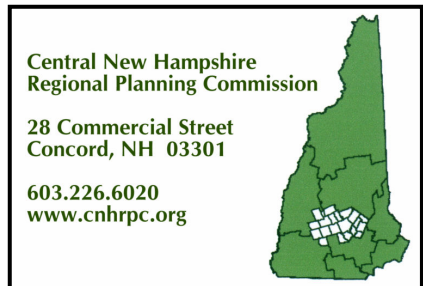
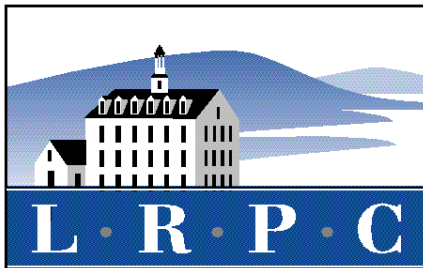


To: Lakes Region Transportation Technical Advisory Committee

**Draft Coordinated Transit & Human Services Transportation Plan
Region 3**

**Staff Report on Comments Received from
Public Display of the Draft Plan**



Introduction – The Aim of the Draft Coordinated Transit & Human Services Transportation Plan

This study was conducted by the Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission and the Lakes Region Planning Commission in response to the “Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users” (SAFETEA:LU). The plan area covers Belknap County, Merrimack County (excluding Hooksett), and Hillsborough and Deering from Hillsborough County.

The Draft Coordinated Transit and Human Services Transportation Plan identifies the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes, provides strategies for meeting those local needs, and prioritizes transportation services for funding and implementation in the Region 3 area.

The provisions of the coordinated plan ensure that communities coordinate transportation resources provided through multiple Federal programs. A coordinated plan for human services and transportation enhances transportation access, minimizes duplication of Federal services, and encourages the most cost-effective transportation possible. SAFETEA:LU stipulates that projects selected for funding under the S. 5310 ‘Special Needs of Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities, S.5316 Job Access and Reverse Commute and S.5317 ‘New Freedom’ federal programs are derived from a “locally developed, coordinated transit-human services transportation plan” and that the plan is “developed through a process that includes representatives of public, private, and non-profit transportation and human services providers and participation by members of the public.”

Public Consultation on the Plan

The pre-draft consultation on the plan began in July 2009, when staff members from the CNHRPC conducted a number of outreach initiatives to specific target groups in the region. Specifically, this involved attending a number of meetings with organizations such as the State-wide Independent Living Commission and outlining the requirements of the coordinated plan, what the plan aims to achieve and the timeframes involved. Over time, the plan team established a working group of transit providers and stakeholders in the region which helped to guide the study process.

The first official public meeting during the plan making process took place on January 13, 2010 in Concord. This meeting was heavily publicized by way of brochure mailings, email distribution lists, dedicated web pages on both planning commission’s websites and phone calls to target populations in the region. A comprehensive needs analysis of transit providers and users in the Region 3 area was conducted by the plan team at this meeting to establish the barriers to increased coordination in the region, and to identify potential strategies to improve coordination between transit providers and human service agencies. The needs analysis actively pursued the views and opinions of participants under the following headings:

- Transportation Needs Update

- Real & Perceived Obstacles to Coordination
- Key Players and their Responsibilities

The results from the needs analysis were reinforced by a survey of transit providers and users which was administered through a web-based survey platform known as Survey Monkey (<http://www.surveymonkey.com>).

The second public meeting in the plan making process took place on February 17, 2010 in Laconia. At this meeting participants were given a general introduction to the work undertaken to produce the draft plan, as well as being asked to list a number of implementation objectives in order of priority by color coded sticker voting.

