

Community Transit Conversation #1

Thursday, June 22nd, Verizon Center, Room 245, 4:30-7:00pm

1. Issues or challenges with the current transit system

FIXED-ROUTE SERVICE

- ◆ It is hard to ride regular bus route in winter, since crossing the street is a challenge due to snow and ice
- ◆ Fares are a challenge for senior citizens
- ◆ People cannot currently get home from work on the bus, since it does not operate late enough
- ◆ Bus does not stop close enough to restaurants
- ◆ Routes are currently not flexible enough
- ◆ Bus does not currently stop between Sam's Club and Walmart and Baker's Square/Chipotle
- ◆ There is a lack of service on Sundays
- ◆ There is currently not a route near post office
- ◆ Non-profits would prefer to distribute bus tokens but currently have to pay for cabs because the bus either doesn't serve where clients need to go or travel times using the bus are too long
- ◆ Bus routes currently limit access to jobs
- ◆ People do not know about the disability fare
- ◆ There are currently limited or lacking connections to the areas surrounding Mankato, which have more affordable housing

MOBILITY BUS

- ◆ It is a challenge to get a ride when desired due to capacity
- ◆ Scheduling in advance can be a challenge
- ◆ Mobility Bus is currently the only option to people using scooters
- ◆ Does not operate on Sunday
- ◆ Fares are an issue for people with disabilities and fixed incomes
- ◆ Eligibility paperwork is a challenge

2. Opportunities for new or improved transit

- ◆ Add stops in residential neighborhoods that the bus already drives through
- ◆ Add routes to new residential neighborhoods
- ◆ Advertise routes
- ◆ Add more bus shelters to provide coverage during inclement weather
- ◆ Add stops in the following locations:
 - Off Victory Drive by Menards and Fleet Farm
 - Between Wickersham and 22nd
 - Hilltop
- ◆ Conduct a peer review of similar systems
- ◆ Add later service for return trips from second shift jobs (3-11pm or 2-10pm)
 - This is especially important in winter months
- ◆ Add service to the following areas:
 - Sibley Park
 - Hiniker Road
 - The industrial park
 - The food shelf

- Eagle Lake
- Madison East to serve offices and clinics
- North Mankato
- Adam Street extension
- West Mankato
- Mobile home communities (Southaven, Knollwood, and Eastwood)
- ◆ Add later service on Saturdays
- ◆ Add more routes that serve areas other than MSU
- ◆ Add more service outside of the academic school year
- ◆ Add more direct routes that decrease travel times
 - Some clients currently have 4 hour round trips
- ◆ Add routes or adjust routes to serve more jobs
 - Jack Links is an employer that several people mentioned
- ◆ There is an opportunity to gain ridership as adults age in the Greater Mankato area
 - People may not want to drive anymore
 - A strong transit system will help people maintain their independence while no longer driving
- ◆ Increase route frequencies
 - Some routes are currently overloaded near MSU
- ◆ Add routes or adjust routes to serve childcare facilities
- ◆ Explore new partnerships for funding similar to the partnership with MSU

3. Transit information availability and accessibility

- ◆ Have bigger maps available
- ◆ Add more viewing options on the transit website
- ◆ Add wifi on bus
 - This would especially be helpful for people to look at transit information on their phones
- ◆ Create a transit mobile app to communicate timing of the bus
- ◆ Add route maps at bus stops
- ◆ Add more consistent shelters
- ◆ Childcare centers should be added to route maps
- ◆ Create a how-to-ride video
- ◆ Promote one free month of service to increase ridership
- ◆ Add a bus “trainer” to help people ride bus
- ◆ Add a frequently asked questions section to the transit website
- ◆ Distribute free test passes to encourage people to try riding the bus
- ◆ Simplify maps and schedules
- ◆ Redesign maps and schedules so that they are easier to print
- ◆ Add social media information

4. Goals for the transit system

- ◆ Span
 - Increase service days of the week
 - Increase service span
 - Increase number of service hours
- ◆ Access
 - Increase access to restaurants
 - Provide more access to housing
 - Provide more access to jobs
- ◆ Increase ridership

- ◆ Trade-offs
 - Non-profits are providing more bus tokens than taxi vouchers/Non-profits are spending less on taxi vouchers
 - Increased awareness of the cost of owning a vehicle
 - Comparison of the cost of riding the bus to the cost of owning and operating a vehicle
- ◆ Increased service to areas outside of MSU
- ◆ More consistency across bus stop signage, branding, and amenities
- ◆ Bus routes within a certain distance of each residences and jobs
 - With emphasis on dense residential areas, affordable housing, and senior communities
- ◆ Decreased average travel time for riders
- ◆ Increased on-time performance
- ◆ Increase people reached during outreach and engagement efforts
- ◆ Introduce a fare card for better data collection and performance evaluation
- ◆ Add a transportation question on the workforce application
 - Goal is for transportation to be less of an issue for accessing jobs