



Burlington NextGen Meeting Minutes | Green Mountain Transit

April 10, 2019 – 5:30 PM

Burlington City Arts, Function Room

135 Church Street, Burlington, Vermont 05401

Staff: Mark Sousa, General Manager; Jamie Smith, Marketing and Planning Director; Jon Moore, Maintenance and Operations Director; Devin Mason, Transit Planner.

Members of the Public: Estimated 15 to 20 attendees.

The meeting opened at **5:30PM**

Overview

- Plans to extend College Street Shuttle to Airport via Dorset Street and Kennedy Drive, as a replacement for the UMall/Airport Service, with potential fare requirements. Potential of fare-free zone in Burlington.
- Pine Street service would run on a 30-minute frequency all day, without higher peak frequency.

Public Comments

- **Messing** remarked that the College Street Shuttle (Route 11) is important to many groups of people, including medical center and university affiliates, as well as visitors to the ECHO, Leahy Center for Lake Champlain. Messing remarked about having spoken with many others who see it as highly important that the service remain fare-free.
- **First Unnamed Individual** concurred with Messing and inquired about where the bus would stop. **Mr. Moore** remarked that the bus would follow the current Route 11 alignment between the hospital and the waterfront, would extend to Dorset Street, and then follow the current alignment of the current UMall/Airport (Route 12) service, likely stopping on Dorset Street in front of University Mall but not stopping on the property.
- **Second Unnamed Individual** remarked that they would like to see Waterfront/Airport route serve the Downtown Transit Center.
- **Third Unnamed Individual** inquired about potential modifications to the Tilley Drive Shuttle. **Mr. Moore** remarked on the potential of extending the service to the Downtown Transit Center.



- **Blanchard** remarked on capacity issues on the Williston (Route 1) service (specifically, in the morning) and would like to see added capacity. They expressed curiosity regarding whether capacity issues may deter prospective passengers. **Mr. Moore** stated that certain runs in the morning do tend to see significant crowding, much of which stated that he expected would be alleviated by proposed service changes.
- **Hanson** expressed the desire to see the Burlington portion of the College Street Shuttle remain fare-free, with potential fare requirements for South Burlington segment. **Mr. Moore** remarked on potential operational challenges regarding the enforcement of fare collection where appropriate, but that Green Mountain Transit may be able to find a solution to this issue.
- **Fryer** inquired about the potential of system-wide fare-free service. **Mr. Moore** indicated that the cost for a fare-free system would be roughly \$2,400,000 annually but that it may also simplify the boarding process and drastically reduce farebox maintenance costs.
- **Fryer** inquired about specific environmental efforts surrounding the NextGen Transit Plan. **Mr. Moore** indicated that Green Mountain Transit plans to place into service two (2) electric buses by the fall of 2019. **Mr. Sousa** commented that twelve (12) electric buses will be purchased and placed into service over the next three (3) years.
- **Rainbow** inquired whether they correctly understood that driver hours would be reduced, with the specific concern of whether drivers would see a cut in pay. **Mr. Moore** stated that there would be no pay cuts stemming from the service hour reductions, and that many of the reduced service hours come in the form of reduced layover and deadhead time associated with split shifts.
- **Fourth Unnamed Individual** expressed desire for the Waterfront/Airport route to continue traveling onto the University Mall property. **Mr. Moore** remarked that this creates on-time performance issues, especially around holidays, but that Green Mountain Transit may re-evaluate this possibility.
- **Keely** thanked Green Mountain Transit for the information shared in the presentation, and viewed the proposed service changes as great improvements. Keely inquired about the purpose of including numbers with the color-coded lines (e.g. 1 – Red Line). **Mr. Moore** indicated that the numbering was added to the presentations to show how current



