Appendix A – Document Review

The Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) commissioned and performed many plans and studies on public transportation in the state of Vermont in recent years. These studies provide specific transit policy and service recommendations, outline strategies for public involvement, and assess the transportation needs of human services providers statewide. Overall, these documents help to direct the state’s public transit policies and identify trends in the community’s transportation needs to provide a better understanding of the role public transportation plays in the state of Vermont. The Steadman Hill Consulting team identified and reviewed the following studies that are directly relevant to Vermont’s Public Transit Policy Plan and Human Service Transportation Coordination Plan:

### Transportation & Transit Plans

* Vermont Public Transit Policy Plan (2012)
* Vermont Public Transit Policy Plan (2007)
* 2040 Vermont Long-Range Transportation Plan
* State Management Plan for Vermont Public Transit Programs
* Public Transit Route Performance Reviews Annual Report (State Fiscal Year 2017)
* Vermont Statewide Intercity Bus Study Update
* VTrans Public Involvement Guide
* Tri-Valley Transit Annual Report (2017)
* Chittenden County Transportation Authority Transit Development Plan (2010)
* Green Mountain Transportation Authority Transit Development Plan (2012)

### Transportation-Related Human Service Plans

* Elders & Persons with Disabilities Program Guidance
* Human Service Transportation Coordination Plan (2012)
* Vermont State Plan on Aging Needs Assessment
* Vermont Elders & Persons with Disability Transportation Program Review
* Exploring Transportation Behaviors and Needs of Veterans and People with Physical Disabilities and Mobility Constraints
* Opioid Coordination Committee – Transportation Working Group Findings
* Rides to Wellness Implementation Plan

A summary of each study is provided below, including the purpose of the study and the implication of the project.

# Transportation & Transit Plans

## Vermont Public Transit Policy Plan (2012)

*Date: January 2012*

*Author: Prepared by KFH Group for VTrans*

### Purpose

The 2012 Vermont Public Transit Policy Plan (PTPP) is the most recent comprehensive document guiding public transportation policy in the state of Vermont. While the PTPP is updated every five years (as required by statute), it serves as the primary guidance for continued development of public transit in the State over the next ten years. Previous versions of the PTPP were produced in 2000 and 2007.

The PTPP outlines transit policies, goals, and strategies to meet current and emerging public transportation challenges. The components of the PTPP provide policy level direction, guidance, and performance tracking to help guide transit investments. The PTPP is part of a series of modal policy plans developed by VTrans addressing transit, rail, bike and pedestrian, aviation, freight, and roadway programs and policies.

### Summary

The plan describes the State’s primary public transit goal as preserving and enhancing the level of public transit service in Vermont (provided that specific routes are well used by the traveling public). The state’s legislatively-mandated goals include (in order of precedence): providing basic mobility for transit-dependent persons; improving access to employment; mitigating highway congestion; and advancement of economic development objectives. Vermont public transportation policy includes preserving and enhancing public transit services, monitoring the performance of transit services, and using additional public transit funds to promote legislatively-mandated goals.

The plan outlines policies needed to achieve these goals in eight major areas:

1. **Funding Levels and Sources** – Continue to seek innovative revenue streams for transit, including flexing of highway funds to be used for public transit, 20% local funding goals, and integration with Elderly and Disabled (E & D) transportation operating funds
2. **Capital Investments** – Strategies to coordinate statewide investments in vehicles, facilities, and other capital stock to reduce unit costs
3. **Coordination of Services** – Coordinate human service transportation and general public transit throughout the state
4. **Interface with Land Use Planning** – Integrate transit into state and local planning decisions by assisting local government and expanding the role of MPOs and RPCs in transit planning
5. **Regional Connectivity and Intercity Bus** – Fund and operate regional and commuter bus services to provide interconnections between local transit providers
6. **Improving the “Transit Experience”** – Work with communities and transit operators to improve the experience of transit riders by providing information and bike/ped connections to transit
7. **Public Transit Planning and Technical Assistance** – The State should assist local transit planning efforts
8. **Performance Monitoring** – Outlines measures of productivity, cost effectiveness, and funding levels to evaluate performance of transit routes in the state

The plan provides an overview of all transit services operating in the state of Vermont. It also identifies areas of need for transit based on demographic factors, and projects need for transit based on data from the National Household Travel Survey. The plan was completed prior to the rise of transit network companies (TNCs), and thus does not address the potential of private TNCs to supplement or replace demand-responsive public transportation services.

### Implications

The 2012 PTPP has guided Vermont public transit policy since 2012, and thus should be consulted heavily while creating the next PTPP. The next PTPP can sustain and build on successful policies while incorporating more recent developments in transit planning best practices. The plan recommended many specialized planning studies that have since been performed (some of which are recounted in this document), which shed light on specific areas of policy. Transit ridership trends for the state have changed significantly since this plan, peaking in 2015 and declining to pre-2013 levels since then. The next PTPP will have to address these evolving ridership trends. Many of these changes are likely driven by low gas prices, changes in work practices (e.g. teleworking or retirement) and increases in car ownership. New technologies such as ride-sharing apps may further impact transit ridership, though these services are relatively new in the state and not yet widespread. The next PTPP should explore the opportunities for using new technologies to improve operating efficiencies of transit services statewide.

Of the goals outlined in the plan, improving the transit experience and increasing transit funding are the needs most often mentioned in other documents examined for this review.

## Vermont’s Public Transit Policy Plan (2007)

*Date: Feb 2007*

*Author: VTrans (Prepared by TranSystems)*

### Purpose

The 2007 Vermont Public Transit Policy Plan (PTPP) is the second five-year iteration of the PTPP mandated by the Vermont Legislature, and was superseded by the 2012 Vermont Public Transportation Policy Plan discussed above.

The purpose of this PTPP was to provide policy level direction, guidance and performance tracking to help guide transit investments. The plan builds on strategies from the 2000 PTPP deemed relevant, taking into account changes that occurred between production of the two plans.

