



GMT/SSTA Call Center Study

for the Chittenden County Regional
Planning Commission



June 30, 2022



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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Background

In 2018, Steadman Hill Consulting and Thatcher Consulting conducted a study for Green Mountain Transit (GMT) of options for the provision of demand response service in Chittenden County. In their final report to GMT, *ADA Paratransit and Demand response Services Study*, the study team recommended that GMT continue to contract for demand response services in Chittenden County.

Concerned about the cost of operating two separate call centers for demand response services in the GMT service area, particularly in light of changes in ridership brought about by the COVID-19 public health emergency, GMT and its Chittenden County service contractor, Special Services Transportation Agency (SSTA), partnered with the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) to undertake this study of consolidated call center options for the two organizations. The objective of the project was to update information presented in the 2018 report about the operations of GMT and SSTA, with a focus on the demand response service reservations and scheduling/dispatch functions, and to identify and evaluate options for a consolidated call center.

Project Approach

The consultant team's approach to the project included the following:

- ▶ Work with CCRPC, GMT, and SSTA to identify the specific consolidated call center options to be considered
- ▶ Online survey of peer transit agencies surveyed as part of the 2018 study, to gather information specific to the operation of their call centers
- ▶ On-site interviews with GMT and SSTA staff in March 2022 to collect updated data and tour potential locations for a combined call center
- ▶ Evaluation of options
- ▶ Presentation of recommendations to CCRPC, GMT, and SSTA

Current Operations

The current structure for delivery of demand response trips in GMT's four-county service area is summarized below.

Chittenden County

Reservations, scheduling/dispatch, customer service, and vehicle operation and maintenance for ADA paratransit, Elderly & Disabled Program (E&D), Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) trips and volunteer rides are handled by SSTA, under contract to GMT for the first three program and to the Vermont Public Transportation Association (VPTA) for NEMT service. SSTA's facility is located in Colchester.

Washington and Franklin counties

Reservations, scheduling/dispatch, customer service, and vehicle operation and maintenance for E&D, NEMT, route deviation, and MyRide trips, and volunteer rides are handled by GMT at its facility in Burlington. Trips are scheduled and dispatched from garages in Berlin and St. Albans.



Grand Isle County

Reservations for E&D and NEMT trips in Grand Isle County are handled by GMT in Burlington. Scheduling/dispatch, customer service, and vehicle operation for E&D and NEMT trips and coordination of volunteer rides is done by Champlain Islanders Developing Effective Resources (CIDER).

Consolidated Call Center Options

The three options for a consolidated call center that were examined in this study are:

- ▶ Option 1: Centralized Reservations at GMT, Decentralized Scheduling/Dispatch
- ▶ Option 2: Contracted Operation of Consolidated Call Center, operated by SSTA or another competitively selected contractor
- ▶ Option 3: Centralized Reservations, Scheduling, and Dispatch at GMT

Key Findings

- ▶ The duties of CSRs at GMT and SSTA differ. GMT CSRs book trips in Washington, Franklin, and Grand Isle counties; SSTA CSRs book trips in Chittenden County. Each group has knowledge of the riders, geography, location of origins and key destinations, volunteer drivers, and other characteristics of a particular area. Moreover, GMT CSRs are responsible for providing information and assistance to riders on GMT's fixed route and MyRide services.
- ▶ Familiar relationships between CSRs and riders are important for customer service, especially for riders who use demand response services. All three options would disrupt the existing relationships between riders and the CSRs who handle their trip requests, at least in the short term.
- ▶ Good working relationships between CSRs and scheduler/dispatchers are also important for effective handling of day of service issues, which affect not only operations but also customer service. Options 1 and 2 would introduce a separation between CSRs and demand response scheduler/dispatchers (in the case of Option 2, the separation would only occur for Chittenden County trips if SSTA were not selected as the contracted call center operator). Option 2 would also create a separation between GMT CSRs and GMT fixed route dispatchers.
- ▶ Wages/salaries and benefits packages for call center employees vary between GMT and SSTA. In general, SSTA offers higher wages for similar positions, but GMT's benefits package is richer. Any consolidation of call center functions will require input of additional resources on an ongoing basis to create an equitable environment for call center staff in terms of compensation for similar years of service.
- ▶ Both organizations have space at their current locations to house a consolidated call center, but estimated costs to make the spaces ready for use vary considerably.

Recommendations

Based on the information reviewed throughout the study, conversations with GMT and SSTA managers, and the conclusions noted above, it is the recommendation of the consultant team that GMT continue to include reservations for demand response trips in Chittenden County in the contract currently held by SSTA, and to continue to operate its own call center for demand response trips in Washington, Franklin, and Grand Isle counties and for fixed route inquiries. Any concerns with the service cost or performance associated with the Chittenden County trips could be addressed through contract oversight and contract modifications as needed.



2. INTRODUCTION

In 2018, Steadman Hill Consulting and Thatcher Consulting conducted a study for Green Mountain Transit (GMT) of options for the provision of demand response service in Chittenden County. In their final report to GMT, *ADA Paratransit and Demand response Services Study*, the study team recommended that GMT continue to contract for demand response services in Chittenden County.

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Project Approach

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- ▶ Work with CCRPC, GMT, and SSTA to identify the specific consolidated call center options to be considered
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- ▶ Presentation of recommendations to CCRPC, GMT, and SSTA

Organization of the Report

The remainder of this report is organized as follows. Section 3 describes the current operation of demand response services in GMT's service area. Section 4 presents updated information about the organization, staffing, and facilities of GMT's and SSTA's reservations and scheduling/dispatch functions. Section 5 summarizes the results of the peer review. Section 6 examines the potential impacts on administration and service management, operations, riders, staffing, facilities, equipment, and cost of each of three consolidated call center options. Section 7 presents the consultant team's recommendations regarding consolidation.



3. CURRENT GMT DEMAND RESPONSE SERVICES

This section provides an overview of the demand response services provided by GMT in its service area, which includes Chittenden, Washington, Franklin, and Grand Isle counties.

ADA Paratransit

Public transit providers are required by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) to provide paratransit service as a complement to fixed route bus (excluding commuter bus) and rail services (excluding commuter rail) for individuals who are unable to use those services as a result of a disability.

Complementary paratransit service must be comparable to the agency's fixed route services in a number of characteristics: service area; days and hours of service; response time, or advance notice requirements; fares; allowable trip purposes; and capacity constraints.

Most of GMT's fixed route service operates in and around Burlington, and thus ADA paratransit trips are provided in Chittenden County. GMT contracts with SSTA for the reservations, scheduling/dispatch, vehicle operation, and vehicle maintenance of the ADA service.

Elderly and Persons with Disabilities (E&D) Transportation

The Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) subsidizes 80% of the cost for GMT's operation of demand response service for individuals aged 60 and over and people with disabilities through the E&D program. The local share of funding is provided by communities or agency partners, which set the service policies for transportation provided to their residents and clients.

E&D service is provided in all four counties and is operated by GMT or its contractors, or volunteer drivers managed by GMT or its contractors. In Chittenden County, GMT contracts with SSTA for reservations, scheduling/dispatch, vehicle operation, and vehicle maintenance. GMT handles reservations for E&D service in Washington and Franklin counties at its Burlington facility; GMT dispatchers in the Berlin and St. Albans garages dispatch E&D trips in Washington and Franklin counties, respectively. Champlain Islanders Developing Essential Resources (CIDER) handles all functions for E&D service in Grand Isle County.

Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT)

NEMT is funded by the Department of Vermont Health Access (DVHA) to transport Medicaid recipients to medical appointments and other trips related to health care. The Vermont Public Transportation Association (VPTA) administers the funding and contracts with providers in each of the nine NEMT regions to operate service. NEMT contractors use public fixed route services, agency operated van services, taxi providers, and volunteer drivers to deliver services to eligible individuals. SSTA provides service in Chittenden County under contract to VPTA; GMT and CIDER do the same in Washington/Franklin and Grand Isle counties, respectively. As with E&D service, GMT takes reservations for NEMT trips at its Burlington facility; trips are dispatched from the Berlin and St. Albans garages.

