



Bennington Bus Report

House Transportation Committee

January 20, 2016

Costa Pappis, VTrans Policy and Planning





Bennington Bus Report

Sec. 11. STUDY OF MONTPELIER TO ST. ALBANS COMMUTER RAIL SERVICE, ALBANY TO BENNINGTON TO MANCHESTER BUS SERVICE

(b) The Agency, in consultation with the Joint Fiscal Office, shall study the expected benefits and costs to the State of Vermont, implementation steps, and timeline associated with various models for initiating and operating an Albany to Bennington to Manchester bus service, and shall report its findings and any recommendations to the House and Senate Committees on Transportation on or before January 15, 2016.

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Purpose

- Provide connectivity between Bennington and Manchester to New York.
- Focus on connections to the Albany-Rensselaer Rail Station.
 - Yankee Trails provides service to Bennington but does not connect to the Albany-Rensselaer rail station.
 - Route 7 Intercity bus route serves Bennington and Manchester but does not connect to the Albany-Rensselaer rail station.

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Four Options Examined

- Amtrak Thruway Service (Amtrak provides the service).
- State-Managed Intercity Carrier
- Local Transit Provider
- Re-route Existing Route 7 Bus to the Rail Station

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Methodology

- Requested cost-estimates from Amtrak, local transit provider, and averaged intercity bus rates submitted by private carriers for other VTrans services
- Cost-estimate parameters:
 - 3,400 trips annually
 - Based on Amtrak's optimal schedule
 - Estimates for both a full 50-seat motor coach and smaller vehicle
- All options examined include 2 return-daily trips except for the re-routing option.



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Optimal Schedule Based on Amtrak's Analysis

VERMONT DEDICATED THRUWAY CONNECTION										
6280	6268	◀ Thruway Bus ▶						6269	6237	6253
Daily	Daily	◀ Normal Days of Operation ▶						Daily	Mo-Fr	SaSu
		Mile	▼			▲				
7 20A	3 10P	0	Dp	Manchester, VT		Ar	1 15P	9 10P	9 55P	
8 10A	3 50P	25	Dp	Bennington, VT		Ar	12 35P	8 30P	9 15P	
9 30A	5 10P	65	Ar	Albany/Rensselaer, NY		Dp	11 10A	7 20P	8 05P	
280/254	68	◀ Connecting Train Number ▶						69	237	253
Daily	Daily	◀ Normal Days of Operation ▶						Daily	Mo-Fr	SaSu
		Mile	▼			▲				
10 10A	5 40P	0	Dp	Albany/Rensselaer, NY		Ar	10 50A	7 00P	7 45P	
10 35A	6 08P	28		Hudson, NY			10 20A	6 33P	7 15P	
10 56A	6 29P	53		Rhinecliff, NY			10 00A	6 13P	6 55P	
11 15A	6 45P	68		Poughkeepsie, NY			9 45A		6 40P	
11 55A	7 25P	109		Croton-Harmon, NY			9 03A		5 58P	
	7 46P	127		Yonkers, NY			8 44A		5 39P	
12 50P	8 20P	142	Ar	New York, NY - Penn Station		Dp	8 15A	4 40P	5 15P	





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Cost-Estimates for Each Options

Options	Full 50-Seat Motor Coach	12-15 Seat Vehicle
Amtrak Thruway Service	\$490,544	\$392,435
State-Managed Intercity Bus Carrier	\$379,600	\$237,250
Local Transit Provider	N/A	\$229,950
Rerouting Existing Burlington-Albany InterCity Bus Route	No change from current	No change from current

N/A: Not Available



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Advantages and Disadvantages: Amtrak Thruway

Advantages

- National Amtrak Through-Ticketing – This option will place Bennington and Manchester in the national reservation system, allowing travelers to book a trip from anywhere on the national Amtrak system.
- Amtrak Brand – Bus shuttle will feature the Amtrak brand, therefore offering significant marketing and branding opportunities.
- Experienced in Providing Such Service – Amtrak has provided such services throughout the country for over a decade.
- Ridership Growth – there is a higher probability that ridership will grow in the long-run. The combination of national through-ticketing, Amtrak service levels and brand, makes it more likely that residents and visitors will use the service.

