



NextGen Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes | Green Mountain Transit

April 9, 2019 5:30 – 7:00 PM

Village of Essex Municipal Offices

2 Lincoln St, Essex Junction, VT 05452

Staff: Jon Moore, GMT Director of Maintenance & Planning; Rachel Kennedy, GMT Senior Transit Planner; Mark Sousa, GMT General Manager

Members of the Public: 32 members of the public were present

The meeting opened at 5:31 PM

Agenda

- Introductions
- NextGen Overview
- Proposed Essex Service Changes
- Proposed FY20 Assessment Impacts
- Proposed Fare Increase
- Passenger Facing Technology
- Next Steps

GMT's General Manager, Mark Sousa, opened the meeting by recognizing the members of the public, members of the Town Select Board, and State representatives present, thanking them for their time.

Summary

Members of the public expressed strong support for the continuation of service on Sandhill Road and River Road. Public perception is that this route is important for workers, students, the elderly, and those who cannot or choose not to drive. With the increase in ridership over the last year, there was a strong feeling that it doesn't make sense to eliminate this route.



Public Comment

Ms. Strout

Interlining will take too long, and people will need time to get used to the idea. Issues with large print BM&G, and hard to hear announcements for hearing impaired.

Answer: Mr. Moore will meet after the presentation to look at specific trips that people might be taking now to see how they will be affected. And will make sure that Ms. Strout gets a large print bus map and guide.

Todd Bay

Concerns about removing Sandhill Rd – bussing for two daughters in high school. Lost high school bussing last year

Ms. Hambelin

Senior citizen with three generations living in the same household. People who use this service to get to jobs, the food shelf, and other locations will be negatively affected by the elimination of this service.

How will we provide support for riders being cut off by the proposed eliminations?

Answer: There would not be a backfill of service, but GMT would grandfather in people who have qualified for the ADA service in the buffer region in the past.

Is there a chance that there will be a shuttle running that route?

Answer: Anything is possible, this plan is not set in stone, we can talk about further possibilities. We will be making recommendations to the board based on the comments we receive during the public comment process. If we can't find further funding, which is unlikely, we will have to propose cuts in other places.

Suggestion: Start talking to Medicaid.

Mark Sousa: to clarify we do get some funding through Medicaid.

Ms. Fry

On behalf of people who want to get cars off the road, and on behalf of elderly people – please consider extending number 4 to Essex Center, includes grocery store.

Answer: We will be looking for a turn around to extend service to Essex Center

Mr. Edwards



I work at Autumn Park; there are at least ten people that depend on the bus to go to work, to go to the grocery, doctor, laundry, etc... Excited to move to Vermont because it is beautiful – I can walk to work, but other people may not be able to do the same. How can a bus route be stripped away from people? This is Vermont, this is about people not numbers, how can you have a third party sitting in an office crunching numbers? Has heard stories from other people about how cutting this route would affect their lives negatively.

Ms. Loundon

Single mom, lives on Sandhill, daughter takes but to school. Just moved from Georgia. Stuck when she heard there was no school buses, but so happy when Essex schools and GMT worked together to get ridership for students. Please don't take this away without coming up with a solution.

Can Essex school district contribute money for this?

Answer: There are additional issues with availability of CDL drivers

Mark Sousa: would like to clarify that there can be any combination of ideas across the board. This conversation is not a yes or no.

Mr. Caswell

Concerns about walking to AMTRAK in the winter – currently has to take Route 4 all the way around.

Answer: in the new system the bus would operate bi-directionally

How would service to IBM work on the new Route 10? It would make it 40 minutes to get from Essex Outlets to Walmart

Answer: Not all trips would go to IBM

Concerned with current OTP issues and inconsistencies on Route 2.

Answer: Service will be consistent, and we have buffers built in in the new schedule, we are confident about OTP

Ms. Reynolds

Just started taking the bus to go to Saxon Hill? Concerned about public transit, sees lots of school children. Global emissions. Eliminate fares, with an increase in public funding. Lots of people in this room who are excited about supporting public transit. We shouldn't be cutting bus service, we should be expanding.

Answer: GMT is looking at working with businesses on Saxon Hill.

Mark Sousa: Some transit agencies in the region are fare free – but they have major funders – a la Dartmouth.

Jim Bernegger



Did the consultant that helped fashion this plan consult with the businesses in Saxon Hill?

Answer: No

That's a huge gap. There is a possibility for an internal solution for the budget gap there. Some people rely on the 36, but that's not enough.

Stop signs are the most visible part of GMT, we should add new route colors to them.

Answer: We will be working with stops after June.

Ms. Haniy

You mentioned earlier in the evening that the town has submitted a letter of support for continuing the bus line. Again workers out to Saxon Hill area. Essex currently funds at 1.4 mil. At that volume of tax support that it carries weight. Encouraging to hear that in S. Burlington Hinesburg road was not changed. Particularly since ridership is up – we know that there will be more riders now. Mark Sousa: I have read the letter.