Volunteer Ride Programs

Volunteer drivers provide ADA paratransit, E&D, and NEMT trips in all four counties included in this study. SSTA manages the volunteer driver network in Chittenden County. GMT and Franklin and Washington County volunteer coordinators manage the networks in those counties. CIDER manages volunteer drivers in Grand Isle County, although GMT pays CIDER volunteers directly for trips provided; funds do not go through CIDER. Management functions vary slightly by county, but generally include driver recruitment, onboarding, recognition and retention, trip reservations, assignment of trips to drivers, and handling of same-day service issues.



MyRide

MyRide is a shared ride, flexible route and schedule microtransit service that has been operating in the city of Montpelier in Washington County since early 2021. The service replaced three route deviation bus routes to popular destinations in Montpelier and Berlin—downtown Montpelier, Central Vermont Medical Center, and the Berlin Mall, as well as others. Modifications to the service area to better match demand are now being considered.

GMT vehicles driven by GMT operators are typically dispatched for a pickup within 15-30 minutes of a request. Service is currently fare-free.

Riders can book trips directly by using a mobile app or the GMT website, by speaking with a customer service representative at the Montpelier Transit Center in, or by a call to a GMT customer service representative in the Burlington call center. As of June 2022, approximately 59% of trips are booked through the app, 38% of trips through the call center, and 3% through other means, such as a web portal or CSRs at the Transit Center.



4. SSTA AND GMT DEMAND RESPONSE OPERATIONS

This section presents updated information on GMT and SSTA operation of demand response services, focusing on call center and scheduling/dispatch staff.

SSTA Organization, Staffing, Facility, and Equipment

SSTA's organization and staffing of its call center, its facility, and equipment are described below.

Organization and Staffing

A recent organizational chart for SSTA is shown in Figure 1. The Customer Service Manager, who reports to the Executive Director, oversees five full-time Customer Service Representatives (CSRs), including a CSR Supervisor, as well as the team of five full-time dispatchers, including a Dispatch/Scheduling Lead. The CSR Supervisor was previously held by a sixth individual; the position was vacant for a time and then filled by one of the five remaining CSRs.

The CSRs, using Routematch software, handle reservations for ADA, E&D, and NEMT trips in Chittenden County, which accounts for 99% of their time. NEMT paperwork accounts for the remainder. One of the CSRs is the volunteer ride coordinator. United Way recruits drivers. The CSR then handles the initial consultation with the new driver, onboarding (with SSTA's Safety Coordinator), sending scheduled rides and manifests, and reporting. Those duties require a maximum of 1-3 hours per day. The entire CSR team is available to handle "hardship" NEMT trips which include Medicaid recipients and Foster Parents who are reimbursed for providing their own transportation for eligible trips, and long-range out-of-town trips that may entail reservations for lodging and other unusual circumstances.

"Where's my ride" and other same-day calls go to the dispatch team; the two teams work closely together to resolve issues.

Facility and Equipment

Both the CSR and dispatch teams work out of SSTA's facility at 2091 Main Street, Colchester. The call center is staffed from 7:30 am to 4:30 pm; all CSRs are on duty during those hours. The combined call center area includes workstations for four CSRs; a fifth workstation is located in the reception area for the fifth CSR, who also acts as a receptionist for visitors. As of the end of March, all CSRs are working in the office on a full-time basis.

SSTA uses a Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) telephone system, which was new in January 2021. Calls are routed to CSRs via a round robin call queue; whichever CSR has been without a call for the longest time receives the next call in the queue. The CSR Supervisor and Customer Service Manager see all data, but other CSRs see only their own call queue. Each CSR uses a computer plus three monitors and a headset. All computers were replaced in October-November 2021.

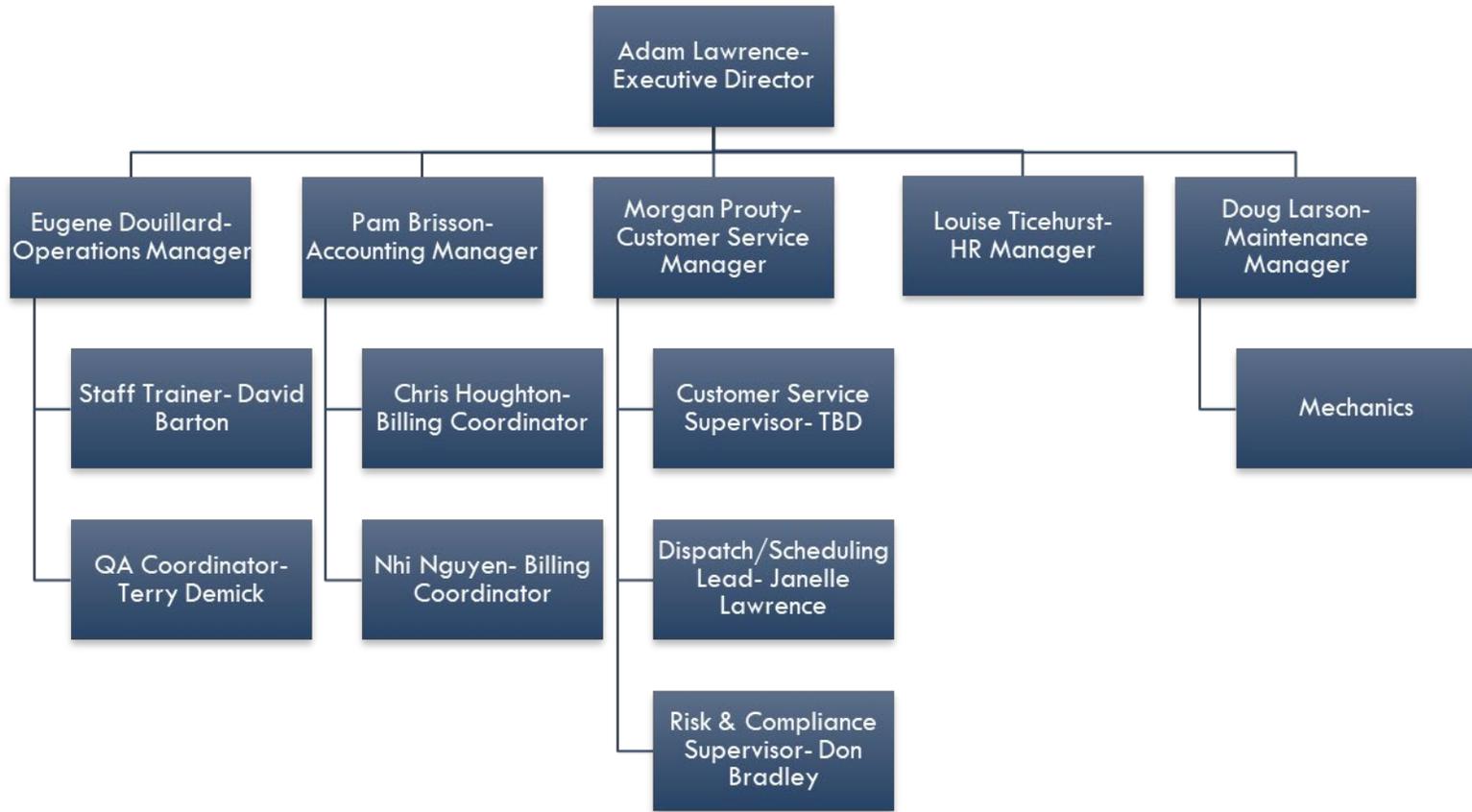
Call Center Statistics

The SSTA call center handles about 84,600 calls per year, based on actual call volume from May 2021 through December 2021. Calls handled average 7,050 calls per month, 235 calls per day, and 47 calls per CSR per day. An estimated 10,140 calls are received after hours.

Annual operating costs attributed to operation of the call center in FY2021 were \$301,815, primarily for the costs of wages and benefits for call center staff.



