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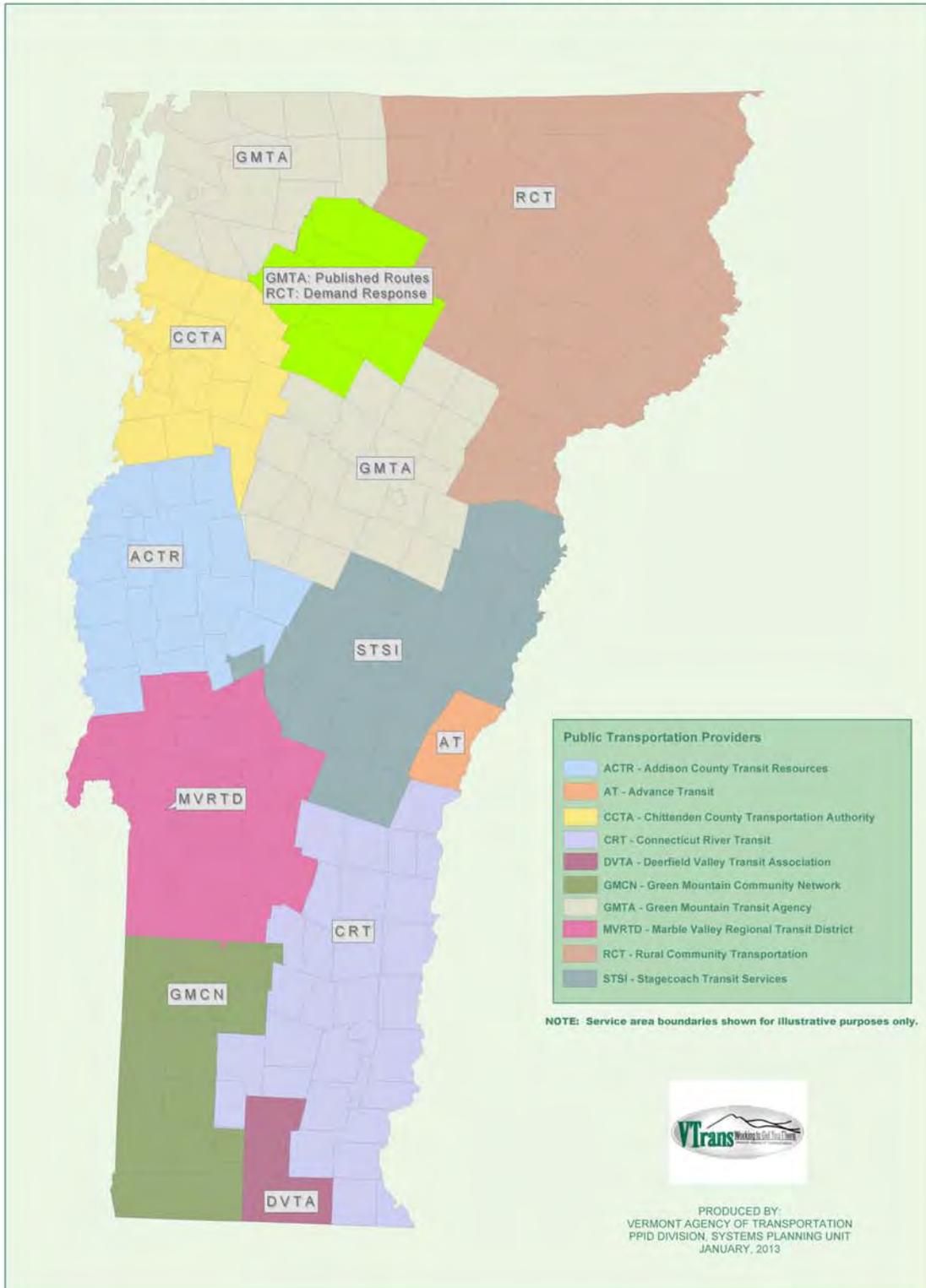
Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans)
Public Transit Route Performance Reviews
Annual Report for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2012

To the Vermont Legislature General Assembly
Pursuant to 24 V.S.A. Section 5092

January, 2013

Shown in Figure 1, the service areas of Vermont's public transit providers remain the same as in the SFY 2011 report.

Figure 1: Service Areas of Vermont's Public Transportation Providers



KEY OF VERMONT TRANSIT SYSTEMS

ACTR	Addison County Transit Resources
AT	Advance Transit
CCTA	Chittenden County Transportation Authority
CRT	Connecticut River Transit (dba The Current)
DVTA	Deerfield Valley Transit Association
GMCN	Green Mountain Community Network, Inc.
GMTA	Green Mountain Transit Agency
MVRTD	Marble Valley Regional Transit District
RCT	Rural Community Transportation, Inc.
STSI	Stagecoach Transportation Services, Inc.
VABVI	Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The annual Public Transit Route Performance Report presents the results of performance evaluations for public transit services across Vermont. Vermont's public transit program is managed by VTrans. This report helps to ensure that public investment in transit is well spent by regularly conducting transit performance evaluations as required by 24 V.S.A. Section 5092.

Public transit routes from the ten public transit providers throughout the State are grouped in like categories, and performance measures are applied to assess the productivity of the routes in terms of ridership and the cost effectiveness in terms of cost per ride provided. Industry standard measures mirroring, and in some categories utilizing, National Transit Database information are used to objectively assess the relative success of each route.

Policy regarding underperforming routes is established in the most recent Vermont Public Transit Policy Plan (2012). Routes that are shown to be underperforming through the analysis in this report become the subject of discussion between VTrans and the subject public transit provider. VTrans works proactively with the public transit provider to determine what, if any, strategies may result in increased performance for the route. This may include, but is not limited to, determining if the route is more appropriately categorized in a different service category, adjusting run times, eliminating unproductive stops, and so forth. If the route continues to underperform for a period of 6 months after modifications are made, VTrans may redirect funding from that route to another more productive existing route, either within the same transit provider's system, or elsewhere in the State. Alternative approaches to providing traditional transit service on underperforming routes may also include targeted outreach through the GoVermont program, including information on carpooling and ridesharing, and possible VTrans sponsorship of a vanpool.

Only a very few routes out of the dozens statewide show sustained underperformance. Those routes include one Small Town route, one Rural Commuter route, and one Tourism route. Many routes are showing outstanding performance, in particular some of the Commuter routes serving Burlington and Montpelier, Small Town and Express Commuter routes in the Upper Valley region, and Tourism routes in the Deerfield Valley and Mad River Valley regions. Additionally, some routes that had performance issues in previous years have shown improvement in this reporting period, including Small Town routes in Bennington and Rural service in Morrisville.

VTrans Public Transit staff is already working with providers to address performance issues identified in this report and looks forward to continuing positive relationships with the public transit providers throughout the State, both in addressing these routes and in continuing to grow a robust, efficient statewide public transit network.

INTRODUCTION

Developed annually for the State Legislature, this report presents the results of performance evaluations for public transit services across Vermont. The Public Transit Section of the Vermont Agency of Transportation's Policy, Planning, and Intermodal Development (PPAID) Division is responsible for managing the State's Public Transit Program. The Public Transit Section helps to ensure that public investment in transit is well spent by regularly conducting transit performance evaluations as required by 24 V.S.A. Section 5092.

The 2012 update of the Vermont Public Transit Policy Plan (PTPP) outlined performance monitoring policies that guided the development of this report. The primary changes in this year's transit performance evaluations included:

- A new "Rural Commuter" service category was introduced. In recent years, Vermont's public transit providers have introduced several new routes that have characteristics of both Rural and Commuter services. In an effort to ensure fair comparisons of truly like-routes, those routes previously categorized as Rural as well as those previously considered Commuter were reviewed and relocated to a new Rural Commuter category where appropriate. The intent of this change was to ensure a reasonable, fair context within which to assess the performance of all of the routes in these categories.
- Consistent with and as part of the change above, the category previously known as "Commuter" was renamed to "Express Commuter" in SFY 2012 to distinguish it from Rural Commuter routes. The routes in the Express Commuter category primarily have one-directional ridership (for instance, most riders travel *to* the City in the morning peak period and *from* the City in the evening peak period), among other characteristics included in the definition below. The noted exception was CCTA's Montpelier LINK Express, which has strong bi-directional ridership.
- Local transit funding levels were assessed in an effort to measure success in meeting the State's goal of 20% local share. This performance measure was reported at the statewide level, rather than by transit provider, due to data limitations. The Public Transit Section intends to improve budget data collection for next year's performance evaluation.

TRANSIT SERVICE CATEGORIES

The service categories below are the same as in past reports with one significant change in this year's report: the addition of a Rural Commuter category. The previous Commuter category has been revised to Express Commuter and its definition updated accordingly.

- 1) **Urban:** Routes operating primarily in an urbanized area with all-day, year-round service. The city served by the route has a population of at least 17,500 people and high-density development.
- 2) **Small Town:** Routes operating in towns with 7,500 to 17,500 people with all-day, year-round service. The route typically stays within one town or two adjoining towns, and does not run through long stretches of rural areas.
- 3) **Demand Response:** Primarily service that does not operate on a fixed schedule nor on a fixed route; also includes routes that are “rural” in nature but operate less than once a day (i.e., service operates only once a week or a few times a month).
- 4) **Rural:** Routes operating in towns with fewer than 7,500 people or connecting two small towns running through undeveloped areas. These routes operate year-round with all-day service, but the frequency may be low (more than one hour between trips).
- 5) **Rural Commuter:** Routes that are similar to the Rural category above, but operate primarily during peak commute periods. These routes usually connect several small towns or villages with intermediate stops, travel on state routes (rather than interstates), and some provide weekend service to connect outlying areas to the nearby city or town center.
- 6) **Express Commuter:** Routes that operate primarily during peak commute periods and often include express segments. These routes are characterized by one-directional ridership, longer route lengths, and service to cities or towns with more than 7,500 people. These routes primarily travel on interstates and provide limited stops, often serving park and ride lots and major employers (rather than other local destinations).
- 7) **Tourism:** Seasonal routes that serve a specific tourist trip generator, such as a ski area.
- 8) **Volunteer Driver:** Services provided by volunteer drivers who use their own vehicles, donate their time to transport riders, and receive reimbursement for mileage at the federal rate.

