The Current Route Evaluation and Planning Project 2016

SEVT Routes in the Bellows Falls, Springfield, and Ludlow areas

Final Version- Last revised June 2, 2016

Report prepared by Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission for Southeast Vermont Transit

Final Version – Last revised June 2. 2016

SEVT
SOUTHEAST VERMONT TRANSIT

SWCRPC
SOUTHERN WINDSOR COUNTY
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

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1 – ABOUT THE PROJECT

This study focuses on the towns of Rockingham/ Bellows Falls, Cavendish, Chester, Ludlow, and Springfield – as relates to transit services by The Current – a division of Southeast Vermont Transit (SEVT) (formerly Connecticut River Transit and Deerfield Valley Transit Association). This study considers the in-town Springfield and Bellows Falls Routes, as well as the between town routes between Bellows Falls, Springfield and Ludlow. These routes are all interconnected and function as a network. This study does not consider the I-91 commuter routes which have a very different ridership profile.

1.1 – GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals

1. Evaluate why ridership trends on The Current routes around Springfield, Bellows Falls and Ludlow areas either show stagnation or decreases in ridership; and
2. Make suggestions on how to improve ridership in order to improve service performance measures.

Objectives

1. Evaluate existing transit routes using
    - Rider and non-rider surveys, including some general public van riders
    - Driver survey
    - Stop boarding study
    - Service Indicator Reports
    - Discussions with SEVT staff
    - Discussions with general public
2. Make suggestions on how to improve ridership in order to improve service performance measures using results from evaluation and expertise of SEVT staff and project steering committee
    - Synthesize evaluation results
    - Make recommendations for identified needs, gaps or issues
    - Prioritize recommendations by assessing potential impact on ridership and estimated timeframe for completion
    - List areas for further study where insufficient information or expertise is available.

1.2 – STEERING COMMITTEE

The following people were part of the steering committee that guided this project:

- Katharine Otto, SWCRPC – Project facilitator
- Rebecca Gagnon, SEVT (The Current)
- Tim Bradshaw, Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans)
- Ed Tarvit, SEVT (The Current)
- Michelle Ovitt, SEVT (The Current)

The steering committee met on 12/4/2015, 1/22/2016, 2/12/2016, 3/21/2016 and 5/27/2016.

1.3 – OUTREACH AND MEETINGS

The following major methods were used to reach the general public and stakeholders:

- Project emails to contact list of over 300 people in the local area – human service agencies, major employers, schools, town officials[1]

[1] This list was compile primarily from existing contacts of the Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission and the Springfield Medical Care System's Community Health Team. This information was supplement with research by SEVT and some

- Project website - http://swcrpc.org/bus-route-evaluation-project-2016/ as well as announcements on http://crtransit.org/
- Facebook announcements - https://www.facebook.com/SWCRPC and https://www.facebook.com/connecticut.transit
- Local television station interview – SAPA TV - http://www.sapatv.org/tuesday-talk-of-the-town/
- Press release to local newspapers

Input and outreach for this study was completed in a variety of ways:

- Primary focus on a rider and non-rider (ie potential rider) survey in January 2016
- Draft report released for public comment in late March 2016, with comments due April 22, 2016.
- Outreach and input was collected at public meetings on April 12, 2016 at 11am and 5pm at the Springfield Town Hall.

The SEVT Board received short monthly updates on the project for the duration of the project. They also received the draft report in March and had a presentation at their 3/24/2016 Board meeting. They received the final report in June and had a presentation at their 6/6/2016 Board meeting.

contacts from Windham Regional Commission. Some additional contact email addresses were gathered from the project survey and outreach meetings.

2 – ABOUT THE AREA

2.1 – BACKGROUND

This study focuses on the towns of Rockingham/ Bellows Falls, Cavendish, Chester, Ludlow, and Springfield, and had a total population of just below 25,000 in 2010. The area is a network of downtowns and small village centers that are surrounded by a rural landscape. The map on the following page (Figure 2.1.A) shows the density of the development in the area, as well as the existing transit routes.

Providing public transportation in the area has a variety of opportunities and challenges including, but not limited to:

- The majority of residential development over the last few decades has occurred outside of more dense neighborhoods. With homes scattered across a town on the back roads this area does not have the densities or travel patterns that easily support convenient and cost-effective public transit routes and stops.
- Key destinations like workplaces, grocery stores, medical centers, schools and childcare are found scattered across the area, not just focused in town and village centers – making it expensive and difficult to provide bus service for all.
- With a robust network of paved state routes, as well as good connections to I-91, travelers in the area can easily travel to other job and service centers located outside the area – such as the Upper Valley, Claremont and Rutland. These hubs provide employment opportunities for the area's residents.
- Historically the region had a strong manufacturing base in the major towns – but this has been in decline since the 1970s – and has affected commuting patterns.
- Parts of the area around Ludlow experience seasonal changes in traffic – related to the Okemo Mountain Resort.

For more information about transportation patterns in the area, see the 2014 Southern Windsor County Regional Transportation Plan[2].

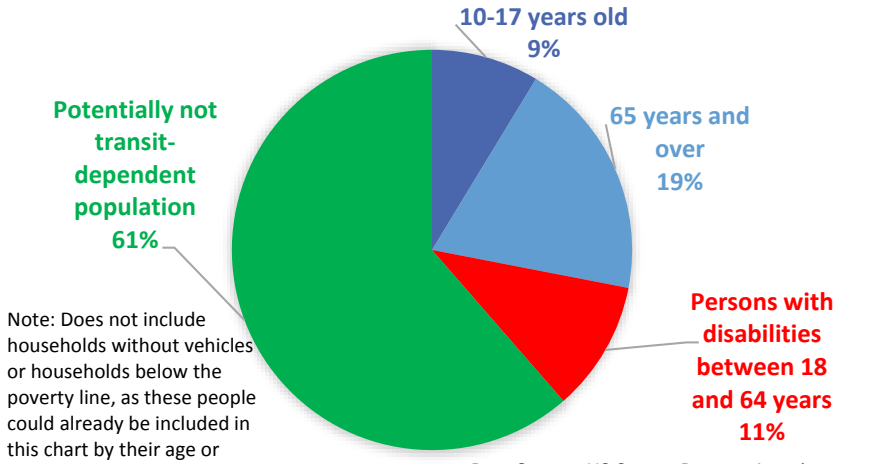
2.2 – TRANSIT DEPENDENT ANALYSIS

In order to better understand the character of public transportation services we need to understand some of the demographics of the population that it serves. A common method to summarize this information is by looking at the percentage of potentially transit dependent persons[3]. This includes data about five characteristics that have a high likelihood of requiring assistance to meet their daily mobility needs:

- People generally below the legal driving age;
- People age 65 or older
- People between the ages of 18 and 64 with a disability;
- People living below the federal poverty level; and
- Households without a vehicle

The data in the chart opposite (figured 2.2.A) and table below (Figure 2.2.B) was collected by the US Census Bureau for a combined average between 2010 and

Figure 2.2.A - Transit Dependent Population



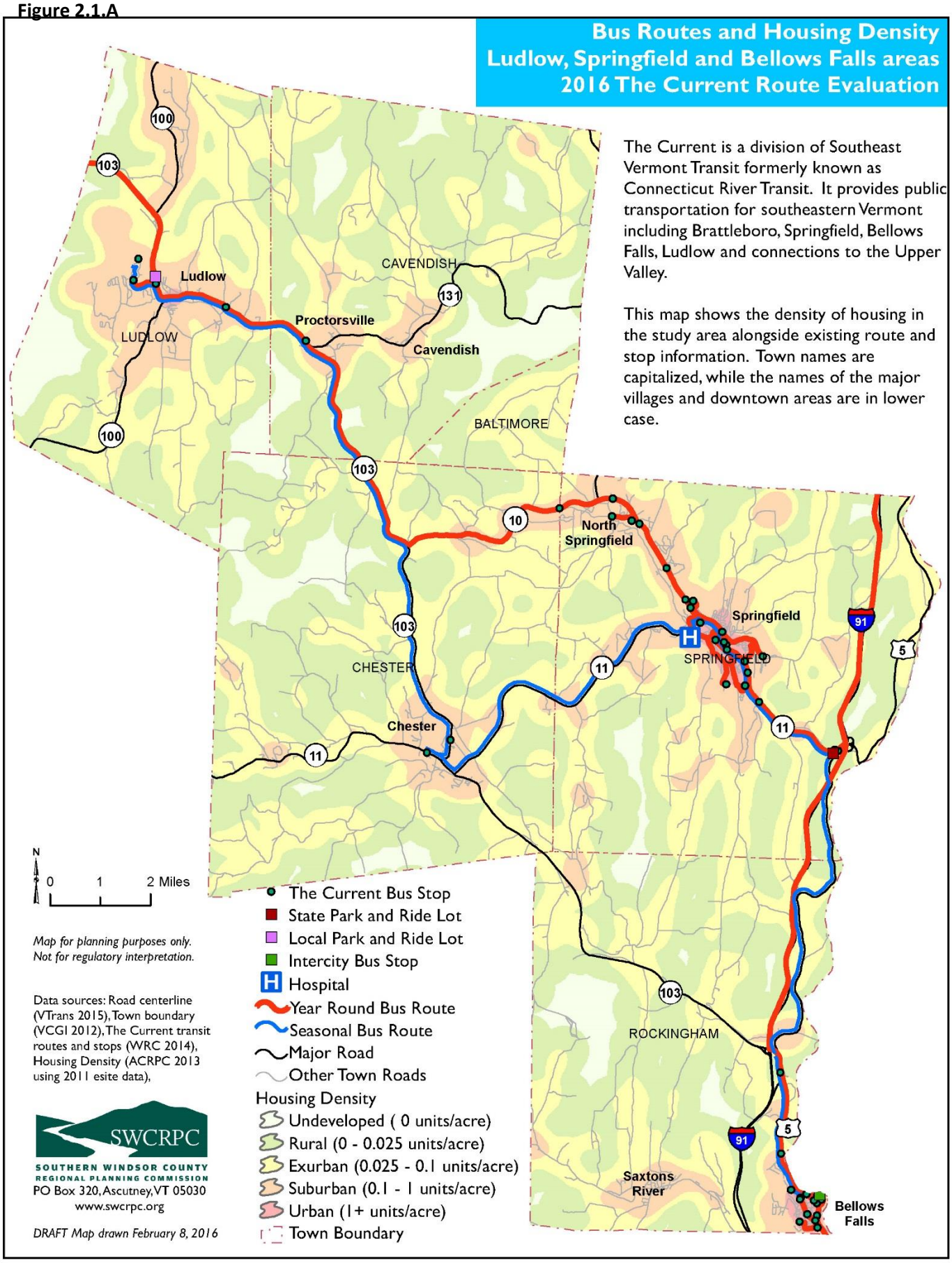
Note: Does not include households without vehicles or households below the poverty line, as these people could already be included in this chart by their age or disability.

Data Source: US Census Bureau. American Community Survey 2010-2014 Five-year average

[2] Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission - Southern Windsor County Regional Transportation Plan. Adopted November 18, 2014. http://swcrpc.org/publications/

[3] For more information see Technical Memorandum 4 Transit Needs Assessment (Page 4-8) of the 2012 Vermont Public Transit Policy Plan http://publictransit.vermont.gov/policies_reports/ptpp

Figure 2.1.A


Bus Routes and Housing Density
Ludlow, Springfield and Bellows Falls areas
2016 The Current Route Evaluation
The Current is a division of Southeast Vermont Transit formerly known as Connecticut River Transit. It provides public transportation for southeastern Vermont including Brattleboro, Springfield, Bellows Falls, Ludlow and connections to the Upper Valley.
This map shows the density of housing in the study area alongside existing route and stop information. Town names are capitalized, while the names of the major villages and downtown areas are in lower case.
Ludlow
LUDLOW
Proctorsville
CAVENDISH
Cavendish
BALTIMORE
North Springfield
Springfield
SPRINGFIELD
CHESTER
Chester
ROCKINGHAM
Saxtons River
Bellows Falls
100
103
131
10
11
91
5
N
0 1 2 Miles
Map for planning purposes only.
Not for regulatory interpretation.
Data sources: Road centerline (VTrans 2015), Town boundary (VCGI 2012), The Current transit routes and stops (WRC 2014), Housing Density (ACRPC 2013 using 2011 esite data),
The Current Bus Stop
State Park and Ride Lot
Local Park and Ride Lot
Intercity Bus Stop
Hospital
Year Round Bus Route
Seasonal Bus Route
Major Road
Other Town Roads
Housing Density
Undeveloped (0 units/acre)
Rural (0 - 0.025 units/acre)
Exurban (0.025 - 0.1 units/acre)
Suburban (0.1 - 1 units/acre)
Urban (1+ units/acre)
Town Boundary
SWCRPC
SOUTHERN WINDSOR COUNTY
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
PO Box 320, Ascutney, VT 05030
www.swcrpc.org
DRAFT Map drawn February 8, 2016

2014[4]. The chart shows that just under 40% of the area's population is potentially transit dependent. This number could be higher – if we could also include the households below the poverty line and households which have no vehicles. Figure 2.2.C shows the wide variation household income within the study area – between Rockingham's median household income of $36,899 and Chester's $52,500 – and all have a notable percentage of people in poverty (9.6% and above)[5].

Figure 2.2.B – Transit Dependent Populations in Study Area

Description	Detail	Percentage by	Total	% of Total	ACS Table
Total population	Total no. of people	N/A	24,384		DP05
	10 to 17 years old	per total no. of people	2,120	9%	calc
	65 years and over		4,718	19%	DP05
Households	Total no. of households	N/A	10,426		DP02
	With one or more people under 18 years	per total no. of households	2,497	24%	DP02
	With one or more people 65 years and over		3,246	31%	DP02
People with a disability	Under 18 years old	per total no. of people	329	1%	DP02
	18 - 64 years old		2,575	11%	DP02
	65 years and over		1,555	6%	DP02
Vehicles	No vehicles available in the household	per total no. of households	829	8%	DP04

Data source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2010-2014 Five-year average

Figure 2.2.C – Income in Study Area

Description	Springfield	Rockingham	Chester	Ludlow	ACS Table
Number of people aged 16 and above	7,529	4,283	2,661	1,904	DP03
Number of employed people	4,119	2,414	1,819	1,099	DP03
Median household income	$43,777	$36,899	$52,500	$44,750	DP03
Percentage of people whose income is below poverty level	14.3%	16.0%	9.6%	14.6%	DP03

Data source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2010-2014 Five-year average

More detailed demographic information is available for each town within the area in Appendix A – including the number of households without any vehicles.

2.3 – COMMUTING PROFILE

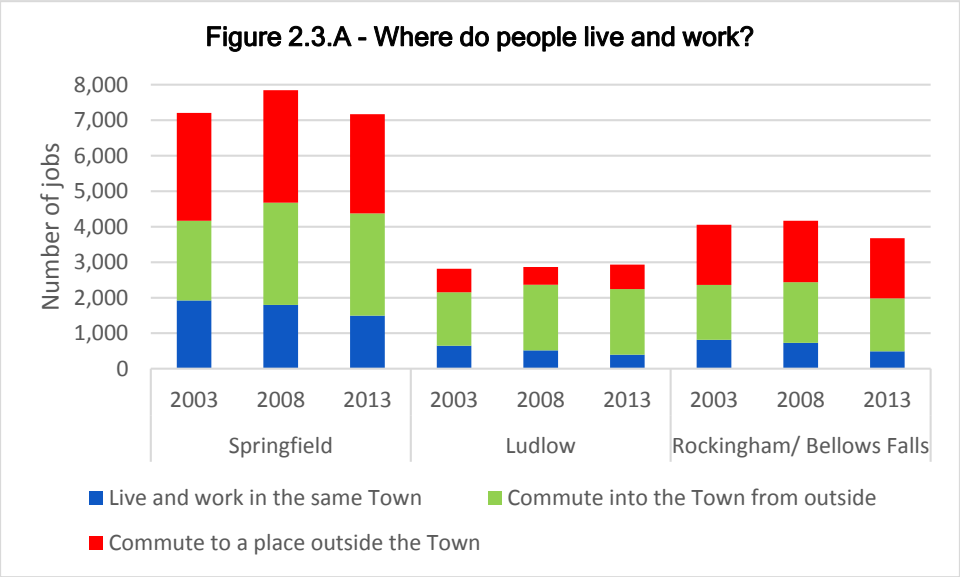
This section uses data from Longitudinal Employment Housing Dynamics (LEHD) data is collated by the US Census Bureau unless otherwise noted[6]. The area has a mismatch between where people live and where they work. As an example, while the largest town in the study area (Springfield) boasts of 4,374 jobs in town in 2013, only 34% of those jobs are held by Springfield residents, and this is down from 46% in 2003 (see figure 2.3.A for more examples).

[4] US Census Bureau. American Community Survey Five Year Average for 2010 thru 2014. Table numbers DP02, DP03, DP04 and DP05 http://factfinder.census.gov

[5] The US Census Bureau defined the poverty for individuals in 2014 at $12,071. https://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/data/threshld/index.html

[6] Longitudinal Employment Housing Dynamics (LEHD) data is collated by the US Census Bureau from a range of administrative records, including information about all workers who have unemployment insurance coverage. It does, therefore, include the self-employed. Approximately 90% of employed persons are included - a far higher percentage than all other sources of transportation data. LEHD On The Map (http://onthemap.ces.census.gov/) is an easy portal for accessing some of the LEHD data – including tables and maps. Data is summarized annually, and for the study area information on residents and workers is available going back to 2003.

The next table and a few maps (Figures 2.3.B, 2.3.C, 2.3.D, and 2.3.E) further illustrate the complexity of how workplaces are spread all over the region and also over specific towns. Figure 2.3.B shows that while the largest towns have some people who work and live in the same town, most people do not and scatter to destinations across the wider region. Figures 2.3.C, 2.3.D and 2.3.E shows how residential development is spread across the region – with few clear clusters that head to similar work areas.

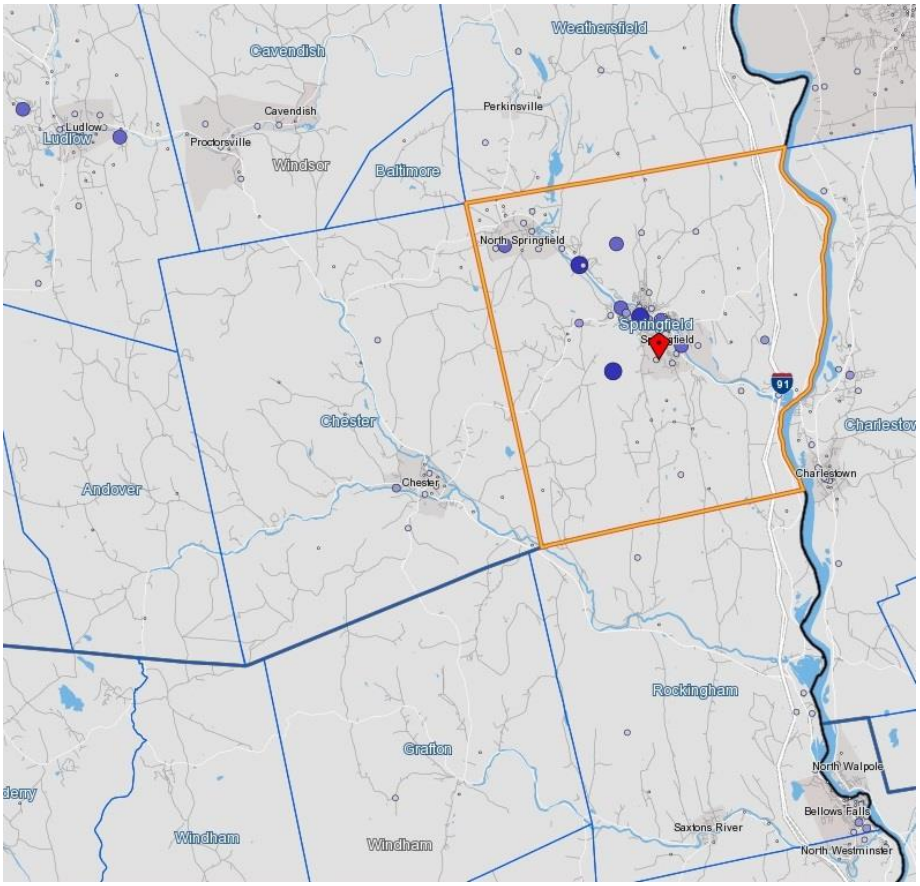


All this data suggests that careful planning for origins and destinations would be needed if public transit routes are tailored to meet commuter needs.