- routes would transition from numbers to colors, but that in actuality, the head-signs and schedule information would not display route numbers.
- **Keely** inquired about the possibility of a wider variety of passes after the implementation of mobile ticketing. **Mr. Moore** indicated the potential for one-day and three-day passes for tourists and other weekend visitors, but that cash and swipe passes would also continue to be accepted.
 - **Keely** indicated that they liked the fare decrease for monthly passes and inquired about the potential of “skimmers” to accompany mobile ticketing. **Mr. Moore** indicated that this would cost \$600 annually for each bus.
 - **Keely** indicated a desire, long-term, for service to Rutland.
 - **Fifth Unnamed Individual** inquired about the potential for additional bi-directional service on Pine Street, provided by out-of-service deadheads traveling to Downtown Transit Center. **Mr. Moore** remarked that this would not be able to provide substantial added service because shift changes (and accompanying deadhead runs) are concentrated at certain times of the day, not distributed throughout.
 - **Sixth Unnamed Individual (Blue Sweater)** inquired about outreach efforts to low-income individuals. **Ms. Smith** indicated that Green Mountain Transit advertises via numerous channels, including social media and community stakeholders. Ms. Smith asked individual if they were inquiring about specific efforts or issues. **Individual** remarked that more service makes it easier for passengers to commute to work. **Ms. Smith** indicated that Green Mountain Transit has learned a lot about how various municipalities can assist Green Mountain Transit in communicating with current and prospective riders. Ms. Smith indicated that Green Mountain Transit would host learning sessions before implementing service changes, to teach individuals how to use the service. **Individual** remarked that many low-income individuals might be unable to attend learning sessions.
 - **Redding** expressed that they were pleased with the proposed changes, especially relating to late-night service, as they and many of their friends work late and find current late-night service inconvenient.
 - **Redding** remarked that they would like to see Tilley Drive Shuttle extended to Downtown Transit Center. **Mr. Sousa** indicated that Green Mountain Transit is currently discussing this possibility with Special Services Transportation Agency (SSTA).



- **Redding** expressed concerns about how people with visual impairments have no way of knowing when a certain service is experiencing detours. **Seventh Unnamed Individual (remarked that they were originally from Houston, Texas)** stated that the Swiftly/Transit app works through Google, which does notify of transfers. **Redding** remarked that this does not help individuals who do not own a phone.
- **Rainbow** inquired whether the color-coded lines would also have text indicating which route they are, for individuals who have partial or total color-blindness. **Ms. Smith** indicated that all routes would also have text indicating which line they are.
- **Eighth Unnamed Individual** inquired whether analytics data from Swiftly/Transit would be available. **Mr. Moore** indicated that there might be privacy concerns with such data, but that he would look into it.
- **Eighth Unnamed Individual** inquired about potential effects of service changes on administrative costs, specifically whether any reductions would allow for restoration of the Sandhill Road portion of the Essex Center (Route 4) service. **Mr. Moore** indicated that Green Mountain Transit's budgetary concerns would preclude the maintenance of that portion of Route 4 in Phase 1 of the NextGen Transit Plan, and that savings realized in Phase 1 would not leave Green Mountain Transit with a financial surplus with which to establish new routes or subsidize existing, unproductive ones. Mr. Moore indicated the potential for such additions and/or re-establishments in later phases of the plan, once Green Mountain Transit's budgetary concerns are sufficiently addressed.
- **Hamre** indicated that they recently moved to the area and would like to see maps for each route, as well as an inset of downtown Burlington on the system map. Also indicated a desire for Waterfront/Airport route to serve Downtown Transit Center. Voiced concern regarding on-time performance for the Shelburne Road (Route 6) service.
- **Ninth Unnamed Individual** indicated desire to maintain fare-free status of Waterfront/Airport service within Burlington. Indicated a desire for good connectivity with other routes, as well as the desire to maintain Cliff Street portion of the City Loop (Route 8) service for the Ruggles House, which is home to many elderly individuals and individuals with disabilities.



