

## Deerfield Valley Transit Association (DVTA) Public Meeting - July 17, 2008

Bill Evans of Milligan & Company opened the meeting with welcoming remarks, explaining the purpose of the meeting. Evans provided an overview of the meeting and the Short-Range Public Transportation Plan (SRPTP) process. He discussed the state's transit map, explaining that the demand response service is not indicated on the map.

Evans reviewed trends in federal and state funding for operations of public transit, which shows continuous increase, commenting that Vermont is in the top tier of states in providing funding for public transit. He provided an overview of governance, operations, the service area and types of services provided. He then discussed fares, fleet and facility. Ridership and operating budgets were reviewed, pointing out the various funding sources.

Evans highlighted the next steps of the process and the availability of materials on the project website. He added that comments can also be sent in through the website or through snail mail. He then opened the discussion.

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

- In response to a question about how federal funds are administered, Evans stated that the Federal Transit Administration provides the funds to the State of Vermont. The Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) administers these funds and provides them to transit providers.
- In response to the question whether the 5 Year Plan was constrained by federal rules or existing funding amounts, Evans explained that the SRPTP is a planning process to establish a business case for needed services over the next five years. Contents of the plan have to recognize existing rules and funding patterns but are not totally constrained by them.
- Randy Schoonmaker of DVTA presented a list of suggestions for improvements (see attached).
- Revenues from the sale of MOOVer souvenirs should be applied to help with the high fuel costs.
- An elderly and low-income housing development called Butterfield Commons was recently constructed in an area that is not served by transit services during the non-ski season. Although the developer was aware, prospective residents were told that public transit service was available. DVTA cannot provide the expanded service to this development without additional funding. The location is too far from the existing deviated fixed route. Limited service would cost approximately \$10,000-\$15,000 annually.
- The service is becoming a rural transit triage. High fuel prices and lack of funding is causing the problem to get worse on a daily basis.
- There was a discussion about whether DVTA should charge a fare. DVTA feels that since the 5311 rules would require them to net out fares and it would be more administrative work to do it, there is no advantage to charging a fare. If a fare were instituted, it would result in loss of ridership that has been steadily

- increasing. It was also noted that DVTA exceeds the state's 20 percent local funding minimum without charging fares.
- There was a discussion about DVTA's capital budget for vehicle replacements and other capital equipment and facilities. The capital budget is updated annually and is part of the annual budget submission to the state.
  - Schoonmaker noted that it is easier to obtain capital funds than operating funds.
  - An attendee suggested economic development funds be used to support public transit.
  - In response to a question about the service relationship between VanGo and volunteer service, Evans stated that volunteers perform trips for medical services in the low-density areas while VanGo service is provided for other, non-life critical, trip purposes.
  - There is a need to coordinate transportation services with other public agency programs for economic development purposes. The success of these programs is dependent on each other.
  - An attendee suggested examining the value of regionalizing public transit services in rural areas. Regional approaches to public transit will have a higher likelihood of succeeding if it comes from the bottom up rather than the top down.
  - An attendee stated that the focus of the plan should not be on establishing new intercity connections at the expense of locally based services.

The meeting was adjourned.