

# Transportation is Changing make it work for you

## Paratransit Planning Overview

Changes to the existing transit system have been proposed, including the addition of complementary ADA paratransit. This proposed paratransit service is both exciting and worrisome. While it has the potential to provide better service for transit users, it also will bring change and it is change that can be challenging for any of us. To address this change we have developed an initial process to help the public understand what is needed to operate a rural paratransit service based on the potential users of this service.

### Goal:

To build a more knowledgeable and informed transit ridership in the Central Vermont Region by engaging directly with existing public transit users and potential users of our rural transit system.

Website: <http://centralvtplanning.org/programs/transportation/paratransit-planning/>

## Findings

As we gathered input and preference on the proposed Paratransit service we also discovered that additional education on the existing transit system was needed. Of the people we surveyed that use transit, more than 25% responded that they didn't know which bus route they lived near. Additionally, 41% of riders reported that better information about what services are available would make it easier for them to utilize GMT transportation services. 58% and 74% of responders indicated that they do or would use the transit service to go to medical appointments and shopping, respectively. Furthermore, just over 38% of responders indicated that they would want to use the service to reach social or leisure activities. Additionally, we found that many older adults and people with disabilities are willing and able to be more mobile (i.e. walk to a bus stop) during the fair weather month but have limited mobility during the winter months (snow and ice on doorways and sidewalks).

### Needs for Paratransit Service:

- Outreach on qualification process
- Gaps in service assistance need to be considered
- Scheduling service
- Ability to ride to social activities
- Guarantee that the rider will get picked up and dropped off on time
- Door to door service
- Seasonal variability in service

### Needs for Public Transit Service:

- Updated Bus Maps and Guide



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- Education on transit code of conduct and rider bill of rights
- Standardized rider experience

## Engagement

We engaged directly with existing public transit users and potential users of our rural transit system. This engagement included presenting at community and small group meetings; surveying older adults, persons with disabilities and caregivers; creating user-story videos; and sharing information on Facebook, in newsprint, and via email.



14

Project meetings

269

Survey responses

197

Media clicks and views

600+

People engaged

## Barriers and Solutions

Users of the existing system identified many barriers and potential solutions during our engagement. In total nine barriers were identified with the primary theme being around the need to improve our public transit infrastructure and build knowledge on how to appropriately help older adults and persons with disabilities.

Solutions were also identified to help address many of these barriers. The primary themes found in the solutions is to identify locations for public transit infrastructure improvements and a need for more education for the transit operator and the transit rider so that there can be a more predictable experience.

9

Barriers

9

Solutions

## Conclusions and Next Steps

The Paratransit Planning Committee feels that we met our project's goal to build a more knowledgeable and informed transit ridership in the Central Vermont Region by



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engaging directly with existing public transit users and potential users of our rural transit system. The engagement of over 600 people in our process is particularly indicative of our meeting our goal. The input we gathered for the paratransit service will help the operator and rider better understand and use the service. The gaps in understanding with our existing service by the user tells us that there is still more that can be done to help older adults, people with disabilities and caregivers to improve their knowledge of service availability.

To accomplish bridging these gaps the Paratransit Planning Committee will be doing the following:

- Working with GMT to identify bus stop locations that need improvements
- Adding rural members to GMT ADA Committee
- Working with GMT on outreach during the two weeks before and two weeks after the start of the paratransit service
- Apply for a Phase 2 Round 2 Inclusive Coordinated Transportation Partnership Project Grant to help develop education and outreach materials to build a more knowledgeable and informed transit ridership in the Central Vermont Region

Thank You,

Paratransit Planning Committee

Participants

- Rebecca Mackin (caregiver)
- Dale Hackett (person with disabilities and transit user)
- Lawrence Seiler (person with disabilities and transit user)
- Lee Cattaneo (older adult)

Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission

Central Vermont Council on Aging

Barre Project Independence

Vermont Center For Independent Living

Green Mountain Transit

Vermont Agency of Transportation



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