Vermont Performance Data Sources

The data sources for Vermont transit services were similar to last year’s report, including Section 5311 – Rural Transit Program Monthly Service Indicator Reports (SIRs)¹, separate data from the transit providers on volunteer driver trips, and route statistics directly from CCTA.

Data used to analyze the statewide percentage of local share came from the transit providers’ FY 2012 budgets as provided in their annual combined application for operating assistance to VTrans. Per guidelines in the 2012 update of the PTPP, the transit providers’ local funding must come from sources other than the Federal Transit Administration, the Federal Highway

¹ Monthly data were available for SFY 2012, July 2011 through June 2012.

Administration, and the State, and cannot include State funding for capital, Rideshare, RTAP, JARC, or Medicaid.

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The Public Transit Section evaluates Vermont's transit services by their productivity and cost-effectiveness. This year's performance evaluation also examined, at the statewide level, the transit providers' success in meeting the State's goal of 20% local funding for transit services.

Methodology for Developing Performance Standards

The approach for developing performance standards to evaluate Vermont's transit services was very similar to last year's methodology. The most recent National Transit Database (NTD) data available were used to develop performance benchmarks for the Urban, Small Town, Demand Response, Rural, and Tourism service categories. At the time that this report was developed, the 2011 Urban NTD and the 2010 Rural NTD were the most up-to-date data sources available. Performance benchmarks for the Express Commuter and Volunteer Driver categories were again based on Vermont averages. Benchmarks for the new Rural Commuter category were also based on Vermont averages, as this type of service is more specific than the service categories available through the Rural NTD. Similar to last year, the performance thresholds for Vermont's Tourism services incorporated both Rural NTD data and data collected directly from several Tourism peers.

Following the same methodology as recent performance evaluations, the "Successful" standard for each service category was the peer average² (whether based on peer data from the NTD or Vermont's internal average). The only exception was for Volunteer Trips, where 80% of the peer average was considered the Successful standard, per guidelines in the 2012 PTPP. For all the service categories, the "Acceptable" standard was set at half the Successful threshold in measuring productivity, and twice the Successful threshold in measuring cost-effectiveness.

The local share measure only had a Successful standard – whether the transit providers collectively met the State's target of 20% local funding. Table 1 displays the performance standards developed using this year's methodology, along with last year's performance standards.

² The peer average of each performance measure was calculated as the average of the performance measures for all the peer systems (i.e., three peer systems had values X, Y, and Z for their boardings per hour and the peer average was calculated as the average of X, Y, and Z); rather than summing the values for all the peer systems and then calculating the measure (i.e., summing the boardings for all peer systems and summing the revenue hours for all systems, and then calculating total boardings divided by total hours).

Table 1: Comparison of SFY 2011 and SFY 2012 Performance Standards

Service Category	"Successful" Productivity Standard		Effectiveness Standard (cost/passenger)		"Successful" Local Share Standard
	2011	2012	2011	2012	New in 2012
Urban	1.67 boardings/mile	1.45 boardings/mile	\$4.20	\$4.81	20% (evaluated on a statewide basis)
Small Town	9.06 boardings/hour	9.06 boardings/hour	\$7.80	\$7.80	
Demand Response	3.81 boardings/hour	3.81 boardings/hour	\$14.04	\$14.04	
Tourism	16.97 boardings/hour	16.96 boardings/hour	\$4.85	\$4.85	
Rural	6.25 boardings/hour	6.25 boardings/hour	\$14.66	\$14.66	
Rural Commuter	--	7.48 boardings/hour	--	\$11.20	
Express Commuter	8.8 boardings/trip*	18.12 boardings/trip**	\$15.30*	\$12.14**	
Volunteer Driver	n/a	n/a	\$3.11	\$3.63	

*Performance standard for Commuter category in SFY 2011.

**Performance standard for category revised to Express Commuter in SFY 2012.

The standards remain largely the same for the Small Town, Demand Response, Tourism, and Rural categories because new Rural NTD data was not available at the time that this report was developed. The new Rural Commuter category also prompted a revision of the previous Commuter category, now called Express Commuter. The routes in the Express Commuter category are a subset of the previous Commuter category, and their different service characteristics such as longer route lengths and more express segments are reflected in the higher performance standards.

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION RESULTS

The next section of the report includes graphs depicting the performance data for all transit services in Vermont. Graphs 1 – 7 depict the SFY 2012 productivity data per service category, and Graphs 8 – 15 display the SFY 2012 cost-effectiveness data per service category. The standard for Successful services, defined for each service category, is shown on each graph as a green line, while the standard for Acceptable services is shown as a red line. New transit services, which are still being funded through the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) program, are distinguished by hash-marked fill in the graphs. The transit services are also shown in colors representing the different transit providers.

Most of Vermont’s transit services met the Acceptable performance standards set by peer systems. Those services that were underperforming or have improved since the last report are highlighted below.

Underperforming Routes/Services

The 2012 update of the PTPP included a policy recommendation to enforce and accelerate the discontinuation of State/federal funding to underperforming services (those not meeting the Acceptable thresholds for two consecutive years). Table 2 outlines Vermont’s underperforming services, and FY 2012 is actually the third consecutive year that these three routes have underperformed in productivity. It should be noted that the GMCN Blue and MVRTD Ludlow routes have improved since FY 2011, but still fall just under the Acceptable thresholds for their service categories. MVRTD’s Ludlow Route also faced higher standards as a Rural Commuter service this year, compared to its categorization as Rural last year.

Table 2: Underperforming Services

<i>Service Category</i>	Route	Underperformed in:	
		Productivity	Cost-Effectiveness
Small Town	GMCN: Blue*	X	
Tourism	GMTA: Valley Floor	X	
Rural Commuter	MVRTD: Ludlow Route	X	

*Performance has continued to improve since the end of FY 2012, and the route is poised to meet Acceptable standards in FY 2013.

Additional services to monitor for productivity, where FY 2012 is the first year they have not met acceptable standards, are CRT’s Okemo route (for productivity), RCT’s new Jay-Lyn Express (both measures), and STSI’s 89er North (both measures). It is worth noting that some of these services faced higher performance thresholds this year in the Rural Commuter and Express Commuter categories. Services to monitor for cost-effectiveness, where FY 2012 is the first year they have not met acceptable standards, are ACTR’s demand response services, GMTA’s Snowcap and Valley Floor routes, and MVRTD’s volunteer driver services.

Improved Routes/Services

Table 3 includes services that did not meet the Acceptable threshold in SFY 2011, but improved over the year to meet at least the Acceptable standard in SFY 2012.

Table 3: Improved Services

<i>Service Category</i>	Route	Underperformed in SFY 2011 and Improved in SFY 2012:	
		Productivity	Cost-Effectiveness
Small Town	GMCN: Green (Saturday)	X	
Demand Response	CCTA	X	
Demand Response	RCT	X	X
Rural	GMTA: Morrisville Loop	X	
Rural Commuter	MVRTD: Manchester Route (Rt. 7 South)	X	
Express Commuter	CCTA: Milton Commuter (CMAQ Y3)	X	

The ridership on CCTA's Milton Commuter has improved 17% in the past year; however, another reason that the productivity looks better this year is because only the peak direction trips were included in the calculation to better reflect the one-directional nature of the ridership (though the route does operate revenue service in both directions).

