Bi-State Agreements: Synthesis

prepared for
Cathy Silins and Brian Lagerberg
Assistant Directors
WSDOT Public Transportation Office

prepared by
Aaron Poor, TRAC Synthesis Editor
Kathy Lindquist, WSDOT Research Office
with assistance from
Michel Wendt, WSDOT Library

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Transportation Synthesis Reports (TSRs) are brief summaries of currently available information on topics of interest to WSDOT staff. Online and print sources may include newspaper and periodical articles, NCHRP and other TRB programs, AASHTO, the research and practices of other state DOTs and related academic and industry research. Internet hyperlinks in the TSRs are active at the time of publication, but host server changes can make them obsolete.

Request for Synthesis:

Cathy Silins and Brian Lagerberg, Assistant Directors, in the Public Transportation Division, requested information to assist in providing Secretary of Transportation, Paula Hammond, with facts and data regarding the governance, planning, and funding structure of potential transit elements in/on/under the Columbia River Crossing (bridge) between Vancouver, WA, and Jantzen Beach, OR. Washington and Oregon DOTs have been talking about this project for some time, as well as the transit agencies C-TRAN and Tri-Met. The Federal Transit Administration has earmarked some "New Starts" funds for Columbia River Crossing.

The questions include:

(a) Which jurisdiction could/should take the lead on the FTA New Starts grant?

(b) What are the impacts and risks associated with being the lead on the FTA project?

(c) Are there other projects in the USA that have had similar projects? (bi-state, highway/transit bridges, multiple jurisdictions, etc.)

Background:

Similar projects to the Columbia River Crossing Bridge between Vancouver, WA, and Jantzen Beach, OR, where state DOTs as well as multiple regional planning and local transit agencies exist, include ones such as the Missouri/Kansas Bridge project in St. Louis, MO. Metro Denver's Transportation Expansion Project (T-REX) is the most often cited example of best practice in collaboration and coordination on a large multijurisdictional, multimodal construction project.

The Columbia River Transit Options as identified on the project website are:

The Columbia River Crossing project is studying two high capacity transit (HCT) options to reduce congestion on I-5:

1) Bus rapid transit paired with express bus service

2) Light rail paired with express bus service

These options are recommended for more analysis because, when compared to other public transit options, they have the best potential to reduce congestion on I-5, meet future transit needs, and address the issues identified in the project's Purpose and Need Statement.

http://www.columbiarivercrossing.org/CurrentTopics/TransitOptions.aspx

Databases Searched:

Michel Wendt, in the WSDOT Library, searched the transportation sources and did not find literature with information on the requested topic. Kathy Lindquist searched Google and the FTA and FHWA websites.

- Transport, available through WSDOT Library
- TRIS Online
- Research in Progress
- Google
- Wisconsin DOT Transportation Synthesis Reports

Synthesis Summary:

Categories of publications and resources are as follows:

- Regional Collaboration & Coordination
- Bi-State Agreements
- FTA New Starts Projects
- Transit Articles

Articles:

Regional Collaboration and Coordination:

From Highways to Skyways and Seaways—the Intermodal Challenge
John V. Broadhurst , *Public Roads Magazine*, July/August 2004
http://www.tfhrc.gov/pubrds/04jul/05.htm

Excerpt: Partnerships are the name of the game when it comes to managing intermodal megaprojects.

For transportation agencies today, the most complex and high-profile megaprojects often are intermodal, involving the convergence of multiple modes of transportation. Three key elements define intermodal transportation: (1) movement of goods or people, (2) use of more than one mode, and (3) seamless transport through the entire journey.

Among the expanded responsibilities that highway agencies need to consider during the planning process for large intermodal projects are tasks such as forming interagency and public-private partnerships; using unique contracting and financing mechanisms; incorporating new design and construction innovations and techniques; managing funding from multiple sources; encouraging public involvement; and complying with accessibility requirements at train stations, in parking lots, and elsewhere. Intermodal freight transportation, especially when it involves one or more foreign governments, adds additional layers of complexity. As highway projects take on these expanded roles, new regulations add to the challenge.

Colossal Partnership: Denver's $1.67 Billion T-REX Project
Steve Moler, *Public Roads Magazine*, September/October 2001
http://www.tfhrc.gov/pubrds/septoct01/trex.htm

Excerpt: Metro Denver's Transportation Expansion Project (T-REX), a $1.67 billion combined freeway reconstruction and light-rail extension, is as massive as the name implies, and three years ago, it was nothing more than a dream.

