

Appendix VI

Community Transit Long Range Transit Plan

Focus Groups

Prepared by:
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1. TRANSIT RIDER FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Transit Rider Focus Group Summary Report

June 4, 2009

Prepared for:
Community Transit

Prepared by:
Norton-Arnold & Company
With Nelson/Nygaard Consulting Associates

Workshop Summary Report

Community Transit conducted a rider focus group on Wednesday, May 27 at Everett Station in Everett, Washington. Community Transit recruited riders from their existing riders' database and invited eighteen riders that represent a cross-section of their customer base to participate in the focus group. Five riders attended the focus group; all described themselves as regular riders, using Community Transit primarily to commute to and from work, but also for errands and other trips.

The two-hour focus group was designed to share information about Community Transit's Long Range Transit Plan and vision for a corridor-based transit system that encourages riders to "Think Transit First." In addition, the focus group was designed to gather feedback from attendees regarding the long-term vision of Community Transit and their proposal to move over time to a network of fast, frequent, high quality transit services operating in transit emphasis corridors.

The information gathered at this event will be used to shape and influence the draft Long Range Transit Plan, which is due to be complete in June 2009. An open house will then be held to receive comments, feedback, and advice on the draft plan. This feedback will, in turn, be used to shape and influence the final Plan.

Workshop Format

The focus group was devoted to a group discussion that enabled attendees to share their thoughts, perspectives, and ideas directly with consulting team members. The discussion guide used for this session is included as an appendix to this report.

The first discussion session was focused on the *Use Cases*. The group was asked to comment on a list of questions about their existing usage of Community Transit's services – what kind of transit riding do you do? How often, when and where? And, they were asked to share any explanation for changes in their ridership habits. They were then asked specific ridership questions about their daily transit habits, routes, perceived barriers to transit, and opinions about the corridor vision and its potential advantages/disadvantages.

Although the group used the bus system in different locations, there was a remarkable degree of consistency between the various participants as they answered the questions posed to them. The "raw notes" from each session are attached as an appendix to this report, and a broad summary of all of the group discussions follows here. *(In the final report we will attach the raw notes as an appendix.)*

Focus Group Findings

In general, focus group participants agreed that Community Transit was on the right track with their vision and transit emphasis corridors. They thought the vision of transit emphasis corridors was valid and forward thinking considering projected growth and growing congestion in the region. However, they also had several new ideas to suggest to Community Transit as it continues on its task of developing a Long Range Transit Plan.

The **most important themes** that focus group participants conveyed to Community Transit about their ridership habits and their opinion of the proposed corridor-based system were:

Use Cases

- Participants cited *environmental reasons* for choosing public transit over driving. They also talked about the *financial savings* and *health benefits* of not being car dependent. They also noted the *camaraderie* of other passengers and the driver as an added perk. They mentioned preferring commuter buses for their *comfort* as well as *routes that served destinations, ran late, and were convenient* including the 201, 511, 535, and 113.
- All five participants used Community Transit buses to commute to work from Martha Lake, Mukilteo, Arlington, and Everett. There was a widely-held view that *using the bus to commute is less stressful than driving and alleviates having to find and pay for parking*. Participants wanted to make sure that Community Transit was aware that an *easy walk to a bus stop and the frequency of bus service* are big determinants of a routes' ridership. If it is difficult or unsafe to get to a stop or there's risk of missing a bus that runs infrequently, commuters will take their cars. One participant said she used the bus for shopping but only because the bus pick up and drop off locations were convenient.

Ridership Questions

- On a related note, all of the participants wanted Community Transit to clearly understand that *frequency of buses and late night service* is critical to ridership along with *providing bus shelters* and *easy access to transit stops*. Participants were eager see their transit improvements realized in the form of well-lit bus shelters and designated crosswalks or pedestrian overpasses. They also envisioned Park N' Rides closer to bus stops and bus stops nearer to destinations such as shopping centers and grocery stores.
- There was a concerted outcry for making public transit more convenient. A broad frustration was that many walking routes to bus stops are unsafe since there aren't any sidewalks, are often unlit, and generally aren't pleasant to use. Several participants mentioned that some Everett locations are hard to get to (i.e. Everett Mall). Everyone attending believed that *increasing frequency of service and establishing longer late night hours* would make a significant difference in implementing a corridor-based transit system; the concept of busses running so frequently that schedules don't matter resonated with the group.

