



**Public Budget Meeting Minutes**  
**January 10, 2023—4:30PM**  
**101 Queen City Road, Burlington VT 05401**

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*The mission of GMT is to promote and operate safe, convenient, accessible, innovative, and sustainable public transportation services in northwest and central Vermont that reduce congestion and pollution, encourage transit-oriented development, and enhance the quality of life for all.*

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**Present:**

Jamie Smith (in-person)  
Chris Damiani (in-person)  
Nick Foss (in-person)  
Ash Labombard (in-person)  
Chapin Kaynor (via Zoom)  
Clayton Clark (in-person)  
Jon Moore (in-person)  
Matt Kimball (in-person)  
Phil Hammerslough (via Zoom)  
Amy Brewer (via Zoom)  
Aurora Hurd (via Zoom)  
Bob Buermann (via Zoom)  
Bobby Murphy (via Zoom)  
Bryn Oakleaf (via Zoom)  
Eliana Fox (via Zoom)  
Patricia (via Zoom)  
Conner (via Zoom)  
Eliana Fox (via Zoom)  
Henry Epp (via Zoom)

James Labyer (via Zoom)  
Katie Martin (via Zoom)  
Kelly Poor (via Zoom)  
Marlene Maron (via Zoom)  
Marshall Distel (via Zoom)  
MG (via Zoom)  
Michael Arnold (via Zoom)  
Molly (via Zoom)  
Rep. Daisy Berbeco (via Zoom)  
Shaun Robinson (via Zoom)  
Susan Grasso (via Zoom)  
Taylor Page (via Zoom)  
Zachary Handelman (via Zoom)  
Feilipe (via Zoom)  
Kimberly Clark (in-person)  
Reanna Huestis (in-person)  
Thomas Caswell (in-person)  
Carolyn Sistrand (in-person)  
Jacob Hurteau (in-person)

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2 **Open Meeting**

3 Assistant General Manager Moore opened the public budget meeting at  
4 4:30PM and welcomed attendees in the room and on Zoom for attending.

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6 **Budget Presentation**

7 Director Foss gave a presentation on the proposed FY24 budget and noted  
8 that the presentation would focus on the following:

- 9     • The budget is based on level federal funding from VTrans on the urban  
10     and rural sides



- Urban Federal formula funds and ARPA balances
- Resumption of urban fares
- Maintaining current service levels, with some COVID-19 related suspensions becoming permanent suspensions
- The budget doesn't factor in costs of programs with an undefined timeline, such as Capstone and Barre microtransit implementation

AGM Moore discussed urban services that we would be presenting service eliminations for service that was suspended due to COVID-19 and hasn't operated since March 2020.

The proposed service changes include:

- Keeping the Rt. 4 Essex Center & Rt. 10 Williston | Essex Combined
- Reduced service after 7:00PM on the Rt. 1 Williston, Rt. 2 Essex Junction, Rt. 6 Shelburne Road, & Rt. 7 North Avenue routes
- Reduction of two evening trips on the Rt. 9 Winooski
- Reduction in frequency on the Rt. 11 Airport
- Elimination of the Barre LINK Express

AGM Moore discussed the timeline of service changes, when service was minimized and when it returned due to crowding. The end result is 4321.64 service hours that are currently unbudgeted to be recommended for elimination. If these hours were added back into the budget, GMT would likely not be able to operate them due to critical staffing levels.

The following public comments and questions were made:

Aurora: I was just wondering if you could speak to kind of how the root reductions were decided. Was it based on ridership? How and where they were riding or were other calculations involved?

AGM Moore: Generally, ridership. There were also some staffing considerations. We are experiencing some significant staffing challenges for CDL drivers as we were at the start of the pandemic, and late evening service was consistently lower.



When we looked at ridership on the Route 11 Airport, the main consideration was that high frequency service existed within a ¼ mile walk on either Pearl Street or Main Street.

AGM Moore reiterated that service reductions are not ideal, and GMT doesn't like making them.