### Summary

The statutory goals outlined in the 2007 PTPP are the same as its 2012 successor: provision of basic mobility for transit dependent residents; improving access to employment; mitigating congestion; and economic developments. The plan identifies major stakeholders (beyond transit agencies), including human services providers and the transit-riding public. The 2007 PTPP provides an analysis of the spatial distribution of transit-riding populations identified by age, income, and population density.

The 2007 PTPP identifies policies in 6 major areas:

1. **Overall Public Transportation Policy** – Transit systems should use performance monitoring to maximize the value of available resources
2. **Funding** – Continue to seek innovative revenue streams for transit, including flexing of highway funds to be used for public transit; 20% local funding goal for transit projects
3. **Demographics and Transit Oriented Development** – Support transit oriented development policies, and support the state’s “Age in Place” policy
4. **Human Service Coordination** – Coordinate human service transportation and general public transit throughout the state
5. **Energy and Environment** – Promote transit as a way of reducing auto dependency and reducing energy consumption
6. **Intercity Bus and Regional Connections** – Fund and operate regional and commuter bus services to provide interconnections between local transit providers

The 2007 PTPP also includes a brief section on implementation of these policies.

### Implications

Many of the policies outlined in the 2007 PTPP carried over and guided the 2012 PTPP. The 2007 PTPP identifies the major role of VTrans in statewide public transit as facilitating cooperation between agencies across the state. The 2007 PTPP is more concise in its outline of policies than its successor 2012 PTPP but provides less insight into implementation.

## 2040 Vermont Long-Range Transportation Plan (Draft)

*Date: June 2018*

*Author: VTrans*

### Purpose

The 2040 Vermont Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) is the state’s long-range transportation plan for all modes of travel (currently in draft form). Once finalized and adopted, the LRTP will serve as a framework, guiding transportation decision-making and investments looking out over the next 20 years. The LRTP is guided by three strategic cornerstones of the current administration: 1) Grow the Vermont economy; 2) Make Vermont an affordable place to live, work, and conduct business; and 3) Protect vulnerable Vermonters.

The LRTP set the broad, high-level statewide direction for transportation policy. The state’s Transportation Asset Management Plan, VTrans Strategic Plan, and individual modal plans establish goals and objectives with more specificity and often identify project priorities.

### Summary

The 2040 Vermont LRTP identifies 6 major goals for transportation at the statewide level:

1. Improve Safety & Security across all transportation modes.
   1. Develop and maintain safety plans for all transportation modes – including public transit
2. Preserve Vermont’s multimodal transportation system and optimize its performance
   1. To comply with federal performance monitoring mandates, VTrans must sponsor a group Transit Asset Management (TAM) plan as a recipient of FTA funding on behalf of any subrecipients who are not direct recipients (Green Mountain Transit is the only direct recipient). The plan must include: an asset inventory; a condition assessment of inventoried assets; a description of the analytical tool used to prioritize investments; a prioritized list of investments.
3. Provide mobility options and accessibility for all users of the system
   1. Improve connections between modes
      1. Review the needs of all modes as part of the project development process
      2. Use highway funding flexing authority to finance mulitimodal projects
   2. Expand public transit, intercity bus, and passenger rail services
      1. Support public transit provider route planning to identify priority routes
      2. Implement priority routes identified in the Statewide Intercity Bus Study
      3. Coordinate public transit services with social service program transportation needs
      4. Extend the Ethan Allen Express Amtrak service to Burlington and the Vermonter service to Montreal
      5. Encourage coordination between public transit and school systems to meet transportation needs
4. Leverage transportation investments to increase Vermont’s economic vitality
   1. Upgrade / expand public transit maintenance and operations facilities
5. Practice environmental stewardship
   1. Increase use of walking, biking, transit, rail, and Travel Demand Management options
6. Support livable, healthy communities
   1. Emphasize public transit services in and around developed centers

### Implications

The LRTP identifies public transit’s potential to achieve progress on multiple state goals, including providing affordable and environmentally-sound transportation options for people of all means, increasing economic opportunity by improving access to jobs and tourist activities, and linking mobility-challenged residents to basic needs such as medical appointments and shopping.

The most salient existing condition from this plan that should inform the next PTPP is that only 6% of respondents in the 2016 Statewide Transportation Public Opinion Survey indicated traffic congestion had a strong negative effect on their quality of life and very few respondents (15%) reported experiencing traffic congestion daily. This suggests priorities for public transportation in Vermont should not be focused on traffic alleviation, unlike in denser urban areas where traffic congestion is a more universal concern.

## State Management Plan for Vermont Public Transit Programs

*Date: February 2015*

*Author: VTrans - Policy, Planning and Multimodal Development – Public Transit Section*

### Purpose

The primary purpose of the State Management Plan (SMP) is to serve as the basis for FTA state level management reviews of the program and to provide public information on the state’s administration of all the FTA Public Transit programs. The SMP is also used by VTrans as a program guide for local project applicants.

### Summary

**Program Goals & Objectives:**

* **Policy**: The policy for the VTrans Public Transit Program in Vermont is established in Vermont Statute Title 24: Municipal and County Government, Chapter 126: Public Transportation, 24 V.S.A. §5083. Declaration of Policy (see attachments). It states that:
  + “The state shall make maximum use of federal funds to support public transportation;
  + The state operating funds shall be included in agency operating budgets as available;
  + The state shall support the maintenance of existing public transit service including fixed route, demand response, or volunteer drivers.
  + The state shall support creation of new public transit services;
  + The Public Transit Advisory Council (PTAC) shall annually evaluate the effectiveness of services;
  + The agency shall adopt performance standards with the advice of the PTAC;
  + The agency shall provide written guidance on planning and funding and technical assistance to public transit systems each year.”
* **Process for establishing long term goals (3 processes)**:
  + Public Transit Policy Plan (every 5 years)
  + Internal VTrans Planning process which details the internal planning process, and the yearly program planning that goes into developing the budget
  + Human Service Transportation Coordination Plan
* **Process for long range planning:**
  + Regional public meetings are held and at least one statewide public meeting is held on the Vermont Public Access TV station
  + The PTAC serves as the advisory committee for the Policy Plan. Consultation with the Public Transit Advisory Council (PTAC) is held at least twice during the process.
  + Human Service Coordination Plan updated every 5 years under a similar process.

