

# SWOT Analysis





# OVERVIEW

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The consulting team conducted interviews with the CUMTD Board, management and staff, and external stakeholders in March/April 2013 to gather important qualitative research information which will contribute to the overall findings of the strategic planning effort. Many interviews were one-on-one, but some interviews were with two or three people grouped with similar responsibility.

At the outset of each interview, the team explained the strategic planning process, the interview selection process, and the intention of individual anonymity of answers. Responses are grouped where three or more participants indicated similar responses. Comments that were only voiced by one or two people are included when the comments may be contra-indicative. The results of these interviews are summarized below as overall findings, organizational culture findings, and in a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis.

In addition, in an effort to gather information from external stakeholders or management and staff who did not attend an interview session, an online survey instrument was developed and administered.

# MANAGEMENT & STAFF RESULTS

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All of the participants cited the exemplary quality of the CUMTD system. Participants recognized the organization as one of the best in the country; one that is on the leading edge of technology, innovative thinking, and service delivery. The system and leadership were viewed as overwhelmingly positive. The primary concern expressed by almost all participants was the impending change of management with the departure of the Managing Director and the senior staff.

## MISSION AND VISION

During the initial stage of the interview, participants were asked to give overall impressions of CUMTD's success in fulfilling the organization's stated mission to "lead the way to greater mobility" and the stated vision of "going beyond traditional boundaries to promote excellence in transportation."

The professional and management staff felt that CUMTD is a national leader in promoting excellence in transportation and a leader in the local community in stimulating greater mobility. Participation in local and national organizations has been important in developing the leadership role. Management has always been willing to try new technologies and the results have usually been successful.

Relationships with other transportation modes have been developed and are successful. CUMTD understands the community development partnerships that are needed to stimulate success for both the community and the transit system. Strong relationships have been developed with the University of Illinois and local governments.

There is also concern about declining quality of customer service and for the growing workload, which would require more drivers, mechanics, and support staff, was voiced by several participants.

“CUMTD UNDERSTANDS THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS THAT ARE NEEDED TO STIMULATE SUCCESS FOR BOTH THE COMMUNITY AND THE TRANSIT SYSTEM.”

## MANAGEMENT & STAFF RESULTS

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### ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

A series of questions were asked regarding the organizational culture, including perceptions regarding management/leadership, philosophy, teamwork, roles, and communication. The comments were generally positive.

Excellence, honesty, trust, and a strong work ethic are evident. Employees are expected to perform their duties correctly and adhere to high ethical standards. Customer service is a high priority and people are flexible enough to help out where and when they are needed. Several management employees appreciated the experience of learning to drive a bus to better understand the responsibilities and efforts needed by drivers to be successful. Staff members are not micro-managed, which allows most of the work to be fulfilling and challenging. The overall culture is one where the expectation is a high degree of excellence.

The organization functions like a small, almost family-like business. People know the strengths and weakness of other staff members and adjust to those varying levels of abilities in a generally supportive manner.

Participants were also open and expressive in offering suggestions for improvements within the organization. The concerns are relatively minor in the overall functioning of the organization and were offered in the spirit of process improvement. No one indicated that the following issues are causing serious dysfunction or impairment in the daily activities of CUMTD.

Generational differences were also expressed by some employees. In general, older employees felt there was a generation “gap” that was disconcerting. Younger employees did not perceive generational differences and felt that conflicts were caused by the individual personalities regardless of age.

Staff members were also concerned about board/staff interaction, as it will be different in the future. There is a fear that future boards may not want to continue future growth and may want to reduce service or support. There is also a concern that board members may want to become more involved in areas that have traditionally been purely staff functions and are not policy issues.

### SWOT ANALYSIS

#### **STRENGTHS - WEAKNESSES - OPPORTUNITIES - THREATS**

Taking the qualitative findings of the interviews and organizing them into a SWOT Analysis allows the organization to evaluate itself from a comprehensive perspective.

#### **STRENGTHS**

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All staff members enthusiastically provided a long list of strengths of the organization. They can be broken into the following categories: leadership, service quality, innovation, infrastructure, and community.

##### **Leadership**

Every participant identified leadership as the primary strength of the organization. Bill Volk is an inspiration to all who were interviewed. He has been able to articulate a vision of a high-quality transit system and then follow through to make the vision a reality. The other members of the management team were also identified by several people as providing outstanding leadership and creating an environment where employees can excel to the best of their abilities. The management team is unique and complements each other in their skills because the organization is stable and focused. Employees know where the organization is headed, what the challenges are, and what is needed to be successful. Positive relationships with a variety of organizations have been developed and nurtured.

“EMPLOYEES KNOW WHERE THE ORGANIZATION IS HEADED, WHAT THE CHALLENGES ARE, AND WHAT IS NEEDED TO BE SUCCESSFUL.”

