Vermont Agency of Transportation

Vermont Public Transit Policy Plan

Final Report

Submitted by:
KFH Group, Inc.

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Thanks to the many Vermont citizens who participated in the public meetings, submitted comments, and shared their vision for transit in Vermont. Your input helped shape this plan.

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Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

Public transportation plays a vital role in the high quality of life that Vermonters enjoy and the State of Vermont supports public transit services in a number of ways. The Vermont legislature views public transportation as "*an important matter of State concern, essential to the economic growth of the State and to the public health, safety and welfare of present and future generations of Vermonters*".[1] The Vermont Public Transit Policy Plan (PTPP) outlines transit policies and goals and strategies to meet current and emerging public transportation challenges.

The components of the PTPP provide policy level direction, guidance and performance tracking to help guide transit investments. The PTPP is part of a series of modal policy plans developed by the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) addressing, transit, rail, bike and pedestrian, aviation, freight, and roadway programs and policies. Together these policy plans provide direction for VTrans various programs, as well as forming the basis of Vermont's Long Range Transportation Business Plan (LRTBP).

The development of a PTPP every five years is required by Statute. The first PTPP was published in 2000 and the second was published in 2007. This document presents the 2012 PTPP update. While the PTPP is updated every five years, it serves as the primary guidance for continued development of public transit in the State over the next ten years. The PTPP report consists of both this document and the Technical Appendices that include the six Technical Memoranda produced during the planning process as well as an Appendix on the Intercity Bus Needs Assessment and Policy Options.

[1] 24 V.S.A. § 5082, Chapter 126: PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

VISION, GOALS, AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

Vision

The Vision for public transit in Vermont is:

Public transit meets the basic mobility needs of all Vermonters including transit-dependent persons, provides access to employment and other modes, mitigates congestion, preserves air quality and promotes efficient energy use, and advances the State's economic development objectives – all in a safe, reliable, cost-effective, and environmentally responsible manner.

Goals

The State's primary public transit goal is to preserve and enhance the level of public transit in Vermont, provided that specific routes and services are well used by the traveling public. A subset of goals for public transit in Vermont is codified in 24 V.S.A. Chapter 126, S.5083:

"..State policy shall support the maintenance of existing public transit services and creation of new services including, in order of precedence, the following goals:

(1) Provision for basic mobility for transit-dependent persons, as defined in the public transit policy plan of January 15, 2000, including meeting the performance standards for urban, suburban, and rural areas. The density of a service area's population is an important factor in determining whether the service offered is fixed route, demand-response, or volunteer drivers.

(2) Access to employment, including creation of demand-response service.

(3) Congestion mitigation to preserve air quality and sustainability of the highway network.

(4) Advancement of economic development objectives, including services for workers and visitors that support the travel and tourism industry. Applicants for "new starts" in this service sector shall demonstrate a high level of locally derived income for operating costs from fare-box recovery, contract income, or other income.

The breadth of the goals recognizes that different areas of the State have varying needs and that the types of transit services that are most effective may vary by location and local conditions. The policies proposed in this PTPP assume that the goals are truly in order of precedence specified in the Statute.

This PTPP update proposes a change to the third goal. It is suggested that the goal on "congestion mitigation" be broadened to preserving air quality and promoting energy efficiency, which could involve congestion mitigation as well as other actions. The proposal is for the goal to read "*(3) preservation of air quality and promotion of efficient energy use in the State.*"

Policy Framework

24 V.S.A. Chapter 126, S.5083 also sets the framework for State policy:

> *"It shall be the State's policy to make maximum use of available federal funds for the support of public transportation. State operating support funds shall be included in Agency operating budgets to the extent that funds are available.*

The State is committed to meeting its vision and goals for public transit as expressed above and the PTPP recognizes that there are opportunities to expand public transit services in the State to meet the needs of all Vermonters. To this end, the State will continue to expand and enhance public transit services in the State. The current framework for Vermont public transit policy includes strategies aimed at:

- Preserving and enhancing existing public transit services that are well used by the traveling public,

- Monitoring the performance of transit services by VTrans and the boards of the transit providers to ensure the maximum value from available resources, and

- Using any additional public transit funds to support and promote the four goals noted above as in 24 V.S.A Chapter 126, S.5083.

Many of the challenges of providing comprehensive public transit in a State as rural as Vermont were discussed in detail in the technical memoranda included in the Technical Appendices. Policies that emerged during the PTPP process are categorized as addressing Funding Levels and Sources, Capital Investments, Coordination of Services, Interface with Land Use Planning, Regional Connectivity and Intercity Bus, Improvements to the "Transit Experience." Recommendations concerning Public Transit Planning and Technical Assistance are also included.

PUBLIC TRANSIT POLICIES

Specific policies needed to achieve the vision and goals for transit in Vermont include:

A. Funding Levels and Sources

1. Continue to seek additional funding to expand and enhance transit services to meet additional needs in the State.

2. Continue to maximize the use of available federal funds to support transit and to assist with State funding to the extent that funds are available within the State budget.

3. Continue to seek innovative funding sources and mechanisms that will increase investment in public transit, especially from the federal level. Policies in this area include:
   - Strongly encourage providers to maximize local funding for public transit.
   - Continue the VTrans goal of 20% local funding (exclusive of capital, Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP), Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC), Rideshare, and Medicaid funding) and reinstitute efforts to track and report provider performance in meeting this goal.
   - Continue "flexing" (transferring) highway funds annually into the State's transit program to maximize their use for transit; particularly flexing federal highway funds from the Surface Transportation Program (STP) (for non-operating costs) and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) for operating and capital for new transit service demonstration projects).
   - Continue the integration of State Elderly and Disabled (E&D) Transportation operating funds with Non-Urbanized Area Formula Grants (Section 5311 program) to maximize coordination between human service agencies and public transit providers and to maximize use of vehicle capacity on all vehicles.
   - Continue to allow volunteer hours (in-kind) to be used as local match in the E&D Program.
   - Continue to capitalize preventive maintenance in an effort to prolong the life of the operator's fleets and allow Federal Transit Administration (FTA) operating funds to be used to cover other operating expenses.

4. Continue performance monitoring of the transit providers by VTrans and local governing boards to ensure that the maximum value is realized from available resources. Fund only services that successfully meet performance standards and use resources effectively. A policy change in this regard will:
   - Accelerate the process of eliminating "under-performing" routes/services so that resources can be shifted to successful services more quickly. This policy will allow under-performing *established "baseline" services* a total of 12 months to improve and *new services* 18 months to be tested and proven.

- Re-classify rural routes that operate less than once a day into demand-response calculation for that agency.

5. Focus service expansions on meeting basic mobility first, then subsequently, access to employment, air quality/energy efficiency/congestion mitigation, and economic development in that order. The major policy change will be a re-vamping of the State's New Services program in an effort to target new dollars toward areas of the State that currently have unmet needs and toward those services that are higher priorities as defined in the State Statute.
   - Remove the goal-based funding formula since it appears that over time the amendments to Section 5091 have rendered it ineffective. Existing services will continue to be funded as long as they meet performance standards, and new services will be funded based on their merit and need-based feasibility studies.
   - Update the New Services evaluation criteria to rank projects based on all State transit goals and distribute new funding based on statewide needs and priorities.
   - Re-institute the mandatory Transit Development Plan (TDP) process to ensure that new transit services funded under the New Services Program are justified. Increase the role for the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the Regional Planning Commissions (RPC) in the process and create a new specialized planning studies component.

B. Capital Investments

1. Manage federal earmarks and capital projects effectively. The policy change proposed for managing earmarks, or any other major capital project, is to centralize FTA earmark/capital project management for Chittenden County at Chittenden County Transportation Authority (CCTA) and for the rest of the State at VTrans.

2. Continue to consider applications for vehicle replacement based on the vehicle design life as designated in the VTrans Vehicle Disposition and Transfer Procedures, based on a 20% spare ratio policy as appropriate.

3. Complete the statewide procurement of vehicles to reduce unit costs. Standardize the statewide fleet, and ensure compliance with federal and State procurement rules.

4. Initiate a Statewide facility funding program to assist transit operators that are building or improving operating facilities. Evaluate and entertain requests for capital funding for facilities based on the results of this comprehensive process and inclusion in an approved TDP.

5. Explore the concept of regional maintenance garages for some maintenance functions.

6. Establish procedures to justify the State's contribution to various passenger amenities and facilities.

7. Conduct statewide procurement for technology improvements to increase operating efficiency and improve user transit experience.

C. Coordination of Services

1. Continue to promote and enhance coordinated human service transportation, and general public transit through the regional public transportation brokers where appropriate.

2. Continue working with the Vermont Agency of Human Services (AHS) to maintain the linkage between transit providers and the State's Medicaid program.

D. Interface with Land Use Planning

1. Continue to support efforts to curtail sprawl and create transit-supportive communities consistent with other state-endorsed policies and programs such as Complete Streets and Smart Growth.

2. Continue to support the integration of transit services and facilities into State and local planning and design decisions. Include the evaluation of transit potential in project reviews at the State and local levels and the implementation of pedestrian-friendly designs by:
   - Incorporating transit considerations in VTrans-funded projects and programs at each stage of the planning, design, construction, implementation, operations, and maintenance activities. This will include consideration of both physical amenities (bus shelters, sidewalks and pedestrian amenities) and design elements that enhance transit operations and access (snow removal, adequate turning radii, and transit signal priority). New projects, reconstruction projects, and other transportation facility improvements will maintain or improve existing access and conditions for transit services or interfaces.
   - Providing guidance and assistance to local municipalities to incorporate appropriate transit elements in local site planning, design and construction reviews. This will include VTrans staff reviewing the transportation segments or chapters of each Regional Transportation Plan to ensure that transit is adequately addressed.

- Expanding the role of the MPO and the RPCs in facilitating transit and associated pedestrian considerations in local land use decisions.
- Educating and training Act 250 Boards and Regional Coordinators on transit issues, interface, and considerations.

E. Regional Connectivity and Intercity Bus

1. Continue funding regional and commuter services on the same basis as other local transit services, with no change in match ratios or other incentives, but reserve the flexibility to increase the State share of project costs as warranted.

2. Improve connectivity between public transit providers and other modes to serve markets both inside and outside Vermont.

3. When appropriate, build park and ride lots as intermodal facilities and ensure that they are served by transit.

4. Support a vital intercity bus network serving both intra-state and inter-state travel by updating the State intercity bus program. This has been started with the assessment of rural intercity bus needs and the FTA-required consultation process. If unmet needs are identified, VTrans will create program guidelines and solicit projects to address these needs, as appropriate.

F. Improving the "Transit Experience"

1. Continue working with transit operators and local communities to improve the transit user experience and attract riders, including choice riders, onto the system. This will include consideration of how to provide good pedestrian connection to transit stops, adequate street crossings, ADA accessible bus stops and pedestrian connections, and bike racks and bike parking at major transit stops and facilities.

2. Work to promote easy access to information about public transit services, including at intermodal facilities and via the Internet. This will include educating the public, particularly youth, on how to use public transit.

G. Public Transit Planning and Technical Assistance

1. Institute a transit planning assistance program to address individual transit operators planning needs and prepare locally developed TDPs and special

planning studies. The program will increase the role of the local RPC(s) and the MPO in public transit planning efforts.

2. Expand the Vermont Technical Assistance Program and take advantage of the FTA RTAP program which focuses on training and technical assistance projects and other support services tailored to meet the needs of transit operators in non-urbanized areas.

Chapter 1

Vermont's Public Transit Program

Public transportation plays a vital role in the high quality of life that Vermonters enjoy and the State of Vermont supports public transit services in a number of ways. The Vermont legislature views public transportation as a "*an important matter of State concern, essential to the economic growth of the State and to the public health, safety and welfare of present and future generations of Vermonters*"[2]. The Vermont Public Transit Policy Plan (PTPP) outlines transit polices and goals and to develop strategies to meet current and emerging public transportation challenges.

The components of the PTPP are consistent with Vermont's Long Range Transportation Business Plan (LRTBP) and provide policy level direction, guidance and strategies to guide transit investments. The PTPP is part of a series of modal policy plans developed by the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) addressing transit, rail, bike and pedestrian, aviation, freight, and roadway programs and policies. Together these policy plans provide direction for VTrans various programs, as well as forming the basis of the LRTBP.

The development of a PTPP every five years is required by Statute. The first PTPP was published in 2000 and the second was published in 2007. This document presents 2012 PTPP update. While the PTPP is updated every five years, it serves as the primary guidance for continued development of public transit in the State over the next ten years.

This section outlines the context within which public transit is provided in the State. More detail on the subject is provided in Technical Memorandum #1 - *The Context: Vermont's State Transit Program* which is included in Technical Appendix A.

As defined in the legislation, *public transportation* refers to passenger transportation "*by all means available to the general public*" while *public transit* service is a subset of that which means "*…any fixed route, paratransit, transportation brokerage, user-*

[2] 24 V.S.A. § 5082, Chapter 126: PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

side subsidy, and or rideshare/ride-match program which is available to any person upon payment of the proper fare, and which is promoted to be available to all members of the public, including those with special needs"(24 V.S.A. § 5088(5)). While this PTPP is primarily focused on public transit services, it also is concerned with coordination and connections among public transit services as well as intermodal passenger connections to other forms of public transit such as intercity passenger rail and commercial aviation services.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

The 2012 update to the PTPP was prepared with the assistance and in consultation with a number of stakeholders. The VTrans Public Transit Advisory Council (PTAC) served as the Study Advisory Committee (SAC). The SAC/PTAC members represented a diverse set of interests. As detailed in Attachment 2, the SAC/PTAC members were consulted throughout the planning process and their feedback was folded into the development of the final PTPP.

Public input also was sought throughout the planning process. The Transportation Planners from the State's Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs), through the Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI), were also briefed on the plan and assisted in distributing the plan's information and public meeting notices. The project website was used to communicate with the public and solicit comments throughout the project. Two series of three public meetings were undertaken during the project. The first series solicited public and RPC input and identification of State transit issues at the beginning of the planning process and the second series solicited input from the public on the draft plan.

OVERVIEW OF VTRANS PUBLIC TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION

Most of the components of this PPTP will be implemented through the State's Public Transit Program. The VTrans Public Transit Program is managed under the agency's Policy, Planning and Intermodal Development (PPAID) Division, Public Transit Section. The Public Transit Section consists of a Public Transit Administrator, three Coordinators, and a Financial Administrator which assists with budgeting and administration of federal and State transit grants. Finally, statewide and regional planning assistance, including planning for public transit, is provided through the Division's Policy and Planning section where the preparation of modal plans is managed.

The role of the Public Transit Section is to oversee how federal and State funds are utilized and to be a bridge between the federal government, State legislature, and

the transit providers. The PPAID/Public Transit Section ensures that transit providers are providing services that are well-planned and consistent with the State's vision and goals for other transportation modes and land use policies.

The public transit program is somewhat unique among the other transportation modes because it involves grant making and on-going grant management activities for ten different public transit providers – both public and private-non-profit agencies. Annually, VTrans solicits grant applications from these providers, is responsible for allocating State and federal funds among them, and monitors their services and financial information on a monthly basis. Another unique feature is the need to coordinate or collaborate with other state agencies, particularly the Agency of Human Services (AHS), to ensure that services reach the most vulnerable Vermonters, but are also provided in a cost effective and efficient manner.

FEDERAL AND STATE FUNDING PROGRAMS

Public transit in Vermont, as in other states, is funded through fares, donations, local communities, agency-contracted services, and federal and State transit subsidy programs. In FY10, the operating budgets for public transit operators in the State totaled over $39M. In Vermont, as in many states, the federal (49 U.S.C.) and state transit programs provide substantial subsidies to the local transit providers.

While Chittenden County Transportation Authority (CCTA) is a direct recipient of FTA Section 5307 transit operating/capital funds for small urbanized areas, most of the federal funds flow through the VTrans to rural transit operators. The State is the designated recipient of all federal rural transit funding as well as funding for specialized services under Section 5310 (Elderly and Persons with Disabilities), Section 5316 (JARC) and Section 5317 (New Freedom). The FY11 Governor recommended State budget for public transit includes about $17 million in federal funds and $6.8 million in State funds for a total of $26 million (excluding the federal funds that flow directly from FTA to CCTA). Of this, there is a one-time grant of $2 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding for vehicles and $600,000 for planning and administration. The total budget is $26 million less the $2 million in ARRA for a net of $24 million. In addition, local communities contribute to transit services through match and users provide fares and other revenue.

Federal and State Transit Funding

Table 1-1 presents a summary of federal and State transit operating and capital subsidies from 2008 through 2011. When the ARRA funding is not considered, transit subsidies in the State increased overall $3 million or almost 16% during that period (between 3-10% annually).

Table 1-1: Public Transit - State and Federal Funds Only, FY 2008 - 2011								
					2011			
PROGRAM NAME	DESCRIPTION	2008	2009	2010	STATE	FEDERAL	ARRA	TOTAL
Project Development	Funding for Project Development and Evaluation	473,255	120,000	120,000	25,436	101,742		127,178
Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality (CMAQ)	Federal Highway Funding that can be used for public transportation	750,000	1,100,000	1,850,000		1,500,000		1,500,000
Rural Program Administration	S. 5311 Funding for Program Administration	507,931	543,288	546,237	90,282	361,126		451,408
S. 5311 Non-Urbanized Area Grants	Funding for Rural Transit in areas less than 50,000 population-Operating, Capital and Administration	12,938,898	13,202,700	14,284,345		5,609,347		5,609,347
Urban - State Operating Assistance	Funding for Urban Transit in Areas with 50,000 - 200,000 population - Capital and Operating (Chittenden County)					825,919		825,919
State Operating Assistance	State Funding for Operations				5,070,904			5,070,904
S. 5311 E&D Assistance	Funding for transportation service for Elders and Person with Disabilities				98,819	3,400,731		3,499,550
Rural Preventive Maintenance	Capitalization of Preventive Maintenance in Rural Areas	500,000	500,000	500,000		500,000		500,000
Urban Preventive Maintenance	Capitalization of Preventive Maintenance in Urban Area (Chittenden County)	500,000	500,000	500,000		500,000		500,000
State Technical Assistance	State Funding for Technical Assistance				200,000			200,000
Rural Technical Assistance (RTAP)	FTA funding for training and technical assistance					90,643		90,643
Kidney Association Grant	Vermont Kidney Association Grant				30,000			30,000
S. 5316	FTA Job Access and Reverse Commute Program for low income residents to access jobs	393,960	426,790	429,600	250,447	250,447		500,894
S.5317	FTA New Freedom Program for Persons with Disabilities beyond ADA	122,332	132,149	133,883		153,748		153,748
Rideshare	Encouragement of Carpools and Go Vermont	450,000	450,000	450,000		450,000		450,000
ARRA Capital	ARRA Capital Funding Program			5,680,572			2,000,000	2,000,000
S. 5309 Capital Grants	FTA and State Capital Grant Program for General Public	4,185,124	4,369,348	4,565,331	999,539	3,146,082		4,145,621
S. 5310 E&D Capital Grants	FTA and State Capital Grants for Elders and Persons with Disabilities				77,500	385,750		463,250
TOTAL PUBLIC TRANSIT PROGRAM		20,821,500	21,344,275	29,059,968	6,842,927	17,275,535	2,000,000	26,118,462
TOTAL PUBLIC TRANSIT APPROPRIATION*		19,151,569	19,719,221	26,259,839	6,842,927	15,896,777	2,000,000	24,739,704
TOTAL PUBLIC TRANSIT PROGRAM Minus ARRA Capital		20,821,500	21,344,275	23,379,396				24,118,462
	Percent Increase Over Previous Year		*3%*	*10%*				*3%*
*NOTE: Appropriations exclude FTA subsidies that pass through directly to CCTA.								

Funding Innovations in Vermont

In addition to public transit dollars, Vermont uses federal highway funds in innovative ways and "flexes" (transfers) highway funds annually into the State's transit program to maximize their use for transit. Vermont is a leader in flexing federal highway funds from the Surface Transportation Program (STP) and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) into its transit programs.