**Roles & Responsibilities:** The SMP goes into great detail about roles and responsibilities of various government organizations in planning and delivering public transportation services, including VTrans and its subsidiary offices such as the Public Transit Section, the PTAC, and the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission.

**Coordination:**  The SMP lays out strategies and assigns responsibilities for coordination between agencies, particularly as it relates to coordinating human services transportation with existing public transportation systems.

**FTA Funding Subrecipient Eligibility**: FTA funding for the state of Vermont is administrated by VTrans, therefore the SMP explains eligibility requirements for local transit agencies and outlines general requirements for funding applications. The SMP also describes local and federal funding limits and outlines the project selection process VTrans uses to disburse funds. The SMP encourages all applicants for funding from VTrans to also explore opportunities for private sector involvement in service delivery.

**Miscellaneous:** The SMP affirms the state’s commitment to Federal Title VI, EEO, and ADA requirements and outlines procedures for meeting these mandates.

### Implications

The SMP outlines VTrans’ structure for administering public transit programs and funds. This document is especially useful for understanding the agency’s prime organizational role within the larger constellation of Vermont public transportation agencies. According to the SMP, VTrans’ main role determining the ultimate destination of federal funding for local transit agencies, most of which are too small to receive funding directly from the federal government. VTrans also provides assistance to all public and private transportation providers in the state through the Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) to help them meet FTA safety and training requirements. This document should be consulted for any questions about the administrative structure of VTrans and its funding policies.

## Public Transit Route Performance Reviews Annual Report (SFY 2017)

*Date: Feb 2018*

*Author: Prepared by KFH Group for VTrans*

### Purpose

This Public Transit Route Performance Report for SFY 2017 presents the results of VTrans’ annual performance evaluations for public transit services across Vermont. Public transit routes and services throughout the state are grouped in like categories, such as Urban, Small Town, and Demand Response.

### Summary

**Ridership:** In SFY 2017 Vermont’s public transit systems provided 4.69 million trips. Just under half of those rides were provided in the Chittenden County region, and the other half was spread throughout the rest of the state.

Statewide public transit ridership decreased by 6% from SFY 2013 through SFY 2017. Statewide ridership decreased 6% in SFY 2016 due to a poor 2015/2016 winter ski season and a modest decrease in GMT-Urban’s ridership following a route redesign, but tourism routes that saw significant declines in ridership in SFY 2016 recovered in SFY 2017. Tourism services saw a 32% increase in overall ridership from the previous year. Other types of services also showed significant increases in ridership, particularly Volunteer and Demand Response services.

**Transit Costs:** Total transit operating costs in SFY 2017 were $31.8 million, with the Chittenden County region accounting for 29% of the total. Transit costs have increased 24% in the past 5 years, while average cost per transit trip has increased 31%. Average cost per transit trip increase 12% from SFY 2016 to SFY 2017, to $6.79.

**Local Funding:** While the statewide local share funding percentage remained stable at 28%, six of ten transit systems/divisions increased their local share in SFY 2017. SFY 2017 was the first-year local funding for all rural providers reached the statewide goal of 20% of the transit operating budget. GMT, AT, and MVRTD all met 20% local funding goals, while GMCN, RCT, SEVT, and TVT all fell short of 20% local funding targets.

**E&D Transportation:** In SFY 2017 the total amount spent on the E&D Program in Vermont was $4.15 million, 80% of which ($3.32 million) was federal money. This funding provided 178,478 rides, for an average cost per passenger trip of $23.27. In SFY 2017 16% of E&D trips were provided on regular bus routes, 38% in vans, 2% in taxicabs, and *43% in private cars operated by volunteer drivers*. Volunteer drivers are especially important to mobility in large rural areas, where the population is thinly distributed, such as the Northeast Kingdom.

**Route Evaluations:** The majority (80%) of the 117 transit services evaluated across the state met the Acceptable standards for both productivity and cost-effectiveness, and 35% of the state’s transit routes were considered Successful in both measures compared to their peers. Four transit services reached the threshold for Acceptable service after underperforming in SFY2016, while 20 transit services did not meet the Acceptable thresholds for productivity, cost-effectiveness, or both measures, including 8 underperforming for the first time. The plan provides a full list of these routes.

### Implications

Transit ridership decreased in SFY 2017, with ridership losses concentrated in urban and commuter services. Perhaps most notably, GMT’s weekend services did not meet the Acceptable thresholds for productivity and cost-effectiveness for the first time, mirroring losses in weekend transit ridership experienced throughout the country. This trend suggests an evolving role for transit in Vermont as changes in gas prices, individual car ownership, changing work patterns, and new alternatives such as ridesharing apps reduce demand in urban areas, while ridership on specialty services such as tourism and demand responsive transit in rural areas continue to grow.

The cost of transit continues to grow in Vermont while ridership declines, leading to sharp increases in average cost per passenger over the past five years. E&D service providers are increasingly relying on volunteer drivers to provide more economical door-to-door service for users.

## Vermont Statewide Intercity Bus Study Update

*Date: January 2013*

*Author: Prepared by KFH Group for VTrans*

### Purpose

An FTA program to fund rural intercity bus transportation requires states to allocate 15% of Section 5311 funding for unmet rural intercity bus needs. As part of the 2012 PTPP, Vermont conducted a consultation process that included an inventory of existing services; a demographic analysis of needs for intercity bus service; and an outreach effort that included a survey of providers, regional planning agencies, and a statewide meeting. The Vermont Statewide Intercity Bus Study Update is an additional analysis recommended by the 2012 PTPP in a white paper, “Intercity Bus Needs Assessment and Policy Options”, that identified potential needs for replacement intercity bus service.