Barriers

- All of the groups acknowledged that foregoing the freedom of a car for the bus is difficult proposition for most people. The perception that you need to plan ahead and that busing is an inefficient use of time is widespread. There was a great deal of interest in communicating to the public that *public transit is often faster and more direct than driving* when you factor in drive time, looking for parking, and walking from parking to your location. Participants also commented about the lack of convenient and frequent bus stops, sidewalks, as well as the lack of rapid service to destinations.

Program Proposals

- *Frequency* was a major theme and top priority for the group. Riders agreed that buses on a corridor-based system need to run often and provide easy transfer points. Knowing another bus will be along shortly, they said, will help encourage people to get out of their cars and onto the bus. Participants did caution that avoiding route redundancy will be an important consideration when determining the transit corridors.
- There was broad and eager consensus on spacing one bus stop per mile as a second priority. Participants recognized that stops cannot be in front of everyone's house. Therefore, they recommended that stops be well-lit shelters to protect transit riders from the elements and to make them feel less like second class citizens. Focus group participants said they would be willing to walk greater distances to bus stops if bus frequency increased and the way to the bus stop was easy to navigate and safe.
- Several of the participants felt that transfers should be the third priority. They agreed that transfers should be at short intervals and that riders need to be able to see the bus transfer stops easily. They wanted to make certain that transfers were used at a minimum, user-friendly, and placed preferably near shelter or retail.
- Similarly, *faster travel using bus-only lanes and technologies to give buses priority* were emphasized as another third priority amongst the group. Everyone liked the idea of faster transit but again raised the concern of duplicating routes. Participants did encourage Community Transit to create fast east-west connections to the new SWIFT buses.
- Another third tier priority was new Park N' Rides focused in the urban/rural transition area with smaller parking lots. The group did not see this as a critical action and suggested that existing Park N' Rides should serve as transfer locations when possible. There was broad agreement that *an east-west connection to SWIFT buses* would be a much more effective approach than building Park N' Rides in the urban/rural transition area.

Advantages/Disadvantages

- The group was excited to learn about increased bus frequency and faster service along transit corridors but feared buses slowing down SWIFT and headway between buses.
- The group requested that with any road improvement projects, there be an effort to consider the whole picture not just cars. They strongly advised that pedestrians and buses be included in the equation.
- Focus group participants were fearful that big, sprawling lots would be built to accommodate need at the outer edges of the urban/rural areas. Therefore, if Park N' Rides have to be built they suggested building vertical structures rather than lots to conserve land. They also commented that perhaps lots can serve a higher and better use as areas near Park N' Rides develop.

- They stated that when building a transit corridor, the ability to transfer, having a covered and lit shelter, and easy street crossings to get a bus should not be undervalued.
- Participants saw transit corridors being more effective than vanpools. They clarified that vanpools are better for larger employers or when no one wants to drive. They said that they would not want to deal with setting up vanpools; therefore, bus transit should take priority.
- They said that transit emphasis corridors are cost effective and efficient. They ensure faster trips and more frequent buses for the majority. Transit emphasis corridors reduce overlapping efforts, therefore, it will be important to increase coordination with other transit agencies, especially with Everett Transit.

DISCUSSION GUIDE – Transit Rider Group

Sample Invitation for Rider Group

The reason I have asked you these questions is to invite you to take part in a research session taking place at Everett Station to talk about Community Transit’s future plans for transit service. The session takes place on:

May 27 at 6 p.m. The meeting is scheduled to last about 2 hours. In appreciation of your time, you will receive a \$10 ORCA card for your participation. There is plenty of free parking. Does this sound like something you would like to do?