It existed only in concept and proposal—and in commuters' wildest imaginations—but in an astonishing blitz from March 1998 to May 2001, T-REX, now one of the largest transportation

projects in the United States, won all environmental approvals, received full funding, and secured a contractor who agreed to finish the project two years earlier than planned and $39 million under budget.

We Are ONE DOT!
Melissa J. Allen, *Public Roads Magazine*, January/February 1999
http://www.tfhrc.gov/pubrds/janfeb99/onedot.htm

Excerpt: Chicago's O'Hare Airport is a busy, often confusing place, especially for passengers whose final destination is downtown Chicago . . . In an effort to address this problem, Joel Ettinger and Cecilia Hunziker, the regional administrators of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), respectively, convened a meeting in July with representatives of the local transportation authorities, city of Chicago's Aviation Department and the Chicago Transit Administration (CTA). The group identified a number of recommendations to make things easier for travelers at the airport; the most straightforward of which is to improve the signs that direct travelers to the CTA rail line. The city is also evaluating the feasibility of installing video screens in the terminal concourses to display real-time information about transit and highway travel times to downtown.

It's not new for agencies within the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to cooperate to solve common problems; however, the O'Hare-Chicago transit story illustrates the effectiveness of ONE DOT, a recently enacted initiative of DOT.

ONE DOT is a management strategy that builds on the strength of mutual collaboration between the various agencies and functional "communities of interest" when those cross-cutting efforts reduce duplication and save resources. Collaboration enables modes to solve common problems and serve customers more effectively, thereby achieving the vision, mission, and goals specified in DOT's Strategic Plan.

Collaborative Leadership: Success Stories in Transportation Mega Projects, A "Lessons Learned" Approach to Collaborative Leadership in Mega Project Management
David B. Hauswirth, Donna M. Hoffman, Jonathan F. Kane, Ijeoma L. Ozobu, Carol L. Thomas, & Priscilla W. Wong, University of Maryland University College, Fall 2004
http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/programadmin/mega/collaborative.cfm (FHWA website)
http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/programadmin/mega/collaborative.pdf (PDF)

From Abstract: What are the keys to successful collaborative leadership for transportation mega projects? The Federal Highway Association (FHWA) asked six graduate students from the University of Maryland University College to conduct a study to identify the keys to successful collaboration necessary to implement large-scale transportation mega projects. The FHWA asked the students to research three successful mega projects; the I-15 Reconstruction Project in Utah; the Infrastructure for the 2002 Olympic Winter Games; and the Alameda Corridor Project. Two smaller successful projects studied were the Big I in New Mexico and the Hyperfix Project in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Transportation Collaboration in the States
Prepared by the National Policy Consensus Center, Federal Highway Administration, June 2006
http://www.policyconsensus.org/publications/reports/docs/transportationcollaboration.pdf

Summary: This 36 page report prepared by the National Policy Consensus Center (NPCC) was prepared for the Federal Highway Administration Office of Project Development and Environmental Review. An NPCC team developed an assessment tool and interviewed state officials and other stakeholders during site visits to four states: Massachusetts, North Carolina, Utah, and Virginia. The report presents information in four areas of interest: (1) issues, barriers, and obstacles to transportation planning and project development; (2) current communication and coordination methods; (3) use of collaborative approaches; and (4) future opportunities for collaboration and training. The report also identifies recurring issues faced by states in undertaking collaborative work and provides recommendations for next steps.

Organizing for Regional Transportation Operations: San Francisco Bay Area 6
Booz·Allen & Hamilton Inc., U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, August 2001
http://www.ite.org/library/SanFrancisco.pdf

Abstract: This is one of six case studies exploring regional cooperation among transportation operating organizations. These studies, developed in conjunction with the National Dialog on Transportation Operations, document alternative approaches for developing and sustaining regional transportation operations and portray institutional practices and lessons learned. They provide examples of experiences that reflect National Dialog goals of facilitating cultural transitions within transportation operating entities that driven by system performance and customer service measures. They serve as a resource guide for decision-makers as well as transportation management and operations staff.

The six case studies associated with this project are TRANSCOM in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut; TransLink in Vancouver, British Columbia; The Metropolitan Transportation Commission in the San Francisco Bay Area; The ITS Priority Corridor in Southern California; TranStar in Houston; and AZTech in Phoenix. Selected case studies present a variety of approaches differing in regional size, characteristics, organizational structure, scope, and geography. An executive guide highlights the findings and perspectives of the six case studies.