The Draft Plan was prepared on the basis of these extensive pre-draft consultation measures. On February 23, 2010 the Draft Coordinated Transit & Human Services Plan was placed on public display for a 30 day period of public review and comment. Hard copies of the plan were available for public review in the following locations:

- Concord Public Library, 45 Green St, Concord, NH
- Franklin Public Library, 310 Central Street, NH
- Laconia Public Library, 695 Main St, Laconia, NH
- CNHRPC, 28 Commercial St, Ste. 3, Concord, NH
- LRPC, 103 Main St, Ste.3, Meredith NH

In addition the draft plan was made available on both planning commission's websites:

www.cnhrpc.org
www.lakesrpc.org

The public review and comment period formally closed at 5:00pm Wednesday, March 24, 2010 by which time a total of 5 submissions were received on the plan, all of which have been reviewed and considered in detail.

This Report contains (a) a list of the persons/organizations who submitted comments or observations; (b) a summary of the issues raised and (c) the response to the issues raised, together with a recommendation in relation to the contents of the Draft Plan.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the TAC should consider and agree to the proposed amendments to the Draft Plan and forward it to the Full Commission for formal adoption.

Submission No. 1

CATCH Neighborhood Housing

The comments received from CATCH Neighborhood Housing are primarily concerned with the accessibility of public transit for 186 residents in Friedman Court I and Friedman Court II on Old Suncook Road off of Manchester Street in Concord. Friedman Court I consists of 54 units that are rented to individuals and families that earn up to 60% of the Area Median Income, while Friedman Court II consists of 41 units that are rented to seniors who earn up to 60% of Area Median Income, although a large number are at a lower income level. Currently, these properties are not served by public transportation.

CATCH Neighborhood Housing requests that bus service be restored to the Manchester Street area of Concord in order to serve its residents. Presumably, this request is concerned with the restoration of fixed route services which were previously provided by Concord Area Transit.

Response

The goals of the SAFETEA:LU program include increasing the general mobility of senior Americans, those with low income and individuals with disabilities, as well as improving general access to transportation services for employment related activities. It is evident from the comments received that a portion of CATCH residents can be considered under these goals. The decision to provide specific transit services is at the discretion of individual transit providers in the Region 3 area. This plan serves to increase coordination between transit providers and users and contains a number of goals and implementation objectives to achieve increased coordination and enhance transit service in the region. Specifically, Section 8.4 Goal 4 states:

Enhance the existing transportation facilities in the Region 3 area and ensure that existing capacity is improved

This goal is followed by a number of implementation objectives which identify potential strategies to increase existing capacity which include a number of new and enhanced routes. These routes were identified by participants during the plan making process. The expressed need for the restoration of bus service to the Manchester Street area of Concord can be accommodated here.

Recommendation

Add the following implementation objective to Section 8.4 of the Draft Plan as well as Page 9 of the Executive Summary:

11. Consider the restoration of fixed route transit services to the Manchester Street area of Concord.

Submission No. 2

Carter Terenzini, Town Administrator - Moultonborough

The comments received from Mr. Terenzini requests that the plan makes reference to planned Carroll County Transit Program which is due to be operational by summer 2010. The planned service will provide transportation services for residents of Laconia heading northwards, and from Center Harbor and Meredith southward.

Response

Although not based in the Region 3 area, this planned transit service can play a role in providing expanded service to residents of the Region 3 area and provide linkages to towns and cities outside of the region. During the plan making process it was difficult to engage with the Carroll County Transit Program as it had yet to be established. However, the plan team recognizes the importance of this transit service and the benefits it will offer to improve service in the Region 3 area and beyond. It is appropriate that the plan references the Carroll County Transit Program.

Recommendation

Add the following text under Section 5.5 of the Draft Plan. This text will then become Section 5.6 and the proceeding sections will be numerically adjusted accordingly:

Section 5.6 Carroll County Transit Program

It is projected that the Carroll County Transit Program will be operational by July 1, 2010. Although not based in the Region 3 area, the planned service will provide transportation services for residents of Laconia heading northwards, and from Center Harbor and Meredith southward. Once operational this transit service will provide a valuable link to cities and towns outside the Region 3 area and has the potential to serve as a valuable addition to increasing coordination between transit and human service providers in the Region 3 area and beyond.