Figure 1: SSTA Organizational Chart



GMT Organization, Staffing, Facilities, and Equipment

The organization, staffing, and facilities of GMT's call center are described below.

Organization and Staffing

A current GMT organizational chart is shown in Figure 2. Management of demand response services and management of contracts for ADA paratransit and other services fall under the Director of Finance. Until May 2022, the Paratransit and Broker Services Manager, who reported to the Director of Finance, was responsible for managing the call center and volunteer ride coordination, coordinating with dispatch staff in GMT's rural operations group who dispatch demand response trips in Washington and Franklin counties, and overseeing contract operation of ADA services by SSTA. The Paratransit and Broker Services Manager position is still vacant. GMT is considering staffing options but will likely rely on the Broker Services Manager and the Director of Finance for call center management and fill the vacant position somewhere else in the organization.

Demand Response Call Center and Volunteer Ride Program Staffing

Four full-time CSRs at GMT's Burlington facility and one flex CSR/scheduler based at the Berlin facility reported to the Paratransit and Broker Services Manager. A Broker Services Manager, stationed in GMT's Berlin facility, is available to fill in as a CSR when necessary, but more often serves as a resource for CSRs, makes "hardship" NEMT trip arrangements, and spends about half her time on billing and reporting, especially for NEMT. Since the Paratransit and Broker Services Manager position has been vacant, the Broker Services Manager has taken on more call center supervisory duties.

CSRs perform a number of functions, including the following:

- ▶ General GMT information and customer service (complaints, lost and found)
- ▶ Fixed route information and customer service, including trip planning and vehicle location, using Google Transit and Swiftly, a vehicle tracking app. CSRs work closely with fixed route dispatchers to resolve same-day issues.
- ▶ Reservations and customer service (including where's my ride and other same-day calls) for E&D, NEMT, MyRide, deviated fixed routes, and volunteer rides in Washington and Franklin counties, using Via's microtransit platform for MyRide trips and Routematch for other demand response trips
- ▶ Reservations for NEMT trips in Grand Isle County

CSRs typically spend about 75% of their time on demand response calls and tasks and 25% on fixed route calls and tasks.

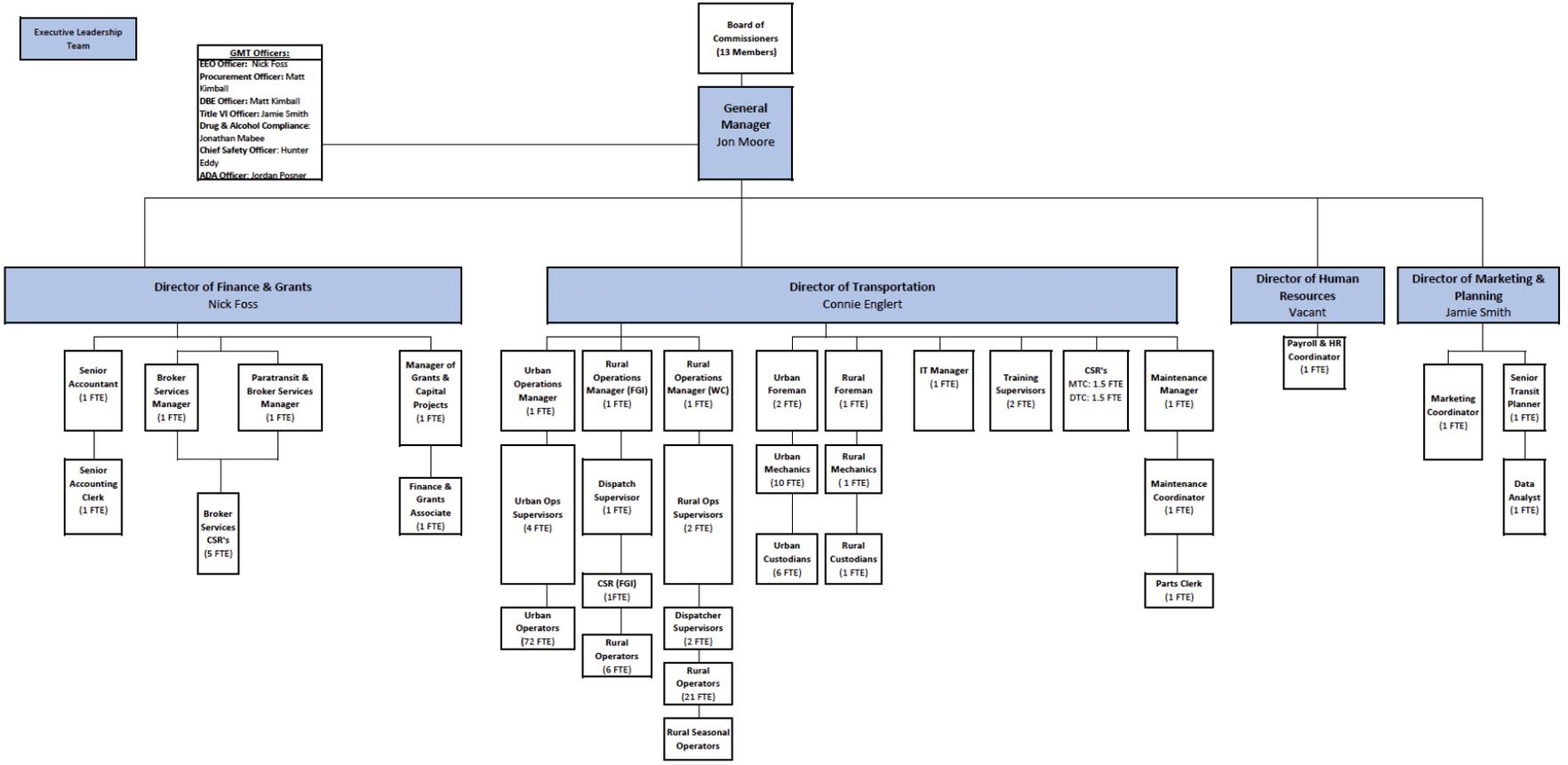
Volunteer drivers for E&D and NEMT trips in Washington and Franklin counties are recruited by the GMT Marketing staff. The Paratransit and Broker Services Manager was previously responsible for all background checks; the Broker Services Manager now handles that as well as assignment of Washington County volunteer rides to drivers and attention to same day service and after-hours issues. A Franklin County coordinator splits her time between Burlington and the St. Albans garage and coordinates volunteer rides in Franklin County.

Technical support for call center staff is provided by GMT's IT Manager.

GMT's call center is located at 101 Queen City Park Road in Burlington, GMT's main administrative and operations facility. The call center is staffed from 7:45 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday. Fixed route dispatchers are on duty from 4:30 am to 7:30 pm, Monday through Saturday. Dispatchers, who are union employees, are able to take calls for CSRs, book MyRide trips, and take trip cancellations.



Figure 2: GMT Organizational Chart



Washington and Franklin County Operations Staffing

E&D and NEMT trips in Washington County are dispatched by GMT rural operations dispatchers at the GMT garage in Berlin (Washington County) and St. Albans (Franklin County). Dispatchers also handle deviated fixed route services, which involve deviations off the route arranged in advance.

Facilities and Equipment

The call center space is on the second floor of 101 Queen City Park Road. CSRs currently work in separate offices. GMT utilizes a Burlington Telecom VOIP telephone system. As at SSTA, calls are routed in a round robin queue. CSRs see only their own call queues. Each CSR uses a computer plus two additional monitors and a headset.

Call Center Statistics

The GMT call center handled 55,081 calls between March 2021 and February 2022. That volume breaks down to an average of 4,590 calls per month, 153 calls per day, and 38 calls per CSR per day. GMT has set a CSR performance standard of 40-50 calls per day at an average of two minutes per call.

Approximate annual operating costs for the call center for FY2021 are \$384,561. That figure includes all expenses associated with GMT's rural broker services, volunteer ride coordination expenses, and allocated indirect charges.



