

Chapter 8

Action Agenda

The Transit Development Plan is a central guidance document for CCTA investments over the coming decade. It also serves as the transit element of the CCMPO Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

If the other organizations, agencies, and municipalities want to accomplish the regional goals called for in numerous plans and studies, there are several specific actions that must be taken. CCTA needs other organizations, agencies, and municipalities to actively work with the agency on the following tasks:

- Municipalities should change their local zoning to more strongly support and incentivize transit oriented development—including higher density and mixed use projects—along transit corridors in their communities.
- CCTA, the municipalities of northwest Vermont, and the State of Vermont should work together to develop a regional funding mechanism for public transportation that relieves the burden on the property tax.
- The CCMPO must have greater autonomy and control regarding programming the region's federal transportation funding.
- CCTA and the CCMPO must have greater control to develop and implement transportation infrastructure projects, such as park and ride lots, in the region.

Next Steps

In addition to the four action items listed above, the CCTA Board of Commissioners and staff will move forward with initiatives to increase the awareness of CCTA's significant statewide role in the areas of sustainability, economic development, and mobility. These initiatives will assist with obtaining the public support necessary to implement improvements in the TDP which will further CCTA's ability to contribute towards sustainable lifestyles within a vibrant economy.

Funding

Once the TDP is adopted by the CCTA Board of Commissioners, the work of implementation begins. While CCTA's planning staff can continue to make progress on planning for new

services and restructuring and enhancing existing services, the major hurdle that must be overcome is the limitation on funding sources that is restricting the growth of CCTA services. Without a new funding source, such as those discussed in chapter 7, the only means to pay for service expansion is a New Start grant funded through the federal CMAQ program. CCTA has been successful at winning these competitive grants, but it is nonetheless a slow process and still requires that local communities allocate scarce property tax dollars to fund the 20% local match. In the 2010 legislative session, the merger of CCTA and GMTA was accomplished, essentially creating a regional transit authority for northwest Vermont. The primary initiative for CCTA in the 2011 legislative session needs to be a regional funding mechanism to support the growth of this regional entity.

During the next year, the PTPP will be updated, and a key element of that study will be an examination of funding. CCTA will need to work with VTrans to encourage new state policies to promote additional funding sources and flexibility for transit providers.

Funding at the federal level is also at a critical stage, with the impending reauthorization of surface transportation funding programs. Working with the American Public Transportation Association and other transit agencies across the country, CCTA is lobbying for the maximum possible allocation of dollars for transit capital investments and operations.

Planning

The TDP includes many service concepts and recommendations for capital investments. Before these can be implemented, more detailed planning must take place. Work is ongoing to prepare for bus procurements, technology investments for real-time passenger information, the design and construction of the Downtown Transit Center, and new services. This work requires coordination with local officials, CCMPO, and VTrans. CCTA is in the process of preparing grant applications to the federal government to help pay for some of these initiatives.

The merger of GMTA and CCTA will also require planning work, although the services are already reasonably well coordinated. Further cooperation with neighboring transit agencies (ACTR, RCT, Stagecoach) can increase the benefit of regional integration.

Marketing and Public Information

Raising the awareness of CCTA services among the traveling public and informing them of the recent enhancements in service (such as the US 2 corridor restructuring in June 2010) is essential to continued ridership growth. It is also important to disseminate the message about the vision for the future of CCTA in order to build public support for the direct investments that will be needed, as well as for the related land use and transportation policies (TOD/POD) that will be critical to the long-term success of the system.

The ridership growth of CCTA over the past decade and its successful ventures into commuter transportation (LINK Expresses, Milton Commuter, peak service upgrades on Essex Junction and US 2/Williston routes) have moved the authority from its former role as a “social service” agency, carrying mostly transit-dependent riders, into a position of a key player in the regional transportation system. The ongoing viability of the economy and the environment in Chittenden County depends on the success of CCTA. In order to grow the economy without sacrificing the land or the air, mass transit is essential. CCTA is now offering competitive service in two primary travel corridors and is poised to expand that service to all points of the compass. Commuter links to surrounding towns are feasible. The Chittenden County region has the capability of reducing reliance on the private automobile and thereby making a positive impact on the environment and quality of life. All that is needed is the commitment to making the vision of this TDP a reality.

