

A thin white vertical line with a white arrowhead pointing to the right, positioned between the CATS logo and the title text.

DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN 2021 - 2026

FROM CATS CEO BILL DEVILLE

Dear Reader,

It is with great excitement that CATS presents to you the enclosed strategic plan. This plan is the culmination of many hours of work and passionate discussion with people inside and outside of our organization to identify our agency's priorities and outline how they can be accomplished. This strategic plan will lead CATS into the next decade.

CATS has already started to work towards meeting the goals of this plan, through purchasing new electric buses, working with the city to obtain a BUILD Grant to implement the regions first bus rapid transit, and improving service reliability. In the months and years to come, our work will be focused on the goals and tasks outlined here.

It is our hope that this plan serves not only as a map to point us in the direction where we are going, but also as a tool of accountability and transparency with our internal CATS team and our external partners and stakeholders. Paired with our capital improvements plan, this presents a long-term strategic vision for the Capital Area Transit System as it helps to move Baton Rouge forward and connect you to what matters in our city.

Sincerely,

Bill Deville
CATS CEO

FROM CATS PRESIDENT ERIKA GREEN

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Sincerely,

Erika Green
President, CATS Board

CATS BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



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Johnathan S. Hill

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND

The Capital Area Transit System (CATS) developed this strategic plan to guide the agency's work to improve the Baton Rouge community through safe and reliable transit while supporting the City's long-term workforce and economic development needs.

The CATS team selected four strategic priorities for the future of the organization, which include focusing on mobility and ridership, management and financial sustainability, capital investment, and community stewardship. Each strategic priority identifies related agency goals to promote each strategic priority. A series of objectives, measures or targets, and action items support each goal, with timelines and responsible parties assigned to ensure maximum transparency to internal and external CATS stakeholders, including riders, operators and the general public.

The selected strategic priorities and their goals are:

Strategic Priority #1 – Mobility and Ridership

CATS is focused on improving mobility and increasing ridership within the region. CATS aims to deliver service excellence and this strategic priority focuses on service elements that impact CATS ability to deliver high quality transportation services that focus on customer satisfaction, safety, operational reliability, service planning and delivery.

- Goal #1: Improve service reliability
- Goal #2: Optimize investments in service and continue to monitor existing and emerging markets
- Goal #3: Enhance customer satisfaction
- Goal #4: Expand transit services across the region

Strategic Priority #2 – Management and Financial Sustainability

CATS seeks to be a responsible fiduciary of the funding entrusted to CATS by the community. The success of the transit system is dependent on the cost-effective management of all revenues and the stability and accountability of its workforce. CATS understands that success requires a strong and engaged workforce. CATS is dedicated to supporting staff development across all levels of the agency.

- Goal #5: Continue to improve planning and management of budgetary resources and expenditures
- Goal #6: Increase funding streams and revenue diversity to ensure long-term financial stability
- Goal #7: Advance employee hiring and performance evaluation processes to support an effective and stable workforce
- Goal #8: Further advance staff development and engagement

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND CONTINUED

Strategic Priority #3 – Capital Investment

Investment in transit infrastructure is critical to maintaining safe, reliable and cost-effective delivery of transit services now and into the future. Infrastructure includes rolling stock, operating facilities and passenger amenities.

- Goal #9: Establish the Five-Year Capital Improvements and Investments Plan (CIIP) as a vehicle to achieve goals outlined in the strategic plan

Strategic Priority #4 – Community Stewardship

CATS is a vital part of Baton Rouge with a responsibility to positively impact the community. Success is dependent upon its commitment to environmental sustainability and its effective and beneficial relationships with the public, CATS customers, transit stakeholders and elected and appointed governmental officials.