5. PEER REVIEW

The 2018 study of alternative service designs for demand response service in Chittenden County included a survey of transit agencies that are comparable to GMT in terms of population, operating environment, and climate. Twenty-three peer agencies were asked to respond to an electronic survey that asked questions about demand response service design and delivery and the operating and financial characteristics of ADA paratransit service.

A link to a brief online survey that sought to collect information about demand response call center structure, staffing, utilization, and cost for this study was emailed to the same list of 23 peers. Several new potential peers that the study working group believed might be operating consolidated call centers were researched as well, but no such examples were found.

Using the contact information from the previous survey, nearly half of the invitations to participate in this study's survey were undeliverable. Online research and phone calls were conducted to identify a contact at each agency, and survey links were ultimately sent to all but one of the peers on the original list.

Despite a cover email and a later reminder from CCRPC, only four agencies responded to the survey:

- ▶ Kalamazoo Metro, Kalamazoo, MI and Apple Bus Company, which operates service and a call center for Metro
- ▶ Charlottesville Area Transit (CAT) and JAUNT, Inc., the non-profit transportation provider that operates demand response service, including a call center, for CAT, in Charlottesville, VA
- ▶ Western Reserve Transit Authority, Youngstown, OH
- ▶ Broome County Department of Public Transportation/Broome County Transit, Vestal, NY

While the survey response rate was low and the data provided by the respondents was limited, some information is helpful to report.

Transportation Services Included in the Call Center

- ▶ ADA paratransit: four respondents
- ▶ Demand response service for the general public: three respondents
- ▶ Other demand response services: four respondents
- ▶ Volunteer rides: one respondent
- ▶ Fixed route services: three respondents
- ▶ No respondents reported NEMT; microtransit, on-demand, or Transportation Network Company (TNC) services or pilot programs

Staffing

- ▶ Respondents reported either one (two respondents) or two (one respondent) managers of their call centers.
- ▶ The number of supervisors or lead CSRs reported: one (one respondent), two (two respondents) and three (one respondent).
- ▶ The number of CSRs reported: four (one respondent), five (one respondent), 10 (one respondent) and 15 (one respondent).



Software Used for Reservations/Scheduling/Dispatch

- ▶ Trapeze and Routematch
- ▶ TripSpark
- ▶ Trapeze Pass Info
- ▶ CTS

Utilization Data

- ▶ JAUNT, Inc. and Western Reserve Transit Authority provided call handling statistics

Call Center Costs

- ▶ JAUNT, Inc. and Western Reserve Transit Authority offered to provide data but did not attach it to their surveys

The peer agency contact list and survey questionnaire can be found in Appendix A.



6. CONSOLIDATED CALL CENTER OPTIONS

This section presents the three consolidated call center options considered for GMT and SSTA in this study and discusses the impacts of each option on:

- ▶ GMT administration and service management
- ▶ SSTA operations
- ▶ Operation of service
- ▶ Riders
- ▶ Staffing
- ▶ Facilities
- ▶ Equipment
- ▶ Cost

Options Considered

Figure 3 shows the three call center options evaluated in this study and the assignment of various demand response service functions in each. The current structure of demand response services in GMT's service area is also shown in gold at the top of Figure 3.

The three options are:

- ▶ Option 1: Centralized Reservations at GMT, Decentralized Scheduling/Dispatch
- ▶ Option 2: Contracted Operation of Consolidated Call Center, operated by SSTA or another competitively selected contractor
- ▶ Option 3: Centralized Reservations, Scheduling, and Dispatch at GMT

Option 1

Reservations and customer service for ADA paratransit, E&D, NEMT, and volunteer rides in Chittenden, Washington, Franklin, and Grand Isle counties would be centralized at GMT. Scheduling/dispatch for each service would continue to be handled by SSTA, or other service contractor, for Chittenden County trips, GMT, for trips in Washington and Franklin counties, and CIDER for Grand Isle County trips. A consolidated call center would be located at GMT's current facility in Burlington.

Option 2

Reservations and customer service for ADA paratransit, E&D, NEMT, and volunteer rides in Chittenden, Washington, Franklin, and Grand Isle counties would be centralized in a contracted, consolidated call center operated by SSTA or another competitively contracted call center operator. Scheduling/dispatch would continue to be performed by SSTA (or other service contractor) for Chittenden County trips, by GMT for Washington and Franklin County trips, and be CIDER for Grand Isle County trips. The consolidated call center would be located at SSTA's facility in Colchester, or other contractor location.

Option 3

Reservations and customer service for ADA paratransit, E&D, NEMT, and volunteer rides in Chittenden, Washington, Franklin, and Grand Isle counties would be centralized at GMT, together with scheduling/dispatch for trips in Chittenden County. GMT would schedule and dispatch trips in Washington and Franklin counties but would do so from its garages in Berlin and St. Albans. Scheduling/dispatch for



Figure 3: Consolidated Call Center Options

Call Center Model and Functions	Chittenden County					Washington and Franklin Counties					Grand Isle County		
	GMT Fixed Route and General Info	GMT ADA Paratransit	E&D	NEMT	Volunteer Rides	E&D	NEMT	GMT MyRide	Deviated Fixed Routes	Volunteer Rides	E&D	NEMT	Volunteer Rides
Current Structure													
Reservations	NA	Service Contractor*	Service Contractor	Service Contractor	Service Contractor	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	CIDER
Customer Service	GMT	Service Contractor	Service Contractor	Service Contractor	Service Contractor	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT/ County Vol Coords***	CIDER	CIDER	CIDER
Scheduling/Dispatch	GMT	Service Contractor	Service Contractor	Service Contractor	Service Contractor	GMT garages	GMT garages	GMT	GMT garages	GMT/ County Vol Coords	CIDER	CIDER	CIDER
Option 1: Centralized Reservations, Decentralized Scheduling/Dispatch													
Reservations	NA	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT
Customer Service	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT
Trip Brokering	NA	GMT	GMT	GMT	NA	GMT	GMT	NA	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT
Scheduling/Dispatch	GMT	Service Contractor	Service Contractor	Service Contractor	Service Contractor	GMT garages	GMT garages	GMT	GMT garages	GMT/ County Vol Coords	CIDER	CIDER	CIDER
Option 2: Contracted Operation of Consolidated Call Center													
Reservations	NA	Contractor**	Contractor	Contractor	Contractor	Contractor	Contractor	Contractor	Contractor	Contractor	Contractor	Contractor	Contractor
Customer Service	Contractor	Contractor	Contractor	Contractor	Contractor	Contractor	Contractor	Contractor	Contractor	Contractor	Contractor	Contractor	Contractor
Trip Brokering	NA	Contractor	Contractor	Contractor	NA	Contractor	Contractor	NA	Contractor	Contractor	Contractor	Contractor	Contractor
Scheduling/Dispatch	GMT	Service contractor	Service contractor	Service Contractor	Service Contractor	GMT garages	GMT garages	GMT	GMT garages	GMT/ County Vol Coords	CIDER	CIDER	CIDER
Option 3: Centralized Reservations, Scheduling, Dispatch													
Reservations	NA	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT
Customer Service	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT
Trip Brokering	NA	NA	GMT	GMT	NA	GMT	GMT	NA	GMT	GMT/ County Vol Coords	GMT	GMT	GMT
Scheduling/Dispatch	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT	GMT garages	GMT garages	GMT	GMT garages	GMT/ County Vol Coords	CIDER	CIDER	CIDER
*Currently SSTA													
**Third-party call center contractor; procured through competitive process. Could be SSTA.													
*** Franklin and Washington County Volunteer Coordinators - mentioned in 2018 report													



trips in Grand Isle County would continue to be handled by CIDER. The consolidated, centralized call center would be located at GMT's Burlington facility. The only remaining contracted functions would be vehicle operations and maintenance for demand response trips in Chittenden County.

Impacts

Presented below are the expected impacts that implementation of each call center option would have in various areas.