## MANAGEMENT & STAFF RESULTS

### Service Quality

The delivery of high-quality, safe, reliable service is the cornerstone of the success of the system as viewed by the general public and employees. People are proud to be a part of the organization. Delivering high-quality service is not a platitude; it is reality. Employees are very serious about doing what is best for the customer. Market surveys are conducted periodically and show a very high level of customer satisfaction.

### Innovation

CUMTD is an innovator in trying new technology and is a leader in the transit industry. It is an early adopter of new, cutting-edge technology. Most projects have been successful, but even when not successful; the organization does not shy away from future innovations.

### Infrastructure and Technology

CUMTD has a modern, well-maintained bus fleet operating from a modern maintenance and administrative facility. Buses are clean, modern, efficient, and well-maintained. The organization is technologically sophisticated and continues to enhance its technology. Almost all administrative and management staff members use the technology available to them in an acceptable manner. Environmentally sensitive infrastructure has been, and will continue to be, a major component in future infrastructure investment.



### Community

CUMTD is an active participant in a wide variety of community activities. It is an advocate for strengthening all non-auto modes of transportation and works with a variety of advocacy groups. Effective and mutually beneficial relationships have been developed with the University of Illinois, city and county government, K-12 schools, social organizations, and the business community. CUMTD is a high-profile, successful community supporter and leader.

### WEAKNESSES

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Staff members indicated that most of the weaknesses of the organization are internal procedures and processes and are not visible to the general public, or even to some employees. The degree of intensity of the issues varied significantly among participants. Some felt very strongly about some issues; some felt there were a few minor areas that needed some improvement. The “empty bus” syndrome was the only externally visible weakness that was mentioned.

The areas of concern were communication, succession planning, safety/training, and organization structure.

#### Communication

Communication was the most common weakness mentioned. While some people felt communication was good and thorough, others felt it was weak within some departments and also between some departments. Some felt that lack of agreement was often cited as poor communication, and divergent or questioning thoughts were viewed as poor communication. Some felt that people did not use their e-mail effectively to communicate, and others felt that e-mail was used too often and personal interaction would be more appropriate. Different styles of communication are not always recognized, and this is often a deterrent to full understanding of problems and issues that arise. Improved communication is needed, even to the point that an unbiased mediator/communicator was suggested to be used at times to separate personalities from issues.

#### Succession Planning

Concerns were raised about succession planning at all levels of the organization. Not only is the senior management team retiring, but many drivers, administrative employees, and maintenance staff will leave in the next five years. There is concern that replacements will not be staffed within an appropriate timeframe, which will cause undue stress on current employees and may inhibit the effectiveness of the organization. Concerns about the loss of organizational knowledge were also expressed.

## MANAGEMENT & STAFF RESULTS

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### **Safety and Training**

There were several comments about the safety and training program and that it is not adequately staffed for the number of drivers needed to maintain current staffing levels. The program is a customized program and is not consistent due to variation in the drivers who train new drivers. A standardized program with dedicated full-time trainers is needed to ensure the quality of new drivers. There was also concern expressed about the ability of drivers to work excessively long shifts, and work weeks exceeding 70 hours per week due to labor shortages.

### **Organization Structure**

Almost everyone commented that a centralized Human Resource function is needed instead of several people performing a variety of HR functions. There were conflicting views on whether it should be a separate department or incorporated into an existing department. Concerns were expressed about how extensive the HR department would be and if it would be an impediment to hiring new operating employees in a timely manner.

There were also concerns expressed about duties performed in some departments that would be more effectively performed in other departments. It was felt by several employees that it would be more efficient if all organizational duties were evaluated for effectiveness. It was felt that there should be a complete review of all functions within the organization to determine the best department for each of the functions.

Several people expressed concern that CUMTD is becoming a big organization, but is not responding to the growth with appropriate support in terms of staffing levels. There were several suggestions about re-organizing the management structure to provide centralized Human Resources functions.

The need to address some inter-departmental conflicts caused by the perception that some departments are not working to the same standards of excellence as other departments was also expressed. Inter-departmental communication and misunderstanding of the stresses on some departments was also a concern.



### OPPORTUNITIES

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The participants saw many opportunities for CUMTD in the future. Some were based on past experience and development, and other opportunities were “outside the box” thinking. The opportunities comprise a wide range of topics and cannot easily be bundled together. In general, the opportunities are: data utilization, new organizational structure, expansion, and risk-taking.

“THERE IS POTENTIAL TO USE AVL DATA TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCIES OF SCHEDULING AND FOR PLANNING PURPOSES.”

#### Data utilization

Staff mentioned that with the current AVL system an abundance of data is being collected and stored. There is potential to use AVL data to improve efficiencies of scheduling and for planning purposes. This data could be used to adjust schedules for possible savings to the agency.