Add the following row to the table contained in Appendix C: Transit Providers Identified in the Study Area:

Organization	Contact	Type of Provider	Contact
Carroll County Transit Program	Beverly Raymond	Specific Transit Provider	223-8150

Submission No. 3

Lakes Region Planning Commission - Transportation Advisory Committee

This set of comments addresses a number of grammatical mistakes in the document as well as recommending more specific alterations to the document to address a number of issues. The first point raised is concerned with Goal 8.4, which states that the potential improvements listed in the document apply to Region 3 area. However, the document clearly lists corridor improvements outside of the Region 3 area. It is suggested that the language contained in the plan be expanded to account for this. It was also noted that implementation objective 1 accompanying Goal 8.4 is erroneous in stating that NH Route 16 connects the Seacoast Region to Laconia. Under these same implementation objectives it is requested that a corridor linking Alton to Allenstown be included, while also mentioning connections with the Town of Epsom.

This submission also requests greater recognition of the role of municipalities and municipal officials as stakeholders in the provision of human services and transportation in the Region 3 area. It states that municipalities are listed as funding sources but not mentioned in the body of the text as stakeholders.

Response

The overall objective for the Coordinated Transit and Human Services Transportation Plan for the Region 3 area is to improve coordination between human services and transportation. While this coordination is primarily focused on the Region 3 area, it is also essential that this coordination extends to areas outside of the Region 3 administrative boundaries. It is accepted that the draft document should have made a clearer distinction regarding this matter and it is recommended that the draft plan be changed to reflect this. The plan team also welcomes the identification of the mistake in stating that NH Route 16 connects the Seacoast Region to Laconia. These two regions are joined by a combination of NH Route 16, US-Route 4 and NH Route 107.

Although not specifically identified by participants during the pre-draft public consultation phase of the plan making process, provision should be made to include the Alton to Allenstown corridor and connections to the Town of Epsom in the plan.

Finally, municipalities and municipal officials have a major role to play in the coordination of human services and transportation in the Region 3 area. This is addressed under Section 7.3 of the Draft Plan: Key Players and their Responsibilities. Specifically, this section states:

Local and state governmental agencies, along with Regional Planning Commissions were also identified as key players in assisting with increased coordination of transit and human services.

It is accepted that this section can be more explicit in its recognition of the role of municipalities and municipal officials in improving coordination in the region.

Recommendation

Amend Goal 8.4: (Also changed in the Executive Summary)

From:

Enhance the existing transportation facilities in the Region 3 area and ensure that existing capacity is improved.

To:

Enhance the existing transportation facilities in the Region 3 area and on specific routes that lead to and from the region to ensure that existing capacity is improved.

Amend the second bullet point under Implementation Objective 1:

From

- Seacoast – Laconia (NH Route 16)

To

- Seacoast - Laconia

Add the following bullets to Implementation Objective 1, under Goal 8.4:

- Alton – Allenstown

Amend the first bullet point, Implementation Objective 2, under Goal 8.4 to include the Town of Epsom.

Amend the text in Section 7.3 of the Draft Plan, and the corresponding section of the Executive Summary to further address the role that municipalities and municipal officials have in the provision of transit and human services in the Region 3 area.

From:

Local and state governmental agencies, along with Regional Planning Commissions were also identified as key players in assisting with increased coordination of transit and human services.

To:

Local municipalities and municipal officials, state governmental agencies and Regional Planning Commissions were also identified as key players in assisting with increased coordination of transit and human services.

Submission No. 4

Mr. David Kerr – Lakes Region Planning Commission Transportation Advisory Committee Member

This submission contains similar points to the comments collectively received from the Lakes Region Planning Commission Transportation Advisory Committee, as well as more detailed individual comments. Therefore, comments duplicated in this submission will not be discussed again in the interest of brevity.

