



CHAPTER III

Public Involvement

INTRODUCTION

An integral part of any planning process is the public participation effort. During the course of this plan, several methods for involving the local public in the process were undertaken. Based upon comments and suggestions from the Advisory Committee, a number of public meetings were hosted by the LSC Team with the help of North Country Transit and Advisory Committee members to receive public input on the transportation needs in Carroll County.



Eleven open houses were held at various times during the planning process where citizens were openly welcome to comment on transit services in the county. The first open houses were held on March 27 and 28, 2007. The locations were the Gibson Senior Center in North Conway, CAP Tamworth Building, and the Ossipee Crossings Senior Center in Center Ossipee. The Gibson Senior Center open house had 22 attendees. The Tamworth meeting had no people show up, while the Center Ossipee meeting had 19 persons attend. Attendees were given the opportunity to voice what they felt are transit needs within each of their communities. Most responses were the lack of public transportation services in the region.

The second round of open houses were held on August 1 and 2, 2007. These were held at the Gibson Senior Center in North Conway, Ossipee Concerned Citizens in Center Ossipee, the Moultonborough Lions Club, and the Wolfeboro Public Library. Flyers and newspaper ads advertised the open houses. The North Conway and Center Ossipee open houses each had nine persons attend. The Moultonborough open house had eight people, while the Wolfeboro open house had only three people attend. Participants of these open houses were given an opportunity to comment on the various service alternatives.

The third round of open houses were held on October 10 and 11, 2007. These were held at the same locations as the second round of open houses—Gibson Senior Center in North Conway, Ossipee Concerned Citizens in Center Ossipee, the Moultonborough Lions Club, and the Wolfeboro Public Library. The Gibson Senior Center and the Ossipee public meeting, each had three attendees. The Wolfeboro meeting had four attendees, and the Moultonborough meeting was well-attended with 13 people. This final public meeting was held to present the Draft Report with the Preferred Transit Service Plan. It gave the audience an opportunity to see what the Advisory Committee had decided on as the best alternative based on the feedback from the various public meetings and to include any additional suggestions they may have had.

SUMMARY OF TRANSIT STUDY PUBLIC MEETINGS

Public meetings were held at the Gibson Senior Center and the CAP Tamworth Building on March 27, 2007 and at the Ossipee Crossings Senior Center on March 28, 2007 to solicit input on the needs and suggestions for providing public transportation services in Carroll County. A brief summary of those open house comments follow:

Gibson Senior Center, North Conway

This meeting—which was held at the Gibson Senior Center in North Conway from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.—had a total of 22 participants. Listed below are the comments received from the citizens that attended the public meeting.

- Taxi service is very expensive.
- Need for service to extend into the evening hours when it gets dark and becomes difficult to drive.
- Several senior citizens commented on the difficulty in renewing their driver's license. Some voluntarily and some involuntarily gave up their driver's license. As a result, many were dependent on friends for transportation.
- One citizen commented that a transit system like the one in Maine would be helpful. This transit system took patrons to different areas in a week. The door-to-door transportation charged \$5 to Portland and a suggested donation of \$30 to go to Dover and back. This system operated from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and used a 12-passenger small bus on Thursday to go to Portland. Patrons were dropped off at malls, hospitals, shopping centers, or grocery stores. Advance reservations had to be made by calling the agency number. The system served its purpose, but had longer travel times on buses.

- There is a need for transportation services for young individuals from other countries who are not used to driving but currently get to work by walking, hitchhiking, and bicycling.
- When asked what type of transportation they would like to see, many suggested 2-3 trips per week to Portland and a daily trip to the Gibson Center. They also suggested more local trips which could then be phased into longer distance trips.
- Portland was seen as a medical destination. There was need to go to Portland for X-rays, radiation, and medical specialists.
- Manchester and Concord were seen as other transit destinations.
- Need for transportation from Conway to North Conway, especially because of congestion and limited lanes in that corridor. Need for transportation to shopping centers, hospitals, and senior centers.
- One citizen commented that a fixed route to a particular location where all patrons could be picked up could be a possible element of the type of transit system.
- One citizen commented that New Hampshire had the highest volunteer rate in the United States. Volunteers were very helpful for providing transportation to seniors. However, many comments related to the difficulty in finding drivers and many volunteers who were seniors may be ineligible to drive as their driver's licenses are being revoked because of age and poor eyesight.
- There was a general agreement that it was not possible to satisfy all transportation needs. Priority had to be given to seniors who don't drive, those who never drive, and DUI drivers.
- There was a discussion on what would constitute a reasonable fare. According to the group, a reasonable fare should not exceed \$3.00. A reasonable round-trip fare to Portland or Manchester would be \$3.00.
- There was a brief discussion of efforts made by the community for providing transportation services that didn't last long. The Carroll County Alliance Center was one that went out of business. The alliance used vans from different human service agencies.

