

Transit Development Plan

Prior Studies and Recent Progress

The Transit Development Plan (TDP) for the Chittenden County Transportation Authority is intended to provide a program for the expansion and enhancement of public transportation service in Chittenden County. This document is not restricted to the short-term period (five years from the present) as previous transit plans have been, but projects included here for the long-term future are intended more as guideposts and reference points than detailed plans. The goal is to have a coherent plan with short-term actions that make sense on their own merits, as well as building toward a future enhanced system.

This chapter summarizes prior plans and studies that are relevant to the TDP and lists the accomplishments since the time of the last comprehensive plan.

CCTA Short-Range Public Transportation Plan – 2003

The Short-Range Public Transportation Plan (SRPTP) for was funded by VTrans and drafted by their consultant but was edited heavily by CCTA staff to accommodate the current thinking of the Board and management. It included an identification of community transit needs, inventory and analysis of current transit services, and a series of organizational and service recommendations for meeting those needs, over a five-year time period.

The following goals were established

- Development of a broad-based source of local funding to decrease reliance on property taxes
- Expansion of public transit services to areas outside CCTA member towns
- Re-routing in downtown through a new multimodal center
- Meet the transit needs of suburban growth areas
- Assist in decreasing traffic congestion and parking problems in downtown and on the hill

Based on the analysis of transportation needs and transit services, various strategies were developed and presented to the study advisory committee, CCTA and SSTA staff, and the public for review and comment. With that feedback incorporated, the SRPTP made the following general recommendations:

- *CCTA, SSTA, and the CCMPO should coordinate to request that the State Legislature create a new kind of RTA for all of Chittenden County – The RTA would be responsible for expanding bus and paratransit service to the entire County and would plan services*

cooperatively with the CCMPO. The Legislature would give the RTA authority to levy taxes, as needed to expand transit services.

- A new, downtown multimodal center
- Coordination of transit services with neighboring systems, including NVPTN and ACTR
- Update the 1999 Park and Ride study conducted by the CCMPO
- Review fare policy, especially for longer or premium trips

In addition to general recommendations, the SRPTP also made specific service recommendations for commuter, fixed-route, community, and paratransit service. Those recommendations were as follows:

- *Commuter Routes Inter-Regional* – Limited stop, express service from outlying communities such as Georgia/ St. Albans, Waterbury/ Sugarbush, or Vergennes into Burlington and Essex Junction to serve employment trips and reduce congestion
- *Commuter Routes Regional Routes* - Limited stop, express service from regional communities such as Colchester/ Milton, Underhill Flats/ Jericho, or Hinesburg into Burlington and Essex Junction to serve employment trips and reduce congestion
- *Regional Line Haul Services Trunk Routes* – to connect high density areas such as Mallets Bay, Tafts Corners, and Williston Village to downtown
- *Community Connectors Local Fixed Routes* – Add frequency on routes that serve high density areas within or close to the urban core, such as Riverside/ Winooski, Essex Center, and the Old North End Loop
- *Community Connectors Parking and Special Purpose Shuttles* – Continue PARC north and south, College Street Shuttle, and CATMA shuttle, with potential for additional shuttle on the Hill
- *Community Connectors Cross County Direct Connections* – Connects suburb to suburb at a high level of service
- *Community Connectors Feeders to Trunk Lines and Commuter Routes* – Demand-responsive or route deviation service in zones around ends of commuter routes and trunk lines in areas around Shelburne, Essex, South Burlington, or Charlotte rail stations; University Mall, Mallets Bay, Tafts Corner, Milton, Jericho/ Underhill, Richmond, or Hinesburg
- *Community Connectors ADA Complementary Paratransit Services* – Expanded service required with institution of other service recommendations
- *Community Connectors Rural General Public Demand-Response* – Advance reservation, demand-responsive system covering the more rural areas of the County, as a compliment to existing human service transportation
- *Other Specialized Services* – Continue to operate senior shuttles, neighborhood specials, Medicaid service, and ridesharing

Vermont's Public Transportation Policy Plan – February 2007

Vermont's 2007 Public Transportation Policy Plan (PTPP) reviewed and updated past policies and goals and developed strategies to meet Vermont's public transportation challenges. The

PTPP was intended to serve as the primary guidance document for a five year period, beginning in 2007. The report provided a list and description of transit stakeholders, as well as an inventory of public transportation services available in the state, and a detailed peer analysis, comparing Vermont's public transit services to similar services throughout the country. It also provided a demographic analysis, finding a high density of target populations in Chittenden County.