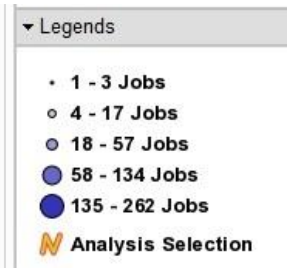
- Opportunities for in-town services are strongest in Ludlow, Springfield and Rockingham where the people who work and live in the same town is the highest percentage (18% in Ludlow, 34% in Springfield and 35% in Rockingham)
- There are few surrounding towns that provide a cluster of 100 workers and/or 5% of the workforce to similar destinations – therefore providing cost-effective commuter-oriented bus service would be challenging.

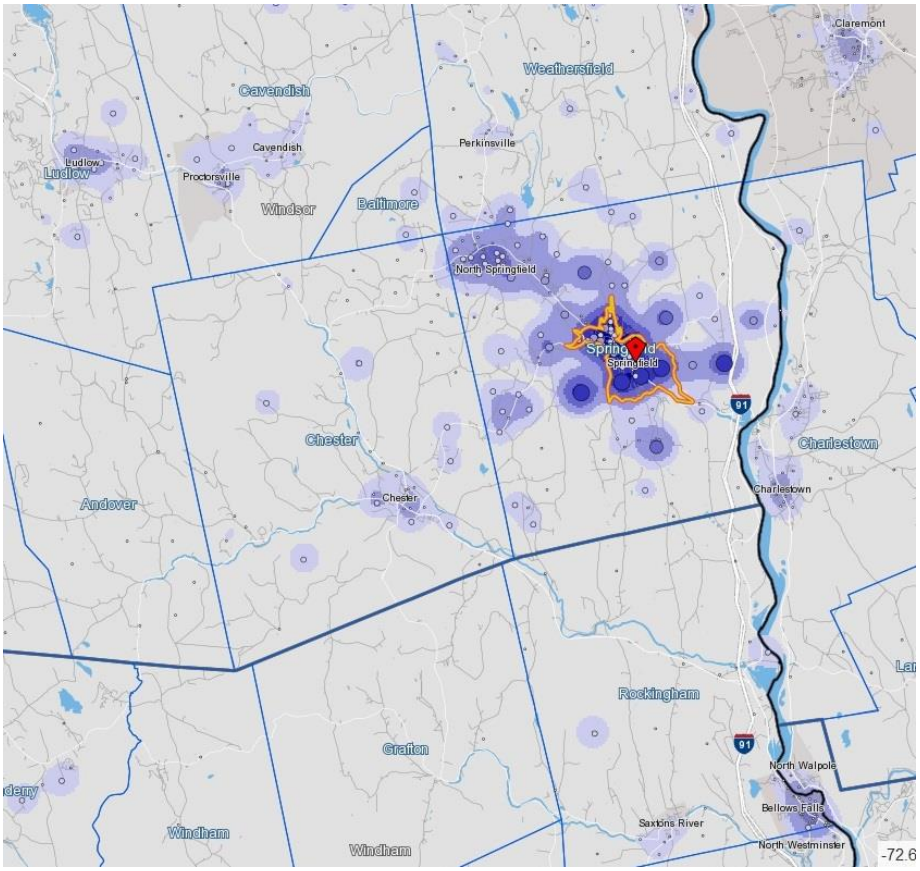
Figure 2.3.B – Where people travel from to work in Springfield, Ludlow and Rockingham/ Bellows Falls

Rank	Ludlow Workers			Springfield Workers			Rockingham Workers		
	Town of Residence	**Count**	**%**	**Town of Residence**	**Count**	**%**	**Town of Residence**	**Count**	**%**
1	Ludlow, VT	397	17.7%	Springfield, VT	1,496	34.2%	Rockingham, VT	492	24.8%
2	Springfield, VT	271	12.1%	Weathersfield, VT	208	4.8%	Westminster, VT	158	8.0%
3	Chester, VT	115	5.1%	Rockingham, VT	186	4.3%	Springfield, VT	150	7.6%
4	Cavendish, VT	92	4.1%	Chester, VT	184	4.2%	Walpole, NH	88	4.4%
5	Wallingford, VT	83	3.7%	Charlestown, NH	126	2.9%	Brattleboro, VT	69	3.5%
6	Weathersfield, VT	79	3.5%	Claremont, NH	114	2.6%	Chester, VT	59	3.0%
7	Rutland city, VT	74	3.3%	Cavendish, VT	101	2.3%	Keene, NH	51	2.6%
8	Claremont, NH	50	2.2%	Ludlow, VT	88	2.0%	Londonderry, VT	44	2.2%
9	Londonderry, VT	42	1.9%	Westminster, VT	86	2.0%	Charlestown, NH	40	2.0%
10	Rockingham, VT	37	1.6%	Brattleboro, VT	72	1.6%	Putney, VT	31	1.6%
	All Other Towns	1,004	44.7%	All Other Towns	1,713	39.2%	All Other Towns	799	40.3%
	Total Workers	2,244		Total Workers	4,374		Total Workers	1,981	

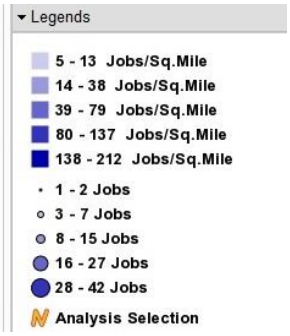


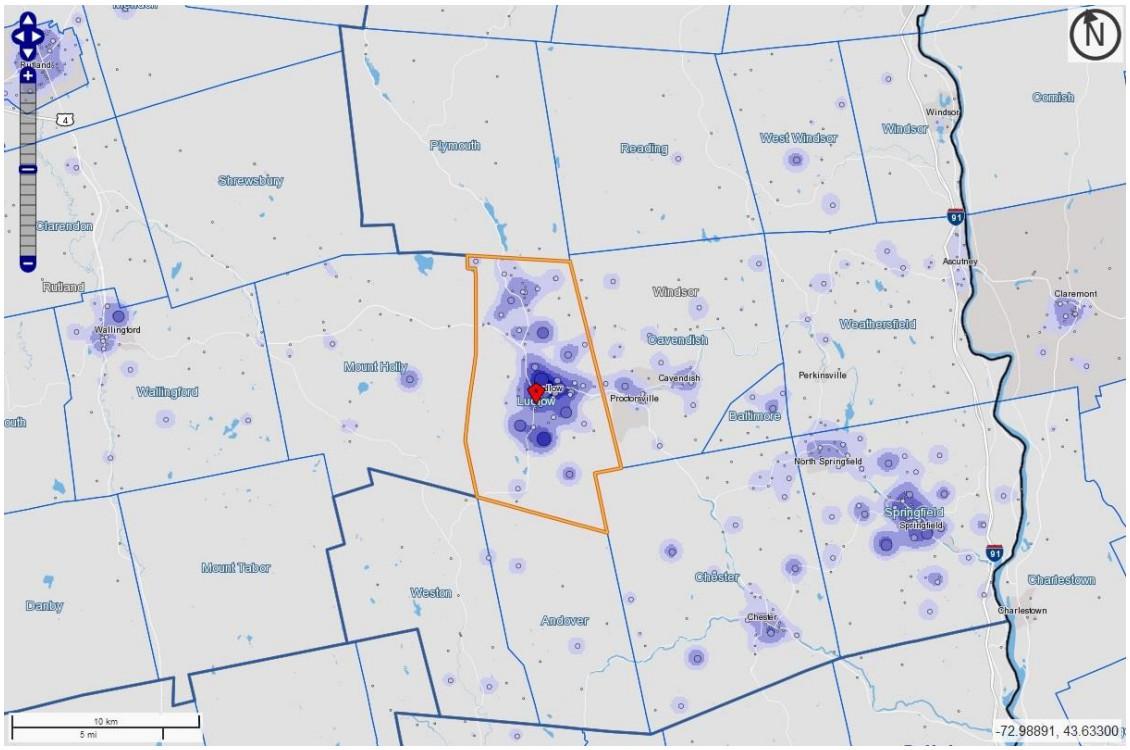
Where Springfield residents travel to for work (Figure 2.3.C)





Where Springfield downtown workers travel from (Figure 2.3.D)





Where Ludlow workers travel from (Figure 2.3.E)

3 – EXISTING SERVICES

3.1 – EXISTING ROUTES AND SERVICE AREA

The routes included within this study have been operating almost unchanged since 2007, other than a few very minor service alterations. The map on the following page (figure 3.1.A) shows the existing routes and the combined number of stops scheduled for each site for all applicable routes. The top five places for number of scheduled stops are Springfield Plaza (27 stops per day), Bellows Falls Penguin Mart (15 stops), Okemo (13), Evergreen Heights in Springfield (11) and Springfield Hospital (11).

In August 2014, all year-round routes included within this study went from being a voluntary donation to charging a fare. A slight decline in ridership after the fare was implemented was expected. Fares vary between $1 all day and $2 per trip. In order not to negatively affect clients who really could not afford fares, local agencies are allowed to purchase ten-trip bus passes for their clients. The local Community Health Team (coordinated by Springfield Medical Care Systems) assisted many agencies with purchasing bus passes as part of their projects to identify and fill gaps in local transportation services in 2014 and 2015.

The existing routes in this study area are listed below. Observations compiled from driver surveys, the Current Operations Manager, and during ride-alongs are summarized for each route.

ALL (OR NEARLY ALL) ROUTES STUDIED

- Variety of riders on the buses, particularly young adults, parents with a young child or two, and commuters. Few routes take many school children or disabled. (See figure 3.1.B)
- Trip purpose is very different between the routes, although commuters can be found on all routes, and no routes had people using the bus to get to school. (See figure 2.1.C)
- The decision to use transit on nearly all routes is primarily because riders have no other means of transportation, particularly no working car. Very few riders appear to ride because they were too young to drive or because they think it is good for the environment. (See figure 2.1.D)
- Riders use their stops for a variety of reasons – close to their destination, convenient time, bus stop has a shelter, convenient places to be dropped off by someone, etc. Stops being close to a place to park is not so important. Wave downs (ie bus stops between scheduled stops on request) are common on all routes. (See figure 2.1.E)

Figure 3.1.B - What types of riders do you have on the bus on a typical day?

Rider Types	1	2	55 am	55 pm	57	57 pm	61	Total
School kids								0
Young adults (approx. 18 – 25)	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y		5
Disabled	Y		Y	Y				3
Elderly	Y	Y		Y	Y			4
Parent(s) with a young child or two	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y		5
Commuter	Y			Y	Y	Y	Y	5
Other - Shopper		Y						1
Other - Homeless					Y			1

Figure 3.1.C - From what you know about riders and their stops, what is the purpose of rider trips?

Trip Purpose	1	2	55 am	55 pm	57	57 pm	61	Total
Commuter	Y			Y	Y	Y	Y	5
Medical appointments	Y	Y			Y			3
Taking kid(s) to school								0
Grocery shopping	Y	Y				Y		3
Other types of shopping	Y	Y				Y		3
Other - Pharmacy	Y							1
Other - Visitors							Y	1
Other - Parole and Probation			Y					1

SPRINGFIELD IN-TOWN ROUTE (#1)

- Fare - $1 all day
- Most people are going to the Plaza
- More people get off at the Hospital and 100 River St Health Center than board at those sites. People from the Health Center often take a pedestrian bridge to the Plaza to pick up pharmacy items, and then catch the bus from there.
- Bad weather often increases ridership
- Going to the Family Center for lunch means more riders at lunchtime
- Some new riders need to get to HCRS

Figure 3.1.D - From what you know about riders and their stops, why do riders use the bus?

Decision to Use Transit	1	2	55 am	55 pm	57	57 pm	61	Total
No other means of transportation	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7
Save money	Y				Y		Y	3
Too young to drive						Y		1
No working car	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	6
Good for environment	Y							1
Other - Disabled				Y				1

BELLOWS FALLS IN-TOWN ROUTE (#2)

- Fare - $1 all day
- Most people are going to Shaws and Mr Gs
- Few new people try the bus
- Stable ridership observed by drivers

Figure 3.1.E - From what you know about riders and their stops, why do riders use particular stops?

Stop popularity	1	2	55 am	55 pm	57	57 pm	61	Total
Stop is close to their destination	Y			Y	Y	Y	Y	5
Stop is quite close to their destination and has the most convenient time to catch the bus				Y	Y	Y	Y	4
Stop has a bus shelter – good for rain/ snow/ windy days	Y		Y	Y		Y		4
No stop, rider flagged down the bus while walking along route	Y	Y			Y	Y	Y	5
Stop is close to a place to park a car	Y				Y	Y		3
Stop is close to a convenient place to be dropped off by someone			Y	Y	Y	Y		4
Other - Goes by their home				Y		Y		2

BELLOWS FALLS TO SPRINGFIELD ROUTE (#55)

- Fare - $2 per trip
- Most people are going to the State Offices for services
- Probation and Parole office is a key destination.
- Primarily medical or human service transportation needs
- Very little utilization for job access or shopping/ personal.
- Includes passengers for Springfield Adult Day who use the service in the morning but use van shuttles in the afternoon
- Few new people try the bus
- Stable ridership observed by drivers, although the fares did have some impacts

BELLOWS FALLS TO RUTLAND ROUTE (#57)

- Fare - $2 per trip
- The Current runs the service as far as Ludlow and then Marble Valley Regional Transit District continues the service to Rutland.
- Quite often have new people on the bus – one or two a week, some become regulars while others don't ride again
- Some people stop using the bus after a while because of getting a driver's license, getting a car or moving.
- Ridership fairly stable/ slight decrease observed by drivers, although in winter months ridership goes up with Okemo employees. Fares are thought to be a reason for the decline in ridership – particularly losing people who would ride for free to stay warm during the day.

BELLOWS FALLS TO OKEMO ROUTE (#61)

- Fare – Free
- Seasonal route between mid November and mid April to primarily serve the Okemo Mountain.
- See "new" people who are on vacation – so they only use the bus for a short while
- Ridership is primarily skiers and commuters – and ridership is generally stable
- Area for improvement – Okemo workers have varied hours, and definitely need rides on holidays (Christmas, New Year, etc) when Current buses are not running. Some riders need earlier rides – for 6am shift

UPPER VALLEY ROUTES (#71-74) (not part of study, but part of system)

- Fare - $2 per trip
- Most people are commuters
- A few people are also using that service for parole related things and social services

VANS (DIAL-A-RIDE)

Vans are used for providing a variety of Dial-A-Ride/ demand-response/ door-to-door service for clients across the SEVT service area. There are four main types of user – ADA, Medicaid/ Medicare Program, VT Elders and Persons with Disabilities (E&D) Program, and general public users. The Current currently operates twelve vans with one way trips costing $2 for in-town trips and $3 for out-of-town trips[7]. Riders must call to schedule a ride at least two business days in advance. Dial-A-Ride services do not operate on weekends or holidays.

For the purpose of this study, the use of vans by the general public is useful when evaluating local rides because they indicate the need for rides between different destinations or at different times from what the fixed route service routes provide. In many instances vans providing demand-response service is the most cost effective way to provide the ride. A significant number of riders by van could also indicate that expansion of fixed route service to meet these needs could be financially viable. It has been noticed that some clients deliberately schedule their appointments so they cannot use fixed-route buses.

The following are observations about the van services in the Bellows Falls area:

- Bellows Falls area has a very high proportion of general public users. The primary reason for this is that Bellows Falls Senior Center does not provide funding for rides for their clients within the village since there is a fixed route service available in Bellows Falls. Several of their clients prefer to pay the $2 per ride (in-town) for Dial-A-Ride transportation as general public users which takes them from door-to-door rather than ride on the fixed route service ($1 for all day)
- Every summer (July and August) a local day care uses the van to transport children to the Bellows Falls swimming pool at the Recreation Area.
- One driver provides the majority of the Bellows Falls Dial-A-Ride service – running between 6:30am and 4:30pm. There are two routine runs during this time - a morning and afternoon run to get Springfield Hospital Adult Day clients to a fixed-route bus to Springfield, and a morning and afternoon run to get clients to the Bellows Falls Senior Center.