Also, it was noted that data utilization will be critical in implementing ISO standards. Staff mentioned that ISO standards have the potential to create quality and efficiency returns to improve customer service.

#### Organizational Structure

CUMTD has grown from a small transit agency to a medium sized system. While staff felt it is desired and optimal to keep the family-like feel, organizational changes should occur for departmental effectiveness. Clarifying the human resources function and integration planning with operations were specifically noted. Additionally it was mentioned that organizational changes could improve departmental communication, safety and training.

## MANAGEMENT & STAFF RESULTS

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### Service Expansion

Expansion of transit services was consistently mentioned as an opportunity. Several different elements can be considered in this category. This could be in the form of contracted service with outlining communities outside of the CUMTD boundaries.

Also development near campus could ignite the need for service. In the future this could lead to revisiting a fixed guideway project in the form of light rail, streetcar, or BRT.

Coordination with other modes, most notably Amtrak, is another opportunity. While rail frequency will determine the extent of coordination; the Illinois Terminal puts CUMTD in a position to maximize the potential of these partnerships.

New routing patterns could assist in service expansion. Additional transit centers in outlying areas could create a redesign of routes and provide upgraded service in fringe areas and not force customers to ride to the campus core.

### Risks

Many staff members welcomed the opportunity to stay current on new technology and to expand environmental initiatives. Generally most staff agreed that future risk-taking ventures should be taken, however, the risks should be calculated to determine potential success or failure. Overall, continued risk-taking should be encouraged for most projects.

## THREATS

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Several threats were identified. The primary threat is funding at the state and federal level. Other threats were future growth, cost of operation, technology, new management team, and relationships.

### Funding

Concerns were expressed about reductions in state and federal funding. Some programs are formula and some are discretionary, but all may be reduced to some extent in the future. There was minimal concern that any program would be completely eliminated. Two people indicated that renewed inflation may increase cost, and local taxes may not be able to maintain service at current levels in an inflationary environment.

### **Future Growth**

Some people indicated that there may be resistance to future growth by some segments of the general population. A greater concern expressed by many was that the current organization would not have the ability to hire drivers and mechanics in a timely manner to take advantage of an immediate growth opportunity. If expansion occurs without proper staffing, there is a fear that the quality of service will decline and that could have a long-term negative impact. Stress on the transit system and the possible loss of agency values were also mentioned.

### **Cost of Operation**

The cost of operation may increase as additional services are added and additional supervision and management is required. The Affordable Care Act is viewed as a cost threat, but also an opportunity to hire high-quality employees. Some staff members believe there needs to be a better plan for hiring to reduce overtime; if that is not done, then they predict overtime costs will continue to increase and this could affect the overall operation.

### **Technology**

Some participants felt there is too much reliance on technology to the point that human interaction is weakened. Others felt that the existing technology is not being maximized and should be fully utilized. These are two separate issues, but seem to be intertwined and not viewed as separate issues by some staff members.

While technology is current and pervasive throughout the organization, there is some resistance to using all the features of the available technology that should be addressed in the near future before new technology is purchased. Some technology has been purchased and is not used or minimally used.

## MANAGEMENT & STAFF RESULTS

“THE NEW MANAGEMENT TEAM WILL NEED TO HAVE THE SAME VALUES AND ETHICS AS THE CURRENT TEAM FOR THE SYSTEM TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN THE FUTURE.”

### Knowledge Transfer

Many felt that the new management team will need to have the same values and ethics as the current team for the system to be successful in the future. If the new team that is assembled over the next few years does not maintain high performance standards and high ethical standards, the system will decline. The new management may not have the focus, integrity, work ethic, and professional standards of the current management and staff.

There is fear of the loss of long-term institutional knowledge and that the new team may have a different value system if large numbers of outsiders are brought in.

As the system grows into a larger entity that is approaching 400 employees, there is an almost universal concern that the current “small system” personalization will disappear and CUMTD will evolve into an impersonal big bus system. If the system loses its personal approach, there will be negative consequences internally as well as within the larger community.

The new board-management relationship was another area of concern. Traditionally, the board has focused on policy issues and there may be more involvement in decision-making that has been traditionally at the staff level.

### Relationships

Continued cultivation of positive relationships with U of I, local governments, and the business community is important. The new management team may not be willing or capable of cultivating the positive relationships that have developed over the last 40 years. There may be a weakening of these relationships also due to the turnover within the university, local government, and business community as turnover occurs in those institutions. If the new staff/management does not cultivate relationships and demonstrate the importance of transit to the new decision makers, the system may be weakened.



### CONCLUSIONS

The overall assessment by the CUMTD management and staff is very positive. They recognize the challenges the system is facing, and almost all are completely engaged in maintaining the high performance standards, high work expectations, and ethics and integrity that are the defining characteristics of the management team and staff.