In STEP with Irving: A Texas community takes the bull by the horns to achieve its transportation goals
Linda Harper-Brown, *Public Roads Magazine*, September/October 2005
http://www.tfhrc.gov/pubrds/05sep/06.htm

In November 2004, Irving city officials, representatives from the Texas Department of Transportation, and other stakeholders dug their shovels into fresh soil in a ceremony commemorating the groundbreaking for the Highway 161 extension through Irving. With its Strategic Transportation Enhancement Program, or "STEP plan," Irving is helping ensure that its vital transportation projects move forward as smoothly as possible.

In creating the plan, Irving did its homework to develop a strategy for how to interface with NCTCOG because the metropolitan planning organization is an important source of funding for local transportation projects. "NCTCOG now serves as an implementation partner," says Mike Sims, senior program manager with the NCTCOG. "It's a cooperative process, where we look at funding schedules and revenue streams to determine the best way to piece together a project.

Transit Friendly Communities for New Jersey
http://www.pps.org/transportation/info/transportation_projects/nj_transit_friendly_communities

Excerpt:
New Jersey (1999-2002)

Client: New Jersey Transit and the Federal Highway Administration (Transportation and Community and System Preservation Pilot Projects—TCSP)

The Transit Friendly Communities for New Jersey program is a unique partnership between NJ Transit, the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, the Office of State Planning, and non-profit groups (Project for Public Spaces, Regional Plan Association, Downtown New Jersey, Rutgers Transportation Policy Institute and New Jersey Future). The program demonstrated to New Jersey communities that over $7.5 billion in transit investments for repairing and connecting all of the State's passenger train lines can be leveraged to revitalize downtowns, encourage business and local economic development, and reduce reliance on the private car.

Bi-State Agreements:

The New Mississippi River Bridge
Project Website
http://www.newriverbridge.org/

The Illinois and Missouri Departments of Transportation are jointly building this project and created the New Mississippi River Bridge Project Web site. Visit each page beginning with the Ultimate Project Concept. Information is available on project organization and management.

Behind the scenes effort culminates in bi-state bridge agreement
Alan J. Ortbals, *Illinois Business Journal Online 8*(7), April 2008
http://www.ibjonline.com/

Excerpt: When Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich and Missouri Gov. Matt Blunt met on Feb. 28 to sign the agreement to build the New Mississippi River Bridge, it was the result of months of behind the scenes negotiations between primarily two men—Illinois State Rep. Jay Hoffman (D-Collinsville) and Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission former chairman Bill McKenna.

Woodrow Wilson Bridge Project Wins the 'Oscar of Civil Engineering': Highest Honor in Civil Engineering Awarded by the American Society of Civil Engineers
Project Website, May 2008
http://www.wilsonbridge.com/index.htm

Excerpt: The Woodrow Wilson Bridge Project was awarded civil engineering's highest award last night as it took home the 2008 Outstanding Civil Engineering Achievement Award from the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE). Only two weeks before the second new bridge is dedicated, the project was presented the prestigious international honor at a gala awards ceremony in Arlington, Virginia. The Federal Highway Administration, Maryland State Highway Administration, Virginia Department of Transportation, and the District of Columbia Department of Transportation sponsor the project.

The ASCE award recognized Wilson Bridge Project's significant contributions to the civil engineering profession, singling out for particular praise the project's innovative and extensive environmental program and its keen sensitivity to travelers and local communities. The selected project was from a group of 26 outstanding projects from around the world.

Multi State Corridor Planning
Cambridge Systematics, 2005
http://www.transportation.org/sites/planning/docs/nchrp%208-36(45)%20multistate_corridor_planning.pdf

Excerpt from Executive Summary: This report presents findings of research into multistate corridor planning efforts. It describes the historical development of these efforts with emphasis on relevant Federal legislation and case studies of multistate and multijurisdictional organizations and alliances. Based on the patterns of previous efforts, this report describes an analytical framework for evaluating success factors in multistate corridor planning. This report concludes with a synthesis of the success factors for multistate efforts including options for federal government involvement.