GMT Service Management

All options: GMT would still need to monitor both internal operations and contractor performance. Internal monitoring efforts would be equal to or greater than contractor oversight under Options 1 and 3. Contractor oversight efforts would be significantly expanded under Option 2.

Option 1: With centralized reservations at GMT, contractor oversight would be needed in the areas of scheduling and dispatch practices; continued oversight of driver and maintenance performance would also be required.

Option 2: With contracted call center operation, GMT would need to monitor the call center contractor's performance of reservations, trip brokering, and customer service, and the service contractor's performance of driver and maintenance performance.

Option 3: With centralized reservations and scheduling/dispatch, responsibility for productivity and on-time performance would lie with GMT rather than the service contractor.

SSTA Operations

Option 1: The SSTA contract with GMT would be reduced to scheduling/dispatch and vehicle operation and maintenance in Chittenden County.

Option 2: The SSTA contract with GMT (if SSTA should win the call center contract) would be expanded to include call center functions for all demand response trips in the GMT service area except scheduling/dispatching outside of Chittenden County.

Option 3: The SSTA contract with GMT would be reduced to vehicle operation and maintenance in Chittenden County.

Operation of Service

Changes in the assignment of functions for demand response trips in the GMT service area would affect daily van operations, NEMT service, volunteer ride programs, and users of all services.

Van Operations

Separating reservations from scheduling/dispatch generally makes handling same-day service issues, including "where's my ride" inquiries, more difficult.

Option 1: A new separation would be created between reservations and scheduling/dispatch for ADA, E&D, and NEMT trips in Chittenden County, which would affect the working relationship between the CSR and dispatch teams at SSTA. Option 2 would cause the same impact if the contractor selected to operate the call center were an entity other than SSTA.

Option 2: The working relationship between GMT CSRs and GMT schedulers/dispatchers in Washington and Franklin counties would be similarly affected, although this change would likely be less disruptive than



Option 1's impact on SSTA because the GMT reservations and scheduling/dispatch staff already work in different locations. Routing same-day dispatch calls about GMT fixed route and demand response trips to SSTA would increase the number of calls to dispatch; use of instant messaging or some other method of communication between SSTA CSRs and SSTA dispatchers might provide a solution. Another issue that might arise with Option 2 is the inquiries from non-union SSTA CSRs to unionized GMT fixed route dispatchers, which might be viewed as "new work" under the GMT bargaining agreement.

Option 3: Separation of functions would not be an issue if most functions were centralized at GMT.

NEMT in Chittenden County

All options would affect SSTA's contract with VPTA for NEMT trips in Chittenden County, which currently includes reservations, scheduling/dispatch, and vehicle operation and maintenance. Assignment of SSTA's contract with VPTA for Chittenden County NEMT to GMT or a contracted call center operation, or subcontract between SSTA and GMT/contractor for NEMT reservations would be needed.

Options 1, 3: The introduction of a new separation between NEMT reservations and scheduling/dispatch would increase the difficulty of handling same-day issues.

Option 2: If SSTA were not the selected contractor of a consolidated call center, VPTA would need to agree to the transfer of the reservations function to the new call center operator.

Volunteer Ride Programs

Currently, all functions associated with volunteer rides in Chittenden County, other than driver recruitment, are handled by SSTA, the present service contractor. These functions include reservations, scheduling (assignment of trips to drivers), dispatch (handling same-day service issues) and customer service. In Washington and Franklin counties, GMT handles reservations and county volunteer coordinators schedule and dispatch volunteer rides and provide customer service. In Grand Isle County, CIDER handles all volunteer ride coordination functions other than reimbursement.

In Option 1, reservations and customer service for volunteer rides in all four counties would move to GMT. Scheduling and dispatch would be handled by SSTA in Chittenden County, GMT garages and county coordinators in Washington and Franklin counties, and CIDER in Grand Isle County. In Chittenden and Grand Isle counties, this would introduce a separation between reservations and scheduling of drivers and rides, which might affect the efficiency of volunteer driver management. This would also divide reservations/customer service and scheduling/dispatch, which would make resolution of same-day issues more difficult and less seamless for riders. The same impacts would occur in Option 2 in which the call center contractor and GMT, respectively, would take over volunteer ride reservations and customer service.

Riders

Options 1, 2, and 3: All options include centralized reservations, meaning one point of contact—either GMT or a call center contractor—for ADA paratransit, E&D, and NEMT services in Chittenden, Washington, Franklin, and Grand Isle counties. Streamlined communications could be perceived as a service quality benefit, or a reduction in service quality due to loss of knowledge and personal contact between CSRs and the riders whose trip requests they have historically handled. Similar relationships would take time to develop between riders and unfamiliar staff. During the presentation of a call center study overview to the Chittenden County E&D Committee, committee members expressed the latter opinion, stating that the relationships between riders and CSRs are very important to riders.



Staffing

Changes to staffing at GMT and SSTA would be among the greatest impacts of a consolidated call center. Impacts associated with each option are discussed below.

Staffing Impacts and Issues—Option 1

As part of Option 1, SSTA CSRs would become GMT employees. GMT would likely add a call center supervisor and increase the Broker Service's Manager's official responsibility for call center support. Overall call center management would be provided by GMT's Director of Finance.

CSRs from SSTA would require training in new job duties and use of additional software tools, including provision of general GMT information; provision of fixed route information and assistance with trip planning and vehicle location; booking MyRide trips; booking trips outside of Chittenden County, and use of a second version of Routematch (GMT and SSTA both use Routematch to schedule and dispatch trips, but have two separate systems and databases).¹

Currently, SSTA works with sponsor organizations to provide service for clients that is not part of SSTA's contract with GMT. Provision would need to be made for continuing that function if SSTA CSRs became GMT employees.

Changes in duties and job location for SSTA staff, as well as changes in compensation (discussed later in this section) might cause turnover, requiring investment in recruiting and training new staff.

Staffing Impacts and Issues—Option 2

Under Option 2, a contracted call center operator would be responsible for reservations, customer service, and trip brokering for all demand response trips in the GMT service area. Presumably, it would be mutually beneficial to the contractor and current staff if GMT and SSTA CSRs would be able to apply for positions with the call center contractor, either SSTA or another entity.

If SSTA is the contractor, it would likely add a call center supervisor position to assist the Customer Service Manager with oversight of the expanded call center. The supervisor position could be filled by the current lead CSR or a new hire. Depending on the volume of GMT fixed route inquiries and tasks, a call center supervisor and a lead CSR might both be needed.

CSR training would be needed for former GMT CSRs related to booking trips for ADA, E&D, and NEMT trips in Chittenden County, which they currently do not handle. Former SSTA CSRs would require training on their expanded job duties as in Option 1.

GMT would be responsible for oversight of the call center contractor but would likely not require additional staff to handle expanded oversight responsibilities.

As with Option 1, changes in job duties, location, and compensation could lead to staff turnover.

Staffing Impacts and Issues—Option 3

Under Option 3, five SSTA CSRs, two schedulers/dispatchers, and one billing assistant would become GMT employees.

¹ The assumption behind this analysis is that all CSRs in a combined call center would handle all types of calls. In a future phase, dedicating CSRs to certain types of calls might be considered.



Additional supervisory/management staff might be needed to oversee consolidated reservations and scheduling/dispatch covering all demand response trips in the GMT service area as well as fixed route inquiries.

GMT CRSs would need training related to booking trips for ADA, E&D, and NEMT trips in Chittenden County. SSTA CRSs would require training as in Option 1 to be able to take on expanded duties.

Again, changes in job duties, location, and compensation could lead to staff turnover.

Facility Options

The current facilities of GMT and SSTA both include space that could be utilized for an expanded call center.

Facility Options at GMT

The most likely space for an expanded call center is a large open area in middle of second floor of 101 Queen City Park Road. The area, approximately 790 square feet, is finished office space, but some relatively minor remodeling would likely be needed to create work areas for additional CRSs and supervisory staff. Some new furniture and equipment may also be required.