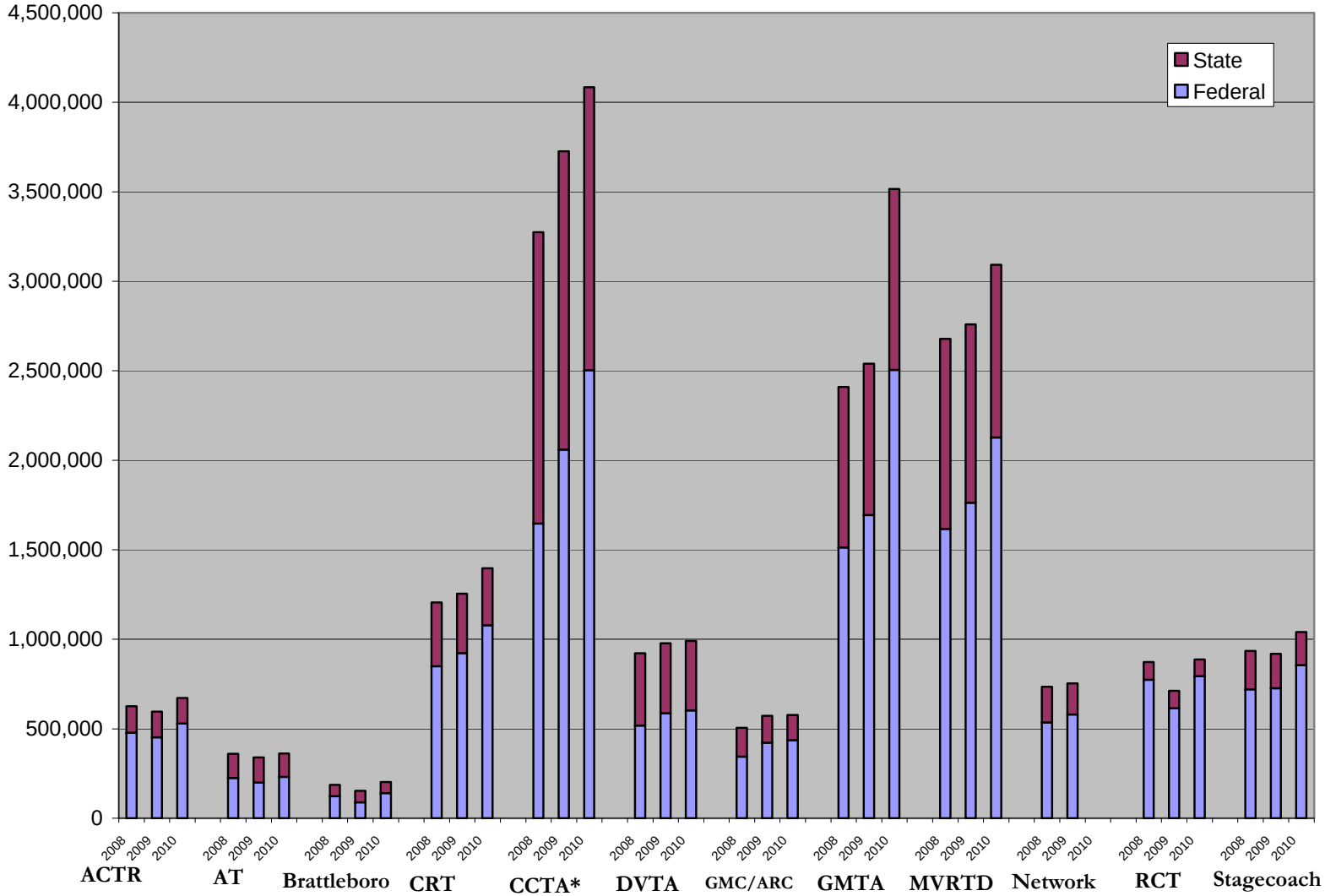
Also innovative is VTrans' integration of elderly and disabled (E&D) operating funds with its Non-Urbanized Area Formula Grants (Section 5311). The goal of the integrated program is to maximize coordination between human service agencies and public transit providers and to improve the utilization of unused capacity on services formerly restricted to E&D.

Another innovative component in the State's use of federal transit programs is its Rural Preventive Maintenance program. In an effort to prolong the life of the operator's fleets, the State has set aside $1 million annually to support preventive maintenance ($500,000 in rural areas and $500,000 in the urban area). By "capitalizing" rural preventive maintenance, those costs are eligible for 80% from the federal program and the transit providers only have to provide 20% in local share (if these costs were considered operating expenses, the federal program would cover only 50% of the net deficit).

Transit funding per capita in Vermont is higher than in other States with a similar rural/urban mix. The rural nature of the State makes it difficult to provide transit in traditional ways. Despite its rural character, the State will spend about $11.00 in State funding per capita on transit services in 2011. According to the 2010 *AASHTO Survey of State Funding for Public Transportation*, the other nine States with over half of their population in rural areas spent between $.43 - $4.52 in State funds on transit in 2008 -– less than half of the amount spent by Vermont that year ($9.50 per capita). The three States with somewhat comparable rural populations (WV, MS, and ME) only provided between $.54 and $1.67 in State transit funding per capita in 2008.

Table 1-1 indicates that budgets by program and funding subsidies have been increasing over the past few years. Mirroring this trend, Figure 1-1 presents trends in federal and State operating fund allocations to each of the providers from 2009 – 2010 (not including capital, Medicaid, or federal operating subsidies that CCTA receives directly from FTA). The figure shows a consistent and steady increase in operating funds available for transit services in the State.

Federal and State Operating Funds Allocations (2009-2010)



*Does not include the Federal S. 5307 operating funds received directly from FTA by CCTA.

STAKEHOLDERS

There are a number of stakeholders that play major roles in the public transit network in Vermont. In addition to the public and riders of the transit systems, the primary stakeholders that will be affected by this PTPP include:

- VTrans
- Public Transit Providers
- Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI) including the RPCs and their Transportation Advisory Committees (TACs), Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)[3] and their TAC and Public Transit Advisory Committee
- Vermont Public Transportation Association (VPTA)
- Vermont AHS and other State Agencies such as the Vermont Department of Labor and the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development
- State and Local Officials

It is noted that each of Vermont's 11 RPCs has a TAC. The TACs include representatives from each town and some representation from the local transit operator. The MPO has a Public Transit Advisory Committee as well as a TAC that makes recommendations on action items to be considered by the full Board of Directors. Through its TPI, VTrans collaborates with the RPCs and the MPO to carry out transportation planning at the regional level. RPCs enter into cooperative agreements with VTrans for the agency to provide the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) planning funds in exchange for collaborative transportation planning.

[3]The Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization (CCMPO) and the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) merged effective July 1, 2011.

Chapter 2

Existing Vermont Public Transit System

PUBLIC TRANSIT SERVICES

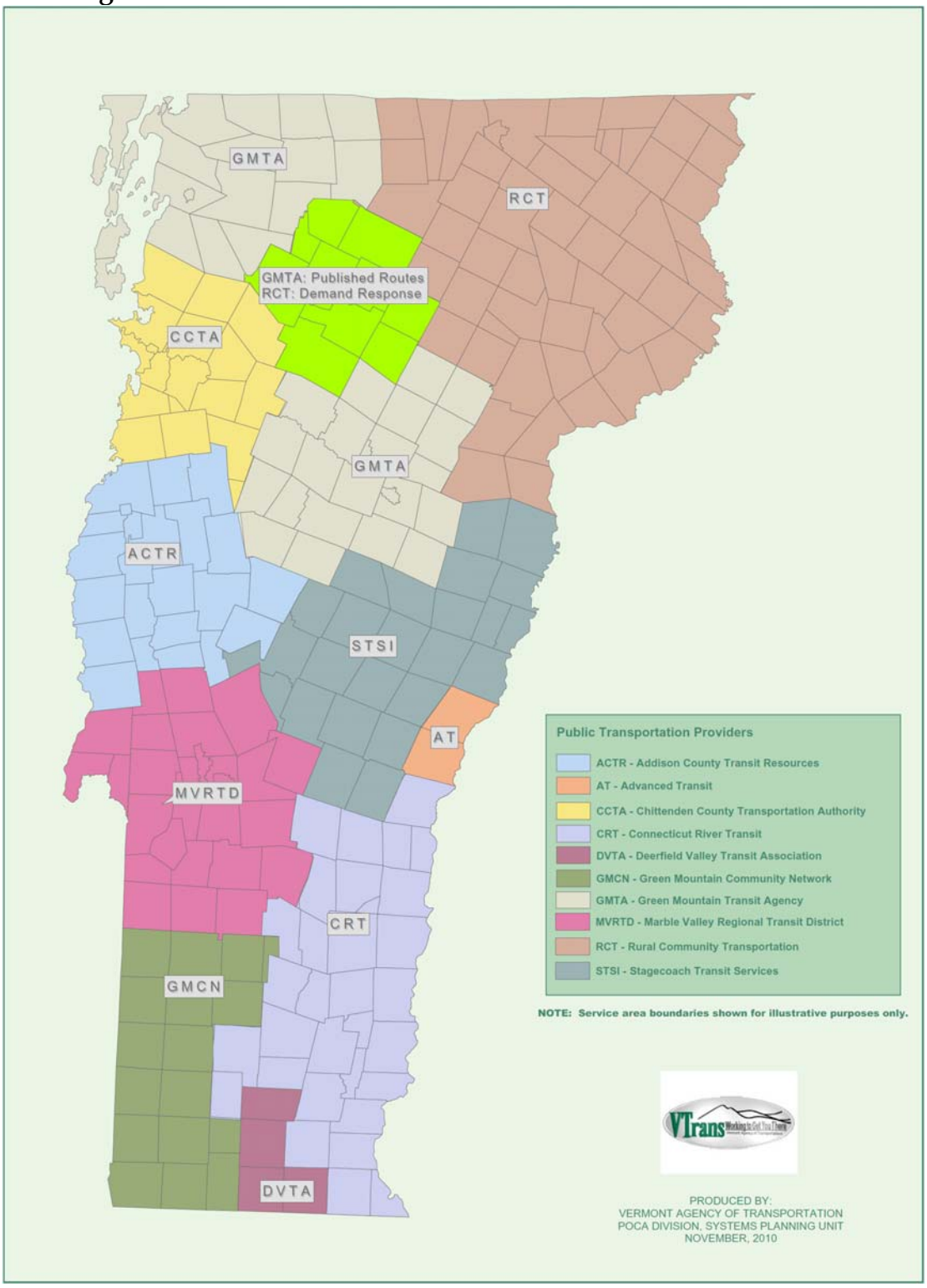
Vermont is served by ten public transit providers that offer a range of transit services, from local fixed-route to demand-response to commuter.[4] Figure 2-1 portrays VTrans' map of service areas for these transit providers, and Figure 2-2 illustrates the fixed and deviated routes operated throughout the State. It is important to note that demand responsive services offered by the public transit providers, which essentially cover the entire State, are not shown on these maps. Another note is that commuter services that extend from a common location may not necessarily interline.

The types of transit services, service characteristics, fares, coordination efforts, organizational structures, budgets, and vehicle fleets of Vermont's current public transit providers are summarized below.[5] More details on the services are included in Technical Memorandum 2 - *Existing Vermont Public Transit System and Demographic Analysis* and can be found in Technical Appendix B.

[4] The Brattleboro BeeLine is now operated by Connecticut River Transit, and is no longer considered a separate service.

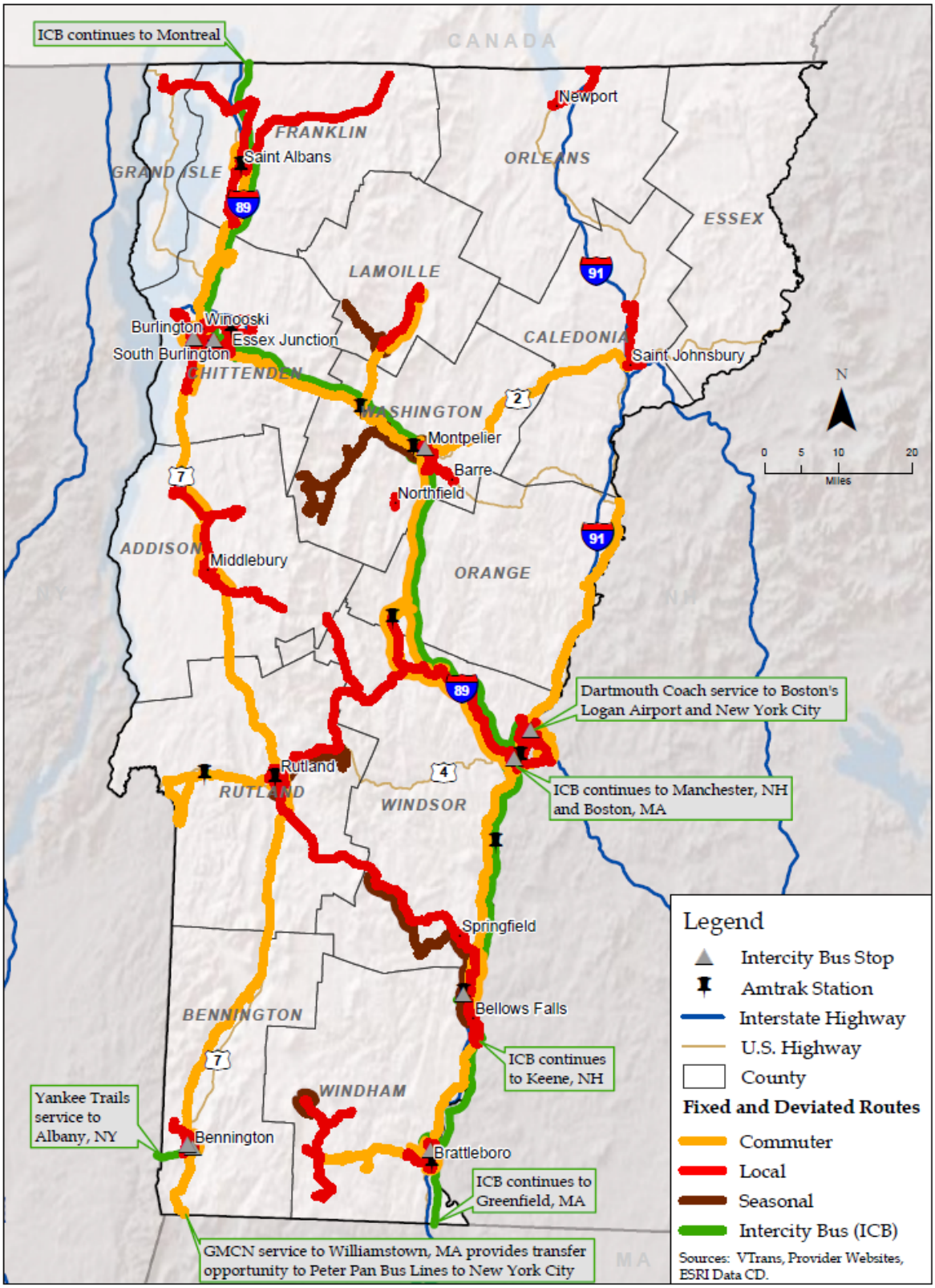
[5] Much of this information was based on the transit agencies' applications for FTA Sections 5311, 5316, 5317 and/or State Operating & Administration Assistance for FY 2011, provided by VTrans. The figures for the transit agencies' FY 2010 operating budgets and ridership were also provided by VTrans and represent data for the Section 5311 program and CMAQ-funded services only; the number of riders per hour and costs per passenger were also calculated with this data. The FY 2010 operating costs and ridership for CCTA were provided separately by CCTA.

Figure 2-1: Service Areas of Vermont's Public Transit Providers



Source: VTrans Website, **http://www.aot.State.vt.us/ops/PublicTransit/providers.htm**.

Figure 2-2: Fixed and Deviated Routes in Vermont



Advance Transit (AT)

AT provides public transit services across State lines in the Upper Valley, serving the towns of Hartford and Norwich in Vermont and Hanover and Lebanon in New Hampshire. AT also provides commuter service to Enfield and Canaan, New Hampshire. AT also provides Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) complementary paratransit service, called Access AT, for eligible persons with disabilities who cannot use the fixed-route bus services due to his or her disability. Access AT is a curb-to-curb, shared ride service that operates in the same area and during the same hours as the fixed-route bus services.

Addison County Transit Resources (ACTR)

ACTR provides public transit services primarily in Addison County, except for the towns of Hancock and Granville, as well as commuter connections to Chittenden and Rutland Counties. In addition to transit for the general public, ACTR offers Dial-a-Ride services through programs for specialized populations including older adults, age 60 and above, persons with disabilities, and low-income families and individuals. ACTR partners with State agencies and human service organizations, such as the Vermont Department of Families and Children, the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired, the Champlain Valley Agency on Aging, Counseling Service of Addison County, and Addison County Home and Health Hospice, to offer these programs.

Chittenden County Transportation Authority

Serving the greater Burlington area, CCTA operates the largest transit system in the State. These routes include local bus service in several cities and towns within Chittenden County, commuter services to cities in adjacent counties, and an employee shuttle from a satellite parking lot to downtown Burlington. CCTA also offers ADA paratransit services for eligible persons with disabilities. Operated through a contract by the Special Services Transportation Agency (SSTA), ADA paratransit services are available within three-quarters of a mile of the fixed-route system. Other services that CCTA provides include shopping shuttles from senior housing complexes to local supermarkets and special routes, called 'Neighborhood Specials', which connect residential neighborhoods in Burlington with local schools.

Connecticut River Transit (CRT)

CRT operates transit service in southeastern Vermont as "The Current." The Current provides several fixed-route services, including commuter and local routes, in Windham and Windsor Counties. Deviations of up to three-quarters of a mile from the fixed-route are available on the local services by request; requests must be made a day

in advance. The Current also provides Dial-A-Ride service, which is open to anyone in more than 30 towns within Windham and Windsor Counties.

CRT also operates the Brattleboro BeeLine, which serves the Town of Brattleboro in southeastern Windham County (in the past the Town of Brattleboro had operated their own transit system through a contract arrangement). The Brattleboro BeeLine also provides complementary ADA paratransit service, curb-to-curb transportation for eligible persons with disabilities, who are traveling between origins and destinations within three-quarters of a mile of the fixed-route services.

Deerfield Valley Transit Association (DVTA)

DVTA operates a public transit system, known as the "MOOver," for the communities and resorts in Deerfield Valley. The MOOver fixed-route system serves the towns of Dover, Wilmington, Whitingham, and Readsboro, with a connection to Brattleboro as well. DVTA also offers an Elderly and Disabled Transportation Program, in which it provides demand-response service for seniors age 60 and over and ADA-eligible persons with disabilities. DVTA also organizes volunteer drivers to be available to provide seniors and persons with disabilities with rides to medical appointments.

Green Mountain Community Network (GMCN)

GMCN provides public transit service in and around Bennington County. The "Green Mountain Express", or GMX, provides many different types of service, including deviated fixed routes. GMCN provides a Shoppers' Express Service to Bennington grocery stores three times a week, and on request, service to the Route 9 Trailhead Monday through Friday. The GMX also provides Elderly, Disabled, and Visually Impaired services for the general public and human service agencies in the area, such as the Vermont Center for Independent Living, United Counseling Services, and Bennington Project Independence. Demand-response service and transportation with volunteer drivers are other service options, depending on vehicle and driver availability.

Green Mountain Transit Agency (GMTA)

GMTA (operated by CCTA) provides various forms of public transit in Grand Isle, Franklin, and Washington Counties; the towns of Orange, Williamstown, and Washington in Orange County; and the towns of Stowe and Morrisville in Lamoille County. Most services are deviated fixed routes, with deviations of up to three-quarters of a mile available with 24-hour advanced notice. Services are differentiated by region: Capitol District, Mad River Valley, Stowe/Lamoille Valley, and Franklin/Grand Isle Region. GMTA service has different branding depending on the service area. It is known as "Mad Bus" in the Mad River Valley and incorporates the Stowe, Vermont

logo on marketing materials for transit services in the Stowe/Lamoille Valley area. GMTA provides ADA paratransit services for eligible persons with disabilities who cannot use GMTA fixed-route buses in the Town of Stowe.

Marble Valley Regional Transportation District (MVRTD)

MVRTD, known as "The Bus," serves Rutland County and operates a fixed-route network in Rutland as well as commuter services to adjacent counties. MVRTD provides ADA paratransit service, complementary to the local fixed routes in Rutland, for eligible passengers with disabilities. A deviated fixed-route service is provided in Proctor, with four trips a day. The Bus also operates several commuter routes between Rutland and other cities within Rutland County, as well as in adjacent counties. Additional seasonal service is provided to Killington to accommodate shift work in the resort area. Other services offered by The Bus include human service or contractual transportation with organizations including Vocational Rehabilitation, Southern Vermont Council on Aging, Castleton Community Seniors, Program for All Inclusive Care for the Elderly, Inter-Age, and the Foster Grandparent Program, to name a few. MVRTD also provides subscription, point-to-point service in Rutland City and Rutland Town, and administers the Medicaid and Reach-Up Programs in Rutland County.