The following are observations about the van services in the Springfield area:

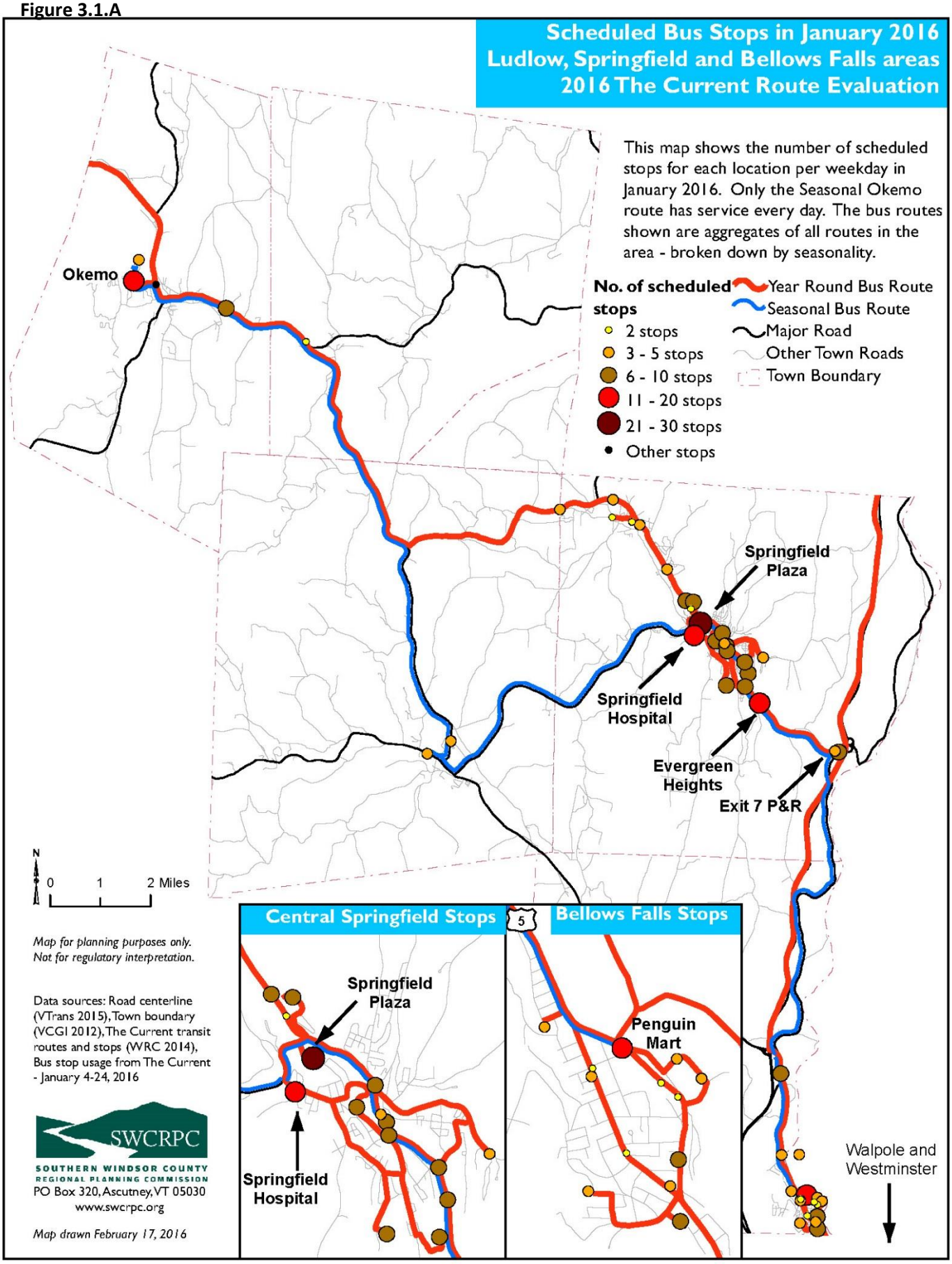
- Springfield has a robust Dial-A-Ride service. Clients use it more for E&D, Medicaid and ADA paratransit than General Public Uses
- Springfield's Dial-A-Ride does not have consistent ridership, unlike the routine riders around Bellows Falls

ROUTE COORDINATION

The Current coordinates service with Marble Valley Regional Transit District to provide service from Bellows Falls to Rutland. The Current does not coordinate service with any other public transportation providers in the area – eg Ludlow Municipal Transit and school buses.

[7] The Current Bus Schedules. Printed schedule. Connecticut River Transit (CRT/ The Current). Effective August 4, 2014

Figure 3.1.A


Scheduled Bus Stops in January 2016
Ludlow, Springfield and Bellows Falls areas
2016 The Current Route Evaluation
This map shows the number of scheduled stops for each location per weekday in January 2016. Only the Seasonal Okemo route has service every day. The bus routes shown are aggregates of all routes in the area - broken down by seasonality.
No. of scheduled stops
2 stops
3 - 5 stops
6 - 10 stops
11 - 20 stops
21 - 30 stops
Other stops
Year Round Bus Route
Seasonal Bus Route
Major Road
Other Town Roads
Town Boundary
Okemo
Springfield Plaza
Springfield Hospital
Evergreen Heights
Exit 7 P&R
N
0
1
2 Miles
Map for planning purposes only.
Not for regulatory interpretation.
Data sources: Road centerline (VTrans 2015), Town boundary (VCGI 2012), The Current transit routes and stops (WRC 2014), Bus stop usage from The Current - January 4-24, 2016
SWCRPC
SOUTHERN WINDSOR COUNTY
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
PO Box 320, Ascutney, VT 05030
www.swcrpc.org
Map drawn February 17, 2016
Central Springfield Stops
Springfield Plaza
Springfield Hospital
5
Bellows Falls Stops
Penguin Mart
Walpole and Westminster

3.2 – RIDERSHIP

This section focuses on ridership data from two sources:

- Monthly ridership data between July 2015 and December 2015
- Stop boarding study between January 4 and 24, 2016

MONTHLY RIDERSHIP ON FIXED ROUTES

Ridership numbers from July 2014 show a steep drop in ridership between July 2014 and September 2014 – almost halved for all routes – see graph below (figure 3.2.A). This drop in ridership coincides with when the four year-round routes moved from donations to fares. One of the purposes of this study is to investigate why this happened (see Section 4.1. for further discussion).

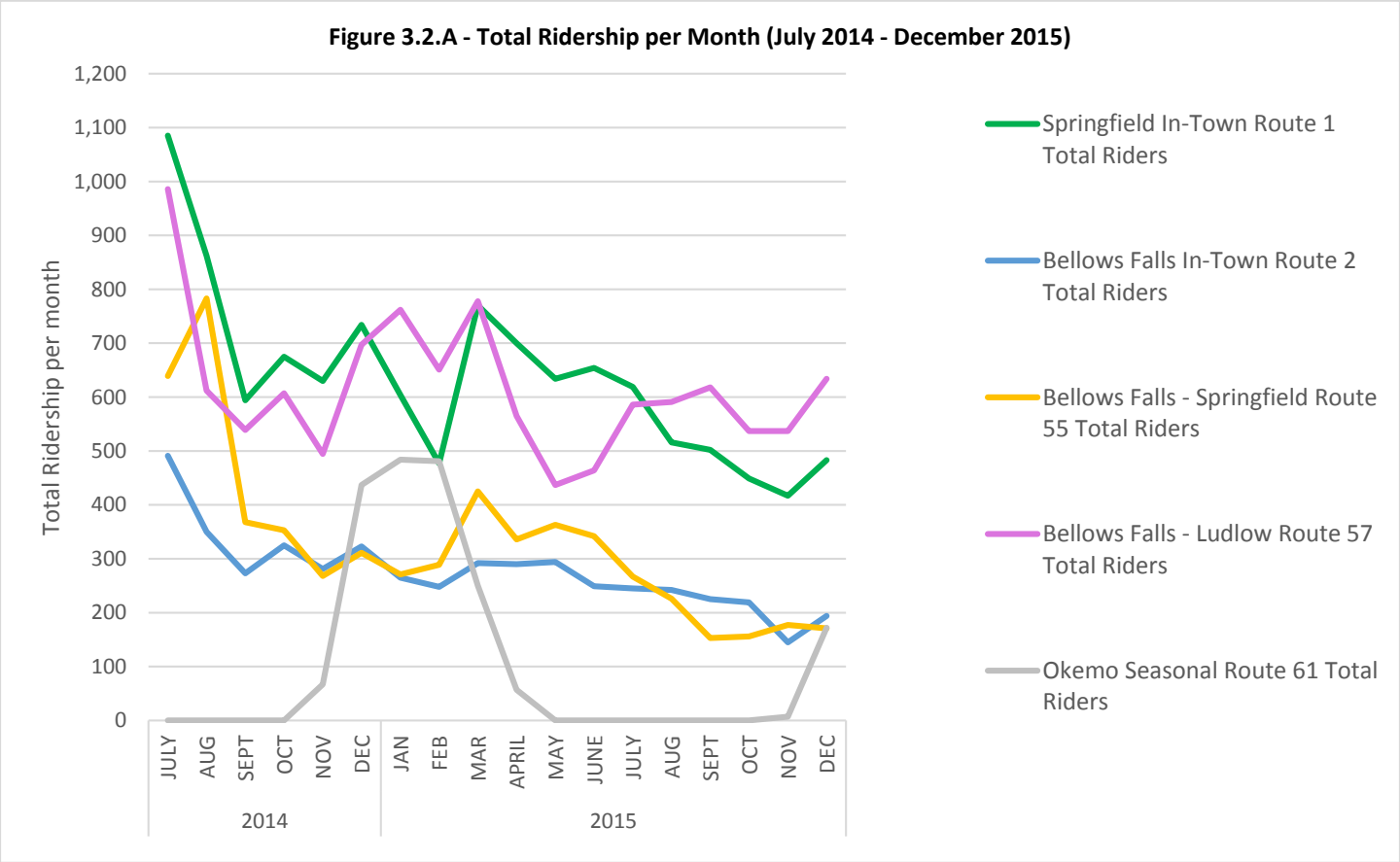


Figure 3.2.A. also shows that ridership is highly variable by month – for example the Bellows Falls to Ludlow Route (Route 57) even after September 2014 show a high of 778 rides in March 2015 and a low of 437 rides in May 2015, with great rises and falls in between.

Other observations from Figure 3.2.A:

- The Bellows Falls In-Town route has overall seen a steady decline in ridership since the significant drop around September 2014.
- As expected the Okemo Seasonal route performs strongest when the Mountain Resort is fully operational.
- The two routes with the strongest ridership are Springfield In-Town and the Bellows Falls to Ludlow Routes.
- The Springfield In-Town Route saw notable fluctuation between September 2014 and March 2015, but since March 2015 the overall trend has been a decline – from 770 rides to 417 rides by November 2015.

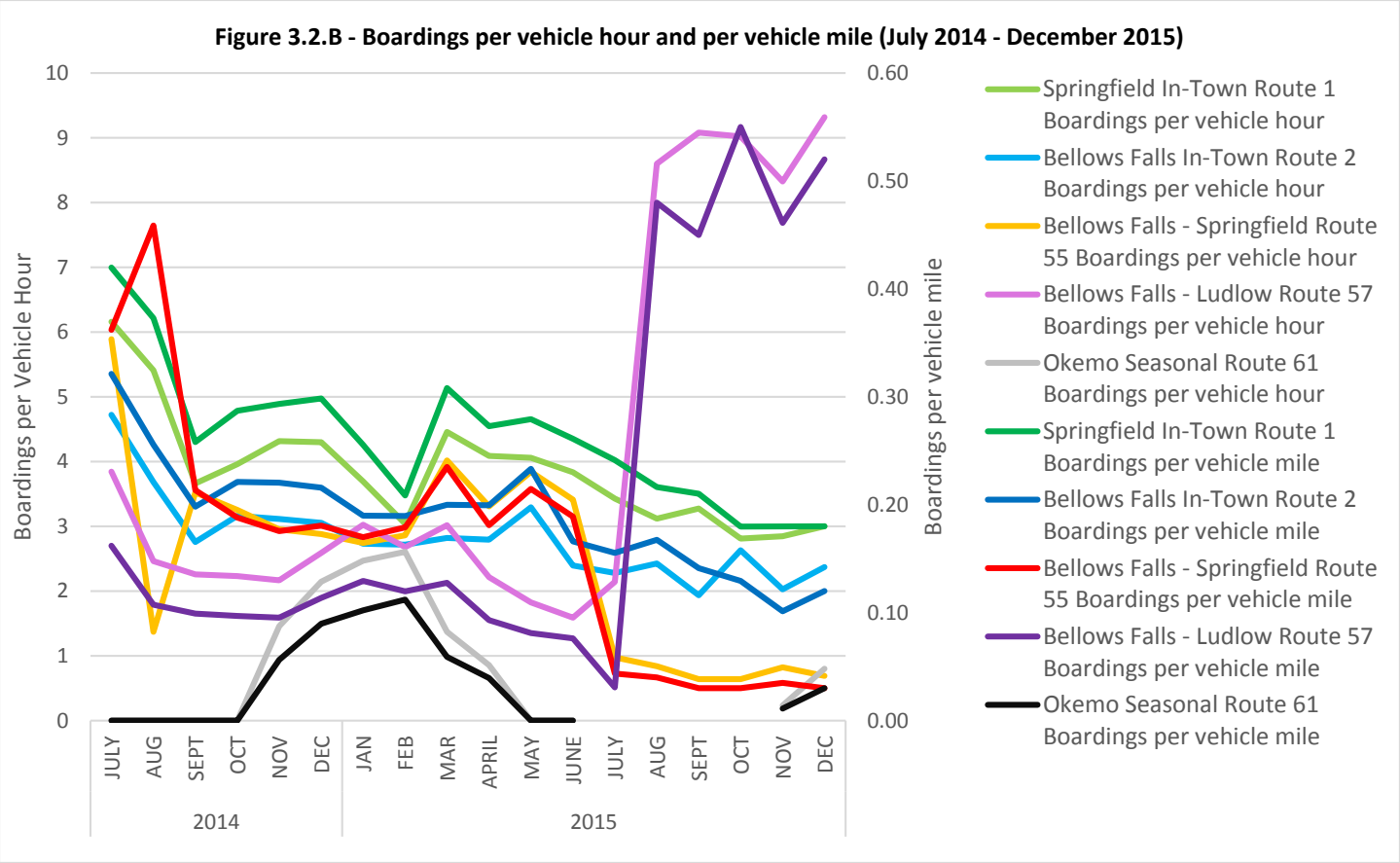


Figure 3.2.B. shows that all routes have a significant decrease in boardings per vehicle hour and per vehicle mile when overall ridership decreases in Figure 3.2.A around July/August 2014 – as routes did not change at this time. The two in town routes (Route 1 in Springfield and Route 2 in Bellows Falls) are usually the highest boardings per vehicle mile – as you would expect for in-town service with stops close together (figure 3.2.B). Boardings per vehicle hour for those routes are also relatively high. These two routes however have also seen a steady decline in boardings per hour and per vehicle mile since a peak of March 2015. The reason for this trend is currently unknown.

The lowest performer for both boardings per vehicle mile and per vehicle hour is the Okemo route – which is seven day service from Bellows Falls to Okemo. The long length of the route probably accounts for this performance – particularly since the final destinations of Okemo and Jackson Gore are some of the highest performing stops on the study routes (see Figure 3.2.C below).

The other routes which travel between towns closely mirror patterns of the in-town routes for their usage, although at lower boardings per vehicle hour and per vehicle mile.

STOP USAGE ON FIXED ROUTES

The stop boarding study highlighted some extremely popular stops. The table on the following page (figure 3.2.C) and the map following (figure 3.2.D) show information about ridership[8].

- Springfield Plaza, Bellows Falls Penguin Mart and Okemo have by far the highest numbers of boardings – all above 200 during the three week study period.
- Other sites with strong boarding numbers are Jackson Gore (67 riders over 3 weeks), State Offices in Springfield (35), Exit 6 Park and Ride (34), and HCRS in Springfield (34).

[8] Note: This data is highly seasonal since it is just a snapshot from 3 weeks in January 2016. Since it was collected in the winter this means that stop activity around Ludlow will be elevated. The mild winter conditions of January 2016 could mean affect ridership in a variety of ways compared to typical January ridership including lower than normal ridership in Ludlow area, and higher than normal usage on other routes without the usual poor weather days that stop some riders from travelling.

- Some sites do not have as high boardings, but given the number of scheduled per day their boardings are strong – for example the Huber Building in Springfield (2.23 boards per scheduled stop per day), North Meadow Plaza in Walpole (1.79), Family Center (1.46), Springfield Main St near Peoples Bank (1.15) and North Springfield (1.00).

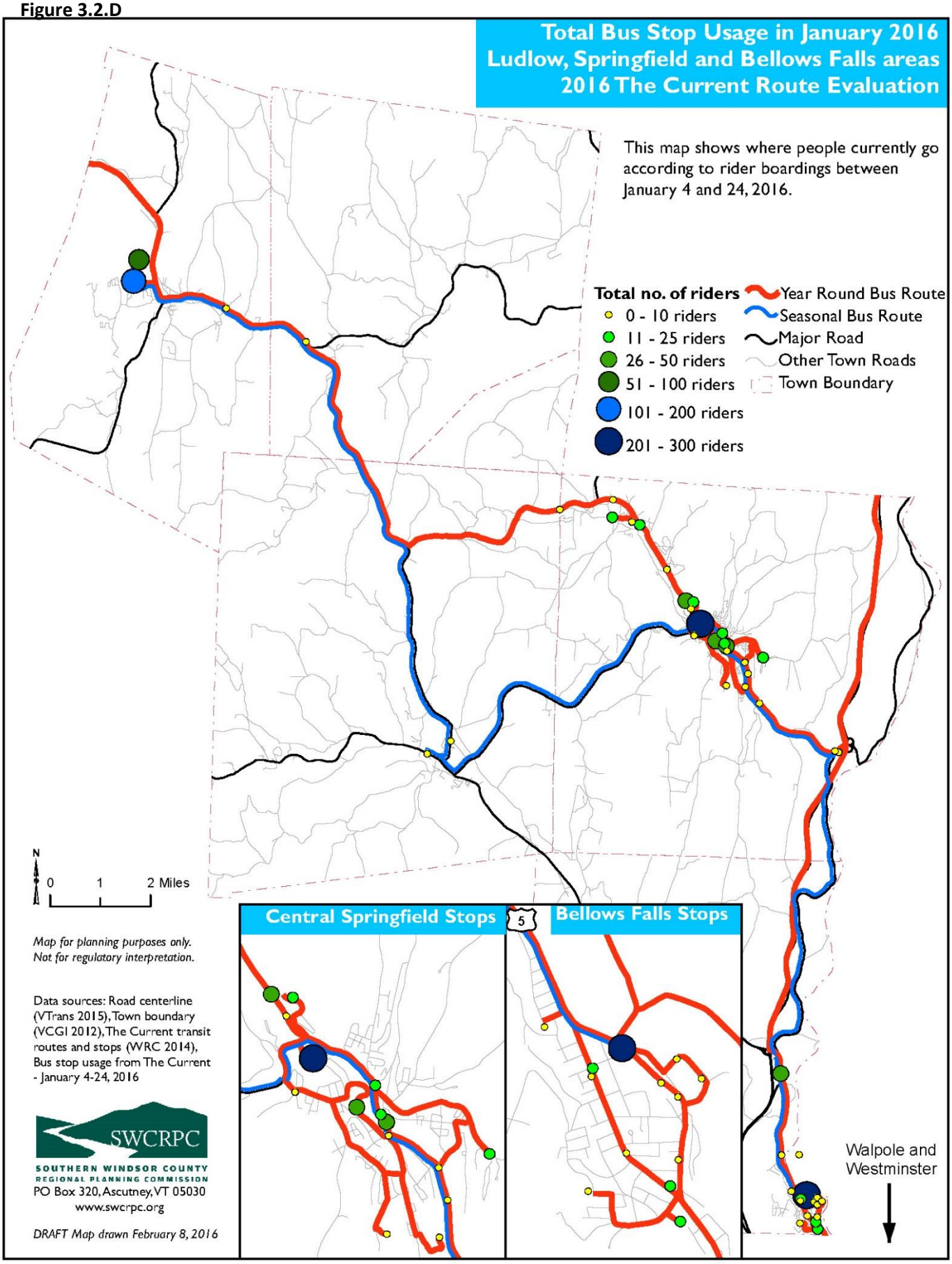
Figure 3.2.C – Top ten stops for total numbers of riders, number of scheduled stops and average riders per stop. (January 4 - 24, 2016)

Stop Name	Town	Total Riders during study period		Scheduled stops per day		No. of scheduled stops during study period*	Average riders per scheduled stop per day	
		No.	Rank	No.	Rank		No.	Rank
Springfield Plaza	Springfield	287	1	27	1	176	1.63	4
Penguin Mart	Bellows Falls	225	2	15	2	147	1.53	6
Okemo	Ludlow	200	3	13	3	89	2.25	1
Jackson Gore	Ludlow	67	4	5	22	43	1.56	5
State Offices	Springfield	35	5	9	6	103	0.34	17
Exit 6 Park & Ride	Bellows Falls	34	6	6	13	68	0.50	15
HCRS	Springfield	33	7	7	9	48	0.69	14
Huber Building	Springfield	29	8	7	9	13	2.23	2
North Meadow Plaza	Walpole	25	9	4	27	14	1.79	3
Lovejoy	Springfield	20	10	4	27	60	0.33	18
Family Center	Springfield	19	11	3	44	13	1.46	7
Peoples Bank/Main St.	Springfield	15	12	7	9	13	1.15	8
Amtrak/ Waypoint Center	Bellows Falls	15	12	8	7	70	0.21	22
North Springfield	Springfield	13	15	2	45	13	1.00	9
Westview	Springfield	11	18	7	9	13	0.85	10
Exit 7 Park&Ride	Springfield	10	20	8	7	66	0.15	24
Evergreen Heights	Springfield	8	24	11	4	26	0.31	19
Springfield Hospital**	Springfield	6	26	11	4	110	0.05	32

*Note: A few days of boardings are missing from the 21 day survey - so numbers do not always tally to simple multiples of 15 (each week day), or 21 (every day).