Goals of Related Plans

The TDP is, in some part, a product of those plans which came before it, and it will have influence over related plans that are written in the future. There are four plans that are immediately related to the TDP in that they set out goals for public transportation in Chittenden County and the state as a whole. In order from most general to most specific, these plans are the following:

- Final Report of the Governor’s Commission on Climate Change (2007)
- VTrans Long Range Transportation Business Plan (2009)
- VTrans Public Transportation Policy Plan (2007)
- Burlington Transportation Plan (2007)

As described below, without the growth and support of public transportation, the implementation of these plans and achievement of their goals would not be possible. The action items in the TDP are consistent with the policy directions of these plans.

Governor’s Commission on Climate Change

The final report of this commission included six recommendations, of which number 3 was the most relevant to public transportation. It is quoted below:

3. Reducing Emissions in a Renewed Transportation System Within and Between Vibrant Town Centers

Future development along the lines of Vermont’s historic settlement pattern of compact town centers surrounded by open countryside will also provide multiple

benefits. Not only would it be consistent with Vermont's traditional character, it would reduce travel demand and create a more transit-oriented pattern of growth. In the long run, this will help bend the upward curve of Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), which is the most significant source of greenhouse gas production in Vermont.

At the same time, Vermont must invest more in its transportation infrastructure, including highways, railroads and park-and-ride facilities, so that the development of public transportation can be accelerated. Vermont should also encourage the purchase of fuel-efficient, low-emission vehicles through financial incentive programs. In order to take these steps, Vermont should consider ways of enhancing transportation revenues through non-traditional means that will not be affected by VMT reductions. The Commission is not recommending a specific approach to funding but, rather, making it clear that greater investment will be necessary to counter the increasing contribution of single-occupant vehicles (SOV) to the problem of climate change.

In particular, we urge the Governor to:

- Evaluate a number of potential new revenue enhancing options that simultaneously serve as incentives for reduced travel or low emitting vehicles, such as “feebates” for low mileage vehicles, a percentage-based sales tax on gas in place of the existing per-gallon approach, and restructuring of the current distribution of transportation funds;
- Develop and begin implementing a long-term plan to efficiently and effectively expand and improve inter-city bus and rail service, including both passenger and freight transport and inter-modal connectivity, such as bicycle, pedestrian, shuttle services, etc.;
- Promote planning efforts that adopt and embrace the concept of town centers

Most of the TDP recommendations are in line the the recommendation to invest more in transportation infrastructure and to accelerate the development of public transportation. These would help build ridership in the short term, which can have an immediate impact on greenhouse gas emissions. The recommendation's emphasis on a “transit-oriented pattern of growth” is fully consistent with the text of this TDP and will lead to greater emission reductions and a more sustainable transportation system in the future.

VTrans Long Range Transportation Business Plan

Several elements of the LRTBP are echoed in this TDP. One of the major goals of the LRTBP is preservation of the existing system. The most relevant objectives under that goal are the following:

1. Maintain the state transportation system to the highest practicable physical condition.
2. Annually develop strategy that preserves the safety of and the mobility within all transportation modes.
3. Increase utilization of alternative transportation modes such as aviation, rail, public transit and bike/pedestrian.

All of these objectives are consistent with the recommendations of the TDP.

The LRTBP includes a section where it considers four possible future scenarios: Business as Usual (no significant change from the present), Environmental Change (non-attainment of air quality standards), Energy Crunch (significant increase in fuel prices), and Growth Scenario (large increase in employment). For the “response” to each of these scenarios, public transit has a role to play. The LRTBP highlights the following:

- Improving multimodal alternatives – transit, bicycles, pedestrians, and rail
- Emphasizing land use planing – smart growth and access management
- Prioritize energy and climate change – prepare for the “crunch” through more efficient travel.