- Goal #10: Enhance community's perception of CATS
- Goal #11: Encourage environmental responsibility

THIS PLAN IDENTIFIES THE STEPS CATS MUST TAKE TO IMPROVE BATON ROUGE'S TRANSIT SYSTEM, INCLUDING DEVELOPING KEY STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND INVESTING IN THE AGENCY'S HUMAN AND PHYSICAL CAPITAL. IF SUCCESSFUL, CATS WILL TRULY CONNECT ITS RIDERS TO WHAT MATTERS TO THEM, FROM WORK OR SCHOOL TO HEALTH CARE, COMMERCE, FELLOWSHIP AND ENTERTAINMENT.

CATS MISSION, VALUES, AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

MISSION

ENRICHING THE LIVES OF OUR CUSTOMERS AND
COMMUNITIES BY OFFERING INDEPENDENCE AND SAFETY...
CONNECTING YOU TO WHAT MATTERS.

CATS Values

Customer Focused Service

Drive Economic Innovation

Safety First

Culture of Excellence

Social and Environmental Responsibility

Integrity in everything we do

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1 *Mobility and Ridership*

3 *Capital Investment*

2 *Management and Financial
Sustainability*

4 *Community Stewardship*

CATS AGENCY-WIDE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In recent years, CATS has worked to improve several key areas. The strategic goals are intended to build off of the CATS accomplishments made in these areas. The following list summarizes the agency accomplishments:

Transit Service Expansion

- Fixed route service has increased 84% from 2012 measured by revenue hours of service
- Increased the number of buses in service from 42 in 2012 (50%) to 63
- Increased demand response service for persons with disabilities by 39% since 2012
- 85% of routes with 30-minute frequency or better during peak periods (pre-COVID)
- Transit service extended to areas previously unserved such as Blount Road, River Road and Greenwell Springs
- Developing a microtransit service pilot for the City of Baker to demonstrate the benefits of technology assisted service
- Entered design phase of Plank/Nicholson BRT in 2020 with operations anticipated to begin in 2024

Fleet Improvements

- Reduced average fixed route fleet age from 9.2 years (2012) to 4.4 years (2020)
- Reduced average demand response fleet age from 4.8 years (2012) to 3.7 years (2019)
- Initiated program to introduce electric buses into fleet by 2019

- Improved maintenance performance and vehicle reliability
- Added public Wi-Fi on 37 buses

Capital Improvements

- Opened new Cortana Transit Center in 2020.
- Acquired property necessary for the North Baton Rouge Transit Center
- Installed 100 new bus passenger shelters

Financial

- CATS, along with the City-Parish and Build Baton Rouge, was awarded a \$15 million Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant by the Federal Transit Administration

Community Relations

- Participated in volunteer efforts to provide food for needy in the city
- Increased participation in civic initiatives through committee involvement

Workforce Development

- Initiated focused bus operator training resulting in safety and reliability improvements
- Recruited and developed a new executive team: Four of the five Executive Team members are new to their positions within the last 3 years

CATS STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1 MOBILITY & RIDERSHIP

CATS is focused on improving mobility and increasing ridership within the region. CATS aims to deliver service excellence and this strategic priority focuses on service elements that impact CATS ability to deliver high quality transportation services that focus on customer satisfaction, safety, operational reliability, service planning and delivery.

GOAL #1: IMPROVE SERVICE RELIABILITY

Objectives

- Improve on time performance (OTP)
- Enhance vehicle maintenance
- Reduce bus accidents
- Decrease the average fleet age

Performance Measures & Targets

- Annual OTP: 80% OTP by December 2021 and 90% OTP by December 2022
- Average annual miles between road calls: 9,000
- Average annual preventable bus accidents: 2.5 per 100,000 miles
- Average fixed route fleet age: 8 years or less

ACTION ITEMS:

- 1 Develop and execute a campaign to improve OTP
- 2 Provide operator recognition and incentives for safe driving
- 3 Implement operator counseling protocols for all preventable accidents
- 4 Provide operator training on proper bus maintenance and driving techniques to reduce maintenance