### Summary

High priority intercity corridors identified by the study include:

* Burlington-Middlebury-Rutland-Albany
* Albany-Bennington-Brattleboro-Keene (NH)-Nashua (NH)-Manchester (NH)
* Rutland-White River Junction
* Brattleboro-Springfield (MA) or White River Junction-Springfield
* St. Albans to Burlington

### Implications

This study concluded that Vermont has unmet rural intercity transportation needs, and that the state should begin implementation of these services on high-priority corridors using FTA Section 5311 funding as a grant solicitation program.

## VTrans Public Involvement Guide

*Date: June 2017*

### Purpose

The VTrans Public Involvement Guide (VPIG) is intended to provide an overview of the rationale for outreach, how to properly prepare for outreach, and tools for engaging stakeholders. Public involvement is built into the regulations and requirements that the Agency must follow on virtually every project. Beyond legal requirements, the practices recommended are guidance rather than policy, as every project can have unique circumstances that affect the level of outreach that should be conducted to properly engage our customers.

### Summary

The Public Involvement Guide outlines strategies for public outreach at each of 5 phases of the project delivery process:

1. **Planning** – Public input should be garnered for the State Transportation Improvement Plan, LRTP, modal plans, planning studies, and corridor plans. Outreach in the planning process can be difficult because of the less-tangible nature of this phase.
2. **Project Definition** – Allow local planning commissions and municipal staff to help develop stakeholder lists and ensure that appropriate government agency officials are included at the appropriate phases. Best practices for outreach at this phase is described in detail in the VTrans Project Definite Guidebook for Highway Division Projects.
3. **Preliminary and Final Design** – The goal of outreach at this phase is to build concurrence. Plans should be shared with local officials and other stakeholders should, including visualizations whenever possible.
4. **Construction** – Public outreach goals shift to informing the public in this phase. The general traveling public becomes a more important stakeholder at this phase. VTrans must hold one public pre-closure meeting for state and interstate projects. Public outreach staff should follow up projects with a customer satisfaction survey.
5. **Maintenance & Operations** – VTrans personnel should keep local officials informed of maintenance activities and consider the timing of closures where possible.
6. **Communications Tools** – The Public Involvement Guide provides a detailed list of communications strategies for outreach based on the level of public impact of a project.

The VPIG also outlines the state’s legal requirements for public outreach related to transportation projects according to Federal and Vermont state law.

Finally, the VPIG goes through detailed, step-by-step processes and best practices for designing public outreach and holding public meetings.

### Implications

The Public Involvement Guide is a comprehensive documentation of best practices and legal requirements for public outreach around transportation projects. The VPIG recommends integrating local involvement in state-level transportation projects to be very important throughout. This document should be consulted extensively in designing outreach strategies for the new PTPP.

## Chittenden County Transportation Authority Transit Development Plan

*Date: September 2010*

*Author: Steadman Hill Consulting*

### Purpose

The Transit Development Plan (TDP) for the Chittenden County Transportation Authority provides a program for the expansion and enhancement of public transportation service in Chittenden County over a 10-year period and beyond. It is the foundational planning document for the agency, as it establishes the framework within which all other short-term service planning and capital planning occurs. The TDP also provides detailed strategies to meet the goals of numerous other regional and state entities as listed in such documents as the City of Burlington’s Transportation Plan, the CCMPO’s Metropolitan Transportation Plan, the VTrans Long Range Transportation Business Plan, and the Governor’s Climate Change Action Plan. Chittenden county is Vermont’s most populous county, and home to Burlington, the state’s most populous city.

### Summary

The main elements of the CCTA TDP are plans for improved service, geographic expansion, and facility / equipment improvements.

There are few areas in Chittenden County that have densities that support high levels of service that are outside of the current service area. Residents outside the urban core demand new commuter routes from outlying communities, while residents in urban areas that already have some service demand longer service hours and higher frequencies, and additional transit connections such as crosstown links. Passengers also request investments in technologies such as real-time passenger information and better payment options.

The TDP also notes that land use decisions at the local and regional level are supportive in that they can promote efficient public transportation service and result in a healthier environment, revitalized community, and improved local economy.

The plan proposes many specific service improvement recommendations, as well as a Downtown Transit Center in the core of Burlington and improvements to Park & Ride lots in peripheral areas.

### Implications

This plan shows the agreed-upon direction of one of the state’s largest transit providers and provides useful insight into local transit organization structures and needs. Though most of the recommendations in this plan are not implemented at the state level, VTrans should identify policies that can help providers such as GMTA provide planned services and reach funding goals.

This plan proposes and aggressive expansion plan that would result in a 400% increase in services and budget, but a predicted 500% increase in ridership. However, these recommendations are impossible without significantly increased funding.

Increased financial and political support from municipalities, the state, the business community, and other organizations will be crucial to CCTA’s success in meeting multiple regional goals. To make this vision a reality, the following items must be pursued:

* 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 Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization (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 our region.

## Green Mountain Transit Agency Transportation Development Plan

*Date: October 2012*

*Author: Steadman Hill Consulting*

### Purpose

The Transit Development Plan (TDP) for the Green Mountain Transit Agency provides a program for the expansion and enhancement of public transportation service in central and northwestern Vermont over a 10-year period and beyond. It is the foundational planning document for GMTA, as it establishes the framework within which all other short-term service planning and capital planning occurs. A primary goal of the GMTA TDP is to work towards a unified public transportation system within the rural service area along with meaningful connections to the urban system in Chittenden County.

### Summary

The main elements of the TDP are calls for improved service span and frequency, greater geographic coverage and coordination, and enhanced facilities and equipment.