**More people get off at the Hospital and 100 River St Health Center than board. People from the Health Center often take a pedestrian bridge to the Plaza to go to the drug store, and then catch the bus from there.

Figure 3.2.D


Total Bus Stop Usage in January 2016
Ludlow, Springfield and Bellows Falls areas
2016 The Current Route Evaluation
This map shows where people currently go according to rider boardings between January 4 and 24, 2016.
Total no. of riders
0 - 10 riders
11 - 25 riders
26 - 50 riders
51 - 100 riders
101 - 200 riders
201 - 300 riders
Year Round Bus Route
Seasonal Bus Route
Major Road
Other Town Roads
Town Boundary
N
0 1 2 Miles
Map for planning purposes only.
Not for regulatory interpretation.
Data sources: Road centerline (VTrans 2015), Town boundary (VCGI 2012), The Current transit routes and stops (WRC 2014), Bus stop usage from The Current - January 4-24, 2016
SWCRPC
SOUTHERN WINDSOR COUNTY
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
PO Box 320, Ascutney, VT 05030
www.swcrpc.org
DRAFT Map drawn February 8, 2016
Central Springfield Stops
5
Bellows Falls Stops
Walpole and Westminster

PLACES WITHOUT STOPS ON FIXED ROUTES

All routes included in this study have the ability for potential riders to wave/ flag down a bus as it comes close in order to board. Riders can also request to be dropped off at a location without a designated stop along the route. Figure 3.2.E lists all route sections where there was more than 1 wave down during the stop boarding study. The highest number of wave downs were between Ludlow (Pleasant St) and the North Springfield Industrial Park on Route 57 – with 64 wave downs over the 15 service days (weekday only service route), an average of just over 4 wave downs per day over this 12 mile section. This high number of wave downs could suggest that there is too much space between scheduled stops, and therefore The Current has two options:

- Add a stop or two, and allot extra time in the timetable for the route. This would work best if there are particular places every day where riders consistently wave down the bus.
- Continue to keep existing scheduled stops without adding new stops, but allot extra time between existing stops if needed, thereby allowing the flexibility to pick up riders wherever is most convenient.

With a maximum of 8 wave downs on all the other route legs over the 15/21 service days, it appears that all the existing scheduled stops are sufficient for existing riders and their existing needs.

Figure 3.2.E – List of places with more than three wave downs between stops (January 4 - 24, 2016)

Route No	Route Name	Stop Before	Stop After	No. of Wave Downs
57	Bellows Falls to Ludlow	Pleasant St and VT-103 Intersection (Ludlow)	North Springfield Industrial Park	64
57	Bellows Falls to Ludlow	North Springfield Industrial Park	Stantec (Springfield)	8
57	Bellows Falls to Ludlow	PCM (Springfield)	Lovejoy (Springfield)	7
57	Bellows Falls to Ludlow	North Springfield Industrial Park	Pleasant St and VT-103 Intersection (Ludlow)	7
57	Bellows Falls to Ludlow	Springfield Hospital	Lovejoy (Springfield)	6
61	Okemo Seasonal	Point Hotel (Cavendish)	Okemo (Ludlow)	6
61	Okemo Seasonal	Chester Green	Springfield Plaza	6
55	Bellows Falls to Springfield	99 Atkinson St (Bellows Falls)	Parent Child Center (Springfield)	5
55	Bellows Falls to Springfield	State Offices (Springfield)	Penguin Mart (Bellows Falls)	5
55	Bellows Falls to Springfield	Penguin Mart (Bellows Falls)	American Legion (Bellows Falls)	5
1	Springfield In-Town	Springfield Plaza	North Springfield	4
2	Bellows Falls In-Town	North Meadow Plaza (Walpole)	Mr Gs (Walpole)	4
61	Okemo Seasonal	Holiday Inn Express (Springfield	Springfield Plaza	4

GENERAL PUBLIC VAN RIDERSHIP

Dial-A-Ride is an important component of the local public transportation system. Figure 3.2.F shows dial-a-ride ridership by rider type. While general public users form a small proportion of van riders (9%), general public users are of particular interest to this study since some may be able to use fixed-route services if they are available. Figure 3.2.F clearly shows that only two Dial-A-Ride "routes" carry significant numbers of general public users – Bellows Falls (3,028 rides over 18 months) and Springfield (1,505 rides over 18 months).

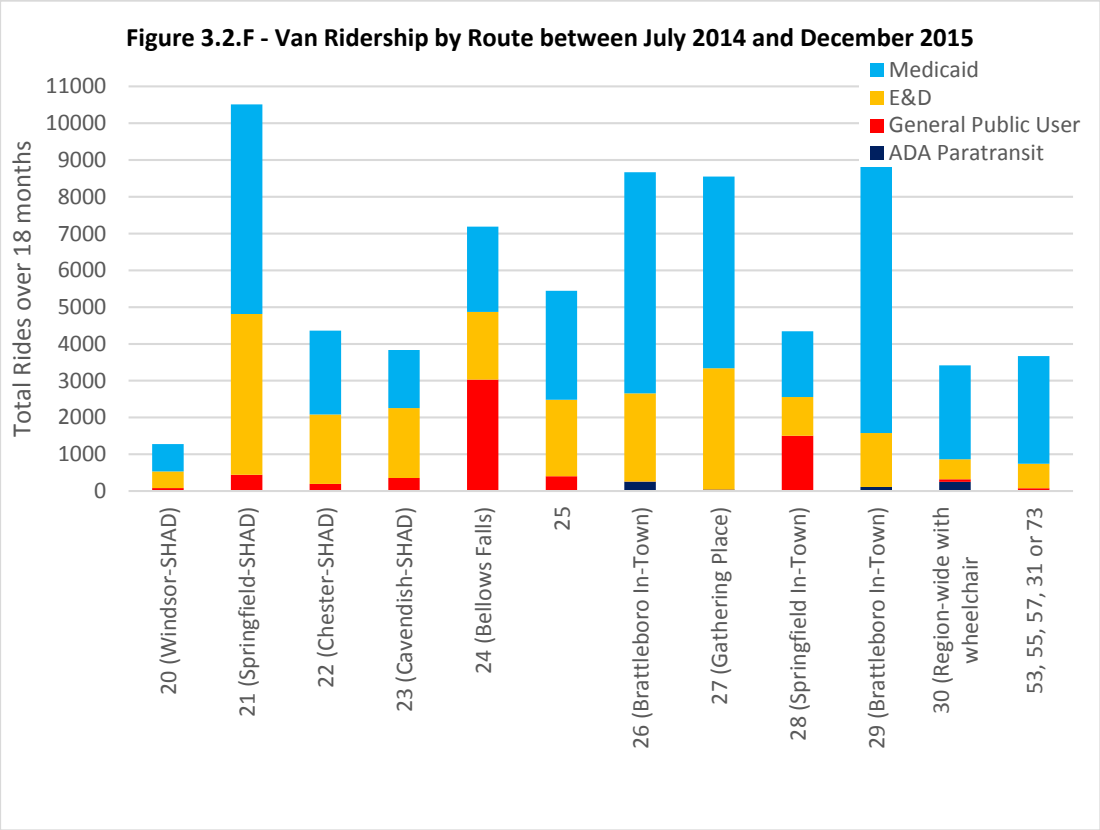
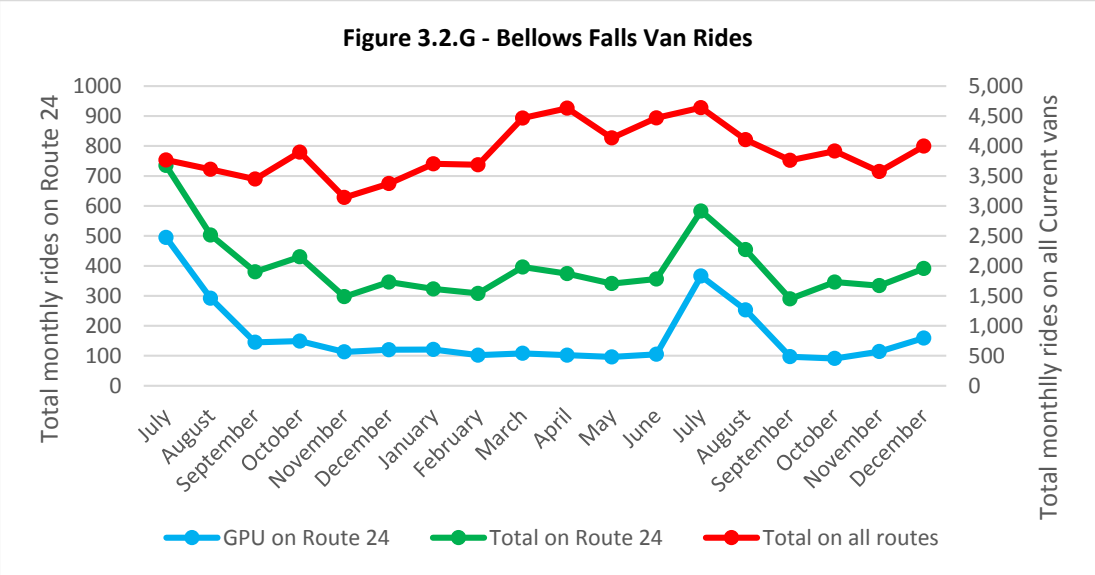


Figure 3.2.G focuses on van riders in the Bellows Falls area – an average of 42% of clients on the vans around Bellows Falls are general public riders. In July and August each year there are regular riders which causes significant peaks – the day care uses transit to get children to the Bellows Falls swimming pool at the recreation area. Other than that spike, ridership is relative stable with just over 100 general public rides per month – provided to regular riders as already described in Section 3.1.

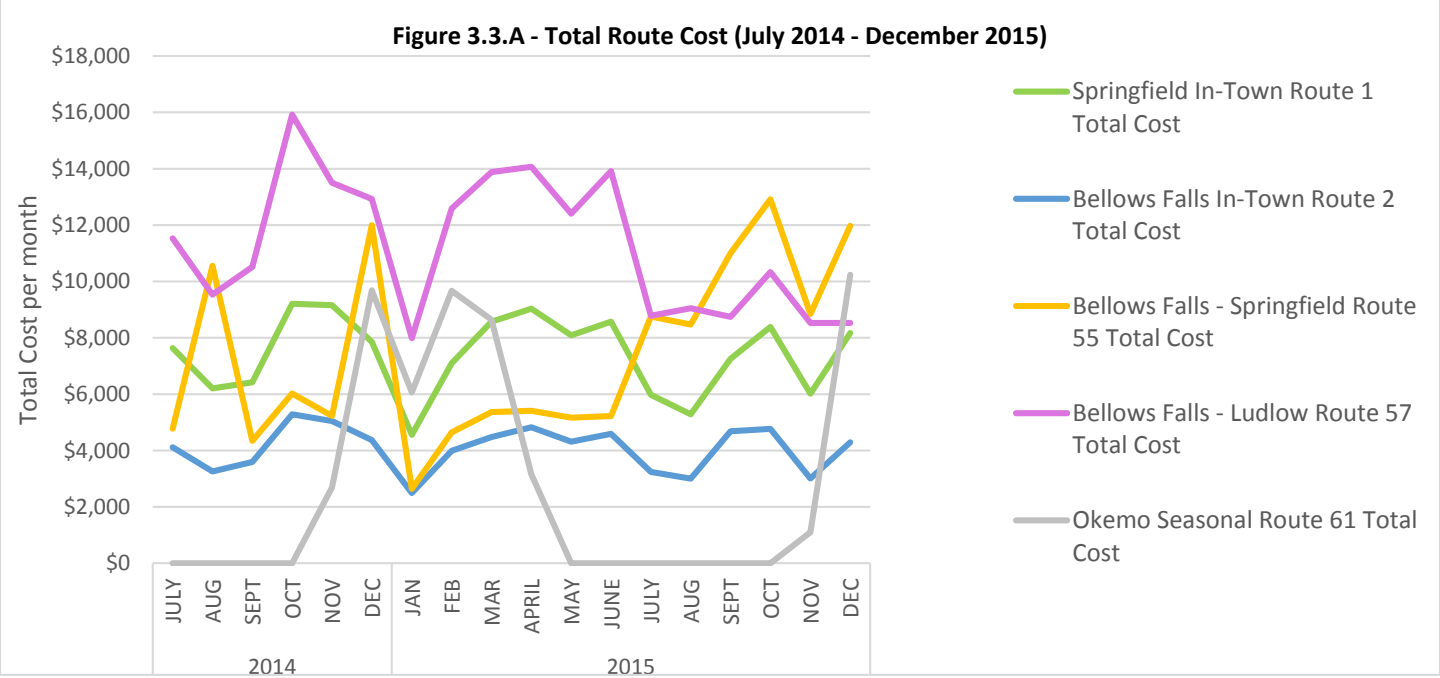


While Springfield has the second highest number of rides as general public users (1,505 rides over 18 months), when compared to their total population (9,301 people[9]) usage of Dial-A-Ride is relatively low. As a contrast Bellows Falls had approximately 3,028 rides over 18 months for a total population in Rockingham of 5,190 people. This is primarily because Springfield already has a more robust fixed route in-town service which covers a far larger geographic area than the Bellows Falls in-town fixed route.

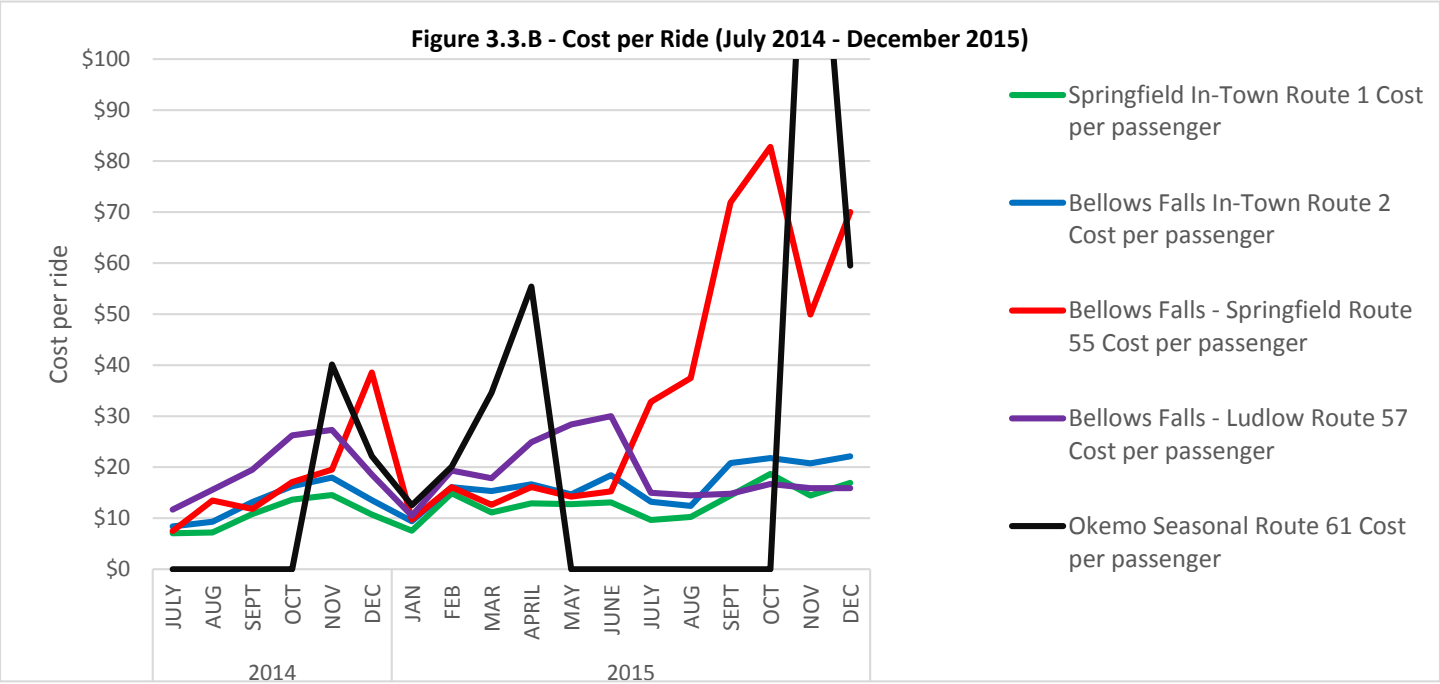
[9] From US Census Bureau American Community Survey – see Appendix A for more information.

3.3 – SERVICE COSTS

Figure 3.3.A shows how the total route cost per month has fluctuated significantly over the last 18 months without any particular trends of increase or decreasing costs. The Bellows Falls to Ludlow route has been the most expensive costing between $8,000 and $16,000 per month to run, while the Bellows Falls In-Town Route has been the cheapest costing between $2,500 and $5,000 per month. The Okemo Seasonal Route shows obvious trends related to the number of service days.



In terms of the most efficient per ride costs, Figure 3.3.B shows that costs vary widely from $7 per ride on the Springfield In-Town Route when ridership was strong in July 2014 to over $40 per ride on the Bellows Falls to Springfield and Okemo Seasonal Routes. As expected the In-Town Routes show lowest cost per ride – between $7 and $22. The Bellows Falls to Ludlow Route is fairly consistent in costs between $12 and $30 per ride. Costs per ride on the other two routes vary widely.