The Policy Plan provided a detailed Implementation Plan. Some of the recommendations provided were as follows:

- 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
- Additional public transportation funds should be used for services that support and promote the four goals stated in the 24 V.S.A., Chapter 126, § 5083
- VTrans will maximize the use of available federal funds in support of public transportation efforts in the state. State funds shall be allocated to public transportation providers for use in their operating budgets to the extent that funds are available.
- In support of Vermont's changing demographics and the state's "Age in Place" policy, VTrans will work with its partners to maintain the mobility of Vermonters without neglecting other essential needs met by the public transportation system
- VTrans, working with AHS, will continue to promote and enhance coordination of human service and general public transportation through the regional public transportation brokers when appropriate
- VTrans will promote the use of public transportation as an energy-saving transportation alternative compared to single occupancy vehicle travel
- VTrans will support a vital intercity bus network in Vermont, serving both intra-state travel and travel to other metropolitan areas in New York, New England, and Quebec by providing attractive and accessible facilities (park-and-rides with bus shelters) at convenient locations along major travel corridors

The Plan concluded that there are several areas of the state without transit service that could benefit from service, and other areas that have a low level of service that could benefit from higher levels of service, both of which requires more funding and increased service coordination.

Vermont Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan – March, 2008

The Vermont Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan (HSTCP) is the state's response to the planning requirements of the 2005 reauthorization of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). Beginning in federal fiscal year 2007, projects supported by the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310), Job Access and Reverse Commute

(Section 5316), and New Freedom (Section 5317) programs are required to be derived from a “locally developed, coordinated public transit – human services transportation plan.”

In Vermont, the HSTCP was used as a statewide planning document, with distinct regional planning documents included, an implementation document, and a framework for the prioritization and selection of projects utilizing federal funding assistance.

Coordination of general public and human service transportation is already well established in Vermont, from policies and priorities established by the Vermont legislature and state agencies, to the delivery of transportation services to members of the public and human service agency clients at the regional and local levels. At the state level, 24 V.S.A. Chapter 126, Section 5090 requires state human service agencies to purchase transportation from public systems where appropriate.

State level strategies for improving coordination identified in the Plan include:

- Encourage trip and vehicle sharing coordination between organizations providing transportation coverage to common areas
- Develop a consolidated information dissemination approach to promote transportation services
- Hold regular meetings with transportation providers and other affected parties
- Improve inter-regional coordination
- Provide technical assistance to providers to strengthen financial and administrative capacity

An inventory of transportation services conducted for Chittenden County identified CCTA as the primary public transportation provider in the county. In addition, a number of towns provide local matching funds to CCTA to provide E&D service to their residents. There are also numerous human services transportation providers, including Special Service Transportation Agency (SSTA), Milton Family Services, Spectrum Youth and Family Services, the Good News Garage, and others. Private operators, such as Amtrak, Vermont Transit, and taxis were also identified.

The transportation service gaps and unmet needs in Chittenden County identified through the HSTCP included the following:

- Service outside current CCTA member towns, especially to new developments in Williston
- Institution of flexible routing
- Commuter service between Burlington and Bennington
- Service from Franklin County
- Service to IBM Campus
- Increased E&D funding to meet the demand for service, especially ongoing medical trips
- Transportation to senior meal sites

US 2 Corridor Transportation Management Plan – August, 2007

The Transportation Management Plan for the US 2 corridor covers the area along US 2 from South Willard Street in Burlington, to North Williston Road in Williston. The Plan provides an inventory of highway, transit, and bicycle facilities; recommendations; and an implementation plan for those recommendations.