Disadvantages

- Costlier Option – This option is estimated to cost approximately \$111,000 more to operate annually than a state-managed intercity carrier for full 50-seat motor coach, and \$155,000 more for a 12-15 seat vehicle.
- Uncertainty over Future Costs – PRRIA Section 209 State Cost-Sharing provisions have injected significant uncertainty in costing-out such services on state partnership basis, as well as accounting for future Amtrak costs.

Advantages and Disadvantages: Intercity Carrier

Advantages

- More Affordable Option – This option costs significantly less than the Amtrak Thruway option for a full 50-seat motor coach, and a 12-15 seat vehicle.
- Experienced in Providing Shuttle Services – Intercity bus carriers have been under contract with Vermont to provide similar services along I-91, U.S 7 and U.S 4, and currently provide shuttle services in several states.
- National Amtrak Through-Ticketing – If negotiated with Amtrak, this option will place Bennington and Manchester in the national reservation system, allowing travelers to book a trip from anywhere on the national Amtrak system.
- Amtrak Brand – If negotiated with Amtrak, bus shuttles could feature the Amtrak brand.
- Ridership Growth – there is a higher probability that ridership will grow in the long-run if this option includes access to Amtrak’s national reservation system and brand.

Disadvantages

- Complex Multi-Party Agreements – Will require VTrans negotiate with a private carrier, who in turn will negotiate with Amtrak.

Advantages and Disadvantages: Local Transit

Advantages

- Knowledge of Local Travel Markets – Of all options, GMCN has the best knowledge of local travel patterns and could more easily adapt services and bus stops to account for local preferences.
- Best Suited to Coordinate Local Transit – As the local and regional transit provider for Bennington County, GMCN is best positioned to integrate connecting rail service with local transit.
- National Amtrak Through-Ticketing – If negotiated with Amtrak, this option will place Bennington and Manchester in the national reservation system, allowing travelers to book a trip from anywhere on the national Amtrak system.
- Amtrak Brand – If negotiated with Amtrak, bus shuttles could feature the Amtrak brand.
- Ridership Growth – there is a higher probability that ridership will grow in the long-run if this option includes access to Amtrak’s national reservation system and brand.

Disadvantages

- Options for Larger Vehicle - Does not provide options for a 50-seat motor coach, making difficult to meet any future growth in demand. The transit provider may need to acquire a 50-seat motor coach.
- Experience in Providing Services - GMCN does not have experience providing such services or negotiating agreements with Amtrak.

Advantages and Disadvantages: Re-routing Option

Advantages

- Service Already in Place – This service already exists, and would require replacing the existing airport stop with the rail station stop. It is, therefore, the easiest of the options to implement.
- Likely Increase Ridership Along the Entire U.S. 7 Route – The rail station will likely attract more ridership route-wide than the airport stop.

Disadvantages

- Would No Longer Serve the Albany Airport – The rerouted service will result in dropping the airport service since the driver would ‘time-out’ under the current contract.
- Lowest Level of Service – This service is established as a daily return-trip, and provides the lowest level of service compared to all other options. It is likely to result in the lowest ridership of all options.
- National Amtrak Through-ticketing – This option will not provide national through-ticketing. Travelers will be responsible for purchasing separate fares for both the bus service and Amtrak service.
- Amtrak Brand – Does not include access to the Amtrak brand or associated marketing opportunities.
- Ridership Growth - Ridership is not anticipated to grow as quickly as other options due to the lack of national through-ticketing and access to the Amtrak brand.

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Implementation Timelines

- 1) Amtrak Thruway Service – 3-9 months, will require an agreement with Amtrak, may require agreement with New York for PRIIA Sec 209 purposes.
- 2) State-Managed Intercity Bus Carrier – 3-6 months, will require competitive bidding, coordination with rail station for boarding/deboarding passengers, and may require through-ticketing or interline agreement with Amtrak.
- 3) Local Transit Provider – 3-6 months, will require coordinating with rail station for boarding/deboarding passengers, and may require through-ticketing or interline agreement with Amtrak.
- 4) Rerouting Existing Burlington-Albany InterCity Bus Route – 1-3 months, will require renegotiating existing contract with intercity bus provider, coordination with rail station for boarding/deboarding passengers.

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Caveats

- Broad-level cost-estimates based on provider experience – negotiations may impact estimates
- Dependent on third parties to reach through-ticketing / interline agreements with Amtrak
- Station planning required.



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Questions / Comments?