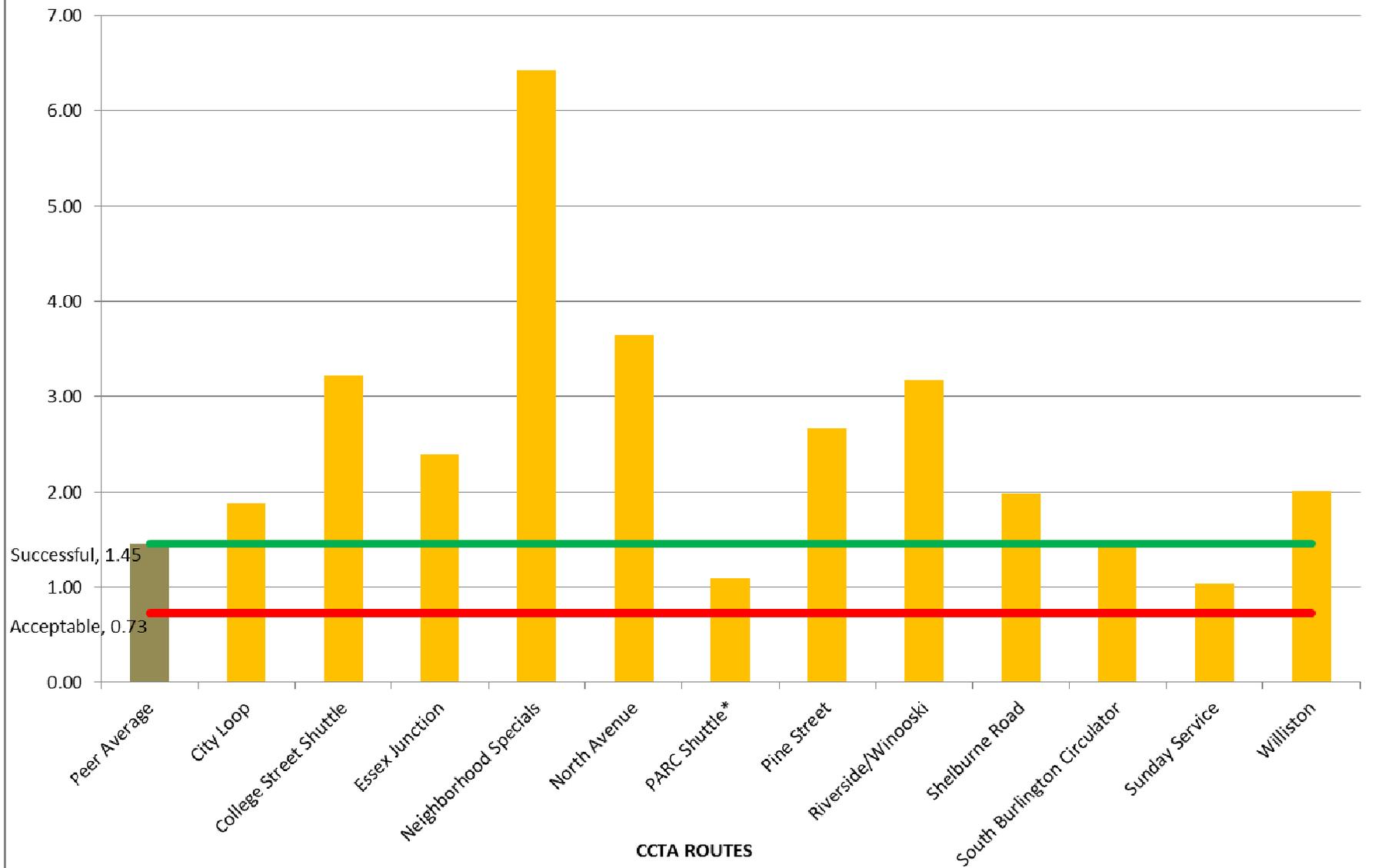
Local Share

This performance measure relates to the State's goal that local communities demonstrate a financial commitment to public transit. Local share refers to the percentage of transit expenses that are *not* covered by the Federal Transit Administration, the Federal Highway Administration, or the State (and excludes State funding for capital, Rideshare, RTAP, JARC, and Medicaid). Potential local sources of revenue include fares; advertising; contributions from municipalities, universities/colleges, businesses, or tourism destinations such as ski resorts; contracts for service provided to private agencies; in-kind donations; local tax revenues; sale of assets such as old buses; and the transit system's general fund.

The 2012 update of the PTPP recommended reinstating the monitoring of the 20% local funding target. SFY 2012 is the first year in the recent past that this performance measure has been formally evaluated. Due to limitations in individual transit provider budget data, this performance measure was evaluated on a statewide basis for SFY 2012. Graph 16 depicts the results of the local share analysis, which found that 30% of transit funding statewide (excluding Medicaid transportation) is derived from local sources. Vermont's transit providers are exceeding the State's 20% local funding goal.

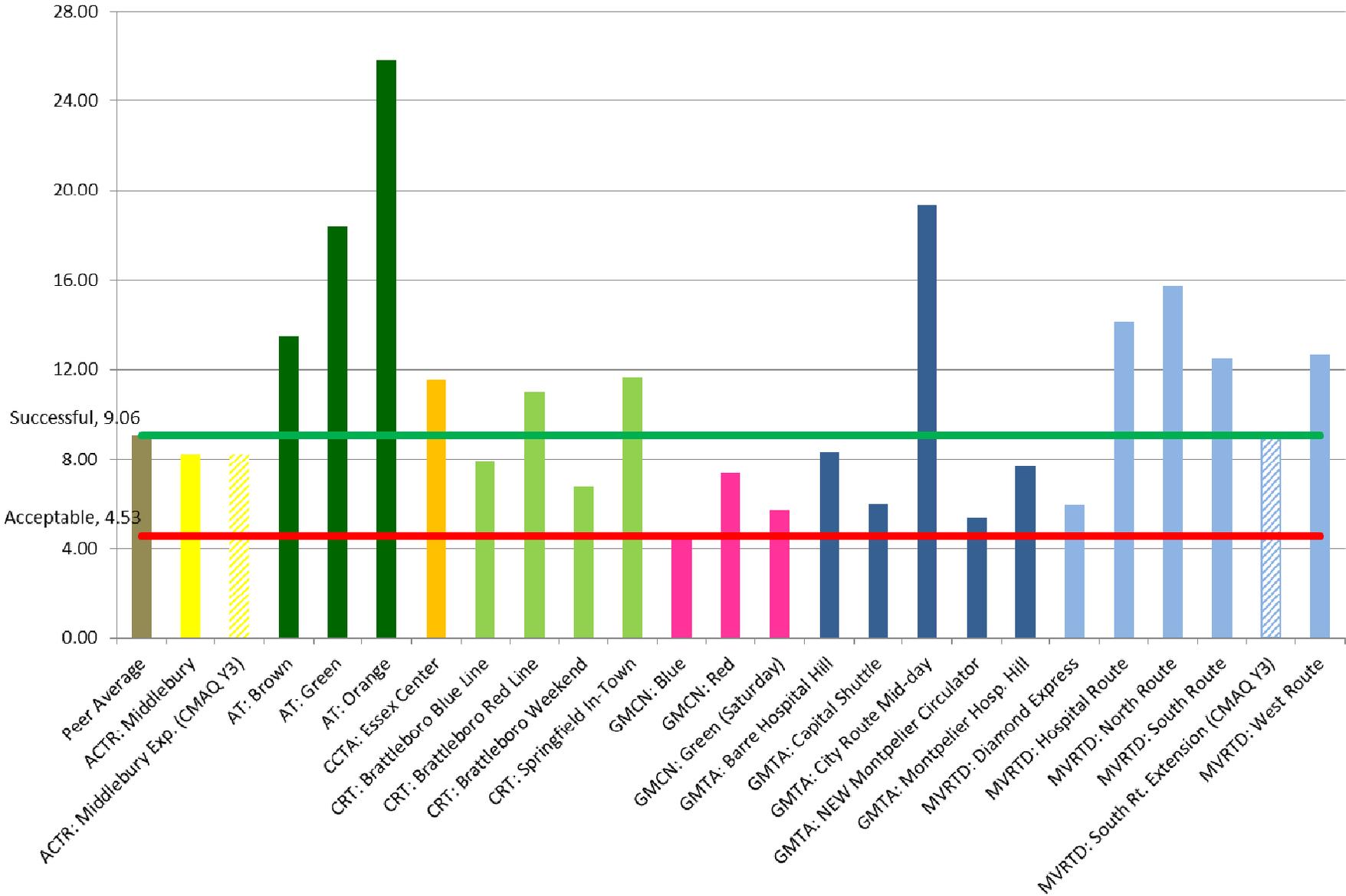
PRODUCTIVITY PERFORMANCE BY SERVICE CATEGORY

Graph #1: 2012 Urban Boardings per Mile

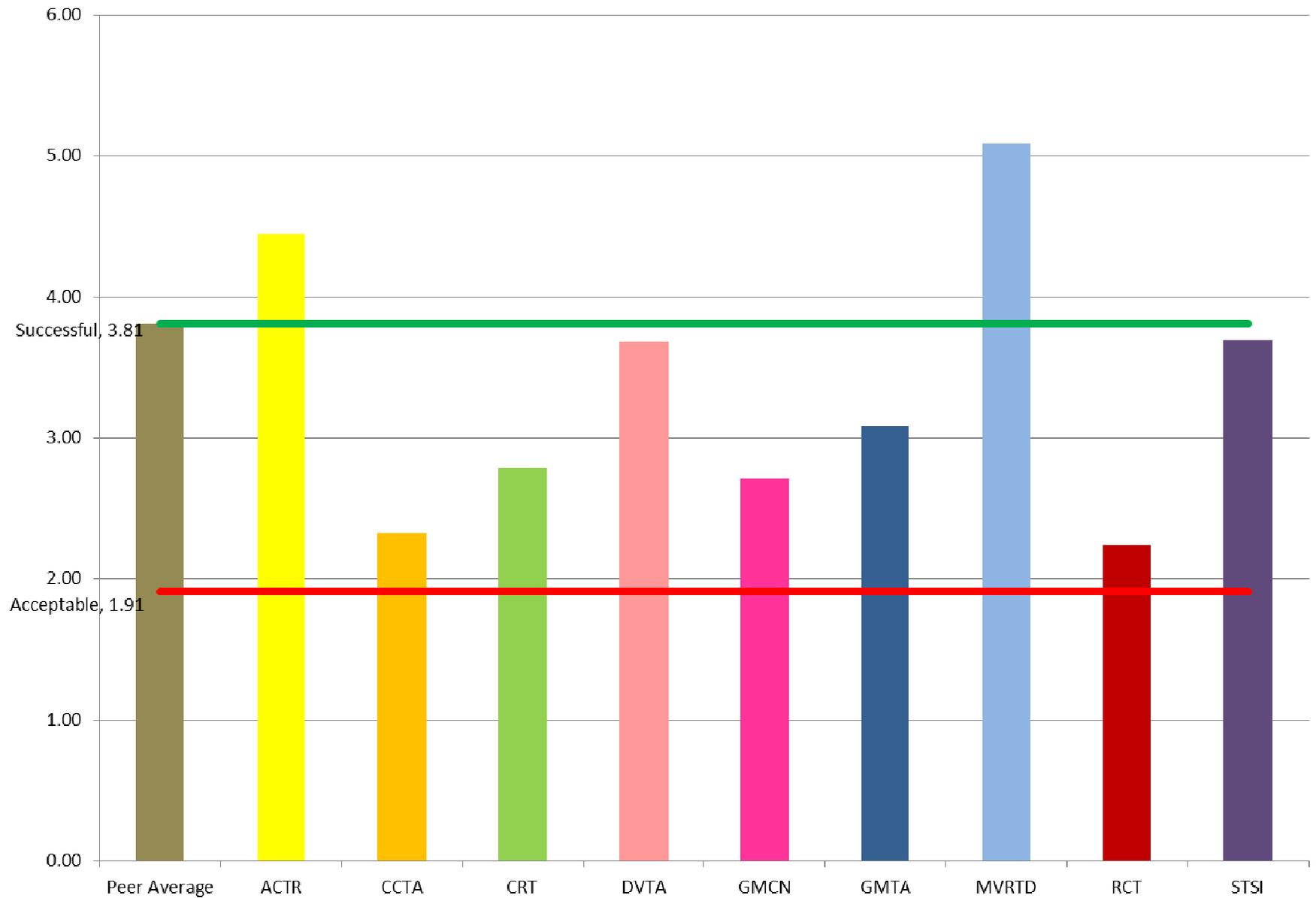


*Route terminated effective June 30, 2012 per CCTA Board directive.