One of the key pieces of Federal legislation related to multistate corridor planning was the TEA-21 inclusion of the National Corridor Planning and Development (NCPD) Program and the Coordinated Border Infrastructure (CBI) Program, commonly referred to as the Borders and Corridors program. The Borders and Corridors program was sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and it funded portions of a small number of multistate corridor planning efforts during the 1990s. The program was affiliated to some successful projects, but over the years of its implementation it transformed from a discretionary program to a Congressionally-designated program and the funds became stretched between several planning efforts and improvement projects. Many observers and participants in the program felt that it did not live up to its potential in recent years. Nevertheless, the experience of the Borders and Corridors program provides insights into potential goals and roles of the Federal government related to multistate corridor planning efforts.

In 2001, the FHWA sponsored the development of a white paper and a national forum on multistate/jurisdictional transportation issues. The white paper centered around case studies of seven multijurisdictional coalitions: 1) I-95 Corridor Coalition, 2) the Latin America Trade and Transportation Study, 3) I-69, 4) Joint Working Committee/Binational Transportation Planning Study, 5) the International Mobility and Trade Corridor Project, 6) the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative, and 7) the Appalachian Regional Commission. This white paper identified a set of patterns and lessons learned that are applicable in today's environment of multistate corridor planning.

The case studies demonstrated many common themes. For example, funding issues are a major driver of these coalitions. Funding is important at the time of coalition formation, because travel expenses are often difficult to secure from individual participants at member organizations. Organizations that could defray some of these travel costs experienced high levels of attendance at these critical early meetings. Funding is also critical to the next phase for many coalitions, which is often to perform a study of the coalition's joint needs and issues. While pooled resources are often utilized to fund these studies, developing a fair allocation of costs to each of the member organizations is often politically difficult. The final phase for a coalition is project implementation.

The Ohio Bridges Project:

Ohio River Bridges Project moves into design phase
Bob Drake
http://www.gobridges.com/article.asp?id=1631

A Bi-State Management Team, comprising officials from the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet and the Indiana Department of Transportation, will oversee work completed by the general engineering consultant, Community Transportation Solutions (CTS), and the six design teams on the project. CTS are a team of consultants selected by the two states to manage the project and coordinate the work executed by design teams. CTS will oversee design work, right-of-way acquisition, utility relocation, and public involvement.

Ohio Bridges Project Website
http://www.kyinbridges.com/project/oversight.aspx

Officials from the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) and the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) manage the Bridges Project, a bi-state project. A Bi-State Management Team of these officials oversees work completed by the general engineering consultant, Community Transportation Solutions (CTS), and the six design teams on the project. Each state has a project manager specifically for this project.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) also reviews the work of CTS and the Bi-State Management Team. FHWA also has a project manager dedicated to this project.

Project Case Study: Ohio River Bridges Project
Jackie Cissell, December 2007
http://www.cenews.com/article.asp?id=2532

Excerpt: The $3.9 billion Ohio River Bridges (ORB) Project —located in Louisville, Ky., and Southern Indiana—is a massive undertaking that includes two new bridges over the Ohio River, twin 2000-foot tunnels, and an interchange where three interstate highways meet. When complete, the hundreds of engineering companies and contractors involved in the ORB Project will have helped develop best practices for civil project collaboration.

The Ohio Bridges Financial and Management Plan
January 2008
http://www.kyinbridges.com/project-newsroom/2008-01-financialplan.aspx

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) approved as submitted the initial financial plan for the multi-billion dollar Ohio River Bridges Project. The document outlines project costs, schedule, and funding mechanisms through completion of the project.

Officials with the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) and the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) submitted the plan in early October to the FHWA for review.

“We are pleased that the Federal Highway Administration has confidence in the plan we have outlined,” said Matt Bullock, Interim Project Manager for the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet. “This is an important step in the process for us. We will engage the legislature as we continue this discussion regarding the best ways to finance this project.”

With the approval of the financial plan, federal dollars can now be authorized for use in project construction. A Financial Plan is required by the FHWA for all projects costing more than $100 million and must consider the effect of inflation on project costs. The financial plan must be updated and submitted to the FHWA on an annual basis.

New Design Details Revealed For Downtown Bridge
April 2008
http://www.kyinbridges.com/project-newsroom/

Excerpt: After months of community input, design team members for the Ohio River Bridges Project unveiled the recommended aesthetic design elements for the new Downtown Bridge connecting Louisville and Jeffersonville.

