Future of Rural Transit

Project Overview
Prepare Vermont to have the most efficient, equitable, and cost-effective rural transportation system in the US
Expand transportation options for rural communities by offering combined bus services to schools and community members using electric buses.
Project Partners

• Steering committee:
  • Jennifer Wallace-Brodeur (VEIC)
  • Cara Robechek (EAN)
  • Linda McGinnis (EAN)
  • Peggy O’Neill-Vivanco (VT CCC)
  • Chris Damiani (Green Mountain Transit)
  • Dan Currier and Ross McDonald (AOT/Go VT)
  • Mariah Keagy (VEEP)

• Advisory committee includes individuals from: GMP, AARP, VCIL, Vital Communities, VNRC, VSA, VBSR, VPPSA, DPS, WCSU, TRORC, NWRPC, CEL
What’s Happened So Far

• Partners have been meeting for over a year
  • Investigated past studies and projects
  • Outreach to key stakeholders
• EAN Summit Pitch – selected for funding and staff support
• Selected to receive a Mobility and Transportation Innovations grant from VTrans
Goals for 2021

• Engage state, regional and local stakeholders
• Learn from existing combined service in Burlington
• Explore opportunities to combine service in Montpelier through request based, flexible schedule, flexible route service
• Identify rural region to analyze costs and benefits and test concept with community members
• Develop a pilot program
• Secure funding and pilot location for 2022
2021 Project Action Plan: Cost-Benefit Analysis

- Based on 2-3 specific rural areas and associated routes within one community/region
- Evaluate opportunities to expand school and public transit trips to meet more needs
- Quantify savings from fleet consolidation and EV adoption
- Quantify energy, emissions reductions and health benefits
- Quantify savings to Medicaid, school district, others?
- Assess labor impacts
- Determine if routes can be served by electric buses and charging needs
2021 Project Action Plan: Pilot Program Design

- Deploy electric buses (cutaways) to serve 1-2 rural school systems and surrounding communities
- Secure funding to purchase buses and charging equipment
- Community engagement to identify and address concerns and build support
- Develop plans to collect data and evaluate the project
- Develop pilot metrics and methodology to track metrics
# Project Partnership Needs: Analysis & Pilot

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transit Provider</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Community &amp; Employers</th>
<th>Utility</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Ultimate goal: Sponsor new route(s)</td>
<td>- Buy-in from Administration, (school board?) and Staff</td>
<td>- Provide input on community and employee transportation needs</td>
<td>- Provide utility data needed for research</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Buy-in from Leadership &amp; Staff</td>
<td>- Provide fleet operational data and transportation budget</td>
<td>- Solicit input on combined transportation services</td>
<td>- Support transit provider with battery electric bus planning and facility upgrades</td>
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<td>- Interest and ability to support electric buses</td>
<td>- Identify routes to analyze</td>
<td>- Support from Contractor (if applicable)</td>
<td>- Assist with Vehicle-to-Grid planning</td>
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<td>- Provide fleet operational data and budget</td>
<td>- Support from Contractor (if applicable)</td>
<td>- Assist with engaging parents, students</td>
<td>- Assist with vehicle-to-grid planning</td>
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<td>- Identify routes to analyze</td>
<td>- Coordinate with school district/supervisory union</td>
<td>- Coordinate with transit provider</td>
<td>- Assist with Engagement partners and project team</td>
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<td>- Coordinate with school district/supervisory union</td>
<td>- Engage w/community partners and project team</td>
<td>- Engage w/community partners &amp; project team</td>
<td>- Assist with Engagement partners and project team</td>
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<td>- Engage w/community partners and project team</td>
<td>- Community &amp; Employers</td>
<td>- Utility</td>
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Why participate?

Analysis

• Cost and benefit analysis results for your community and schools
• Assess the potential to reduce costs and improve transportation services
• Identify additional community and school benefits from combined transportation
• Understand potential for electric vehicles to serve transportation needs

Pilot

• Expanded service for students and general public
• Electric vehicles reduce greenhouse gases and exposure to tailpipe emissions (getting sensitive lungs away from diesel fumes)
• Reduce transportation costs
• Put values into action
Sequence of Activities

- April 2021: **Partners Chosen**
- April - August 2021: **Analysis** - Working with interested school and public transportation providers
  - Study existing combined service for lessons learned
  - Test assumptions through cost and benefit analysis
- September 2021: Go/No Go decision about moving towards a pilot
- September 2021: August 2022 **Pilot Planning**
  - Build community support for new transit route
  - Work with transit agency to develop new routes for testing
  - Pursue funding for electric buses and pilot program (if not already planned)
- September 2022: **Pilot starts**
### Timeline

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<th></th>
<th>2021:</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
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<td><strong>Task 1: Outreach</strong></td>
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<td>Identify Pilot Partners &amp; Sites</td>
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**Milestone 1:** Identify rural pilot locations  
**Milestone 2:** Complete Burlington research  
**Milestone 3:** Complete cost-benefit analysis  
**Milestone 4:** Program design is complete  
**Milestone 5:** Final report