

COMPREHENSIVE TRANSIT SERVICE ANALYSIS NEW BRITAIN/BRISTOL DIVISION

Preferred Scenario Discussion Meeting

July 27, 2017, 9:30 AM

New Britain Public Library – Community Room
20 High Street, New Britain

Welcome

Cara Radzins, Project Manager for CRCOG, welcomed everyone to the meeting, and introduced this meeting as a presentation and discussion of the preferred scenario for improving service in the New Britain/Bristol Division of CT *transit*, which was developed based on previous meetings with attendees as well as public outreach and technical analysis.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Study Overview and Work to Date

Eryn Rosenblum of Nelson\Nygaard reviewed the goals of the study and provided an overview of the work completed to date that informed the development of the preferred scenario:

- Goals of the study are to identify the strengths and weaknesses of existing service, including existing service performance and unmet needs/gaps, and recommend improvements to existing service as well as potential new services.
- Technical work for the study including analysis of existing services, which looked at systemwide and route-by-route performance, ridership, and service design. The study team also completed a market analysis for the study area, identifying areas with high underlying demand for transit and assessing how well existing services matched areas of demand.
- Stakeholder and public input was also critical to the study, and outreach efforts included meetings with town representatives, public meetings, outreach events at major bus hubs, and an online survey.
- Based on this work, the study developed two potential service scenarios, and presented these to town leaders and the public in the spring to get feedback and develop a preferred scenario for service improvements.

Draft Preferred Scenario and Service Plan

Ms. Rosenblum reviewed the preferred service scenario and the major issues it was designed to address.

- Key themes for service improvements include:
 - Several routes were reconfigured to be less circuitous and make service simple, direct, and convenient for riders.
 - Some routes were also redesigned to provide more direct service to major destinations and require fewer transfers.

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- New service was added in Southington and southern parts of Plainville and Bristol, areas identified as having unmet demand for transit service.
- The preferred scenario consists of three phases. Most service changes would be implemented in Phase 1, which was designed to be cost neutral. Phase 2 would extend service farther south into Southington, and Phase 3 would add a new direct route from Bristol north to Unionville.
- Service improvements in the preferred scenario provide new or improved service to areas with underlying demand, improving access where it is needed.
- In areas that demonstrate need but may be difficult to service due to low density, narrow streets, or a disconnected street network, service solutions may include working with transportation network companies, taxi vouchers, or other strategies.

Discussion

- Some attendees expressed an interest in drilling down into specifics on where stops would be located and how destinations would be served. Examples included Route 501 in Berlin (larger employers including Comcast) and Route 542 in Plainville and Southington. Members of the study team noted that specific stop locations were not part of the scope of this study and would be one of the next steps based on the recommendations of this study.
- Concern was expressed about whether the Berlin Senior Center is currently located within three-quarters of a mile of Route 501 and whether it would be under the preferred scenario, and what the implications could be for paratransit access. It was also noted that the town is in the process of applying for a grant for sidewalk improvements. The study team confirmed that it will determine whether the senior center is served today and would be eligible for paratransit service under the preferred scenario.
- Representatives from Bristol expressed appreciation that the Bristol Senior Center would still be served by Route 541 under the preferred scenario.
- Representatives from Plainville and Southington expressed support for Route 542 providing service between both towns. The route provides a new connection between the two towns that does not exist today, opening up employment opportunities for residents of both Southington and Plainville.
 - Service on West Street and to ESPN were highlighted as positive.
 - One resident noted that she currently drives her son to Plainville to reach transit service because he cannot drive, and a route in Southington would improve access for him and other residents with disabilities.
 - Attendees noted that the proposed service span on Route 542 was shorter than that of other routes, but agreed that the hours were sufficient to “prove it out” and see how the new route performs. Route expansion and service increases could be implemented in later phases based on ridership/performance and resource availability.
- Attendees noted the importance of access to stops and the presence and quality of sidewalks. Bus stop amenities were also discussed, including bus shelters, and the role that facilities play in helping people use transit and making service more attractive. It was noted that providing and maintain these facilities are the responsibility of the towns.

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- In light of the recommendation to discontinue Route 502 due to redundancy with **CTfastrak** Route 102, attendees requested that the scheduling for both routes be confirmed to determine whether departures are staggered to provide more frequent service to riders. Later research determined that this was not the case: schedules are not staggered to provide more frequent service, and Route 102 provides more frequency throughout the day.
 - Frequency: Route 102 currently operates every 30 minutes during the AM and PM peak hours, while Route 502 operates every hour. During midday and evening hours, Route 102 operates every hour, while Route 502 operates every 90 minutes.
 - Scheduling: During peak hours, eastbound Route 502 buses are scheduled to depart Bristol just six minutes before Route 102, and westbound buses depart New Britain for Bristol just two minutes after Route 102.
- Attendees also identified specific corridors and areas with emerging development to consider as part of this study:
 - Route 10 in Southington has issues with traffic congestion and signal timing/operations that may hinder travel speed for buses on this corridor. A corridor study of Route 10 was completed in 2010.
 - New development is planned at several locations along Queen Street in Southington.
 - A study was recently completed for the Route 6 corridor in Bristol.
 - Approximately 40 new senior housing units are expected to be built near Berlin Town Hall.
 - In Southington, there is senior housing located on Academy Street and Spring Lake Road.

Next Steps

The next steps are to incorporate Advisory Committee comments on the preferred service scenario and additional public outreach. Public meetings will be scheduled for the Fall to present the preferred scenario and receive public feedback. The study team will then finalize the recommended scenario for service improvements and develop the final report.

Ms. Radzins thanked the entire Advisory Committee for their participation in the study and their attendance at this meeting.

Public Comment

There were no additional public comments.

In Attendance

Advisory Committee

- Anna Bergeron, CTDOT
- Garrett Daigle, Plainville
- Mark DeVoe, Plainville
- Christopher Edge, Berlin
- Jim Grappone, Southington
- Maureen Lawrence, CTDOT

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- Alicia Leite, CTDOT
- Al Naudus, Dattco
- Christopher Schaut, Bristol

Study Team

- Jennifer Carrier, CRCOG
- Cara Radzins, CRCOG
- Eryn Rosenblum, Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates

Interested Parties

- Danielle Herbert, Way to Go CT
- Marlene Schempp, Way to Go CT
- Sheri Taber, Southington Resident