiency Strategic initiative (Goal 2)	\$50,000			
Unfunded	2017	73	➤ Extend service west to SR 7	Major East-West Route Productivity Ridership potential Strategic initiative (Goal 5)	\$613,952			
Unfunded	2017	N/A	■ Install AVL on CONNECTION fleet	Data collection Efficiency Strategic initiative (Goal 2)	\$1,200,000			
Unfunded	2017	11	 Add one a.m. peak trip and one p.m. peak trip (span and frequency improvement) 	Express route Ridership potential Strategic initiative (Goal 3)	\$69,165			
Unfunded	2017	95	 Add one a.m. peak trip and one p.m. peak trip (span improvement) 	Express route Ridership potential Strategic initiative (Goal 3)	\$63,632			
Unfunded	2018	2	 Increase weekday peak frequency to 20 minutes Increase weekend frequency to 30 minutes 	Major North-South Route Ridership growth Productivity Strategic initiative (Goal 1)	\$1,518,980			
Unfunded	2019	3	 Increase Sunday frequency to 30 minutes 	Major North-South Route Ridership growth Productivity Strategic initiative (Goal 1)	\$157,092			
Unfunded	2020	73	 Increase weekday peak frequency to 30 minutes Increase weekday service span to 14 hours 	Major East-West Route Productivity Ridership potential Strategic initiative (Goal 1)	\$179,829			
Unfunded	2020	63	 Increase weekday peak frequency to 30 minutes Increase weekday service span to 14 hours 	Major East-West Route Ridership growth Productivity	\$193,662			
Unfunded	2020	81	 Increase weekday peak frequency to 30 minutes Increase weekday service span to 14 hours 	Major East-West Route Ridership growth Productivity Strategic initiative (Goal 1)	\$414,990			
Unfunded	2021	46	 Increase weekday service span to 14 hours 	Major East-West Route Ridership growth Productivity Strategic initiative (Goal 1)	\$110,664			
Unfunded	2021	31	■ Increase weekday service span to 14 hours	Major East-West Route Ridership growth Productivity Strategic initiative (Goal 1)	\$55,332			

NOTE: Additional, programmed capital improvements exist. See Chapter 5.



CHAPTER 5

Chapter 5 contains the financial plan for the TDP's 10-year improvement plan. The plan is prefaced by summaries of existing and potential funding sources.

The following are the key assumptions and findings of the financial plan:

- * Palm Tran is anticipated to continue using its current mix of federal, state, and local funding sources to fund transit service. It must be noted, however, that there is significant uncertainty associated with the upcoming reauthorization of federal transportation funding. If federal transit funding is cut, such cuts must be addressed in annual TDP updates. There is also significant uncertainty associated with the level of gas tax funding that will be available in the future.
- * Starting in 2015, new revenue sources are needed to fund operating shortfalls associated with maintaining existing levels of transit service. New revenue sources are needed to fund shortfalls associated with unfunded improvements in the 10-year plan.
- A total of \$150 million of FTA capital grants is assumed to be available for Palm Tran for the next ten years to fund the TDP capital improvements as well as capitalized maintenance costs.

The financial plan is summarized in the table below. The provided summary does not include any new service or capital investments beyond what is required to maintain existing service levels and assumes no increase in Federal Transit Administration, Florida Department of Transportation, or locally generated contributions. Currently, projected funding levels will only maintain the existing system for the first three years of the plan. Funding will fall short beginning in 2015. Federal transportation funding sources are currently uncertain and should not be counted upon to meet funding requirements; therefore, Palm Tran will need to find additional local funding to close the funding gap if existing services are to be maintained. This should be monitored closely and modified as needed in future annual TDP updates as new funding sources are found.

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Postprietry - Melinian Edulory	10-Year Cost and Revenue Summary											
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Ad Valoren Funding \$15,386,514	Gas Tax	\$26,307,000	\$26,307,000	\$26,307,000	\$26,307,000	\$25,307,000	\$26,307,000	\$26,307,000	\$26,307,000	\$26 3/97 non	\$26,307,000	\$263.070.000
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Faces/Lorentes \$11,040,401		\$9,476,586	\$9,476,586	\$9,476,586			 					
Interfund Transfer	Fares/User Fees/Charges											
S25,530 S25,		\$143,336	\$143,336	\$143,336	\$143,336	\$143,336	\$143,336			<u> </u>		
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CHAPTER 6

Chapter 6 is a general assessment of Palm Tran's organizational structure that was completed in order to ensure that staffing levels are sufficient to support enhancements to the transit network as identified in the 10-year improvement plan. This effort included a peer assessment and a general review of current staffing levels by major employment category as identified per National Transit Database reporting requirements. Key findings of this assessment are as follows:

- Compared to its peer agencies and their respective system sizes, the staffing levels at Palm Tran appear to be comparatively low in terms of administrative employee functions and slightly high in terms of vehicle maintenance and operating employee functions.
- Palm Tran's current governance structure under the Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners is appropriate to support its current organization and its future growth.
- Palm Tran should continue to monitor staffing levels as the enhancements identified as part of the 10-year TDP process are implemented. It will be important for Palm Tran staff to maintain awareness that continued growth of the transit system will also require investment in sufficient staff to support expansion.

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