

**PUBLIC TRANSIT ADVISORY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
VTrans Davis Building
Montpelier, Vermont
December 15, 2016**

ATTENDEES: Chris Cole, VTrans
Barb Donovan, VTrans
Scott Bascom, VTrans
Dave Pelletier, VTrans
Tim Bradshaw, VTrans
Erik Filkorn, VTrans
Sommer Bucossi, VTrans
Jim Ware, Green Mountain
Murray Benner, SSTA
Jamie Feehan, VPTA
Mary Grant, RCT
Jim Moulton, ACTR/STSI
Randy Schoonmaker, DVTA
Peter Johnke, VCIL
Lee Cattaneo, COVE
Katharine Otto, SWCRPC
Michele McCutcheon-Schour, VEIC
Van Chesnut, AT

[Note: Minutes reflect the order of the published agenda.]

1. CALL TO ORDER and INTRODUCTIONS

Chris Cole called the meeting to order at 1 PM. Introductions were made.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

September 22, 2016

MOTION by Jim Moulton, SECOND by Lee Cattaneo, to approve the minutes of 9/22/16 as written. VOTING: unanimous; motion carried.

3. COMMUTER RAIL

Scott Bascom presented the results of a conceptual study of commuter rail service from Montpelier to St. Albans with connecting service to Burlington. The final report will be submitted to the legislature on January 15, 2017. The service would use the New England Central rail line, Winooski Branch, and Vermont Rail Systems rail line. There would be five stations. Presently, there is bus link service between Montpelier and Burlington and Montpelier and St. Albans.

Per the study limited peak commuter rail service includes six roundtrips to Burlington with two from St. Albans and four from Montpelier. Comprehensive peak commuter rail service includes 11 roundtrips to Burlington with four trips to St. Albans and seven trips

to Montpelier. The limited peak service would capture 12% of the demand in the corridor for home to work service and the comprehensive peak service would capture 25%. Using projected growth figures for 2030 the limited peak service would carry between 1040 and 1100 passengers per year and the comprehensive peak service would carry between 2090 to 2210 passengers per year. Capital costs include improvement to the rail lines (track, signals, bridges, wyes), adding sidings, building or improving stations to meet ADA requirements in Winooski, Milton, Richmond, Montpelier Jct., Essex Junction south, and purchasing rolling stock that meets federal transportation standards for crash worthiness and positive train control. Total capital investment is estimated at \$301 million to \$363 million. The Montpelier to Burlington passenger cost per trip would be \$4.62 and the Montpelier to St. Albans passenger cost per trip would be \$3.68. The operation would have to be subsidized \$4.9 million for the limited peak service and \$8.9 million for the comprehensive peak service. Other considerations include governance/management of the system, having a commuter rail operator for daily operations, funding sources for capital and operations, federal labor protection requirements, and feeder bus service to meet the fixed rail service.

Annual operating cost for both Link bus services is less than \$1 million. The commuter rail operation cost would be \$5 million to \$9 million annually (\$6.1 million for the Montpelier to Burlington service and \$2.8 million for the Montpelier to St. Albans service). Total annual state transit budget is \$40 million.

Jim Moulton commented the bus service that exists today goes into the downtown area to the employment hubs at a cost nine time less than that of the train service. Murray Benner noted the state would still need to provide bus service for the rest of the state. Lee Cattaneo questioned how many people would use the train that would require getting on a bus to get to the train station to get on the train to another train station and then on a bus again to get to their destination when the bus will provide direct service in one stop.

4. INTERCITY PROGRESS

Barb Donovan reported the following:

- Ridership on intercity bus service is growing, but not exploding. It appears as fuel costs increase, ridership increases, but more marketing of the service is needed. More onsite information on where to get the bus is needed.
- Signage on the Route 4 service is being developed (modeled on the GoVT website city-to-city route). There is good signage at the Albany, NY station on how to get to Vermont by bus.
- Better directions are needed on the website for the bus-to-Amtrak connection in Albany.
- The investment for the service is going down each year, but is still \$400,000 per year. In order to cut that down ridership needs to double.
- Manchester/Bennington to the Amtrak Station in Albany is the next big project. Two meetings have been held in Bennington to date. Most of the professors at Bennington College live in NYC so they spend the week in Vermont then return to the city on weekends.

Barb Donovan described her experience of riding the intercity bus routes for a day. There was mention of possibly making a connection to Dartmouth Coach again.

5. TAMS PLAN, SAFETY PLAN, INCENTIVE PROGRAM, PUBLIC TRANSIT POLICY PLAN, WORK PLAN FOR E&D SERVICE, TPI PROCESS

Sommer Bucossi reported on the Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI) grant program to provide funds to 10 regional planning commissions for their work programs and transportation planning. Transit is eligible for short range planning. Tasks from the regional planning commissions are due by March. Final guidance on the work programs will be given by May. Regional planning commissions need to prioritize their regional concerns within their work program. The guidance section will be updated in the TPI Manual with a section on “the big picture” so people better understand the TPI. Information will be posted online.

Erik Filkorn reviewed the Automatic Vehicle Location (ABL) tool that is on every state plow truck. People can use the tool to determine what roads have been plowed and get a forecast of when the roads will be plowed. The tool also provides weather alerts, current temperature, weather advisories on the 511 system, weather cams, and other information. The tool is available on iPhones and tablets.

Plans to be written/updated include the Transit Asset Management Plan, Safety Plan, Policy Plan, E&D Work Plan, Individual Transportation Plan, and GMT (“Where’s My Bus” app).

6. ROUTEMATCH SOFTWARE

Barbara Donovan reported no complaints have been received in a month from riders using Routematch. Murray Benner said on-time-performance is at 90% using 15 minutes before and 20 minutes after. Connectivity problems have been addressed. Jim Moulton said Routematch has been responsive to staff and riders. Randy Schoonmaker stated the service has been good for them. Peter Johnke observed when the system is optimized is important for pickup time and planning connection with volunteer rides. Van Chesnut commented most of the problems are because people are not following the parameters and flexibility in the ADA law.

Lee Cattaneo asked if people can monitor themselves with Routematch rather than received “robo” calls. Barb Donovan will investigate the matter.

7. AHS MEDICAID RFP

Contract negotiations are in process.

8. VTRANS UPDATES

Rockingham Park-and-Ride

The facility will open once the light poles are installed.

Mobility on Demand (MOD)

A grant was received by Vermont, one of a few states in the nation to receive a MOD grant. The goal is to have on-demand local rides. More money is not expected in next year's budget which limits the ability to expand the service.

Electric Transit Buses

Burlington Electric is to offer an incentive for the purchase of electric transit buses. Van Chesnut said his company will have a pilot run of electric transit bus service (February 6, 2017 to March 6, 2017). It is hoped to run another pilot in another part of the state next winter.

PTAC Membership

The list of current members was distributed. Changes are possible under the new administration.

Next Meetings

March 16, 2017, VTrans, 6th Floor, Coolidge Room
June 15, 2017 (location to be determined)

9. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

10. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business and without objection the meeting was adjourned at 3:30 PM.

RScty: MRiordan