Ms. Haniault

I just moved to the area – the reason was because there is transit. Current service works pretty well – does not use SSTA. Scheduling with SSTA does not work for her. Early morning pick ups for mid-day appointments. Nobody informed ADA folks what the maps are and where they go. Request for more information technology. Took her six months to find the ADA map.

Mr. Hamblin

The last Essex Center bus just left at 6:15PM Some other concerns. Lives on Pinewood Drive, the bus stop corner was covered in snow and ice, not safe, people swerving around that area. AMTRAK and some other places where they have no smoking signs lots of people smoking.

Answer: snow removal is a huge challenge, we have a list of priority bus stops. In terms of the smoking if you call our main number we will send the supervisors out

Continued: Have been turned down for employment based on bus constraints.

Ms. Hamblin

Works for human service agencies: how else have we reached out to people?

Answer: Local newspapers, fliers on buses, FPF posts, social media.

Has called the main line to discuss snow removal, never got a response.



Answer: We are working on some of our internal communication practices. This specific comment never made it up to us.

School District: Bryan –

Appreciate GMT taking feedback, they've received a letter from the school board. Has sons that discovered transit after they left the area. Benefit to introducing that earlier. Safety, pipeline to future transit users, leveraging existing service. Certainty that ridership numbers will climb in the future. Lots of benefits, that the community could continue to leverage. Please take a second look.

Diane Clemmons

Member of school district board. One opinion that has not been expressed yet that the changes would start June 1st.

Answer: our apologies that is an error we will fix that on the website. Actually June 17th.

DC, Please reconsider this situation. We really need to get these kids to school and back.

Mary Redmond – District Rep

Has received calls from concerned citizens, school children, after hours athletics, as well as from people who have disabilities who cannot drive themselves due to whatever reason, but still need to make it to work. She serves on the human services committee – every day work at the school level is how do we remove barriers for people. How do we get people out and working and engaged. How do we create equity for families that are going to school. This is really an equity issue and providing a service to people who may not have the means to get to where they need to go. Another issue for the state is climate change.... Every committee is looking at this. Appreciate GMT willingness to take this input.

Evan: Town Manager,

Letter sent to GMT from Village and Town. They gave GMT some information about ridership and businesses and industry. Trying to create jobs here, keep jobs here, increasingly those people are needing transportation. Spoken to many of the orgs here including Blodgett they are looking to add a new division. One of the things that they are looking for is if they can get the employees they'd have another shift. Appreciated convo with GMT and everyone who came out tonight. Essex understand the CDL issue and is here to help. Please let Essex know when the Board Committee is, so they can notify...



Answer: We are facing a 1mil budget deficit. Just the reality. We can't make decision based on the numbers, but at the same time we have some real budget constraints that we are working under.

Ms. Feliciano

New to number 4, new job stops on Jericho rd. I kept quiet for a very long time cause her son can walk to essex, only one car in the household understands that we are a business that needs to make a profit. On the flip side there are a lot of solutions being provided for ridership. We have to invest in the see before it is a garden. Maybe Essex doesn't have the ridership that other areas do, but that's because they have more service.

Answer: Just to clarify GMT is not a non-profit, it's a service provider.

Member of Public

When everything is taken into consideration, what is the real true cost per rider for the essex bus. Numbers from February. Can't get no more water out of the rock.

Answer: State has acceptable standards. There is a process in place to make sure that these service are as efficient as possible. The Essex Center levels are not unheard of in a more urban route.

Feedback on Fare Increase

Why aren't we increasing fares on LINK routes?

Answer: Not at the moment, but we will be taking a look in the future.

Mark Sousa: We phasing in fare media.

Are stops limited to the stops on the map?

Answer: No.

Do service providers still give passes?

Answer: Yes.

Comments on Technology

When Routematch works it's great, but it usually doesn't work.

Can I send tickets to someone else using Transit App?

Answer: Yes



Mark Sousa: Regarding Transit App – it's a statewide contract. All transit agencies in Vermont will be using it.

How much advanced notice will there be for schedule changes?

Answer: April 16th is the Board vote. April 17th we will start outreach. About a two month notification period.

Public Comment continued

Jamie Smith – School Transportation

Couple of comments. Been riding the bus. It is a full bus, its been a huge resource for the community. Number 4 serves high-school and both middle schools. There's a short window in the am and in the pm it's an hour. Please consider school hours in any attempt to preserve this service. Talk of greater community, extra curricular service.

Mark Sousa: Clear example of why we need to have these public meeting. We appreciate all of you taking the time to show up here tonight. Please do not hesitate to reach out.

Meeting Adjourned: 7:20 PM

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