Ridership on GMTA nearly doubled between 2003 and 2012. More than half the population of Central Vermont is within ¾ mi of a GMTA route.

**Rider Characteristics**:



Specific areas for improved service mentioned include:

* South Barre and other parts of Barre Town
* Route 12 corridor from Montpelier south (to Northfield) and north (to Worcester)
* Route 14 corridor between Hardwick and Montpelier
* Year-round connection between Montpelier and the Mad River Valley
* Commuter service into Barre on Route 14 and US 302
* Service on Route 15 in Lamoille County linking Morrisville to Johnson and Cambridge
* Year-round service on Mountain Road Shuttle in Stowe
* Increased level of service on commuter routes in Franklin and Grand Isle counties

The plan lists recommendations for improved services along these corridors.

Respondents also requested further investment in shelters, benches, bike racks, and other passenger facilities, and new technology such as real-time passenger information, Wi-Fi enabled buses, and trip planning software, as well as improvements to the pedestrian environment around stops.

### Implications

This plan shows the agreed-upon direction of one of the state’s largest transit providers and provides useful insight into local transit organization structures and needs. Though most of the recommendations in this plan are not implemented at the state level, VTrans should identify policies that can help providers such as GMTA provide planned services and reach funding goals.

Green Mountain Transit is currently working on a new plan called NextGen that incorporates the agency’s dual urban and rural transportation missions. Ideally, the next PTPP can garner information from this plan ahead of its release to ensure consistency between state transit policy and the state’s largest transit provider.

At the state and regional level, the unsustainability of the current funding structure must be addressed with bold action, such as vehicle miles traveled fees outlined in the state’s Comprehensive Energy Plan.

# Human Service Transportation Plans

## Elders & Persons with Disabilities Program Guidance

*Date: Oct 2004*

*Author: VTrans*

### Purpose

This program guidance was produced by VTrans to lay the foundation on which current E&D transportation policy in Vermont is built.

### Summary

This program guidance lays out policies that define eligibility and structures for agencies participating in the state’s E&D transportation program, guidelines for service delivery, eligibility for participation in the program by the qualifying public, funding structures, and information reporting requirements.

**Eligible Grant Applicants**: VTrans designates one service provider per region to submit annual grant applications. All other grant applicants must work with the region’s designated service provider (with some exceptions).

**Regional Advisory Committees**: Regional Public Transit Advisory Committees (PTACs) made up of relevant stakeholders are designated for each region to manage grant applications

**Submitting Grant Applications**: Grant applications must be submitted on time to VTrans and the Vermont Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (DAIL)

**Review & Approval of Grant Applications**: A committee with members from VTrans and the Vermont Agency of Health Services (AHS) review all applications and submit recommendations for approval to the Secretary of AHS and Secretary of Transportation, which are consolidated and submitted to the FTA as a statewide grant application upon approval.

**Frequency of RPTAC Meetings**: RPTACs should meet at least quarterly to review current service levels, quality concerns, budgetary and funding issues, and matters of service improvement for the public.

**Authorized Modes of Transportation**: E&D transportation must accommodate wheelchairs. Drivers must receive training to be able to provide door-to-door assistance to those who require such aid. Vehicles should be full when possible, but providers’ primary responsibility is ensuring safe, comfortable and timely transportation. Non-accessible vehicles may be used for passengers who do not require special accommodation. 15-passenger vans are discouraged for safety reasons.

**Service Quality**: Drivers must be properly licensed, vetted, and trained. Dispatchers should coordinate with Human Service Agencies to understand passenger needs. Transit providers are responsible for ensuring vehicles are properly equipped to meet or exceed health & safety requirements.

**Grievance Procedures**: Each provider should have clearly written grievance procedures available to the public and HSAs.

**Eligible Riders**: Riders should use the lowest-cost mode available, which is fixed-route transit in most cases. Door-to-door demand responsive service is possible in places where funding and resources exist. Most often this service is used by residents 60 and older or those with a disability defined by the ADA. Demand response service requires 24-hours notice, and drivers provide door-to-door service. Aides required for additional services ride free. Passengers with special needs should inform HSA when reservations are made. The appropriate mode for the trip is determined when passenger requests demand responsive service. Unused capacity may be offered to non-E&D passengers at the fully-allocated cost of the ride if it does not interfere with service quality.

**Eligible Costs and Cost Matching**: Both capital and non-capital costs are eligible for reimbursement, but vehicle acquisitions are eligible under a separate process. VTrans follows Federal budgetary guidelines for disbursing funding. Administrative and maintenance expenses require 20% local matching funds, operating expenses require 50% local matching funds. Some state funding is appropriated for matches annually, and HSAs will not be required to provide more than 20% match. Volunteer hours may be used as non-cash matching funds. HSAs may enter into local service agreements with public transit providers which set agreed upon terms for delivering E&D transportation.

**Reports**: Agencies must provide reports on passenger counts and costs to inform RPTACs.

**Background Checks**: Drivers must complete specified background checks.

### Implications

This document is the policy foundation for E&D transportation in Vermont. Any E&D plan should conform to the guidelines laid out in this document, except when superseded by more recent policy directives.

## Human Service Transportation Coordination Plan (2014)

*Date: December 2014*

*Author: Prepared by Nelson\Nygaard for VTrans*

### Purpose

The 2014 update to the Vermont Human Service Transportation Coordination Plan (HSTCP) is the result of a series of planning activities undertaken by the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) to provide direction for future transportation coordination activities in the state. The updated HSTCP builds on the success of the 2008 HSTCP, which was developed in response to the planning requirements set forth by federal transportation grant programs. It serves as the framework for the prioritization and implementation of coordinated transportation projects seeking federal funds through applicable Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) programs.

### Summary

The overarching goal of human service transportation coordination is to expand statewide and regional capacity to provide increased mobility for transit-dependent individuals including people with disabilities, older adults, low-income residents, and others with limited access to transportation by identifying the specific needs that are being met in an inefficient way by human service agencies or are not being met at all.