It is requested, under Goal 8.4, that Wolfeboro-Alton-Pittsfield should be added as an additional regional corridor in the plan, and also that Barnstead be considered under the potential feeder services to Concord. One particular comment, regarding Section 2.4 of the Draft Plan states that public outreach did not involve municipal elected officials. It is stated that the entire plan seems headed towards a “build it and they will come” plan for expanding public transportation and that greater assurances are needed that transit service will be sufficiently expanded to a reasonable level for those commuting to work. Building on this point, it is stated that additional survey work should be conducted to establish how many people do / would use public transportation to shop, reach medical and social service providers, governmental agencies and related services.

Mr. Kerr requests that the final results of the Concord Area Transit (CAT) Service Analysis be included in the document before the plan is finalized. At the time of producing the Draft Plan, this analysis of CAT services was not completed. It is also requested that the expansion of Park & Ride lots in the area should be addressed in the plan, as at present these facilities are far more heavily utilized than public transit.

Concern is raised that municipalities are identified as the main source of matching funds for most transit systems in the state, and that it may be necessary to obtain a higher commitment from these municipalities. Given the current economic climate, Mr. Kerr requests that this assumption be removed from the plan as the majority of communities in the Region 3 area are at the limits of their financial commitments due to limited resources.

Finally, potential new transit routes to Epsom, on account of the establishment of a medical center by Concord Hospital, and routes to Loudon and Chichester are identified, and it is requested that these locations be included in the plan to assist with future grant applications to expand services.

Response

The suggestion of potential new routes in the Region 3 area is welcomed and the Draft Plan will be amended to accommodate these routes. Under Section 2.4, it is stated by Mr. Kerr that public outreach did not involve municipal elected officials. Section 2.4 which describes the public outreach methodology employed during the pre-draft consultation stage of the plan making process, states that during the public outreach process the purpose was to “directly solicit the views and experiences of transit and potential transit providers and potential transit users in the three study groups regarding transportation

barriers they face”. Municipal officials were considered covered under the description of potential transit users in this section. However, it is accepted that this could be made clearer to better reflect the input provided by municipal officials. During this stage, each of the 39 municipalities covered under the Region 3 area were directly notified of events and meetings regarding the plan. Many towns had representatives at both public meetings held, and a large amount of feedback was received from municipal officials in this regard.

It has been requested that additional survey work should be conducted to establish how many people do / would use public transportation to shop, reach medical and social service providers, governmental agencies and related services. The goal of this coordinated transit plan is to establish increased coordination between transit providers and users in the Region 3 area. Each of the target populations covered under this plan have an implied need for transit i.e. low income, elderly and disabled individuals. Numerous studies conducted at the regional, state and national level have identified these three target populations as having a distinct need for transit services. By increasing coordination between transit providers and users and by expanding transit provision in the Region 3 area, and directly targeting these three demographic groups, it is reasonable to assume that increased ridership will result. Establishing how many people do / would use transit services in the region is a significant task and is not covered under the scope of this plan. Specific transit providers in the Region 3 area may choose to do this survey work, along the lines of the recent study undertaken by Concord Area Transit, to improve the individual services they offer. The final results of the CAT Feasibility Study will be included in the final plan as requested by Mr. Kerr.

It is felt that the role of the Park & Ride facilities is adequately addressed in the draft plan. The operational profile of the Park & Ride facilities implies their importance to the transportation network in the Region 3 area. Specifically, the draft plan, under Section 5.8 states:

The existing Park & Ride lots in the region are a crucial component of the transportation infrastructure. They are especially effective in facilitating both Rideshare opportunities available to the study area’s population. In the future, potential may exist to expand the role of the existing Park & Ride lots as multi-modal transportation centers for carpools, buses, bicycles and pedestrians. Better utilization of these lots can lead to more efficient transportation and increased opportunities for coordination in the region. Park & Ride lots with effective multi-modal transit options could potentially serve as centralized drop-off/pick-up points in the region and could ultimately lead to better opportunities for the low-income, disabled and elderly populations to utilize transit services.

