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Public Transit Ridership Study

Barbara Donovan

Public Transit Program Manager

Agency of Transportation

barbara.donovan@vermont.gov

802-828-2828

Thank you for asking me here today to testify to the request for a Public Transit Ridership Study

described in P 16 of 27 * * * Public Transit Study * * * Sec. 16. STUDY OF METHODS TO

INCREASE PUBLIC TRANSIT RIDERSHIP IN VERMONT.

The basic purposes of the study are to determine what more can be done to increase ridership in Vermont.

The basic approach is to look at issues such as route and population distribution; parking availability; quality of service; options for first and last mile connectivity; availability of volunteers, micro transit and ride hailing services such as UBER and LYFT; and the joint procurement of services among state agencies among others.

It also includes consultation with other partners in the state, review of current literature and existing and ongoing studies, plans, and activities and their results. It includes the use of the gap analysis from the ongoing Public Transit Policy Plan and other activities to determine new investments. Some of these investments might include sidewalk and crossing improvements, bike storage and shelters, new technologies for payment, bus arrivals and trip planning. The study ends with a request that it be presented to the transportation committees by January 15, 2020 and include a recommendation on how to fund the recommendations outside of the current budget.

Sec. 16. STUDY OF METHODS TO INCREASE PUBLIC TRANSIT

RIDERSHIP IN VERMONT

(a) As Vermont plans for a future with reduced greenhouse gas emissions as determined in the State Energy Plan, improvements to transit service to enhance the use of mobility options and accessibility will be critical to achieving the State's environmental goals.

(b) The Agency of Transportation shall, in consultation with stakeholders such as the Vermont Public Transportation Association, the Public Transit Advisory Council, human services agencies, hospitals, nonprofit agencies that provide transportation to their clients, as well as any other stakeholders that are identified, study methods to increase use of public transit in Vermont for both residents and visitors that:

(1) determines what factors limit the use of public transit, as defined in State statute, in Vermont including proximity to routes, availability of park and rides, quality of service delivered, first and last mile(s) hinderances, use and availability of ride-hailing services, availability and ease of use of volunteer resources, joint procurement of services among State agencies, and other factors as identified by the Agency;

(2) reviews the current research on what methods best serve to increase ridership, particularly in small cities and rural areas, including research published by the Transportation Research Board and other national groups, data collected during the outreach for the Public Transit Policy Plan (PTPP), recent plans published by the Agency of Human Services, and other State agencies;

(3) assesses the status of current initiatives the Agency and others are undertaking to deliver increased service, the PTPP, opioid transportation, micro-transit project in Montpelier, automated vehicle location applications, trip planners, mobility management, and other initiatives;

(4) assesses how best to use the gap analysis results from the PTPP to take advantage of available seats on current transit routes and to determine the most effective new service investments; and

(5) identifies what infrastructure and delivery improvements might contribute to increased transit ridership, including use of micro-transit, rural route development and feeder route development by transit providers, transitioning to cleaner and more efficient vehicles, improved or new sidewalks and bike paths, improved bicycle storage facilities, road crossing enhancements, and reservations and ride availability applications.

(c) The Agency shall deliver a written report of its findings and any recommendations, including on where and how to make the most effective improvements in service and criteria to use to determine the priorities of investments, to the House and Senate Committees on Transportation on or before January 15, 2020.

(d) The Agency shall evaluate recommendations for potential inclusion in its fiscal year 2021 budget proposal as a request for the funding necessary to achieve the recommendations determined by the working group pursuant to subsection (b) of this section. The request for funding shall be separate and distinct from the Agency's funding request for public transit.