FTA New Starts Projects:

New Starts Program Assessment, Final Report
Deloitte Consulting, for FTA, February 2007
(Due to the size of the following links attachments have been provided with this TSR)
http://www.tpb.ga.gov/Documents/Deloitte_FTANewStartsFinalReport_FINAL_2007-2-12.ppt

- **Appendix A: Case Study Report**
  http://www.tpb.ga.gov/Documents/AppA_CaseStudyReport_FINAL_2007-2-12.ppt
- **Appendix B: Assessment of Analogous Project Delivery Processes**
  http://www.tpb.ga.gov/Documents/AppB_AnalogousProjectDelivery_FINAL_2007_2-12.ppt

From page 4: In June of 2006, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) hired Deloitte Consulting to perform a detailed analysis of the New Starts program.

The objective of this analysis was to review the project development process to identify opportunities for streamlining or simplifying the process, while focusing on FTA's stated goals for the program (see next slide). Key activities included:

- Documentation review – A review of program information provided by FA and also available on www.fta.dot.gov, as well as a comparison of the current statute, policies and guidance.
- Key Stakeholder interviews – Over 60 interviews with FTA Headquarters Offices (TOA, TPE, TPM, TBP), selected FTA Regional Offices, the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), selected transit agencies, GAO, and Congressional staff.
- Case Studies – Detailed reviews of 6 projects awarded recent New Starts Full Funding Grant Agreements (FFGA), and 3 Non-New Starts projects, all selected by FTA.
- Review of Analogous Project Delivery Processes – A review and analysis of selected public and private sector programs to assess leading practices in grants management, investment decisions and risk management. Also includes a discussion of alternative project delivery approaches, such as Design-Build (DB) and Public-Private Partnerships (PPP).

From page 9: Key findings of the assessment are:

- New Starts generally perceived as a good program.
- Project development process is perceived by grantees as intensive, lengthy, and burdensome.
- Clear and concise definitions of requirements do not exist for each stage of project development.
- The precise status of a project is not always known during project development process.
- Annual project rating requirement creates unnecessary burden.
- Inconsistent enforcement of policies across the program.
- Grantees generally deem FTA staff knowledgeable, dedicated, and professional – but understaffed.
- Roles, responsibilities, authority, and accountability not clearly defined in current organizational structure.
- Organizational conflicts exist between HQ offices and between HQ and Regions.
- Project sponsors not realizing full benefit of alternative delivery methods.
- Ineffective/inadequate use of technology to enable processes.
- The current nomenclature for New Starts phases does not accurately reflect required process activities and causes confusion for program stakeholders.

Contractor Performance Assessment Report
FTA, Office of Planning and Environment, USDOT, September 2007
http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/cpar_final_report_-_2007.pdf

From Introduction, page 4 of PDF: Section 5309 of Title 49 of the United States Code, as amended by the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), emphasizes the need to improve the quality of the estimates of ridership and costs used to support funding decisions for major transit investments. To help fulfill this goal, FTA is required to submit an annual report to Congress that documents and analyzes the

performance of contractors that develop cost and ridership estimates to support decision-making for New Starts and Small Starts projects. The SAFETEA-LU Conference Report indicates that the Contractor Performance Assessment Report (CPAR) "will provide public transportation agencies with an informational tool, allowing them to better identify contractors able to perform accurate estimates of cost and ridership figures. Additionally, consulting the CPAR as a condition of Federal assistance will help ensure the reliability of estimates used in awarding FFGAs."

Before and After Studies of New Starts Projects, Report to Congress
FTA, Office of Planning and Environment, and USDOT, September 2007
http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/Before_and_After_Studies_Report_2007_-_Final.pdf

Excerpt from page 5 of PDF: FTA intends for the Before and After Study to benefit the larger transit community through the dissemination of study results and findings. In that vein, the Before and After Study requirement has two other distinct and important purposes:

1. to expand insights into the costs and impacts of major transit investments; and,
2. to improve the technical methods and procedures used in the planning and development of those investments.

To accomplish the first purpose—insights into costs and impacts—each study is to identify the actual costs of the New Starts or Small Starts project and its impacts on transit service and ridership. The study isolates these actual costs and impacts by comparing the conditions that prevail after project implementation to the conditions that existed before implementation.
To accomplish the second purpose—improvements to technical methods and procedures—each study examines the accuracy of predicted costs and impacts and conducts analyses to identify the probable sources of differences between forecasted and achieved values. The study determines the accuracy of the predictions by comparing the conditions that prevail after project implementation to the costs and impacts predicted for the project in each phase of the planning and project development process.