3.4 – SURVEY OF RIDERS AND NON-RIDERS

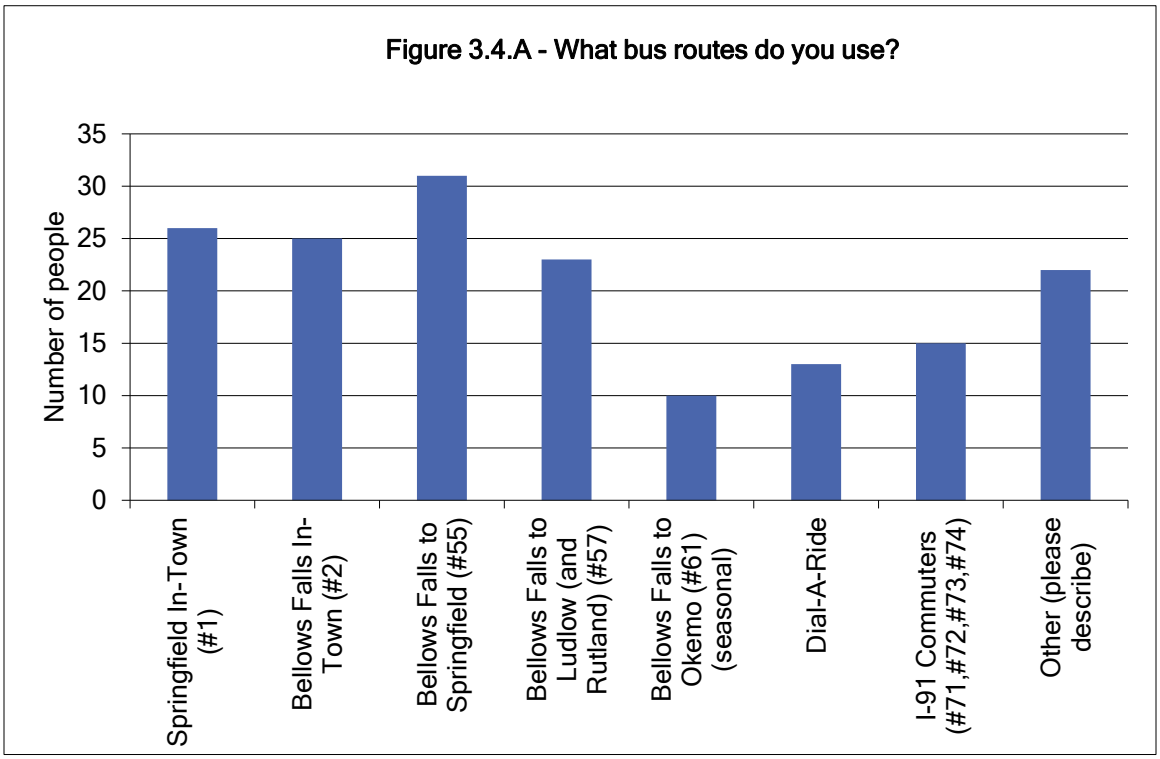
From January 4th through 24th 2016, SEVT and SWCRPC carried out a survey of riders and non-riders (i.e. potential riders). This survey was available online on through
Survey Monkey and on paper via bus drivers (with a "Transit Dollar"[10] incentive for completion). A copy of the full survey is available in Appendix B. A copy of the full survey results are available upon request from SEVT and SWCRPC.

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

- 58 of the 126 respondents (46%) are existing bus riders.
- Riders use of the buses varied – 25% use it 5 days a week, 27% use it 3-4 days a week, 21% use it 1-2 days a week, and 28% use it less than once a week
- The length of time that riders have been using The Current buses varies, but a majority have been riding for 3 or more years. 12% started using it in the last year, 34% started 1-2 years ago, 25% started 3-5 years ago, and 29% started more than 5 years ago
- Riders were mostly over the age of 26 – 7% under 25, 24% aged 26-40, 45% aged 41-60, and 24% over 60. Existing riders were quite evenly split between 26-40 and 41-60 (18 and 19 riders respectively, with the next highest category being over 60 with 11 riders). Potential riders were more skewed towards the 41-60 age (22 potential riders) with the next highest category being over 60 (11 riders) and then 26-40 (4 riders).

ROUTE USAGE

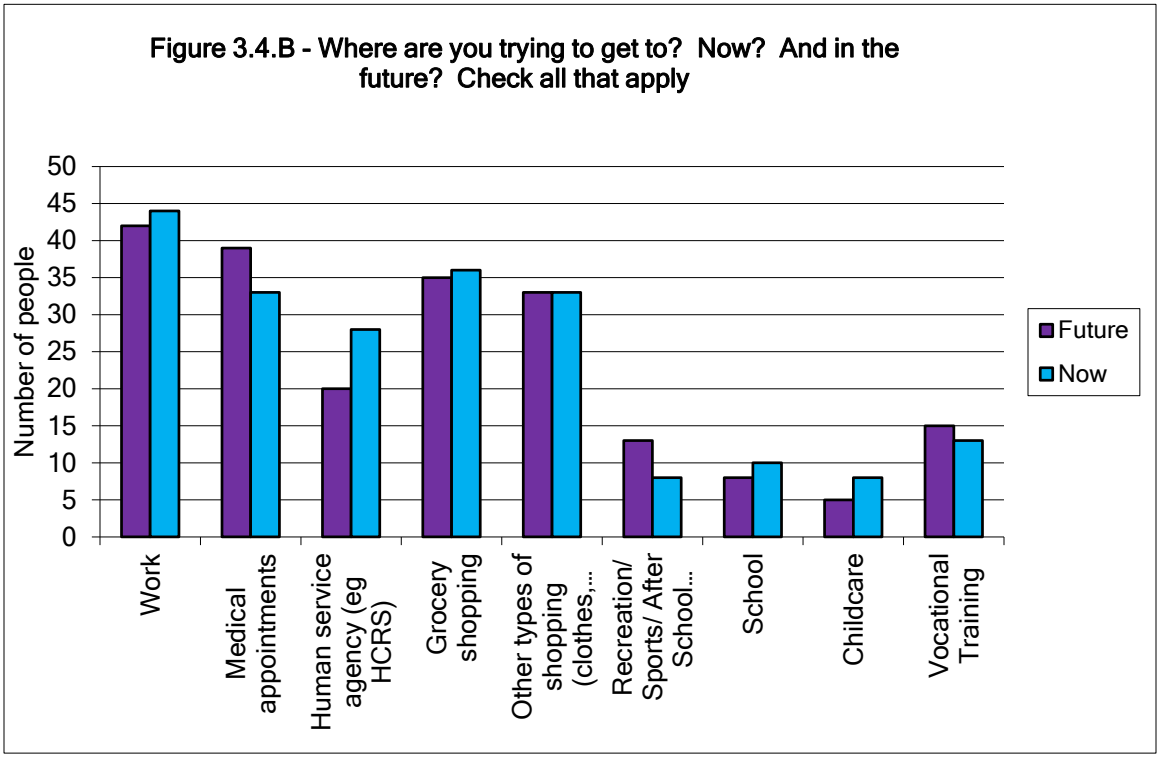
- Riders use a wide variety of routes.
- 20% of the riders (15 people) transfer between routes, with 6 of those transfers being between Route 57 (Bellows Falls to Ludlow) and the Marble Valley Route from Ludlow to Rutland and 2 being between Route 55 (Bellows Falls to Springfield) and an I-91 Commuter. See graph below (figure 3.4.A) for more details. There were a wide variety of other transfers/ connections.



[10] A "Transit Dollar" was created for this project of the value of $1 to be used for a fare on a future bus ride.

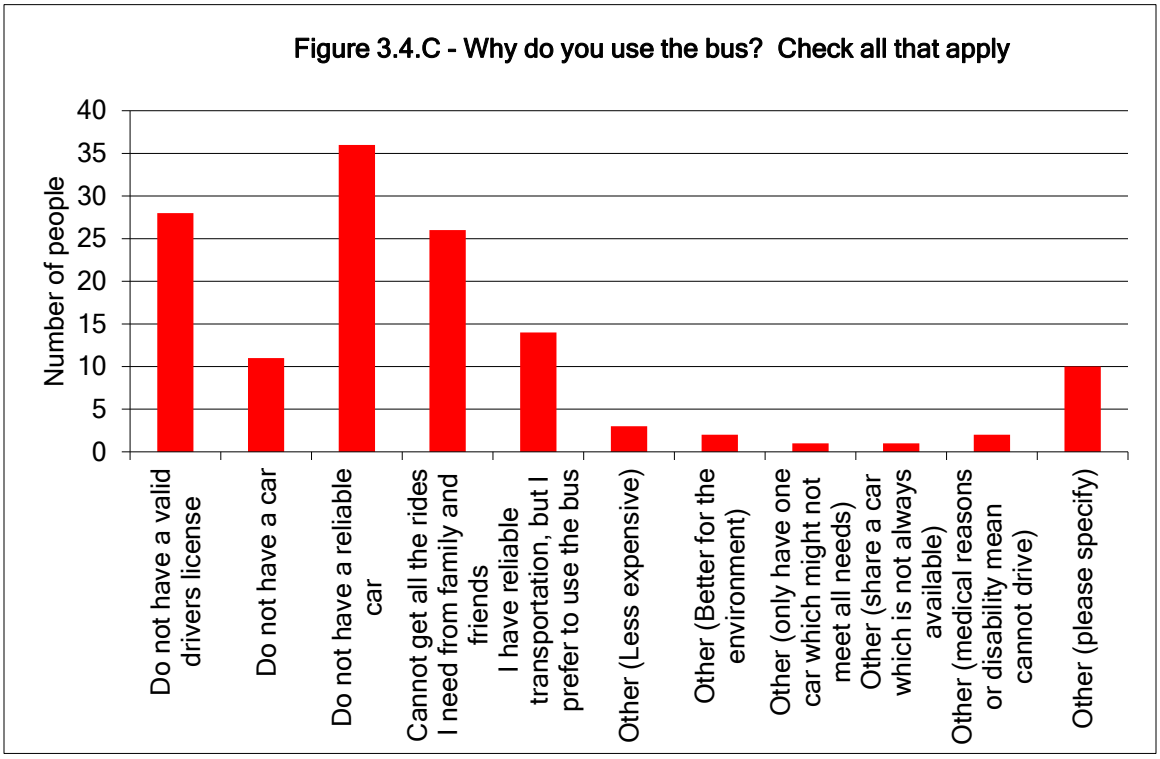
TRIP PURPOSE

- Riders currently use the bus for a variety of reasons – work (48%), grocery shopping (39%), medical appointments (36%), other shopping (36%) and human service agencies (30%). See graph below (figure 3.4.B) for more details.
- Riders would like to use the bus in the future to get to similar places. See graph below (figure 3.4.B) for more details. Slightly more people would like to use the bus to get to medical appointments, recreation/sports/after school activities, and vocational training in the future than currently – indicating opportunities for future stops/ route changes.
- As you would expect for existing riders there was usually a balance between existing and future needs – with the exception of human service agencies (less in the future).
- For people who do not currently ride they anticipate more future needs for medical appointments, grocery shopping and other types of shopping – as you would expect when people are planning for future essential needs. They also expressed future needs for recreation/ sports/ after school programs – which was unexpected.



REASON FOR USING TRANSIT

- Riders use transit for a variety of reasons, but the main reasons being they do not have a reliable vehicle (43%), do not have a valid drivers license (38%), and/or cannot get all the rides they need from family and friends (26%). See graph below (figure 3.4.C) for more details. These results seem to indicate that many riders are lower income, and therefore providing adequate bus service is linked to social justice and Title VI issues.



LOCATION INFORMATION

- The highest percentage of respondents lived in the bigger towns which had in-town bus routes within the survey area – Rockingham/ Bellows Falls (40%), Springfield (34%). See map following (figure 3.4.D) for summary of where people lived – including particular neighborhoods within town. As expected existing riders tended to live more in the areas served by more public transportation than the potential riders.
- People currently go to a wide variety of places – particularly in Bellows Falls and Springfield. See map figure 3.4.E and table opposite (figure 3.4.F) for summary
- When listing places respondents would go if there was a stop, there were several occasions when existing stops were listed (15 respondents). See table below (figure 3.4.G) for summary.
- The only specific new location requested with more than 1 response was Springfield Health and Rehabilitation (figure 3.4.G). This site should therefore be considered as a new stop if any changes are made to bus routes.
- When comparing the survey results (Figure 3.4.F) to actual stop boardings (Figure 3.2.A) several interesting patterns emerged that should be investigated further. Some popular

Figure 3.4.F - Places respondents currently go

Place	Responses	Town
State Offices (including DMV, Parole & Probation, Economic Services) in Springfield	13	Springfield
Springfield Plaza	9	Springfield
Springfield Medical Center (unknown whether hospital or 100 River St)	7	Springfield
Bellows Falls Health Center (1 Hospital Court)	7	Bellows Falls
Okemo	6	Ludlow
Springfield Main St/ Downtown/ Dept of Labor	6	Springfield
Walpole Shaws and Job Lot	6	Walpole
Family Center	5	Springfield
HCRS	5	Springfield
Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center	4	Lebanon
Springfield Hospital	3	Springfield
Goes everywhere I want	3	
Claremont shopping	2	Claremont
Bellows Falls downtown (The Square)	2	Bellows Falls
Bellows Falls Lisai's	2	Bellows Falls
Bellows Falls SEVCA	2	Bellows Falls

Note: includes all specific locations with more than 1 response

destinations for survey respondents had low boardings during the Stop Boarding study:

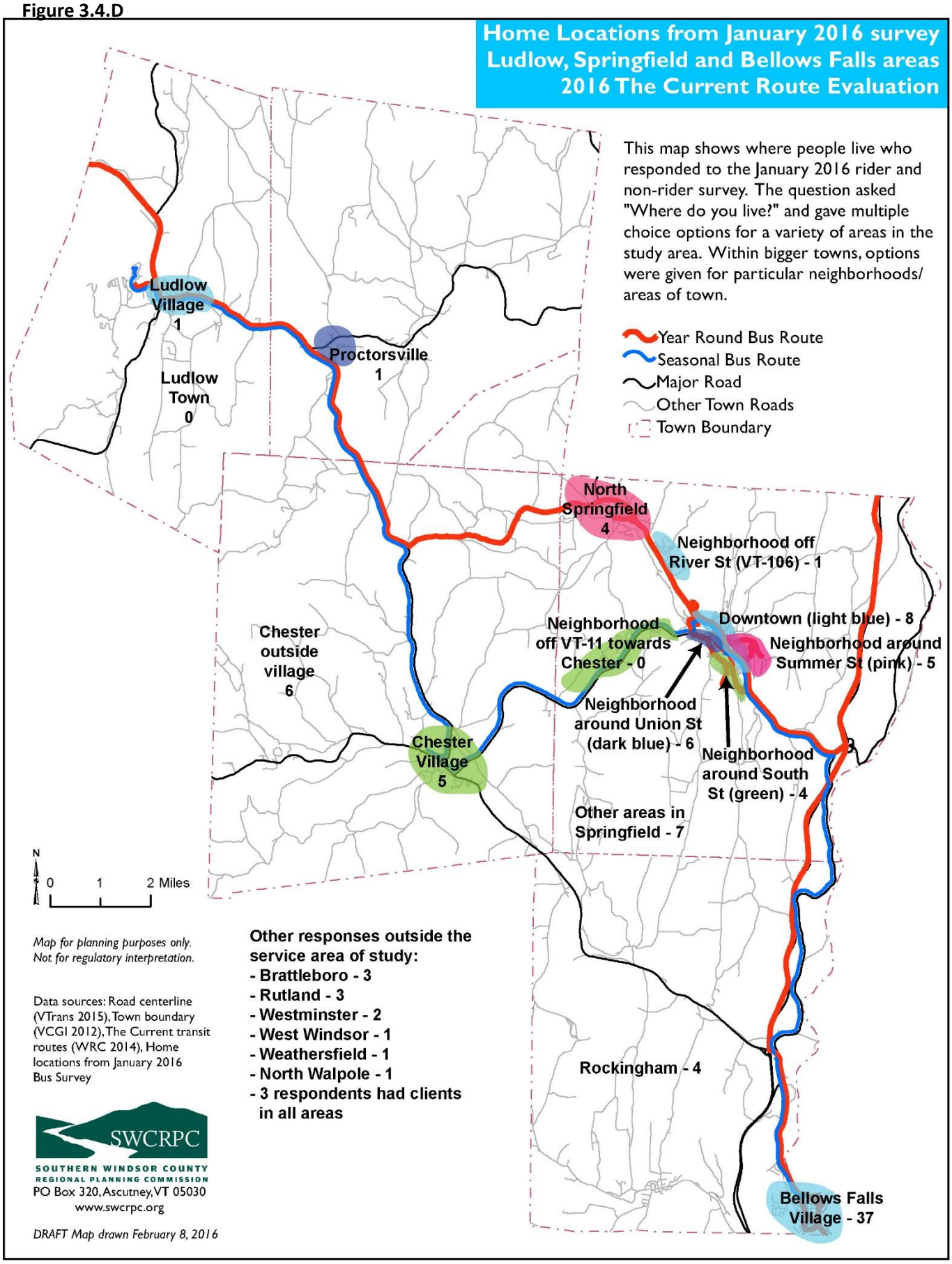
  - Springfield Medical Center/ Hospital - More people get off at the Hospital and 100 River St Health Center than board. People from the Health Center often take a pedestrian bridge to the Plaza to pick up pharmacy items, and then catch the bus from there.
  - Bellows Falls Health Center

- Only 13 "potential" riders gave locations where they would go if there was a stop – of the 68 people who are not existing riders. In contrast 25 of the 58 existing riders gave suggestions. There were no particularly clear trends of existing versus potential riders in terms of locations where they wished to go.
- Unfortunately, despite some direct outreach to schools and major employers in the study area, the survey results clearly show few people connected with either schools or particular major employers responded to the survey. Schools and workplaces are both important opportunities for expanding route usage within the study area so active outreach to and engagement with both schools and major employers should be a recommendation for future action/ study.