Six “goals and objectives” were developed by the project team, each with numerous sub-goals. The goals identified by the Plan are listed below, along with some of the sub-goals:

- *Develop transportation strategies consistent with the current and emerging function of US 2, including improvement to local circulation and access and safe and efficient connections between various transportation systems*
- *Provide travel options to serve the needs of a diverse population and both residential and non-residential land uses in the corridor, including the creation of a bicycle and pedestrian network*
- *Provide transportation improvements that support community character and develop goals, such as the creation of new passenger facilities designed to enhance the transit riding experience*
- *Improve safety by addressing deficiencies at high crash intersections, closing gaps in the existing bicycle and pedestrian system, providing safe connections and minimizing dangerous conflicts between modes*
- *Design and operate transportation facilities to protect and enhance the environment, by reducing emissions and noise and using flexible design*
- *Develop transportation projects and services cooperatively and implement projects cost effectively in time to meet immediate and long term needs*

Two CCTA routes currently serve the corridor: UMall/Airport and Williston. As of 2007, the UMall/ Airport route was CCTA’s highest ridership route, with over 1,000 boardings per day, and the Williston route was one of CCTA’s fastest growing. The CATS shuttle, operated by UVM, also runs in the corridor.

With regard to transit, the short- (five years or less) and medium- term (five to ten years) recommendations included:

- Introduction of a new corridor service on US 2 between downtown Burlington and Williston, operating on 30-minute headways during the day and hourly service at night, with extensions to Williston Village during the peak
- Extension of the College Street Shuttle to UMall and Market Street, with extended days and hours of service
- Restructuring of the UMall/Airport route to a South Burlington local circulator
- Restructuring of the Williston route

- Future expanded US 2 corridor service, running at 15-minute frequency during morning and afternoon peak periods

Additionally, the study included recommendations for pedestrian and bicycle facility improvements such as enhancing existing roadway crossings, providing new crossings, and the addition of a bicycle lane and bicycle facilities in Williston Village.

In the long term, the Plan recommended implementation of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and its necessary components such as enhanced passenger facilities, transit signal priority (TSP), queue jump lanes, and dedicated rights-of-way along the US 2 corridor.

VT 15 Corridor Study – 2008

The goal of the VT 15 Corridor Study was to develop a comprehensive multi-modal transportation improvement plan for the VT 15 corridor from Main Street in Winooski through the towns of Colchester and Essex and the Village of Essex Junction, to the border of Essex and Jericho. The plan outlined a long-term vision for the corridor, as well as short-, medium-, and long-term strategies to achieve those goals.

CCTA operates two routes on the VT 15 corridor: Essex Junction and Essex Center. The Essex Junction route serves the major destinations of the Ambulatory Care Center (ACC) at MCHV/ Fletcher Allen, Fort Ethan Allen, Essex Junction, and the IBM campus. As of 2009, the Essex Junction route is CCTA’s most heavily utilized route. The Essex Center route functions as a circulator within the Town of Essex and a feeder route to other CCTA trunk line service. Trips occur during the weekday morning and afternoon peak hours.

Public transit improvement strategies presented in the study included, in the short term (less than five years):

- Upgrading the Essex Junction route to 15-minute peak period service (already implemented by the time the study was completed)
- Expanding service on the Essex Center route to 30-minute headways, with all day service, Monday through Saturday

In the mid-term (less than ten years):

- Add evening and Sunday service on the Essex Junction route
- New LINK Express route from Cambridge to Burlington, via Underhill, Jericho, and Essex
- New local route in the neighborhood surrounding Susie Wilson Blvd.
- New park-and-ride at intersection of VT 289 and VT 2A
- New satellite or intercept parking lot in the Barnes Road area

And in the long-term (more than ten years):

- Upgrade the Essex Junction route to Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service (earlier if funding is available)

Moving Forward Together – Transportation Plan for the City of Burlington – August, 2007

The Transportation Plan was drafted with the intent to promote three general themes: Strong and Healthy City, Transportation Choices, and Great Streets. The Plan acknowledged that transportation is vital to a strong and healthy city.