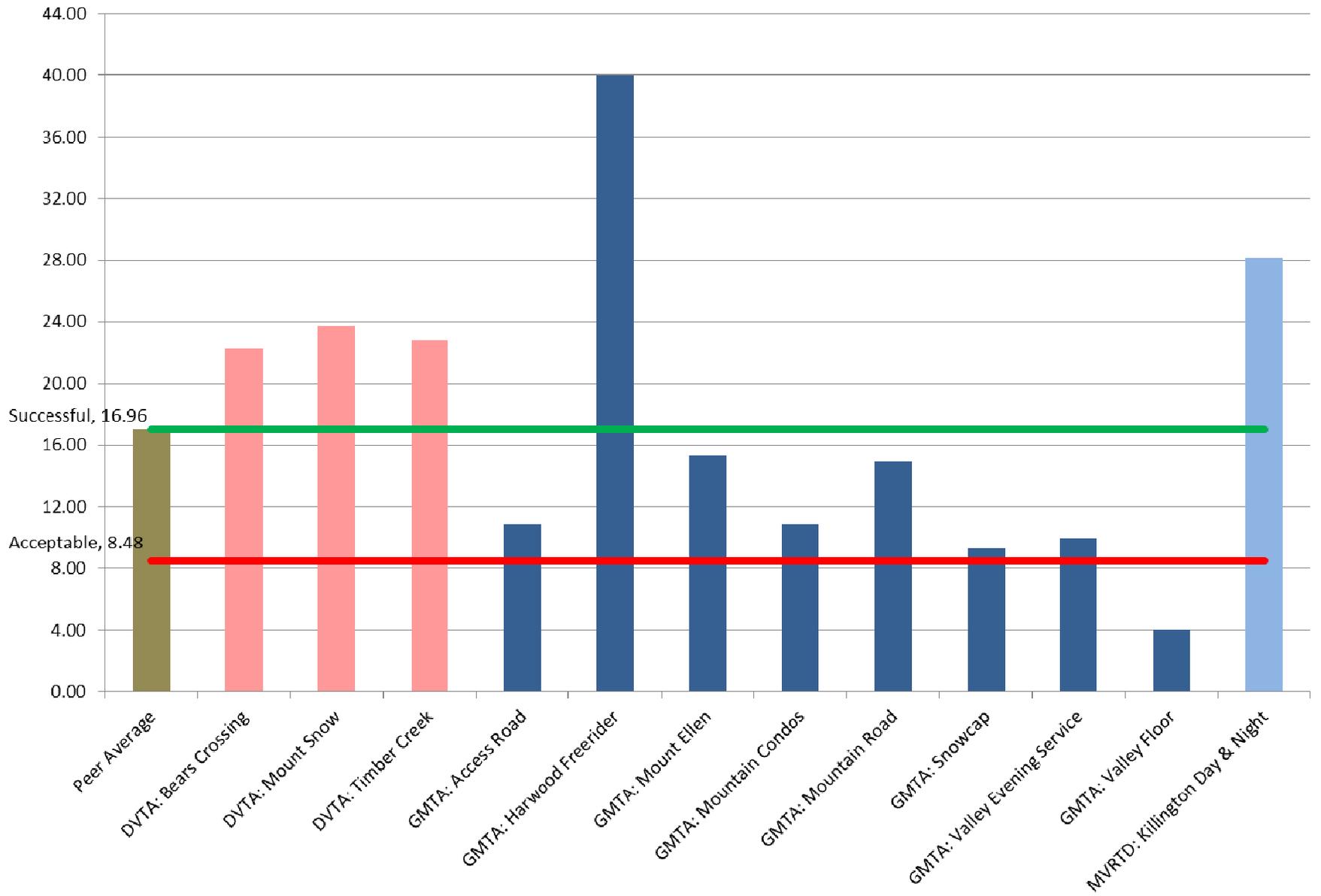
Graph #2: 2012 Small Town Boardings per Hour



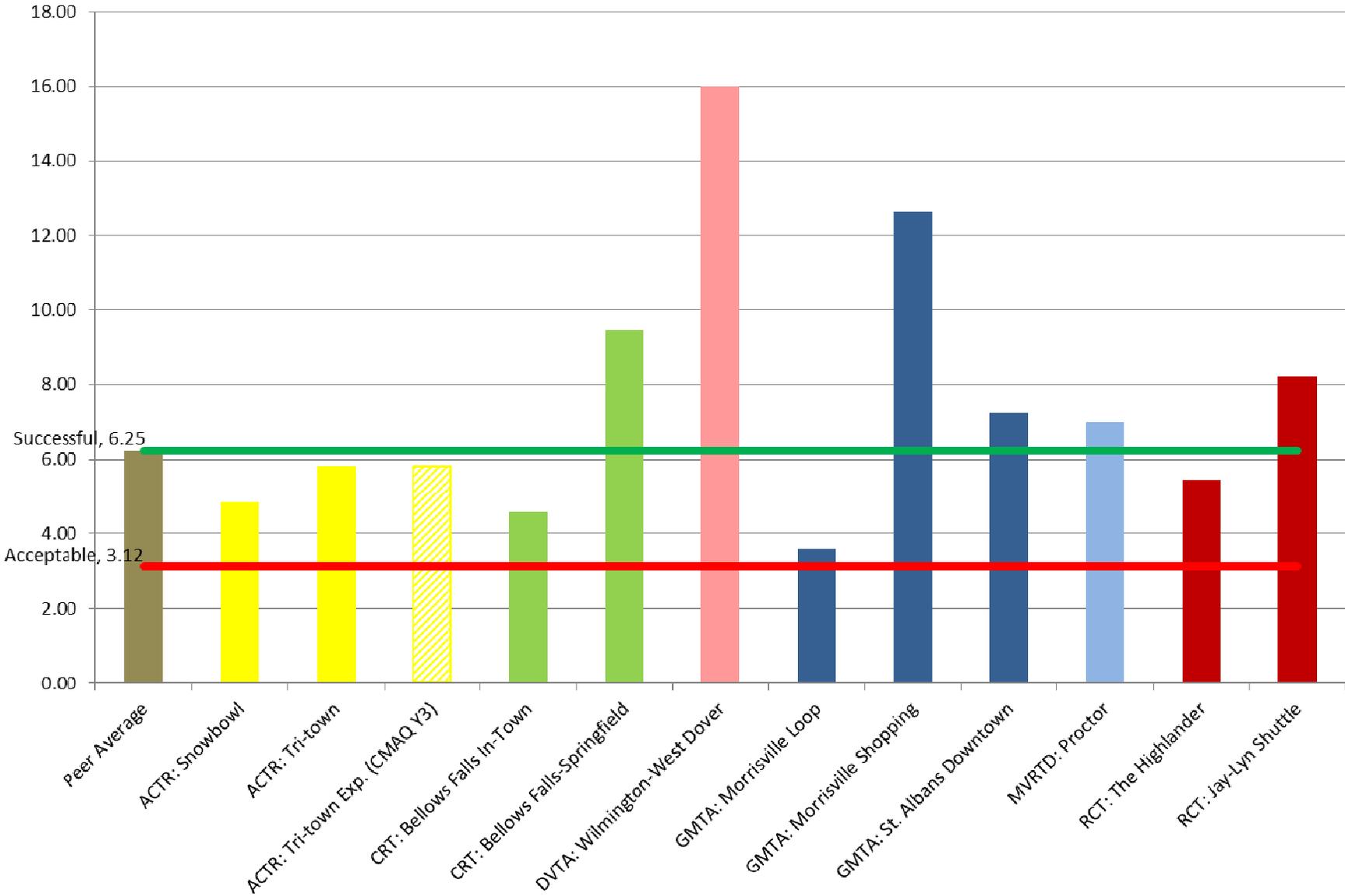
Graph #3: 2012 Demand Response Boardings per Hour



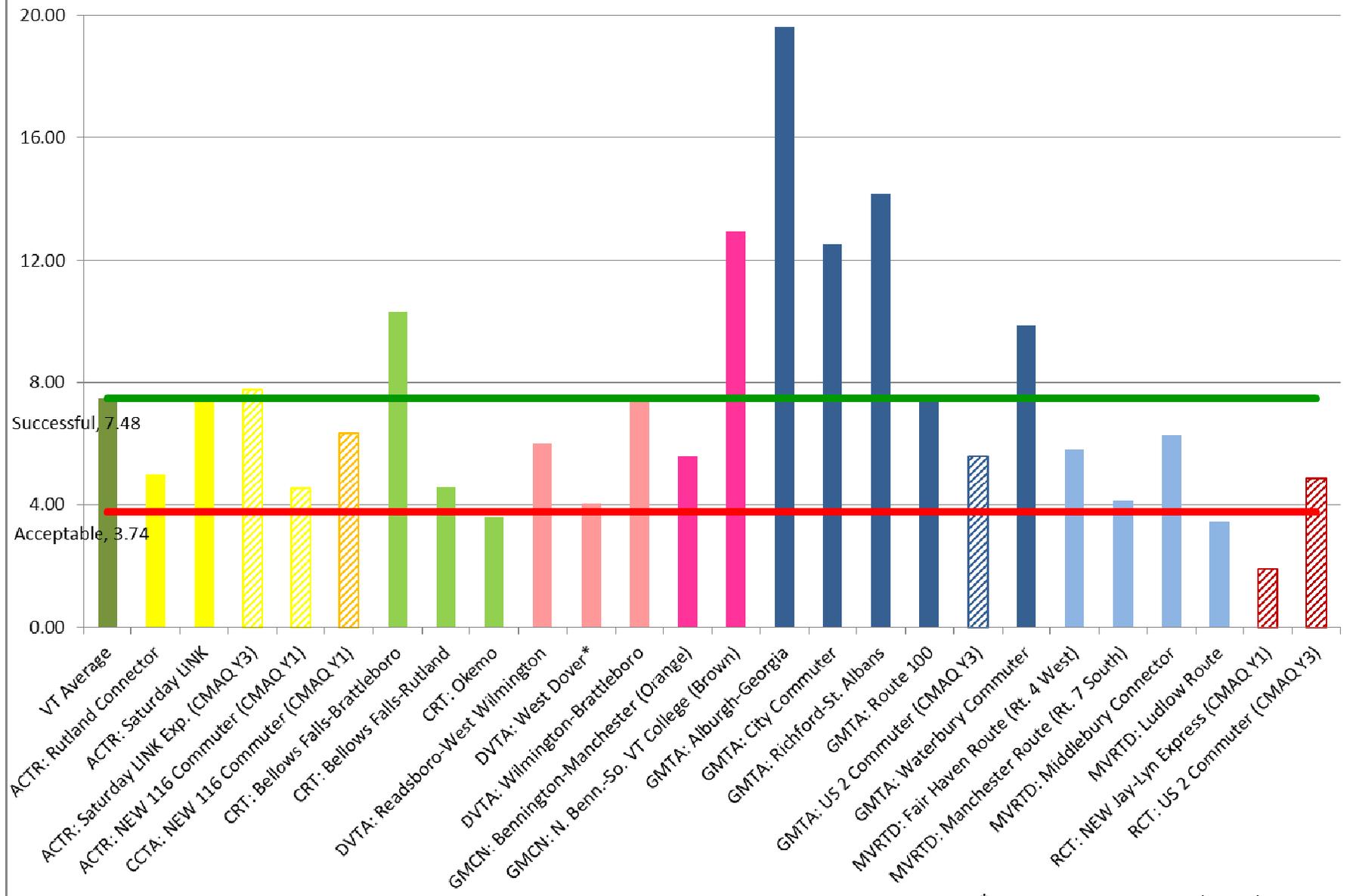
Graph #4: 2012 Tourism Boardings per Hour