GOAL #2: OPTIMIZE INVESTMENTS IN SERVICE AND CONTINUE TO MONITOR EXISTING AND EMERGING MARKETS

Objectives

- Increase ridership on the fixed route system
- Systematically evaluate service performance and improve service productivity
- Increase mobility and accessibility for disadvantaged communities
- Develop a premium service brand for primary transit corridors
- Evaluate non-traditional services to augment traditional service

Performance Measures & Targets

- Fixed route ridership: Increase by *3% annually**
- Boardings per revenue hour: *11*
- Operating cost per trip/boarding: *Reduce by 5%*
- Percent of minority and low-income populations served within CATS service area (within 1/4-mile walk access to transit): 50% minority population and 60% of population in poverty

ACTION ITEMS:

- 1 Complete a comprehensive operations analysis to establish a short term plan for CATS service and operations
- 2 Evaluate service accessibility for historically disadvantaged populations with limited transportation options
- 3 Implement Plank-Nicholson BRT by 2024
- 4 Evaluate near-term opportunities and markets for microtransit

* As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, ridership has significantly decreased. Once ridership for 2021 is determined, a baseline will be established.

GOAL #3: ENHANCE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION**Objectives**

- Ensure all employees are aware of the importance of customer satisfaction
- Improve customer satisfaction
- Improve customer wayfinding

Performance Measures & Targets

- Overall customer satisfaction: *85%*
- Customer complaints per boarding: *Reduce by 5% annually*

ACTION ITEMS:

- 1 Develop and execute a campaign intended to enhance customer service
- 2 Implement customer service training for all front-line staff
- 3 Ensure all customer complaints follow a standard internal evaluation process

GOAL #4: EXPAND TRANSIT SERVICES ACROSS THE REGION**Objectives**

- Promote and educate on the benefits of transit
- Market transit as connection tool to link job centers, neighborhoods, residents, and campuses to destination hot spots
- Position CATS as regional transit provider during times of emergency or disasters

Performance Measures & Targets

- Total ridership generated by new initiatives, partnerships, or services: *Track*
- Percent participation in regional disasters as an emergency service provider: *100%*

ACTION ITEMS:

- 1 Identify towns and parishes most likely to partner and create targeted messaging
- 2 Communicate and educate elected officials on the importance of public transportation in successful communities
- 3 Produce annual marketing campaigns to new and returning students at all campuses

2 Management and Financial Sustainability

CATS seeks to be a responsible fiduciary of the funding entrusted to CATS by the community. The success of the transit system is dependent on the cost-effective management of all revenues and the stability and accountability of its workforce. CATS understands that success requires a strong and engaged workforce. CATS is dedicated to supporting staff development across all levels of the agency.

GOAL #5: CONTINUE TO IMPROVE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF BUDGETARY RESOURCES AND EXPENDITURES

Objectives

- Contain operating cost increases
- Formalize operating budget process
- Formalize capital budget process

Performance Measures & Targets

- Operating cost/revenue hour: *1% or lower annual increase*
- Value of efficiency improvements (quantified operational savings from improved efficiencies): *Track*
- All awarded grants and available funds: *Effectively manage and expend within the grant horizon*

ACTION ITEMS:

- 1 Prepare 5-year financial plan and update annually
- 2 Establish fund management policies that ensure stability through a variety of economic conditions
- 3 Continually explore and implement cost efficiencies
- 4 Negotiate a sound, cost-efficient labor contract

GOAL #6: INCREASE FUNDING STREAMS AND REVENUE DIVERSITY, AND ENSURE LONG-TERM FINANCIAL STABILITY

Objectives

- Maintain and increase long-term stable funding sources
- Increase state transit funding through advocacy efforts
- Seek and form creative business partnerships

Performance Measures & Targets

- Annual state operating revenues: *\$500,000 or more*
- Non-taxpayer revenue streams: *Seek*
- Non-DOT grants: *Pursue*

ACTION ITEMS:

