

CRT Public Meeting
July 22, 2008

Bill Evans of Milligan & Company opened the meeting with welcoming remarks and a review of the meeting agenda. Evans provided a description of the Short-Range Public Transportation Plan process, emphasizing the role of the public in preparing the plan. Evans 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 into 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.

Evans provided an overview of CRT's governance and discussed their board representation. Evans discussed CRT's operations and service area, including the types of services provided; overview of fares; fleet; and facility.

Evans discussed CRT's ridership and 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.

Gary Fox, Executive Director, CRT, gave an update on changes to three small town routes:

- Windsor: General public service provided for two hours one time per week will be eliminated in August or September due to low performance. CRT will explore addition of a shopper service.
- Springfield: Ridership has been increasing a small percentage each year. Despite added service, productivity went down. CRT will eliminate the extremities of the service and increase headways on the remaining service. CRT has submitted a new start proposal to add commuter service in the mornings.
- Bellows Falls: New design of this route will match new Springfield service..

The following is the list of comments and questions from the stakeholder committee:

- Windsor needs to have transportation. Suggest in-town Windsor service only at this time. Expand the current service in Windsor to provide service to the Claremont Wal-Mart and Market Basket. Bottom line – CRT needs to continue with Windsor transportation services.
- The Town of Weathersfield values the transit system, helps fund it and has made it part of the official town plan. Expand service and park and ride lots on the interstate highway.
- Fewer senior citizens will be operating their own cars as gas prices continue to increase. This is a critical issue. They currently travel to various locations in

Springfield, Bellows Falls and Chester. Some travel from as far as Bridgewater. It is getting very hard for them to continue to get around and they are becoming frightened about this. Concerned that voice of seniors won't be heard. CRT has worked on some schedule changes to address the seniors needs.

- Expand service on the Upper Valley Route, adding a later return trip (around 5:00 or 5:15 pm from Dynamics) for businesses along Aetna Road. The Exit 8 Park and Ride lot is dangerous and not user friendly. There are no lights, telephone or bus shelter. Accommodation of existing park and ride users during construction of the new lot is unclear. CRT should consider utilizing human resource officials for marketing the bus schedules and services.
- Hypertherm Company has changed its work times for hourly production workers in an effort to reduce auto congestion. Employers now get out of work at 3:30 and 4:30 pm. Dynamics production department not flexible. A 3:15 bus would draw additional riders.
- Additional support from other employers along Aetna Road (BFI, NE Industries, Okemo Sports, Bond Optics, etc.) would be helpful. Many people working in these companies are not aware of the bus services. Many of these companies operate three shifts, but the bus services do not line up with them. These companies are becoming concerned that lack of bus service may have an impact on recruiting and retaining workers. When first shift workers get out of work at 3:00 pm they are not willing to wait an hour for the bus to take them home.
- Dartmouth-Hitchcock employee noted the CRT buses are so full between Exit 8 and 9 that there are usually standees on the bus. Lack of a seat discourages new riders. Provide lighting at Exit 8 Park and Ride lot (current lighting is provided by the Fire Station). Snow piles add up in the wintertime, reducing the amount of parking spaces each day.
- Expand the Exit 9 Park and Ride lot. The current situation is dangerous. Buses back into the lot because the circle route for the bus is not marked out. The lot needs to be paved and striped. New Hampshire should help support these lots because many people from New Hampshire use them.
- The Park and Ride lots at Exits 7 & 8 need lighting.
- Cars in the Park & Ride lots are parked haphazardly thus reducing the total parking capacity. Clearly mark the path for the bus and erect signs to state that cars parking in the bus path would be towed. Abandoned cars are also left in the lots and should be towed by State Police to make room for the users.
- Split the Edger from Hanover Road if ridership can be substantiated for better utilization.

- Provide mid-day and Saturday service to stores at the Hartland/Windsor exit. Would like to have more than two-bike capacity on each of the buses. Provide covered bicycle shelters at Park & Ride lots in Vermont.
- The cost of personal transportation will continue to increase. There is going to be an endless need for more transit service.
- CRT should improve marketing services to the public so everyone is aware of availability of transit; AHS had to cancel a recent training due to lack of transportation. Work survey of state office building in Springfield should be completed.
- Feeder routes along routes 103 and 131 into the Exit 8 Park & Ride lot would reduce the numbers of cars in the lot and therefore expand the lot's capacity.
- The needs are growing rapidly and CRT needs to plan for the future.
- There was a question about CRT not charging a fee. Gary Fox, Executive Director, CRT responded that fares cannot be counted as local match. The local match is critical in leveraging additional state and federal funding since there is no dedicated funding source to provide the match. There would also be additional expense involved with administering a fare system. CRT currently receives a high level of donations, especially on the commuter runs.
- Some people, especially senior citizens, are getting confused about the donation issue. They make a donation when they ride, but they also receive a letter from CRT requesting donations to support the service. This needs to be cleared or explained better to that population group.
- In response to a question, VTrans provided an explanation as to how performance measures are established by the state.
- CRT should develop a frequent rider reward program. This could increase ridership.
- Voters should communicate to the state the need for increased funding for transit. A recent legislative bill approving an increase in home heating fuel assistance is an example of how the legislature should be assisting transit that is now faced with service reductions due to the same types for large cost increases in fuel prices.

The meeting adjourned.