Your full participation may require you to see written material, both up close and on a wall. Please remember to bring your glasses if you normally wear them for these types of activities.

Light refreshments will be provided.

00:00 Introduction

(Moderator introduces self, unbiased third party, and then explains:)

Purpose of the Focus Group:

We’re holding this discussion with you today to understand some of your feelings about the long-term vision of Community Transit and what it means to you and your bus ridership habits. We’ll discuss these topics and then we’ll talk about a few potential service changes later on and ask your opinions about them.

What is Community Transit’s Vision?

Community Transit recognizes the need for planning a future that goes well beyond maintaining the system of the past 20 years. Population growth, traffic congestion,

regional transit measures and efforts to build a sustainable community for the future cause us to re-consider our future. We have adopted a Big Harry Audacious Goal (BHAG) of “Think Transit First.” We envision that, in the future, people will view public transportation as their first mode of transportation. The ease and comfort of being transported will make driving their private car a second choice. The long range transit plan is just one part of our efforts to make our “Think Transit First” vision a reality.

This focus group will help inform Community Transit’s Long Range Transit Plan, and messaging for their community outreach effort.

What is the Long Range Transit Plan?

The long range transit plan will identify the policies and service strategies that will help Community Transit support the “Think Transit First” vision. More than just a written plan, the long range plan will begin a process of coordinating public transportation services with local communities’ plans. Over time, we look toward development of compact transit oriented development that can be supported with a network of fast, frequent, high quality transit services, operating in transit emphasis corridors.

So first we’ll get the housekeeping rules and announcements out of the way, we’ll introduce ourselves, and then we’ll begin the discussion.

Ground Rules/Disclosures:

- Some viewers/listeners
- Taping, note taking for program development purposes
- Use first names only for anonymity
- Can only hear one at a time; speak up at same level as I am or louder so that we can all hear
- No right or wrong answers, want your honest ideas, perceptions, and suggestions
- We don’t identify individuals when we quote ideas, but present the information in a combined form
- While we promise to keep the information confidential (i.e. not associated with individuals by name) we can only ask and hope that you would do the same and that you respect each others’ privacy and not repeat any personal details once you leave this room

Respondent Introductions:

First name? What city/town you live in?

00:10 Use Cases

1. What kind of transit riding do you do if any? (prompts: trips, errands, commuting... discuss)
2. Where do you get on and off the bus?
3. How often do you ride Community Transit?
4. What prompts you to use Community Transit's service when you do?
5. If you run errands by bus, which ones do you run? Which ones do you choose not to run by bus? Why?
6. Do other members of your household use Community Transit (children, partner, other)? Do they ride the bus with you?
7. Has your bus ridership changed over the last several years? To what do you attribute that change? (prompts: more/less service, bus frequency, fuel/parking prices, concern over climate impacts of driving)

Ridership Questions:

1. Think back to the last day you rode the bus. When was that and what prompted you to ride the bus? (prompts: convenience, less expensive than driving, etc.)
2. What is it about the routes that you ride on and the destinations you ride to that appeal to you? What features attract you to ride the bus there?
3. What is it about the trips you don't make by bus that makes them different?
4. What do you need to know about the routes and facilities in your community to make it easier to ride the bus more often? (prompts: better information, more frequent service, express routes etc.) What other changes would encourage you to choose to ride the bus more often?
5. How do you see yourself using transit in the future?
6. What role do you see transit playing in economic development? (provide examples to illustrate the connection)

Barriers

What are the primary barriers that keep you from busing more often? (prompt if necessary: too many transfers; lack of service; don't know where the bus routes are; lack of service connections; poor night service)

01:00 Program Proposals

Community Transit is completing a study about moving to a corridor-based system that closely ties transit improvements with development patterns along major travel corridors.

The Long Range Transit Plan will begin a process of coordinating public transportation services with local communities' plans. The goal is to create a network of high quality

transit services, with frequent and speedy transit routes operating along a network of transit emphasis corridors that support compact transit oriented development.

