

GREATER HARTFORD AREA COMPREHENSIVE TRANSIT SERVICE ANALYSIS

Advisory Committee Meeting #5

March 31, 2016, 1:00 PM

CTtransit Offices

Meeting Summary

Welcome

Cara Radzins, Project Manager for CRCOG, welcomed everyone to the meeting and recapped key study milestones completed since the last Advisory Committee meeting.

Public Forum

There were no public comments.

Survey Findings

Boris Palchik, Project Manager for Nelson\Nygaard shared the results of a transit survey posted on the study website over the last eight months. CRCOG also made paper copies available at recent public meetings and upon request. A total of 1,076 surveys were completed, and more than 50% were completed by frequent transit riders.

The survey asked a series of tradeoff questions, and Mr. Palchik shared the areas where riders and non-riders were in agreement, as well as where they have differing opinions.

- Both daily riders and non-riders reported a preference for:
 - More frequent bus service (rather than longer service hours)
 - More frequent service on fewer streets)rather than greater service coverage)
 - Fewer bus stops and faster service (rather than more bus stops)
 - Later or more frequent weekday service (rather than increased weekend service)
 - Real time information via mobile apps (rather than at bus stops)
 - Mobile payment apps (rather than additional locations to buy bus passes)
 - Better amenities and features on board buses (rather than at bus stops)
- Topics on which daily riders and non-riders were not in agreement include:
 - Whether increased service should be put on existing routes or in new areas
 - Whether increased service should be directed to new neighborhood circulators or park-ride express services

Dave Lee of CT*transit* noted that 21% of daily riders do not own a vehicle, which seems low. Mr. Palchik cautioned that despite the survey's decent response rate, it may not be representative of all riders in the area.

Review of Preliminary Scenarios

Mr. Palchik reviewed the preliminary service scenarios presented to the Advisory Committee last fall and brought to the public in January. Scenario 1 focused on relatively minor adjustments to existing routes based primarily on performance; Scenario 2 offered a fundamentally different vision for transit by focusing service around high ridership arterial corridors. Routes were classified within an expanded “family of services,” and Flex (or demand response) service was suggested for lower density areas.

Summary of Public Meetings

Anne Galbraith of ASG Planning summarized the public outreach process conducted in January 2016. Five traditional public meetings were held, with a formal presentation and question and answer period. The study team also held five informal rider drop-in sessions at **CTfastrak** and shopping centers. At the shopping centers, riders were invited onto a **CTtransit** bus to view maps and discuss potential route changes. In total, about 152 people attended these outreach events.

Riders expressed enthusiasm about **CTfastrak** and seemed open and amenable to considering other service changes. Faster service was one of the top requests, and most attendees seemed to like the concept of focusing service around high ridership corridors and working to make this service operate faster. There was also interest in some of the new routes proposed, with the crosstown connection between West Hartford Place and Copaco Center being the most favorably received.

The greatest challenge continues to be figuring out how best to serve lower density areas outside the downtown core. People in these areas expressed an interest in frequent, fast service to downtown, as well as more local circulation.

Overview of Recommendations

Mr. Palchik explained how the study team used the public comments to reassess the service proposals and to identify a modified service scenario. This scenario is being refined to serve as the final set of recommendations for the study. It includes:

- Enhanced Transit Corridors: similar to the Arterial BRT corridors initially proposed, but focusing foremost on service frequency, with capital improvements phased as practicable. These corridors would have service every 10 minutes or less during peak periods.
- Rebranding certain premium services as **CTfastrak** (e.g. Bradley Flyer and MCC Flyer), and reclassifying some existing **CTfastrak** feeder services as local routes.
- Pairing certain routes to maximize efficiency and allow for service to be operated at consistent intervals (e.g. every 20 minutes)
- Using Transportation Network Companies (e.g. Uber or Lyft) to supplement transit. Mr. Palchik shared case studies from other parts of the US where transit agencies and cities are offering discounts on Uber rides, a strategy which can cost less per trip than operating fixed route service in low density areas.

Mr. Lee asked why the study team had backed off of the idea of Arterial BRT. Mr. Palchik responded that the enhanced transit corridors are a more flexible service concept that would essentially be Arterial BRT in the long-term.

Mr. Lee also noted the AVL data feed now coming off buses shows that running times vary across the day due to traffic congestion. This makes clockface scheduling difficult, plus the survey results show

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that riders want to use mobile apps to find bus schedules. Charlie Carson of *CTtransit* said the agency initially created clockface schedules for its routes, but these have gotten adjusted over time to meet requests from trip generators. Mr. Palchik explained the recommended strategy is to make service implicitly simple so riders eventually won't even need to check mobile apps or schedules.

Mr. Lee cautioned that interlining of routes needs to be considered carefully, as tying routes together means a service disruption on one route can sometimes lead to more widespread impact. Mr. Palchik explained that the study team considered this concern and built in recovery time of at least 10% to all for a cushion from disruptions.

Next Steps

The consulting team will be preparing a draft Final Report and Implementation Plan. For each route, a "chapter" of materials will be put together, including the route evaluation, suggested changes and the rationale explaining how the final recommendation was formed.

Ms. Radzins said these recommendations would be presented to CTDOT and *CTtransit* for their review. While some actions may be implemented immediately, others may require further analysis or policy changes. For example, the use of Transportation Network Companies to supplement transit would require policy changes at the legislative level. Extending the Bradley Flyer to use the *CTfastrak* guideway would also require steps to address the use of parking along the guideway.

Sandy Fry of GHTD suggested the consulting put together a cost neutral recommendation, in light of current budget concerns. Ms. Radzins said this will be done.

Mr. Lee requested the final report include documentation and rationale for bus stop consolidation and the infrastructure needed to support frequent service in Enhanced Transit Corridors. To the degree possible, the report should also identify improvements needed at identified hubs such as West Hartford Center, Copaco Center and Buckland Hills. Ms. Radzins noted that as discussed at previous Advisory Committee meetings a menu of options for municipal improvements to support enhanced transit service will also be prepared.

The team will also prepare a Title VI analysis to consider Environmental Justice issues at the systemwide level. This will identify areas that may be adversely impacted by proposed changes so that *CTtransit* will be able to quickly identify which changes would likely require a more detailed, route-level Title VI analysis.

Jim Ford from the City of Hartford noted that Hartford is in the process of upgrading streetscapes in some of the identified Enhance Transit Corridors. It will be helpful to understand what is expected in such corridors so that the enhancements are in line with the recommendations. Mr. Palchik said that the Final Report will include a chapter devoted to recommended capital improvements by type of service. Mr. Ford also noted that Hartford's new Automated Traffic Management System could be programed to allow for bus priority in the future.

Mr. Lee asked if there would be specific recommendations for which bus stops should be consolidated. Mr. Palchik responded that the report will identify recommended average stop spacing by service type.

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In Attendance

- Advisory Committee
 - Anna Bergeron, CTDOT
 - Maureen Lawrence, CTDOT
 - Molly Parsons, CTDOT
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 - Charlie Carson, **CTtransit**
 - Philip Fry, **CTtransit**
 - David Lee, **CTtransit**
 - Ed Perzanowski, **CTrides**
 - Sandy Fry, GHTD
 - Jim Ford, Hartford
 - Mark Pellegrini, Manchester
 - Anne Hayes, Travelers
- Study Team
 - Anne Galbraith, ASG Planning
 - Jennifer Carrier, CRCOG
 - Cara Radzins, CRCOG
 - Ryan Visci, CRCOG
 - Boris Palchik, Nelson\Nygaard