

# Chapter 5

## Regional Coordination and Sustainability

To an increasing extent, CCTA plays an essential role in the economy of Chittenden County, allowing for continued economic growth in a way that is consistent with reduced energy use, environmental protection, sustainable land use, and reduced traffic congestion. In order to achieve this, CCTA coordinates closely with local, regional, and state governments and works with the private sector to leverage public investment in transportation. This chapter discusses this coordination and the region's pursuit of a sustainable transportation system.

### ***Regional and Multi-modal Coordination***

As mentioned in chapter 1 of this TDP, CCTA is joined by many partners at all levels of government. At the regional level (Chittenden County), CCTA is heavily involved in ongoing activities at the Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization (CCMPO) which is responsible for planning intermodal federal aid surface transportation projects in Chittenden County. CCMPO's Board contains appointees from each of the 18 Chittenden County municipalities. CCMPO's bylaws are located at <http://www.ccmpto.org/about/bylaws.php4>

CCTA staff serves on the following CCMPO committees and groups:

- *CCMPO Board (ex officio)* – Considers and provides final approval for the region's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), annual Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), long range plans, and major studies.
- *CCMPO Transportation Advisory Committee* – Provides technical and municipal staff guidance to CCMPO staff on a variety of topics, including corridor studies, scoping studies, the annual planning program, the creation of and amendments to the TIP, and the creation of evaluation criteria for various grant programs.
- *CCMPO Public Transportation Committee* - Provides recommendations to the Board for the development of a comprehensive public transportation system in the region. Specifically, the committee is charged with developing policy recommendations related to the public transportation system(s) in the region, including system improvement and system funding.
- *CCMPO TIP Committee* – Develops the TIP and makes recommendations to the TAC and the CCMPO Board.
- *CCMPO UPWP Committee* – Sets budgets for various planning tasks and projects performed by the CCMPO and partner organizations such as CCTA
- *CCMPO Bike/Ped Committee* – Reviews and prioritizes ongoing projects in the region, helps CCMPO staff write and update the Bike/Ped Plan, and helps coordinate a Bicycle and Pedestrian Summit.

- Representation on corridor study and plan advisory committees, including:
  - Route 15 Corridor Study
  - US 2 Corridor Study
  - Colchester Ave Corridor Study
  - Park & Ride Plan Update
  - Metropolitan Transportation Plan Update

In addition to serving on these committees, CCTA staff is engaged in the review process of local and regional plans and offers comments on proposed zoning changes, Act 250 permit applications, and other local plans.

In the process of developing this TDP, CCTA formed a Stakeholder Committee with broad representation from local municipalities, advocacy groups, and regional organizations. This committee met three times through the Autumn of 2009 and Winter 2010 and provided valuable input about the transportation markets served by CCTA and the vision of the future system.

CCTA also works on an ongoing basis with its member municipalities and grassroots organizations such as Local Motion to promote an environment along streets and in other public spaces that is conducive to public transportation and other alternatives to driving. Specifically, investments in transit facilities and services are being linked to other infrastructure such as sidewalks, crosswalks, traffic signals, bikeways, roads, and parking facilities through ongoing communication and coordination with local public works departments. Carshare Vermont also supports transit, as it makes automobile *ownership* less important and allows people to feel that they have an inexpensive option to use a car for those trips that cannot be served effectively by the existing bus system.

### ***Park & Ride and Automobile Intercept Opportunities***

Park & Ride lots are an integral part of successful commuter transit service in the region, especially since parking and traffic congestion are an issue in downtown Burlington and on the Hill. Existing transit routes can be made more successful through the expansion of park & ride capacity at existing lots and the creation of new lots. These can increase access to transit services without incurring significant new operating costs.

The MPO's 2004 park and ride study is in the process of being updated. That study differentiates between two types of parking facilities: Park & Ride lots and Intercept or Satellite parking lots. These are defined below:

**Park & Ride Lot** – Generally located in a suburban or rural area. This type of lot is typically a surface lot with a capacity of under 100 cars, and it may or may not be paved. The lot may be served by bus routes (low frequency commuter service), but also may be intended primarily for carpool or vanpool formation. It is usually publicly owned, built and maintained. Walk and bike access is desirable but not always provided. Helps to reduce vehicle miles of travel (VMT) by shifting travelers to higher-occupancy modes close to the origin point.