Rural Community Transportation, Inc. (RCT)

RCT provides public transit in the Northeast Kingdom, including Caledonia, Essex, and Orleans Counties, as well as Lamoille County. RCT provides transit through various modes, including cars, taxis, vans, volunteer drivers, and vanpools. Services are available to the general public as well as the clients of partner human service agencies, including the Area Agency on Aging, Northeast Kingdom Human Services, Central Vermont Council on Aging, and the Northeast Kingdom Community Action. RCT acts as the Medicaid/Reach-Up broker for its service area. RCT operates two deviated fixed-route services, which will deviate up to a quarter-mile from the published routes. RCT partners with the GMTA in providing a commuter service between Montpelier and St. Johnsbury, along the US 2 corridor. The agency also operates five "Green Express" shuttles that serve outlying villages and towns, primarily transporting riders for shopping trips.

Stagecoach Transportation Services, Inc. (STSI)

STSI provides public transit service in Orange and northern Windsor Counties. ADA-eligible passengers can request deviations of up to a quarter-mile on both these services, with notice at least 24 hours in advance. The commuter services operate on weekdays, offering one to three trips each in the morning and evening peak periods. Geared toward shopping trips, the deviated fixed-route services provide one roundtrip a day, four to five times a month. STSI also provides demand response service,

including transportation for human service agencies, senior citizen centers, and medical centers. STSI manages Medicaid transportation and arranges trips for eligible passengers via a public transit route, volunteer driver, or taxi. STSI also has a program called Ticket to Ride, in which the organization pays up to 80% of the cost of transportation for senior citizens, age 60 and over, and persons with disabilities for various trip purposes. Passengers that are not eligible for Medicaid or the Ticket to Ride program may also privately pay for trips. STSI also manages a volunteer driver program.

COMMUTER AND INTERCITY TRANSPORTATION

Commuter Bus

As described above, several of the State's public transit providers also provide commuter services, which generally operate only during peak periods Monday through Friday and include express segments. Across the State, these services provide economic lifelines for many outlying communities to access jobs and a range of services in larger cities, where major employers, medical centers, educational institutions, and retail centers are located. These services also tend to attract choice riders as many Vermonters travel long distances to work.

Ridesharing

Go Vermont is a State initiative aimed at providing easily accessible and reliable information about commuting and ridesharing resources, including transit routes and services. The service was upgraded from a manual system to a web-based system in 2010. The highly successful rideshare/ride match program now has 4,200 registrants in the matching database, and the web-based system has freed up resources for outreach, marketing, and education. You-tube, television, and radio ads and local-motion educational programs are being conducted, and Vermont has 29 park-and-ride lots (see Figure 4-11 in Technical Appendix D) located throughout the State, making it easier to carpool or vanpool to various destinations.

Intercity Bus

Scheduled intercity bus service in Vermont is currently provided by three carriers, Greyhound Lines, Yankee Trails, and Megabus. Intercity bus service is fixed-route, fixed-schedule bus service open to the general public, operated with over-the-road coaches with the capability of carrying baggage or package express. The Greyhound Lines service in Vermont is provided on two routes. On the Montreal to Boston route, Greyhound has Vermont stops in Burlington, Montpelier, and White River Junction. There are four round-trips per day on this corridor, which is operated

seven days per week. The Burlington stop is now located at the Burlington International Airport, which is served by all trips, but the earliest bus of the day (both directions) also stops in downtown. In Burlington all trips have a 15-minute layover at the airport, and in White River Junction the buses make an initial stop at the White River Junction depot, travel to Hanover, NH, and then return to the White River depot before continuing. In Boston, two of the inbound trips make stops at Logan Airport (but not any northbound trips). Three of the schedules in each direction make a stop at the Manchester, NH Airport. To use intercity bus from Burlington to New York, it is necessary to transfer either in Boston or Montreal.

The other Greyhound route operates a single daily round-trip from White River Junction to Springfield, MA. This route has stops in Vermont at Bellows Falls and Brattleboro. The southbound bus serving this corridor leaves White River Junction well after the arrival of the bus from Burlington, but the northbound arrives in time to allow a rider to connect to either Burlington- or Boston-bound buses with minimal delay. New York can also be accessed on this route once a day with a layover/transfer in Springfield, MA. Finally, it is possible for Vermonters in the GMCN service area to take Peter Pan Bus Lines from Williamstown, MA to New York City (two round trips per day).

In August, 2011 Megabus inaugurated daily intercity bus service between the University of Vermont campus in Burlington and Boston. This service is operated twice a day, and has no intermediate stops.

Vermont's only other remaining scheduled intercity bus service is provided by Yankee Trails, which offers two round-trips per day from Bennington to Albany, New York (but does not serve the Albany airport). This service is provided Monday to Friday only. The Yankee Trails scheduled service is not interlined with Greyhound, so a Vermont resident cannot buy a bus ticket in Bennington for travel beyond the Albany terminus. Yankee Trails offers only separate cash fares. The fare from Bennington to Albany is $4.00. As a result of the lack of an interline agreement with Greyhound, the stop in Albany is on the street in front of the Greyhound terminal. Also, Greyhound's website and telephone information service does not have information on the Yankee Trails service.

Finally, while it does not serve Vermont directly, Dartmouth Coach operates between Hanover/Lebanon, NH through New London, South Station, Logan International Airport in Boston with eight round trips per day, as well as between Hanover/Lebanon, NH and New York City once or twice a day, depending on the day of the week.

Intercity Rail

Two Amtrak lines currently serve Vermont. The Ethan Allen Express provides daily service, one roundtrip a day, from New York, NY to Rutland, VT by way of Albany, NY. This train service also stops in Castleton, VT. The Vermonter provides daily service from Washington, D.C. to St. Albans, VT, offering connections to Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York. One southbound and one northbound trip are provided each day. The other stops within Vermont include Essex Junction, Waterbury, Montpelier, Randolph, White River Junction, Windsor, Bellows Falls, and Brattleboro. Both train services are financed primarily through funding from VTrans.

Vermont – New York Ferries

Two companies provide ferry service between Vermont and New York. Lake Champlain Transportation (DBA: Lake Champlain Ferries) offers three crossings: the Northern Crossing from Grand Isle, VT to Plattsburgh, NY; the Central Crossing from Burlington, VT to Port Kent, NY; and the Southern Crossing from Charlotte, VT to Essex, NY. Ticonderoga Ferry offers a crossing between Ticonderoga, NY and Shoreham, VT. These ferry services generally operate year round, with availability depending on weather conditions during the winter months. Fares are charged for passengers, vehicles, and bicycles.

Chapter 3

Transit Needs in Vermont

An important component of the update to the PTPP was an analysis of transit needs, particularly at the regional and State levels. This analysis guided the policy approach to meet any unmet needs. A detailed review of transit needs is included in Technical Appendix D, *Technical Memorandum #4*: *Transit Needs Assessment,* which examines how well the State's existing transit network meets residents' needs and identified service gaps. This "gap analysis" identified issues ranging from geographic gaps and needs for increased service levels to the connectivity of transit and the desire for more information about services.

The results of this needs assessment were used to develop the public transit vision for Vermont and to recommend policies, goals, and objectives to improve the State's transit services and ensure that transit needs are met.

GAP ANALYSIS – TYPES OF SERVICES NEEDED

Technical Memorandum #4 provides the detailed analysis of the need for additional transit services in the State. The analysis included a number of elements:

- Review of needs identified in previous studies
- Public input on transit needs
- Demographic analysis of the need for transit
- Travel patterns and connectivity

Figures 3-1 and 3-2 demonstrate some results of the demographic analysis of transit needs. Figure 3-1 portrays relative transit need across the State based on the densities of potentially transit-dependent populations, including older adults, youth, persons with disabilities, low-income residents, and households without an automobile. This analysis identified Vermont's more urban areas as having the highest concentrations of potentially-transit dependent persons. Figure 3-2 portrays relative transit need based on the percentages of the same populations, complementing the

Figure 3-1: Relative Transit Need by Density of Potentially Transit-Dependent Populations (Scored through the Transit Dependence Index - Density)

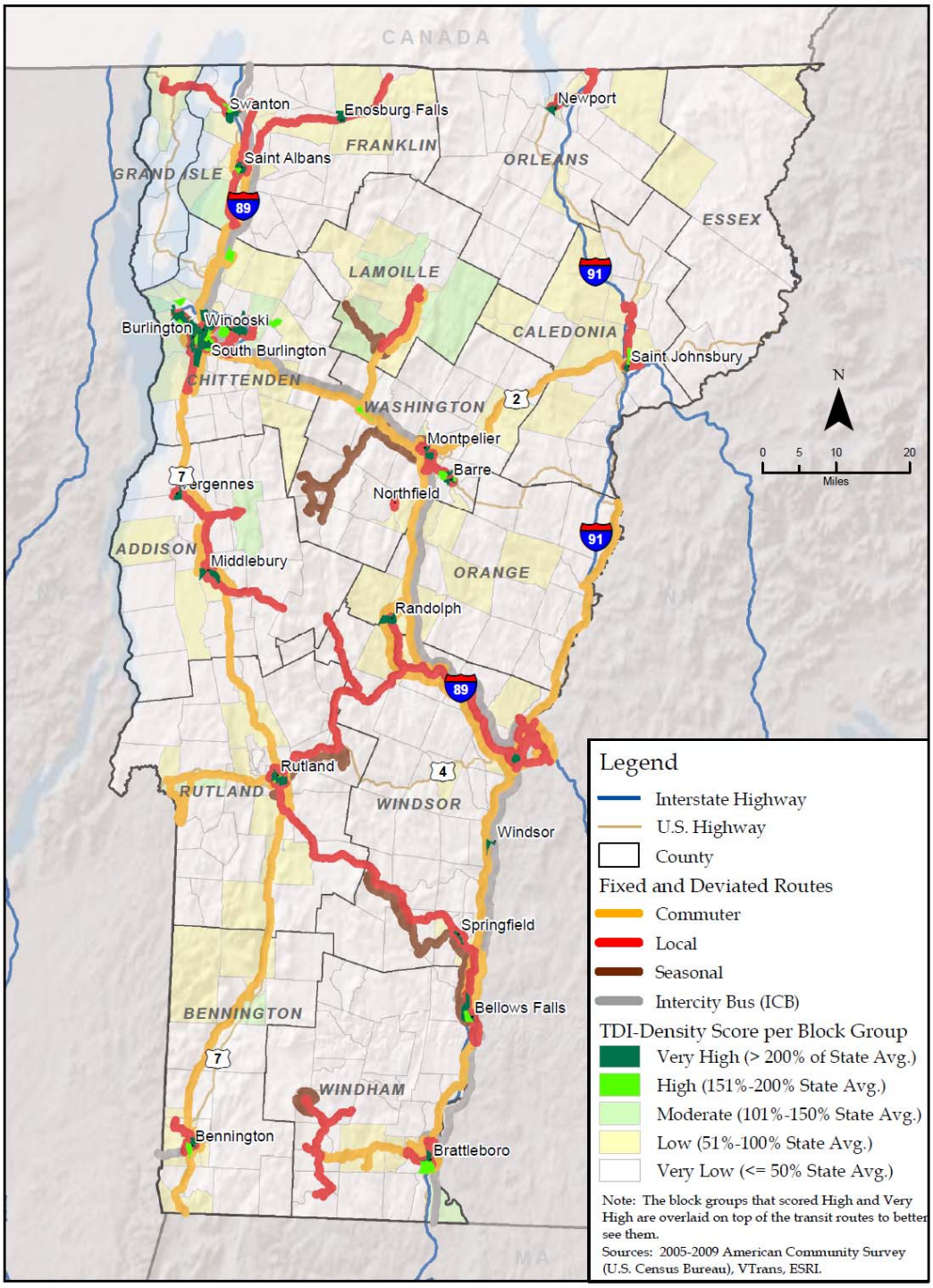
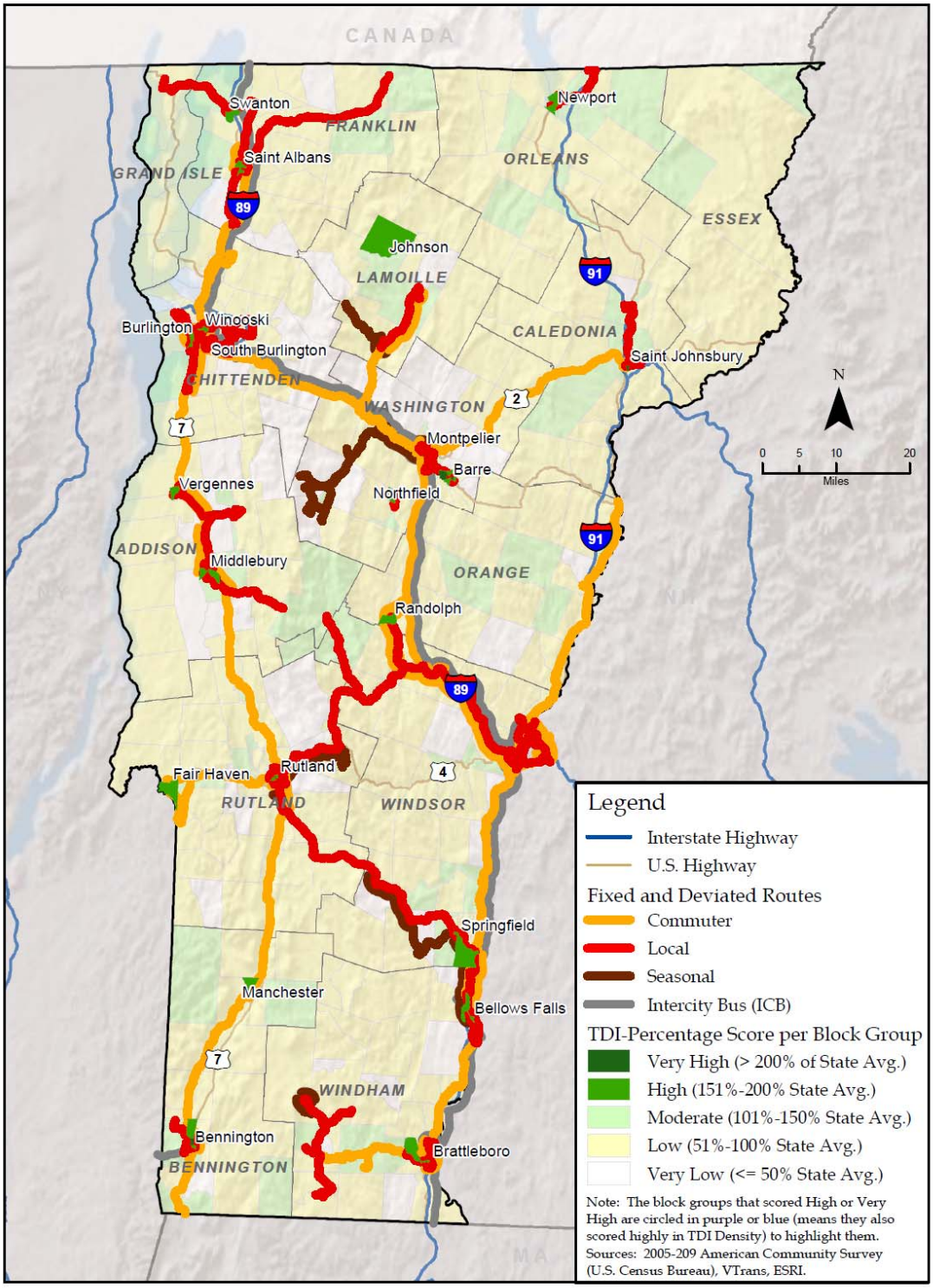


Figure 3-2: Relative Transit Need by Percentage of Transit-Dependent Populations (Scored through the Transit Dependence Index - Percentage)



density map by highlighting areas of potential transit need outside urban centers. The existing transit routes were overlaid on both demographic maps to identify geographic gaps in service, as well as potential service improvements in areas of higher transit need.

The analysis in Technical Memorandum #4 concluded that Vermont's existing transit providers generally provide good coverage through fixed- and deviated fixed routes in those parts of the State with the highest densities of potentially transit-dependent populations. All of the providers also offer demand- response, scheduled, and/or volunteer driver services to help meet transit needs in more rural areas, that do not have the density to support fixed-route services. The caveat is that most demand-response services are funded through the E&D Grant, Medicaid, or human service agencies. While E&D program services are open to the public, residents typically are clients of the human service agencies receiving services under other programs. Additional demand- response service, scheduled routes, and volunteer driver services would improve the convenience of public transit in outlying areas, where scheduled service to nearby large towns may only operate a few times a month and rides with volunteer drivers are subject to availability.

The Northeast Kingdom, Lamoille, and Orange Counties have areas with high relative transit needs, but limited fixed-route transit service; these areas also have lower population densities, which make fixed-route or deviated fixed-route transit service less feasible. Where such services already exist, such as Morrisville or the I-91 corridor in Orange County, these areas may be candidates for expanding service frequencies, hours, or days. In the Northeast Kingdom, where deviated fixed-route services are limited, new scheduled or deviated service could be implemented as population growth and densities warrant; these new services would play a vital role in connecting the Northeast Kingdom to the rest of the State.

The more urban areas around the State that currently have local or commuter services may also benefit from increased levels of service, such as expanded hours of service or higher frequencies, or new services such as weekend or evening service. Candidates for such transit growth include the areas surrounding Vermont's major cities: Burlington, St. Albans, Montpelier, Barre, Middlebury, Rutland, Springfield, Brattleboro, and Bennington. Hartford and White River Junction are additional areas with potential for transit growth, since the Upper Valley region hosts several major employers, educational facilities, and medical institutions. Expanding existing services provides further opportunities to coordinate transit between provider areas, both within Vermont and possibly across the State border to New Hampshire, New York, and Massachusetts, and better meet regional travel needs.

Vermont's current transit providers communicate often and engage in notable coordination efforts, from sharing information about other providers and highlighting connection points to sharing capital and training resources. The public transit networks also connect to other transportation modes, including park and ride lots, Amtrak, and Greyhound and other intercity bus providers, whenever possible. Vermont's public transit network provides good geographic coverage across the State through at least one form of transit (i.e., demand-response or volunteer driver service in the most rural areas). However, numerous opportunities exist to improve existing services, including more interlining of regional services and between local and intercity bus services, and introduction of new types of transit to boost local and regional accessibility.

Improvements to regional and inter-State connectivity, specifically making longer-distance trips feasible with fewer transfers and shorter travel times, were among the top transit needs identified through public input. In the past, Greyhound (formerly Vermont Transit) routes allowed Vermonters to travel between towns in-State. Increasingly, the in-State trips are being provided by local transit providers, and the gaps in long distance trips within Vermont are slowly being filled by regional and commuter services operated by the transit providers. However, many existing commuter and local routes have limited service hours, targeted toward commuters, and consequently do not meet regional transit needs for other trip purposes. Vermonters also frequently travel across the State borders for work, shopping, and recreation. With the reduction in intercity bus service, Greyhound now primarily provides the out-of-State linkages. Additional connections to New Hampshire especially would better meet the daily travel needs of Vermont residents and potentially encourage out-of-State visitors to Vermont.

While the demographic analysis focused on potentially transit-dependent populations, "choice riders" present another potential market for public transit. Choice riders are those that may own or have access to personal vehicles, but may choose to use transit services to save the costs related to owning an automobile, to reduce the environmental impacts of their transportation, or to experience less stressful commutes. The new commuter services that are emerging across the State often capture choice riders for these reasons. Improvements in the convenience and reliability of transit services are especially important for attracting these types of riders and increasing new transit users. Improvements ranging from increased service levels to additional amenities to technology, which provides real-time information and a trip planning function, were needs identified during this assessment.

GAP ANALYSIS – LEVEL OF SERVICE NEEDED

One question that was explored in the development of the PTPP is "*How much service would be needed to fully address the State's primary goal of meeting the mobility needs of*

transit dependent persons?" This section presents estimates of the number of trips that would be needed to fully address the State's primary goal of meeting basic mobility needs of transit dependent persons.

For this exercise, the transit dependent population is defined as persons without a car available for travel. Estimates of the number persons and households without a car available are shown in Table 3-1. The table also shows the current number of trips provided on public transit by geographical area.

Table 3-1: Carless Population

Geographic Area	Total Population	Zero Car Households	Estimated Carless Population	Trips Provided*
Urban	130,389	3,447	7,378	2,459,736
Small Town	216,345	7,720	16,853	585,434
Rural	273,680	3,971	9,589	386,905
TOTAL	**620,414**	**15,138**	**33,820**	**3,432,075**

* Data for FY10 excludes tourist and commuter services; includes demand responsive trips in each area. Urban represents CCTA's fixed route, E&D demand response, and E&D volunteer trips. Small Town data for services by all other providers designated as "rural" or "DR".