Graph #5: 2012 Rural Boardings per Hour

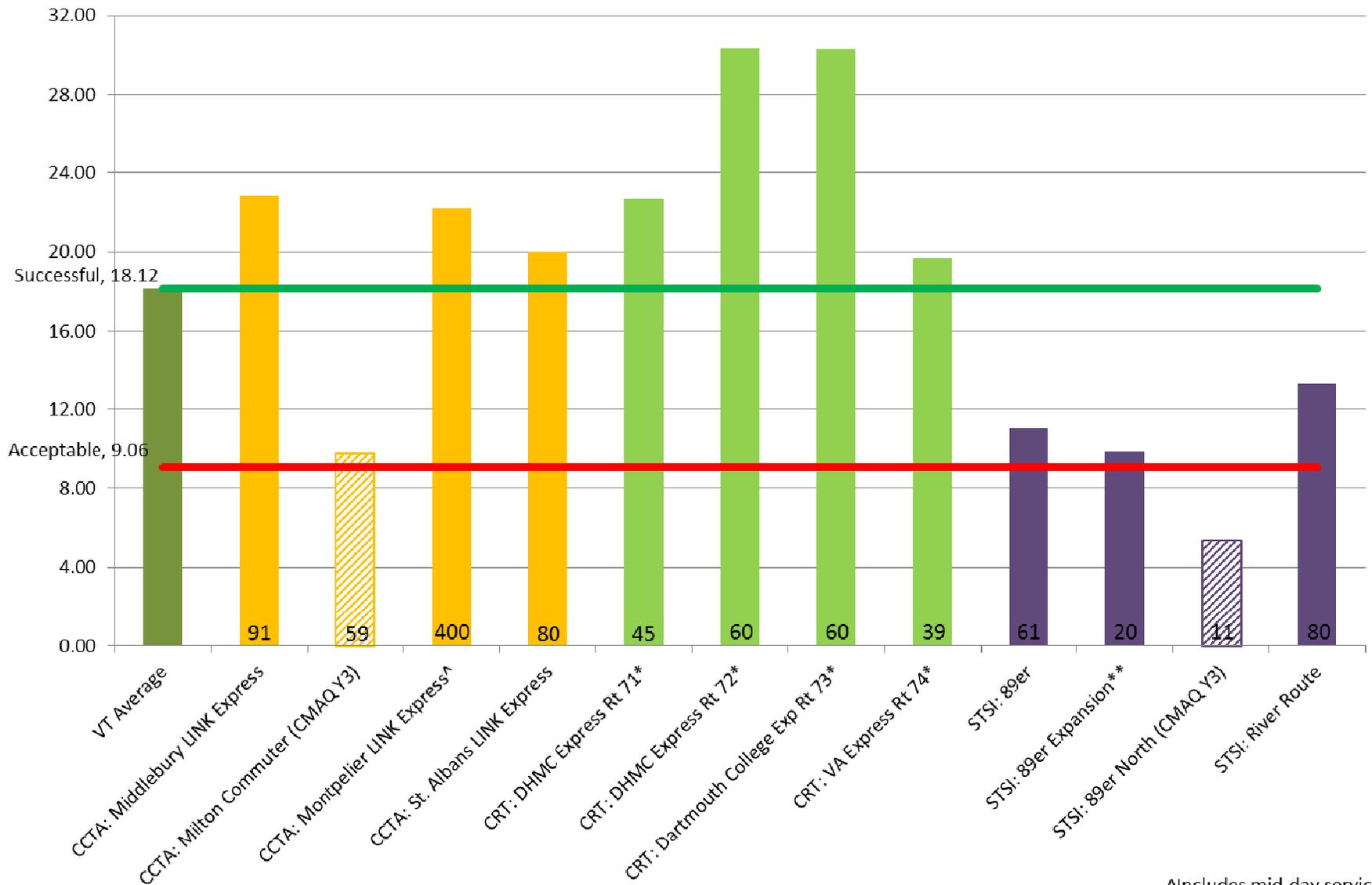


Graph #6: 2012 Rural Commuter Boardings per Hour



*Same as East Dover route in previous reports.

Graph #7: 2012 Express Commuter Boardings per Trip

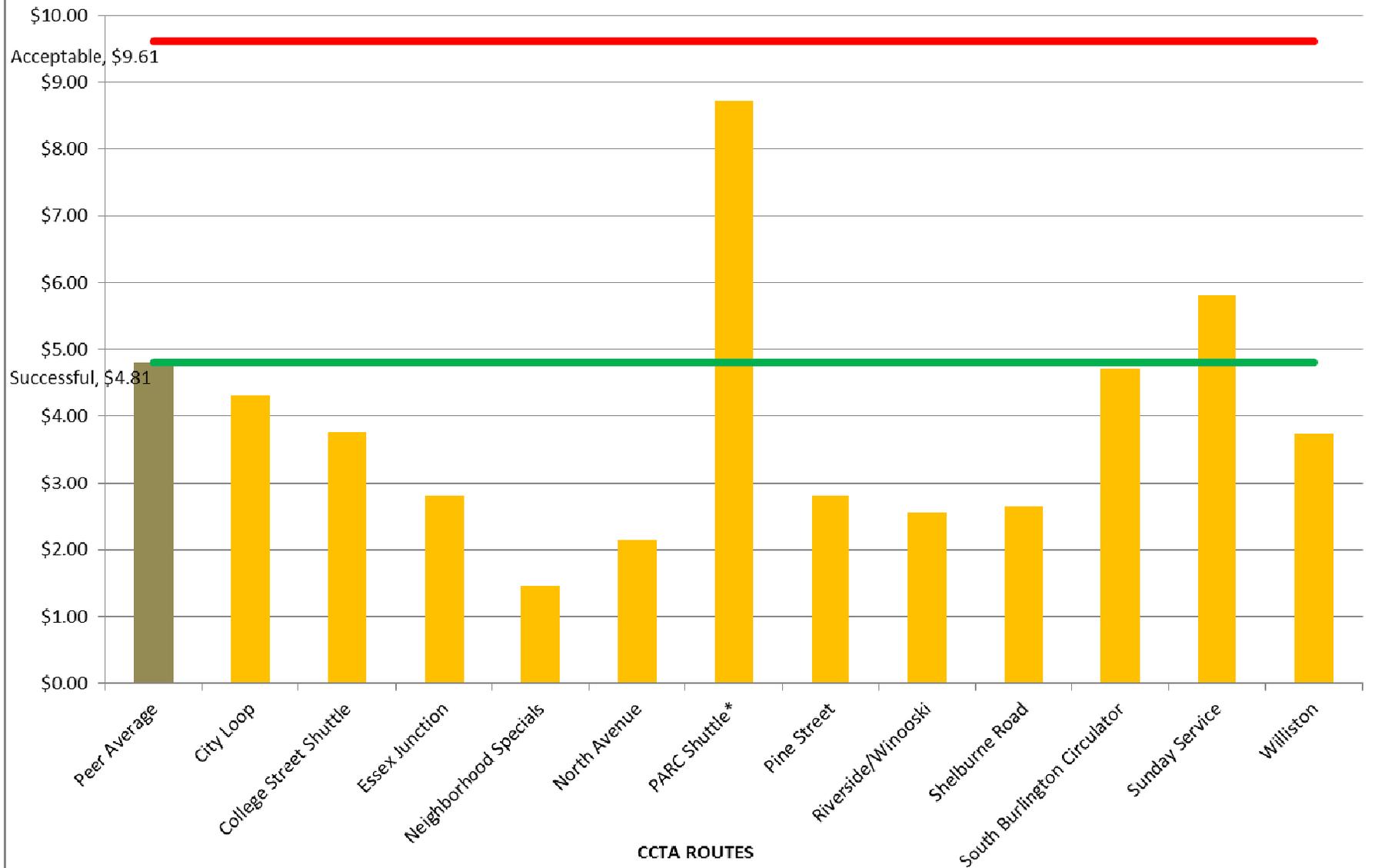


Note: The numbers at the bottom of the bars indicate the routes' FY 2012 average daily ridership.

*Includes mid-day service
 *CRT: The Upper Valley routes are shown separately this year.
 **STSI: The 89er Expansion was incorporated into the 89er starting October 2011.

