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.
What’s Happened So Far

- Researched models of combined service
  - In Vermont and beyond

- Recruited interested school districts
  - Mount Mansfield Unified Union SU
  - Orange East SU

- Feasibility Study
  - Combined service is legal
  - Strong partnership needed among SU and transit agency
Findings

- Students traveling to school on public transit can work
- School transportation can’t always support equitable after school opportunities for students
- Public transit could supplement school transportation services
- Replacing school transportation routes w/public transit service is complicated
- Students are an important market segment for public transit ridership
- Education (climate/equity/economy) needed to increase student ridership on a school or transit bus
Successes and Challenges

Successes

- Interest among transit agencies (Tri Valley Transit)
- VTrans can fund route amendments

Challenges

- Staffing challenges at schools and transit agencies (opportunity?)
- New routes (or deviations) need ridership
- Successful implementation will require champion(s)
Opportunities

75+ high schools within 3 miles of existing fixed route transit

- Small deviations can increase opportunity for high school students
- Serve communities with school choice
- Serve tech centers with large catchment areas

Strengthen transit with more ridership
Value Proposition(s)

1. **Transit providers**
   - Increase ridership
   - create life-long transit riders

2. **School districts**
   - Increase student (and staff) mobility and access to activities
   - Potential to save money
   - Reduce number/length of school bus routes

3. **Towns**
   - Reduce school transportation budgets
   - Increase transit access for everyone

4. **Students and parents**
   - Increased transportation options and independence for students
Questions and Discussion

• Initial thoughts?
• Anything we missed?
• Good candidates or communities with high need for combined service?
• What are the school transportation challenges in your region?
• Where are the opportunities for emissions reductions?
Appendix
Program 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
Mount Mansfield United Unified School District

Transit partner: GMT

Focus on supplemental service: after school

- Students’ extra curricular participation is limited by school bus schedule

Richmond scoping study underway with GMT

- Consider students as riders

Limited capacity at GMT to consider route expansion
MMUUSD Proposed Route

- Along Rt 2 in downtown Richmond
- Serve:
  - Riverview Commons Manufactured Housing Community
  - Camel’s Hump Middle School
  - MMU
- Could be electrified
Take-aways

- GMT has limited capacity to increase service
- Difficult to staff during peak hours (after school)
- Long deadhead trips from GMT garage in Burlington
- Our survey revealed that a third of respondents are interested in combined service in the MMUUSD

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<th>Would additional stops aid in afterschool participation?</th>
<th># Respondents</th>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>44</td>
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OESU

Transit partner: Tri Valley Transit

• Focus on bringing students to activities off campus and employment in village centers and shoppes

• Small deviations in existing route could serve two high schools and the Bradford Tech Center

• TVT has a strong interest in collaborating
  - Already providing transportation to Sharon Academy
Orange East
Proposed Route

• Run along Rt 5
• Could Serve
  • Bradford Tech Center
  • Blue Mountain HS
  • Newbury Village
  • Ox Box High School
• Small deviations from existing River Route
• Could be electrified