Finally, it is agreed that identifying municipalities as the main source of matching funds for most transit systems in the state is unreasonable due to the current economic climate, and it is recommended that the plan be altered to reflect this.

Recommendation

Add the following bullets to Implementation Objective 1, under Goal 8.4:

- **Wolfeboro-Alton-Pittsfield**

Amend the first bullet point, Implementation Objective 2, under Goal 8.4 to include the Town of Barnstead.

Amend the text under Section 2.4 Stakeholder Involvement – Public Outreach:

From:

To directly solicit the views and experiences of transit and potential transit providers and potential transit users in the three study groups regarding transportation barriers they face.

To:

To directly solicit the views and experiences of transit providers, potential transit providers, interested stakeholders such as municipal officials and advocacy groups, and potential transit users in the Region 3 area regarding transportation barriers they face.

Submission No.5

Community Action Program Belknap – Merrimack Counties, Inc.

The comments received from Community Action Program Belknap – Merrimack Counties, Inc. provide more detail on existing services in the Region 3 area offered by the organization as well as requesting further clarification on a number of points contained in the Draft Plan. The first point raised is that the existing title of the Draft Plan which states ‘Region 3: Belknap County & portions of Hillsborough & Merrimack Counties’ does not adequately represent the Region 3 area. It is requested that the title be changed to read ‘Region 3: Belknap County, Merrimack County (excluding Hooksett) and the Towns of Deering & Hillsborough from Hillsborough County’, and that all references to the existing title be amended throughout the document accordingly.

This submission also calls for more clarification on funding issues affecting the region. Specifically, under Section 7.2 Real and Perceived Obstacles to Coordination it is requested that lack of funding from federal, state and local resources be specifically identified as a barrier to coordination. It is also requested that the following Implementation Objective be added under Goal 1:

- Secure adequate funding and commitment from federal and state agencies to develop and maintain the Region 3 RCC.

Recommendation

Change the title of the plan:

From:

Coordinated Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan 2010: Region 3: Belknap County & portions of Hillsborough and Merrimack Counties

To:

Coordinated Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan 2010: Region 3: Belknap County, Merrimack County (excluding Hooksett) and the Towns of Deering & Hillsborough from Hillsborough County

Replace all references to the “region” with “the Region 3 area”.

Amend the first sentence of Section 7.2 Real and Perceived Obstacles to Coordination:

From:

Funding issues and lack of coordination between service providers dominates this section.

To:

Difficulties with obtaining funding from a combination of federal, state and local resources and lack of coordination between service providers dominates this section.

Amend the text under Section 7.2 Key Players and their Responsibilities:

From:

The leading transit providers in the region, Concord Area Transit, Belknap – Merrimack County Community Action Program and Winnipiesaukee Transit were identified as being instrumental in the establishment of a Regional Transportation Brokerage and promoting increased coordination in the region.

To:

The leading transit providers in the region, such as Community Action Program Belknap – Merrimack Counties, Inc. were identified as being instrumental in the establishment of a Regional Transportation Brokerage and promoting increased coordination in the region.

Add the following Implementation Objective under Goal 1:

- **Secure adequate funding and commitment from federal and state agencies to develop and maintain the Region 3 RCC.**

Amend Implementation Objective 2 Under Goal 2:

From:

- A clear and effective common website with the facilities for ride scheduling, timetables, and general information should be established (this should be multi-lingual). Seek funds to develop a web based Find-A-Ride system to guide riders to the most efficient and appropriate transportation service provider. (Possibly under the umbrella of CNHRPC's Program for Alternative Transportation and Health (PATH).

To:

- **A clear and effective common website with the facilities for ride scheduling, timetables, and general information should be established (this should be multi-lingual). Seek funds to develop a web based Find-A-Ride system to guide riders to the most efficient and appropriate transportation service provider. The CNHRPC currently operates a web-based Find-A-Ride system which could serve as a useful tool when expanding facilities in the future.**

Amend Implementation Objective 1 Under Goal 3:

From:

- Develop partnerships with local institutions and private sector organizations to make contributions to public transportation services. Concord Area Transit (CAT) has experience with this approach having raised matching resources from employers for the trolley service in Concord.