The professionals on staff are very realistic in their approach to problem solving and have a realistic view of the efforts that will be required to maintain and enhance the system in the future. They are able to identify challenges and are engaged in meeting those challenges with a variety of solutions. They recognize personality differences and are generally respectful of each other and recognize the value that each individual brings to the management/staff team.

The next management team has an expectation from the staff that there will be continuity of performance that has been established over the last 40 years. Continued success of the system will be attainable with a dedicated staff and skillful management team that recognizes the challenges the system faces and addresses them in a timely fashion, and continues the level of high-quality service the system is currently known for in the community and in the transit industry.

# BOARD RESULTS

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The consulting team conducted interviews with CUMTD board members in March/April 2013 to gather important qualitative research information which will contribute to the overall findings of the strategic planning effort.

At the outset of each interview, the team explained the strategic planning process, the interview selection process, and the intention of individual anonymity of answers. Responses are grouped where three or more participants indicated similar responses. Comments that were only voiced by one or two people are included when the comments may be contra-indicative or insightful.

The results of these interviews are summarized below as overall findings in a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis. Additional comments from board members are also included.

## MISSION & VISION

Currently CUTMD's mission is to lead the way to greater mobility. The board strongly and emphatically feels that the CUMTD is fulfilling its mission. The board feels that the organization is an industry leader that exhibits a systems approach to total transportation and involves organizations representing all modes. It is a forward-thinking organization that has a broad vision of providing mobility for everyone. Additionally the board felt that the agency is living up to the vision of providing excellence in transportation. It should be noted that board members also mentioned that there is always room to improve the agency.

## STRENGTHS

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### Service

The transit board echoes many of the comments of management, professional staff, and the general community. The commitment to high-quality service is the most prominent strength with safe, courteous, and reliable service in clean, modern, well-maintained buses.

### **Collaboration and Innovation**

Strategic planning in the past has resulted in the mutually beneficial relationship with the University of Illinois as well as other local governments. The organization has been an innovator in several areas and is an industry leader and a local leader in working with a variety of interest groups. It responds to opportunities conscientiously and thoughtfully, with employees who are dedicated to providing the best service possible.

### **Financial Stability and Commitment to Excellence**

It is a financially stable organization that has been able to invest in its people, equipment, technology, and facilities. It has high expectations in everything it does, and everyone is trying to make a great system even better.

## **WEAKNESSES**

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There are no glaring weaknesses that need immediate attention. Some board members relayed community comments that CUMTD is too big and spends money to get different awards, that it does not provide equal service to all parts of the community, and that it is somewhat self-serving.

### **Funding Inequity**

There is a perception of funding inequity in that users do not pay a fair share through the farebox. Property taxes have been increasing every year, but the fares are the same. Some taxpayers are not receiving a comparable benefit to others, depending on the service level in their area.

### **Empty Buses**

There is a negative image of large buses on some routes carrying only a handful of passengers. The system is perceived to be designed for U of I students, to the detriment of the larger community.

### **Internal Staff Concerns**

There may be some generational tension within the workforce, and there are some internal staff conflicts that have not been resolved.

## BOARD RESULTS

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### OPPORTUNITIES

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#### New Managing Director

There was a wide range of opportunities expressed by board members. Some felt that the next Managing Director should be able to plan at a strategic level with the board to develop many different choices for the organization. They felt comfortable that the staff will assist the new director in developing new ideas, and that CUMTD will continue to be an industry leader as well as a strong influence on the local community.

#### Business Community

The transit system can be part of the economic development efforts in the area and can influence and benefit from land use that is beneficial to transit service. They also recognized that not every development in the future will need transit, and the freedom of choice for developers to use or not to use the transit system in future developments is important.

#### Expansion

Regionalization with service to surrounding communities should be explored. The development of a relationship with the CRIS Rural Mass Transit District is important and is a model for other transit development, whether directly operated by CUMTD or by others. The role of CUMTD in enhancing other modes should be continued and expanded. Improved AMTRAK service to Chicago, which will enhance the need for CUMTD bus service, is also an opportunity for board involvement.





### Other

Transit's role in community development must be continually explained. The success of Illinois Terminal is a shining example of risk-taking for development that should be repeated in the future. Further development of the Illinois Terminal should be a high priority.

Changes in labor force attitudes and the Affordable Care Act are two areas where opportunity exists to attract high-quality, dedicated employees in all levels of the organization.

Management of other modal facilities or services is an opportunity with significant risk. Finances will need to be completely separated if the board pursues a wider range of modal opportunities to avoid negative financial consequences for local bus service in the current CUMTD service area.