Present the corridor vision, one element at a time, asking participants about the importance of each: (prioritize elements)

- Frequent service, operating on nights and weekends.
- Stops limited to about one per mile, usually at major activity centers. Local services will continue to use intermediate stops.
- Faster travel, taking advantage of bus-only lanes and technologies that give buses priority at intersections.
- Transfers to other corridors at major intersections.
- New park & ride capacity will be focused in the urban/rural transition area with smaller lots (200 spaces) collecting riders. An emphasis will be placed on bus feeder service to major facilities like Ash Way Park & Ride and Lynnwood Transit Center rather than expanding parking at those locations.

Discuss the perceived advantages and disadvantages of the corridor vision:

Imagine that a major street in your neighborhood was converted into a transit emphasis corridor. As a result, buses ran every fifteen minutes on weekdays and every thirty minutes on nights and weekends. By limiting stops and speeding travel, a trip that once took you thirty minutes can now be completed in only twenty.

- Would this make you likely to use the bus more often?
- Suppose that you would no longer be able to get off the bus right in front of your destination, as you can now, but would have to walk six blocks. You would still have a faster ride than today but would need to walk farther. What impact would this have on your willingness to ride the bus?
- Now suppose that you would have to transfer buses, where you now have a direct trip. What impact would this have on your willingness to ride the bus?
- Would it make any difference if:
 - You knew the bus you are transferring to will arrive within ten minutes
 - There is a lit and sheltered waiting location while you wait for the bus
 - You would not be required to cross the street

Somewhere in this discussion it will be important to remind riders that:

- Less-frequent, local services maintain connections to outlying communities as well as neighborhoods in more urbanized areas. Note, however, that a priority will be placed on increasing service levels in primary corridors rather than more dispersed locales.
- Vanpools are another option for areas not served directly by bus service.

Summary Discussion of Corridor Vision

Now that we've talked in detail about the transit emphasis corridors, do you think they are a good idea that Community Transit should pursue? Why or why not?

01:50 Wrap up

Is there anything else that we haven't mentioned that you would like to tell Community Transit to do to address how transit fits into your vision of the future?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH for taking the time to participate in this focus group.

Raw notes: Transit Rider Focus Group

Reasons for taking the bus

- Environmental reasons
- Saves money, cheaper than owning and maintaining a car
- Exercise by walking to and from the bus
- Frequency of buses that helps to reduce car trips
- Bad traffic; can spend less on roads by not putting cars on the road
- Can read, sleep, or enjoy being driven

Why do you like routes?

- Friends on the bus.
- Friendly drivers.
- 201: like going to the mall, runs late and convenient to downtown Seattle
- 511: runs late and convenient to downtown Seattle
- Commuter buses are comfortable, one can sleep
- 535: Ash Way Park N' Ride takes you almost everywhere
- 113 to Mukilteo

Usage

- Martha Lake, Lynnwood: one mile from stop

- Mukilteo: 417 to downtown
- Arlington: ended up living here by circumstance, not based on transit service. Commute from here, takes 45 minutes. Walk to stop. Often travel to Snohomish
- Arlington: drive there because there's no parking or transit. Go to Everett Station to get to S. Everett
- Everett 128th: Ashway Park & Ride, 511 bus to Seattle, chose where I settled based on transit
- Arlington: 3 days per week. And daily for another rider
- Use for commuting and for shopping
 - Like not worrying about parking, more relaxing
- At Martha Lake, you can wait a long time if you miss the bus
- Smoky Point is crowded and it is hard to get a parking spot
- Use for commute typically the 105 and 114 buses. Also can walk to Ash Way approximately two miles
- Commute to Bothell, North Creek
- Ride almost everyday on the weekdays mainly
- Commute to Mukilteo everyday
- 128th: Use it for everything as I don't drive especially the 511

What would make you ride Community Transit more?