The other option is a vacant, unfinished facility next door to GMT's administration and operations office, 31 Queen City Park Road. The 1,740 square feet space is sufficient for 10 CSR workstations and offices for supervisors. Significant work would be required to make the space usable and construct offices or cubicles for workstations.

Facility Option at SSTA

SSTA's offices at 2091 Main Street, Colchester include unused space on the second floor of the building. Four offices currently used by SSTA staff could also be available.

The unused space accounts for about 2/3 of second floor square footage and is sufficient for 10 CSR workstations. The space would require completion of build-out – it has walls and is wired for data but would need flooring and workstations.

One major issue regarding the space that has been only partially resolved is the need to add an elevator to the building. Initially, it was thought that the Town of Colchester would require installation of an elevator to provide access for individuals with disabilities to meet ADA requirements if the number of staff in the building increased to a certain number. Consultation between SSTA and the town has determined that an elevator would not be needed to meet accessibility requirements. It may, however, be needed to meet a state fire code. SSTA is currently working to obtain a final decision from the state fire inspector.

Equipment Needs

Equipment needs for a consolidated call center would be minimal—primarily needs for CSR computers and monitors, headsets, and software.

Option 1: GMT's IT Manager estimates a cost of \$2,520 per user per year, assuming that no equipment from SSTA would be available for use in the new call center.

Option 2: If SSTA is the selected call center contractor, estimated costs would be the same as under Option 1. If an outside contractor were selected, equipment costs could be built into the project scope/budget.

Option 3: Option 1's estimate would apply.



Costs and Savings

As discussed below, the primary component of the costs associated with consolidating the GMT and SSTA call centers is staff wages and benefits, particularly in light of the need to adjust for differences in wages and benefits between the two organizations if staff are to be combined. One-time facility renovation costs for Option 1 and for Option 2 if installation of an elevator is not required and ongoing equipment costs are estimated to be relatively minor in comparison.

Staffing Costs

Significant disparity between pay and benefits for similar positions exists between GMT and SSTA. In general, SSTA offers higher wages/salaries to call center staff, but GMT offers a higher level of benefits—37% of wages and salaries as compared to SSTA’s 15%. In addition, supervisory/management positions do not align exactly. Nonetheless, if staff from the two organizations are to be combined in one expanded call center, equity concerns will require that differences in pay and benefits between GMT and SSTA be reduced. Equalizing pay and benefits is an ongoing increased cost of Options 1 and 3, as well as Option 2 if SSTA is the selected call center contractor.

GMT and SSTA provided wage/salary and benefit information for call center staff during the site visit in March 2022 and updated that information in June 2022. Estimated salaries for new supervisory staff that would be added by each organization to an expanded call center were also provided. Comparisons between pay and benefits between the two organizations are discussed below.

Staff Cost Comparison

Figure 4 compares wage/salary information for comparable positions, to the extent possible, between GMT and SSTA, using the updated wage rates provided by GMT and SSTA in June 2022.

Figure 4: Staff Cost Comparison, GMT and SSTA

Current SSTA Position	Current SSTA Salary or Average Wage	Similar GMT Position	GMT Salary or Average Wage	Difference (SSTA over GMT)
Customer Service Manager	\$76,190	No equivalent position	NA	NA
Lead CSR	\$49,920	Broker Services Manager	\$50,000	\$0
Dispatch/Scheduling Lead	\$49,920	Dispatch Supervisor	\$55,000	-\$5,080
Full-time Scheduler/Dispatcher	\$21.40	Dispatcher	\$21.63	-\$0.23
Customer Service Representative	\$19.68	Customer Service Representative	\$16.75	\$2.93
Billing Coordinator	\$24.33	No equivalent position- salary estimated at low-mid 40's	\$20.67	\$4.14



Management decisions at both organizations not to fill open positions or to shift duties to existing staff and a recent increase in the wage rate of GMT CSRs have reduced the differences in pay levels somewhat since the data collection phase in March 2022. For most positions, SSTA wages/salaries are still higher.

Benefits Comparison

Figure 5 compares staff benefits offered by GMT and SSTA. Differences in paid time off and employer contributions account for most of the disparities.

Figure 5: Benefits Comparison, GMT and SSTA

Benefit	SSTA	GMT
Health Care Coverage	\$450 per month employer paid	100% employer paid; no deductible, but co-pays required
Vision and Dental	No employer contribution	100% employer paid
Life Insurance	2X employee's salary up to \$200,000	\$50,000
Short & Long-term Disability	100% employer paid	100% employer paid
Holidays	Combined Time Off Full-time employees: 17 days/year Part-time employees: VT Earned Sick Leave, 40 hours	11 paid
Vacation		1-5 years: 10 days 6-12 years: 15 days 13-24 years: 20 days 25+ years: 25 days
Other Leave		Sick: 6 days/year Personal: 1-5 days/year Bereavement: 3-5 days/year
Retirement Plan	No employer contribution	5-7% employer contribution, depending on employee contribution

Potential Staff Cost Increases

Figure 6 presents the estimated annual staffing cost increases associated with each call center option.

Under Option 1, costs would be incurred to increase wages of the GMT CSRs to the level of the SSTA team. Conversely, benefits would be increased for the SSTA CSRs to be commensurate with those offered by GMT. GMT would likely add a new call center supervisor position to help the Broker Services Manager and the Director of Finance with oversight of the day-to-day operation of the call center.

Since this analysis assumes that SSTA would be the selected contracted call center operator in Option 2, increases in wages and benefits to make the compensation of the former GMT and SSTA CSRs equal would



be the same as in Option 1. SSTA estimated a higher salary for a call center supervisor than GMT would incur in Option 1.

Option 3 would result in the highest additional staff costs of the three options, due to the absorption of SSTA’s dispatchers and billing coordinator into the fully centralized reservations, scheduling, and dispatching operation at GMT and the need to increase benefits for those staff members. Current salaries of SSTA and GMT dispatchers are virtually identical, so no adjustment to the salaries of GMT dispatchers would be necessary.

Management of each organization provided their best estimate of the additional supervisory staff they would need to operate an expanded call center, and the cost of that additional help. Both acknowledged, however, that there are many options for levels of supervision and assignment of supervisory functions among positions, so the actual supervisory structure that would be used if any of the three options were implemented might be different from that presented herein.

Figure 6: Estimated Annual Staffing Cost Increases by Call Center Option

Staff Change	Consolidated Call Center Options		
	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Increased wage for 5 GMT CSRs	\$30,472	\$30,472	\$30,472
Increased benefits for 5 SSTA CSRs	\$62,316	\$62,316	\$62,316
New GMT or SSTA Call Center Supervisor	\$50,000	\$62,500	\$50,000
Increased benefits for 2 FT SSTA scheduler/dispatchers	NA	NA	\$19,585
Increased benefits for 1 SSTA billing coordinator	NA	NA	\$11,133
Total	\$142,788	\$155,288	\$173,506

Notes:

- ▶ Updated wage/salary rates provided by GMT and SSTA June 2022
- ▶ Updated number of each type of position provided by SSTA June 2022
- ▶ Estimates of new call center supervisor salary provided by GMT and SSTA June 2022
- ▶ Option 2 assumes that SSTA is selected as the contracted call center operator; costs would vary (likely lower) if another contractor were selected



Estimated Annual Cost Increases and One-Time Implementation Costs by Call Center Option

Figure 7 shows estimated additional one-time implementation costs and ongoing additional operating costs of each of the three consolidated call center options.

Option 1: The annual cost increases associated with this option include equalization of pay and benefits for GMT and SSTA CSRs, a new call center supervisory position, and equipment costs, for a total of \$157,788. A rough estimate of the cost of construction work to complete the build-out of the second-floor space at 101 Queen City Park Road is \$35,000.

Option 2: Ongoing annual costs of this option include equalization of pay and benefits for GMT and SSTA CSRs, a new call center supervisory position, and equipment costs, for a total of \$170,288. The cost of completing the build-out on the second floor of SSTA's Colchester facility is not known at this time, but order of magnitude estimates are \$50,000 if installation of an elevator is not required and \$200,000 if it is.