Ridership the route 11. Reduction from every 30 min, every 45 min.

For the Route 4/10 combination, which ran independently, we looked at ridership and noted these were two of our lowest ridership routes. However, they are very important routes in the system in terms of connectivity.

Michael: I was just wondering what your like modeling procedure for estimating ridership is because if I recall correctly the College Street shuttle used to be the highest ridership line, per mile, in Vermont so it seems sort of odd that that would be considered for further service reductions.

AGM Moore: We have done some modeling in terms of what our fare revenue amounts will be, and we've blended analysis of historical and anticipated ridership based on COVID impacts, including fuel prices and teleworking impacts to the #11 Airport. AGM Moore noted that was once a high ridership route due to its short mileage, however there has been decreases in that route ridership for years.

Brian: I'm curious how you decide when to bring back certain services?

AGM Moore: Some of those decisions, again, are based on ridership, and other decisions are based on staffing.

Through the pandemic especially, we did look at onboard load factors with the primary goal of making sure we were not leaving people behind, which is why we added back the midday service on the #1 and #2 routes.

Brain: Great. I wonder how much you coordinate with municipalities, and the CCRPC as it relates to new multifamily developments that are going in? Obviously, we're facing a housing crisis and many new developments are being built with parking minimums or without parking minimums which will increase and I would anticipate that that would increase the demand on the system.



87  
88 So how are you anticipating that and adapting to that?

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90 AGM Moore: We work very closely with the CCRPC, and generally speaking,  
91 land use planning is the number one factor in getting people to use transit.

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93 We support dense village development, and we want to make sure that our  
94 service exists where people can use it. We want to add service, there's a  
95 need to add service, but we need to balance out with financial availability.  
96 The CCRPC did draft a statewide transit financing study last year and from  
97 GMT's perspective, since we operate a regional service, a local funding  
98 model is not sustainable.

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100 We are excited to work with the legislature and our partners on hopefully  
101 expanding the investment in transit. But that investment does not exist today.  
102 So again, we're balancing our financial realities with providing as much  
103 possible service that we can to the public.

104  
105 Phil: Has GMT done any positive advertising to the benefits of using the bus  
106 which really helps create a 15-minute city, gets people out of their cars,  
107 makes parking more available to those who require parking and increases  
108 people's access to being able to walk and bike and utilize the bus for that  
109 extra distance in between the first and last mile.

110  
111 Director Smith: Yes, we advertise our services specifically and generally as  
112 they relate to other multimodal connections. The last few years have been  
113 focused on service changes, on-board capacity, masking, etc but in general  
114 we do advertise the positive benefits of transit.

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116 James: You said on one of your earlier slides that some of the funding is  
117 unknown and you're not sure how much you're going to get. Can you talk  
118 about that?

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120 Director Foss: GMT has two budgets, an urban and a rural. We pass our  
121 budget before we do our state grant application, with a general  
122 understanding of what funds will be available, but we adjust the budget to  
123 reflect the actual funding in the midyear.

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125 Michael: Have elected officials asked for these service cuts, or suggested  
126 that they refuse to pay increased local matches?



AGM Moore: We, as an organization under our municipal charter, have the power of assessment for our 8-member municipalities in Chittenden County. In addition to the fixed route service, there's also the Americans with Disabilities act service, and so, when you combine both of those programs, each county sees a fluctuation in funding amounts. For example, the City of Burlington saw a 12% increase in their municipal assessment. We increase funding amounts annually on the urban side, but our Board of Commissioners have expressed that increases of 12%, for example, are not reasonable amounts to expect. There is nothing in our Charter that would prevent a community from contributing more, and we'd be happy to have those conversations.

Aurora: I was just wondering about the labor shortage. What methods have you tried to onboard and attract new drivers? Have you done any creative like helping people get the necessary licensure?