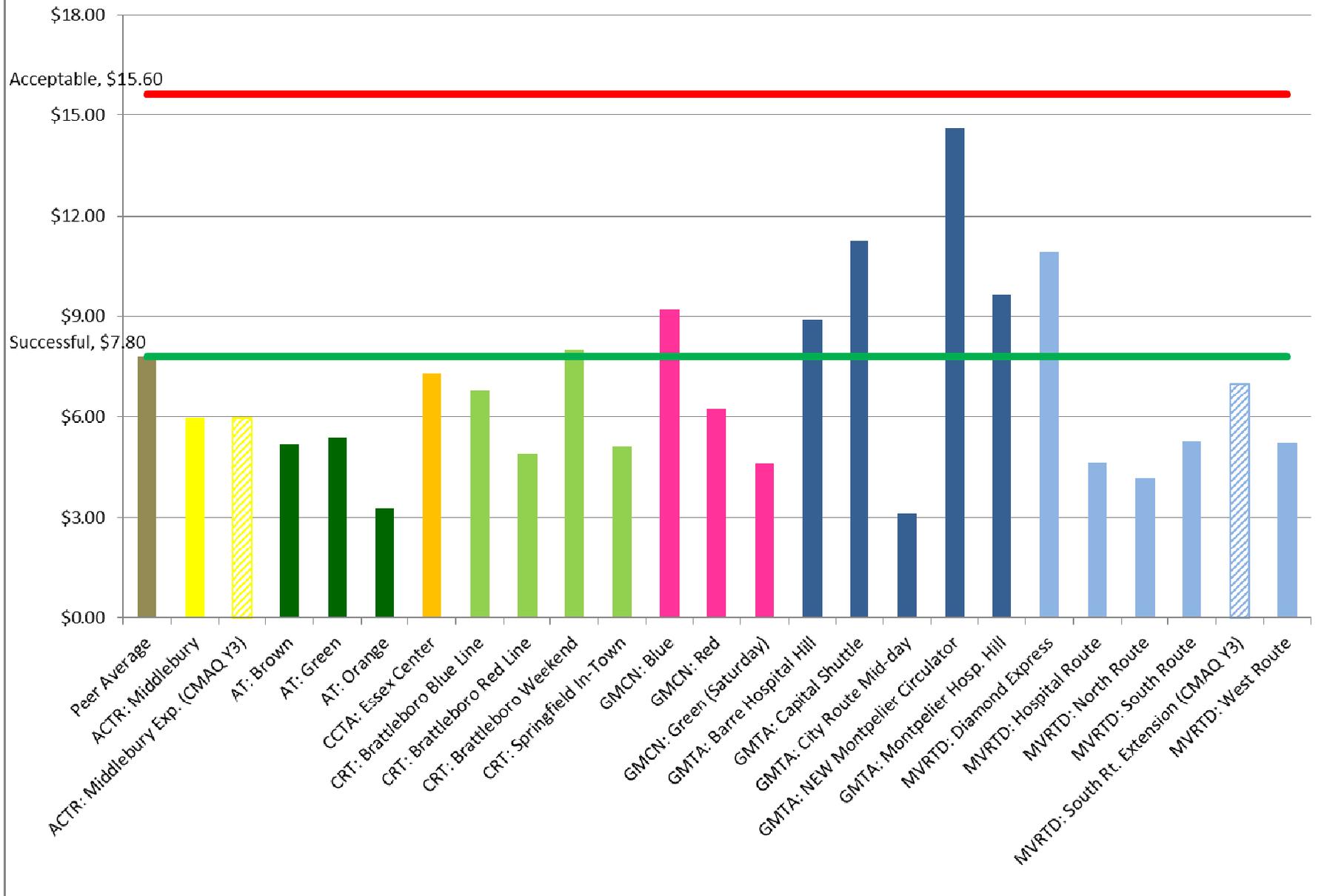
**COST-EFFECTIVENESS PERFORMANCE
BY SERVICE CATEGORY**

Graph #8: 2012 Urban Cost per Passenger

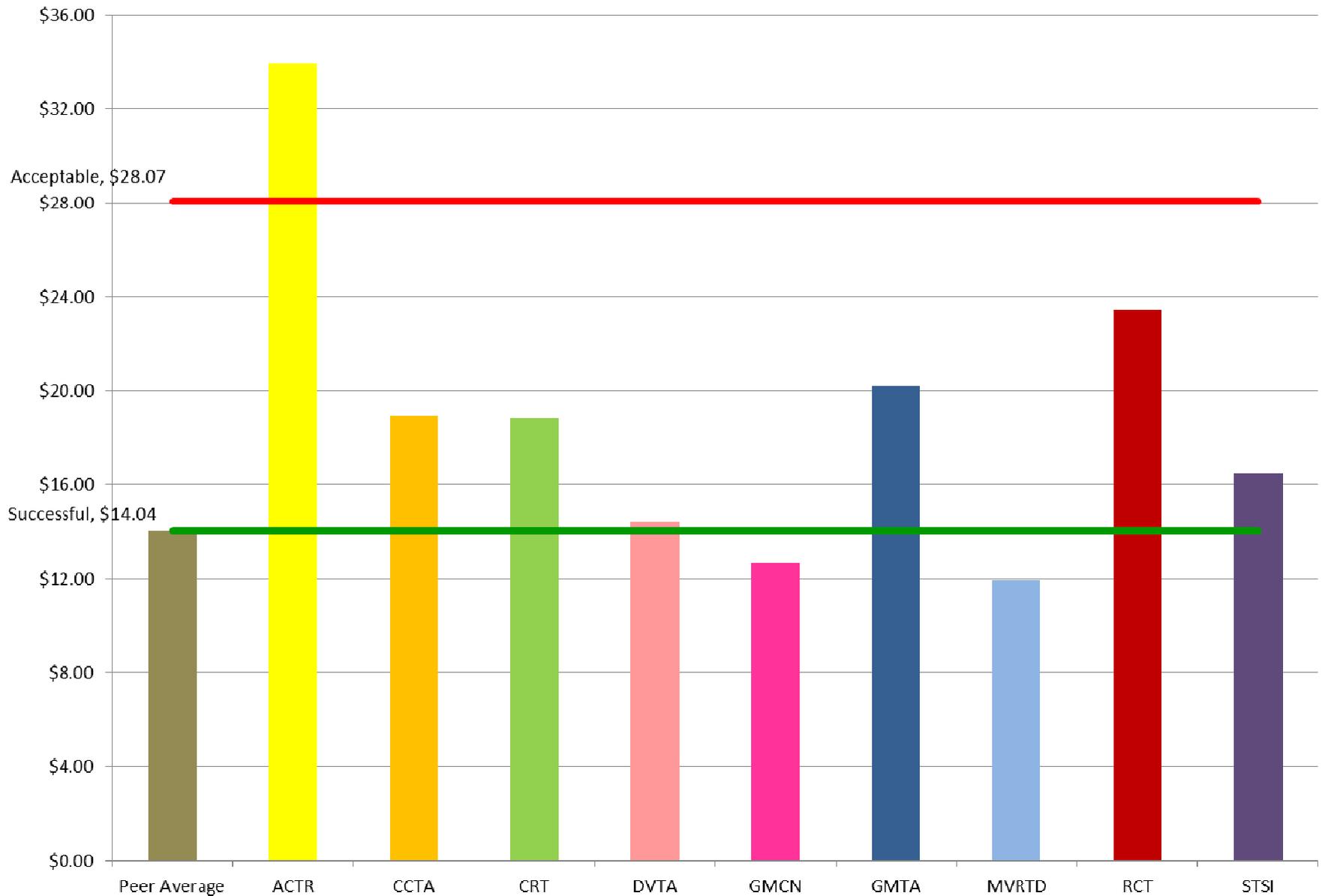


*Route terminated effective June 30, 2012 per CCTA Board directive.

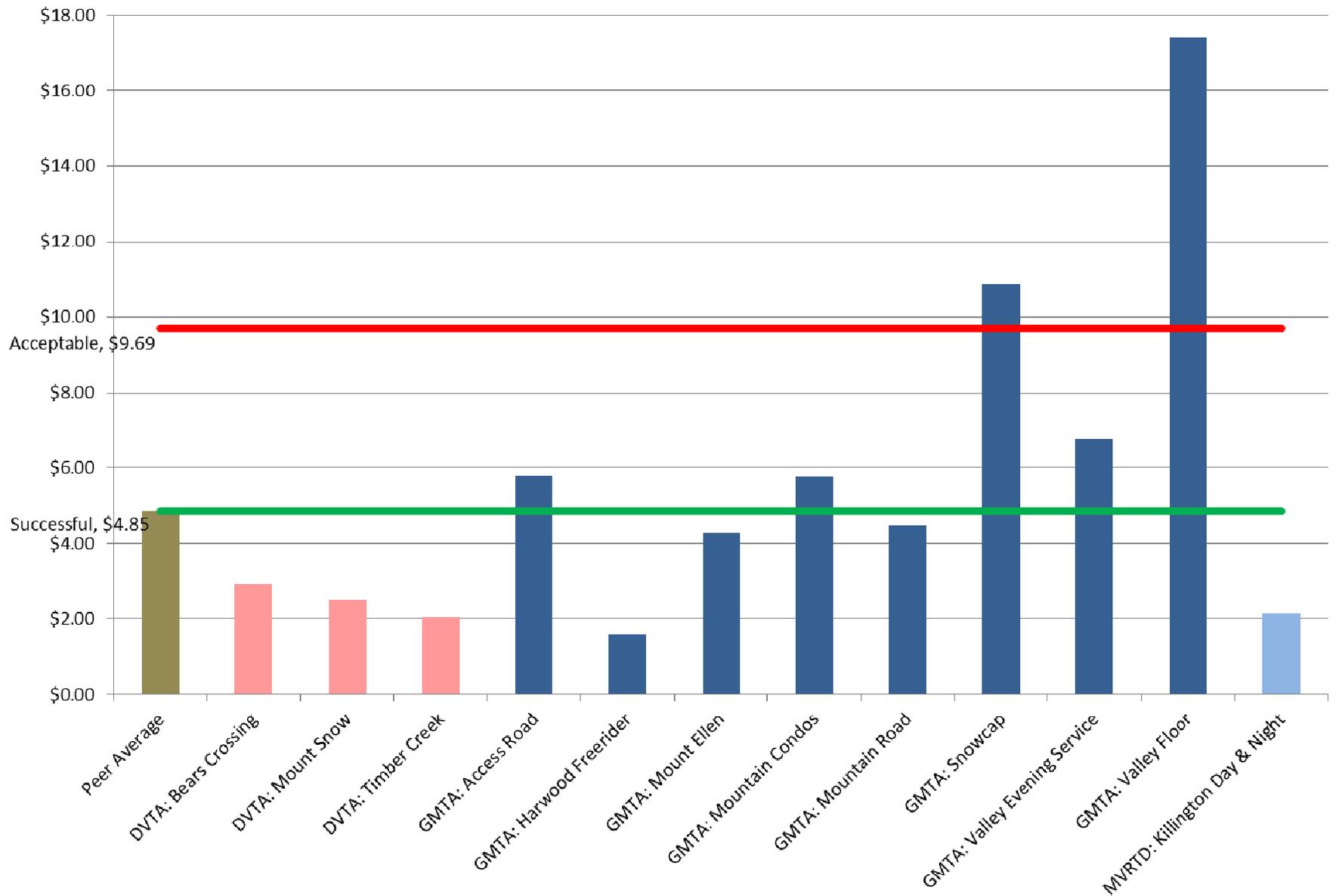
Graph #9: 2012 Small Town Cost per Passenger