- 1 Renew property tax referendum in 2021 / 2022
- 2 Pursue discretionary FTA grants
- 3 Pursue non-DOT grants
- 4 Establish non-traditional funding sources
- 5 Explore innovative financing opportunities, such as value capture and joint development; prioritize based on likelihood of partnership and potential return

GOAL #7: ADVANCE EMPLOYEE HIRING AND PERFORMANCE EVALUATION PROCESSES TO SUPPORT AN EFFECTIVE AND STABLE WORKFORCE

Objectives

- Create a robust hiring and recruitment program
- Refine the agency's performance management process
- Recognition for high performing employees and staff
- Provide a competitive compensation for operator and mechanic positions

Performance Measures & Targets

- Administrative staff turnover: *Track and reduce*
- Operating and maintenance staff turnover: *Reduce by 5%*

ACTION ITEMS:

- 1 Formalize hiring practices to include current HR best practices including position posting policies, background checks, use of recruiters, etc.
- 2 Create internal processes to monitor and document employee performance for use as in employment decisions
- 3 Consider and evaluate employee incentive programs such as performance compensation and recognition programs
- 4 Consider partnering with local colleges and universities to promote transit career tracks
- 5 Utilize exit interviews to improve organizational function

GOAL #8: FURTHER ADVANCE STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND ENGAGEMENT**Objectives**

- Support staff development through training and continuing education opportunities
- Listen to employees and respond to staff concerns
- Provide meaningful opportunities for staff to engage in strategic priorities
- Position CATS as an employer of choice and “best place to work” in Baton Rouge

Performance Measures & Targets

- Level of staff engagement and satisfaction via employee engagement and satisfaction survey: *Gauge and track*
- Employee participation in professional development programs: *Track*
- Employee participation in leadership programs or professional conferences: *Track*

ACTION ITEMS:

- 1 Conduct an internal employee survey; develop task forces to implement suggestions and identify improvements
- 2 Develop ongoing training programs for operators, maintenance staff, dispatch, and supervisors
- 3 Support external career development opportunities for salaried staff
- 4 Develop an internal feedback process where staff comments and concerns can be submitted anonymously
- 5 Certify CATS as an official apprenticeship for the Louisiana Workforce Commission

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Capital Investment

Investment in transit infrastructure is critical to maintaining safe, reliable and cost-effective delivery of transit services now and into the future. Infrastructure includes rolling stock, operating facilities and passenger amenities.

GOAL #9: ESTABLISH THE FIVE-YEAR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS AND INVESTMENTS PLAN (CIIP) AS A VEHICLE TO ACHIEVE GOALS OUTLINED IN THE STRATEGIC PLAN

Objectives

- Ensure transparency on the progress of the CIIP
- Expand funding sources and allocations for capital projects
- Regularly monitor project performance
- Monitor community satisfaction with completed capital improvement projects
- Regularly evaluate and revise project prioritization and implementation
- Monitor and update the Fleet Management Plan

Performance Measures & Targets

- Progress on the CIIP: *Provide annually*
- “State of Good Repair” for capital assets: *Maintain using the FTA Transit Economic Requirements Model (TERM) scale*

ACTION ITEMS:

- 1 Develop a project implementation schedule for the two-year budget and Five-Year Capital Improvements and Investments Plan
- 2 Track progress of the CIIP and provide quarterly and yearly project updates on the agency website
- 4 Track community satisfaction and awareness of capital improvement projects
- 5 Coordinate with other agencies and plans to advance CATS capital improvements
- 6 Continue progress on the Plank-Nicholson BRT Corridor

4

Community Stewardship

CATS is a vital part of Baton Rouge with a responsibility to positively impact the community. Success is dependent upon its commitment to environmental sustainability and its effective and beneficial relationships with the public, CATS customers, transit stakeholders and elected and appointed governmental officials.