Before and After Studies address both purposes through a careful technical analysis undertaken by sponsoring transit agencies in cooperation with other local planning entities and FTA. This arrangement ensures authorship by local agency staff with first-hand knowledge of the project and its development, buy-in of individual Project Sponsors and the broader transit industry, and consistency with national standards for the analysis.

They Played Us: Talking trash instead of transit, federal officials used a New York minute to suggest an end to Dulles Rail [Opinion]
Doug Koelemay, January 2008, *Bacon's Rebellion*
http://www.baconsrebellion.com/Issues08/01-28/Koelemay.php

Excerpt: Deloitte reported that that FTA faces key issues of "transparency and consistency." The FTA New Starts project development process was described as "lengthy and burdensome." Enforcement of policies across the program, Deloitte reported, is "inconsistent." Roles, responsibilities, authority and accountability at FTA "are not clearly defined" and use of technology is "ineffective" and "inadequate."

The Deloitte report, which is available on the FTA web site, illustrated its findings with quotes from key stake holders.

New York Mega-Rail Projects Update
Metro Magazine, May 2008, p. 32-36
http://metro-magazine.epubxpress.com/wps/portal/metro/c1/04_SB8K8xLLM9MSSzPy8xBz9CP0os3iLkCAPEzcPIwMDC0NTAyNT3yAjM6MQQ0dDI_2CbEdFAMbozpo!/

Article discusses transit projects being funded by the New Starts program, beginning on page 34.

Transit Articles:

The Future of Mass Transit in the United States: Can We Get There From Here? (extended version including Atlanta and Las Vegas Case Studies)
Thomas A. Rubin, Texas Public Policy Foundation (originally published in *Veritas*, Summer 2000)
http://www.nctr.usf.edu/jpt/jptv11n1.htm

Excerpt: For many decades, the future of transit in the United States has suffered from failure to address an extremely important issue: What is the purpose of mass transit? What is transit supposed to accomplish?

As the old saying goes, if you don't know where you're going, then any road will get you there. Because there is not a commonly accepted concept of the purpose of mass transit in this nation, either on a national, state, regional, or local basis, there has been a failure to develop and implement proper plans for transit agencies and related governmental units to accomplish this purpose.

To illustrate the results of this lack of purpose in transit planning, let us first examine recent transit projects in San Antonio and Los Angeles.

Does Government Structure Matter? A Comparative Analysis of Urban Bus Transit Efficiency
Susan Leland and Olga Smirnova, University of N.C. at Charlotte, *Journal of Public Transportation 11*(1): 63-83, 2008
http://www.nctr.usf.edu/jpt/pdf/JPT11-1leland.pdf

Abstract (p. 63): As public transit becomes more and more important to our economy, it is imperative that we understand which governing system achieves optimal efficiency. Following up on the work of Perry and Babitsky (1986), we quantitatively test whether certain forms of public governance are more efficient administrators of bus service. We utilize 2004 data from the National Transit Association database and control for federal funding, whether services are contracted out, region, population density, whether the system has a fixed guideway, the presence of local dedicated funding, and the ratio of local to federal funding. We find that special-purpose governments are more likely than general-purpose governments (cities and counties) to operate more efficiently. We also discovered that governments that contract out for some or all of their bus services are also more likely to be efficient than those public agencies that directly operate all of their services.

This article cites that special-purpose governments (defined as public authorities, government corporations, and special districts—p. 66) are more successful in funding projects, perhaps due to aggressive solicitation of funds (p. 64). Also these jurisdictions can be regional in nature, allowing the overlap of other governmental boundaries (p. 65). The study finds that special-purpose governments have a higher farebox recovery ratio and high service effectiveness, but lower labor productivity and service efficiency than general-purpose governments (p. 79). The authors attribute increased efficiency to the ability of special-purpose governments to raise local taxes. Study results are not to be generalized to other means of transit than bus service (80).

Virginia Railway Express
http://www.vre.org/about/index.htm

Excerpt: The Virginia Railway Express (VRE) is a transportation partnership of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) and the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC). VRE provides commuter rail service from the Northern Virginia suburbs to Alexandria, Crystal City and downtown Washington, D.C. The VRE Operations Board, consisting of seven commissioners - three each from NVTC and PRTC and the Director of the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (VDRPT), oversees all operating aspects of the Virginia Railway Express. Reporting to the Board is the VRE Operations Group, which handles the daily operations of the VRE.