

3/12/18 Middlebury Climate Action Transportation Task Force--Summary Notes

Present: Laura Asermily, Dorothy Mammen, Nadine Barnicle, Eric Davis, Sam Wagner, Kathy Woods, Fred Dunnington, Deb Sachs, Bill Cunningham, David Andrews, Steve Maier, Chris Robbins, Adam Lougee, Jon Copans, Nancy Luke, John Dale

Proposed Agenda, call to action (5 minutes)

Public transportation action priorities (40 min)

ACTR-Betcha redundancy--Middlebury students synthesizing

ACTR Ridership Survey is closed--Middlebury students assisted by entering data. Ultimately, EV students will help with getting more students to ride the bus.

Members of the Task Force assisted in conducting a transportation survey at Town Meeting (still open as of 3/12/18).

Build bus ridership--Actions--ACTR did survey of riders, survey at town meeting, non-riders, Task Force members assisted on collecting and collating results. Fred reported initial results. In total, collated 133 responses, from all areas of town. In general, there is broad awareness of different shuttle routes, over 50% said ACTR buses go where they need to go, 65% thought ACTR was convenient. Most people completed the survey at their convenience. Again, initial results indicated that over 40% weren't sure it would be convenient. Top suggestion was the need for real time information, 78% of them had access to a car.

Dorothy reported that ACTR, Mary-Claire helped come up with the survey questions. Results included non-rider or infrequent riders. Other questions included opinions on peripheral parking lots. More than half of the responses were folks 60 years or older (54%). Town survey, also included parking related questions.

Kathy Woods (present at the meeting) indicated she was an ACTR rider, noting that LINK buses are too early for commuters coming to Middlebury from Burlington. Mid-day bus was on the ACTR survey. Many people are interested in mid-day connection.

For those who went to the GMT presentation, learned that ridership is under performing. VTrans is asking GMT to consider options.

ACTR's number one expansion is a coordinated bus to BTV. It was noted that maybe a smaller bus is a starting option.

Discussion followed. It was noted that ACTR is an urban system design for people who have a normal workday schedule. Equipment and staff utilization is based on that model. ACTR's bus thru Hinesburg and then to BTV is nearly full. The 116 leaves at 3:30 pm. to Burlington to connect in with GMT, therefore, the early departure is required to make connections.

ACTION ITEM: Promote existing survey to have a table in Bristol and Vergennes. Expand where we are capturing data. Promote it on FPF and table. ACTR and Task Force members will follow through.

Multi-modal transportation center / train platform--

Discussion shifted to the train platform. Eric reported on the RFP, and mentioned a link to a 2001 study. Eric asked members: should the Task Force make a statement about its opinion/views. Does the Task Force want to make a statement? He referenced the 2001 Study that was developed several years ago. Siting of a platform was in question. The major difference is that this 2001 study looked at a multi-modal center including a Ticket office, intercity bus, a big parking lot, been a number of surrounding developments.

Eric suggested the Task Force get involved by offering a statement. We shouldn't focus on siting, but rather, suggest siting criteria. While it is just a platform, it should be sited and designed for potential expansion. Do not preclude multi-modal, bus, bike. The 2001 study, anticipated 50 passengers a day, to NYC, at most. Since there is going to be a station in Vergennes, with parking, overnight parking should not be a high criteria.

The RFP states that this is a study to site a 'rail platform'. Adam, noted that ACTR has a new facility on Creek Road, the bus can meet the trains without a big facility. Second, VTrans has money to build a platform only. Look at expansion, but the size of the facility, will be for the Amtrak Trains.

Eric's fear is that it will be cited too far outside of town. It needs to be located downtown.

Discussion followed, some committee members read the Amtrak station guidelines. The tunnel project lowering the rail with a U-wall, where things will then level out. Earlier studies were not mindful of local businesses entrances/access. Plus, the Amtrak schedule will be arriving very early and late hours of the night. It was noted that the prior study used great criteria.

General support as a Task Force:
Central location, and
Connectivity

ACTION ITEM: Erik will develop a draft for Task Force consideration and subsequent submission to decision-makers. The consultant will be selected by late April. It was noted that there were a few responses to the RFP. Going back to criteria, there will be sites ideal for both. Can you meet nearby and peripheral parking as well? Longer distance riders would be inconvenienced.