AGM Moore: We do hire folks that don't have the commercial driver's license. We'll train them to get a commercial driver's license that's been a very successful program for us. That's roughly a \$5,000 training cost if you were to so that training on the private market.

Our HR Department has done just about everything to recruit, but the reality is, there is a national and regional shortage of commercial drivers and skill mechanics.

Have you tried offering interpretation for getting such licensure?

AGM Moore: Not for the licensure. There are actually some DMV restrictions about that, but we have offered some internal ESL trainings in the past, and we are investigating more. We have a very strong internal employee referral program, and that's probably been our most successful program in terms of getting new people in the door.

Rep. Daisy Berbeco: Was any stakeholder impact data gathered following the existing service reductions that you are proposing to sustain?

AGM Moore: You know that that's a really good question, and I would say no. We have done some anecdotal surveying and some formal surveying in the rural area. We opened the comment period for this process early and did



some stakeholder outreach, which was intended to serve as the stakeholder and customer feedback loop. But we haven't done any other in-depth analysis.

Phil: I'm wondering if you've reached out to other corporations, like Target, who would benefit from buses being available for employees?

AGM Moore: Not specifically Target, but we do work with some local businesses and we work for CATMA. Private-public partnerships has been identified as a priority for GMT.

Patricia: When we talk about ridership, in terms of BIPOC, what impact do you think it's going to have? Secondly, when you do start to charge again, how will you handle transfers? And also, I don't believe I've ever seen accommodation for people who have impairments to their hearing in terms of the driver. Maybe announcing where they can get off, you know, or some sort of signage that's on the buses to say what the next stop is.

Patricia outlined an incident on the bus where passengers were asked to leave the bus, seemingly for no reason and asked, what is the process, because it seemed concerning that passengers were left in the cold?

AGM Moore: I can't speak specifically to the incident you described, but I will say that we do have an onboard code of conduct, and if customers don't adhere to that, our procedure is to give a warning, if the behavior continues especially if it's a safety sensitive situation they could be asked to leave the bus. If you're able to recall the details (when and what time this happened), we can pull video and look into that situation.

As for the comment about on-board accommodation, GMT is required federally to make on-board stop announcements for timepoints and major intersections. If you are riding, and that isn't happening, please let GMT know.

Staff is currently doing a fare collection analysis and we will have more information on the transfer policy once we have more data on the fare collection procedures.

As we continue on in the presentation, you'll see that we are proposing to restore fares on July 1st, but that does not include any increase to the pre-



207 COVID fare prices, or any change in our transfer policy in terms of BIPOC  
208 impacts. GMT has a Title VI program, but we have no data to suggest that  
209 this will be disproportionately impacting the BIPOC community.

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211 Michael: Are there standardized formulas, so that if municipalities wanted to  
212 add service they could pay a set amount to receive extra group miles of  
213 service?

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215 AGM Moore: That gets complicated in terms of Federal Funding. For  
216 example, Federal funds generally pays 50% of the operating cost. GMT is  
217 getting to a situation where we are overspending our Federal funds. So, if any  
218 community wanted to add service, we would need to look at what the  
219 available Federal and State funding was, and then we could develop a  
220 quote in terms of what the local match requirements would be and that  
221 would likely be on a case-by-case basis.

222

223 Bryn: I've heard that transportation impact fees cannot be used to increase  
224 bus service, is that accurate? Is there effort from GMT to make changes to  
225 eligible uses for those fees?

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227 AGM Moore: I honestly cannot speak on that. We will need to do some more  
228 research on. I'm not aware of that restriction

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230 MG: The possibility of people getting started at snow with a fare increase is  
231 concerning.

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233 Thomas Caswell made a comment on the frequency of service that the  
234 impacts to the system, then asked if the frequency of the major routes could  
235 be no longer than 60 minutes.

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237 AGM Moore: The limitation there is really the round-trip running times in the  
238 and they can't make a round trip in 60 min.

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240 Thomas also made some suggestions about service improvements and bus  
241 amenities, including using newer buses on the LINK Express services.