CAP Tamworth Building, Tamworth

This meeting was held at the CAP Tamworth Building in Tamworth between the hours of 4:00 and 6:00 p.m. Since no participants showed up, no discussion was held.

Ossipee Crossings Senior Center, Center Ossipee

This meeting—which was held at the Ossipee Crossings Senior Center in Center Ossipee from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.—had a total of 19 participants. Listed below are the comments received from the citizens that attended this public meeting.

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- Need for service to Manchester Airport.
- Need for service to Manchester for medical and shopping purposes.
- Need for transportation to Portland; Catholic Medical Center and other hospitals in Concord, Manchester, Dover; and other places such as Laconia and Rochester for other medical destinations.
- Shopping needs for daily staple foods are available locally. However, there is a need to visit friends and spouses in nursing homes located in Ossipee and North Conway.
- Need for transportation from Ossipee to Memorial Hospital in North Conway.
- Need for local transportation in the Ossipee area and transportation to Wolfeboro and North Conway once a week for doctor's appointments.
- Need for employee transportation from Wolfeboro to Conway, as Conway has the major employers and businesses.
- The Caregiver program is having difficulty finding volunteer drivers. Also, the Carroll County RSVP has difficulty providing transportation to Ossipee due to difficulty in finding volunteer drivers.
- Need for student transportation to Conway, Laconia, and Rochester for continuing education. Also, transportation is needed for students going to alternate schools in Wolfeboro.
- Need for transportation in single-vehicle households where one parent uses the vehicle to go to work and the other parent has to stay at home with no means of transportation, or in cases where both parents go to work and children have no means to get around.

The second round of public meetings were held at the Gibson Senior Center and the Ossipee Concerned Citizens on August 1, 2007, and on August 2, 2007 at the Moultonborough Lions Club and the Wolfeboro Public Library to solicit input on the various transit alternatives for meeting the demand within Carroll County. Alternatives for the proposed Carroll County Transit's future services were presented and comments were taken from residents, as well as questions answered. Following is a brief summary of those open house comments:

Gibson Senior Center, North Conway

This open house was held from 12:30 - 1:30 p.m. at the Gibson Senior Center and had a total of nine participants. The group was pleased with the overall alternatives offered and gave several suggestions to enhance the alternatives. Listed below are the major comments/suggestions from this public meeting:

- The public preferred the alternatives which had the all-day service between North Conway and Wolfeboro, as they felt many of the riders would be people

who worked in the service industry with different working shifts, people working two part-time jobs, and people working during the weekends (often the main time for employment). So a continuous connection between North Conway and Wolfeboro, a weekend service, and a late evening service were preferred by this group of people.

- The public also liked the alternative which included out-of-county medical trips because they thought that this alternative would meet some of the need for transportation for shopping and medical purposes.

Ossipee Concerned Citizens, Center Ossipee

Following the Gibson Senior Center meeting, an open house was held from 2:30 - 4:30 p.m. at the Ossipee Concerned Citizens with a total of nine participants.

Listed below are the major comments/suggestions from this public meeting:

- The public liked the alternative that had continuous service between North Conway and Wolfeboro, as not only commuters would be able to use the service, but service could be used for midday medical and shopping trips.
- The public also liked the flex connector route as it gave more flexibility for passengers to be picked up within three-quarters of a mile of the fixed route.

Moultonborough Lions Club, Moultonborough

This open house was held from 12:30 - 2:30 p.m. on August 2, 2007 at the Moultonborough Lions Club and had a total of eight participants. Listed below are the major comments/suggestions from this public meeting:

- The public did not like any of the alternatives that did not include transit services to Moultonborough.
- The public suggested that the Moultonborough service area needed to extend to the southern portion of the county to pick up passengers that need transportation.
- The public liked the service to Laconia and said it should be a more than just a commuter route with a midday trip and should also include a stop at Meredith.
- Most of the people in Moultonborough go to Laconia, Wolfeboro, and Meredith for shopping, and Laconia and Wolfeboro for their medical trips. Therefore, the connection to Laconia and Wolfeboro was very important to the people in the Moultonborough area.

