

Stagecoach Stakeholder Meeting
July 16, 2008

Dan Wagner of Milligan & Company opened the meeting with introductions, followed by stakeholder committee members' introductions. Wagner then described previous work he had undertaken with the State of Vermont. Wagner then went over the meeting's agenda, followed by a description of the Short-Range Public Transportation Plan process, emphasizing the role of the public in preparing the plan. Wagner then discussed the State public transportation network that only shows the fixed and deviated fixed routes, but not the demand response network. Wagner discussed the state and federal funding for public transportation (operating) which shows an increasing trend. Capital projects are usually funded by earmarks from the federal government.

Wagner went over Stagecoach's governance structure. David Palmer, Executive Director of Stagecoach explained that towns appoint four members to the board of directors. Wagner discussed the operations which includes a volunteer network. Wagner showed Stagecoach's service area, explaining the Greyhound service in the State. He then went over Stagecoach's routes and service area. Wagner explained the private pays (full payment for a volunteer service). Holly Brown from Stagecoach added clarification about this type of service. Wagner explained that Stagecoach acts as a broker that matches riders to rides. Wagner then discussed the fare, fleet, and facility (bus storage and administrative offices). There was a question about Dartmouth/DHMC contribution to fares. Palmer explained that there is local match from Hitchcock plus Dartmouth College reimburses its employees.

Wagner showed a graph showing ridership. He then discussed the operating budget and explained the next steps of the planning process. Wagner then opened the discussion to the group for comments and suggestions.

The following are comments and questions from the stakeholder committee members:

- There is a black hole in Greater Woodstock to get elderly and disabled riders to Upper Valley health centers. There have been attempts to do an on-demand service, funded by contributions. They are trying to make it into a fixed route (Route 4 corridor, maybe to White River Junction or bypassing it) and combining a shopping trip to Dartmouth/Hitchcock. There should be state recognition and funding for the route. Wagner explained that 5310 funding is usually available for such service. It is actually being used for one van service. Palmer explained that senior centers usually contact with Stagecoach to arrange for rides.
- Maxi-Taxi service should be added in Woodstock. There has been an increase in the senior population and there is demand for evening service, in particular. Taxi service comes from White River Junction and costs \$150. Wagner explained that building up the demand would eventually lead to private company service.

- There is some talk about a tourist-based transportation system in Woodstock with possible connections to Queechee. This is part of the National Park Service program.
- There is a need for community service with connections to other services.
- Upper Valley TMA is planning to do an employer (major employers) survey to determine transportation need and would like to coordinate the effort to collect information useful for the SRPTP. A discussion of local employers providing local match followed.
- There is need for an I-89 North to Montpelier/Barre area service from Randolph.
- There is a need for Maxi-Taxi in Bradford which is close to New Hampshire. There is no provider in that area of New Hampshire that can help. Palmer stated that Advance Transit receives funding from New Hampshire Department of Transportation and local towns because of their transit needs. Wagner discussed the area's eligibility for rural funding through New Hampshire. There is an interest on the part of Bradford Workforce Investment Board to cooperate with Stagecoach.
- There was a question about New Freedom and Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) funding. Wagner explained the JARC demonstration program that was geared toward low-income population for transportation to employment sites. It became a formula under SAFET-LU. Palmer stated that there was an existing route. VTrans has already identified this as a need.
- There is a need for more transportation to meal sites which are serving more people because of gas prices.
- There should be a link between Randolph and Bradford.
- There is a gap between Bradford and Barre (access to employment, social services, medical, and shopping).
- There was a comment about the Vermont 211 referral service, statewide database for use as an information source for the plan to see the kinds of transportation requests.
- Palmer explained the purpose of New Freedom funds, used mainly for beyond ADA and is applicable on an individual basis. Wagner added that it is a state policy within federal constraints.
- Discussion of an opportunity for additional park & ride lots. There are two funding sources for them, one along interstates, another one within municipalities. Wagner asked if it would be possible to identify some locations.

- Exit 2 expansion
 - I-91 corridor at Norwich
 - Exit 16
- White River serves as a transit hub, would be nice to house a multimodal facility financed by an NH earmark
- There was a discussion about capacity issues. Stagecoach's strategy will be more frequent service on River Route and the I-89er. Stagecoach has looked at van pools and rideshare programs. Palmer stated that availability of capital funds is limited.
- There was a comment about rail transportation and limitations to reaching employment sites.
- There is a need for collaboration of local providers to share buses with area agencies. The agency that serves elderly and disabled has a mapping project to look at collaboration potential. There is need to undertake coordinating efforts at a smaller geographically scale to coordinate E&D services among those agencies. Wagner suggested an internet based scheduling and route matching system. Wagner also suggested a trip planner on the website.
- There is an opportunity for cooperation on use of backup vehicles.
- TMA has done a map of all transit services. However, because of lack of funding, the map won't be updated.
- There was a suggestion for a regional survey of travel behavior.
- Wagner suggested a bus pool idea and described the Washington State area. DHMC has a van pool program.

The meeting adjourned.