**Intercept or Satellite Facility** – Generally located within 3 miles of a central business district (CBD) or major activity center. This type of facility is intended to offer a remote parking option for automobile commuters so as to reduce congestion and parking demand within the CBD. Frequent transit/shuttle service is offered between the lot and the CBD/activity center. May include structured parking, and capacity is typically greater than 100 cars to provide enough volume to support the frequent shuttle service. Walk and bike access is desirable. Has less of an impact on VMT since commuters will have driven most of the way to the destination, but can have a greater impact on congestion due to higher volume of riders. Also allows parking facilities within the CBD/activity center to be redeveloped for higher value purposes.

An increase in the number of publicly owned park and ride lots is crucial to the development of future transit services and CCTA will strongly advocate for such an expansion. CCTA on its own, or in cooperation with CCMPO, could begin development of park & ride lots through land purchase/lease and construction. In the recent past, the use of private land, through lease agreements or shared-use agreements, has been necessary to support existing routes due to a lack of capacity at state- and municipality-owned lots.

While the MPO study is not yet complete, some recommendations CCTA will make on the location of future parking facilities are the following:

- Park & Ride Lots
  - Along existing transit routes
    - To support LINK Express routes
      - New Haven
      - Middlebury
    - To support Regional Commuter routes
      - Williston
      - Milton
    - To support local routes
      - Taft Corners
      - VT 15 in Essex Junction and Colchester
      - Essex Way
  - Ideally located outside or on the edge of village/town centers so as to not interrupt a walkable/bikable urban form. Land in town/village centers should be devoted to buildings and green spaces rather than auto storage.
  - To support future routes
    - Hinesburg
    - Jericho
    - Underhill
    - Richmond
- Intercept Facilities
  - Exit 14 (South Burlington/Burlington border)
  - Exit 16 (Colchester/Winooski border)
  - Pine Street Corridor – Burlington

It is critical that any new lots be designed to accommodate full-size transit buses, to ease access and egress and minimize bus travel time. Existing lots that are too small to allow for efficient bus operations should be redesigned and expanded. In addition, all lots should include a passenger shelter and bicycle storage facilities.

### ***Working with the Private Sector***

In addition to its public sector partners, CCTA reaches out to the private sector to build relationships with employers and institutions. These relationships lead to new funding sources for operations as well as increased ridership. Perhaps the greatest example of this is the Unlimited Access program. As discussed in Chapter 2, this program allows students, faculty, and staff of the University of Vermont, Champlain College, Saint Michael's College, and Middlebury College (faculty and staff only) to ride CCTA's fixed routes for free with valid identification. These institutions pay for these rides directly to CCTA.

CCTA works with employers through its Smart Business Program. In this program, an employer can provide transit passes to their employees, or the employees can purchase transit passes, on a pre-tax basis. This program is modeled on the much larger Eco Pass program in Boulder, Colorado, which is partly subsidized by the City of Boulder.<sup>1</sup> Participants are also eligible for Sure Ride, which reimburses participants for the cost of a taxi ride home in emergency situations. CCTA contacts employers along its routes on a regular basis, and especially when service improvements are implemented, to encourage them to take advantage of this program.

Transportation Management Associations, or TMAs, are another means for the private sector to work with CCTA. The Campus Area TMA (CATMA) has a long history of cooperation with CCTA through the Unlimited Access program and direct funding of operations. There has been discussion of forming a TMA in downtown Burlington in order to pool resources in support of CCTA. While some employers may be reluctant to commit individually to support public transportation, the value of their support can increase exponentially when it is combined with others in a focused area such as the central business district.

Another initiative pursued by CCTA is cooperation with private developers. As discussed more below, the location and design of future development can have a significant impact on transit

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<sup>1</sup> Eco Pass is an annual transit pass purchased by a company and its employees or a collection of residences. The pass provides unlimited usage of RTD services. Companies purchase the Eco Pass for all full-time employees, with an option to include part-time employees. Eco Pass is also tax deductible to employers and tax free to employees (up to \$230/mo or \$2,760 annually). The City of Boulder rebates 50% of the Eco Pass contract cost to the employer (for first-time participants – 25% for second-time participants) if an employee volunteers to serve as an Employee Transportation Coordinator (ETC). According to GoBoulder's promotional brochure: "An ETC is [a] company representative who is passionate about protecting our environment and is ready to encourage other employees to bus, bike, walk, carpool, vanpool, telework, or take advantage of a flexible work schedule, like working a compressed work week to reduce the dependence on SOVs for the work commute."

ridership. By being engaged early in the development process, and especially having developers come to CCTA to discuss transit needs and accommodations, the region can be built to allow for efficient and sustainable transportation in the future.

### ***TOD/POD and Future Development and Investment***

Chapter 3 discussed current development patterns and the ability of CCTA routes to serve residences, jobs, and other important destinations that are clustered around important roadways. It was noted that some residential development and employment was isolated from these clusters, and thus not easily served by CCTA, at least, not in a cost-effective manner.