**Funding:** The plan outlines federal and state funding structures for human service transportation in Vermont. Federal funds from the FTA, the Vermont Agency of Human Services Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living (DAIL), and Veterans Administration are administered by VTrans. Each of the regional public transit systems provides transportation service under contract with local human service organizations (the document provides a full list of these partnerships). Spending on human services transportation grew by 57% between 2007 and 2013 due to more available federal funding. Additional funding from federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funding for rural transportation is administered by the Vermont Department for Children and Families, and federal funding from the DHHS Administration on Aging is administered by (DAIL). Transportation for Veterans costs Vermont an unknown amount, predominantly for trips to Veterans Affairs Medical Centers.

**Target Populations and Services**: The HSTCP investigated the prevalence, location, and trend related to target populations in Vermont, including elderly, disabled, and underprivileged households. Key findings include:

* Vermont is getting older: the state had the second-oldest population in the country in 2010, and the population of individuals aged 60 and older increased by 40% from 2000.
* Poverty rose from 2000 to 2010, mostly among non-family households
* Households without a vehicle increased 3.3% from 2000 to 2010
* Persons with any type of disability were 13% of Vermont’s population in 2010, while persons with a physical disability are 6% of population

**Transportation Gaps**: Transportation gaps and issues for the state and regions were collected through several outreach efforts to residents and local experts. The plan identifies the following statewide transportation needs as priorities:

* **Critical care medical transportation**: Transportation for people with chronic medical needs can consume large portions of a region’s medical trips.
* **Inter-regional travel**: Transportation from one region to another in rural areas is often necessary to access essential services, and riders often lack knowledge of these services.
* **Resources for people who do not qualify for program funds**: Many transportation dependent residents do not qualify for human services programs and need additional resources to fill holes in their transportation needs.
* **Availability of information**:Residents are often unaware of services offered and how to use them.
* **Transportation for people who are blind and deaf**: Residents who are both blind and deaf often require specialized support services to use public transportation.
* **Substance abuse withdrawal program**: Clients of substance abuse withdrawal programs often require reliable, long-term, daily transportation to reach services. Inter-regional trips can pose difficulties, particularly for clients who need to travel with children or dependents.
* **Employment re-entry & vocational rehabilitation transportation needs**: Individuals returning from incarceration often face difficulties reaching vocational rehabilitation programs and employment opportunities.

**Solutions and Recommendations:** The 2014 HSTCP first inventories progress on recommendations from the 2008 HSTCP. Existing coordination strategies include:

* Volunteer driver programs: Vermont’s program is one of the most successful in the country.
* Mobility management programs with the White River Junction Veterans Administration Medical Center, CCTA, RCT, and a successful program using community health workers as mobility managers at the Springfield Medical Center.

Additional recommended coordination strategies include:

* **Volunteer driver recruitment and retention**: Many practical strategies for recruiting/retaining drivers.
* **Mobility management training and network**: VTrans should invest resources in helping local mobility managers improve their services.
* **Technology investments**: Peer-to-peer shared ride technology was not widespread at the time of this plan. Technology can also facilitate interoperability of systems, allowing for consolidated dispatch responsibilities.
* **Changes to the Go**! **Vermont one-click resource**: Vermont should include additional information on the Go! Vermont website about the availability of human services transportation for the full spectrum of persons in need of transportation, not just commuters.

### Implications

Federal funding and regulatory structures have changed since this plan was written and the next HSTCP should take care to examine the current federal funding landscape and the impacts of regulatory changes. In particular, the next plan should investigate the increase in demand due to Vermont’s expansion of Medicaid services under the Affordable Care Act, which took full effect in 2015. The next HSTCP should also attempt a fuller accounting of expenditures for transportation for veterans.

The HSTCP’s process for tracking the progress of recommendations of the last plan should be replicated, as it encourages continuity from plan to plan. Many demographic trends such as income are likely to have changed due to improved economic conditions, but other are likely to have continued.

Shared ride technologies were new to the transportation world in 2014, and no case studies existed for use of these platforms to provide human services transportation. The next HSTCP should investigate best practices for using private peer-to-peer ridesharing services to help meet human services transportation needs.

## Vermont State Plan on Aging Needs Assessment

*Date: December 2017*

*Author: Prepared by Kelly Melekis, MSW, Ph.D for the Dept. of Disabilities, Aging, & Independent Living*

### Purpose

This report summarizes findings from the 2017 DAIL statewide assessment of the needs of and resources for older adults in Vermont. Findings help understand the experience of aging in Vermont and contribute to the development of the next five-year state plan on aging. Data collection included 1) a survey of service providers, 2) a survey of older adults, 3) key stakeholder interviews and focus groups.

### Summary

The top three concerns voiced by older adults were: financial security (57%); health care (57%); and maintaining independence and dignity (55%)

**Transportation-related results**: Transportation is a major challenge to meeting the needs of older adults across Vermont. The most common specific resource identified as a challenge, respondents highlighted either the lack of transportation or of adequate options. In many areas of the state, “public transportation is limited” and the “walkability of our downtowns is often poor.” Further, limited access to transportation is linked to “isolation” and “limited opportunity for engagement, socialization, and stimulation.”

Mode Split: 93% of respondents drive for most local trips, 17% walk, 13% ride with someone, 8% bike, and 6% take public transportation for some of their trips. Only 2% of residents report using transportation that serve older people or persons with disabilities, and only 1% report using taxis or ride-hailing apps.

Transportation Reliability: 73% of respondents report never needing help getting transportation, 17% rarely need help, 2% need help most of the time, and 1% always need help. The most common type of trip identified as challenging were visits to family or friends (13%) or for entertainment and social events (9%). The most frequent comments and suggestions for improvements to help respondents get around were related to improved public transportation (e.g., more frequent and extended bus routes, regular and reliable service), improved access to drivers (both volunteer and paid services), and improved sidewalks and walking/bike paths.