Option 3: This option would involve consolidation of more GMT and SSTA staff in one location than the other two options, including CSRs, dispatchers, and supervisors. Estimated additional annual costs include pay and benefit equalization for GMT and SSTA CSRs and SSTA dispatchers, a new call center supervisory position, and equipment costs, for a total of \$193,506. In addition, more than one additional supervisory position might be needed to help the GMT Director of Finance and the Broker Services Manager oversee a centralized reservations and scheduling/dispatch operation.

Renovation of 31 Queen City Park Road would be needed to accommodate the combined staff, and the cost of that work is likely to be substantial. An order of magnitude estimate of up to \$1 million is included in Figure 7.



Figure 7: Estimated Annual Costs Increases and One-Time Costs by Call Center Option

Cost Impact	Consolidated Call Center Options		
	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Annual Cost Increases			
Increased wages for existing GMT CSRs	\$30,472	\$30,472	\$30,472
Increased benefits for SSTA CSRs	\$62,316	\$62,316	\$62,316
Increased benefits for existing SSTA dispatchers	NA	NA	\$19,585
Increased benefits for SSTA billing coordinator	NA	NA	\$11,133
New call center supervisory position	\$50,000	\$62,500	\$50,000
Yearly equipment costs, CSRs + call center supervisor	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$20,000
<i>Total</i>	\$157,788	\$170,288	\$193,506
One-Time Implementation Costs			
Facility renovations	\$35,000	\$50,000 - \$200,000	Up to \$1 million

Notes:

- ▶ Estimate of facility remodeling costs at 101 Queen City Park Road provided by GMT June 2022
- ▶ Option 2 assumes that SSTA is selected as the contracted call center operator

Potential for Cost Savings

One of the objectives of this study was to examine the potential for lower operating costs by consolidating call center functions between GMT and SSTA. As the previous analysis suggests, Options 1 and 3 offer no opportunities for savings. Equalization of pay and benefits among call center staff would increase annual operating costs yet both organizations would retain their facilities and administrative/management staff to carry on with other aspects of their operation of transportation services.

Option 2 offers the best chance for cost savings as contracted functions generally cost less than in-house operations. However, lower operating costs for a contracted call center would likely only be achieved if an outside entity, such as a national transit services contractor, were selected to operate the call center. Such an organization, with no history of staff wages and benefits for call center employees to contend with, would be able to propose lower call center operating costs than SSTA. The outside contractor would likely seek new employees, rather than the current GMT and SSTA staff, to fill call center positions at lower wage rates



and a reduced level of benefits, which may be desirable from a cost standpoint but undesirable due to its effect on current staff and, more importantly, on riders.²

Potential Operating Cost Offsets

The 2018 paratransit and demand response service study identified the possibility of eliminating one CSR position due to the increased efficiency in call handling that would be gained by increased call volume and the ability of all CSRs to handle calls for any service and county. The study recommended that reduction in the number of CSRs not be attempted at the time of consolidation, but by attrition following more experience with combined call center operations. The savings of one CSR position would be approximately \$57,000 per year at current (equalized) wage and benefit rates.

The 2018 study also identified potential savings that might be achieved by increased efficiency of scheduling intra-county trips with centralized reservations and decentralized scheduling/dispatch and vehicle operations (Options 1 and 2). The optimistic but minimal estimate of such savings in 2018 was \$13,000 per year.

Comparison between Options

Figure 8 compares the relative impact in all the areas discussed in this report of each of the three consolidated call center options. A value of 1 in Figure 8 for an option's effect in a particular impact category indicates the lowest among the three options—i.e., the most positive impact, a value of 3 indicates the highest impact—the least positive (except in the area of cost savings), and a value of 2 falls in the middle. The comparison is somewhat subjective and does not identify a clear winner but attempts to differentiate the options based on their relative impact in key areas.

² Two survey respondents reported that they contract for call center operation, one with a local bus company and the other with the nonprofit transportation provider that operates the agency's demand response service, but provided no cost data.



Figure 8: Comparison of Impacts by Call Center Option

Impact Category	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
GMT Administration and Service Management	1	2	3
SSTA Operations	1	NA	3
SSTA Operations, Option 2, SSTA as call center operator	NA	2	NA
SSTA Operations, Option 2, other contracted call center operator	NA	3	NA
Van Operations	1	1	2
Volunteer Rides	1	1	1
Riders	2	2	2
Staffing	1	2	3
Facilities	2	3	3
Equipment	1	1	2
Cost	1	2	3
Cost Savings	NA	3	NA

Note:

- ▶ 1 = Least Impact, 3 = Most Impact



7. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The impetus for this study was a concern with the cost of operating two separate call centers for demand response services throughout the GMT service area—one operated by SSTA, GMT’s service contractor, to handle trip reservations and scheduling/dispatching for ADA paratransit and other demand response services in Chittenden County, and the other by GMT to handle reservations for demand response trips in its rural service area communities. Concerns with cost grew in the past two years as ridership decreases in the NEMT program during the COVID-19 pandemic caused more of SSTA’s fixed costs to be spread across GMT programs.

Two options for consolidating trip reservations for all trips in the service area at a consolidated call center operated by GMT or SSTA (or other contracted call center operator), and a third option that would centralize scheduling and dispatch as well as reservations for all trips in the service area at GMT, were examined as part of the study. Key findings include the following:

- ▶ The duties of CSRs at GMT and SSTA differ. GMT CSRs book trips in Washington, Franklin, and Grand Isle counties; SSTA CSRs book trips in Chittenden County. Each group has knowledge of the riders, geography, location of origins and key destinations, volunteer drivers, and other characteristics of a particular area. Moreover, GMT CSRs are responsible for providing information and assistance to riders on GMT’s fixed route and MyRide services.
- ▶ Familiar relationships between CSRs and riders are important for customer service, especially for riders who use demand response services. All three options would disrupt the existing relationships between riders and the CSRs who handle their trip requests, at least in the short term.
- ▶ Good working relationships between CSRs and scheduler/dispatchers are also important, for effective handling of day of service issues, which affect not only operations but also customer service. Options 1 and 2 would introduce a separation between CSRs and demand response scheduler/dispatchers (in the case of Option 2, the separation would only occur for Chittenden County trips if SSTA were not selected as the contracted call center operator). Option 2 would also create a separation between GMT CSRs and GMT fixed route dispatchers.
- ▶ Wages/salaries and benefits packages for call center employees vary between GMT and SSTA. In general, SSTA offers higher wages for similar positions, but GMT’s benefits package is richer. Any consolidation of call center functions will require input of additional resources on an ongoing basis to create an equitable environment for call center staff in terms of compensation for similar years of service.
- ▶ Both organizations have space at their current locations to house a consolidated call center, but estimated costs to make the spaces ready for use vary considerably.

The main advantages and challenges associated with each option are noted below.

Consolidation through Option 1, Centralized Reservations at GMT, Decentralized Scheduling/Dispatch, would lead to increased annual operating costs, introduce a separation between reservations and scheduling/dispatch for demand response trips in Chittenden County. The increased annual operating costs, primarily for staff, would be lower than those of Options 2 and 3.

Option 2, Contracted Operation of Consolidated Call Center, offers the best opportunity for cost savings but would have a significant impact on SSTA operations, unless SSTA were selected as the contractor, an outcome of the competitive selection process which cannot be guaranteed. If SSTA were the call center



operator, additional operating costs would be higher than those of Option 1 and lower than those of Option 3. Cost savings are likely to be realized only if an outside entity were selected as the call center operator offering lower wages and benefits to call center staff, which would affect both staff and riders. As noted above, Option 2 would also cause a separation between CSRs and scheduler/dispatchers.