The number of trips that would be needed to meet basic mobility needs was estimated using a number of methods:

1. **National Household Travel Survey (NHTS) Trip Rates for Vermont**[6]– Two of the methods used data from the NHTS daily trip rates for households with one car to estimate how many trips carless households might take if a car were available.

2. **Reasonable Trip Rates** – Another exercise assumed that each carless person needs 12 round trips per month to meet basic mobility needs – for shopping, medical, and personal errands.

Since carless households currently are meeting *some* of their mobility needs through other modes (transit, bike, walking, riding with family or friends), the unmet needs were projected as the additional trips needed beyond current trip making.

[6] In 2009 the UVM Transportation Research Center, the MPO, and VTrans joined together and purchased an oversample or "add-on" of 1,690 households in the 2009 NHTS data —541 in Chittenden County and 1,149 in the rest of the state—resulting in a Vermont sampling intensity rate of 2.1%, in comparison to the national average of 0.4%.

All methods resulted in estimates of the need for between 6.7-6.9 million additional annual transit trips by people without cars beyond the approximately 3.4 million transit trips currently provided. It is important to note that, with the relatively high level of transit services available in Vermont, a large portion of the mobility needs of the transit dependent population are being met. While it probably is not reasonable to assume that all the unmet needs could or should be provided, the PTPP recognizes the need to expand transit services as funding permits.

Chapter 4

Public Transit Vision and Goals

This section presents a vision, goals, and a policy framework for public transit. For more information on how this vision relates to current services and issues identified during the planning process, refer to Technical Memorandum 5: *Policy and Performance Framework* which is included in Technical Appendix E.

VISION

The purpose of the PTPP is to define the goals, policies, and strategies for public transit in Vermont, all aimed at realizing a shared vision presented below. The 2009 Vermont Long Range Transportation Business Plan includes the overall VTrans vision for a "*safe, efficient and fully-integrated transportation system that promotes Vermont's quality of life and economic well-being*." VTrans' mission is "*to provide for the movement of people and commerce in a safe, reliable, cost-effective, and environmentally responsible manner*."

While the State does not currently have a defined vision for *public transit*, it could be inferred from goals outlined in Title 24, Chapter 126 of the V.S.A: *Public Transportation* and from the goals and vision expressed in the LRTBP. The proposed public transit vision is:

> *Public transit meets the basic mobility needs of all Vermonters including transit-dependent persons, provides access to employment and other modes, mitigates congestion, preserves air quality and promotes efficient energy use, and advances the State's economic development objectives – all in a safe, reliable, cost-effective, and environmentally responsible manner.*

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

VTrans' major public transit goal is to preserve and enhance the level of public transit in Vermont. Policy Statements and goals for public transit in Vermont are codified in 24 V.S.A. Chapter 126, S.5083. According to this section:

"It shall be the State's policy to make maximum use of available federal funds for the support of public transportation. State operating support funds shall be included in agency operating budgets to the extent that funds are available. State policy shall support the maintenance of existing public transit services and creation of new services including, in order of precedence, the following goals:

(1) Provision for basic mobility for transit-dependent persons, as defined in the public transit policy plan of January 15, 2000, including meeting the performance standards for urban, suburban, and rural areas. The density of a service area's population is an important factor in determining whether the service offered is fixed route, demand-response, or volunteer drivers.

(2) Access to employment, including creation of demand-response service.

(3) Congestion mitigation to preserve air quality and sustainability of the highway network.

(4) Advancement of economic development objectives, including services for workers and visitors that support the travel and tourism industry. Applicants for "new starts" in this service sector shall demonstrate a high level of locally derived income for operating costs from fare-box recovery, contract income, or other income.

The breadth of the goals recognizes that different areas of the State have varying needs and that the types of services that are most effective may vary by location and local conditions. While the legislative language indicates the goals are "in order of precedence," in recent years the language has not been interpreted to focus on one goal over any other. The policies being proposed in this PTPP have assumed that the goals are truly in order of precedence specified in the Statute.

This PTPP update proposes a change to the third goal. The Study Advisory Committee suggested that the goal on "congestion mitigation" be re-worded to broaden it to preserving air quality, which could involve congestion mitigation as well as other actions. The proposal is for the goal to read *"(3) preservation of air quality and promotion of efficient energy use in the State."*

Chapter 5

Key Issues

Through discussions with the PTAC, stakeholders, and the public, the most pressing issues that emerged are included in the Technical Appendices, *Technical Memorandum #3*: *Current Issues Related to Public Transit in Vermont,* namely:

- Funding Levels and Sources,
- Capital Investments,
- Coordination of Services,
- Interface with Land Use Planning,
- Regional Connectivity and Intercity Bus, and
- Improving the "Transit Experience."

FUNDING LEVELS AND SOURCES

Transit in Vermont has benefited from continued VTrans and legislative support, which has provided significant and creative levels of funding. Yet, funding is one of the most critical issues facing VTrans and its public transit providers. Many aspects of the funding issue are anticipated to arise in the next five to ten years:

- How to fund maintenance of current service levels,
- How to fund service expansions to serve unmet needs or gaps in service,
- How to manage and distribute funding for capital (vehicles, facilities, and passenger amenities), and
- How to maximize federal funding while encouraging and sustaining local financial support for services.

Funding to Maintain Current Levels of Service

While transit funding levels have been stable and grown some over the past few years, this has been accomplished in part by the use of federal funding under the CMAQ program to create new services. VTrans supports demonstration or pilot projects for new services using CMAQ funds. Demonstrations are funded for up to three years with up to 80% from the federal program and at least 20% from local funding; eligible expenses include operating and capital. The 2011 allocation of CMAQ dollars for transit in Vermont is $1.5M, and in 2010, the operating cost for the CMAQ routes was over $1M. Most of these services would be considered to have at least an "acceptable" performance under the current standards and would be eligible for continued funding.

One of the most critical funding issues that the State will face in the next few years is how to continue funding for successful services that are coming off the three year CMAQ demonstration period. Funding to transition successful CMAQ routes will require an increase in base funding allocation for systems. Without some source of additional funding, many of the successful services started under this program are now under threat of discontinuation. Local funding is not sufficient to pay the 100% net cost of the service – only the 20% local match.

VTrans has been providing the transit agencies with preventive maintenance funding from STP transfers in an attempt to backfill and replace the CMAQ funds when the services reach their three-year CMAQ funding time limit. STP funds can only be used for capital expenses, including "capitalized" preventive maintenance, and cannot be used to cover operating costs. Many of the public transit providers are now operating CMAQ services that cannot be funded with flexed STP preventive maintenance funding when they are no longer CMAQ eligible. Since most of the public transit providers have reached their capacity to absorb preventive maintenance funds (which may pay for 80% of an agency's eligible capitalized maintenance expenditures), funds from other source(s) would have to backfill any gap between the cost of the routes on CMAQ and the transit agency's ability to consume preventive maintenance funding.

A related issue is what may happen to funding if Vermont were to lose its status as an air-quality "attainment" area under the federal Clean Air Act (CAA). The State's CAA status allows it to use its CMAQ funds for purposes other than CAA compliance, namely to fund transit services statewide. Public transit is not only a beneficiary of the State's compliance status, it is itself also a valuable tool in Vermont's ability to meet air quality standards. Vermont's CAA status may change in the coming years given the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's need to strengthen the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) to protect human health.

The range of the current (2011) proposed Ozone NAAQS challenges Vermont's attainment status. Loss of this status will affect the use of CMAQ funds in the future. Were that status to be lost, the State would have to re-direct its CMAQ funds to activities aimed at improving air quality in those areas of the State that are not in attainment (likely the Southwest and Burlington areas). These activities could include transit services, but the State would no longer have the flexibility to use CMAQ for its Statewide New Services demonstration program.

Another related, but unresolved issue, is what the State and transit providers will do if federal earmarks are eliminated. Under the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), much of this was in the form of earmarks to VTrans and the transit operators (currently there is almost $37 million in active federal earmarks to local transit operators in the State. It is uncertain what will happen to earmarks under the 2011 or 2012 Congress and reauthorization of the federal transit programs. The two issues with earmarks are: 1) what will happen if they are eliminated? and 2) if they are continued, how they can best be managed in Vermont?

Finally, the management of earmarks to local communities is a difficult subject since the State does not contribute to these projects financially. Yet, it appears that too many earmarked funds languish due to municipalities' inabilities to manage FTA projects.

Funding for New Services and Expansions

Clearly, not all transit needs are being met in Vermont, or any other State. This project and the Short-Range Public Transportation Plans (SRPTPs) have identified gaps in service. Proposals for new services and expansions are initiated by the local transit providers and the communities they serve. As noted in Section 5083, "*Proposals for new service shall be evaluated by examining feasibility studies submitted by providers. These studies shall address criteria set forth in the public transit policy plan of January 15, 2000.*" The current method for creating new services is for the service to be proposed by the transit providers in their annual grant applications and funded as part of VTrans' New Starts Three-Year Demonstration program, using CMAQ funds. If a new service performs adequately, it becomes eligible for continued funding as an established "existing" service.

Given the scarcity of resources, it is important to plan services with the highest potential for success. Service expansions were a major focus in the 2000 PTPP that recommended the SRPTP process. The requirement for SRPTPs was legislatively mandated as a means of identifying and justifying where additional public transit services were needed. The first round of these plans was conducted by the transit providers in 2004. One of the primary purposes of the SRPTP was to explore the need

and feasibility for new transit services – including estimates of budget requirements. A more recent effort to update the plans was abandoned after the effectiveness of the approach came into question. While there is a recognition that transit services need to be well planned, the requirement that planning take place in this manner was eliminated from the legislation in 2009.

Finally, a related issue is how to expand services beyond the level possible under CMAQ. Relying on CMAQ alone will not allow the State to expand transit services to fill the gaps identified in this PTPP. While it may be possible to extend the period for CMAQ funding beyond the initial demonstration period, the State should be looking at ways to increase services over the long haul.

Local Funding and Fares

The ability of the transit systems to generate local share is a major issue for some providers. The local funds needed to support public transit typically come from the towns they serve, the farebox, and contracts with human service agencies. Local communities and residents in some areas also contribute a significant amount for transit services from their local property taxes. In some areas, there is continuing interest in developing alternatives to the local property tax as the primary source of local match.

With the 2007 PTPP, VTrans set a goal for all providers to cover at least 20% of their operating budget from non-FTA/FHWA and non State-sources (this is exclusive of capital, Rideshare, RTAP, JARC, and Medicaid funds). However, achievement of this goal has not been the focus of recent performance reports and additional data is needed to determine the extent to which the standard is met.

CAPITAL INVESTMENTS – VEHICLES, FACILITIES, AND PASSENGER AMENITIES

One of the broad issues considered in the PTPP is capital planning for the State's public transportation system. There has never been enough funding available to satisfy all the needs, and VTrans has had to prioritize what needs are funded. The State places priority on replacing existing vehicles and has an informal way to "prioritize" the need for replacement vehicles based on vehicle condition. In an effort to extend the useful life of the fleets, VTrans has distributed $1 million annually ($500,000 urban and $500,000 rural – allocated to providers based on expenditures in 2005) through a preventive maintenance program set up by the legislature.

Although expansion vehicles for new services can be funded through CMAQ as part of the New Service grants, the PTAC has expressed an interest in developing a

policy on expansion vehicles. This may be particularly timely as the State has received a State of Good Repair (SGR) grant as well as earmarks from the FTA for *replacement* of capital, but not for expansion vehicles. An additional vehicle issue raised has been the need for consistency of vehicle manufacturers for ease of maintenance. Finally, the need for a policy on when and how transit facilities are funded was also raised as an issue.

Outreach meetings and stakeholder interviews have suggested that the capital planning issue has three major aspects, one dealing with vehicles, one with facilities, and a third with other capital, but particularly technology enhancements. Each of these is discussed below, but as will be seen, they are related.

Vehicles

Currently VTrans' policy on vehicle replacement and capital focuses on ensuring compliance with FTA requirements regarding procurement and satisfactory continuing control. Recent efforts in funding have focused on replacements for worn-out vehicles to bring the statewide fleet into a state of good repair, and there is general agreement that the state of the vehicle fleet is (or soon will be, as funded vehicles arrive) as good as it has been in a very long time. Issues that have been identified include the need for consistent policy to support the fleet, including:

- A clear statement of vehicle replacement policy and consistent application, which relates the design life to consideration for replacement (and is consistent with FTA policy);
- A clear identification of the design life of different types of vehicles, in order to avoid either premature replacement or keeping vehicles on the road past their useful lives;
- Policy regarding allowable spare ratios to provide adequate backup, but avoiding excessive spare ratios and underutilization of vehicles;
- Policy regarding expansion vehicles, and when funding for fleet expansion will be considered;
- Changes in procurement to provide for statewide vehicle procurements instead of individual system procurements;
- Funding to support future services. The key to this is planning to predict vehicle capital needs in future years, by type of vehicle and program. This planning would help identify appropriate and allowable funding to provide timely replacement or meet expansion needs, and should be done annually.

- Better monitoring of preventive maintenance activities to extend the life of the fleet. The State could institute periodic reviews of sample preventive maintenance records of providers.

Transit Operating Facilities

Although vehicles remain the State's priority under its capital program, it has an interest in ensuring that the transit operators have adequate facilities. Currently VTrans does not have a policy regarding the funding and construction of transit operating and maintenance facilities. The State has not provided funding for facilities, either federal capital or a share of the local match. At the same time, a number of transit operators have identified a need for a facility, and have independently sought funding for feasibility studies, architectural and engineering work, land, and construction. As examples, STSI renovated the Randolph railroad freight house to create an administrative and storage facility, CRT has completed a new operating facility, DVTA has been working on a facility in Wilmington for some time, and ACTR is developing an operating facility. CCTA has its own facility. Most have sought the funding through federal earmarks, providing the local match through their own local funding sources. The VTrans role has been limited to providing letters of support, although in the case of the new facility for ACTR, the State is involved in providing the site. VTrans is not administering any of the grants for the facility projects that are in process.

In the absence of any VTrans policy regarding facilities, questions have been raised even about providing letters of support for these local projects, as there is no State position on which systems might need what kind of facility. At the same time, the lack of a coordinated process between VTrans and the local agencies regarding these earmark projects has also led to a situation in which a locally desired project may languish due to a lack of local administrative support or match funding. Simultaneously, Congressional efforts to eliminate earmarks may well end the opportunity for this type of local initiative project. All of these concerns suggest that there is a need for VTrans to develop policies to address facilities—both the operating facilities sought by CRT, ACTR, and DVTA, and intermodal passenger facilities.

Passenger Facilities

Another potential policy could address standards for when the State would consider various passenger amenities justified, and would accordingly contribute to the cost. The most costly of these is shelters, feasible for transfer points, high ridership stops, and major attractors such as universities, colleges, and hospitals.

COORDINATION OF SERVICES

Coordination of transportation resources among State agencies, transit providers (public and private), and human service providers is a means of ensuring that services are not duplicative or overlapping and that resources are used in a cost effective manner. Since the last PTPP, there has been an increased emphasis on coordination at the federal level. Even though Vermont is a recognized leader in the coordination of transportation resources among public transit and human service agencies, there is a need to maintain the level of coordination.

The AHS and VTrans have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that outlines the manner in which they will coordinate (the original MOU expired, but a new one was recently executed). Departments and programs within AHS use the public transit provider for client transportation where appropriate. VTrans and AHS have worked to make funding more flexible and to encourage human service programs to use public transit providers as regional brokers of service for human service agency clients.

The most important coordination issue currently faced by Vermont's transit program is the need to maintain the linkage between transit providers and the State's Medicaid program.[7] Recognizing that coordination of transportation services is beneficial to both, the promotion and enhancement of coordinated human service transportation and general public transit has long been a Vermont State policy. State legislation in 24 V.S.A, Chapter 126, Section 5090 regarding Human Service Transportation States,

> *"The secretary of human services shall direct agency of human service programs to purchase client transportation through public transit systems in all instances where public transit services are appropriate to client needs and as cost efficient at other transportation."*

VTrans and AHS have historically worked to make funding more flexible and to encourage human service programs to use public transit providers as regional brokers

[7]One requirement of Title XIX of the Social Security Act (Medicaid) is that States assure necessary transportation to the nearest available and appropriate medical facilities for Medicaid eligible clients. Part of this assurance is accomplished through their Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT). While Title XIX does not include specific mention of NEMT, federal regulation, and the body of case law that have evolved from language in the Act clearly mandate that every State Medicaid program include provisions for necessary transportation of Medicaid recipients to and from providers of medical services. While funded with a combination of State and federal dollars, the programs themselves are State run, with each State determining its approach to NEMT. This explains why there are so many variations in service design among the States (and in some States each county).

of service for human service agency clients. The State recently developed a coordinated transportation plan in accordance with the requirements in SAFETEA-LU and the designation of regional brokers as relatively new mechanisms to advance this policy.

AHS has historically relied on community-based public transit brokers to serve the Medicaid clients residing in set geographical areas, while also coordinating NEMT services with their general public transit services. At $12M annually, the Vermont Health Access NEMT program is a major source of transportation funding in the State. The Department of Vermont Health Access (DVHA) within AHS administers the NEMT program.

Most of the public transit systems in Vermont function as the community-based brokers for NEMT. In this role, the transit agencies coordinate public transit and NEMT into one unified system for residents within their areas.[8] The current arrangement has many advantages, but also has raised questions regarding potential conflicts of interest; since the brokers can provide the service themselves, they could assign trips to their services despite the fact that the trip could be provided in a more cost-efficient manner. This is one of a number of issues raised by DVHA which desires to achieve improvements in accountability, quality, and access as well as lower service costs.

If DVHA competitively bids for NEMT broker(s), the existing transit systems could certainly bid on those contracts. However, if one or more of them are unsuccessful and a new non-coordinated broker is chosen, this could have a major impact on transit services in the State.

INTERFACE WITH LAND USE PLANNING

Discussions with stakeholders and the public have recognized that land use decisions can have a significant impact on the potential for residents to use transit. The discussions began with the desire to use transit as a means to create and support Transit Oriented Developments (TODs) in the State. TODs typically have land use density sufficient to support transit services, mixed land uses, and pedestrian- and bike-oriented designs that encourage walking and biking, less auto ownership and less auto mode share, and proximity of destinations such as retail, employment, and residential areas to transit stations/services. Vermont's traditional settlement pattern of compact, mixed-use villages surrounded by open countryside is consistent with smart-growth principles and meets the basic requirements of developments that could support transit services.

[8]In addition, DVHA purchases CCTA monthly passes for frequent-NEMT users that can ride fixed-route buses.

It is unlikely that densities and transit investments in most areas of the State would be able to support the traditional TOD concept where development occurs around, and as a result of, transit facilities and services. However, the concept of Transit Oriented Design, which considers the contribution transit makes to the mobility of residents in communities during the design stage, is appropriate. Vermont's primary statewide land use planning goal (24 VSA 4302(c)1) guides development toward existing and planned settlements. In doing so, Vermont positions itself to combat sprawl and create developments that could eventually support the provision of effective inter-municipal transit services, if local zoning codes are revised to be consistent with State planning goals and legislation. The State legislature has enacted a number of laws that create incentives for growth in its compact centers, including the Vermont Downtown Community Development Act, which created a process for revitalizing downtowns and village centers. More recently, 2006 legislation created a program to establish "designated downtowns" that would endorse development-ready, high density, mixed-use centers oriented around downtowns and village centers. The bill supports investment in growth center infrastructure that facilitates pedestrian and bike traffic and supports the use of public transit.

For most of the State, the most pressing policy issue is the need to establish a process to require or encourage that transit is considered when local municipalities make local land use decisions. Transit operators have a responsibility to reach out and participate in land use planning process. At the same time localities need to pay more attention to transit in the overall transportation planning and permitting process, so that development and major facilities (such as medical facilities) do not continue to be built without accommodations for transit service or off the transit network entirely. The MPO for the Chittenden County region and the RPCs across the State could play a role in facilitating transit considerations in local land use decisions.

The MPO and RPCs in Vermont conduct both regional and local planning. One of the MPO/RPCs' primary roles is to provide planning expertise and technical assistance to municipalities within their regions in a cost-effective manner. MPO/RPC staff work with municipalities on a range of planning issues including land use, permitting, and transportation, and are therefore uniquely positioned to facilitate interaction between these realms, particularly since staff at the municipal level are often dedicated to one planning realm. The MPO/RPCs work with a variety of entities including counties, towns, transit providers, and developers, and can take the initiative to bring these stakeholders together to actively incorporate Transit Oriented Design into new or planned developments.