Most respondents (65%) identified transportation a unique challenge to serving older adults in rural areas. Many respondents noted that transportation issues are exacerbated by inclement weather; winter weather, environmental conditions and temperatures can impact older adults’ ability to get out as well as providers’ ability to get to older adults living in more remote areas.

Often linked to transportation challenges, isolation was noted by 19% of respondents as a challenge/concern. Several providers highlighted connections between isolation, loneliness and depression.

### Implications

The study identifies improving transportation as the most common suggest for major improvements to programs and services for people 60 and older. The study recommends increasing the availability, accessibility, affordability, and flexibility of transportation in the state, but does not provide specific examples of improvements to be made.

Transportation solutions can play a part in alleviating many concerns older residents expressed in this survey. A number of other challenges, including isolation, social support and health care, could be positively impacted via improvements to the transportation infrastructure.

## Vermont Elders & Persons with Disability Transportation Program Review

*Date: January 2016*

*Author: Prepared by VTrans for Vermont House & Senate Committees on Transportation*

### Purpose

This study was conducted at the request of the Vermont Legislature to review the Vermont Elders and Persons with Disabilities (E&D) Transportation Program, the last comprehensive review for which was conducted in 2004. This update examined the characteristics of the current E&D Transportation Program, the gap between the current resources and the projected funding needs of the program over the next 15 years, and opportunities to improve the effectiveness of the program in providing mobility options for elders and persons with disabilities.

### Summary

This report examines the successes, challenges, and opportunities for E&D transportation in six areas, as requested by the Legislature:

**Unmet Needs**

* Continue to support the E&D Program through consistent or increased funding
* Continue to monitor how the needs of elders and persons with disabilities are being met through various transportation resources including the E&D Program, to regularly assess the role of the program and the level of funding needed.
* Increase outreach and marketing about the program to help identify the true need for E&D transportation.
* Expand Ticket to Ride Program with private contributions and to other regions.
* Expand State support through assistance in recruiting volunteer drivers and regular involvement with Regional E&D Advisory Committees.

**Service Delivery**

* Continue to support the regional service delivery model, which facilitates successful coordination between public transit and human service agency transportation services.
* Better utilize available trips and capacity (e.g., encourage more clients to use fixed route bus when feasible, coordinate more riders on volunteer driver trip, schedule trips during midday when capacity is available).
* Explore innovative service models based on peer examples of E&D transportation.
* Hold regular meetings of the statewide E&D stakeholder group to facilitate an idea exchange on successes, best practices, & lessons learned between the regions.

**Coordination Opportunities**

* Continue to support the transportation coordination efforts between the regional brokers/transit providers and the human service agency partners.
* Increase coordination of trips across regions and brokers.
* Coordinate additional trips at times when vehicles have capacity.
* Add new partners to the E&D Program where possible and appropriate.

**Local Match**

* Establish a statewide pool to share in-kind match resources
* Provide more flexibility in the sources for in-kind match (e.g., value of transportation staff and transportation services that human service agency partners provide beyond E&D services)

**Impacts of the Medicaid Waiver and NEMT**

* Continue to coordinate at State level (VTrans and AHS) to ensure coordinated regional broker model continues.
* Monitor the use of coordinated transportation resources to ensure that the increase in NEMT services does not negatively affect regional brokers' ability to provide E&D trips, in terms of vehicle capacity and funding.

**Technologies**

* Continue to implement RouteMatch system statewide and pursue best use of built-in functions.
* Continue to monitor modern ridesharing platforms (Uber, Bridj, etc.) for their potential application in rural environments; pursue pilot projects to explore these potential solutions as appropriate.
* Provide real-time information to improve the customer experience.
* Develop one source for customers to schedule rides across regions and providers.
* Establish an online ride scheduling system for partner agencies to directly schedule trips with the regional brokers.

### Implications

The E&D Program currently covers only the most basic needs such as access to critical care and medical services and shopping, most often for essentials such as food, household items, and clothing. This level of service is vital for existing users who are primarily low-income elders and residents in rural areas that would otherwise be isolated. The regional brokers and their human service agency partners have operated a constrained program for many years due to funding limitations at both the state and local levels. Service parameters have been established in every region to prioritize trip types (medical over shopping and social), limit the number of trips per individual, and/or limit the days and times of service.

Facing funding constraints and increasing demand, both the regional partners and the clients that use E&D transportation have become more creative in meeting transportation needs. Regional brokers have been able to meet the need for longer trips, particularly to critical care and medical services, by increasing the use of volunteer drivers. Human service agencies are working with clients to identify other transportation resources available to them, and a few are providing their own transportation to fill gaps in E&D service. Elders and persons with disabilities have seen a growth in the public transportation services available, and some have become eligible for Medicaid so that their medical trips are provided through NEMT.

New technologies and new types of services have changed the ways that mobility needs are met. The demographics of the E&D populations have also changed, translating into demand for different amounts and types of service. Today and through 2020 individuals in their 60s comprise the largest share of Vermont’s elder population. These young elders are staying active and working longer, which translates into decreased needs for E&D transportation in the short-term, but high projected needs – in both volume and more specialized transportation needs – in the next 10-15 years. This combination of factors helps explain an observed leveling off in demand for E&D transportation in recent years and outlines a projected increase in future needs.

## Exploring Transportation Behaviors and Needs of Veterans and People with Physical Disabilities and Mobility Constraints

*Date: June 2017*

*Author: Prepared by UVM Transportation Research Center for VTrans*

### Purpose

This report summarizes the initial phase of the Personal Transportation Plan Pilot Program (PTP3). The purpose of the PTP3 initiative is to develop a personal transportation planning tool that can be used by disabled Vermonters and Vermont veterans to match existing transportation resources with their travel needs. This study discerned stakeholder needs through focus groups and electronic surveys on transportation behavior and demographics.