There are three policy goals that relate directly to public transportation. Policy Goal #5 is to “improve and connect all modes of Vermont’s transportation system to provide Vermonters with choices.” Transit figures prominently in two strategies under this goal:

- B. Plan and support intermodal transportation facilities to provide multimodal options that reduce personal vehicle use and reduce Vermont’s reliance on fossil fuels for meeting transportation needs.
- D. Conduct ongoing assessments of non-single occupant vehicle (SOV) modes to determine their economy, efficiency and effectiveness relative to other transit opportunities to ensure mobility and accessibility.

Policy Goal #6 is to “strengthen the economy, protect and enhance the quality of the natural environment, promote energy conservation, and improve Vermonters’ quality of life.” Under this goal, transit is specifically highlighted as one of the strategies: “H. Promote transit services as a tool to support tourism and economic development.”

Finally, Policy Goal #7 is to “support and reinforce Vermont’s historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside.” As discussed earlier in this TDP, this type of development is supportive of public transportation as it promotes walking and clustering of trip ends that can be served effectively by transit routes.

VTrans Public Transportation Policy Plan

The PTPP, which is due to be updated by the beginning of 2012, contained a range of policy statements and an implementation plan with recommended actions for VTrans. Among the 16 policy statements, the following are the most relevant to the TDP:

- The existing public transportation system in Vermont should be preserved and enhanced, provided that specific routes and services are well used by the traveling public.
- VTrans will continue to support Smart Growth and transit oriented development as it strives to improve mobility, maintain the rural character, and avoid sprawl in Vermont.
- VTrans will promote the use of public transportation as an energy-saving transportation alternative compared to single occupancy vehicle travel.
- VTrans will work to improve connectivity between public transit provider services and private-sector operations that serve markets outside Vermont, and to provide easy access to information about those services at intermodal facilities and via the Internet.

In the implementation plan, VTrans strongly endorses the concept of transit oriented development and investments in transit services and equipment that will lead to a more efficient and environmentally-friendly transportation system. The following three action items are especially relevant to the TDP:

- VTrans will revise criteria for new public transportation routes (New Starts) to reflect the benefit of services that promote or enhance TOD.
- VTrans will work with providers to enhance and expand public transportation services. Adding new services and improving the efficiency and convenience of existing ones could help attract and retain additional public transportation ridership.
- VTrans will promote use of low emissions technologies by public transportation providers.

The recommendations in chapter 6 for new services and investments in fleet, facilities, and technology are fully in line with the prescriptions of the PTPP. There is also full agreement on the importance of TOD and the cooperation needed from state, regional, and municipal governments to guide future development so that the future transportation system can be more efficient, rather than more costly.

Burlington Transportation Plan

The Burlington Plan, entitled *Moving Forward Together*, strongly endorses the upgrading of transit in the city of Burlington and the Chittenden County region. One of the primary goals for

transit is the enhancement of service on the trunk corridors. These are the same as the trunk corridors discussed in chapter 6.

The near-to-medium term vision for public transportation service in Burlington is to provide a high level of service on primary trunk routes serving downtown from the north, northeast, east, and south, complemented by shuttle services and neighborhood feeder services. Trunk routes include:

- North Avenue;
- Essex Junction (service to Colchester Avenue/Winooski/Essex);
- University Mall/Airport;
- Shelburne Road; and
- Pine Street.

These trunk routes would run frequently during the day, and service would be provided evenings and weekends, and serve both walk-access transit riders and those parking at remote lots.

A set of new street design guidelines forms a central part of the Plan. Two classifications of streets place a significant emphasis on public transportation: the Complete Street, and the Transit Street. A Complete Street includes enhanced transit stops and a range of enhancements for pedestrians. A Transit Street has similar treatments as a Complete Street, but in this case, more pavement can be devoted to transit service because bicycle facilities are being provided on a parallel street.

The Plan also includes a list of capital projects it recommends for implementation. Among these are the Downtown Transit Center and the South End Neighborhood Transportation Center, both of which are included in this TDP. A final note about transit is that the Plan states that “the City will continue to push for a regional transit funding source.”