The plan says that *transit availability is critical, especially for the young, the old, and those without cars, and those who are otherwise dependent on transit.* In the near future, choice riders, or those who do not rely solely on public transportation, will also play a key role in increasing the demand for services. These riders have indicated that the current level of service has been a deterrent to transit use.

In the future, primary trunk routes serving the downtown area on key arterials—including North Ave, Pearl St/Colchester Ave, Main Street, Shelburne Road, and Pine Street—should provide a high level of service, with frequent service during the day, and service provided on evenings and weekends. Currently, CCTA’s ability to increase service is severely limited by its reliance on local property tax as a funding source. The City plans to continue to push for a regional transit funding source. Accessibility to public transportation is also critical.

Chittenden County Park and Ride Facility Prioritization – February, 2004

The report is an update of previous studies that identified potential locations for twenty new park and ride lots. Facility locations were prioritized based on ten criteria within three general categories: demand, location, and readiness, with the demand category accounting for 50% of a lot’s total score.

In addition, potential lots were identified as Intercept/Satellite or Park and Ride. An Intercept/Satellite lot is intended to provide a less expensive alternative to on-site parking facilities within activity centers or the urban core. A Park and Ride facility is generally for car and vanpooling, sometimes served by transit or a low frequency shuttle.

The top scoring Intercept/Satellite locations and accompanying recommendations, as listed by CCMPO, were as follows:

- Burlington: Lakeside Avenue and Champlain Parkway – Assist as needed City/ Private developer led effort to construct parking structure
- South Burlington: I-89, Exit 14 – Scope interchange improvements that will include park and ride facility. Partner with VTrans, two cities, and UVM on possible solutions
- South Burlington: US 7/ I-189 – no action recommended
- Colchester: VT 15/ Barnes Avenue – Seek earmarked funds for all recommended VT 15 improvements as identified in the VT 15 Corridor Study

The top scoring Park and Ride locations and accompanying recommendations were as follows:

- Burlington: North Avenue – no action recommended
- Williston: I-89, Exit 12 – Advocate to VTrans for expedited construction
- Colchester: I-89, Exit 17 – no action recommended
- Richmond: I-89, Exit 11 – CCMPO scoping priority

In addition to the sites listed above, the CCMPO recommended action on additional lots in Colchester, Essex, Jericho, Hinesburg, and South Burlington, as well as continued development and expansion of facilities in Grand Isle, St. Albans, Enosburg Falls, Waterbury, Bristol, Ferrisburgh, and Middlebury.

Review of Accomplishments since last SRPTP

The 2003 SRPTP had recommendations for structural and organizational changes for CCTA, but none of these have as yet been implemented. As discussed later in this report, work is ongoing to consider alternative structures for regional transit. As mentioned above, one major accomplishment concerning the structure and governance of CCTA was the abandonment of the mileage formula and the subsequent expansion of membership to include two new towns.

In terms of service changes, many recommendations from the SRPTP have been implemented:

- Interregional commuter routes
 - Montpelier
 - Middlebury
 - St. Albans
- Regional line-haul services
 - Restructuring of the Essex Junction Route
 - 15-minute peak service on Essex Junction route
 - Late-night service on Friday and Saturday on Essex Junction route
 - Increase in service to Shelburne
 - Increase in service on Essex Center route
 - Restructuring of Pine Street routeImplementation of the CATMA Park and Ride Shuttle
 - Adjustment of running times through timepoint analysis

In response to these service improvements, marketing efforts, capital upgrades, and institutional relationships, CCTA has enjoyed annual ridership increases in the range of 5-7% for each year since the last SRPTP.