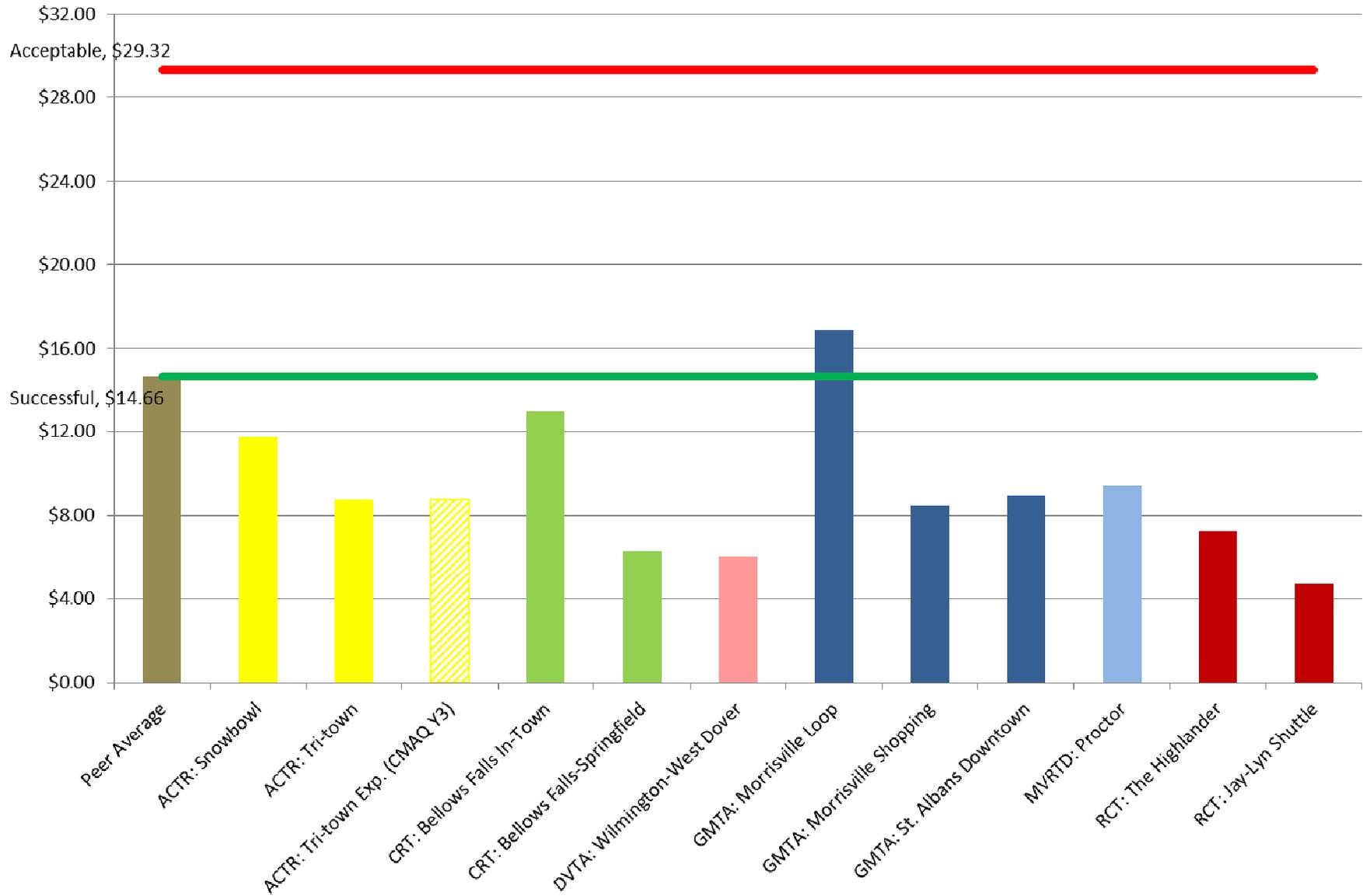
Graph #10: 2012 Demand Response Cost per Passenger



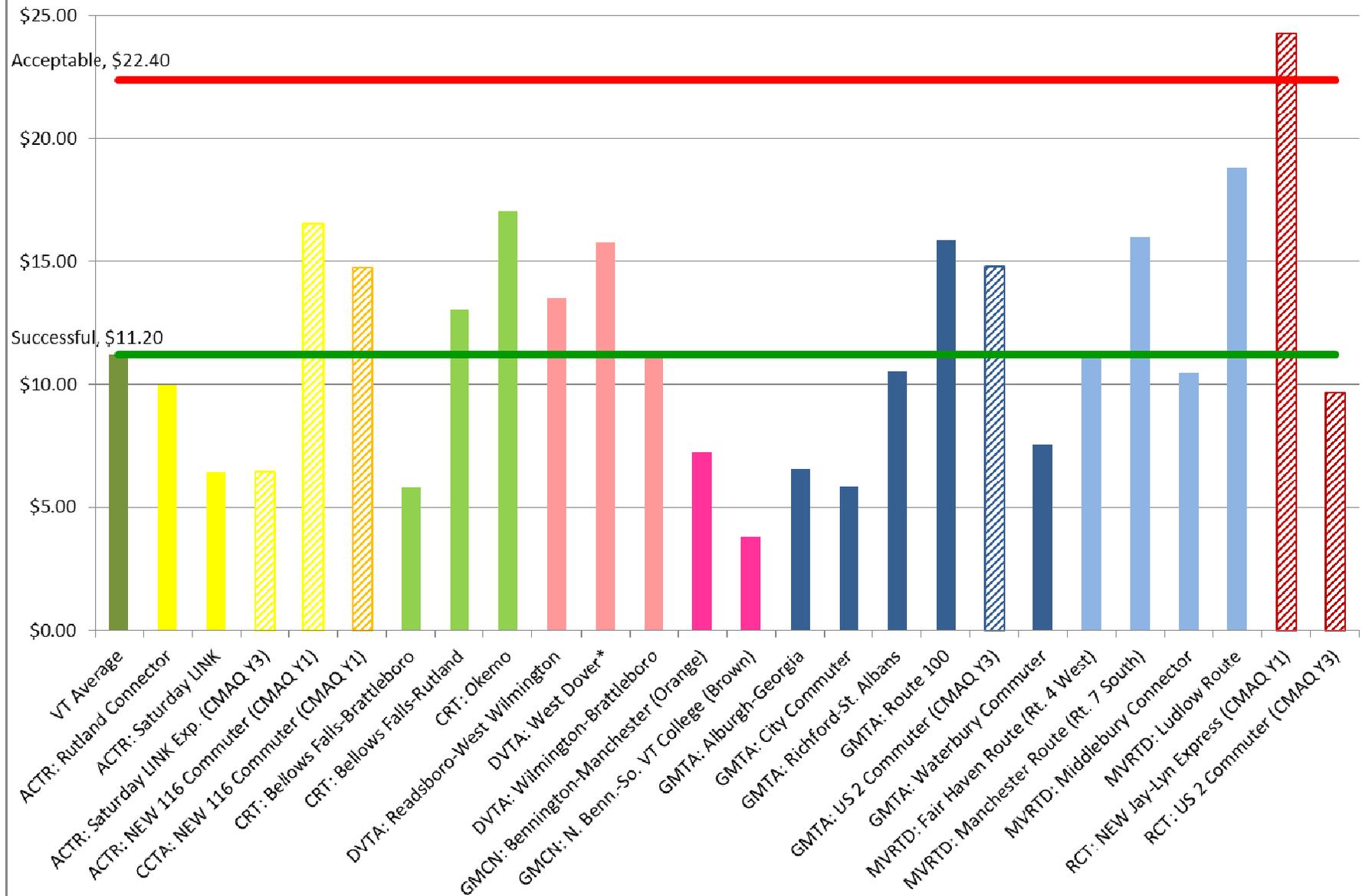
Graph #11: 2012 Tourism Cost per Passenger