GOAL #10: ENHANCE COMMUNITY’S PERCEPTION OF CATS

Objectives

- Increase interaction with community leaders and stakeholders
- Foster improved customer education and outreach
- Build partnerships with community and elected leaders
- Promote agency transparency
- Improve and enhance online and virtual public relations and engagement
- Branding consistent with CATS values

Performance Measures & Targets

- Brand reputation and perception gauged through resident and stakeholder surveys: *Track and improve*
- Agency participation in community events: *Track and increase*
- Level of digital engagement: *Track and increase*

ACTION ITEMS:

- 1 Become a regular participant in scheduled community events, job fairs, and philanthropic events
- 2 Evaluate and prioritize advertising and communications outlets to promote the CATS brand
- 3 Complete regular (bi-annual) resident and stakeholder survey to measure public perception
- 4 Monitor CATS performance and provide regular updates to the public
- 5 Monitor passenger amenities and facilities for cleanliness to create an inviting customer experience

GOAL #11: ENCOURAGE ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY**Objectives**

- Help reduce greenhouse-gas emissions in the region
- Expand agency's environmentally sustainable practices
- Develop agency processes to ensure environmental sustainability action and accountability

Performance Measures & Targets

- Percentage of alternative fuel fleet (electric): *50%*
- Service-related greenhouse gas emissions: *Annual reduction as measured by the APTA Transit Emissions Quantifier Tool*

ACTION ITEMS:

- 1 Participate in the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) Sustainability Committee to learn agency best practices
- 2 Establish an interdepartmental task force to guide the development of an agency-wide sustainability approach

PERFORMANCE METRICS AND TARGETS

EXAMPLE TRACKER

STRATEGIC PRIORITY	PERFORMANCE MEASURE OR TARGET	BASELINE	GOAL	ACTUAL PERFORMANCE			
				Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
#1 Mobility and Ridership	On time performance (OTP)		90%				
	Average annual miles between road calls		9,000				
	Average preventable bus accidents per 100,000 mi.		2.5				
	Average fixed route fleet age		< 8yrs				
	Annual increase in fixed route ridership		3%				
	Boardings per revenue hour		11				
	Reduced operating cost per trip/boarding (annually)		5%				
	Minority populations served (of total region)		50%				
	Low-income populations served (of total region)		60%				
	Overall customer satisfaction		85%				
	Reduced annual customer complaints per boarding		5%				
	Total ridership generated by new initiatives, partnerships, or services		TBD				
	Participation in regional disasters as an emergency service provider		100%				
#2 Management and Financial	Annual limit to operating cost/revenue hour increase		1% or less				
	Annual tracked value of efficiency improvements (quantified operational savings from improved efficiencies)		TBD				
	Utilize all available grant funds within the grant horizon		100%				
	Increased and maintain state operating revenues, goal of \$500,000 annually		\$500k				
	Sought non-taxpayer revenue streams		TBD				
	Pursued non-DOT grants		TBD				
	Administrative staff turnover		Minimize				
	Reduce operating and maintenance staff turnover		5%				
	Staff satisfaction (internal survey)		85%				
	Employee participation in professional development programs		TBD				
	Employee participation in leadership programs		TBD				

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PERFORMANCE METRICS AND TARGETS

EXAMPLE TRACKER

STRATEGIC PRIORITY	PERFORMANCE MEASURE OR TARGET	BASELINE	GOAL	ACTUAL PERFORMANCE			
				Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
#3 Capital Investment	Provide annual progress on the CIIP		1x per Yr				
	Ensured “State of Good Repair” for capital assets using the FTA Transit Economic Requirements Model (TERM) scale		Meet				
#4 Community Stewardship	Brand reputation and perception through resident and stakeholder surveys		85%				
	Agency participation in community events		TBD				
	Website views		TBD				
	E-mail engagement/interaction		TBD				
	Social media followers		TBD				
	Percentage of alternative fuel fleet (electric)		50%				
	Level of service-related greenhouse gas emissions, as measured by the APTA Transit Emissions Quantifier Tool		TBD				