Figure 3.4.G – Places respondents would go if there was a stop

Place	Responses	Town	Notes
Chester	5	Chester	
Claremont	3	Claremont	
Bellows Falls	2	Bellows Falls	
Chester Village Green	2	Chester	Existing seasonal stop
Keene	2	Keene	
Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center	2	Lebanon	Existing stop - Several
Londonderry	2	Londonderry	
Ludlow	2	Ludlow	
North Springfield	2	Springfield	Existing stop - Several
Downtown Springfield (including Dept of Labor)	2	Springfield	Existing stop - Springfield Main St
Springfield	2	Springfield	
Springfield Health and Rehabilitation	2	Springfield	
State Offices (including Vocational Rehabilitation)	2	Springfield	Existing stop - State Offices
Windsor	2	Windsor	
Note: includes all locations with more than 1 response			

Figure 3.4.D


Home Locations from January 2016 survey
Ludlow, Springfield and Bellows Falls areas
2016 The Current Route Evaluation
This map shows where people live who responded to the January 2016 rider and non-rider survey. The question asked "Where do you live?" and gave multiple choice options for a variety of areas in the study area. Within bigger towns, options were given for particular neighborhoods/ areas of town.
Year Round Bus Route
Seasonal Bus Route
Major Road
Other Town Roads
Town Boundary
Ludlow Village 1
Ludlow Town 0
Proctorsville 1
North Springfield 4
Neighborhood off River St (VT-106) - 1
Downtown (light blue) - 8
Neighborhood around Summer St (pink) - 5
Neighborhood off VT-11 towards Chester - 0
Neighborhood around Union St (dark blue) - 6
Neighborhood around South St (green) - 4
Chester outside village 6
Chester Village 5
Other areas in Springfield - 7
Rockingham - 4
Bellows Falls Village - 37
N
0 1 2 Miles
Map for planning purposes only. Not for regulatory interpretation.
Data sources: Road centerline (VTrans 2015), Town boundary (VCGI 2012), The Current transit routes (WRC 2014), Home locations from January 2016 Bus Survey
Other responses outside the service area of study:
- Brattleboro - 3
- Rutland - 3
- Westminster - 2
- West Windsor - 1
- Weathersfield - 1
- North Walpole - 1
- 3 respondents had clients in all areas
SWCRPC
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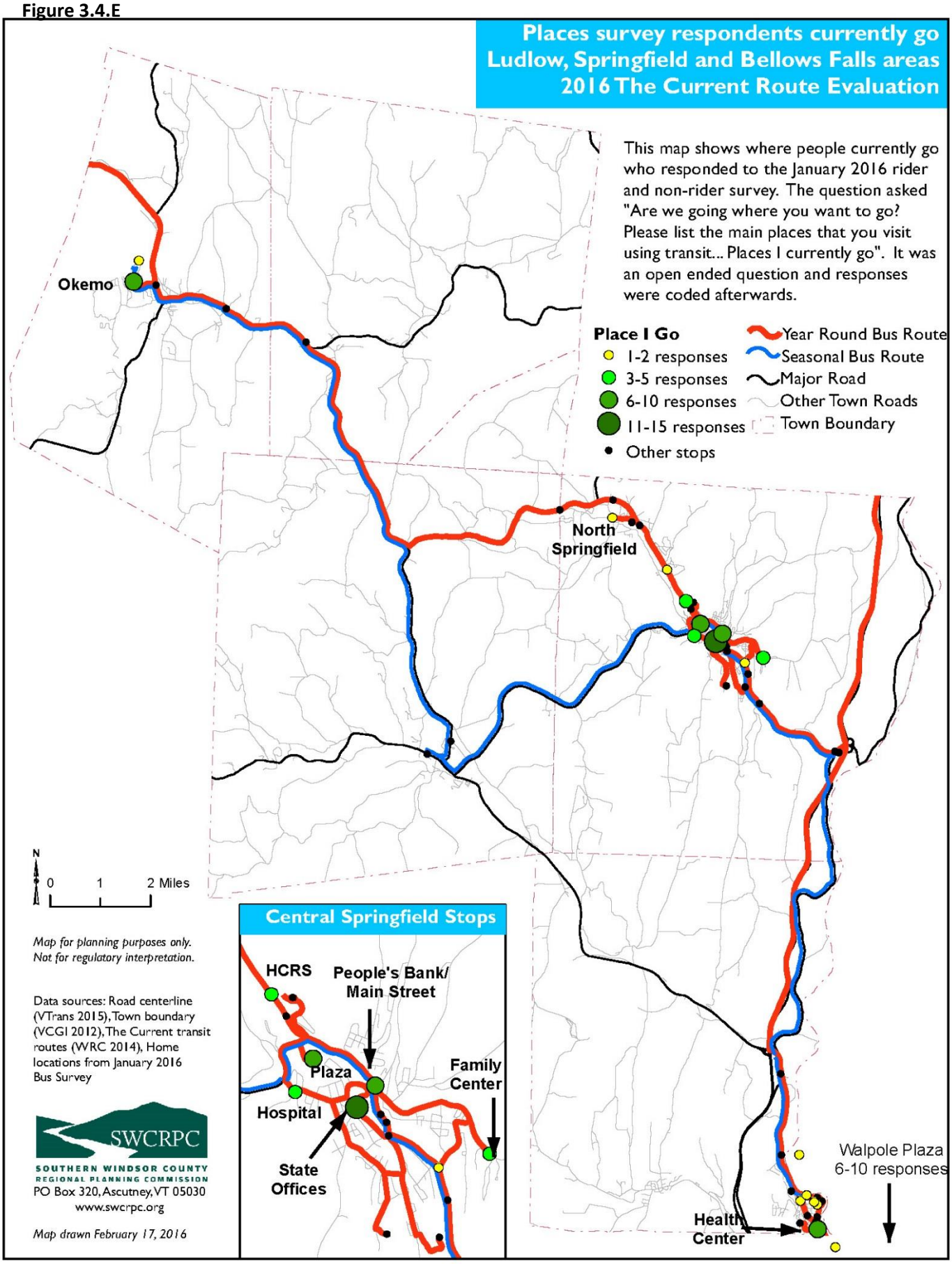
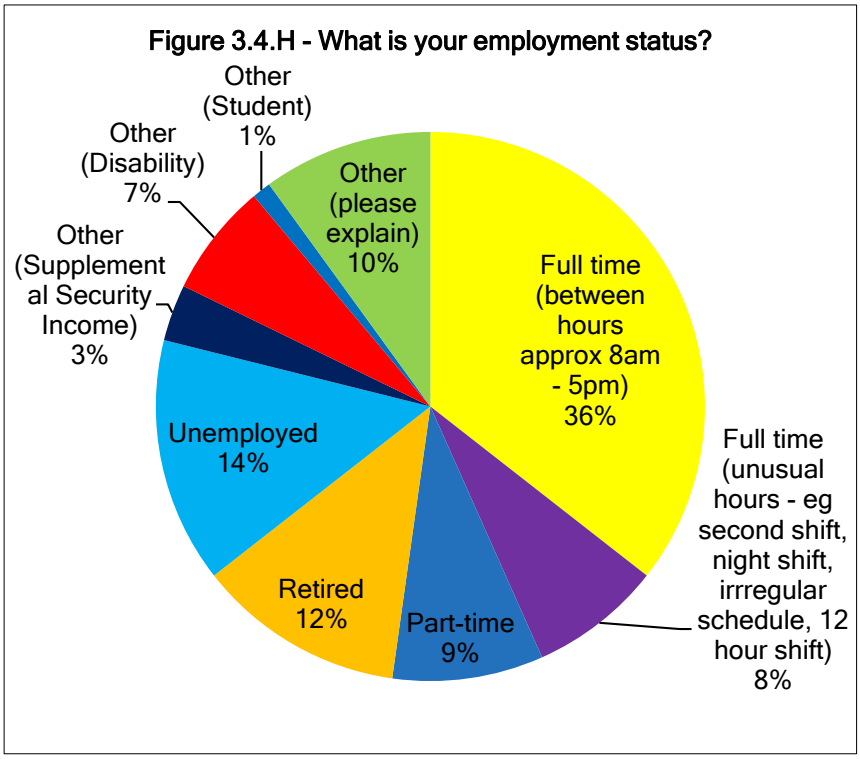
PO Box 320, Ascutney, VT 05030
www.swcrpc.org
DRAFT Map drawn February 8, 2016

Figure 3.4.E


Places survey respondents currently go
Ludlow, Springfield and Bellows Falls areas
2016 The Current Route Evaluation
This map shows where people currently go who responded to the January 2016 rider and non-rider survey. The question asked "Are we going where you want to go? Please list the main places that you visit using transit... Places I currently go". It was an open ended question and responses were coded afterwards.
Place I Go
1-2 responses
3-5 responses
6-10 responses
11-15 responses
Other stops
Year Round Bus Route
Seasonal Bus Route
Major Road
Other Town Roads
Town Boundary
Okemo
North Springfield
Walpole Plaza
6-10 responses
Health Center
N
0 1 2 Miles
Map for planning purposes only.
Not for regulatory interpretation.
Data sources: Road centerline (VTrans 2015), Town boundary (VCGI 2012), The Current transit routes (WRC 2014), Home locations from January 2016 Bus Survey
SWCRPC
SOUTHERN WINDSOR COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
PO Box 320, Ascutney, VT 05030
www.swcrpc.org
Map drawn February 17, 2016
Central Springfield Stops
HCRS
People's Bank/ Main Street
Plaza
Family Center
Hospital
State Offices

EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION

- While most of the respondents had full time work with usual hours (37%), there were a wide variety of other situations and schedules. See figure 3.4.H for more details. There was a pretty even split between all the employment statuses for existing riders. Potential riders were primarily worked full time with normal hours (approximately 8am-5pm) – indicating a potential for ridership growth.
- Work start times ranged from 4:30am to 11am – with most between 7am and 9am. See table below (figure 3.4.I) for more details. Start times for existing riders was far more varied than for potential riders.
- Work finish times ranged from 1pm to 7:30pm – with most between 4pm and 5:30pm. See table below (figure 3.4.I) for more details. Finish times for existing riders was far more varied than for potential riders.



- Given the clear cluster of start and finish times it may be possible to increase ridership with commuters. Few of the existing bus schedules would work for these riders – either starting too late in the day (eg Bellows Falls to Springfield) or finishing too early in the day (Springfield in-town). To make the routes more commuter-friendly a 6am-6pm service, as is currently used in Brattleboro, could work well – and would also work better for other user types. This would also help with the expressed need for more hours of service per day (Figure 3.4.K).

Figure 3.4.I - If you are employed, please indicate your start and finish times

Start Times	Count	Percent	Finish times	Count	Percent
4:30am	1	2%	1:00pm	1	2%
5:00am	1	2%	1:30pm	2	4%
5:30am	1	2%	2:00pm	0	0%
6:00am	0	0%	2:30pm	0	0%
6:30am	0	0%	3:00pm	2	4%
7:00am	6	13%	3:30pm	0	0%
7:30am	6	13%	4:00pm	9	18%
8:00am	10	21%	4:30pm	9	18%
8:30am	8	17%	5:00pm	9	18%
9:00am	1	2%	5:30pm	1	2%
9:30am	0	0%	6:00pm	2	4%
10:00am	2	4%	6:30pm	1	2%
10:30am	0	0%	7:00pm	0	0%
11:00am	1	2%	7:30pm	1	2%
Varies	3	6%	Varies	4	8%
Weekends, irregular schedule, self employed…	8	17%		8	16%
Total	*48*			*49*	

Note: Each time slot is for a half hour - eg if someone responded with 4:45, they would be put in the 4:30 slot

WHAT DO PEOPLE LIKE ABOUT THE CURRENT BUS SERVICE?

- Respondents had some very encouraging feedback.
- The top response (33%) was about the friendly and genuine drivers.
- Other popular responses were being on time (15%), helpful (15%), cheap/ affordable (15%), goes where I want (11%), comfortable and clean (9%) and safe (7%).
- See word chart opposite (Figure 3.4.J) for more reponses. Each word is bigger the more it was used.

Figure 3.4.J – What do you like about The Current bus service?

WHAT WOULD PEOPLE LIKE TO SEE IMPROVED WITH THE CURRENT BUS SERVICE?

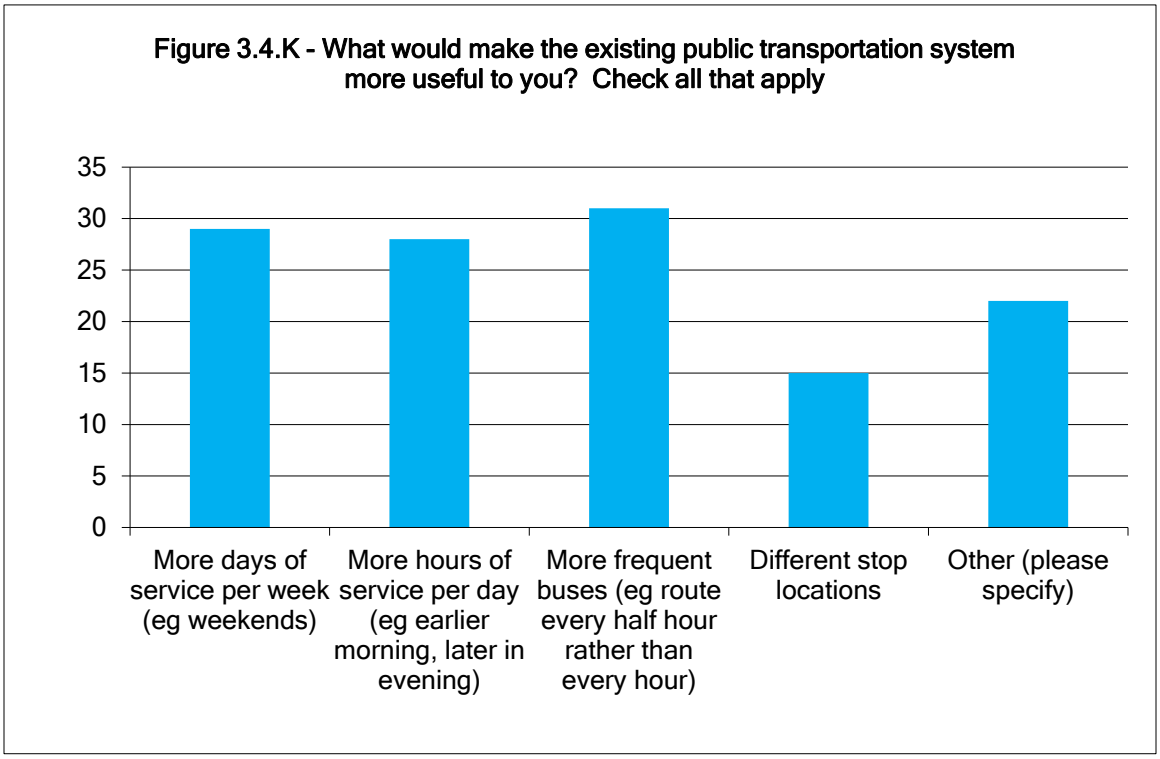
- While 55 people responded with positive feedback, just 39 people responded with areas for improvement.
- The top response was the need for more buses/ more frequent buses (41%).
- Other popular responses were adding locations (26%), later buses (15%), and adding weekend service (15%).
- Some other responses included confusing schedules, reducing time between transfers, useless online maps, need for more frequent stopes, need to do more outreach/ education, and could be abit more comfortable.

WHAT WOULD MAKE THE EXISTING SYSTEM MORE USEFUL?

- Overall there was consensus that frequency of service – whether additional days, additional hours of operation, or increase frequency of route in a day – would be most useful (28-31 respondents for each). In comparison, only 15 respondents said that different stop locations would make the system more useful. Other ideas were

mainly specifics concerning which routes and where, as well as a suggestion about shortening/ reversing in-town circuit routes. See table below (Figure 3.4.K) for more details.

- There were clear differences between existing riders and potential riders for their preferences: existing riders wanted more days of service more frequent buses more than other options, while potential riders preferred more hours of service and more days of service more than other options[11].



WHY DO PEOPLE NOT USE TRANSIT?

- The most popular reason for not using transit was that they already have a car (30%), not visiting the right locations (22%), and doesn't fit schedule/ routine (16%).
    - Unfortunately the survey question designed to find out where people wanted to go (Figure 3.4.G) did not yield sufficiently accurate descriptions of locations respondents would like to go. The question was raised at the April public meetings.
- Other responses included needing the car during the day to get to places, don't need it at the moment but will as get older, hearsay about buses not being regular, need more direct route, don't always have money, family member has car, work unusual hours and use volunteer drivers instead.

[11] It should be noted that not many potential riders answered this question, so this may not be a fair comparison.

3.5 – SURVEY OF DRIVERS

The following is a summary of the results of a survey of bus drivers carried out in January 2016. A copy of the Driver Survey is available in Appendix C. For more information about the character of the trips, see Section 3.1.

Some other suggestions from the drivers included:

- Lowering the fare on the Bellows Falls to Springfield Route (#55) – from $2 to $1
- Consider adding another morning run from Bellows Falls to Springfield (#55)
- Evaluate trip purpose for the Bellows Falls to Springfield route (#55) – Adult Day clients, Probation and Parole, etc.
- Expansion of the Bellows Falls route (#2) might help

3.6 – INPUT FROM GENERAL PUBLIC, STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS

In late March 2016 a draft report which detailed survey results, demographic analysis, and draft recommendations was released for public comment. Comments were due by April 22nd. SEVT and SWCRPC also held two public meetings that focused on the survey results and seeking further feedback from the general public (see meeting flyer in Appendix D).

During this project SEVT and SWCRPC received input from approximately 40 people in addition to the 126 people who answered the project survey. The following opportunities were available:

- Email comments on draft report due April 22, 2016
- Written comments on facebook page for The Current
- Public meetings on April 12, 2016 at 11am and 5pm at the Springfield Town Hall.
- The project was also an agenda item for the following regular committees: Springfield Medical Cares System Regional Transportation Committee (3/21/2016), Southern Windsor County Transportation Advisory Committee (4/27/2016), and the Chester Economic Development Committee (5/4/2016)

A full summary of ideas and comments raised in the survey is available in Appendix E. In addition to the ideas and comments already raised in the survey which were summarized in section 3.4 and published in the draft report, the following additional comments/ recommendations were raised during the additional public input:

1. Assist school districts with transportation for families in temporary housing
2. Consider adding Springfield Rehab (105 Chester Road) as a stop – only half mile from hospital and many relatives want to go there
3. Penguin Mart Hub could potentially be moved to public parking lot between the American legion and the Windham Antique Center if a covered bus stop was added.
4. Consider providing trainings, brochures, and information on the following topics:
    a. Where existing services run, including special services such as the Claremont Shopper
    b. How to flag down a bus
    c. Guaranteed ride home
5. Consider re-designing brochures so they are easier to understand. For example:
    a. Rename some stops using addresses rather than business name
    b. On maps indicate which side of the road bus stops are on.
6. When doing outreach consider the following methods:
    a. Visit Selectboards
    b. Visit Town Meetings
    c. Add links on town websites
    d. Use facebook more – eg Springfield School District page, business pages, etc
    e. Use local blogs more – eg Springfield VT blog
    f. Use radio

4 – CONCLUSIONS ABOUT RIDERSHIP

4.1 – STAGNATION OR DECREASES IN RIDERSHIP

Given the ridership data, surveys and general public input outlined in Section 3, we can make the following conclusions about recent stagnation or decreases in ridership on routes around the Ludlow, Springfield and Bellows Falls areas.

Some factors that likely have contributed to stagnation or decreased ridership include:

1. The introduction of fares. Two notable rider groups that no longer take the bus due to cost:
    a. Riders to Probation and Parole – on the Bellows Falls to Springfield route
    b. School children – on the Springfield In-Town route
2. Service routes have not been evaluated for over five years and may need adjustments to accommodate changes in travel patterns and transportation needs of current and potential future riders. This study included surveys of riders and non-riders, surveys of drivers and stop by stop boarding analysis – and specific recommendations about what specific changes might be merited are listed in the Recommendations Section.
3. Transit service to the major hubs within each town may not be as efficient as possible or optimal conditions. The existing hubs of Springfield Plaza and Bellows Falls Penguin Mart show considerable ridership – and those sites could still be better incorporated into schedules and better physical stop facilities provided. There are also several opportunities for other hubs within the existing service area that could encourage new ridership – eg Park and Ride Lots.
4. The majority of residential development over the last few decades has occurred outside of denser neighborhoods. With homes scattered across a town on the back roads this area does not have the densities or travel patterns that easily support convenient and cost-effective public transit routes and stops.
5. Significant mismatch between homes and places of employment – while Springfield has over 4,000 jobs in town, only 34% of those jobs were held by Springfield residents in 2013, down from 46% in 2003. This would particularly affect ridership on the Springfield In-Town route.
6. Current service areas and frequency of service does not meet the needs of current and potential riders. Survey respondents wanted expanded service hours, increased frequency of service and weekend service. Some existing route timetables are very constrained – eg Bellows Falls In-Town route only runs from 9:30am to 1pm, and the Springfield In-Town route runs from 9am to 3:30pm – schedules which would not work for any commuters who took the survey.

Some factors that could have contributed to stagnation or decreased ridership, but likely did not:

1. Riders shifting from fixed route service to Dial-A-Ride (general public user)

Some factors that may or may not have contributed to stagnation or decreased ridership, but insufficient information from this study to make a conclusion:

1. Some riders may switch services between seasons according to their employment – for example few of the Okemo Mountain Resort employees work in Ludlow year round, and likely have another job in the local region in the non-winter months.

Some factors that likely did not contribute to recent ridership changes, but could affect future capacity to increase ridership:

1. Commuters live and work in locations spread across the SEVT and beyond – with no large clusters of commuters than live in similar areas and commute to similar areas.
2. Confusing schedules and online maps were mentioned as preventing new riders from trying existing services. (Usually once people try the bus they find drivers very helpful to help them use the system more)
3. Lack of awareness of existing services offered appeared to influence whether services were tried by new riders.
4. Some routes do not run to scheduled times.