Graph #12: 2012 Rural Cost per Passenger

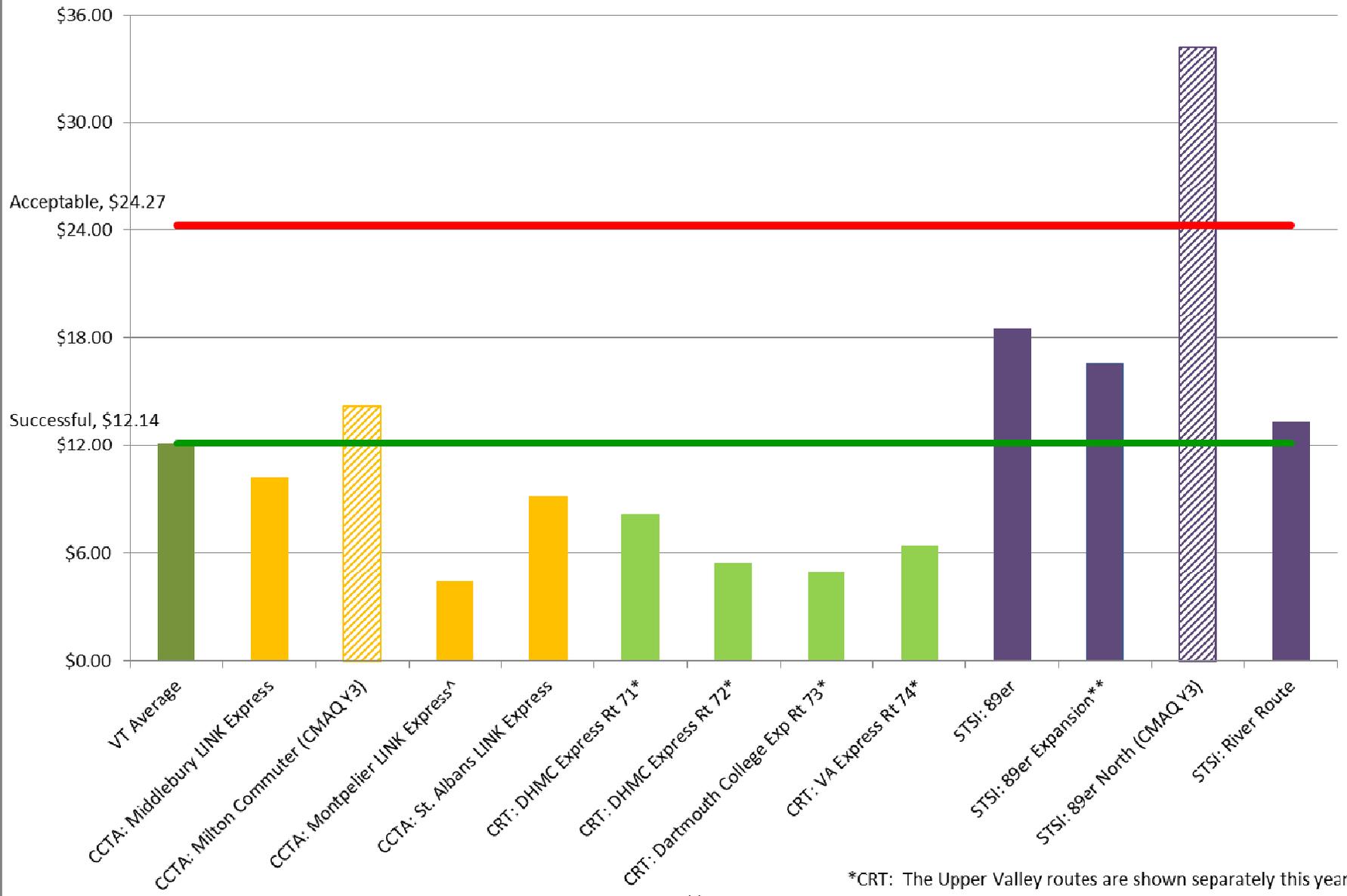


Graph #13: 2012 Rural Commuter Cost per Passenger



*Same as East Dover route in previous reports.

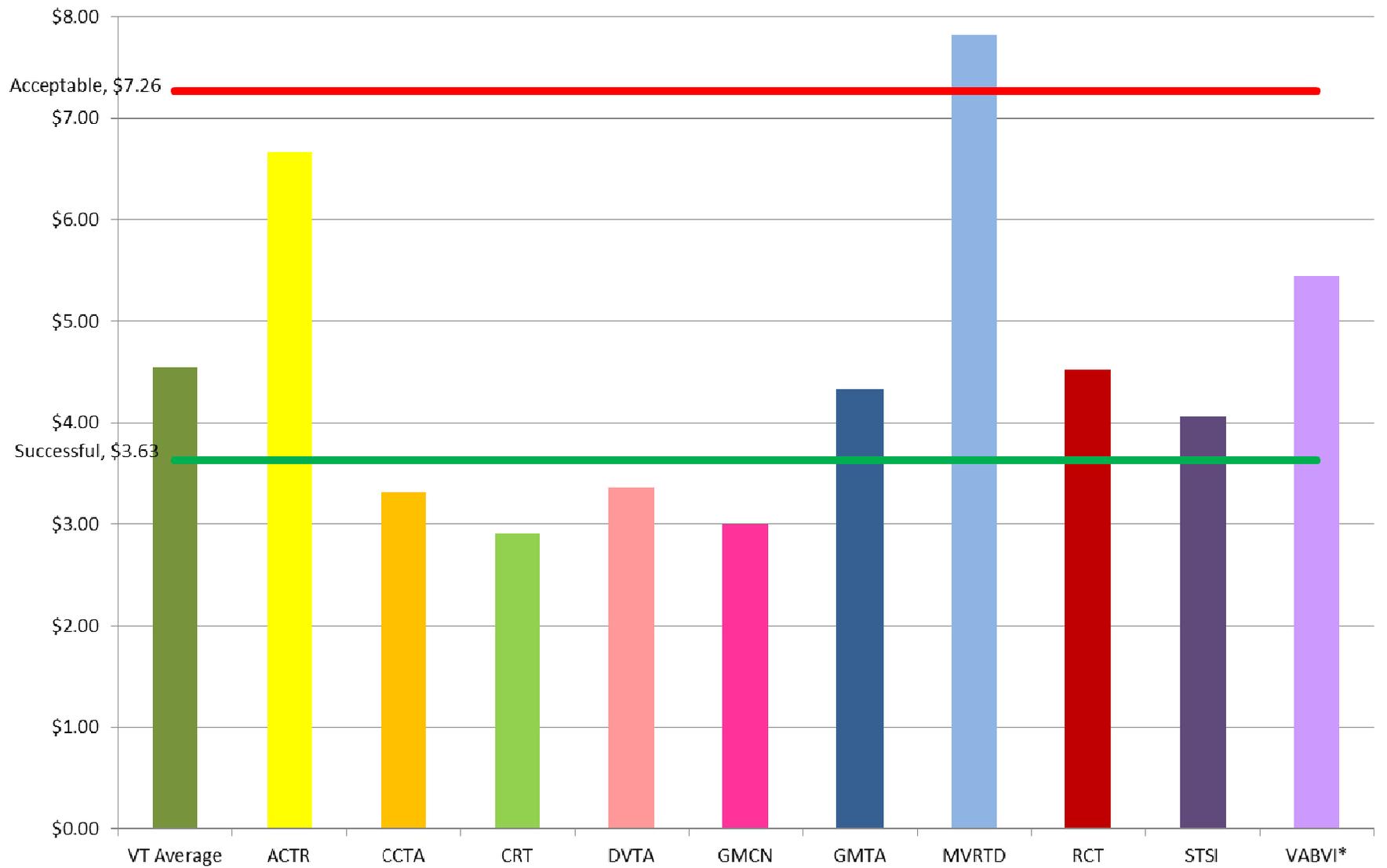
Graph #14: 2012 Express Commuter Cost per Passenger



[^]Includes mid-day service.

*CRT: The Upper Valley routes are shown separately this year.
 **STSI: The 89er Expansion was incorporated into the 89er starting October 2011.

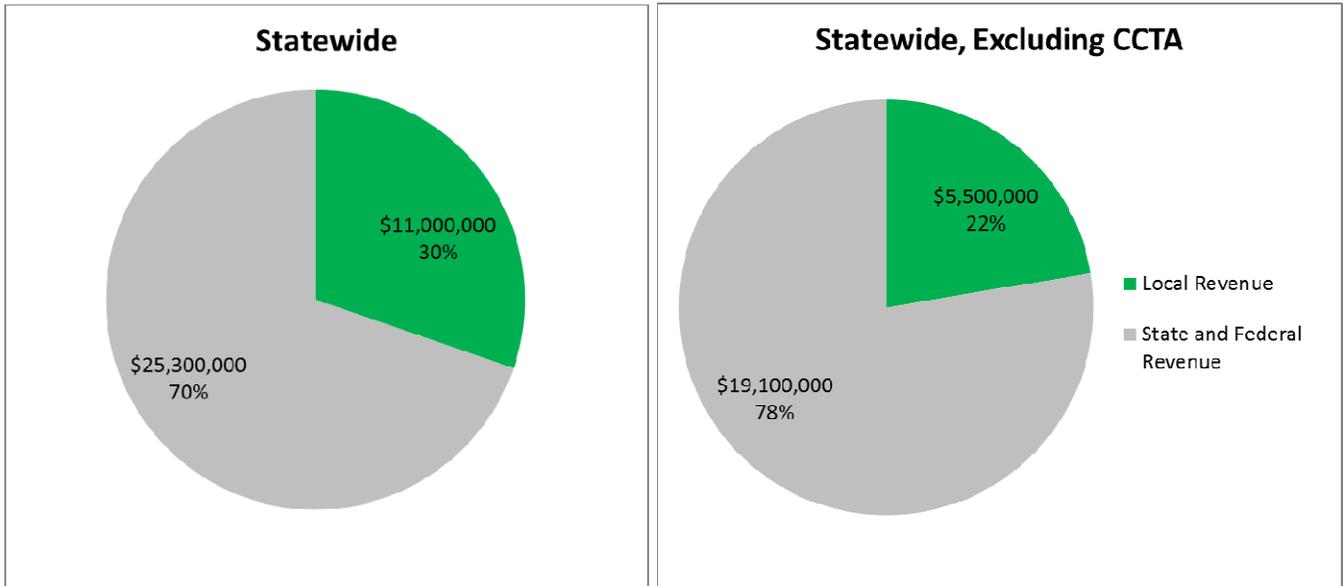
Graph #15: 2012 Administrative Cost per Volunteer Trip



*VABVI is the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

LOCAL SHARE PERFORMANCE

Graph #16: 2012 Local Share of Total Transit Budget*



*Local share was calculated as a percentage of local revenue out of total revenue, excluding Medicaid revenue. Data source: Transit providers' FY 2012 budgets as provided in their annual combined application for operating assistance to VTrans.