

Brattleboro (BeeLine)/CRT Joint Stakeholders Meeting  
July 24, 2008

Bill Evans of Milligan & Company opened the meeting with welcoming remarks and stated the purpose of the meeting. Evans provided a description of the Short-Range Public Transportation Plan process, emphasizing the role of the public in preparing the plan. He then discussed the State public transportation network that shows the fixed and deviated routes, but not the demand response network. Evans stated that the State of Vermont flexes funding from Federal Highway to Federal Transit Administration for additional funding statewide. Evans discussed the state and federal funding for public transportation (operating) which shows an increasing trend, indicating the State's generosity in providing funding for transit needs.

Evans discussed the following about CRT and BeeLine service: governance, operations, service area and types of services provided, fares, fleet and facility, ridership and the operating budget.

Evans explained the next steps in the process and the availability of information from the project website. Evans added that comments can also be sent through the website or postal mail for inclusion in the plan. Evans opened the discussion to the group for comments and suggestions.

The following is a list of questions and comments from the public:

- There was a question about using funding from New Hampshire? There is a cost for elderly and disabled travel purposes that Vermont is incurring for people living in New Hampshire. Explore how emergency Medicaid transportation is handled in New Hampshire.
- The SW Regional Planning Commission is doing a study on the transportation needs from Hinsdale and Winchester, NH versus Keene, NH . BeeLine will be establishing an Advisory Committee to assist in this assessment.
- Hinsdale is a primary market for service to the hospital. Ten percent of the hospital's workforce comes from Hinsdale, NH.
- Provide dedicated service to Guilford; existing service is 6 miles away from Guilford pick-up location. Guilford could become the pickup point for the existing Brattleboro service.
- Establish dedicated route to Hinsdale, NH.
- Youth in Guildford and other outlying areas need transportation to Brattleboro for activities at the Boys & Girls Club and other activity centers.
- Maintain and improve existing services before expanding service routes. Any route expansions should not reduce the service frequency of existing routes.

- Provide more night service for low-income wage earners or persons with disabilities whose jobs are not the typical 8-5 hours. These jobs (i.e. Wal-Mart or Price Chopper) often have hours that end later in the evening when no service is available.
- Students at the Rural Learning Center also need night service for transportation to evening classes; later than 5:30 run.
- Extend evening services up to 8:00 pm for many events. Those with special needs would like to go to dinner while being independent to do so. The Town meetings go from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm and people are afraid that they might miss the last bus and be stranded if they attend.
- Provide service to Algiers where low-income housing is located. Cars could be parked at the Grange to connect to transit. The Omega Campus is expanding and new housing is also being built. Provide service near Paul Road on Route 5.
- Extend service hours on Friday evenings to allow people to use the bus for social purposes; 8:00 – 9:00 pm at least.
- Five public housing communities have been constructed in the area. Three of them are for the elderly. These three have service but it takes one hour to travel three miles to go shopping due to transfer (West Brattleboro to center of Town). The other two are for families; Wedgewood Heights has no transportation. The other one family complex is too far to walk to the bus route due to traveling with small children; could be dangerous also .
- Town should conduct an analysis of how many trips are going to Keene, NH. Journey to work data could help support the need. CRT is in contact with Keene; currently has fixed route service, no deviations..
- Provide more service on the Route 30 corridor for trips other than work. Route 30 has a designated park (recreation site) identified by the Town.
- The general public does not identify that demand response transportation is there for their travel needs. This service is perceived as catering only to people with special needs. The general public identifies more with fixed route service and is more likely to use it.
- Provide increased rail service with good connections to other bus services. If rail service were improved, the buses would not have to serve the main routes and could be used as feeder services to the rail or intercity carriers.
- Improve marketing of the bus routes and services. People perceive transit service as being for the very low income groups that have no other travel alternative. The

transit system should talk with businesses in an attempt to have the businesses set up more flexible work schedules to tie into the bus schedules.

- Service from Keene to Sullivan and Chester has been a major focus. Provide service along Route 30. Bennington is looking to work with CRT to connect its service in Chester.
- Place more stops using bus stop signs to increase the visibility of the transit system—Canal Street is flag stop only now, Melrose; bus stops every 5 feet now.
- There are many youth who come to the Boys & Girls Club and Hughes Services by bus after school but there is no service after 6:00 pm for return trip. Many of the youth are walking home which is not safe. Extend evening service hours. Existing transportation services does not work for Youth Services as well.
- Use a marketing campaign to change the bus stereotype from a service only for the poor and disadvantaged. The Chamber of Commerce receives many calls for information about the bus service. A bus service between Brattleboro and Keene, NH would improve the economics of both areas. Going to Keene, NH would be different than going to Hinesdale, NH for the new Wal-Mart.
- The youth needs transportation service that operates more like a taxi service than a fixed route bus.
- Providing later bus service for the youth is necessary for their safety.
- The role of the transit system in connection with emergency management and evacuation needs to be better defined and coordinated.
- BeeLine is providing service to high school and middle school students (approximately 20) as part of the fixed-route service. The schools are using the regularly scheduled buses for various field trips.
- There is an opportunity to coordinate public school transportation and public transportation to a greater degree. High fuel costs are impacting both systems. Many school buses have large numbers of empty seats that could be providing other general transportation services. Schools are going to receive fewer bids for school busing contracts in the future. Better coordination with public transit will make both systems more efficient.
- Roads need to be bicycle friendly to encourage more use as a transportation option.
- Public transit needs more money.

The meeting adjourned.