Option 3, Centralized Reservations and Scheduling/Dispatch at GMT, would be a major structural change to GMT services. Such a change would be helpful as a first phase if centralization of all demand response services in the service area is pursued in the future. It would also be the most expensive option to implement in terms of both ongoing cost increases, primarily for staff, and one-time facility renovation costs. Separation between CSRs and scheduler/dispatchers would not be an issue with Option 3.

Based on the considerations above, it is the recommendation of the consultant team that GMT continue to include reservations for demand response trips in Chittenden County in the contract currently held by SSTA, and to continue to operate its own call center for demand response trips in Washington, Franklin, and Grand Isle counties and for fixed route inquiries. Any concerns with the service cost or performance associated with the Chittenden County trips could be addressed through contract oversight and contract modifications as needed.



Appendix A

Peer Agency Contact List and Survey Questionnaire



Consolidated Call Center Study - Peer Agency Contact Information

Agency	Name	Title	Email	Phone
Everett Transit	Mr. Brian Senyitko	Operations Supervisor	bsenyitko@everettwa.gov	425-257-8801 (PT)
Lowell RTA	Mr. John Bronski	General Manager	john.bronski@lrta.com	
Merrimack Valley RTA	Ms. Jaymi Swarbrick	Dir of Paratransit Ops	specialservices@mvrta.com	978-469-6878 ext 3
Worcester RTA	Ms. Carolyn Foley	Director of Paratransit	cfoley@therta.com	
Greater Portland Transit District	Mr. Greg Jordan	Executive Director	gjordan@gpmetro.com	207-774-0351
Norwalk Transit	Mr. Mark Goodale	Director of Operations	mgoodale@norwalktransit.com	
CT Waterbury/ Northeast Transportation	Ms. Maria Vaccarelli	Asst. General Manager - Paratransit	mvaccarelli@ct-transwb.com	203-756-5550 (c) 203-704-0302
Broome County Department of Public Transportation	Ronald Hirst	Mobility Manager Communications and Marketing Manager	rhirst@co.broome.ny.us	607-763-4464 ext 2
Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit	Ms. Patty Poist	Manager	pp1@tcatmail.com	607-227-9388
Berks Area Regional Transportation Authority	Mr. David Kilmer	Executive Director	kilmer@sctapa.com	
Charlottesville Area Transit	Mr. Garland Williams	Director of Transit	williams@charlottesville.org	
	Mr. Ted Rieck	CEO, JAUNT, Inc.	tedr@ridejaunt.org	434-296-3184
	Ms. Karen Davis	JAUNT, Inc. (contractor to CAT)	KarenD@ridejaunt.org	
Blacksburg Transit	Ms. Jenny Mills	BT ACCESS/GAR Supervisor	jmills@blacksburg.gov	540-961-1185
Western Reserve Transit Authority	Ms. Judy Rodriguez	Dir of Transportation	jrodriguez@wrtaonline.com	330-744-8431
Duluth Transit Authority	Mr. Rod Fournier	General Manager	RFournier@duluthtransit.com	218-722-7283
St. Cloud Metropolitan Transit Commission	Ms. Missy Kraemer	Operations Manager, Paratransit Coordinator of Metro County	mkraemer@stcloudmtc.com	
Kalamazoo Metro Transit System	Mr. Richard Congdon	Connect	congdonr@kmetro.com	269-337-8446



CCRPC Demand Responsive Call Center Research

1. Introduction

The Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) is leading a study of consolidated call center options for Green Mountain Transit (GMT) and Special Services Transportation Agency (SSTA), located in Chittenden County, VT. Currently, each agency operates its own call center and is responsible for different functions associated with various types of demand responsive service provided in Chittenden County. Options for consolidating call center operations and reassigning some operational functions are being considered in the study. This project is a follow-on to a broader ADA Paratransit and Demand Responsive Services Study completed for GMT and SSTA in 2018.

As part of a list of peer transit providers, your agency participated in the previous study by supplying information about your ADA paratransit and demand responsive services. CCRPC, GMT, and SSTA request your assistance once again. We would greatly appreciate your responses to the questions below by March 7, 2022. The survey should take about 15-20 minutes to complete. If you have questions as you work through the survey, please contact Patti Monahan at patti.monahan@monahanmobility.com or 617-291-8431.

If you are not the best contact for information about your agency's call center, please forward the survey link to the appropriate person.

Thank you very much for your assistance.



CCRPC Demand Responsive Call Center Research

2. Agency Information

1. Contact Information for Survey Respondent

Name

Company

Address

Address 2

City/Town

State

ZIP Code

Email Address

Phone Number



CCRPC Demand Responsive Call Center Research

3. Basic Call Center Information

2. Name of the entity that operates the call center

3. Is the call center operating entity a contractor to your transit agency?

- Yes
- No
- Other (please specify)

4. Where is the call center housed? (e.g., "Transit agency's administrative offices" or "Service contractor's operating facility")

5. What transportation services are covered by the call center. Check all that apply.

- ADA complementary paratransit
- Non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT)
- Other demand responsive services for target rider groups (e.g., older adults, people with disabilities, or human service agency clients). Please specify below.
- Demand responsive services for the general public
- Other (please specify)
- On-demand, microtransit, or Transportation Network Company (TNC) services or pilot programs
- Volunteer ride programs
- Fixed route bus

6. What functions are provided by call center staff?

- Demand responsive service customer service (information, assistance with eligibility or itinerary planning, complaints, translation services, etc.)
- Trip reservations
- Trip brokering to contract service providers. Please describe below.
- Initial vehicle scheduling prior to review by a scheduler
- Final vehicle scheduling
- "Where's my ride?" calls
- Communication with contract service providers
- Communication with vehicle operators
- Fixed route customer service information (route/schedule information, assistance with itinerary planning, complaints, translation services, etc.)
- General agency information

Comment:

7. Is the current call center a consolidation of formerly separate call centers operated by different agencies? If yes, please explain briefly below.

- Yes
- No

Comment:



CCRPC Demand Responsive Call Center Research

4. Staffing

8. Please indicate the staffing levels of your call center.

Number of full-time managers

Number of part-time managers

Number of full-time supervisors or lead customer service representatives

Number of part-time supervisors or lead customer service representatives

Number of full-time customer service representatives

Number of part-time customer service representatives

Number of full-time volunteer ride program coordinators

Number of part-time volunteer ride program coordinators

Other full-time staff positions (please specify)

Other part-time staff positions (please specify)



CCRPC Demand Responsive Call Center Research

5. Telephone System and Other Technology

9. Does the call center use an Automatic Call Distribution System?

Yes

No

Comment:

10. Briefly describe the structure of the telephone system - lines, call groups, etc.

11. How many workstations are located in the call center?

12. What software is used for demand responsive trip reservations/scheduling/dispatching?

13. What software, if any, is used for customer information?

CCRPC Demand Responsive Call Center Research

6. Utilization/Performance

14. Please provide any recent measures of utilization for the call center that your agency tracks, including the relevant time period (month, quarter, year, etc.) by uploading telephone system reports or other data here. Reports may also be emailed to patti.monahan@monahanmobility.com.

Choose File

Choose File

No file chosen

CCRPC Demand Responsive Call Center Research

7. System Costs and Funding Sources

15. Please estimate the annual operating expenses attributed to the call center, including staff salaries, wages, and benefits; telephone system maintenance; software licenses and maintenance; equipment and supplies; portion of facility operation; and other expenses. Copies of operating budgets or accounting system reports may be emailed to patti.monahan@monahanmobility.com.

16. What are the primary funding sources for ongoing operation of the call center? Check all that apply.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds (please specify grant programs below) | <input type="checkbox"/> Contributions from local partner organizations (please specify below) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> State funds (please specify below) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify below) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local funds (please specify below) | |

Comments:



CCRPC Demand Responsive Call Center Research

8. Conclusion

Thank you very much for providing CCRPC, GMT, and SSTA with information about your call center. We know your time is valuable and appreciate your efforts to assist us. If you have questions or additional materials to provide, please contact Patti Monahan at patti.monahan@monahanmobility.com or 617-291-8431.