To:

- **Develop partnerships with local institutions and private sector organizations to make contributions to public transportation services. Community Action Program Belknap – Merrimack Counties, Inc. has experience with this approach having raised matching resources for vehicle maintenance, purchase and operation.**

Amend Implementation Objective 5 Under Goal 3:

From:

Where applicable, utilize non-NHDOT funds such as Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Older American Act (Title IIIB) as matching resources. This is a strategy that has been successfully used by the Tri-County CAP in Berlin, NH.

To:

Where applicable, utilize non-NHDOT funds such as Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Older American Act (Title IIIB) as matching resources. This is a strategy that has been successfully used by the Tri-County CAP in Berlin, NH and Community Action Program Belknap – Merrimack Counties, Inc.

Add the following text to the last paragraph of Section 3.6 Elderly:

The alternative to easy access transport is isolation, loss of self-esteem and potentially an increase in the cost of care.

Section 5.1: Concord Area Transit:

State that the CAT service is managed by Community Action Program Belknap – Merrimack Counties, Inc. and state that riders contact CAT dispatchers to schedule a ride on both Concord Senior Transit (CST) and Special Transit Service (STS).

Add the following text to the end of Section 5.1:

There is existing coordination of services between CAT and the Winnepesaukee Transit System, as well as the Rural Transportation System which are all under the umbrella of Community Action Program Belknap – Merrimack Counties, Inc. (BMCAP). BMCAP also operates the Central NH Transportation Brokerage to coordinate rides with other service providers.

Section 5.2: Insert WTS in parenthesis (WTS) following reference to the Winnepesaukee Transit System throughout the document. State that the WTS is managed by Community Action Program Belknap – Merrimack Counties, Inc.

Remove the following sentence from the final paragraph under Section 5.2:

While this system is a welcome facility for those who need to schedule rides, it may be possible to provide better service to commuters and people who do not own a vehicle with a fixed route service with more rigid schedules.

Change Section 5.5 of the Draft Plan:

From:

5.5 Rural Transportation System

The Rural Transportation System operated by Belknap-Merrimack CAP provides a link to community services for seniors (aged 60 and over) and disabled individuals using a wheelchair or other device intended to aid the user. This program is offered to those seeking to maintain independence while facing the challenge of limited physical mobility, financial resources or lack of personal transportation.

Rides are available Monday through Friday on buses based in Meredith, Laconia, Franklin and Warner. Vehicles are routed through many communities, depending on service requests, which provide service to residents of the more outlying rural areas. Routes are planned from specific pickup areas to rider-selected medical offices and shopping centers in the destination zone. Routes are tailored to offer door-to-door service and assistance in loading and unloading.

To:

5.5 Rural Transportation Service

The Rural Transportation Service operated by Community Action Program Belknap – Merrimack Counties, Inc. is a demand response service that provides a link to community services for seniors (aged 60 and over) and disabled individuals using a wheelchair or other device intended to aid the user. This program is offered to those seeking to maintain independence while facing the challenge of limited physical mobility, financial resources or lack of personal transportation.

Rides are available Monday through Friday on buses based in Belmont, Bradford, Franklin, Laconia, Meredith and Pittsfield. Vehicles are routed through many communities, depending on service requests, which provide service to residents of the more outlying rural areas. Routes are planned from specific pickup areas to rider-selected medical offices and shopping centers in the destination zone. Routes are tailored to offer door-to-door service and assistance in loading and unloading. Due to funding levels, all routes are operated on a part-time basis, with the exception of Laconia which operates 7.5 hours, Monday through Friday.

Change all references to the Department of Elderly and Adult Services in the draft plan to Bureau of Elderly and Adult Services.