

NVPTN Stakeholder Meeting
July 16, 2008

Bill Evans from Milligan & Company opened the meeting with welcoming remarks and introductions, explaining the purpose of the meeting. Evans reviewed the meeting agenda. He then went over the Short-Range Public Transportation Plan process. He discussed the state's transit map, explaining that the demand response routes are not indicated on the map.

Evans continued with the trends in federal and state funding for operations of public transit, which shows continuous increase, commenting that Vermont is in the top tier of providing funding in public transportation nationwide. Evans provided an overview of NVPTN's governance, operations, the service area and types of services provided. Evans then discussed fares, fleet and facility; showing the ridership chart of NVPTN's deviated fixed routes. He then discussed NVPTN's operating budget, pointing out the various funding sources.

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

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

- There was a question about the progress toward implementing programs since the last five-year plan. Evans indicated that the new plan will include the status of the previous short range plan.
- Vehicle capacity has been an issue for NVPTN since 1990.
- The total amounts of funds (Medicaid & FTA) should be looked at in conjunction to assist people with disabilities and low-income families.
- CIDER has 48 volunteer drivers, which has resulted in doubling of passenger trips during the last year. NVPTN has a very low number of volunteer drivers available which adds a greater demand to their vehicles having to travel statewide, including human service transportation.
- Long travel distances for trips have had led to reduction of the overall capacity of the system due to small buses in the fleet.
- There is a need for commuter service from St. Albans to Burlington. Using the LINK service results in a total 12-hour workday due to commuting time from Georgia; no way to catch a return trip. NVPTN needs to dovetail their services around the LINK.
- Need for weekend and evening service.
- There is a need for service at mid-day on the St. Albans LINK. Most routes are peak hour commuter routes. Mid-day trips would address human service times in addition to employment trips.
- Public transit can reduce the cost for Medicaid transportation for chronic users.

- There is need for shopper services from outlying areas. Grocery stores are not willing to help finance these trips.
- Look into designating a certain day of the week or month for the seniors shopping trips.
- Look into grassroots opportunities for vehicles and local match in each community NVPTN serves.
- Install bike racks on all NVPTN vehicles to serve more individuals.
- Towns and cities do not have the ability to provide local funds. In some towns, property tax assessments recently increased by almost 200%.
- Human service unmet needs survey should be done to help address local match with communities; identify a strategy to get on the ballot in each Town.
- Most trips on the demand response services are for medical trips. Provide demand response services for employment and childcare trips in the areas of Berkshire, Fairfield, East Fairfield, Bakersfield, and Montgomery.
- VHAP clients need transportation for medical services that are not covered by Medicaid.
- Expand service from Richford and Enosburg for non-work trips. St. Albans routes does not accommodate for these types of trips currently.
- Trips for dialysis treatment are local trips for the most part, but the number of trips is capped due to financial constraints.
- Chemotherapy patients must go to Burlington. Expanded appointment hours are from 6:00 am to 11:00 pm. Services currently do not cover all of these hours.
- People have moved from Burlington to St. Albans to reduce their cost of living. However, their commuting cost is now very high due to the increases in fuel prices.
- Transportation needs for after school trips and second shift workers in the region.
- There is a need to coordinate NVPTN human service transportation trips with providers outside of the region, doctors offices, dialysis centers and hospitals.
- There is currently one trip with NVPTN that meets the St. Albans LINK Commuter bus at 6:30 am for work trips. However, NVPTN services do not run late enough for return trips.
- Grand Isle ferry commuter along Route 2; CIDER would like to contract with NVPTN to save on operational costs.
- There is a need for more park & ride facilities within the area (municipal and off-interstate). Northwest Regional Planning Commission to start a study of them in October 2008. Enosburg park and ride project won't be built until 2011.
- Suggestion to make Chimney Corners a transfer location with CIDER, NVPTN and CCTA.
- Determine the demand for more fixed route services. There is a belief that more service is needed due to fuel prices but the real demand is unknown.
- There is a need for off peak trips for the general public within the areas currently served by commuter routes. An alternative would be to provide a shopper bus to each area once a week with four trips per day to establish actual demand.
- NVPTN would like to be able to use the state maintenance garage. The state should have backup buses or high capacity buses available for use when needed.

- NVPTN should have the ability to piggyback with the state for fuel purchases. This would reduce the operating costs.
- Volunteer drivers should receive a tax credit as it is getting harder to find and retain volunteer drivers due to fuel prices. Volunteers provide a very low cost method of providing services in low-density areas.
- Develop a model for recruiting and retaining volunteer drivers (i.e. Hinesburg).
- Expand NVPTN's vehicle capacity.
- NVPTN should serve as a feeder service to the St. Albans LINK buses.
- Fuel price increases will increase the demand for transit services within low and middle income groups.
- The transit providers should be more nimble. The ability to make needed changes quickly is not enough when the need is identified.
- Develop a better match between the number and type of vehicles within the fleet to the different services provided.
- Improve coordination between VTrans and AHS.
- Conduct an analysis of the cost impacts of certain rules and regulations. In some cases, the cost of compliance with the requirements exceeds the benefit of receiving federal funds.
- VTrans and the transit providers should work more as partners.
- Provide more training in the areas of board member development, defensive driving, basic first aid and customer service.
- The Grand Isle area has the fastest growing elderly population in the state. Expand services to the area.
- There should be closer cooperation with developers to assure that new facilities for seniors and disabled are built in areas that have good transit services available.

The meeting adjourned.