Electric jitney shuttle (In-Town Circulator)--Discussion followed on a circulator concept, a shuttle service operating small vehicles, that would offer a downtown loop service M-F--College/Hospital, down Route 7 Hannaford, to Exchange Street. Run every 15 min. Essentially this is an expansion of the Middlebury Shuttle bus, might need to be tighter than 15-minute headways. Discussion followed: we need more people riding, period.

Not enough demand for mid-day, which is the place to improve frequency. Could we demo the most awesome option, to serve large employers. Seek private funding. This project will take cooperation, service between the two largest employers. Discussion followed on how we might support a demonstration, create an awesome model. Folks are in positions to go after grants to model this.

ACTION ITEM: Could ACTR organize forums or demonstrations on to ride the bus. Find a way to inform people. The everyday people, often most are just not understanding the bus schedule; then there is the language barrier. It was noted that some folks just don't understand the driver. Language barriers. Lack of understanding, follow-GMT's other languages. It was noted there is a big Bosnian community at Woodbridge.

Discussion followed on the concept of promote "peripheral auto capture parking lots" at the Campus level. Note that so many students have cars.

Questions were raised about how frequent is use up to the Snowbowl Service (50 for the day)? Good in winter, but it is necessarily cut back in summer. Snowbowl usage is down because many go to Sugarbush. Changing behavior.

VTRANS--Jill Barrett, Fitzgerald & Haliday, This group is working on the plan while bridges are down. Signage, peripheral lots, shuttles.

AGENDA ITEMS SUMMARY (Con't)

Other action priorities (20 min)

Biking/Walking

Bike and Bus Community Arts Campaign

Ride-sharing Education--Preliminary Promote the Middlebury Shuttle bus.

Idle-free Part II

Zoning for Walkable Neighborhoods

Environmental Studies students project updates (15 min?)

Quick action review (10 min)

Action priority leaders from prior meetings

Public Transit -- Eric, Bill, Mary, John, Laura, Dorothy, Bethany, Deb (resource for ed campaigns) -- Action Steps 1, 2, 8, 10, 11--Students are getting picked up by a BETCHA Bus, and no kids are there when local bus comes by. Middlebury students, ACTR is limited in that they cannot compete. Betcha has a relationship with the school district. The conversation must happen between Addison School District and Betcha. Their vehicles are not ADA equipped. Why would the school district want to pay for a route that ACTR can serve? Again the school district contracts, could be reduced or terminated. When the school district published the routes where there is redundancy with ACTR. First, ACTR met with Mary Hogan, and they loved ACTR. They actually created too much demand with BETCHA. ACTR reached with ACDC staff.

Biking/Walking -- David, Adam -- Action Steps 4, 5, 13 -- working in coordination with Walk/Bike Council

Bike and Bus Community Arts Campaign -- Bethany, John, Dorothy, Deb (resource) -- Action Step 6

Ride-sharing education -- Dorothy, Deb (resource) -- Action Step 14

Action Step 3 --Idle Free Part II-- Laura McLaughlan and Nadine Barnicle

Action Step 7 -- Chris Robbins

Task Force Member Action priorities:

1. Laura--doing a lot about biking. Inventory of bike racks and bike parking including schools private business locations. Covered biking demo at Porter
2. Zoning for walkable neighborhoods. Planning Commission is going to bring this forward, measures of connectivity.
3. Adam will share timeframe of RFP--March 16th is submission deadline. March 30th determination. Proposal by end of June.
4. Concerned about bike policy, rolling stop, Idaho stop, where bicycles yield versus stop
5. ACTR will meet with Doug to further discuss students with difficult
6. Research multi-modal commonalities.
7. Bus parking--Merchants Row angled parking, reduced paved area, collect storm water, do some things that build support for safety components, help ensure that buses have more than one place to park.
8. Cathy could help bring folks to understand there is an interpretive component to understanding bus scheduled.
9. Sam would like to come to the next meeting: Task Force
10. Ride the Bus group--two tabulated surveys. Appreciative of the surveys. Dug into the analytics.
11. Eric, will draft first draft of rail platform letter
12. Nadine will work with students.
13. Dorothy will coordinate with student groups. Ridesharing education
14. Nancy--Transportation 4 Vermonters, VW settlement funds, electrification. Mitigation plan letter. Personal interest, safe transportation from Bristol is of interest.