## THREATS

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### Funding

The primary threat to CUMTD is the possible reduction in federal and state funding. It is expected that these changes will come soon, and the board must carefully analyze the choices for adjusting the system to lower external funding levels. It was felt that local taxing ability may not be able to meet the reduced federal and state losses to keep the system whole. A variety of options are needed to adjust to available funding.

### Retirements

Concern was expressed about the turnover in senior management, and if the service culture and standards may gradually decline with a new management team. Retirements at all levels of the organization will be a challenge that could have negative consequences if performance declines. Several board members felt that they could do long-term harm to the system if they do not make good choices in the leadership change.

## BOARD RESULTS

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### **Service Needs**

Increasing ridership and demand for service is also viewed as a threat if the system cannot provide enough service to meet demand. This may cause a reduction in local support and more criticism of the board and management. Social service agencies may also balk at unmet service needs.

### **Other**

Too much involvement in other modes may also put a financial strain on the core transit service. If there is a reduction in support of other modes, the consequences will be negative. In a declining or stagnant financial situation, it will be difficult to balance the need to protect the core bus service and still be involved with other modes.

### **Other comments**

Board members were encouraged to discuss other issues besides the SWOT topics. Several board members expanded on the SWOT topics with a slightly different viewpoint.

### **Board/Staff Relationship**

Several board members felt that there should be deeper board involvement in the operation of the transit service. They felt the new committee structure will provide more information and allow deeper understanding of the inner workings of transit operations. They felt that an in-depth examination of various operations issues by the board is important with the change in management.

### **Role of the Board**

Many, but not all, board members agreed that they should have a higher visibility in the community and “take the heat” for potentially controversial decisions. The risk is that a high-profile board can make progress more difficult if a negative public perception develops. A bad director is correctable by the board, but a bad board will carry negative perception for a long time.

### Board Consensus/Decision Making

Several board members felt that the staff should continue to bring new ideas to the board. When they do, they should generate several options that are fully thought out. This will allow more thorough decision-making before new ideas are exposed to public scrutiny. Requests for service changes are very difficult for the board. Although they usually want to accommodate these requests, it will be more difficult in the future as finances become tighter. Requests will be evaluated as to how expensive they are and if they will have a negative impact on service quality.

Board/staff need to have clearly adopted policies to guide discussion and decision-making. The Board needs to review its previous policies and have processes in place for policy review and application of the policies to various issues.

Complex issues, such as Illinois Terminal expansion, annexation, and service addition/reduction should be made with complete background of previous decisions and current conditions that affect decision-making. Policies should be firm but not completely inflexible when a negative impact could occur and affect the political climate in which the transit district operates. Extensive discussion of all options should be first developed in the committee structure.

“COMPLEX ISSUES, SUCH AS ILLINOIS TERMINAL EXPANSION, ANNEXATION, AND SERVICE ADDITION/REDUCTION SHOULD BE MADE WITH COMPLETE BACKGROUND OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS AND CURRENT CONDITIONS THAT AFFECT DECISION-MAKING.”

### Fixed Guideway

If there is a transit need for higher-capacity service such as streetcar or BRT, it has to be tied to economic development and not look like “empire building.” Impetus should come from outside CUMTD, with extensive community input and eventual consensus. Board members were mixed on how aggressive the board and staff should be on leadership roles in streetcar/BRT option development.

## BOARD RESULTS

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### **Risk**

Most board members agreed that CUMTD has taken some risks and is usually successful. Future risk-taking ventures should be identified as being risky and consequences of partial success or failure should be thought through. Overall, continued risk-taking should be encouraged for most projects. It has been successful in the past and should continue to be in the future.

### **Knowledge Transfer**

The senior management transition will create some tension between new staff members and retiring staff. It is important to retain the experience and knowledge of the current staff while allowing new staff/management to develop their own style, which should be consistent with the historically high standards of CUMTD. Advisory roles and processes should be developed for the newly retired staff. However, some felt that the retiring staff would be too intrusive with the new team without ultimate responsibility, and this could inhibit development of the new staff members.

Several specific suggestions were offered for system improvements, including higher-end amenities, longer service spans on some routes, more frequent service on busy routes, 365-day service of some type, limited-stop buses, increasing advertising revenue, and comprehensive analysis of the system for access to the entire community.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The board SWOT process provided additional insight into the future of CUMTD. Board members were generally focused on board-level priorities and functions. They genuinely care about their role and the current and future success of the transit system. They recognize the positive achievements of the current management and staff, while acknowledging the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. By continuing to provide high-level leadership and support for CUMTD, and developing the appropriate planning techniques and policies needed to meet challenges that will inevitably arise, they can propel the transit system toward a successful future.



# EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER RESULTS

The consulting team conducted interviews with forty-two external community stakeholders and leaders. The participants were initially identified by the team, and the list was then finalized by the leadership of CUMTD. The interviews were conducted April 9 through May 7, 2013. All interviews were conducted in person at the participant's office or at Illinois Terminal/MTD offices, with the exception of two telephone interviews. Most interviews were one-on-one, with group interviews conducted when the participants, organizations, or responsibilities were similar.

All of the participants readily agreed to participate in the process and were not given questions prior to the interviews. All participants were invited, confirmed, and thanked for their participation via email or telephone. At the outset of each interview, the team explained the strategic planning process, the interview selection process, and the intention of individual anonymity of answers.

## OVERALL FINDINGS

All of the participants cited the exemplary quality of the CUMTD system. Participants recognized the organization as one of the best in the country and on the leading edge of technology and innovative thinking. The system and leadership were viewed as overwhelmingly positive. While positive comments from CUMTD advocates were anticipated, there was also a noticeable level of support and recognition of strengths from organizations and individuals who may not be traditional supporters of CUMTD.

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## MISSION AND VISION

During the initial stage of the interview, participants were asked to give overall impressions of CUMTD's success in fulfilling the organization's stated mission to “lead the way to greater mobility” and the stated vision of “going beyond traditional boundaries to promote excellence in transportation.”

## EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER RESULTS

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In relationship to the mission, most participants recognized the organization's leadership, especially on traditional transit-focused issues, but many suggested there is no current area-wide leader particularly for bicycles and pedestrians. Several participants said CUMTD is perceived as a valued contributor to mobility but not the leader. Many participants echoed one person's comment, "they have come a long way, but there is room for improvement." Seven participants said CUMTD is a leader only on issues related to public transit.

About one-fourth of the participants cited the organization as the leader in all areas of mobility.

When asked about the vision, over half of the participants recognized CUMTD as successfully going beyond all boundaries. The other half of the participants suggested this is not currently happening, but they see pieces in place to realize this vision. A number of participants voiced concerns about the perception the organization can "come off too heavy-handed" (more detail in later sections), thus limiting its ability to go beyond traditional boundaries. Several participants chose not to answer this question as they felt they did not have enough information about the organization.

### STRENGTHS

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Among the four categories of questions (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats), the strengths of the organization generated the greatest number of comments. All participants were able to quickly name perceived strengths with very little probing or need for clarification. Four areas emerged as the organization's greatest strengths.

#### Fleet

First, nearly every participant suggested the existing fleet of buses is a major strength of the organization. Individual comments centered on the ideas of "well-maintained, clean, good color scheme, hybrids, bikes on buses, and clever bus ads" as leaving a positive impression of not only the buses but also the entire system.

## EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER RESULTS

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### Leadership

Second, CUMTD leadership was cited as a great strength of the organization. Specifically mentioned were: the Managing Director's leadership locally, in the state, and in the nation; the bridge-building role among the University and municipalities; and the involvement in "more than buses." Over one-fourth of the participants said the organization's visioning for the future and willingness to be on the leading edge of technology/service were valuable to the area. CUMTD's leadership role for Illinois Terminal and the resulting community impact were specifically noted. Also mentioned were: a good management team and structure, the longevity of top leadership to date, and having at least two leaders in the community (Managing Director and Assistant Managing Director) to diversify the contacts and styles.

### Collaboration

Third, another highly regarded strength mentioned by most of the participants is CUMTD's collaboration and community partnership at every level of the organization. High visibility in the community and behind-the-scenes work to provide extraordinary service were noted as equally valuable. An important component of this area is the exemplary partnership with the University of Illinois. Students, U of I leadership, and community leaders recognize: consistently strong service, communication, route planning, cost/value ratio, and responsiveness at every level as a demonstrated strength that should continue as a high priority. The existing partnership to provide school district transportation was viewed as positive by both educators and community leaders.



## EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER RESULTS

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### Marketing

Finally, marketing and branding campaigns were mentioned as memorable, positive, and clear. Nearly three-quarters of participants mentioned the positive impact of existing marketing. Social media tone and collaboration with other organizations were also mentioned.

### Other

Another highly valued strength of the organization is the perception of consistently good service “from top to bottom” including drivers, routes, training, safety improvements, on-time arrivals and departures, technology, and attention to detail. Service to the core was specifically mentioned by a wide range of participants.

Strong financial management and the ability to secure grant funding were mentioned by over half of the participants. The perception of the reasonable fares and focus on sustainability were also mentioned.

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## WEAKNESSES

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Two areas emerged where CUMTD could focus efforts for improvement. Nearly all participants mentioned some variation on the topics.

### Empty Buses

The first is the negative perception left by empty buses on the street. Participants suggested this leaves the impression the system could be run more optimally. Most community leaders understood this may be a difficult problem to solve, especially outside the core, but agreed it is the issue perceived most negatively in the community. Several participants suggested the lack of a concise message, with a reasonable response to this issue, is a weakness of the system.



## EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER RESULTS

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### Communication

The second weakness mentioned by nearly all participants is communications and public relations. Most participants suggested the day-to-day and individual communications are acceptable, but the overall communication strategies don't appear to be in place. Specific areas for improvement include: the perception that leadership "gets ahead of an idea before bringing the community along"; not inviting the community to help/engage before something is already decided; leadership approach to sensitive community issues; and lack of proactivity which therefore allows critics to frame the message. Several participants suggested the perception of CUMTD's inability to work with certain areas of the community is a political liability, and prevents buy-in of CUMTD as the area transportation leader. Another area noted was the lack of a compelling message for non-riders, or "How does this benefit me?" Finally, a perception exists of a lack of follow-up communication, both in the media and with individuals, on issues that are not easily or quickly resolved.

### Routes

Decision-making regarding route changes and suggestions is an area for further review and consideration. A perception among riders and non-riders is the system can be prohibitively complicated and deters people from choosing CUMTD for transportation. Other areas of weakness specifically mentioned were: lack of routes that avoid campus; service to developing residential/commercial areas north of I-74, especially in Urbana; lack of express routes to certain areas of the community, most notably service to the fringe; Sunday service ending time and its effect on area retailers for customers/employees.

### Other

Other weaknesses noted by several community leaders include: perceived lack of partnership with the business community; CUMTD community projects that suffer from lack of clarity and timelines; lack of visibility of others in the organization leaves the impression of a need for a deeper organization and succession planning; and lack of flexibility when focusing on ADA needs. Also noted was a lack of information about the Board's selection and responsibilities, and perceived lack of business expertise among board members.

## EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER RESULTS

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Several community leaders suggested the financial strength and management of CUMTD may create the perception of being insulated from financial issues facing other municipalities, and if not handled carefully, could leave the impression CUMTD has too much money.

### OPPORTUNITIES

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#### Scope

When asked to consider opportunities, the majority of participants suggested CUMTD should carefully consider whether or not the organization envisions its scope as more than buses. If so, systems and communication need to be developed to become the perceived leader for all mobility.

Participants suggested the opportunity areas for further study are:

#### Transportation Leadership

Coordination of rural transportation, including linkages to medical facilities and employment; long-range transportation plan leadership; high speed rail/Amtrak service to Chicago; service to outlying communities, specifically Rantoul, Mahomet, St. Joe; plus partnerships in regard to the airport, taxis and a central call center for all transportation.

Among the items mentioned, service to outlying communities, airport collaboration, and long range transportation plan leadership were most often mentioned. The caution was to “tread lightly, collaborate, and listen first” if moving forward in this area. Leaders suggested identifying all stakeholders for conversation and assessment – “How have we served you? How can we serve you better?”

#### Communication Plan

The other area of opportunity most often mentioned was development of a communication plan that is different from past approaches. This could be a strategic approach to reintroduce the organization and build believers.

## EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER RESULTS

### Population Shifts

The emphasis on infill, particularly in downtown Champaign is an area for potential growth. Continued residential development in these areas would make the community more transit friendly.

Population shifts that will provide greater opportunities to capture additional market share include: mode shift thinking in Gen X and Y towards no autos and delay in getting driver's license; growing senior/retiree population; high population of international students; and the chancellor's vision for increasing the population base of the community. Area leaders suggested it will be important to understand what is value-added for these population groups in order to serve them better.

“POPULATION SHIFTS WILL PROVIDE GREATER OPPORTUNITIES TO CAPTURE ADDITIONAL MARKET SHARE.”

### University of Illinois

Service to the University of Illinois will continue to be an opportunity. While the University's overall student population, including international students, is not projected to grow, ridership growth could increase. Decreases in parking requirements for new campus developments, the number of student parking permit requests, and parking availability in the core of campus will affect the number of cars on campus and may increase the need for other modes of transportation. Improvements to the bicycle network on campus could also be an opportunity.

### Business Community

About one-fourth of the community leaders suggested CUMTD should make it a priority to participate in economic development project discussions as they transpire. The organization should also build better linkages with the business community and existing major employers, with an eye towards linking potential employees with employers.

### Illinois Terminal

Several community leaders suggested an assessment of Illinois Terminal for the future. Ideas include: explore linkages with visitors to the community, re-examine the tenant mix, consider another taxing body as a tenant, and consider expansion carefully to ensure community needs are met.

## EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER RESULTS

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### Other

Other areas of opportunity mentioned include: potential growth in Research Park, growth of service through Lincoln Square, Parkland College, and other community hubs; strategic connection of area residents with area resources (Rantoul with U of I/ Parkland, K-12 students with Parkland/ U of I, etc.); leadership for park and rides; and sustainability emphasis.

