



CHAPTER II

Community Input

INTRODUCTION

Members of the Community Mobility Project (CMP) completed two outreach efforts to obtain public input for the pilot project in Charlestown. The first of these was an outreach to local employers to determine the level of interest in transit services for employees. This outreach focused on employers in Claremont, Newport, Charlestown and particularly along the River Road corridor in Claremont. The second outreach effort was targeted to residents of Charlestown. A short questionnaire was distributed through different outlets in the community.

EMPLOYER OUTREACH

The Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission contacted 166 employers throughout Sullivan County asking them to participate in the transit needs assessment of Sullivan County. Follow-up telephone calls were made to employers in Claremont, Newport, and Charlestown. Of the 166 employers contacted, 12 participated by completing the questionnaire that was provided. The employers ranged in size from 5 to 100 full-time employees and 0 to 40 part-time employees.

Half of the businesses responding were industrial or manufacturing. Other businesses included government and education. One business offers a carpool program for employees. There is little awareness among the responding businesses of current transportation programs in the region. As an example, only one business was aware of the tax benefit for transit passes. Half of the businesses would be willing to modify work schedules to avoid peak travel times to get to work. Employees commute from throughout the region with no single community having a majority of the commuters to these responding businesses.

Community Input

About half of the employers indicated support for an increase in taxes or fees to support a coordinated public transportation system and about half would consider implementing programs to support use of alternate modes of transportation.

Overall, the responses indicate a low level of support for public transportation in Sullivan County by employers. Reasons may include adequate parking at most employers and no issue in finding qualified employees. The responses indicate potential demand for carpool or vanpool services, but little support by employers for public transportation service.

CHARLESTOWN OUTREACH

A subcommittee of the CMP developed a questionnaire for use in Charlestown to determine needs, preferences, and support for public transportation. The questionnaire and results are presented in Appendix A. Responses were received from 135 individuals, the majority of whom are Charlestown residents. The responses should not be considered as a representative sample as the questionnaire was distributed through a variety of channels and respondents were not selected randomly. However, the results do serve as an excellent source of community input.

The majority of respondents were not aware of the CATS Dial-a-Ride service or the Red Cross Volunteer program in Charlestown, with very few having used either service. The primary destinations for work, shopping, and medical services were Charlestown, Claremont, and Springfield. Medical services in Hanover had a significant number of responses. Respondents indicated a willingness to use public transportation if it was available, but many indicated that they used their cars for personal business during the day.

The responses to this questionnaire indicate a need for and support of public transportation. The responses support the quantitative analysis of demand completed by LSC which was used to develop the service recommended in Chapter III.