242

243 Marlene: Will you maintain the current arrangement with universities?

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AGM Moore: That is our hope! We've been having recent conversations with CATMA, who represents UVM and Champlain College, and we'll start conversations with St. Michael's as well.

Katie: I work with CATMA, the Chittenden Area Transportation Management Association. Yes, we are actively working on renegotiating our unlimited access program as we re-envision what it looks like as fares are reinstated, we supported, the best we could, a partnership through an annual contribution last year. We do look forward to working through what that unlimited access program looks like for FY24.

Bryn: What are the plans to upgrade the fleet to EVs?

AGM Moore: We have 2 electric vehicles, full size buses, in service in Burlington and we are in the process of procuring 5 additional full-size transit buses for Chittenden County service.

We are going with a new vendor with a great reputation for liability. They offer a turn key solution for the charging infrastructure, which is very complicated and complex. There's a lot of Federal money for fleet electrification, and we wanted to make sure that mileage the range of those buses meets our service requirements.

Michael: During last year's budget process we had asked about service improvements that would increase operating costs while increasing average speeds, like bus stop consolidation, signal priority and queue jumps. How far along are those initiatives?

AGM Moore: Those are still on a list of things to do; the planning department does some additional work on bus stop consolidation. That is likely the quickest and easiest solution for some of the speed of travel. But when we do that we do want to realize that while it may speed up the travel times, it also increases walking distances for some passengers. We want to balance that and we think we can offset some of that with stop amenities that make it more comfortable for passengers to wait.

Aurora: If there were the funds, would you return to a model without fees? I see it as an increase of accessibility for low income and differently abled riders to be able to use the bus.





285 AGM Moore: At this time last year we had the same exact strategy in that we  
286 passed an initial budget that assumed that we'd go back to fare collection  
287 on July 1, 2022. Through the legislative process we were granted funds that  
288 allowed us to remain fare free in this current year, and that certainly is still a  
289 possibility.

290

291 Thomas: How does GMT plan to get the word out on fare collection and will  
292 the system be the same, i.e. paper tickets?

293

294 Director Smith: That is all part of the fare collection analysis that we'll work on  
295 right now.

296

297 We do have some local partner and stakeholder groups that can help us  
298 push that messaging out to folks, and we are looking into, translated  
299 materials and more easily accessible materials for that outreach process.  
300 There is more to come on that; we're getting through this budget approval  
301 process first, and then we'll start working toward funding a more robust  
302 outreach to let folks the direction we are moving in for fare collection.

303

304 Katie: I just have one question, and then a couple of comments as you guys  
305 go into your board meeting next week. Apologies if this was answered in an  
306 email, but if fares come back, will that include commuters and LINK Express  
307 routes?

308

309 Director Smith: LINK Express and Commuters are in the proposal, yes.

310

311 Katie made a couple of comments about UVM Medical Center's plan to  
312 build housing in South Burlington. It is important that we identify a sustainable  
313 or equitable and innovative funding source to not only keep the transit  
314 service that we have now, but to expand service.

315

316 CATMA wanted to share how important we think that it is for the State, GMT  
317 and the legislators, to move forward with this transit financing study in some  
318 capacity

319

320 Michael: I just wanted to reiterate that it would really be great if the board  
321 could come up with somewhat standardized plan so the municipalities can  
322 understand what kind of service they could expect for a given increase in  
323 local match funding. Having ambiguous "we'll consider new roots on a case  
324 by case basis" really discourages volunteer local elected officials from,



325 understanding or knowing what's available. I think we all understand that  
326 you're funding constrained, but I really have deep reservations about relying  
327 on a rural, dominated State legislature to be responsive to the needs of  
328 urban riders.  
329  
330 Assistant General Manager Moore thanked the participants for joining the  
331 meeting and asked them to provide any further comment to  
332 [info@ridegmt.com](mailto:info@ridegmt.com).  
333  
334 The meeting ended at 5:52PM.