



MEMO

Date: February 24, 2020
To: Transportation Advisory Committee
From: Bonnie Waninger, Executive Director
Re: Proposed Green Mountain Transit Service Changes

Green Mountain Transit (GMT) will be holding public meetings in March 2020 regarding proposed changes to its service. Service changes are necessary to bring GMT's revenues in line with its expenses.

The proposed service changes affecting Central Vermont fixed route service include:

- Transferring Route 2 Commuter service to Rural Community Transportation, Inc. (RCT).
- Transferring Route 100 Commuter service to RCT.
- Eliminating the first and last trip of the day for the Montpelier-Barre City Route.
- Modifying Barre and Waterbury Link Express services to consolidate one AM and one PM trip.

Additional details are included below. No changes are being proposed for Central Vermont service to Elderly Adults and Persons with Disabilities (E&D or Elderly and Disabled Service). Additional service changes are being proposed for Lamoille and Chittenden Counties service. If implemented, all changes would become effective July 2020.

Staff is providing advance notice to municipal leadership and other interested parties. CVRPC will forward public meeting notices to municipalities and publicize the notices to augment GMT's notices.

SERVICE CHANGES

Route 2 Commuter (GMT Route 84)

Currently, Rt. 2 Commuter service is operated by both GMT and RCT. The proposal will shift all Rt. 2 Commuter service to RCT. This change is expected to provide consistency in service (RCT bus is free to riders; GMT bus has a rider fee) and result in efficiencies marketing the service to riders. It also will provide RCT with more flexibility to coordinate service between the Rt. 2 Commuter and Morrisville to Barre service (Rt. 14 service).

Shifting services to RCT would allow vital transit services to remain in place while reducing the cost of services. The two transit providers have different personnel costs.

Route 100 Commuter (GMT Route 100)

Currently, GMT operates fixed route and seasonal service in Lamoille County, and RCT provides Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) and Medicaid-related (E&D or Elderly and Disabled Person service) services for elderly adults and persons with disabilities who cannot use regular bus service. If implemented, the proposed service changes would result in RCT providing all Lamoille County fixed route, NEMT, and E&D services. GMT would continue to provide seasonal services in Stowe.

Shifting services to RCT would allow vital transit services to remain in place while reducing the cost of services. The two transit providers have different personnel costs.

City Commuter (GMT Route 89)

The City Commuter travels between the Montpelier Transit Center and the Dollar General Store in Barre primarily along Rt. 2 and Rt. 302. The proposed change would eliminate the first (5:30/5:55/6:30 am) and last (7:30/7:55/8:30 pm) trip of the day due to low ridership. The ridership on the City Commuter AM trip is an average of 3.1 passengers. The PM trip averages .8 passengers.

Eliminating these trips assists the route to improve route metrics. VTrans uses cost-per-passenger as one metric when considering whether state and federal support should be provided for a service. Based on the low ridership, GMT anticipates minimal disruption to most passengers from the reduced service.

Barre (GMT Route 97) and Montpelier/Waterbury (GMT Route 286) Links

This change proposed to consolidate some service on the Barre Link Express and the Montpelier Link Express. Currently, the Barre Link travels between Burlington and Barre on I-89 with stops at the Richmond and Waterbury Park and Rides. The Montpelier Link travels between Burlington and Montpelier on I-89 with stops at the Richmond and Waterbury Park and Rides and Waterbury State Complex. Four (4) trips on the Montpelier Link travel between Burlington and Waterbury only. These trips are known as the Waterbury-Burlington Link Express. The proposed changes would remove the Waterbury-Burlington Link Express from the Montpelier Link Express and move the four trips to the Barre Link Express service.

GMT staff currently are projecting bus stop time points to determine whether the proposed change would retain service to both the Waterbury Park and Ride and Waterbury State Complex. This information will be available for the public meetings.

Consolidation of the LINK services would reduce costs by removing one bus from service and reducing associated driver pay hours.

Other Potential Changes for July 2020

GMT anticipates achieving additional cost reductions through changes to its Non-Emergency Medical Transport (NEMT) services in FY21. Examples of these changes include increasing recruitment of

volunteer drivers and right-sizing vehicles to service needs. These changes should have minimal impacts to passengers.

When volunteers are not available to provide NEMT services, GMT is required to use paid drivers for the service. This increases the cost of service. Based on past and projected transit ridership, GMT is discussing vehicle size needs with VTrans. If TAC members have ideas for recruitment strategies, we hope you will share them.

Light commercial vehicle vans (Sprinter-type) have become available on the market. These vans have a higher height profile than other van types. They offer transit providers the opportunity to maintain passenger service and comfort while reducing service costs.

OTHER INFORMATION

Will this Impact Transit Funding Requests to Municipalities?

Currently, it is unknown whether/how requests for municipal funding to support transit may change.

Should the proposed service transfers be implemented between GMT and RCT, GMT anticipates funding contributed by municipalities to GMT for July 2020 – June 2021 Rt. 2 and Rt. 100 service will be transferred from GMT to RCT to support continuation of those services. For July 2021 service and beyond, RCT would make direct requests to municipalities to support Rt. 2 and Rt. 100 services.

Currently, GMT is reviewing its local cost share request practice and will be developing a new policy. The policy is expected to be adopted and applied for FY22 service (July 2021 – June 2022). GMT's requests for municipal funding to support transit services may change at that time.

What is the Process for Service Changes?

After public meetings are held, GMT staff will review public comments and develop a final recommendation for service changes. The GMT Board of Commissioners will consider the comments and final recommendation at its April 21, 2020 meeting. The Board approves final service changes. Approved service changes would be implemented July 2020.

How Can I Learn More?

Information about proposed service changes and public meetings can be obtained from GMT by contacting Jamie Smith, Director of Marketing and Planning, via 802-540-1098 or jamie@ridegmt.com.

TAC members also may relay questions, concerns, and information through Bonnie Waninger, Washington County's GMT Board representative, via 802-229-0389 or waninger@cvregion.com.