The RPCs also have a contract with VTrans to coordinate the TPI and ensure local participation in the transportation decision-making process in order to meet federal requirements. With extensive experience in public outreach, as well as knowledge about planning and project development processes in both land use and

transportation, the RPCs can serve as the liaison between community groups and residents and local governments. RPCs can both advocate for transit considerations in local land use planning and educate local officials and the public about the benefits of Transit Oriented Design. The MPO and RPCs can also provide municipalities with valuable information and insights on how regional plans may impact local activities, or vice versa. Specifically, RPCs might promote the growth of regional transit networks or regional coordination of public transit and human services transportation to meet the needs that arise from new developments.

Other policy improvements to integrate transit and land use planning include adding evaluations of transit potential to local zoning and planning processes and implementing pedestrian-scale design. Current State development review considerations (including the Act 250 review process) do not directly address public transit and may only require a traffic impact study. State and local development review processes should look at improving transit services or addressing the mobility needs of Vermonters in the Act 250 review process. Finally, VTrans staff should be reviewing Regional Transportation Plans to ensure that transit is adequately addressed.

REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY AND INTERCITY BUS

A newly emerging and related set of issues in Vermont is the growth of regional commuter services, their success, and the need to develop a sustainable funding basis. Like the intercity connections, it reflects the fact that transit and transportation needs are increasingly long distance in nature, and are not limited to one service area. Determining the State role and the way in which regional and intercity needs can be addressed is one of the key policy areas initially identified for inclusion in the PTPP and in subsequent public outreach meetings. These issues are related in that they are generally services that provide longer-distance service, often on routes that go between the service areas of different providers. Key issues include the need for funding to maintain regional services that are meeting performance criteria and whether there are additional regional needs. On the intercity side, issues include the likely demand for such service (or whether the regional services are addressing intercity needs), and if warranted, how it can be funded and operated.

Inter-regional Commuter Routes

Since the last PTPP transit systems in Vermont have responded to regional commuter needs by developing regional commuter routes, and in general these are quite successful. For the most part, these services have been established under the State's New Services program, using CMAQ funding which provides operating assistance for three years. In general, these services have been designed based on identification of significant long-distance commuter patterns, focusing on attracting

"choice" riders who may have a private vehicle option. Ridership on most of the services has grown rapidly (one, the route from White River Junction to St. Johnsbury was discontinued due to poor performance), and led to calls for increased park and ride lot capacity and the need to ensure that transit serves these lots where appropriate.

A key issue for these services is funding, including local match. Started as "New Starts" with CMAQ funding, the initial three-year period for operating funding is ending or will shortly end. Under State policy regarding New Services, at this point successful services would be transitioned into the base program for these systems—potentially requiring additional funding from different sources such as STP transfers for bus purchases as well as State funds. Also, these services would require local match as part of the base program. Some have expressed concerns that on shared routes local match may be problematic. More than anything, a lack of a plan for future funding for these kinds of services would seem to be the major concern.

Intercity Bus

Over the past decade the State's primary intercity bus carrier, Greyhound Lines, reduced Vermont services to four daily round trips on the I-89 corridor and one daily-round trip on I-91 between White River Junction and Springfield, Massachusetts. Another carrier, Yankee Trails, provides two daily round-trips between Bennington and Albany. Vermonters can also access Dartmouth Coach services to Boston and New York City at stops in Hanover (Dartmouth College), Lebanon (Dartmouth Regional Transportation Terminal), and New London (park and ride lot off I-89) in New Hampshire. All other intercity bus service was discontinued due to a lack of profitability. Corridors that lost service included the Route 7 corridor between Burlington and Bennington (and continuing service to Albany), the link from Rutland to White River Junction, the link from Rutland to Springfield, and White River Junction to Newport via St. Johnsbury.

One of the other important distinctions between the regional commuter services and rural intercity bus service is the fact that there is an FTA program directed toward maintaining or improving rural intercity service. Section 5311(f) was developed as a policy response to exactly the situation faced by Vermont, the loss of rural intercity bus services. Under Section 5311(f) each State is directed to use up to 15% of its overall Section 5311 rural transit funding allocation for rural intercity bus services—unless the State certifies that there is no unmet rural intercity need in the State. Prior to SAFETEA-LU, States were left on their own regarding how to make the determination of "no unmet rural intercity need," but in the SAFETEA-LU legislation language was added requiring States to conduct a consultation process involving the intercity providers, studies or analysis, and other stakeholders. If, following that consultation, the State did certify, it would need to document the consideration it made of the input provided.

Vermont's certification status for the past several years is not documented at this point, but the State has not set aside the 15% amount or built up any kind of balance in a Section 5311(f) program. It is likely that submittal of a certification letter to reprogram these funds would require documentation of a consultation process. It is possible that such a process would not be able to say there is no unmet need, given the documented loss of rural intercity access and the likely written comments from Greyhound about the potential need for linkages to Rutland (at a minimum).

The outreach and stakeholder input to this PTPP process recognized the loss of the intercity services, but raised questions as well. One is whether the needs are being met by the regional commuter routes that have been developed. The possible role of the regional services in providing access to the existing intercity network could be considered in the consultation process, but the regional services, as currently provided, do not actually provide for the "meaningful" connection called for in the Section 5311(f) program circular. A "meaningful connection" is one in which the Section 5311(f) service must serve the same locations at times that permit convenient transfers to and from the national intercity network. The federal guidance does not specify how close the arrival and departure times of the Section 5311(f) service must be to those of the national intercity network carrier. In addition, while the map of Vermont's existing fixed and deviated services might make it appear that the regional services have filled in for the discontinued intercity routes, making some of these trips through end-to-end transfers between different regional operators would be so inconvenient and time-consuming that the trips are not practical or feasible.

The other question raised in the outreach was whether or not there is potential demand for intercity services, given that Greyhound abandoned them as unprofitable. Greyhound has supplied data on the former Vermont Transit/Greyhound routes, and it appears that the Route 7 Corridor had revenues on some trips of $2.35/mile, which means that if Greyhound (or another intercity operator) had costs of $4.00 per mile, these trips would have had a farebox recovery of nearly 60%, making it one of the better transit routes (on this measure) in the State. Note that intercity services need to be assessed differently, because there are relatively few boardings and long trips, with fares that vary by distance—so measures of effectiveness need to focus on how many passengers are on the bus over what distance, not just how many boardings there are.

Also, demand could be assessed using the new rural intercity bus demand Toolkit developed under the Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) Project B-37. A preliminary use of the Toolkit results in estimated ridership for the Route 7 corridor of 11,400, if the service connects to the airports in both Burlington (Greyhound's station in Burlington is at the airport already) and Albany, with lower ridership of 5,700 if it does not. The data supplied by Greyhound shows that ridership on the Burlington – Rutland – Albany route was approximately 22,000 boardings annually. However, there was not enough demand to cover the fully-allocated cost of

the services at Greyhound cost levels—but a combination of operating assistance and a lower-cost operator might allow for service, at least in this corridor, that would have comparable performance to other rural transit routes in the State.

If one accepts the notion that a consultation process may find unmet needs in the Route 7 corridor (or elsewhere), the next questions that arise are those related to funding. Vermont's Section 5311(f) 15% share of its overall Section 5311 allocation would be about $400,000, and there is always the issue of local match—as the operating ratios for this program are the same as Section 5311 generally, with a limit on the federal share of 50% of the net operating deficit. Fortunately, as a means of dealing with the local match requirements for intercity services, FTA has an administrative program regulation for Section 5311(f) that allows for rural intercity projects to be defined as having both a subsidized segment and an unsubsidized segment. Bus-miles on the connecting unsubsidized segments can be valued at their fully-allocated cost, and 50% of this value (representing the value of capital) can be counted as in-kind operating match for the subsidized segment. With artful identification of project routes and services, it is thus possible to use the in-kind match to cover all or a large portion of the required operating match.

Technical Memorandum #3, included in Technical Appendix C, presented an illustration of the application of this funding method for a Burlington-Bennington-New York State line route, operated one round-trip per day, 365 days per year, connecting to Greyhound services at the Burlington Airport. The memorandum also presented an example of the use of the Pilot Project for an expanded rural intercity project, that would include not only the Burlington-Bennington-New York State line route described above, but a second connecting route from Rutland to Springfield, Bellows Falls, and Brattleboro, where it could potentially connect to a possible Section 5311(f) route in New Hampshire that would serve Keene (and continue to Boston). The Pilot Project funding mechanism can reduce or eliminate the need for operating cash match. It does require that the firm operating the unsubsidized service (which in Vermont would be Greyhound Lines) provide a letter agreeing to the use of their miles, and identifying the routes, schedules, and miles being contributed. Use of this funding method also means that the available federal funding does not cover as much service as it would if there were local cash match, as it is effectively being used as 100% of the net operating deficit.

In either event, it is likely that some or all of the 15% Section 5311(f) set-aside would need to be used to support these services. This would reduce the amount of Section 5311 funding available for other services by the amount used for rural intercity projects. The 15% set-aside amount is approximately $400,000.

IMPROVING THE "TRANSIT EXPERIENCE"

The public input process identified several needs related to improving the transit user experience. Transit riders requested additional amenities, such as bus shelters and posted schedules, and safety features, including more lighting at bus stops. There is a need to plan and implement good pedestrian connections to transit stops, adequate street crossings, signage, ADA accessible bus stops and pedestrian connections, and bike racks and bike parking at major transit stops and facilities. Residents also want more information about transit services, whether using smart technology to add predictability to transit service or unifying provider information through a statewide trip planner. The public also requested an orientation for new riders, particularly youth, to learn how to use transit and become more comfortable leaving their cars at home. Residents also discussed the need to attract new riders by promoting the benefits of transit, such as savings on gas costs and lowering individual carbon footprints, and changing the negative image of transit as the "welfare bus."

Chapter 6

Public Transit Framework and Policies

POLICY FRAMEWORK

As defined in the legislation, *public transit* service as a subset of public transportation is defined as "*…any fixed route, paratransit, transportation brokerage, user-side subsidy, and or rideshare/ride-match program which is available to any person upon payment of the proper fare, and which is promoted to be available to all members of the public, including those with special needs*" (24 V.S.A. § 5088(5)).

The State is committed to meeting its vision and goals for public transit as expressed above and the PTPP recognizes that there are opportunities to expand public transit services in the State to meet the needs of all Vermonters. To this end, the State will continue to expand and enhance public transit services in the State. The current framework for Vermont public transit policy includes strategies aimed at:

- Preserving and enhancing existing public transit services that are well used by the traveling public,

- Monitoring the performance of transit services by VTrans and the boards of the transit providers to ensure the maximum value from available resources, and

- Using any additional public transit funds to support and promote the four goals noted above as in 24 V.S.A Chapter 126, S.5083.

Many of the challenges of providing comprehensive public transit in a State as rural as Vermont were discussed in detail in the technical memoranda included in the Technical Appendices. As described in the previous chapter, the most pressing policy level issues that have emerged during the PTPP process can be categorized as addressing:

- Funding levels and sources,
- Capital investments,
- Coordination of Services,
- Interface with land use planning,
- Regional connectivity and intercity bus, and
- Improving the "Transit Experience."

Each of these issues was also described in Technical Memorandum #3, Technical Appendix C, along with possible alternative approaches for how each might be addressed in State policy. The final policies selected for inclusion in the PTPP are presented below.

POLICIES ON FUNDING LEVEL AND SOURCES

There are a number of State policies that will continue to provide the basic framework for how transit services are funded in the State. Currently VTrans policies being maintained include:

- Continue to seek additional funding to expand and enhance transit services to meet additional needs in the State.

- Continue to maximize the use of available federal funds to support transit and to assist with State funding to the extent that funds are available within the State budget.

- Continue to seek innovative funding sources and mechanisms that will increase investment in public transit, especially from the federal level.

- Strongly encourage providers to maximize local funding for public transit and all parties strive to increase the level of local funding to meet a goal of 20% local funding (exclusive of capital, RTAP, JARC, Rideshare, and Medicaid funding).[9]

- Continue funding only to services that successfully meet performance standards and use resources effectively.

[9]Some funding flexibility was built into the Elders and Persons with Disabilities program to allow operators to use non-cash match under that program (the value of volunteer hours can be used as local match), but the State still requires locally derived cash match the remaining programs.

- Focus service expansions on meeting the basic mobility first, then subsequently, access to employment, congestion mitigation, and economic development in that order.

Increasing Funding Levels

As outlined in Chapter 3, even with the relatively high level of transit services available in Vermont, not all transit needs are met in the State. The State will continue to seek additional State and federal funding to help meet these needs, particularly as new federal funding programs become available (such as the new Veteran's Transportation Program).

Based on the estimate of 2010 operating budgets and required vehicle capital costs from all federal, state, and local sources, the current level of services cost about $46M annually (2011 dollars). At an annual inflation rate of 3%, the cost to maintain the current level of services would rise to almost $53M annually over the next five years. (Table 6-1)

Table 6-1: Estimated Operating and Capital Costs to Maintain Existing Services

	Fiscal Year					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
*Operating**						
Federal/State	$14,534,691	$14,970,732	$15,419,854	$15,882,449	$16,358,923	$16,849,690
Total**	$39,419,691	$40,602,281	$41,820,350	$43,074,960	$44,367,209	$45,698,225
Capital (Vehicles Only)						
Federal/State	$6,325,650	$4,960,377	$3,958,451	$7,269,354	$4,614,731	$6,149,221
Total	$7,028,500	$5,511,530	$4,398,279	$8,077,060	$5,127,479	$6,832,468
TOTAL	**$46,448,191**	**$46,113,811**	**$46,218,629**	**$51,152,020**	**$49,494,688**	**$52,530,693**

Note: Assumes 3% inflation for operating and capital costs.
*Excluding federal funds that go directly to CCTA
**May include human service contract funds such as Medicaid transportation

The policy plan acknowledges, however, that a significant increase is unlikely in the short- term (5 year horizon). An overall increase in funding is unlikely beyond the funding needed to cover increases in cost (fuel, etc). Thus, many elements of the policy plan are aimed at doing more with the same level of funding. The plan acknowledges that transit funding per capita in Vermont is higher than in other States with a similar

rural/urban mix[10]. Currently, the federal and state transit budget for 2011 is $26M or almost $41.50 per capita. This is includes almost $7M in State funds, a significant commitment by the State which surpasses the commitment in other states that have a rural nature similar to Vermont.

Maintaining Current Funding Innovations

When considering policy changes, it is important not to abandon the innovative funding mechanisms currently employed by the State. To this end, the following policies will be maintained:

- Continue "flexing" (transferring) highway funds annually into the State's transit program to maximize their use for transit; particularly flexing federal highway funds from the STP (for non-operating costs) and CMAQ (for operating and capital funding for new service demonstration projects).

- Continue the integration of E&D operating funds with its Non-Urbanized Area Formula Grants (Section 5311) to maximize coordination between human service agencies and public transit providers and to maximize use of vehicle capacity on all vehicles.

- Continue the VTrans program to capitalize preventive maintenance in an effort to prolong the life of the operator's fleets and to and allow FTA operating funds to be used to cover other operating expenses.

- Continue with the VTrans' goal of 20% local funding (exclusive of capital, RTAP, JARC, Rideshare, and Medicaid funding) and reinstitute efforts to track and report on provider performance in meeting this goal.

- Continue to allow volunteer hours (in-kind) to be used as local match in the E&D Program.

Expanding Services

It appears that the VTrans New Service demonstration program (formerly called New Starts) is an effective way for VTrans to fund service expansions aimed at meeting additional needs. Yet relying solely on CMAQ as the funding mechanism for this program has created some challenges, most significant being how to increase baseline funding enough to absorb the cost of successful CMAQ new services. The following

[10] Despite its rural character, the State spent about $11.00 in State funding per capita on transit services in 2011. The other nine States significant rural populations in rural areas spent between $.43 - $4.52 in State funds on transit in 2008 -– less than half of the amount spent by Vermont that year ($9.50 per capita).

policy changes are intended to address the need to ensure that resources are used in the most effective manner.

Policies to Eliminate Under-Performing Routes or Services

One policy change aimed at freeing up funding for new services is to accelerate the process of eliminating "under-performing" routes/services so that resources can be shifted to successful services more quickly.

VTrans policy States that services that consistently under-perform and do not meet performance standards will not be supported with State/federal funds. Currently, the State monitors performance both monthly (using the monthly services indicator report) and annually. Existing policy would discontinue funding for existing "baseline" routes/services that do not meet performance standards for two consecutive years while CMAQ routes that have not performed well within the three year demonstration period currently are not considered for continued funding or conversion to a baseline service.

The new policy will accelerate the process and allow less time for services to prove themselves. VTrans will have the flexibility to work with the systems to extend the improvement period depending on the anticipated time involved in making improvements. This policy will allow under-performing *established "baseline" services* a total of 12 months to improve and *new services* a total of 18 months to become tested and proven. This could free-up a significant amount of funding.

The process over the 12-18 month period will entail:

- VTrans staff will review route/services performance quarterly to identify services/routes that are under-performing (based on the monthly reports submitted by the operators). VTrans will work toward a more automated method for transit systems to submit their monthly service indicator reports; in conjunction with more detailed procedures for VTrans staff to monitor and flag services that are under-performing.

- For established "baseline" services – if the services fall below acceptable performance levels in either the productivity or cost measure for two consecutive quarters, VTrans will work with the provider to adjust the service, provide more marketing, etc.

- For new services - if the services do not meet acceptable performance levels in either the productivity or cost measure after 12 months, VTrans will work with the provider to adjust the service, provide more marketing, etc.

- A plan and timeline for improvements will be written. This is intended to be a cooperative process. With justification/documentation, VTrans could grant exceptions for non-performing services if these services address needs for basic mobility and are unable to be provided in another manner. (For example, if it is determined that operating a rural route for 2-3 riders in a low density area is more cost effective than providing 2-3 demand-response trips).

- The services will have two additional quarters to improve after the improvement plan is implemented. They could have more time depending on what the adjustment entails.

- If there is no improvement in six months, service will no longer be eligible for funding.

- Funds will revert back to the State for re-distribution to fund either new services under the New Service program or "baseline" services that are graduating out of that Program (depending on whether the services were funded under CMAQ, Section 5311, or from another source).

The policy recognizes that some services, while important, inherently have lower productivity and/or higher costs. This may be particularly true of services to critical populations in low density areas or at off-peak hours. If, despite efforts to improve productivity and cost effectiveness, a particular service or route is unable to meet performance standards, VTrans could grant an exception that would allow it continued funding, depending on the justification for continuation.

Policy Changes to Revamp the State New Service Program

Public transit funding is currently allocated to the providers based on needs demonstrated during the annual grant application process and allocations are generally based on previous year allocations plus inflation. In essence, systems are eligible to receive the level of funding needed to maintain current services, as long as those services remain eligible and meet performance standards.[11] To fund new services, the policy allows local areas to apply for services under the New Services program mentioned above.

[11]Title 24 V.S.A, Chapter 126 Section 5091 (j) Notwithstanding subsection (i) of this section, and to the extent that appropriated funds are available, no provider who is otherwise eligible shall receive a lesser amount of operating funds than it expended on eligible operating expenses in State Fiscal Year 2001 for services that remain ongoing, and provided that the amount shall be evaluated as necessary to address changes in the cost of providing the services. In the event that a provider merges with or is otherwise succeeded by another provider, the successor provider shall be entitled to the same protection under this subsection that would have been available to the superseded provider.

Funding decisions regarding new services (including expansions to existing services - increased frequency, span or area of service) are based first on the feasibility study, and then on the demonstrated need for the services. In addition, The VTrans New Services program includes a review of proposed new services against evaluation criteria. The program guide[12] includes program goals that include supporting the "goals and objectives of the current Public Transportation Policy Plan". However, perhaps because the New Services program is funded with CMAQ, the evaluation criteria for selecting projects are mostly oriented toward maintaining air quality attainment. And, while maintaining air quality will continue to be a goal, the selection criteria do not address the remaining three goals, including the first goal of providing for the basic mobility for transit-dependent persons.

The following policy changes will be made to the New Services program in an effort to target new dollars toward areas of the State that currently have unmet needs and toward those services that are higher priorities as defined in the State statute.