As municipalities and developers consider new construction of homes and commercial space within CCTA's member communities, communication and cooperation with CCTA and other regional organizations is essential to promote a sustainable economy. Public transportation works best when origins and destinations are focused in linear corridors and city and town centers rather than being spread out in suburban-style subdivisions and office parks. And the regional economy and transportation system as a whole works best when public transportation service is effectively delivered to provide affordable and attractive alternatives to private automobile travel. Shaping the future Burlington metropolitan area in such a way as to promote efficient public transportation service will result in a more vibrant economy, less traffic, and a healthier environment.

The mechanism to make this happen is called “transit oriented design” (TOD) or “pedestrian oriented design” (POD). It is a departure from the prevailing automobile-centric development pattern that has been in place since 1950. The idea is that future homes and commercial space would be built in compact, mixed-use developments and that the streetscape would be designed with the pedestrian in mind, not the automobile. Rather than seeking to maximize automobile speeds and throughput, the safety and comfort of pedestrians is the primary goal.

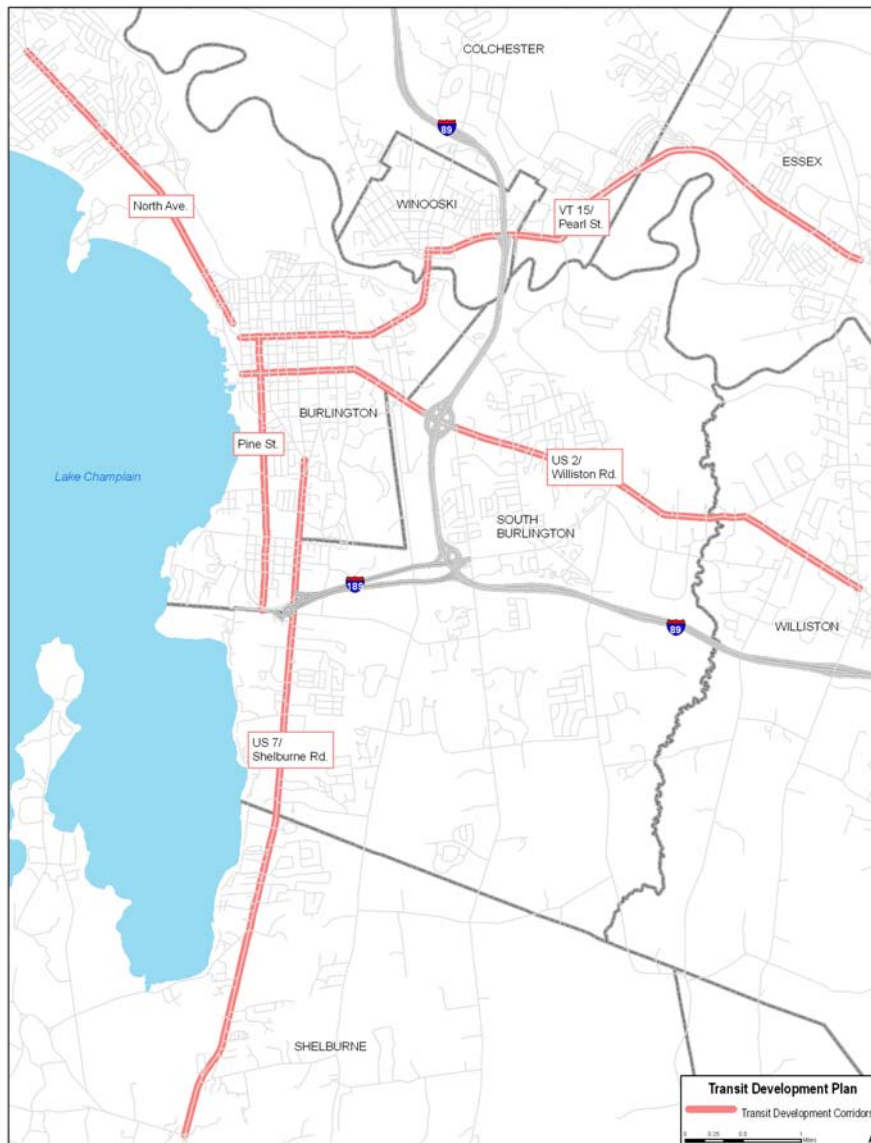
In such an environment, public transportation has a much greater chance of attracting choice riders. There would be many more origins and destinations within easy walking distance of a bus route, and the actual walk between those locations and the bus stop would be much more pleasant and safe. Pedestrians and public transportation riders would be treated as “first-class” users of public space, rather than as an afterthought. Accommodations for bicyclists also are an essential feature of TOD and POD, as the slowing down of traffic and the reduction of public space devoted to automobiles allows for greater space devoted to all modes of non-motorized transportation.

