

Ulster County Transit System Coordination & Development Plan



Public Outreach Efforts to Date – March 2012

Ulster County and the Ulster County Transportation Council (UCTC), in conjunction with the City of Kingston's Citibus and the Ulster County Area Transit (UCAT), are working together to develop a comprehensive and coordinated transit plan for the County. The goal of the Plan is to provide better service and integration between transit systems and to provide public transportation that is more responsive and accessible to residents and visitors of the County at a lower cost.

Recently, the UCTC launched an extensive public outreach component to gather input from County residents and better inform the study. The elements of this outreach included:

- ◆ Stakeholder Interviews
- ◆ On-board Rider Surveys
- ◆ Public Meeting
- ◆ General Public Surveys

► Stakeholder Interviews

A series of group interviews were conducted in November to assess the transportation needs and concerns of stakeholders representing five (5) distinct interest groups in the community: transportation, housing, human resources, tourism and major employers. Here are the highlights from these discussions:

- ◆ **In general, existing transit service is valued by the community.** Stakeholders are generally appreciative of the existing transit services and feel they are valuable community resources.
- ◆ **High marks for fleet and staff.** The perception among stakeholders is that UCAT and Citibus vehicles are in good condition and are well maintained. Drivers and dispatchers for both systems have a reputation of being courteous and helpful.
- ◆ **Better coordination between services would benefit riders.** A common frustration expressed by several stakeholders is the lack of coordination between the services, especially between UCAT and Citibus, but also between the local service and regional service. Stakeholders say it is difficult to transfer between systems because there aren't enough shared bus stops, the schedules aren't coordinated and the fares are different. There is also a sense that some services are redundant (i.e. UCAT commuter routes and Trailways routes).
- ◆ **There are gaps in existing services.** There are gaps in the existing services, especially in the more rural areas. Specific underserved destinations include Ellenville and the county jail. The lack of coverage affects workers, seniors and students. Very limited evening service also makes it difficult for some shift workers to ride the bus to/from work.
- ◆ **Connections to private transportation providers are insufficient.** Stakeholders said many people ride the regional private services, but it is difficult to get to these services using the local bus network. The main challenges include service frequency and the differential in fares.
- ◆ **Lack of awareness about the existing transit services.** Stakeholders also reported that there is a lack of understanding about the individual services, how they work and how they work together. This is a challenge for fixed-route service as well as demand response services.





► Public Meeting

The first public meeting was held on December 1, 2011. The meeting consisted of an afternoon information session from 2:30 to 4:30 PM at the Hannaford at Kingston Plaza and an evening meeting from 6:30 to 8:30 PM at George Washington Elementary School. While most of the feedback from the public meeting is reflected in the general public survey, a few key comments include:

- ◆ Hardcopies of all schedules and route information must be made readily available as many senior riders do not have access to a computer.
- ◆ Transit information should be distributed to senior residences and living facilities.
- ◆ Additional midday and paratransit service is needed.

► General Public Survey

A ten-question general public survey was distributed in hard-copy format and as a link to an online version of the same survey. The survey was also distributed at the public meeting held on December 1, including both the afternoon kiosk information session and the evening meeting. A total of one-hundred and eleven (111) surveys were collected. The following themes emerged from the responses:

- ◆ The majority of survey respondents either had no opinion about UCAT/Citibus because they have never used the services, or claim that they would like to ride UCAT/Citibus more often. This suggests a high degree of good-will toward the transit providers.
- ◆ County residents prefer to receive transit information from a variety of sources, meaning that information needs to be distributed across a wide variety of media.
- ◆ Respondents seemed more concerned with the frequency of the service and difficulty transferring than they did with the pick-up and drop-off points they currently use. However, a number of proposed destinations were suggested as well.
- ◆ Most respondents used UCAT and/or Citibus for shopping and medical reasons; and those that use the service often use it for nearly all of their transportation needs.
- ◆ There is significant interest in longer weekday service hours and added weekend service hours.

► On-Board Survey

In October 2011, surveys were distributed to UCAT, Citibus, and Trailways passengers. A total of 529 surveys were completed. A summary of the key findings include:

- ◆ Riders on all three services are frequent users; 75% or more reported riding 2 to 5 days per week.
- ◆ UCAT carries a significant number of school-based trips due to ridership by SUNY Ulster and SUNY New Paltz students.
- ◆ More than 40% of UCAT's riders are 25 years old or younger, reflecting its student market. Nearly 70% of Citibus riders are 45 or older.
- ◆ Trips on UCAT primarily take place between the Kingston and the towns of Ulster, New Paltz and Poughkeepsie, and Kingston and SUNY Ulster. Some trips occur between Saugerties and SUNY Ulster; these passengers must wait to transfer at Kingston Plaza.
- ◆ Citibus riders are generally traveling between the uptown and downtown districts.
- ◆ Trailways trips within Ulster County primarily take place between Kingston and New Paltz.
- ◆ Citibus and UCAT passengers are very happy with the service fare and find the routes easy to understand. They are least satisfied with the days and hours of operation.
- ◆ Citibus and UCAT customers ranked 'increase the number of trips' as their first priority.
- ◆ In general, Citibus and UCAT customers are happy with current methods of getting information. Trailways customers expressed interest in receiving more service information via social media and cell phone updates.
- ◆ In terms of new destinations, Citibus customers want to get to Hudson Valley Mall, and UCAT riders want to get to the Poughkeepsie Galleria.

► Next Steps

The Study Team will soon be conducting a performance analysis of UCAT and Citibus to determine how they compare to a group of peer transit agencies. Stay informed by visiting the project website at www.co.ulster.ny.us/planning/tdp.html.

Contact for Information:

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Comments can also be mailed to:
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