- **Remove the goal-based funding formula** since it appears that over time the amendments to Section 5091 have rendered it ineffective. Existing services will continue to be funded as long as they meet performance standards, and new services would be funded based on their merit and need-based feasibility studies.

- **Update the New Services evaluation criteria to rank projects based on State transit goals** and distribute new funding based on statewide needs and priorities.

- **Re-institute the TDP** process to ensure that new transit services funded under the New Service Program are justified and well planned. The State will develop a minimum work scope for the TDPs and stagger funding assistance when the plans are prepared, so that two to three plans can be completed each year. The State will fund these plans and may provide consultants, or the plans could be procured locally. In either case, they would be developed in coordination with the RPCs and MPO. VTrans will work with the RPCs and MPO so the process could be funded and managed by them through the TPI program.

Policies Regarding Local Funding

To implement the State goal that local communities demonstrate a financial commitment to public transit, VTrans has a policy that 20% of each provider's operating budget be generated from "local sources." With the 2007 PTPP, VTrans set the standard

[12] *New Start Program Information Sheet*, VTrans, Public Transit Section, August 29, 2006.

that all providers should cover at least 20% of their operating budget from non-FTA/FHWA and non State-sources (this is exclusive of capital, Rideshare, RTAP, JARC, and Medicaid funds). This policy "target" is in lieu of a mandated farebox recovery rate, recognizing that farebox revenue is only one component of local funding. Some communities may chose to contribute directly to maintain a low fare or fare free services. Others may have access to private contributions (i.e., colleges, large employers, and ski resorts).

Currently the 20% goal for local funding is not included in the annual performance report to the legislature and, since the goal is a system-wide goal, there also is no policy to dictate what would happen if a transit provider was unable to meet the goal. While not a policy change, the PTPP recommends that VTrans monitor the 20% goal more closely and assist providers in developing and implementing strategies to increase local participation and financial support for transit. Close monitoring of this policy will require VTrans to collect financial data (operating costs and revenue sources) from the transit operators more consistently. Information needed to monitor whether the goal is met could be collected as part of the annual grant application (reporting on the previous year) or by revising the monthly service indicator reports that are submitted by the transit operators.

If a system is unable to meet the 20% local funding goal on a system-wide basis, they will be asked to explain their "good faith" efforts to generate this support from their local communities. Achievement of this policy goal also could be supported by a statewide marketing program and/or outreach to local community leaders. Reporting on this measure will be included in future annual *Public Transit Route Performance Review* submitted to the legislature.

State Initiatives to Increasing Productivity or Reduce Costs

Initiatives that would help the transit systems increase productivity or reduce the costs associated with providing existing services could allow the transit systems to create new services with the savings. While it is difficult to quantify the cost saving, a few initiatives that could improve productivity include:

- *Improved training* – Initiate new training programs aimed at service efficiency. Training has the potential to reduce service costs, but the manner in which training occurs could also be improved to be more cost effective. For example, CCTA puts on 10-20 maintenance training events annually and the other providers could attend for minimal cost.

- *Technology improvements* – Continue to support technological improvements at the systems since technologies such as Automatic Vehicle Locators (AVL), Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs), automated billing, and tracking could help

reduce costs (as well as increase service quality and improve ridership and farebox revenue). VTrans, AHS, and VPTA are partnering on a project to upgrade the intake and dispatching software statewide. (The current tool is six years old and is reaching its limitations.)

- *New vehicles and maintenance improvements* – Continue to ensure that vehicles are replaced at the end of their useful lives. The recent improvements in the condition/age of the fleet and improvements to preventive maintenance should reduce operating costs and extend the lives of the transit operator fleets.

POLICIES ON CAPITAL INVESTMENTS

Vermont relied heavily on earmarks to fund transit capital projects in the state. The two issues with earmarks are: 1) *what will happen if they are eliminated?* and 2) *if they are continued, how they can best be managed in Vermont?* On the first issue, there are a number of policy changes planned that will allow the State to position itself as competitive under the FTA's discretionary grant program. These improvements, outlined below, are aimed at demonstrating to FTA that transit providers in the State use capital funding effectively and cost-efficiently through initiatives such as statewide vehicle and equipment procurements, statewide vehicle and facility maintenance guidelines, and a statewide policy and program guidance for managing major capital projects (passenger amenities and facilities, operating/administrative facilities).

Managing Earmarks and Major Capital Projects

In the event that earmarks continue in some form under reauthorization, the State should address how those funds are managed. The policy change proposed for managing earmarks, or any other major capital project, is to centralize FTA earmark/capital project management for Chittenden County at CCTA and at VTrans for the rest of the State. VTrans and the operators will compile and submit a combined request to FTA for capital projects. Based on a statewide criteria and capital improvement program discussed below, projects that had State review and approval could be considered for State funding.

Funding Vehicles

Vehicle Replacement Policy

Vermont's current policy is to consider applications for vehicle replacement based on the vehicle design life as designated in the Vehicle Disposition and Transfer Procedures. While there are no policy changes that affect replacement of current

vehicles, a number of changes could be made to program procedures that will allow VTrans to implement and monitor its current policies in this area:

- Allow transit operators to replace vehicles that meet either the mileage or year thresholds as long at they can justify that the vehicle needs to be replaced based on maintenance records or other documentation.

- Revise the VTrans vehicle capital inventory database to include, in a separate column, each vehicle's Altoona useful life, and its in-service date. In addition there will be a category for light-duty vehicles with an Altoona service life of less than five years or 150,000 miles.

- Revise the VTrans annual grant application to include a Vehicle Utilization Chart showing the annual usage of each vehicle, including information regarding its use under a lease agreement (identify lessee), or if it is primarily being used as a backup (spare) or contingency fleet vehicle.

Statewide Vehicle Procurement Policy

One vehicle issue raised has been the need for purchasing vehicles from the same manufacturer for ease of maintenance. This could be handled, in part, by conducting a statewide procurement for transit vehicles. The new policy in this area will be to conduct a statewide procurement for the most commonly used vehicle types, using a process that:

- Involves the operators in the writing of the bid specifications based on their experience and knowledge,

- Provides for professional expertise in the development of the bid specifications,

- Provides for professional assistance in the procurement process to ensure compliance with procurement requirements of FTA and VTrans, and

- Provides for appropriate professional support to conduct bus production-line inspections, pre- and post-delivery inspections and certifications, and warranty oversight.

Spare Ratio Policy and Expansion Fleets

Spare ratios were raised as another issue, as a need for a clear consistent policy that would support vehicle replacement applications. FTA guidance for non-urbanized systems allows for a spare ratio of up to 20%, calculated by taking the number of spare

revenue vehicles and then dividing that number by the number of vehicles required for peak revenue service.

With the smallest transit fleet in the State now at 12 vehicles, it is suggested that the State set a policy of allowing up to a 20% spare ratio in evaluating requests for replacement and expansion vehicles. The change will allow systems to apply for vehicles needed to permit fleets (and sub-fleets in the case of multiple operations in different locations) to have an adequate spare ratio to maintain continuity of service while allowing for preventive maintenance. This ratio will be set at 20% of the peak vehicle requirements or a minimum of two vehicles. Transit operators with system-wide spare ratios under the 20% level could request "replacement vehicles" (as opposed to "expansion vehicles") to bring their fleets up to acceptable levels, reflecting the fact that they are not being added to expand service, but to improve quality and reliability.

Most expansion vehicles, beyond those needed to achieve an appropriate spare ratio, are provided through the New Services program; expansion capacity is thus linked to a specific project which also has operating funding for the 3-year demonstration period. But cases also may arise in which incremental growth in an existing service would require expansion vehicles outside of a "New Service" situation.

The State will allow systems to apply for vehicles when a transit provider can demonstrate that their spare ratio has dipped below the minimum level. Some situations that might call for expansion vehicles not funded as part of a "New Service" project include the need for additional vehicles to meet demand-response service demand, or if the funding for operation of a service or expansion (such as a frequency increase or route extension) is entirely locally funded. Because these situations are likely to be limited, the policy is to treat expansion needs outside of New Services program through the spare ratio policy, as described above. Systems will be allowed to apply for additional expansion vehicle capital when their fleet spare ratio declines to 20% or below, for services that are achieving acceptable productivity levels under the State guidelines.

Funding Facilities

Statewide Facility Program

VTrans will develop a statewide capital funding program to assist transit operators that are building or improving facilities. Instead of setting a hard and fast definition for when a system should own its administrative, operating, or maintenance facilities, VTrans will evaluate and entertain requests for facility capital based on the results of a comprehensive process that includes an assessment of whether or not a facility is needed, the functions that it would need to provide, space estimates by function, potential sites, estimated costs, etc. Systems that have included a facility in

their TDP and provided a completed facility assessment process will be eligible for consideration for available facility capital funding in any given year, with funding provided in a multi-year cycle beginning with the feasibility/site selection study, environmental analysis, site procurement, architectural and engineering work, construction, and equipment. The facility planning process will include an assessment comparing the costs of providing different levels of maintenance activities in-house at the proposed facility with the use of local vendors and/or use of another system's facility and staff. In considering these issues, the capabilities of facilities in nearby locations will need to be considered, along with the potential deadhead costs of moving vehicles long distances for repair.

By outlining the process as a multi-year process, the State can combine the requests and develop a statewide facility plan from a prioritized list of projects that would warrant funding. Implementing this policy recommendation will require the development of a VTrans facility assessment process that provides the process and the analysis tools to support local development of realistic applications for facilities. When a local system works through this process, it will go through a multi-step process that includes a project definition phase, a concept development phase including cost/benefit analysis, a screening and evaluation by the State program staff, identification of potential funding, an application phase, and finally contracting for design and construction. This process provides the data needed to the State transit program, which will be used to establish a transit Facility Priority List each year.

The development of a common State process with evaluation criteria has advantages in that the local system is tasked with identifying and documenting its needs, assessing the costs and benefits, and then submitting its concept for initial approval based on a known set of project evaluation criteria, rather than having a statewide study define what each system should have from a State program perspective.

Policy on Regional Shared Facilities for Major Maintenance

VTrans also will pursue the concept of regional maintenance garages for some maintenance functions. Given the need to deadhead vehicles to regional garages, it may not be practical for ***all*** vehicle maintenance to be done out of centralized or regional garages, especially not routine preventive maintenance. However, there are some maintenance functions or repairs such as engine overhauls, air conditioning servicing, lift maintenance, or body work, that could be conducted more cost effectively if they were centralized. Rather than creating new regional bus garages, one or more of the existing operator facilities could function in this role, and even provide spares to replace vehicles in maintenance as discussed above.

Funding Passenger Facilities and Amenities

Finally, VTrans will establish a policy to address when the State would consider various passenger amenities to be justified and would possibly contribute to the cost. Currently VTrans makes capital funding available for bus shelters, but without having established guidelines for when shelters are warranted. The consideration of applications for passenger facilities and amenities could include an assessment of shelter and amenity needs, prioritizing stop-level expenditures based on meeting ridership thresholds, or providing shelter at stops serving particular functions (at transfer points, at medical facilities, and at stops with significant levels of boardings). As part of the planning process, communities will consider pedestrian connections to transit stops, street crossings, signage, and ADA accessible bus stops and pedestrian connections.

Off-street passenger transfer centers (bus-only or intermodal facilities) will also be eligible, but would need to be justified through a process similar to that for operations facilities, in which the proposing locality will have to perform an initial feasibility study demonstrating the need or benefits, with subsequent planning, design and construction to follow if the facility is shown to be needed or justified. Bike racks and bike parking at major transit stops and facilities will reinforce the link between bike and transit modes.

This policy will extend only to the transit-related portions of projects, as the transit program funding will not be used to construct parking ramps or space for other non-transit related functions.

POLICIES ON COORDINATION OF SERVICES

Promotion and enhancement of coordinated human service transportation and general public transit has long been a Vermont State policy. State legislation in 24 V.S.A, Chapter 126, Section 5090. Human Service Transportation States, "*The secretary of human services shall direct agency of human service programs to purchase client transportation through public transit systems in all instances where public transit services are appropriate to client needs and as cost efficient at other transportation.*"

The most important coordination issue currently facing Vermont's transit program is the need to maintain the linkage between transit providers and the State's Medicaid program. While no transit policy changes are warranted at this time, clearly it is in everyone's interests for the transit operators, AHS, and VTrans to work together to address the issues AHS has raised regarding costs, accountability, potential conflicts of interest, quality of service and access (a more detailed discussion is presented in Technical Memorandum #3, included in Technical Appendix C).

POLICIES ON INTERFACE WITH LAND USE PLANNING

VTrans continues to support efforts to curtail sprawl and create transit oriented communities both through coordinated transportation planning with the RPCs, the MPO and Towns as well as through its role as a party to Act 250 development review proceedings.

The State has statewide land use planning goals and a number of laws that create incentives for growth in its compact centers, but needs to strengthen the process to require or encourage the consideration of transit when local municipalities make land use decisions. Localities will benefit if they integrate transit access in the overall transportation planning and permitting process, so that development and major facilities (such as medical facilities) do not continue to be built without consideration of transit service potential. Other improvements include adding evaluations of transit potential to local project review and implementing pedestrian-friendly design.

One policy initiative over the next few years will be to have the MPO and RPCs have a more active role in facilitating transit and associated pedestrian considerations in local land use decisions. The MPO/RPCs work with a variety of entities including towns, transit providers, and developers, and can take the initiative to bring these stakeholders together to actively incorporate transit-oriented design into new or planned developments. It is noted that a new State law (Act 34 of the 2010 Legislative Session) that went into effect on July 1, 2011 required that State transportation policy consider "complete street" principles of safety and accommodation of all transportation system users including motorist, bicyclists, public transit users, and pedestrians.

The RPCs currently have a TPI agreement with VTrans to coordinate and ensure local participation in the transportation decision-making process in order to meet State and federal planning goals. The MPO and RPCs can also provide municipalities with valuable information and insights on how regional plans may impact local activities, or vice versa. Specifically, RPCs might promote the growth of regional transit networks or regional coordination of public transit and human services transportation to meet the needs that arise from new developments. At the local level, RPCs should advocate to revise local zoning codes to be consistent with State planning goals and legislation, specifically to gear new development toward existing downtowns and village centers that can be served by transit. Local zoning codes need to help combat sprawl and facilitate growth in areas already served by transit or located near the existing transit network.

A policy aimed at better linking transit with land use decisions is to ensure that transit is included in the Act 250 project review process. This policy also would encourage that the local review of permits for essential services, such as health care,

consider the ability of residents to access the site/services via public transit. Currently "*Criterion 5 provides that before granting a permit, the board or district commission shall find that the subdivision or development "{w}ill not cause unreasonable congestion or unsafe conditions with respect to use of the highways, railways, airports, and airways, and other means of transportation, existing and proposed*." As written, this language requires the Act 250 Boards to consider the impact that the proposed development would have on transit, existing and proposed. As they are statutory parties in the Act 250 process review, this could be accomplished by working through the MPO and the RPCs. The MPO/RPCs will ensure, through their role in the Act 250 reviews, that transit vehicles have access to any new projects being developed so that those developments can be reached by transit riders.

Along with this policy change, VTrans and the RPCs/MPO will undertake an initiative to educate the Act 250 Boards and the Act 250 Regional Coordinators on transit issues as they relate to developments and their contribution to reducing congestion.

On the state level, VTrans staff will review the transportation segments or chapter of each Regional Transportation Plan to ensure transit is adequately addressed. And, finally, to the extent reasonable, transit considerations will be incorporated into VTrans-funded projects and program at each stage of the planning, design, construction, implementation, operations, and maintenance activities. This would include consideration of both physical amenities (bus shelters, sidewalks, bicycle, and pedestrian amenities) and design elements that enhance transit operations and access (snow removal, adequate turning radii, and transit signal priority). This will result in new projects, reconstruction projects, and other transportation facility improvements maintaining or improving existing access and conditions for transit services or interfaces.

POLICIES ON REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY AND INTERCITY BUS

Determining the State role and the way in which regional and intercity needs can be addressed is one of the key policy areas initially identified for inclusion in the PTPP and in subsequent public outreach meetings. As noted in the issues section, there are significant differences in the trip purposes and potential destinations between the regional commuter services and the intercity services.

Inter-Regional Commuter Routes

As noted, one issue in Vermont is the growth of regional commuter services and the need to develop a sustainable funding basis. At this time, VTrans will continue funding these services on the same basis as other local transit services, with no change

in match ratios or other incentives applied because a route or service links the service areas of multiple operators. However, the State does reserve the right/flexibility to negotiate a higher State share for services that meet State priorities for new services. Finally, where appropriate, park and ride lots will be built as to be served by transit.

Update Intercity Bus Program

Over the past decade intercity bus services in the State have been reduced significantly. One of the other important distinctions between the regional commuter services and rural intercity bus service is the fact that the FTA requires each State to use at least 15% of its overall Section 5311 rural transit funding allocation for rural intercity bus services—unless the State certifies that there is no unmet rural intercity need in the State. The SAFETEA-LU legislation language requires that States conduct a consultation process involving the intercity providers, studies or analysis, and other stakeholders. If, following that consultation, the State certifies, it needs to document how it considered the input provided. For the past several years Vermont has conducted a consultation process, certified that intercity needs are being met and, thus, the State has not set aside the 15% amount or built up any kind of balance in a Section 5311(f) program.

The proposed intercity program starts with an expanded assessment of rural intercity bus needs that would then feed into the consultation process. The assessment and consultation process were initiated as part of the PTPP and initial results of that effort are included in Technical Appendix G.

If unmet needs are ultimately identified[13], VTrans will develop a service description/program for the services using the in-kind funding method. This would require detailed planning of schedules and connections, and assessment of likely funding needs (which would include assumptions regarding the likely operator and its costs, and the estimated revenue).[14] To pursue this type of intercity bus service, the process would entail the following.

[13] The preliminary needs assessment presented in Technical Memorandum #3 suggests that there is evidence of unmet need in rural areas for intercity bus services.

[14] It should be noted that Greyhound is not necessarily the operator, but would have to be a party to the project as the provider of the value of the in-kind miles. As both a potential applicant or bidder on the subsidized service and the provider of the in-kind match, Greyhound's current policy is to offer to provide the in-kind miles to whichever operator the State selects, as long the operator and the proposed service meet Greyhound's requirements for connecting service that can be quoted by them in their schedule information, has appropriate levels of insurance, is fixed-route fixed-schedule service at least five days per week, and has required legal federal and State operating authority.

Expanded Rural Intercity Bus Needs Assessment

A preliminary assessment of intercity bus needs was developed as part of the PTPP. This assessment identifies some preliminary unmet rural intercity travel needs and served as an input to an inclusive consultation process required under Section 5311(f).

Initiated Consultation Process

Following the needs assessment and prior to the call for projects for the next Section 5311 funding cycle, VTrans will complete the FTA-required consultation process. To begin this consultation process, VTrans 1) distributed the initial needs assessment sections of the PTPP, 2) solicited input on available services, unmet needs, capabilities, and opportunities from intercity bus providers, transit operators, the rail passenger program, and the public, and 3) documented that input. The consultation process will be completed as VTrans provides written documentation of how the results of the needs assessment and the consultation process were used in the development of State policy regarding certification of unmet needs or use of Section 5311(f) funding for projects.

Revise Program Application and Guidelines

If the process ultimately identifies unmet needs, VTrans will include in the Section 5311 application (or in a separate Section 5311(f) application) requests for services and connections in specific corridors to address the identified gaps. The consultation process may also identify needs such as capital for vehicles or facilities, or user information systems, and VTrans will need to consider its policy on eligibility of such requests as it assesses the results of the consultation in developing its policy.

POLICIES TO IMPROVE THE "TRANSIT EXPERIENCE"

The public input process identified several needs related to improving the transit user experience, beyond the service improvements addressed in service expansions (improved frequencies, span of service). The PTPP proposes that the image problem be addressed by creating a positive transit "brand" statewide; brand marketing refers to the method of propelling transit into the public consciousness as a positive travel option. The individual transit systems could be co-branded as one Vermont transit system, while keeping their separate identities. The object for this effort is to combine the strength of two brands, in order to combine the different perceived benefits associated with each into a single product or service.

Other proposed policies or initiatives to improve the transit experience include:

- Creating a statewide marketing and slogan campaign coordinated with or as part of the existing GoVermont program.

- Increasing use of technology to disseminate public information on transit services by plugging into Twitter, social networks, and other on-line information-sharing mechanisms.

- Improving user information through a statewide trip planner – perhaps using GoVermont.

- Completing efforts to include and maintain all transit services on Google Transit – perhaps using the University of Vermont's (UVM) transit program.

- Adding transit to Vermont's 511 program as part of the eight-State consortium effort.