The shift in healthcare requirements for employees over thirty hours may mean employers hire more employees who are individually working fewer hours. This could mean additional growth in ridership, particularly in large area retail locations.

Participants suggested CUMTD should continue to focus on alternative funding sources particularly grant funding.

## THREATS

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### Funding

The greatest threats noted by community leaders are related to funding issues. Federal and state funding issues have the potential to negatively impact CUMTD's overall budget. Community leaders understood the costs for operating the system will increase, and they suggested locating additional revenue to fund even the most basic cost increases may prove difficult.

### Infrastructure/Taxes

Related to this topic of declining state and national revenues is the lack of state investment in infrastructure needed for roads and bridges. Roads in poor condition and large buses in residential areas were specifically cited as posing long-term threats to the organization. The declining tax revenue caused by the shift at Carle Clinic was mentioned by many participants. Also noted was a push back on taxes overall, and a high sensitivity to tax rates. Community leaders suggested CUMTD should keep costs low and not lose the perception of being a well-run system.

## EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER RESULTS

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### Other

Several members suggested current negative perceptions of the organization by some members of the community could become a broader threat if not addressed and rectified where possible.

Many participants suggested the retirements of the Managing Director and other senior staff, with their collective knowledge and involvement, may be a threat to the overall positive role CUMTD enjoys in the community.

Other threats mentioned by several participants include: congestion and safety concerns projected to grow in the core of campus, particularly Green Street; retirements of traditionally pro-CUMTD officials in government; low density nature of development on the fringe and increasing need for service; high U of I overall fees means any lapse of service to students could lead to a lack of support for the existing CUMTD fee and fee increases; and shifting student population and poverty pockets in the community.

When discussing the possibility of the organization taking on a broader role in all mobility, several participants suggested CUMTD should carefully consider whether to deviate from its core services. This change has the potential to dilute the quality of the outstanding service currently delivered.

### CONCLUSIONS

The overall assessment of the system is extremely positive from all sectors of the community represented by the external stakeholder interviews. The existing fleet of buses, leadership, community partnerships, and marketing were the universal strengths cited by most participants. The perceptions caused by empty buses and the communication/public relations offer the greatest areas for focused improvements. When looking to the future, community leaders suggested CUMTD would benefit from studying the feasibility of providing leadership in other areas of mobility. The leaders also suggested population shifts may provide further opportunities for the system. The leaders agreed that resource management, including finances, facilities, and human resources will be the greatest threats to the organization.

# SURVEY RESULTS

In an effort to obtain information from internal and external stakeholders who did not attend any of the in-person interviews, online surveys were developed to gather similar information. External participants were invited to contribute via the CUMTD public facing website, social media, and by personal email invitations when the in-person interview could not be scheduled. Internal participants were encouraged to participate via the CUMTD intranet, printed copies available at CUMTD offices, and other internal communications. Charts detailing all of the results can be found in the appendix.

## EXTERNAL RESULTS

53 individuals answered a series of questions about the services and impressions of CUMTD. 96% or 51 individuals were current or past riders. 83% of participants believe CUMTD is living up to its stated mission and vision. The respondents suggested CUMTD ranks highest in terms of value (good service for price), safety, technology and environmental responsibility. There were no significant areas of negative perceptions noted.

When asked where CUMTD should place its focus in the next five to ten years, routes and schedules received 88% of the responses. The highest areas of opportunity were increased ridership, technology, responsiveness, changes at the University of Illinois, and demographic changes in the community. The respondents suggested decreased ridership and lack of responsiveness would pose the biggest threats to the organization should they occur.

94% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "Transit investment can enhance the quality of life and help to sustain economic development in the community."





### INTERNAL RESULTS

61 current employees answered a series of questions about the services and impressions of CUMTD. Participants ranged from new hires to employees with 15+ years of seniority. 90% of the participants believe CUMTD is living up to its stated mission/vision. Employees believe the organization ranks highest in environmental responsibility, being community-minded, and technology. 19% of respondents suggested the organization rates poorly on internal communications, with another 29% giving a fair rating. 91% would like to see CUMTD continue to be innovative and mobility leaders in the community.

Employees participating in the online and printed copy surveys strongly agree U of I changes, increased ridership, technology and U of I changes will provide the areas of greatest opportunity for the organization. Lack of responsiveness ranked the highest for imminent threats. The group did suggest the economy and CUMTD leadership will most affect the organization's future. When given a list of values that should guide C-U MTD, the respondents suggested all should be given high priority in guiding the organization. Those values were: service, responsibility, quality, efficiency, accountability, and excellence.

When asked what specific items would enhance the employees' ability to improve C-U MTD, 70% suggested internal communication. Customer service training, educational courses, job training, and transit related conferences followed with a significant, but lower number of respondents.