### Summary

**Results for Vermonters with Disabilities**:

* **Focus Groups**: Participants expressed a preference for paratransit over fixed-route service. Many complained of unreliable pickup times and a lack of scheduling flexibility. Users find the eligibility reviews they complete every 3 years to be a bureaucratic nuisance. Bus service was lauded for low costs, consistent scheduling, and empathetic drivers. Winter conditions make accessing bus stops and waiting for the bus difficult for many users. Few public transit resources are suitable for recreational activity.
* **Surveys**: 60% of disabled Vermonters reported they could not drive a car, and 40% have no regular access to a vehicle. Only 23% of those surveyed report riding a bus either seasonally or year-round, despite 64% reporting that they can. 80% made 2-3 personal trips per month, and 49% travel for medical appointments this frequently.
* **Challenges facing Disabled Vermonters**: 51% report having walked, biked or used a wheelchair in the winter of 2014-15, but most reported obstacles associated with these modes such as snow, curbs, & stairs. 64% used on-demand transit services, with the top obstacle being return trips. Nearly half of respondents had to cancel medical appointments due to last-minute schedule changes.
* **Access to Information**: Majority of respondents had access to internet from home (67%) and mobile phones (51%).

**Results for Vermont Veterans**

* **Focus Groups**: Many veterans use Disabled American Veterans shuttles to reach VA Medical Center in White River Junction, but many complain that the shuttle requires a full day because the bus must wait for all passengers to complete appointments. Veterans noted that there is a shortfall in transportation services to primary care appointments. There is no veteran-specific transportation agency in rural areas. Case workers provide an important peer support system but cannot be relied on as a full-time transportation method. Most veterans were able-bodied enough to own a car but car ownership among this group is lower than the state average. Veterans living in shared housing can often rely on roommates for transportation.
* **Survey**: Most veteran respondents were over 65 years old and had an income of $30k or less. 50% reported being able to drive a vehicle, and 25% did not have regular access to a vehicle. 52% are at least able to take a bus with a wheelchair lift, but nearly half do not have access to a bus near their home. 71% take personal trips at least 2-3 times per month, and 59% travel for medical appointments.
* **Challenges facing Vermont Veterans**: The veterans who reported taking the bus found snow, boarding problems, and bus timing to be issues.
* **Access to Information**: Fewer than half have access to internet at home, and exactly 50% had access to mobile phones

### Implications

The main implication of this study is that scheduling issues are viewed as the largest obstacle for E&D and veteran passengers using the bus. Four of the top five obstacles to using on-demand transit services and two of the top five obstacles to riding a public bus related to schedule limitations. Though these passengers find ways to make necessary trips, the next HSTCP should focus on finding ways to improve the convenience of transit using available resources.

## Opioid Coordination Committee – Transportation Working Group Findings

*Date: May 2018*

*Author: Governor’s Opioid Coordination Council, Transportation Working Group*

### Purpose

This study represents the findings of the Recovery Transportation Working Group made up of members of VTrans and the Governor’s Opioid Coordination Council, formed to identify critical transportation needs of patients struggling with addiction that are not accessible through the existing transportation system.

### Summary

Through discussions and the data received, the identified needs (priorities) not covered by current programs are:

* Group Meetings and Therapy sessions
* Access to Recover Centers
* Access to Drug Test sites
* Medical Appointments
* Job Access (training, interviews, and initial commutes)

The Working Group estimates that transit providers could provide at least 800 – 1000 trips per month for recovery services and/or job opportunities, at an estimated cost of $20k - $25k per month

### Implications

**Recommendation from the Working Group**:

* Regional Coordination Meetings:
  + Using the Northwestern Medical Center’s successful pilot project, the working group recommends meetings between the recovery centers, the local support organizations, transit providers, and other related services to ensure eligible trips are being scheduled and all regional entities are in communication regarding demand and services.
* Seek funds for vehicles for the recovery centers and service providers:
  + These vehicles may provide the flexibility for these organizations to manage their own trips to counseling sessions, treatment, etc.
* Launch an expanded demand response program, specifically serving those in recovery and seeking job access:
  + Trips can be coordinated through recovery centers, UA sites, VR, and other pre-approved partners. This recommendation is the most comprehensive of the three recommendations, but if funding is awarded, the working group believes that it has the right program, processes, and approach to quickly institute direct and valuable service to bridge the identified gaps to a successful recovery and/or to joining the workforce.
* The working group urges all agencies and organizations directly receiving funding to help those with opioid addiction and/or job entry and access to consider applying a percentage of these funds to partially pay for additional transportation services.

## Rides to Wellness (R2W) Implementation Plan

*Date: April 2018*

*Author: Aplomb Consulting and Steadman Hill Consulting for VTrans*

### Purpose

The Rides to Wellness project being carried out by VTrans, funded by a grant from the Federal Transit Administration, focuses on two regions in Vermont which have already begun to address the need for transportation access to healthcare – Mt. Ascutney & St. Johnsbury. The purpose of the program is to improve health outcomes for vulnerable populations and reduce the use of emergency services by providing more reliable transportation for program participants. The program is focused on people who miss medical appointments because of transportation barriers, and those who do not seek care in the first place because they perceive barriers to be insurmountable.

### Summary

Constituencies affected by this plan include customers, Rides to Wellness “Champions” such as health care providers, and Vermont 2-1-1. Vermont 2-1-1 is intended as an entry point to refer people to appropriate transportation or health resources. The plan calls for Roadmap to guide key constituencies, particularly 2-1-1 operators and health care providers in the availability of transportation resources.

### Implications

The R2W may provide an interesting template for improving the flexibility of paratransit services to meet customer needs, especially last-minute changes in schedule. The results of the R2W pilot program collected by Steadman Hill will be an important resource for identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the R2W to determine if the program is successful enough to establish statewide.