- **Tenth Unnamed Individual** indicated desire for later inbound Pine Street service to enable residents and visitors to use transit for after-work trips along the corridor. **Mr. Moore** indicated that this would likely occur in Phase 2 of the NextGen Transit Plan. **Individual** indicated desire for Waterfront/Airport service to serve Downtown Transit Center. **Mr. Moore** indicated that it may be possible to do this or to directly serve University Mall but that, from a schedule standpoint, Green Mountain Transit could not do both.
- **Eleventh Unnamed Individual** echoed concern regarding the Cliff Street portion of the City Loop, with respect to the Ruggles House. Inquired about an on-demand service acting as a hybrid between Green Mountain Transit and Special Services Transportation Agency. **Mr. Sousa** stated that micro-transit is a potential solution and could take the form of a partnership with Uber, Lyft, or another ride-hailing service.
- **Eleventh Unnamed Individual** indicated a desire for system-wide fare-free service and indicated that \$2,400,000 was not a significant amount when considering potential contributions from major employers and institutions of higher education. The individual also highlighted parking deficits experienced by the University of Vermont and encouraged that satellite parking facilities be developed throughout Green Mountain Transit's service area, for drivers attempting to access the University of Vermont.
- **Sixth Unnamed Individual (Blue Sweater)** encouraged Green Mountain Transit to also seek donations.
- **Rainbow** encouraged a personal vehicle tax.
- **Seventh Unnamed Individual (Originally from Houston)** liked the suggested but stated that Green Mountain Transit does not have the ability to advocate for a personal vehicle tax, and that these proposals would require public engagement.
- **Messing** indicated a desire for increased law enforcement presence at and around the Downtown Transit Center to deter criminal activity, which might deter prospective passengers.
- **Redding** voiced strong disagreement with Messing regarding an increased presence of law enforcement.
- **Rainbow** indicated a desire for a shelter at a stop near the Vermont Technical College's Williston Campus. **Mr. Moore** was unsure of the



stop to which Rainbow was referring but stated that they could converse after the meeting ended.

- **Caswell** inquired about whether head-signs would still indicate direction of travel. **Mr. Moore** indicated that head-signs would indicate point of origin, the destination, and the intermediate point, being the Downtown Transit Center (e.g. Shelburne to Essex via Downtown Transit Center).
- **Caswell** voiced concerns regarding current late-night service patterns, specifically the headways for the Essex Junction (Route 2) service. **Mr. Moore** indicated that the service changes proposed in the NextGen Transit plan should address Caswell's concerns.
- **Caswell** inquired about why Bus Map and Guide has not been updated since August. **Mr. Moore** indicated that there have not been service changes since the release of the last Bus Map and Guide.
- **Seventh Unnamed Individual (Originally from Houston)** indicated that they prefer fewer schedule changes, as it is easier to understand. **Mr. Sousa** also indicated that this provides greater schedule certainty for bus operators.
- **Sixth Unnamed Individual (Blue Sweater)** mentioned GoVermont's Guaranteed Ride Home program, in which an individual who has missed their last transit trip or must travel outside of normal operating hours may be reimbursed if they choose to summon a taxi. **Ms. Smith** provided the web address: ConnectingCommuters.org. **Mr. Moore** remarked that one must pre-register to use this program.
- **Ninth Unnamed Individual** inquired about the percentage of Green Mountain Transit passengers who have a disability and whether that information is available online. **Mr. Moore** remarked that it was not currently available online but likely could be made available. **Ms. Smith** gave the individual her business card and asked them to contact her.
- **Fryer** inquired about whether connection to Amtrak would change, with regards to scheduled arrivals at the Essex Junction Amtrak station in relation to Amtrak arrivals. **Mr. Moore** indicated that there would likely be no changes between Monday and Saturday, but that there would be more service on Sundays.
- **Fryer** inquired about Montpelier LINK Express service on Saturday. **Mr. Moore** stated that this is not included in Phase 1 of the NextGen Plan but may be possible in later phases.



- **Seventh Unnamed Individual (Originally from Houston)** inquired about whether the Sunday Service (Route 18) was being eliminated as part of the NextGen Plan. **Mr. Moore** confirmed that this was the plan, but that the North Avenue and City Loop services would operate on Sundays, and that the Pine Street service would operate between 8:00 AM and 6:00 PM and serve Market 32. Mr. Moore also indicated that Sunday service on Shelburne Road might occur in later phases.

Meeting Adjourned: 7:25 PM.

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