Wolfeboro Public Library, Wolfeboro

There were only three attendees for this open house held from 3:30 - 5:30 p.m. on August 2, 2007. Listed below are the major comments/suggestions from this public meeting:

- Extension of service from Wolfeboro to Wakefield

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- Connection of Wolfeboro to Laconia
- Connection of Wolfeboro to Concord Trailways
- Connection of Wolfeboro to Concord and the University at New Hampshire
- Connection from Wolfeboro to Amtrak stations in Portsmouth and Dover

In the second round of meetings held on August 1 and 2, 2007, a brief description of the various service alternatives was given. The attendees were then shown the boards with each alternative displayed so that they could have a closer look and ask any questions they may have. The public was given a comment/suggestion sheet which asked them to rank each of the alternatives, give reasons on why they selected their highest ranked alternative, and any changes they would like to see in the preferred transit service alternative. Comments in Appendix A are categorized into each comment location.

In the third round of meetings held on October 10 and 11, 2007, an overview was presented of the process involved with the transit feasibility study and the various service alternatives analyzed. Details of the preferred service plan along with future phases were then presented and discussed.

INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Participants of the first round of public meetings were also given a questionnaire. A total of 38 completed individual questionnaires were received—20 from the Gibson Center and 18 from the Ossipee Crossing Senior Center. The questionnaires were not conducted to be statistically based, but to obtain opinions on transit issues and perceptions of the proposed transit system. The questionnaire designed was used as part of the public involvement process. A copy of the individual transportation questionnaire is provided in Appendix B. The survey responses are summarized in the following sections.

Demographic Characteristics

There were a number of questions asked to determine the characteristics of these individuals. The majority (75 percent) of the respondents in the North Conway public meeting belonged to the age group 60 years and above, with the remaining 25 percent of respondents belonging to the 40-60 years age group. In the Ossipee

public meeting, the majority (67 percent) of the respondents also belonged to the age group of 60 years and above, with 33 percent of individuals belonging to the age group between 40- 60 years.

Employment

Respondents were also asked to indicate their employment status using several categories. The majority of respondents in the North Conway meeting indicated that they were retired, while the majority of respondents in the Ossipee public meeting were employed either full-time or part-time.

Vehicle Availability and Driver's License

The questionnaire asked the number of operating vehicles the individual had in their household and whether they had a driver's license. Vehicle availability and the ability to drive play key roles in the demand for public transportation. Lack of a private vehicle or the inability to drive influence people to use public transportation. The majority of the respondents had a driver's license and had one to two operating vehicles in their household.

Means of Transportation

The questionnaire asked information about the types of transportation currently used. Respondents were allowed to select multiple responses. The majority of respondents use a personal vehicle. Other means of transportation indicated by a few respondents were a friend or a family vehicle, bicycle, and walking.

Trip Characteristics

Trip Purpose

The questionnaire asked respondents for what purpose they would use transit. Multiple responses were selected by respondents. The majority of the responses in the North Conway public meeting were for doctor, shopping, and social/visiting purposes. The majority of respondents in the Ossipee public meeting indicated shopping and doctor appointments, followed by work and school as the trip purposes for which they would use transit.

Service Preferences

Respondents were asked preference questions, such as the hours and days of operation for the transit service. The majority of respondents indicated that the service should operate between 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. followed by a few respondents who indicated service from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. The majority of respondents also indicated that service should be provided on weekdays with less need for weekend service.

Transportation Needs

The questionnaire asked individuals if they would need and use public transportation within Carroll County and beyond Carroll County. The majority of respondents indicated they would need public transportation to go both within and beyond Carroll County.

In addition, respondents were asked to indicate to which cities and communities they thought the bus should go. The majority of the respondents in the North Conway meeting indicated they would like the service to go to Conway and North Conway. Other communities to which they would like the bus to go are Berlin and Wolfeboro. Respondents in the Ossipee public meeting indicated that they would like to go to Conway, North Conway, Ossipee, and Wolfeboro.

Additional Comments

Participants were given the opportunity to include additional comments and suggestions on providing public transportation services in Carroll County. A variety of comments received including the need for a regularly scheduled transportation from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 or 6:00 p.m., on-call transportation services, transportation in the evening (after dark), door-to-door service (especially for nights and weekends), connection to public transportation services in Coos County and other counties that currently have transportation, transportation for seasonal workers, and transportation for medical services. One comment from the Ossipee public meeting was the need for employee transportation from Ossipee and Wolfeboro to Conway.

SUMMARY

The information received from the public involvement process, and the goals and objectives developed by the Advisory Group play an important role in the development of a transit plan in Carroll County.