- Improving passenger amenities (bus stops, shelters, transit centers) and improving information provided at passenger facilities.

- Educating the public, particularly youth and choice riders, on how to use public transit services.

POLICIES ON PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Statewide performance measures for public transit services are included in the VTrans *2008 Performance Measures Report* and include: 1) the percent of routes at or below an acceptable level for cost per passenger; and 2) the percent of routes at or above the acceptable level of passengers per hour. Although no target has yet been set, the goal for both measures is 100%.

Within the public transit program, performance monitoring of existing routes is conducted to ensure that the public investment in transit is well spent. In fact, legislation states, "*(b) The public transit advisory council shall annually evaluate existing services based on the goals...*" and *(c) The agency, in cooperation with the public transit advisory council, shall adopt appropriate performance and service standards for transit systems receiving federal or State assistance*." VTrans monitors the performance of its public transit services through the monthly services indicator reports which feed into the annual route performance report to the legislature. VTrans provides a report to the

legislature annually and the report, *2010 Transit Performance Reviews,* was submitted January 22, 2011.

The goal of the performance measurement process is to be able to fairly compare similar services and provide a means of how well these services meet the needs of Vermonters in relation to the funding available. The performance monitoring system becomes particularly important in light of the policy recommendation to enforce and speed up efforts to discontinue funding to underperforming routes/service. The performance monitoring program includes two components: 1) the monitoring process; and 2) the standards for evaluating whether performance is acceptable.

Monitoring Policies and Procedures

It appears that the current performance monitoring system is working relatively well and should remain as unchanged as possible to allow VTrans to track services in a consistent manner from 2007 onward. The current performance framework focuses on two performance areas: productivity and cost-effectiveness.[15] VTrans uses a single measure in each area and sets standards for these measures for the various types of transit service provided: urban, small town, rural, demand-response, tourism, commuter, and volunteer driver.[16]

Productivity is measured through boardings per hour, mile, or trip, depending on the type of transit service, while cost-effectiveness is measured by the cost per passenger. Another measure also used in other states is the percentage of operating costs covered by local funding - analogous to the State policy of 20% local funding.[17] Finally, the VTrans process for performance measurement has centered on the annual report to the Vermont Legislature and a series of service indicator reports, submitted by providers monthly or quarterly per funding program.

Suggestions for changes address the interpretation of the route classification scheme as it is applied to particular routes rather then the measures or route classifications, per se.

[15] In FY 2009, VTrans updated its performance measurement methodology to incorporate new data available through the Rural National Transit Database. (Source: VTrans. January 2011. *Public Transit Route Performance Reviews, Annual Report for State Fiscal Year 2010.*)

[16] VTrans only monitors the cost-effectiveness of volunteer driver services, through the administrative cost per trip. The 2007 PTPP determined that the administrative burden to track volunteer driver trips and the number of passengers on those trips would be too large, and the usefulness of this productivity measure is unclear.

[17] The goal of 20% local funding is exclusive of capital, RTAP, JARC, Rideshare, and Medicaid funding.

- There may be a need to re-classify particular routes. Some rural routes may really be commuter routes and vice versa, or a tourism route might be considered a rural route. VTrans will have transit agencies that wish to re-classify a route/service present a justification using the service descriptions in the legislative report.

- VTrans will re-classify rural routes that operate less than once a day to include them in the demand-response calculation for that agency.

In addition, policy changes and revisions will:

- Re-institute monitoring and enforcement of the 20% local funding target.

- Enforce State policy to discontinue State/federal funding for routes/services that under-perform, using the service standards outlined below and speed up timelines for discontinuation of under-performing services (see above).

Service Standards

The current system uses service standards or benchmarks based on a national peer review and standards are set annually for productivity, cost-effectiveness, and local share. *Productivity* measures vary by service class as follows:

- Urban – Boardings/mile
- Small Town, Rural, Demand-Response, and Tourism – Boardings/hour
- Commuter – Boardings/(round) trip

Cost effectiveness is measured in terms of cost per passenger trip for all types of service except volunteer trips. For both cost effectiveness and productivity, services are considered to be "successful" if they meet average levels for peers and "acceptable" if they are at 50% of the standard.

Local share or locally generated revenue is considered on a system-wide basis and expressed as the percentage of the system's operating expenses that are covered by non-FTA/FHWA and non-State sources. Considering this measure allows VTrans and the systems to measure how well each provider meets the requirement to generate at least 20% of their operating budget locally.

The only performance measure used for volunteer trips is the administrative cost per volunteer driver trip. In these cases, the standard for "success" is set at 80% of the average the Vermont operators and the "acceptable" standard is set at twice the level or 160% of the average.

It appears that the measures and standards are working relatively well and no suggestions are made for revising either the measures or procedure for setting the standards. However, it is suggested that boardings per trip on commuter routes represent boardings per round trip (to discount the impact that deadheading has on these services).

Chapter 7

Transit Planning and Assistance Program

This section includes proposals for 1) a planning assistance grant program to address transit planning needs in the State, and 2) a technical assistance program. More detail on the rationale and program elements can be found in Technical Memorandum #6: *Transit Planning Assistance Program* which is included in Technical Appendix F.

PLANNING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The transit planning assistance program is intended to address individual transit operators planning needs in coordination with the appropriate RPC/MPO consistent with 24 V.S.A. § 5089 Planning. The planning grant program is designed to encourage the effectiveness and efficiency of transit services and their coordination with human service transportation and is proposed to be conducted cooperatively with the local RPC(s)/MPO.

By way of background, a Regional TDP Grant Program was first established in Vermont in 1987 to assist transit operators and human service agencies plan for better coordination of passenger transportation services. Subsequently, service expansions were a major focus in the 2000 PTPP and the SRPTP process was recommended in the Plan as a means of identifying and justifying where additional public transit services are needed. The requirement for SRPTPs was legislatively mandated and the first series of these plans was conducted by the transit providers in 2004. Any proposed new services were required to be consistent with a current SRPTP. A more recent effort to update the plans was abandoned after the effectiveness of the approach came into question. While there is still a recognition that transit services need to be well planned, the requirement that planning take place in this manner was eliminated from the legislation in 2009. Currently, VTrans provides individual systems with limited planning funds on an "as needed" basis.

There remains common agreement that, given the scarcity of resources available for transit, it is important to plan services with the highest potential for success. As VTrans revises the State's New Service Program, the results of a local planning process take on additional importance. And, with the removal of the goal-based funding formula, the TDPs and special studies will be used as the primary basis for funding decisions regarding new services and expansions to existing services (increased frequency, span or area of service) as well as for capital funding. As noted in Section 5083, "*Proposals for new service shall be evaluated by examining feasibility studies submitted by providers...*"

Some essential components of the transit planning program include an increased role for MPO and the RPCs in the process, re-instatement of the TDP planning requirement (with modifications), and creation of a new specialized planning studies component. The VTrans transit planning program would include the following components.

Increase Role of the RPCs and MPO

The RPCs and MPO are already highly involved in the overall transportation planning in each region, but a PTPP policy objective is for the RPCs and MPO to have a more active role in facilitating transit considerations and transit planning. Transit planning at the regional or local level needs to 1) plan for effective and efficient transit services, 2) fully integrate transit into the overall transportation planning process (all modes), and 3) better link transit into the land use decision-making process.

Through its TPI, VTrans collaborates with the RPCs to carry out transportation planning at the regional level.[18] The RPCs contract with VTrans to coordinate the TPI also ensures local participation in the transportation decision-making process in order to meet federal requirements. The MPO and RPCs can provide municipalities with valuable information and insights on how regional plans may impact local activities, or vice versa. RPCs can both advocate for transit considerations in local land use planning and educate local officials and the public about the benefits of transit-oriented design.

The policy ensuring that transit is included in the Act 250 project review process and furthering the concept of transit-oriented design (by requiring that permits for essential services consider the ability of residents to access the site/services via public transit) would include a role for the RPCs/MPO to educate the Act 250 Regional Coordinators on transit issues. RPCs are a statutory party in the Act 250 permitting

[18] Vermont's 11 RPCs each has a TAC. The TACs include representatives from each town and some representation from the local transit operator. The MPO has a Public TAC as well as a TAC that make recommendations on action items to be considered by the full Board of Directors.

process, review Act 250 applications, and attend hearings, which are conducted by a three-member District Environmental Commission, to advocate for or dissent against a proposed subdivision or development.[19] As a statutory party to Act 250, the RPCs have an opportunity to ensure that the transit operators are informed and engaged in the process when transit is involved in a development. Transit operators can provide comments as well as work with the RPCs to address their concerns.

Require Transit Development Plans (TDPs)

VTrans will return to the requirement for a TDP and only those services and capital needs identified and justified in an approved TDP would be funded by VTrans. Rather than returning to a legislative mandate, the TDPs will be an administrative requirement. However, new services and projects will only be funded by VTrans if they are included in the locally developed TDP.

- TDPs will be prepared for each Transit Operator based on a common but tailored scope of work (see Technical Memorandum #6, Technical Appendix F for an outline of a sample work scope). A Transit Operator's TDP must be prepared in coordination and cooperation with the RPC for the area.

- Planning assistance funding from VTrans will cover the TDP preparation at 100% but not the local personnel time to administer the planning grant. The local management of the process could be handled by the RPCs/MPO under the TPI umbrella.

- VTrans will fund the initiation of two or three TDPs or updates per year.

- A TDP or update can be conducted by the RPC, Transit Operator's staff, a consultant hired by one of those two entities or by a consultant VTrans has on retainer. Regardless of which entity conducts the planning process, coordination and involvement of both the RPC and transit operator would be required.

- A Study Advisory Committee of interested parties will be formed to advise on the development of the plan. In addition to the RPC, transit operator, VTrans, and AHS, this Committee should include local elected officials, local human service agencies, rider advocates, and riders of the system.

[19] Hearing Information provided on the Vermont Natural Resources Board, Land Use Panel Website, **http://www.nrb.State.vt.us/lup/publications/nrb1.pdf**.

- Upon the completion of the TDP, the Governing Board for the Transit Operator will approve it. The RPCs, at the recommendation of the RPC's TAC will also adopt it. If the TDP's transit service covers more than one RPC region, then all affected RPCs would also adopt it.

- The TDP or its primary components will be incorporated into the RPC's Regional Transportation Plan and/or the transportation element of their Regional Plan.

- RPCs will attest that a bordering region's TDP is compatible with their region's regional and TDP plans.

- TDPs will be updated every five years, or more frequently as necessary.

- Any requests under the New Service Program or for capital assistance (rolling stock, new service(s), shelters, facilities/vehicle storage, equipment, etc.) must be consistent with a current TDP.

Fund Specialized Planning Studies

For studies outside the scope of TDPs, and that cannot be accomplished by the RPCs/MPO under the TPI program, transit systems can also apply directly to VTrans for funding to conduct special planning studies. These might include specialized planning projects on issues such as funding, passenger amenities, route re-alignments, facility feasibility studies, service feasibility studies/design of new services, capital replacement plans, coordination studies, or management reviews/plans. Funds for these studies will come from VTrans.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND TRAINING

The development of a Vermont Technical Assistance Program responds to State policy, included in statute, that requires "…*The agency of transportation shall provide guidance, training, funding, and technical assistance to transit systems in order to meet the performance and service standards established.*"

The technical assistance program will take advantage of the FTA RTAP Program which focuses on training and technical assistance projects and other support services tailored to meet the needs of transit operators in non-urbanized areas.

Management and Administration

The technical assistance program will be coordinated through VTrans and funded using FTA's RTAP and other State funds. The practice of allocating a nominal amount of funding (currently $3,000 annually) to each provider for training and conferences will continue, but the remainder of the program will be statewide.

Currently a VTrans staff person functions as the State's RTAP Program Manager, but this is only a small part of her responsibilities. Creating an effective technical assistance program will require VTrans assigning a staff member to manage the program (at least half time).

The PTPP process identified a number of areas that transit operators could use technical assistance and training, but these are just a start. The VTrans program manager will be tasked with:

- Developing an annual RTAP work plan and budget.
- Periodically surveying local transit providers about their training and technical assistance needs and priorities.
- Establishing an RTAP Advisory Group that meets periodically to discuss training needs and resources and help set the priorities of the program. This group should include representatives of rural transit operators (rookies as well as veterans), VTrans, PTAC, VPTA, and AHS.
- Getting fully involved with National RTAP, which provides a peer network among State RTAP coordinators. Consider joining or forming a multi-State RTAP group with other northeast States to collectively share program resources.

Target Audience

While relying heavily on the federal RTAP program and training and technical assistance needs in non-urbanized areas, the VTrans program will also address those needs in the urbanized area in Chittenden County. Thus, the target audience/eligible participants include all public transit operators in the State. It is noted that the federal RTAP program funds will continue to be targeted toward operators of service in rural areas.

Training

Training Classes

Under the new program, the State will conduct and/or sponsor training classes on a variety of topics, targeted at different functions in the transit organization, including upper management, supervisors, dispatchers, maintenance personnel, and drivers. For some topics, a train-the-trainer approach is appropriate (such as topics targeted at drivers).

While training resources available in Vermont may preclude development of new training programs and/or materials (such as videos or manuals), there are many training programs available through other sources. For example, the National RTAP program and CTAA offer a variety of training programs by their staff or contractors which are specifically targeted at rural transit programs. Or, the program could arrange for courses developed by the National Transit Institute, FTA, and the Transportation Safety Institute (TSI) to be presented in Vermont with priority registration for the RTAP target population. These courses are generally provided at little or no cost to the host state and the public transit participants; the host need only provide the facilities.

Training could be conducted by:

- Trainers on VTrans, RPC, or Transit Agency staff - this requires having the available expertise and staff time to conduct the training or cultivating it through a train-the trainer program.

- Outside Trainers—In addition to the trainers available through National RTAP, NTI, and CTAA, there are many excellent transit training consultants who could be utilized, with different specialties. Vermont could procure a team of contract trainers (such as Pennsylvania RTAP uses) to use as needed.

The program would establish an annual training calendar which includes the consortium – in conjunction with PTAC – in response to operator requests.

Set Minimum Training Standards

VTrans could also set minimum (suggested) training standards for public transit operators; training is already tracked by VTrans as part of the annual grant application. These would be set by working with VPTA and the PTAC. Recommended core topics to facilitate safe operations by all local programs include defensive driving, pre-trip inspections, passenger assistance methods (as covered in Passenger Service and Safety - PASS), emergency evacuation procedures/fire safety, first aid/CPR, and bodily fluid clean-up/bloodborne pathogen awareness, drug and alcohol awareness (including

prescription and over the counter medications), fatigue awareness and conflict resolution/dealing professionally with problem passengers. In another example, Georgia provides PASS and Drug and Alcohol training classes for local programs.[20].

Training Scholarships

Development of a formal RTAP scholarship program is recommended as a way to stretch training dollars. It may be useful to require scholarship recipients to submit a brief written report on their training experience.

Technical Assistance

Another important function of the program is to provide technical assistance to transit providers in the State. This can be achieved through a variety of approaches, many of which also serve outreach/marketing functions for the program.

Web-based Resource Library

The program will develop a web-based resource library of materials that will function as an on-line training and technical assistance resource center for systems to be able to download materials or borrow by mail through a VTrans lending library (for those materials not available in electronic form).

Technical Assistance and Information Sharing

Other technical assistance efforts could include:

- A newsletter (quarterly or semiannually recommended).
- Peer-to-peer network, identifying and sharing information about best practices and individual expertise among the rural and small urban programs, and facilitate communications between peers. Funding participant travel costs may be warranted to provide on-site technical assistance from peer-to-peer.
- Roundtable discussions among peers to address critical issues and brainstorm problem-solving approaches, at annual State conference or other meeting locations.

[20] Georgia's existing program was based on a State requirement that all Section 5311 vehicle operators receive PASS training, and all of the District Coordinators (seven of them, each with multiple systems) were required to be certified PASS trainers and provide the training periodically (on a Saturday, so that no drivers had to be taken off the road). The District Coordinators also conduct required Drug and Alcohol classes. The State also recommends First-Aid and Defensive Driving, but does not conduct it themselves.

Chapter 8

Implementation Plan

This section identifies the steps that VTrans will take to implement each of the plan elements/policy changes included in the PTPP. The matrix in Table 8-1 presents the implementation action plan including the action required, responsible part(ies) and supporting partners for each action. A timeline for actions as immediate, near-term (0-5 years), and long-term (5-10 years) is also included.

Many of the policy recommendations involve continuing existing policies and procedures. The implementation plan includes only those things that require changes or where staying the course requires action.

Table 8-1: Implementation Action Plan					
Plan Element	**Item No.**	**Action(s) Required**	**Responsible Party**	**Supporting Partners**	**Timeline**
Vision/Goals					
Change goal on congestion to "preserve air quality and efficient energy use in the State"	A	1. Legislative change	• VTrans Policy Planning and Intermodal Development (PPAID)		Immediate
		2. Revise new service grant application and evaluation criteria to accurately reflect the goals	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit		Immediate
Funding Levels and Sources					
Increase State and federal funding	B	1. Continue to seek additional State and federal funding	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit	• Transit Operators • VPTA • AHS	Immediate
Increase monitoring and reporting on policy that 20% of each provider's operating budget be generated from "local sources"	C	1. Gather complete and consistent data on local funds used for transit by revising the annual grant application or the monthly service indicator report	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit	• Transit Operators	Short Term
		2. Report the 20% performance measure in annual performance review to Legislature	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit	• Transit Operators	Short Term
		3. Revise annual grant application to require "good faith" effort certification from operators that do not meet the goal	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit	• Transit Operators	Short Term

Table 8-1: Implementation Action Plan					
Plan Element	**Item No.**	**Action(s) Required**	**Responsible Party**	**Supporting Partners**	**Timeline**
Shorten timing to eliminate under-performing routes	D	1. Create a more automated system for transit operators to submit monthly service indicator reports to VTrans	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit	• Transit Operators	Immediate
		2. Streamline procedures for VTrans staff to monitor route/service level data quarterly (using monthly service indicator and financial reports from operators).	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit	• Transit Operators	Short Term
		3. Identify routes that are under "acceptable" levels (for two quarters for baseline services, and four quarters for new services). • Develop/negotiate corrective action plan • Monitor performance for trial period (two more quarters for both baseline and new services; discontinue services that continue to under-perform) • Reprogram funds for other uses	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit	• Transit Operators	Short Term
Eliminate the current statutory funding formula for transit operators	E	1. Remove the goal-based funding formula in 24 VSA S.5091(i).	• Legislature • VTrans		Immediate
Update New Services evaluation criteria to rank projects based on State transit goals	F	1. Revise New Service evaluation criteria to reflect all State transit weighted goals (and distribute new funding based on statewide needs and priorities)	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit		Immediate

Table 8-1: Implementation Action Plan					
Plan Element	**Item No.**	**Action(s) Required**	**Responsible Party**	**Supporting Partners**	**Timeline**
		2. Revise SMP and application to require new services to be in TDP for funding	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit		Immediate
Re-institute the mandatory Transit Development Plan process to ensure that new transit services funded under the New Services Program are justified		See Planning Section below			Short Term
Capital Investments					
Conduct statewide vehicle and equipment procurements	G	1. Develop cooperative agreement among VTrans and transit operators	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit • Transit Operators		Immediate
		2. Develop vehicle and equipment specifications	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit • Transit Operators		Immediate
		3. Identify lead agency	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit	• Transit Operators	Immediate
		4. Conduct and manage procurements	• Lead Agency	• VTrans • Transit Operators	Short Term
Statewide vehicle guidelines	H	1. Standardize vehicle useful life criteria	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit		Immediate
		2. Standardize spare ratio definition and define "expansion" vs. "replacement" vehicles	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit		Immediate

Table 8-1: Implementation Action Plan					
Plan Element	**Item No.**	**Action(s) Required**	**Responsible Party**	**Supporting Partners**	**Timeline**
		3. Revise grant application(s) to reflect the above definitions and to require vehicles to be in TDP for funding	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit		Immediate
Statewide facility guidelines for investing in and managing operating facilities	I	1. Develop a locally-initiated common process for developing facilities including evaluation criteria	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit	• Transit Operators	Short Term
		2. Revise SMP and application to require facilities to be in TDP for funding	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit	• Transit Operators	Short Term
Shared regional maintenance garages	J	1. Solicit transit operator interest and commitment	• Transit Operators • Lead Agency • VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit		Long Term
		2. Identify lead agencies and/or centralized locations	• Transit Operators • VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit		Long Term
		3. Decide which maintenance functions could be performed at regional garages	• Transit Operators • Lead Agency • VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit		Long Term
		4. Establish policies and procedures and MOUs	• Transit Operators • Lead Agency • VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit		Long Term
State guidelines for investing in passenger facilities and amenities	K	1. Develop guidelines for when and where passenger facilities and amenities are needed/warranted	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit • MPO/RPCs • Local municipalities	• VTrans staff planning Park and Ride lots, Bike/Pedestrian facilities	Short Term