5 – RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 – SHORT TERM SERVICE RECOMMENDATIONS

The following things were considered when making short term service recommendations:

1. Rider and Non-rider survey – completed January 2016
2. Driver survey – completed January 2016
3. General Public Van user survey – completed January 2016
4. Existing deadheads that could be better utilized
5. Observations from ride alongs
6. Public input and meetings

The following are short term service recommendations sorted by route. Each recommendation is assigned a level of impact and timeframe:

- The "impact" refers to the potential impact on ridership – high/ medium/ low potential to increase ridership.
- The "timeframe" refers to the likely time for completion – short (address within the next six months), mid (within next 1-2 years) and long (at least two years away).

Some recommendations could have a short timeframe despite their low impact due to the ease of addressing the issue, while other projects could have long timeframe and a high impact due to the complexity of the issue or the need for further study. Every recommendation is subject to available funds and approval from VTrans.

SHORT TERM PROJECTS (TO ADDRESS WITHIN THE NEXT SIX MONTHS)

ID	Route	Service recommendation	Identified by	Impact	Time frame
1	All	Consider annual advertising of bus schedules locally - like school bus routes in newspapers every August. Potential places to advertise include local newspapers, town websites, facebook, local blogs, radio, and town meetings.	Steering Committee and public meetings	High	Short
2	All	Provide trainings, brochures and/or information on the following topics: where existing services run (including special services such as the Claremont Shopper), how to flag down a bus, and guaranteed ride home.	Public input and meetings	High	Short
12	BF-SP	Make adjustments to schedule to reflect actual running times in Springfield	Ride along	High	Short

ID	Route	Service recommendation	Identified by	Impact	Time frame
13	BF	Pilot a new earlier time route extension for Bellows Falls using the General Public Van Service. This could be a low-commitment method to encourage commuters and other riders onto the bus while having the flexibility to alter the schedule as riders need, until a good new schedule is settled upon. This will also allow riders to try out the service, and hopefully become regulars.	Steering Committee	High	Short
23	SP	Evaluate usage of new route extension to Family Center. Potentially incorporate Family Center run better into the schedule	Ride along	High	Short
24	SP	Evaluate how North Springfield is incorporated into the in-town route since few boardings, but particular needs. Consider marketing and installing additional bus stop signs.	Ride along	High	Short
25	SP	Look into adding schools as regular stop during the day, particularly Riverside Middle School	Ride along	High	Short
35	OK	Get information about Okemo worker shifts - since very varied (including 6am start), and need rides on holidays like Christmas.	Driver Survey	High	Short
36	OK	Correct schedules on website and in printed schedules to reflect actual running times - particularly around Pointe Hotel where timetable is about 20 mins off.	Ride along	High	Short
7	All	Look into providing more opportunities for using fixed route transit to get to medical appointments once route match software implemented.	Rider Survey	Medium	Short
20	SP-BF	Consider reducing the fare on the Bellows Falls to Springfield route from $2 to $1 or researching getting sponsorship for particular rider demographics on that route (eg Probation and Parole).	Driver Survey	Low	Short

MID TERM PROJECTS (TO ADDRESS WITHIN THE NEXT 1 – 2 YEARS)

ID	Route	Service recommendation	Identified by	Impact	Time frame
3	All	Consider updating schedules and online maps to be more user friendly in response to survey feedback. Add links to Go! Vermont website that has links to other resources in Vermont such as ride-sharing and intercity coaches services.	Rider Survey	High	Mid
4	All	Consider running an outreach and marketing campaign about the local bus service, including advertising, travel trainers, public meetings, TV interviews, radio, town websites, local community blogs, town meetings, targeted mass mailings, etc. Include outreach to schools, businesses, and local residents (especially the major apartment complexes already on the routes).	Steering Committee, Driver Survey, Ride along	High	Mid
14	BF	Evaluate existing Bellows Falls stop hub - Penguin Mart - for any rider needs (e.g. shelters) and consider advertising the stop as a hub. Carefully consider needs and future plans given the site is private property. Alternatively consider moving hub to a nearby location.	Steering Committee	High	Mid
37	BF-LD	Investigate whether additional stops are needed between North Springfield Industrial Park and Pleasant St in Ludlow. Take into consideration the Beekman House on the route.	Stop boarding study	High	Mid

ID	Route	Service recommendation	Identified by	Impact	Time frame
38	Other	Evaluate deadheads from Upper Valley Commuter Routes to see if they could provide some additional services through the Springfield and Bellows Falls area. One deadhead is already being used for Windsor to Springfield service.	Steering Committee	High	Mid
42	All	Re-design the brochures so they are easier to understand, including renaming some stops using addresses rather than business name, and on the maps indicate what side of the road bus stops are on.	Public input and meetings	High	Mid
5	All	Consider doing a one-month pilot program that offers free transit bucks to get new riders interested in using the service. A similar pilot was done in Chittenden County and was widely successful. This could be done by mass mailings. Learn from Chittenden County's experience. Coordinate with new fare boxes.	Tim	Medium	Mid
6	All	Look into providing more opportunities for using transit to get to recreation/ sports/ after school programs.	Rider Survey	Medium	Mid
16	BF	Look into adding school as regular stop during the day	Ride along	Medium	Mid
17	BF	Evaluate places which could become future stop hubs	Steering Committee	Medium	Mid
18	BF	Investigate why ridership so low for boardings at Bellows Falls Medical Center when many survey respondents wanted to get there.	Rider Survey and Boarding study	Medium	Mid
29	SP	Investigate why ridership so low for boardings at Springfield Hospital when many survey respondents wanted to get there.	Rider Survey and Boarding study	Medium	Mid
30	SP	Investigate why ridership so low for boardings around 100 River St Springfield Health Center. Could potentially be due to clients crossing the pedestrian bridge to the Plaza to visit the drug store - and then board the buses there. Consider adding signage and/or scheduled stop.	Insufficient data	Medium	Mid
32	SP ones	Coordinate with the Department of Labor (especially unemployment) and State Offices for any regular meetings/ services which their clients use the bus for	Steering Committee	Medium	Mid
33	SP	When the new E-Fare cards start to be used on routes in 2016, consider adding the ability for local school children to travel on buses using their student IDs. Talk with schools about how this could work, particularly related to fares and funding.	Steering Committee	Medium	Mid
39	All	Assist school districts with transportation for families in temporary housing	Public meetings	Low	Mid
41	SP	Consider adding Springfield Rehab (105 Chester Road) as a stop – only half mile from hospital and many relatives want to go there	Public meetings	Low	Mid

LONG TERM PROJECTS (AT LEAST TWO YEARS AWAY)

ID	Route	Service recommendation	Identified by	Impact	Time frame
15	BF, BF-Brat	Consider altering the Bellows Falls In-Town route to focus on the mornings and afternoons, so then the bus could be used for an additional Bellows Falls to Brattleboro run in the midday. Also potentially reduce the geographic service area of the route, focusing on the stops which have good ridership (boarding and alighting) so you could increase the frequency (eg every half hour). Identify cost-shifts within realm of existing grant from VTrans/ FTA.	Steering Committee	High	Long
26	SP	Look into addressing some of the inconsistencies in the schedule during the day (not all stops at all hours)	Ride along	High	Long
27	SP	Consider serving midday riders with dial-a-ride services since currently low ridership - so that the fixed route services could be shifted to other times of day. This could encourage more commuters, and enable more people to use the services for after-school program/ recreation, and vocational training. This also fits with the need for more hours of service per day, but allows for reallocating resources on Springfield routes - drivers, vehicles, timetables - so costs are shifted within existing grant from VTrans/ FTA.	Steering Committee	High	Long
28	SP	Consider expanding some route services to being 6am - 6pm like Brattleboro's In-Town service. This should be implemented after trying other ways to increase ridership - including advertising, making schedules more clear, revising schedules to reflect running times, shifting fixed route times, etc. Expanding service hours would involve additional operating funds so instead could consider condensing the service area so that service frequency could be increased.	Steering Committee, Rider Survey, Ride along	High	Long
8	All	Investigate why people want to go to several destinations that they believe do not have a stop, but they do - Chester Village Green, DHMC, North Springfield, Downtown Springfield, Springfield State Offices.	Rider Survey	Medium	Long
9	All	Investigate any other additional stops that might be helpful - since Rider Survey data was not sufficient. Potential options include gathering alighting data with boarding data, and carrying out more outreach.	Insufficient data	Medium	Long
19	SP-BF	Further evaluate morning usage of Bellows Falls to Springfield routes. Consider additional marketing or adding another morning run from Bellows Falls to Springfield, as needed. Run a pilot using General Public Van Service to see whether extended service would be helpful	Driver Survey	Medium	Long
31	SP	Evaluate places which could become future stop hubs through coordinated routes - eg Springfield Exit 7 P&R	Steering Committee	Medium	Long
10	All	Look into providing more opportunities for using transit to get to vocational training.	Rider Survey	Low	Long
11	All	Once the E-fare system is in place consider getting more involved with area businesses to start up an unlimited access program through transit passes. There may not be a large enough employer willing to participate in the program but worth looking into. A similar pilot study was carried out in Chittenden County 2013-2014	Tim	Low	Long

ID	Route	Service recommendation	Identified by	Impact	Time frame
21	SP-BF	Evaluate user types for the Springfield - Bellows Falls route. Adult Day clients, Probation and Parole, etc. Data from intake-tracking may be helpful. Try to understand original intent for the route and current needs.	Driver Survey	Low	Long
22	SP-BF	Make return Bellows Falls to Springfield afternoon trips later in the afternoon so Adult Day Center clients can use it as well as workers	Ride along	Low	Long
34	SP	Consider adding Springfield Health and Rehabilitation as a stop if any changes are made to bus routes.	Rider Survey	Low	Long

5.2 – OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER STUDY

The following are a list of opportunities for further study as identified during this project:

1. Carry out full boarding and alighting study for all stops on the routes
2. Commuter needs and employer outreach – further explore available commuter data (eg LEHD), complete employer surveys, engage local businesses, etc
3. School needs and school outreach – engage with local schools both in terms providing service for students as well as teachers. One way to start the conversation would be to reach out to schools on existing routes (Springfield and Bellows Falls in town routes) to raise awareness of existing service which could help both students and teachers.
4. Human service agency needs and outreach – engage with human service agencies like the Department of Labor, Unemployment, and Probation and Parole, to see how transit can better serve their clients.
5. With assistance from VTrans, pursue more comprehensive analysis to determine more long range service changes and improvements that might help increase ridership.

6 – ABBREVIATIONS AND GLOSSARY

6.1 – ABBREVIATIONS

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
AHS	Vermont Agency of Human Services
CHT	Springfield Medical Care Systems Community Health Team
CMS	US Department of Health and Human Services Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services
COASEV	Council on Aging for Southeastern Vermont (otherwise known as Senior Solutions)
The Current	Transit service by Southeast Vermont Transit Association (formerly Connecticut River Transit CRT and Deerfield Valley Transit Association DVTA)
DAIL	AHS Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living
DCF	AHS Dept of Children and Families
DHHS	US Department of Health and Human Services
DVHA	Department of Vermont Health Access
E&D	Vermont Elders and Persons with Disabilities Program Transportation
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
HCRS	Health Care and Rehabilitation Services of Vermont
MAHHC	Mount Ascutney Hospital and Health Center
MAPP	Mount Ascutney (Hospital) Prevention Partnership
MVRTD	Marble Valley Regional Transit District
NEMT	Non-Emergency Medicaid Transportation
P&R	Park and Ride Lot
RSVP	Retired and Senior Volunteer Program
SEVT	Southeast Vermont Transit
SHAD	Springfield Hospital Adult Day
SMCS CHT	Springfield Medical Care Systems Community Health Team
SWCRPC	Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission
Title VI	Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and statutes and regulations related to discrimination
VA	Veterans Administration (Federal)
VOVA	Vermont Office of Veterans Affairs
VTrans	Vermont Agency of Transportation
WRC	Windham Regional Commission

6.2 – GLOSSARY OF TERMS

All descriptions are from the Human Service Transportation Coordination Plan 2014 Update (Pages E-1 and E-2) unless otherwise stated

Accessible Vehicle (Or **Wheelchair-Accessible Vehicle** or **ADA Accessible Vehicle**) **-** Public transportation revenue vehicles, which do not restrict access, are usable, and provide allocated space and/or priority seating for individuals who use wheelchairs, and which are accessible using ramps or lifts.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): Passed by Congress in 1990, this act mandates equal opportunities for persons with disabilities in the areas of employment, transportation, communications and public accommodations. Under this Act, most transportation providers are obliged to purchase lift-equipped vehicles for their fixed route services and must assure system-wide accessibility of their demand response services to persons with disabilities. Public transit providers also must supplement their fixed route services with complementary paratransit services for those persons unable to use fixed route service because of their disability.

Deadhead (miles and hours): According to the Federal Transit Administration [12], deadhead is the miles and hours that a vehicle travels when out of revenue service. Deadhead includes:

- Leaving or returning to the garage or yard facility
- Changing routes
- When there is no expectation of carrying revenue passengers.

Dial-a-Ride (also called Demand Response) – A transit mode comprised of passenger cars, vans or buses operating in response to calls from passengers or their agents to the transit operator, who then dispatches a vehicle to pick up the passengers and transport them to their destinations. A dial-a-ride operation is characterized by the following: a) the vehicles do not operate over a fixed route or on a fixed schedule except, perhaps, on a temporary basis to satisfy a special need; and, b) typically, the vehicle may be dispatched to pick up several passengers at different pick-up points before taking them to their respective destinations and may even be interrupted en route to these destinations to pick up other passengers. Dial-a-ride routes also include special services that are generally "rural" in nature and operate less than once a day (i.e., service operates only once a week or a few times a month.)

Elderly and Disabled (E&D) Transportation - Transportation service to persons who are disabled or elderly, age 65 and older.

Fixed Route: Transportation service operated over a set route or network of routes generally on a regular time schedule.

FTA – Federal Transit Administration. A component of the U.S. Department of Transportation that regulates and helps fund public transportation. FTA provides financial assistance for capital and operating costs and also sponsors research, training, technical assistance and demonstration programs.

Human Service Agency - A government or not-for-profit organization that provides services for essential needs such as medical care, income support, housing, education, training, and public health, typically for people requiring help due to age, disability, low income or similar reasons.

Human Service Transportation - Transportation provided by or on behalf of a human service agency to bring people participating in the agency's programs or services to those programs or services.

Local Match - The state or local funds required by the Federal government to complement Federal funds for a project. For example, in the case of public transportation, the Federal government may provide 80 percent of the necessary funds for the purchase of a vehicle if the state or local government matches 20 percent. A match may also be required by states in funding projects which are a joint state and local effort.

Paratransit - Flexible forms of public transportation services that are not provided over a fixed route, e.g. demand response service, and most often refers to wheelchair accessible service.

Public Transportation- Transportation service that is available to any person upon payment of the fare and which cannot be reserved for the private or exclusive use of one individual or group. "Public" in this sense refers to the access to the service, not the ownership of the system providing the service. Public transportation service must be open door.

Section 5311 – The section of the Federal Transit Act that authorizes capital and operating assistance grants to public transit systems in areas with populations of less than 50,000.

Section 5310 - Authorized under 49 USC Section 5310, a Federal program administered by ODOT to provide small buses and vans to eligible agencies which provide transportation services to elderly and disabled persons.

[12] National Transit Database Glossary for 2014 Reporting Year. Published by the Federal Transit Administration Office of Budget and Policy. February 2015 http://www.ntdprogram.gov/ntdprogram/Glossaries/pdf/Glossary2014.pdf

TANF - Temporary Aid to Needy Families - Created by the 1996 welfare reform law, TANF is a program of block grants to states to help them meet the needs of families with no income or resources. It replaces AFDC, JOBS, Emergency Assistance and some other preceding federal welfare programs. Because of TANF-imposed time limits, states are using TANF to place recipients in jobs as quickly as possible, often using program funds to pay for transportation, child care, and other barriers to workforce participation.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987, and related Federal and State statutes and regulations, prohibits discrimination and provides that no person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, gender, age, low income status, or mental or physical disability be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. (Definition from the SWCRPC 2014 Regional Transportation Plan)

Transportation Provider or Public Transit System - Any organization, agency, or municipality that operates its own vehicles with agency staff and schedules trips for passengers or clients. This does not include organizations that provide travel vouchers, subsidies, stipends, reimbursements, or other travel assistance directly to their clients for travel on public transit, paratransit, taxi services, other agency-sponsored transportation, or in private vehicles.

Volunteer Driver - Services provided by volunteer drivers who use their own vehicles, donate their time to transport riders, and receive reimbursement for mileage at the federal rate.

Wellness – According to the World Health Organization[13] health is "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". Often public transportation provision prioritizes "medical" related transit needs, while the broader "wellness" needs referred to in this definition of health are secondary. Wellness rides include a wide range of reasons which focus on improving the basic quality of life of the patient/ client. This could include vocational/ job related, legal, daycare, schools, etc. (Definition by author for this report.)

[13] World Health Organization. http://www.who.int/about/definition/en/print.html

7 – RESOURCES/ REFERENCES

Data

US Census Bureau. American Community Survey Five Year Average for 2010 thru 2014. Table numbers DP02, DP03, DP04 and DP05 http://factfinder.census.gov

US Census Bureau. Longitudinal Employment Housing Dynamics (LEHD) On The Map. Data for 2003, 2008 and 2013 for County Subdivisions within the study area. http://onthemap.ces.census.gov/

Other Plans

Beeline Study 2012 – Enhancing Transit Services in Brattleboro. Prepared for Connecticut River Transit by LSC Transportation Consultants - http://www.lsccs.com/projects/crt/

NH 120 Claremont-Lebanon/ Hanover Transit Planning Services. Final Report. Prepared by Upper Valley – Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission and Nelson/ Nygaard Consulting Associates http://www.uvlsrpc.org/files/9013/0877/4150/NH_120_Final_Report.pdf

North Country Council and Transport Central – Transit Feasibility Study. 2010. Prepared by Nelson/ Nygaard Consulting Associates

Southern Windsor County Regional Transportation Plan. Adopted November 18, 2014. Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission - http://swcrpc.org/publications/

State of Vermont Human Service Transportation Coordination Plan. 2014 Update. Prepared for Vermont Agency of Transportation by Nelson Nygaard. http://publictransit.vermont.gov/sites/aot_public_transit/files/VT%20HSTCP%202014%20FINAL.pdf

Transit Development Plan for Advanced Transit. Final report December 2012. Prepared by Tom Crikelair Assocaiates for Advanced Transit http://www.advancetransit.com/planning.htm

Vermont Public Transit Policy Plan. January 2012. Prepared for Vermont Agency of Transportation by KFH Group, Inc. http://publictransit.vermont.gov/policies_reports/ptpp

APPENDIX A – STUDY AREA DEMOGRAPHICS

The data in the tables below were collected by the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey for a combined average between 2010 and 2014[14].

