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Dear House Transportation Committee,

The Sustainable Montpelier Coalition (SMC) was the community partner with Green Mountain Transit starting October 15th 2020 through January 2023. VTrans funded this work through two MTI Grants in '21 & '22.

Building Community Relationships - SMC established relationships with over 80 businesses, organizations and individuals in the service area. These contacts assisted in sharing information to their workers, clients and constituents regarding aspects of the pilot project.

Onboard Surveys – SMC staff conducted the pre-launch survey and the customer survey that was conducted in October 2022.

MyRide Community Advisory Group (MRCAG) support – SMC initially offered support to MRCAG during the first year.

Launch – The week of MyRide’s launch in January 2021, SMC:

- were the boots on the ground.
- trained volunteers who were at previous bus stops helping to instruct riders how to reserve a MyRide trip.
- developed relationships with transit dependent riders.
- posted large notices at bus stops, Shaw’s Montpelier & Berlin, CVMC, the Mall, and the Montpelier Transit Center.
- provided telephone support – SMC’s phone number was listed on posters for additional support.
 - The first few weeks of the service SMC fielded calls to instruct riders how to use the service.
- Held office hours at two Montpelier Housing Authority locations as well as the Hilltop and Days Inn.
 - Assisting residents on how to access the call center and use their phones to download the app.
- Trained the help desk at Walmart, Shaws, Price Chopper, CVMC, and the Coop on how to assist customers with calling a ride.

Year 1 – Goal – Transit dependent riders feel confident using the new service.

- provided ongoing support to transit dependent riders
- advocated for transit phones in key locations for those without cell phones – Montpelier Transit Center, the Mall, Berlin and Montpelier Shaws.
- determined service challenges that could be addressed and shared these with GMT.

Year 2 – Goal – Choice riders use the pilot program

- Faces of MyRide – created 45 second interviews with Choice Riders. The interviews were promoted monthly in the Bridge with a picture and a QR code for readers to scan to watch the interview. Mayor Anne Watson, Teacher Peter Watt, Gay Pride organizer Elaine Ball, Student Issy Strout, Disabilities Advocate Peter Jonke and others were interviewed. These videos were also promoted on social media: Montpelier Area Friends and Montpelier Area Events.
- Outreach to area businesses – Montpelier Alive, Montpelier Downtown Business Association, National Life, Union Mutual, VSECU, Hunger Mountain Coop to give employers information to share with their workers on the service to reduce parking stress in those locations.

65,000 rides were provided by MyRide in its first two years. When I rode the bus in October to perform the Current Rider Survey, I was amazed to see how many new people are riding the bus! One of the major advantages of MyRide is that it has an increased service area. Riders were being picked up throughout Montpelier and Berlin. Many of these riders explained that they are workers who now use the bus to get to work, medical appointment and do their shopping.

Our transportation group wrote two MTI grants that were not awarded: 1) to share our learnings from our two years of experience with the MyRide Pilot Project that could be used by other Vermont Communities. 2) a targeted door to door survey of downtown businesses – what owners/workers use for transportation and what incentives would it take for them to adopt microtransit. Sadly, VTrans did not have the resources to fund these two grants.

The extensive outreach that SMC did as GMT's community partner helped to support current riders and invite choice riders to use the system. GMT, like other transit providers in Vermont, does a great job, however they do not have the staffing sufficient to provide the community outreach necessary for support establishing microtransit service in a community.

All communities launching microtransit in Vermont need to have this additional community support. I encourage you to increase the MTI funding for VTrans in the coming year. Building relationships is key to the success of this service and other innovative transportation services in Vermont.

Warmly,

Elizabeth