Table 8-1: Implementation Action Plan					
Plan Element	**Item No.**	**Action(s) Required**	**Responsible Party**	**Supporting Partners**	**Timeline**
Statewide policy and program guidance for managing major capital projects including earmarks	L	1. Develop procedures for centralization of FTA earmark/capital project management (rural at VTrans and urban at CCTA)	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit • CCTA	• Local municipalities • Transit Operators	Long Term
		2. Educate local governments on US DOT/FTA requirements, policies, and procedures	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit • CCTA	• Local municipalities • Transit Operators	Long Term
Technology improvements for transit	M	1. Conduct statewide procurement for scheduling and dispatching software – strive for uniformity for all transit systems	• Lead Agency • CCTA • VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit • Transit Operators	• AHS/DVHA (to build in Medicaid control features)	Immediate
		2. Conduct other statewide technology procurements (AVLs/MDTs, fareboxes, etc.) – strive for uniformity for all transit systems	• Lead Agency • CCTA • VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit • Transit Operators	• AHS/DVHA (to build in Medicaid control features)	Immediate
Coordination of Services					
Coordinated Medicaid program	N	1. Continue to address the issues AHS has raised regarding costs, accountability, potential conflicts of interest, quality of service, and access	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit • AHS/DVHA • Transit Operators		Immediate

Table 8-1: Implementation Action Plan					
Plan Element	**Item No.**	**Action(s) Required**	**Responsible Party**	**Supporting Partners**	**Timeline**
Interface with Land Use Planning					
More active role for MPO/RPCs in facilitating transit and associated pedestrian considerations in Act 250 reviews and local land use decisions	O	1. MPO and RPCs advocate to revise local zoning codes to be consistent with State planning goals and legislation to gear new development toward areas that can be served by transit; include Complete Streets legislation and VTrans bike/pedestrian policies	• MPO/RPCs	• VTrans PPAID/Planning (funding through TPI) • Transit Operators	Short Term
		2. Follow and link transit considerations into the permitting process before the permit is issued; coordinate with local municipalities, transit operators, and VTrans (see Item O1)	• MPO/RPCs • VTrans PPAID • Transit Operators • Local Municipalities	• VTrans PPAID/Planning (funding through TPI)	Short Term
		3. Educate Act 250 boards and Regional Coordinators on creating a transit-friendly environment	• MPO/RPCs • Transit Operators	• VTrans PPAID/Planning (funding through TPI)	Short Term
		4. Bring transit considerations into the Act 250 review process. Participate in Act 250 hearings to advocate for transit	• MPO/RPCs • Transit Operators	• VTrans PPAID/Planning (funding through TPI)	Short Term

Table 8-1: Implementation Action Plan					
Plan Element	**Item No.**	**Action(s) Required**	**Responsible Party**	**Supporting Partners**	**Timeline**
Provide guidance and assistance to local municipalities to incorporate appropriate transit elements in all site planning, design, construction activities	P	1. Work with local municipalities as they review and approve local projects to ensure developers build transit elements into projects including: bus pull outs, pavement markings (including cross walks to serve transit stops), bus stop signage, shelters, etc. Create process for VTrans staff to review Regional Transportation Plans to ensure transit adequately addressed.	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit • MPO/RPCs • Transit Operators	• VTrans PDD	Short Term
Develop guidance and direction for VTrans to incorporate appropriate transit elements in all its planning, design, construction, and maintenance activities	Q	1. Work with planners/engineers designing transportation facilities to build transit elements into all projects including: bus pull outs, pavement markings (including cross walks to serve transit stops), bus stop signage, shelters, etc.	• VTrans Program Development Division (PDD) • VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit	• MPO/RPCs • Transit Operators	Short Term
Regional Connectivity and Intercity Bus					
Maintain flexibility on funding for regional and commuter routes	R	1. Create flexibility within the transit program to negotiate a higher State share for services that meet State priorities for new regional services (that cross transit system boundaries)	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit	• Transit Operators • MPO/RPCs	Short Term

Table 8-1: Implementation Action Plan					
Plan Element	**Item No.**	**Action(s) Required**	**Responsible Party**	**Supporting Partners**	**Timeline**
Conduct intercity consultation process and, if needed, develop program guidelines and application	S	1. Complete consultation process	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit and Planning	• Private Operators • Transit Operators	Immediate
		2. Depending on outcome of consultation process: • Certify needs are met, or • Create program to use some or all of 15% of the S.5311 set aside; including developing program guidelines and soliciting projects to address unmet needs	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit and Planning	• Private Operators • Transit Operators	Immediate
Improving the Transit Experience					
Market public transit statewide	T	1. Develop statewide transit marketing campaign	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit • Transit Operators	• Consultant	Long Term
		2. Co-brand transit on statewide basis	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit • Transit Operators	• Consultant	Long Term
Technology improvements for enhanced user experience	U	1. Plug information into social media and other on-line information sharing sites	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit • Lead Agency • Transit Operators	• Consultant	Long Term
		2. Create statewide trip planner – GoVermont platform	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit • Lead Agency • Transit Operators	• Consultant	Long Term

Table 8-1: Implementation Action Plan					
Plan Element	**Item No.**	**Action(s) Required**	**Responsible Party**	**Supporting Partners**	**Timeline**
		3. Complete efforts to include transit services on Google maps	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit • Lead Agency • Transit Operators	• Consultant	Long Term
		4. Add transit to Vermont's 511 program as part of eight-state consortium	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit • Lead Agency • Transit Operators	• Consultant	Long Term
Performance Monitoring					
Route/service re-classification	V	1. Reclassify some routes based on operator requests	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit	• Transit Operators	Immediate
		2. Reclassify routes/services that operate less than once a day as demand response	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit	• Transit Operators	Immediate
Legislative report enhancement	W	1. Include narrative component to legislative report to "tell the story"	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit	• Consultants	Short Term
Technical Assistance/Training					
Improved Vermont RTAP technical assistance and training program	X	1. Assign VTrans staff member to manage the program (at least half-time)	• VTrans PPAID/Public Transit		Short Term
		2. Develop annual RTAP technical assistance and training program and budget; Initiate new training programs aimed at service efficiency	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit RTAP Coordinator	• Transit Operators	Short Term

Table 8-1: Implementation Action Plan					
Plan Element	**Item No.**	**Action(s) Required**	**Responsible Party**	**Supporting Partners**	**Timeline**
		3. Establish and manage RTAP Advisory Group	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit RTAP Coordinator	• Transit Operators	Short Term
		4. Create Training Calendar	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit RTAP Coordinator	• Transit Operators	Short Term
		5. Establish virtual library of materials, newsletters, peer networking	• VTrans PPAID/ Public Transit RTAP Coordinator	• Transit Operators	Short Term
Planning					
Transit development plans (TDPs)	Y	1. Finalize TDP Scope of Work (SOW)	• VTrans PPAID/ Planning and Public Transit	• Transit Operators • RPCs/MPO • Consultants	Immediate
		2. Develop process for administering the preparation of TDPs using MPO/RPCs and the TPI program	• VTrans PPAID/ Planning and Public Transit	• Transit Operators • RPCs/MPO • Consultants	Short Term
		3. Establish TDP priorities/schedule for transit operators – conduct 2 to 3 plans annually	• VTrans PPAID/ Planning and Public Transit		Short Term
Special studies	Z	1. Develop guidelines and application for special studies	• VTrans PPAID/Planning and Public Transit		Short Term

Attachment 1

Acronyms

AASHTO – American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials

ACTR – Addison County Transit Resources

ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

AHS – Vermont Agency of Human Services

ARRA – American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009

AT – Advance Transit

CAA – Federal Clean Air Act

CAP – Vermont Climate Action Plan

CBD – Central Business District

CCTA – Chittenden County Transportation Authority

CCMPO - Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization

CCRPC - Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission. The CCMPO and CCRPC merged effective July 1, 2011

CIDER – Champlain Islanders Developing Essential Resources

CMAQ – Federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program

CRT – Connecticut River Transit, also known as "The Current"

CTS – Community Transportation Services (New Hampshire)

DVTA – Deerfield Valley Transit Association, also known as "The MOOver"

E&D – Vermont's Elders and Persons with Disabilities funding program. May also refer to locally-operated specialized transportation services provided for elders and people with disabilities.

FHWA – Federal Highway Administration

FTA – Federal Transit Administration

GIS – Geographic (or Geospatial) Information System

GMCN – Green Mountain Community Network

GMTA – Green Mountain Transit Agency

GMX – Green Mountain Express

JARC – FTA's Job Access and Reverse Commute program

LRTBP – Vermont Long Range Transportation Business Plan

MOU – Memorandum of Understanding

MPO – Metropolitan Planning Organization

MVRTD – Marble Valley Regional Transportation District, also known as "The Bus"

NEMT – Non-Emergency Medical Transportation

PPAID – VTrans Division of Policy, Planning, and Intermodal Development

PDD – VTrans Program Development Division

PTAC – VTrans' Public Transit Advisory Council

PTPP – Vermont Public Transit Policy Plan

RCT – Rural Community Transportation, Inc.

RPC – Regional Planning Commission

RSVP – Retired and Senior Volunteer Program

RTAC – refers to MPO's Regional Public Transit Advisory Council

RPTAC – Regional Public Transportation Advisory Committee

RTAP – Rural Transit Assistance Program

SAFETEA-LU – Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users

Funding programs under SAFETEA-LU:

S.5307 – FTA's Section 5307 program, Urbanized Area Formula Funding

S.5309 – FTA's Section 5309 program, Capital Investment Program (Bus and Bus Facilities)

S.5310 – FTA's Section 5310 program, Transportation for Elderly Person and Persons with Disabilities

S.5311 – FTA's Section 5311 program, Non-urbanized (also referred to as "Other than Urbanized ") Area Formula Funding

S.5311(b)(3) – FTA's Section 5311(b)(3) program, Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) (part of S.5311)

S.5311(f) – FTA's Section 5311(f) program, Rural Intercity Bus (part of S.5311)

S.5316 – FTA's Section 5316 program, Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC)

S.5317 – FTA's Section 5317 program, New Freedom Program

SGR – FTA's State of Good Repair Initiative

SIBS – Vermont's Statewide Intercity Bus Study

SRPTP – Short-Range Public Transportation Plan

SSTA – Special Services Transportation Agency

STP – Surface Transportation Program

STSI – Stagecoach Transit Services, Inc.

TAC – Transportation Advisory Committee

TOD – Transit Oriented Development

TPI – Transportation Planning Initiative

UVTMA – Upper Valley Transportation Management Association

VPTA – Vermont Public Transportation Association

VTrans – Vermont Agency of Transportation

Attachment 2

Policy Plan Development and Public Involvement Process

POLICY PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The VTrans Policy Planning and Intermodal Development Division (PPAID) took the lead on the development of the 2012 update to the Vermont Public Transit Policy Plan (PTPP). The PTPP is one of a series of modal plans VTrans prepares to address transit, rail, bike and pedestrian, aviation, freight and roadway programs and policies. The VTrans Project Manager from PPAID, along with the staff of the VTrans Public Transit Section, formed an Internal Working Group that worked with an outside consultant to develop the Plan.

VTrans Executive Staff (comprised of Directors of each of the Agency's four Divisions, the Department of Motor Vehicles along with the Agency Secretary, Deputy Secretary and Assistant Attorney General) also provided overall guidance for the Plan. VTrans Executive Staff were briefed on the PTPP periodically, as it was being developed and finalized.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

The 2012 update to the PTPP was prepared with the assistance and in consultation with a number of stakeholders. The VTrans Public Transit Advisory Council (PTAC) served as the Study Advisory Committee (SAC). The SAC/PTAC members represented a diverse set of interests and included various state agencies, the transit providers, human service agencies and advocates, regional planners, legislative representatives, private operators and citizens. The SAC/PTAC was consulted throughout the planning process; materials from the Technical Memoranda and preliminary draft report were presented to the SAC/PTAC at a series of five meetings held in October 2010 and January, April, June, October 2011. In addition, the study team conducted one-on-one discussions, either in person or via telephone, with many members of the SAC/PTAC. Feedback from these discussions was folded into the development of the draft and final PTPP.

Public input also was sought throughout the planning process. The Transportation Planners from the State's Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs), through the Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI), were also briefed on the plan and assisted in distributing the plan's information and public meeting notices. The project website was used to communicate with the public and solicit comments throughout the project. The website was used to provide project team contact information, advertise public meetings, post the project schedule and materials (the Draft Final Report, Technical Memoranda, meeting presentations, summary of meeting results), and solicit public comments. Members of the public were encouraged to complete the comment form on the "feedback" page of the project website at **http://www.kfhgroup.com/vermonttransitplanupdate.htm**. Some submitted comments this way while other members of the public e-mailed comments directly to VTrans staff or the consultant team. The draft plan and technical memoranda also were posted on the VTrans website at **http://www.aot.state.vt.us/PublicTransit/PTPP.htm**.

Two series of three public meetings were undertaken during the project. The first, intended to solicit public and RPC input and identification of State transit issues at the beginning of the planning process, were held February 7, 8, and 9, 2011 and included one meeting on Vermont Interactive Television that reached all areas of the State. A second round of public meetings was held November 14, 16, and 17, 2011 to solicit input from the public on the draft plan. Again, one meeting was held on the Vermont Interactive Television so that interested parties from all areas of the State could participate. Copies of the notices are attached.

VTrans and MPO staff made presentations on the PTPP at a number of RPC Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings and at meetings of the TPI statewide group.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON DRAFT PLAN

Comments on the draft plan were received from many interested parties including the SAC/PTAC, the RPCs, other state agencies, and members of the general public. There was a great deal of support for the elements of the draft plan and suggestions for strengthening and clarifying language on a number of those elements were incorporated into the final PTPP.

The following three areas were of particular interest to the reviewers:

1. **Park and Ride Connections and Integration** - Reviewers expressed a need for more park and ride lots, expanded transit services to park and ride lots, and ensuring that park and ride lots are addressed in local and regional transit planning efforts. Specifically, it was felt that transit plans should address how transit can serve park and ride lots as well as how to make them

more accessible by transit. The local transit providers should identify how connections to park and ride lots can facilitate enhanced use of public transit and, where possible, bus routes should be expanded to stop at park and ride lots and/or shuttles operated between park and ride lots and local downtowns. One reviewer wanted to ensure that park and ride lots are built as intermodal facilities for transit and bikes. These comments were incorporated into the final PTPP.

2. **Act 250 and Development Review Processes** – Efforts in the PTPP to integrate transit into the land use planning process were applauded by many of the reviewers. Some stressed the importance of the RPCs in addressing transit use during Act 250 reviews; as they are statutory parties in the Act 250 process review, the MPO/RPCs are the pivotal to this review process. A few reviewers proposed amending the Act 250 Criterion 5 to explicitly list transit. This was explored during the planning process but it was decided that, because transit is implicitly included in Criterion 5[21], it is not necessary to request this revision to the language in order for transit to be included in the Act 250 review process. However, if the language is changed in the future for other purposes, transit should be considered for explicit inclusion. Also, as outlined in the PTPP, VTrans and the RPCs/MPO will undertake an initiative to educate the Act 250 Boards and the Act 250 Regional Coordinators on transit issues as they relate to access to developments and their contribution to reducing congestion. One addition to the transit-land use connection section of the PTPP specifies that VTrans staff will review the transportation segments or chapter of each Regional Transportation Plan to ensure transit is adequately addressed.

3. **Transit Amenities** - Some reviewers wanted to reinforce and expand the PTPP section that addresses transit amenities. As a result, the final plan includes more language to ensure that there are good pedestrian connections to transit stops, adequate street crossings, signage, ADA accessible bus stops and pedestrian connections, and bike racks and bike parking at major transit stops and facilities. Educating youth on how to ride transit was also mentioned and is now addressed in the PTPP.

In addition, the many comments received regarding Intercity Bus needs were incorporated into Chapter 6 of the PTPP as well as into a separate *Intercity Bus Needs Assessment and Policy Options* document.

[21] Criterion 5 provides that before granting a permit, the board or district commission shall find that the subdivision or development "{w}ill not cause unreasonable congestion or unsafe conditions with respect to use of the highways, railways, airports, and airways, and other means of transportation, existing and proposed."

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 28, 2011

Contact: Scott Bascom
(802) 828-5748

VTRANS TO HOST PUBLIC MEETINGS TO GATHER INPUT FOR VERMONT PUBLIC TRANSIT POLICY PLAN UPDATE

MONTPELIER – The Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) will hold three public meetings, from February 7 to 9, regarding the Vermont Public Transit Policy Plan.

Last completed in 2007, the Public Transit Policy Plan outlines the State's transit policies and goals and develops strategies to meet current and emerging public transit challenges. VTrans is updating this plan, and seeks public input in this first round of meetings to help shape the vision for the State's transit system and to identify and explore related issues.

The public meeting times and locations are:

February 7, 2011

7:00 p.m. Vermont Interactive Television – 15 sites across the state, see **www.vitlink.org** for information and directions to the sites

February 8, 2011

7:00 p.m. Montpelier – Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission, 29 Main Street, Suite 4.

February 9, 2011

7:00 p.m. Rockingham – Connecticut River Transit, 706 Rockingham Road. For directions, see **http://www.crtransit.org/contact/contact_info.html**.

The Public Transit Policy Plan focuses on public transit services, specifically fixed route, paratransit, transportation brokerage, user-side subsidy, and rideshare/ride-match programs. The plan also addresses coordination and connections among public transit services and with other public transportation modes such as intercity passenger rail, commercial aviation services, and park and ride locations. However, VTrans has separate policy plans for Airports, Rail, Highways, and Pedestrian and Bicycle. In conjunction with these other policy plans, the Public Transit Policy Plan provides the basis for the Vermont Long Range Transportation Business Plan.

All members of the Vermont public are invited to attend and provide their input on the vision for the State's public transit system. For additional information and to see the progress of the Public Transit Policy Plan update, please visit the project website, **http://www.kfhgroup.com/vermonttransitplanupdate.htm**, or contact Scott Bascom of the Division of Planning, Outreach and Community Affairs, at VTrans by email at **scott.bascom@state.vt.us** or by phone at (802) 828-5748.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 13, 2011

Contact: Scott Bascom
(802) 828-5748

VTRANS TO HOST PUBLIC MEETINGS TO GATHER INPUT FOR VERMONT PUBLIC TRANSIT POLICY PLAN UPDATE

MONTPELIER – The Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) will hold three public meetings, from November 14th to 17th, regarding the Vermont Public Transit Policy Plan.

Last completed in 2007, the Public Transit Policy Plan outlines the State's transit policies and goals and develops strategies to meet current and emerging public transit challenges. VTrans is updating this plan, and seeks public input in this second round of meetings to review the draft of the final report and receive input and comments.

The public meeting times and locations are:

November 14, 2011

7:00 p.m. Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission, 110 West Canal Street, Suite 202, Winooski, VT 05404; Telephone: (802) 846-4490

November 16, 2011

4:00 p.m. Vermont Interactive Television – 13 sites (Randolph Ctr. and Waterbury not available) across the state, see **www.vitlink.org** for info. and directions to the sites.

November 17, 2011

6:30 p.m. Rutland Regional Planning Commission, The Opera House, 67 Merchants Row, Third Floor, Rutland, VT 05702; Telephone: 802-775-0871.

The Public Transit Policy Plan focuses on public transit services, specifically fixed route, paratransit, transportation brokerage, user-side subsidy, and rideshare/ride-match programs. The plan also addresses coordination and connections among public transit services and with other public transportation modes such as intercity bus and passenger rail, commercial aviation services, and park and ride locations. However, VTrans has separate policy plans for Airports, Rail, Highways, and Pedestrian and Bicycle. In conjunction with these other policy plans, the Public Transit Policy Plan provides the basis for the Vermont Long Range Transportation Business Plan.

All members of the Vermont public are invited to attend and provide their input on the draft Public Transit Policy Plan. The draft plan will be available on the project web site by the end of October. To view the plan and additional information please visit the project website, **http://www.kfhgroup.com/vermonttransitplanupdate.htm**, or contact Scott Bascom of the Policy and Planning Division at VTrans by email at **scott.bascom@state.vt.us** or by phone at (802) 828-5748.