Basic Demographic information

Description	Percentage by	Springfield		Rockingham		Chester		Weathersfield		Ludlow		Cavendish		Baltimore		Area Total	ACS Table
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Total no. of people	N/A	9,301		5,190		3,128		2,813		2,131		1,587		234		24,384	DP05
10 to 17 years old	per total no. of people	788		516		279		246		139		124		28		2,120	calc
65 years and over		1,842	20%	847	16%	589	19%	609	22%	459	22%	345	22%	27	12%	4,718	DP05
Median age (years		44.7		41.9		50.5		47.8		49.2		46.3		43.9			DP05

Households

Description	Percentage by	Springfield		Rockingham		Chester		Weathersfield		Ludlow		Cavendish		Baltimore		Area Total	ACS Table
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Total no. of households	N/A	3,835		2,252		1,442		1,220		955		642		80		10,426	DP02
With one or more people under 18 years	per total no. of households	1,044	27%	526	23%	336	23%	235	19%	194	20%	139	22%	23	29%	2,497	DP02
With one or more people 65 years and over		1,228	32%	608	27%	452	31%	407	33%	317	33%	219	34%	15	19%	3,246	DP02
Average household size	N/A	2.29		2.24		2.17		2.3		2.18		2.44		2.93			DP02

[14] US Census Bureau. American Community Survey Five Year Average for 2010 thru 2014. Table numbers DP02, DP03, DP04 and DP05 http://factfinder.census.gov

Disability

Description	Percentage by	Springfield		Rockingham		Chester		Weathersfield		Ludlow		Cavendish		Baltimore		Area Total	ACS Table
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Total no. of non-institutionalized people with a disability	Per total no. of people	1,954	21%	1,045	20%	385	12%	469	17%	278	13%	276	17%	52	22%	4,459	DP02
Under 18 years old		238	3%	65	1%	10	0%	0	0%	16	1%	0	0%	0	0%	329	DP02
18 - 64 years old		1,061	11%	693	13%	230	7%	247	9%	147	7%	160	10%	37	16%	2,575	DP02
65 years and over		655	7%	287	6%	145	5%	222	8%	115	5%	116	7%	15	6%	1,555	DP02

Vehicles in the home

Description	Percentage by	Springfield		Rockingham		Chester		Weathersfield		Ludlow		Cavendish		Baltimore		Area Total	ACS Table
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
No vehicles available	per occupied housing units	417	11%	199	9%	77	5%	46	4%	68	7%	20	3%	2	3%	829	DP04
1 vehicle available		1,312	34%	992	44%	517	36%	265	22%	347	36%	220	34%	15	19%	3,668	DP04
2 vehicles available		1,496	39%	717	32%	457	32%	539	44%	344	36%	264	41%	34	43%	3,851	DP04
3 or more vehicles available		610	16%	344	15%	391	27%	370	30%	196	21%	138	22%	29	36%	2,078	DP04

Education

Description	Percentage by	Springfield		Rockingham		Chester		Weathersfield		Ludlow		Cavendish		Baltimore		Area Total	ACS Table
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
No. of people enrolled in school/ college	N/A	1,870		1,108		602		563		374		289		63		4,869	DP02
Nursery school and preschool	per no. of people enrolled in school/ college	126	7%	47	4%	27	5%	23	4%	12	3%	31	11%	6	10%	272	DP02
Kindergarten and Elementary School		968	52%	558	50%	323	54%	262	47%	114	31%	162	56%	26	41%	2,413	calc
High School		457	24%	282	26%	133	22%	133	24%	117	31%	63	22%	18	29%	1,203	DP02
College or graduate school		319	17%	221	20%	119	20%	145	26%	131	35%	33	11%	13	21%	981	DP02

Employment

	Description	Percentage by	Springfield		Rockingham		Chester		Weathersfield		Ludlow		Cavendish		Baltimore		Area Total	ACS Table
			No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Employment	no. of people aged 16 and above	N/A	7,529		4,283		2,661		2,394		1,904		1,296		188		20,255	DP03
	no. of employed people	per no. of people 16 and over	4,119	55%	2,414	56%	1,819	68%	1,448	61%	1,099	58%	741	57%	142	76%	11,782	DP03
	Median household income	N/A	$43,777		$36,899		$52,500		$61,447		$44,750		$49,565		$75,625			DP03
	Mean household income	N/A	$57,470		$49,790		$72,647		$68,115		$56,773		$67,301		$74,029			DP03
	Workers 16 years and over	N/A	4,030		2,354		1,773		1,379		1,070		712		140		11,458	DP03
Worker commute	Drove alone	per workers 16 years and over	3,258	81%	1,702	72%	1,264	71%	1,110	81%	824	77%	544	76%	96	69%	8,798	DP03
	Carpooled		356	9%	357	15%	189	11%	173	13%	80	8%	110	15%	31	22%	1,296	DP03
	Public transportation		82	2%	26	1%	31	2%	0	0%	14	1%	1	0%	0	0%	154	DP03
	Walked		160	4%	139	6%	123	7%	8	1%	68	6%	7	1%	2	1%	507	DP03
	Other means		45	1%	39	2%	0	0%	0	0%	8	1%	11	2%	1	1%	104	DP03
	Worked at home		129	3%	91	4%	166	9%	88	6%	76	7%	39	6%	10	7%	599	DP03
	Mean travel time to work	N/A	21.3 mins		19.1 mins		21.2 mins		23.6 mins		18.9 mins		25.6 mins		29 mins			DP03
Employment industry	Construction	per no. of employed people	314	8%	194	8%	135	7%	165	11%	124	11%	69	9%	15	11%	1,016	DP03
	Manufacturing		623	15%	332	14%	237	13%	187	13%	153	14%	114	15%	26	18%	1,672	DP03
	Retail trade		432	11%	320	13%	222	12%	148	10%	134	12%	72	10%	10	7%	1,338	DP03
	Education, health care and social assistance		1,201	29%	681	28%	392	22%	388	27%	244	22%	137	19%	29	20%	3,072	DP03
	Arts, entertainment, rec, accom. and food services		515	13%	222	9%	224	12%	107	7%	211	19%	117	16%	13	9%	1,409	DP03

Housing

Description	Percentage by	Springfield		Rockingham		Chester		Weathersfield		Ludlow		Cavendish		Baltimore		Area Total	ACS Table
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Total no. of housing units	N/A	4,161		2,586		1,798		1,346		3,253		1,022		89		14,255	DP04
no. of occupied housing units	per total no. of housing units	3,835	92%	2,252	87%	1,442	80%	1,220	91%	955	29%	642	63%	80	90%	10,426	DP04
Year moved into house - 2010 or later	per occupied housing units	599	16%	597	27%	187	13%	134	11%	290	30%	72	11%	9	11%	1,888	DP04
Year moved into house - 2000 - 2009		1,763	46%	829	37%	680	47%	441	36%	281	29%	252	39%	29	36%	4,275	DP04
Year moved into house - 1990 - 1999		536	14%	318	14%	372	26%	308	25%	164	17%	106	17%	22	28%	1,826	DP04
no. of people aged 1 and above	N/A	9,141		5,164		3,125		2,797		2,122		1,561		232		24,142	DP02
Lived in same house one year ago	per no. of people 1 and over	8,012	88%	4,416	86%	2,909	93%	2,707	97%	1,726	81%	1,459	94%	204	88%	21,433	DP02
Lived in different house one year ago but same county		638	7%	408	8%	75	2%	55	2%	164	8%	69	4%	24	10%	1,433	DP02
Lived in different house one year ago but same state		233	3%	153	3%	102	3%	3	0%	129	6%	19	1%	0	0%	639	DP02
Lived in different house one year ago, either in different state or abroad		258	3%	187	4%	39	1%	32	1%	103	5%	14	1%	4	2%	637	calc

Survey for existing and potential bus riders

2016 Springfield/ Ludlow/ Bellows Falls Area Route Evaluation and Planning Project

In early 2016, Southeast Vermont Transit will be evaluating some of "The Current" bus routes, mainly in the Springfield, Bellows Falls and Ludlow areas. Finding out why existing riders use the buses, as well as why potential riders currently do not, is very important to this project. It is hoped that through this input we will identify small improvements to existing routes so they can better serve the riders and cost less to run. Your input is important!

This survey will be available for completion between 1/4/2016 and 1/24/2016. For more information about the project, including an online version of this survey, see www.swcrpc.org. For more information on existing bus routes, see www.crtransit.org

Please take a few minutes to fill out this survey. Complete the survey only once. Thank you!

1. Are you an existing bus rider?

Yes	
No	

2. **What bus routes do you use?** Check all that apply

Springfield In-Town (#1)	
Bellows Falls In-Town (#2)	
Bellows Falls to Springfield (#55)	
Bellows Falls to Ludlow (and Rutland) (#57)	

Bellows Falls to Okemo (#61) (seasonal)	
Dial-A-Ride	
I-91 Commuters (#71,#72,#73,#74)	
Other (Please describe)	

3. Do any of your trips involve a transfer between routes?

No	
Yes (please list routes)	

_____

4. Where are you trying to get to? Now? And in the future? Check all that apply

	Now	Future
Work		
Medical Appointments		
Human service agency (eg HCRS)		
Grocery Shopping		
Other types of shopping (clothes, household items, etc)		

	Now	Future
Recreation/ Sports/ After School Programs		
School		
Childcare		
Vocational Training		
Other (please describe)		

5. Why do you use the bus? Check all that apply

Do not have a valid drivers license		Cannot get all the rides I need from friends and family	
Do not have a car		I have a reliable transportation, but I prefer to use the bus	
Do not have a reliable car		Other (Please describe)	

6. Where do you live?

Springfield Downtown		Proctorsville village	
Springfield in neighborhood around Summer St		Chester village	
Springfield in neighborhood around Union St		Chester outside village	
North Springfield		Bellows Falls village	
Springfield in neighborhood around South St		Rockingham	
Springfield in neighborhood off River St (VT-106)		Ludlow village	
Springfield in neighborhood off VT-11 towards Chester		Ludlow town	
Springfield (rural area)		Other (Please describe)	

7. **Are we going where you want to go? We are evaluating the route so that it works better for riders. Please list the main places that you visit using transit, or would visit using transit if there was a stop.** For each location include the name of the place and an address where possible. Some examples – Springfield Medical Center at 100 River Street, Workplace on Precision Drive in North Springfield, Main Street near the Summer Street intersection, Springfield plaza, etc

Places I currently go _____

_____

_____

_____

Places I would go if there was a stop _____

_____

_____

_____

8. What would make the existing public transportation system more useful to you? Check all that apply

More days of service per week (eg weekends)	
More hours of service per day (eg earlier morning, later in evening)	
More frequent buses (eg route every half hour rather than every hour)	
Different stop locations	
Other (please describe)_____	

9. How often do you usually ride The Current buses?

5 days per week	
3-4 days per week	
1-2 days per week	
Less than once per week	

10. When did you first begin using The Current buses?

Within the last year	
1-2 years ago	
3-5 years ago	
More than 5 years ago	

11. What is your employment status?

Full-time (between hours approx. 8am – 5pm)	
Full-time (unusual hours – eg second shift, night shift, irregular schedule, 12 hour shift)	
Part-time	
Retired	
Unemployed	
Other (please explain)	

12. If you are employed, please give your start and finish times.

Start time	
Finish time	
Other useful notes – eg work on weekends, start and finish times for second job	

13. What is your age?

17 or younger	
18-25	
26-40	
41-60	
Over 60	

14. What do you like about The Current bus service? What can we do to improve the service?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

15. If you are not an existing bus rider, why not?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND INPUT!

If you are interested in being added to our email list about this survey, the route evaluation and potential changes to bus route schedules or routes, please give it here _____

IF YOU ARE FILLING OUT THIS SURVEY ON A BUS, PLEASE RETURN THE COMPLETED SURVEY TO YOUR BUS DRIVER.

Survey for drivers

2016 Springfield/ Ludlow/ Bellows Falls Area Route Evaluation and Planning Project

In early 2016, Southeast Vermont Transit will be evaluating some of its bus routes, mainly in the Springfield, Bellows Falls and Ludlow areas. Finding out why existing riders use the buses, as well as why potential riders currently do not, is very important to this project. It is hoped that through this input we will identify small improvements to existing routes so they can better serve the riders and cost less to run. Your input is important!

This survey will be available for completion between 1/4/2016 and 1/24/2016. For more information about the project, see www.swcrpc.org

1. **Name (In case we need to follow up):_____**

2. **Route that you drive regularly** (Complete one survey per route you drive): _____

3. **How long have you been driving this route?** (Approx. number of years): _____

4. **What types of riders do you have on the bus on a typical day?** Check all that apply

School kids	
Young adults (approx. 18 – 25)	
Disabled	
Elderly	
Parent(s) with a young child or two	
Commuter	
Other (please describe) _____	

5. **From what you know about the riders and their stops, what is the purpose of rider trips?** Check all that apply

Commuter	
Medical appointments	
Taking kid(s) to school	
Grocery shopping	
Other types of shopping	
Other (please describe) _____	

6. **From what you know about the riders and their stops, why do riders use the bus?** Check all that apply

No other means of transportation	
Save money	
Too young to drive	
No working car	
Good for environment	
Other (please describe) _____	

7. **From what you know about the riders and their stops, why do riders use particular stops?** Check all that apply

Stop is close to their destination	
Stop is quite close to their destination and has the most convenient time to catch the bus	
Stop has a bus shelter – good for rain/ snow/ windy days	
No stop, rider flagged down the bus while walking along route	
Stop is close to a place to park a car	
Stop is close to a convenient place to be dropped off by someone	
Other (please describe) _____	

8. **How often do you get a new person on the bus? Do they continue using the bus, or stop after just a few trips?** If they stopped quite soon after trying the bus, why do you think they did not continue?

_____

_____

9. **What patterns have you seen in ridership?** Overall rise? Quite stable? Some loses? Major seasonal variations? Any particular user types using the buses more or less?

_____

_____

_____

10. **Have you seen a change in ridership since approximately June 2014? If yes, why do you think it has changed?** (eg Introduction of fares? Regular bus rider moved out of town or their schedule has changed? Other reasons?)

_____

_____

_____

11. **Do you have any other useful information to share that might be helpful when evaluating a route? Anything else to consider that might help tweak a route to improve ridership, efficiencies, reduce deadheading, etc?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND INPUT!

Do you ride The Current buses?

Would you use a bus if you could?

Southeast Vermont Transit has been evaluating some of "The Current" bus routes in the Springfield, Bellows Falls and Ludlow areas.

We had great response to our January 2016 survey.
Now we want to continue the conversation!

Public Meetings
Tuesday April 12, 2016
11am and 5pm
Springfield Town Hall, 96 Main St

Please help us evaluate our local routes!

For more information about the project, including the draft report, see www.swcrpc.org
For more information on existing bus routes, see www.crtransit.org

SWCRPC
SOUTHERN WINDSOR COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Getting to the meetings by bus:

- Anyone riding the bus to the meeting can ride for free. Just tell the driver you are going to the meeting
- 11am meeting - From Springfield – The in-town route stops outside the Town Hall about 10:47am and 11:25am and can pick you up at either 1:35 or 2:30
- 11am meeting - From Bellows Falls – You can take #55 from Penguin Mart at 9am to the Springfield Plaza. You can take #55 back to Bellows Falls (pick up from the State Offices around 2:24pm).

APPENDIX E – INPUT FROM THE GENERAL PUBLIC (INCLUDING PUBLIC MEETINGS)

In addition to the survey, input from the general public was gathered from approximately 40 people, many of whom had not answered the survey. The following opportunities were available:

- Email comments on draft report due April 22, 2016
- Written comments on facebook page for The Current
- Public meetings on April 12, 2016 at 11am and 5pm at the Springfield Town Hall.
- The project was also an agenda item for the following regular committees: Springfield Medical Cares System Regional Transportation Committee (3/21/2016), Southern Windsor County Transportation Advisory Committee (4/27/2016), and the Chester Economic Development Committee (5/4/2016)

Most of the people at the meetings or emailing comments did not answer the survey because either:

- They do not anticipate using the bus
- Did not know about it
- Forwarded it to colleagues and clients, but not relevant for them personally

The following responses were given in response to specific questions at the public meetings:

1. What do you like about The Current bus service?
    a. Goes to the Parent Child Center
    b. Community oriented – eg driver who reported a porch fire
2. What would you like to see improved?
    a. More frequency – eg once an hour
    b. More places
    c. Timing – eg commuters to Sonnax and Chrona
    d. Better connections between towns and buses
    e. Better marketing/ improve awareness of existing services
    f. Greater flexibility for services off the Fixed Routes

The following ideas and comments were raised:

1. Payment and Fares
    a. $2 fare is too much for the bus, particularly for those who qualify for Medicaid or E&D rides which are free and provide door-to-door service
    b. Please consider fare cards where you can make purchases online using debit card, rather than cash payments on the bus
    c. Consider monthly or weekly unlimited transportation fare cards – punch cards or pre-purchased cards. Agencies like Economic Services could buy them for their clients
2. Bus stops
    a. Try to make some bus stops need to be more obvious – eg those along River St in Springfield. Maybe adding bus shelters would help make them more obvious
    b. Consider adding Springfield Rehab as a stop – only half mile from hospital and many relatives want to go there (2 comments)
    c. Bellows Falls Health Center and Springfield Hospital – one potential reason for fewer people getting on the bus than expected is that both locations are at the top of a hill so riders need the ride to the site, but are okay to walk down the hill afterward.
    d. Penguin Mart Hub could potentially be moved to public parking lot between the American legion and the Windham Antique Center if a covered bus stop was added.
3. Luggage
    a. Please add the ability to take small animals in carriers on the bus
    b. Please increase the limit for the number of bags allowed on a bus
    c. Taking bikes on buses is a good feature.
4. Routes
    a. Some ideas for potential new runs/ extensions:

        a. Mid-day run from Bellows Falls to Brattleboro
        b. Loop of Chester, Ludlow and Springfield, including service to Ludlow's Shaws, Hospital, Springfield Plaza, etc
        c. Year round service to Chester
        d. Chester to Bellows Falls
        e. Service to Londonderry
        f. Commuter related service to Sonnax and Chrona (Bellows Falls)
    b. Some ideas for changes to route timing:
        a. Additional runs in the middle of the day from Bellows Falls to Springfield so riders are not left in town for 5-6 hours for just one appointment
        b. Add later buses – especially after 5pm
        c. Add earlier buses – particularly from Bellows Falls to Springfield for Vocational Rehabilitation orientation
    a. Please consider adding a route from North Springfield to Chester Green – 8/8:30 to Chester, 5 back to North Springfield
5. Dial-A-Ride
    a. Consider adding additional capacity for Dial-A-Ride service during peak hours. (A potential rider phoned for ride from Chester several times but could not get a ride because the Dial-A-Ride bus was full.)
6. Schools
    a. Consider assisting the school district to provide transportation for people in temporary housing. Springfield school district has their own buses, but has trouble getting people from temporary housing to the schools in Springfield since the temporary housing is either out of town or off the school bus routes.
    b. Consider adding stops near schools
7. Employment/ Businesses
    a. "Can't get to work" is a common comment at local Job Fairs
    b. The business community is eager to be engaged
8. Education/ Marketing
    a. Consider providing trainings, brochures, and information on the following topics:
        a. Where existing services run, including special services such as the Claremont Shopper
        b. How to flag down a bus
        c. Guaranteed ride home
    b. Consider re-designing brochures so they are easier to understand. For example:
        a. Rename some stops using addresses rather than business name
        b. On maps indicate which side of the road bus stops are on.
    c. When doing outreach consider the following methods:
        a. Visit Selectboards
        b. Visit Town Meetings
        c. Add links on town websites
        d. Use facebook more – eg Springfield School District page, business pages, etc
        e. Use local blogs more – eg Springfield VT blog
        f. Use radio