Car-sharing arrangements are also supported by TOD/POD. When many trips can be accomplished on foot, by bike, or by transit, the need to own an automobile is greatly reduced. There are, of course, some types of trips for which it is necessary or much more convenient to have an auto available. Shared cars, offered by organizations such as Carshare Vermont, can fulfill this need and allow many people to avoid the large expense of owning a car. Carshare Vermont started operations in 2009 and currently (Spring 2010) has a fleet of nine cars and one pick-up truck.

The maps in Chapter 3 indicate that a significant amount of development already exists on some important roadway corridors. To make best use of CCTA resources and promote future improvements in service on these corridors, and thus attract more choice riders, future development and enhancements of the pedestrian environment should be focused here. These corridors include the following (see Map 1):

- North Avenue in Burlington
- US 7 from Burlington to Shelburne Village
- US 2 from Burlington to Tafts Corners in Williston
- VT 15 from Burlington to Essex Junction
- Pine Street in Burlington.

**Map 1 TOD/POD Focus Corridors**



These focus corridors are the same ones that were designated as “priority corridors” in the Burlington Transportation Plan and are grouped as the “trunk” corridors in the recommendations section in Chapter 6. As indicated in Chapter 4, investments in enhanced service in these corridors—especially for improved frequency during peak commuting hours—is likely to be the most cost-effective investment CCTA can make in terms of increased ridership. As service and ridership builds in these corridors, CCTA can begin to take incremental steps toward bus rapid transit (BRT), level 14 in the service hierarchy presented at the end of Chapter 4.

In addition to a high level of service, BRT includes a range of physical investments that can make transit more attractive to choice riders and actually reduce operating costs by allowing for faster and more efficient bus operations. Roadway-related investments include exclusive bus lanes, queue jumpers at intersections, and transit signal priority. While transit demand is likely to be insufficient to justify exclusive lanes in the foreseeable future (especially given the constrained right of way in many corridors), moving buses more quickly through congested intersections can lead to substantial reductions in running time. Queue jumpers—short exclusive bus lanes approaching an intersection—can allow buses to bypass the worst congestion and save several minutes. Transit signal priority throughout a corridor can help to ensure that buses spend as little time as possible waiting at red lights.

BRT-style investments can also improve the passengers’ experience. Enhanced passenger shelters improve passenger comfort and mitigate the negative aspects of waiting for a bus. Even more important is real-time bus arrival information so that passengers know how long it will be until the next bus arrives. GPS units on the buses, communicating with a central computer, can generate accurate estimates of arrival times, which can then be disseminated via the Internet, text messages, and electronic signs at bus stops. One of the main factors that drives away choice riders is the uncertainty about when the bus will arrive and the anxiety that they will be stranded in an unsafe and uncomfortable location. Better knowledge of where the bus is and where it is going can overcome this anxiety.

In addition to the immediate benefits of comfort and knowledge, capital investments in public transportation, particularly those that are obvious to the public, send a message that service is not going to be abandoned and that transit riders are worthy of the same investments made in other modes of transportation. Bus transportation has usually been considered the “cheap” mode of transit (compared to rail) and thus has been historically shortchanged in terms of capital investment. This has led to many people thinking that bus transportation is only for poor people or those who cannot drive. Visible capital facilities, new and attractive buses, and technology can overcome this perception and lead to increased ridership.

Beyond the trunk corridors of the CCTA system, village and town centers should be the focus of development and of enhancement of the pedestrian environment. The terminal point of a bus route is often one of its largest sources of ridership. To the extent that a town or village center offers mixed-use development and a pedestrian-friendly environment, a bus route serving that

location will be more successful. The following town and village centers outside of the regional core are the best candidates for such focused efforts (see Map 2):

- Hinesburg
- Essex Center
- Milton
- Jericho/Underhill/Cambridge (village centers along VT 15 corridor)
- Richmond
- Charlotte

It is important to note that CCTA fully supports focused development in town and village centers along existing transit corridors closer to the regional core (as shown in Map 1).

A cooperative effort of CCTA, member municipalities, the state of Vermont, CCMPO, CCRPC, and the development community is needed to reshape the area into a form that is more conducive to efficient and sustainable transportation. Organizations such as AARP and other non-profits that have been promoting these concepts should also be involved. To the extent that the member municipalities can achieve TOD/POD in these corridors, their current and future investments in land development and public transportation become much more effective and valuable.

**Map 2 TOD/POD Town and Village Centers**

