

**PUBLIC TRANSIT ADVISORY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
GREEN MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY NETWORK (GMCN)
215 PLEASANT STREET
BENNINGTON, VERMONT
December 17, 2015**

ATTENDEES: Barb Donovan, VTrans
Mary Grant, RCT
Sandy Thorp, RCT
Van Chesnut, AT
Peter Johnke, VCIL
Jim Moulton, ACTR/STSI
Aaron Little, STSI
Randy Schoonmaker, DVTA
Susan Schreibman, RRPC
Mark Sousa, CCTA
Minga Dana, MVRTD
Jamie Feehan, VPTA
Mark Anders, Bennington RPC
Donna Baker, GMCN
Chip Desautels, VT Translines
Mollie Burke, legislature

[Note: The minutes reflect the order of the published agenda.]

1. CALL TO ORDER and INTRODUCTIONS

Barb Donovan called the meeting to order at 1 PM and suggested the order of the agenda be modified to hear the update from VT Translines first. Introductions were made.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

September 17, 2015

MOTION by Jim Moulton, SECOND by Mark Sousa, to approve the minutes of 9/17/15 as written". VOTING: unanimous; motion carried.

3. DONNA BAKER, GMCN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Donna Baker, Green Mountain Community Network (GMCN) and Green Mountain Express Service, gave a brief history of the organization that started in 1986 out of the Red Cross with one car as a Medicaid provider. In 2006 GMCN was established. Today there are eight routes in Bennington County and interconnection to other bus service in the state. GMCN needs lots of services and routes because there is not the population base in Bennington. More than 200,000 people have been transported by the service. The GMCN facility is a remodeled residence built in 1862 by the Scott family. The property is listed on page 2 of the land records. The bus port was added. The adjacent municipal parking lot has an electric charge station.

4. 2015 LEGISLATIVE STUDIES

Barb Donovan stated full drafts of the studies will go to the legislature on January 15, 2016. The following was noted:

- Elderly and Persons with Disabilities Transportation Program Review – information is on the KFH Group website. Stakeholder meetings were well attended.
- Local Public Transit Funding – the initial draft is due 12/18/15. Stakeholder meetings were held.
- Montpelier to St. Albans Commuter Rail – Rail Council discussed through bus service with Amtrak tickets.
- Bennington Thruway Bus Service – Rail Council discussed through bus service to connect to the train. The rail/bus study is due 2017. Late trains are an issue. There are 5 million bus riders and 50,000 rail riders. There was mention of Bridj and Uber rides or private providers meeting the train, especially to go to resorts. It was also suggested that maps be posted on the VTrans website and in the stations showing rail to transit connectivity. Transit agency websites should show connectivity services like taxi or bus so people can see the connections.

Molly Burke said the Brattleboro transportation center needs a bigger presence. Information on bus service should be posted at the train station. More signage is needed by Greyhound or at the exit on I-91 (an icon for train and bus service). Barb Donovan said there is a new person assigned to the Brattleboro area in charge of transportation information.

5. UVM RESEARCH REPORTS

Samantha Tilton reviewed the results of the research on personal transportation plans by veterans and people with physical disabilities and/or mobility constraints. The following was noted:

- Focus groups were used to develop the survey for the study.
- Most of the respondents to the survey lived in Chittenden County and were at least 65 years old. A significant number had some post-secondary education and average annual income of \$30,000 or less. Most of the respondents lived alone, did not own a house, and could not drive a car. Most had access to public bus service though the access was not close to their residence. Most of the respondents left their residence for personal trips and medical appointments using a private car or on-demand transit.
- Significant obstacles for winter travel included ice, snow, uneven surfaces, curbs, stairs, grade changes, having no sidewalks, paths or crosswalks, lack of bus shelter, and not enough bus runs.
- Concerns with bus/on-demand travel included unreliable schedule, getting on/off the bus, long waits for service with on-demand rides or the service not being available.
- The most popular choice with a change in appointments or plans is to use a private car with family, friend, or caretaker or simply cancel plans.
- A significant number of respondents did not have internet service or a cell phone with data plan to access information on the internet. Many got information on

- transportation options from family, friends, or caretakers rather than by calling agencies or going to a website or paper information.
- Results of the survey indicate there is significant dependence on family, friends, and caretakers for transportation needs, and those who do not have these arrangements need assistance.

Jim Moulton asked if there are any recommendations. Samantha Tilton explained the goal of the research was to get an assessment of who is struggling with mobility in Vermont and what part is related to transit. Further research can be done on how existing resources can be used and how to ensure people have better access to transportation. Barb Donovan added the eventual goal is to have a personal transportation plan process where a rider enters the destination and any specific mobility needs and the system matches the transportation to the trip. More planning is put into the trips to access what is available which will save money. The UVM study provided baseline data.

Molly Burke mentioned the AARP study (“Transporting the Public”) that focused on ‘complete streets’ being built which should be done in towns.

6. VT TRANSLINES INTERCITY UPDATES

Chip Desautels, VT Translines, provided the schedule for the Route 4 and Route 7 bus services, information on passenger boardings on the routes, and ridership data. Mr. Desautels noted the following:

- VT Translines bid to operate the Route 4 and Route 7 bus services which work well together.
- The Route 4 service uses a 12 passenger lift equipped bus. The Route 7 service uses a full sized motorcoach. The service connects to Greyhound in Bennington, Trailways, and the Albany Airport.
- There will be discussion of better connection to Amtrak train service.
- Ridership on the Route 4 service has increased 71%. Ridership on the Route 7 services has increased 49%. Passengers are connecting to other buses in Albany to points west and south.
- The fare is \$36 from Burlington to Albany one way. The fare is \$12 from Rutland to White River Jct. one way.
- The services are connected to the Greyhound ticket system. VT Translines wants to allow passengers to buy tickets on their iPhone. Greyhound is moving in that direction, but is not there yet.
- Revenues on the Route 7 service have exceeded expectations. Revenues on the Route 4 service are under the projected levels. The two routes together meet the financial expectation.

Molly Burke mentioned parking for free in Bennington and taking a bus to Albany to connect to the airport or train station.

Jim Moulton asked about the cost per trip information. Barb Donovan said the information will be part of the legislative report.

Mark Anders mentioned the connection to Albany Airport. Chip Desautels said the southbound bus goes to the airport if there are passengers with that destination. A stop northbound is not made because it is not known if there are passengers waiting at the airport.

Barb Donovan mentioned the express bus from Burlington to Middlebury to Albany. Chip Desautels said this service has been very successful. There were two full buses (100 passengers) on buses the Sunday after Thanksgiving. Tickets can be purchased on the bus and passengers can board the bus anywhere along the route. VT Translines is working to have the system seamless with Greyhound. Bennington and Rutland local bus terminals are used. Seamless interconnectivity with the local routes can be provided.

Minga Dana mentioned tickets through to Killington. Chip Desautels said the option is made known, but a sign can be posted on the bus. There are schedules for connecting bus services on the bus.

Susan Schreibman asked if the service will be put out to bid when the contract with VT Translines ends. Barb Donovan said the decision has not yet been made. There have been no complaints about the current service/provider. Having two runs per day on both routes will likely increase ridership, but the investment would be twice as much as well.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

PTAC Meeting Schedule

- March 17, 2016 in Montpelier at 1 PM

8. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Mary Grant, SECOND by Mark Sousa, to adjourn the meeting.

VOTING: unanimous; motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 PM.

RScty: MRiordan