- Frequency: If work runs late, I miss the bus.
 - Going from 15 minutes to every hour is a big change
- Stagger buses so you have better service coverage
- It would be nice to not have to drive for an evening out
- Provide shelters
- In the morning 4-11am the buses are well-used therefore, frequency is critical
 - Late nights past midnight are also critical
- Park n' Rides
 - Make them close to bus stops
 - Offer secure parking like at Ash Way
- Parking
 - Utilize grocery store lots
 - Riders would shop there if there was access
- Pedestrian friendly ways to catch the bus
 - Use pedestrian overpasses for easy access
 - Include designated crosswalks

When don't you use transit?

- Shopping at Costco but will use it for minor shopping by walking to store and busing back
- One person admitted she only uses the buses for commuting to work
- If transit is not convenient, riders won't use it
- Will not use it if they have to walk on dangerous roads with no sidewalks
- Hard to get to Everett locations specifically the Everett Mall
- The bus to Darrington from Arlington doesn't operate long enough to do a full eight hour day at work

Role in economic development?

- Low wage residents rely on it
- Transit is as important as office buildings
- Has to be easy, cheap, and efficient to get people to work
- 240 – run it more often
- Sometimes transit seems adversarial with businesses
 - Don't want riders/transit to coexist
 - Transit and businesses should work together
- Transit sometimes seems like an afterthought
 - Alderwood Mall example
 - Malls are car-focused, looks at riders as second class citizens

Barriers

- Car still gives more freedom
- People like to drive
- Have to plan more when taking the bus
- Perception that you are mismanaging your time on the bus
- Lack of understanding; bus is a lot faster many times and it's not scary to ride it
- Not getting off at the same location where you get on

- Lack of sidewalks – development patterns
- Bus stops are too far apart
- Bus stops are too close together, too much time spent stopping
- Location of stops - not near convenient locations

Program Proposals

- Distance to bus stops are hard to make perfect for everyone
- Physical obstacles to stops: Need to be pedestrian-friendly
- Less about distance, more about safety, pedestrian-friendly measures
- Connect communities without having to go to Everett Transit Center
- Less redundant trips to Seattle from independent locations
- Faster service, bus only is also a third tier priority
- Prioritize #1: Frequency
 - Corridor bus needs to run frequently
 - Worried about transfers
- Location of stops 1 per mile should be the #2 priority. Stops should not be in front of everyone's house
 - Depends upon the time of year
 - Make them well-lit
 - If there were more buses I would be willing to walk more and the walk needs to be nice
 - Distance is less of a big deal than the environment. The environment needs to be safe, well-lit. Perception of the surroundings is important (i.e. bus riders do not want to cross the street without a safe, clear crossing)
 - Can use other routes to get to or can walk if necessary
 - 911, comes back to frequency
- Transfers should be the #3 priority. They need to be at short intervals and riders need to be able to see the bus transfer stops easily
 - Transfers need to be very frequent. If I knew a bus was coming, I would not have to rush
 - Minimize transfers if possible
 - Need nice and safe transfer locations
 - Make user-friendly
 - Preferably near shelter or retail
 - Crossing the street is a big issue - need well-lit, easy crossings
- Faster service, bus only is also a third tier priority
 - Willing to walk more if it got them there faster
 - Don't duplicate routes
 - Fast east west to SWIFT buses
- Park N' Ride and capacity also a third tier priority
 - They should serve as transfer locations when possible

Advantages/Disadvantages

- Worried about other buses slowing down SWIFT, concern about headway and spacing between buses
- When there are road improvements, consider the whole picture not just cars - include pedestrians and buses in the equation

- Build more vertical parking lots
- Add Park & Rides to outer edges; it is cheaper and compensates for the bus frequency that is not there; at some point when there is more usage, the lot can be used for a higher and better use
- The ability to transfer, have a covered and lit shelter, and cross the street to get a bus makes a difference
- Vanpools are better for larger employers or when no one wants to drive - many times people don't want to bother to set it up
- Overall, transit emphasis corridors are cost effective and efficient; they ensure faster trips and more frequent buses for the majority; transit emphasis corridors reduce overlapping especially Everett Transit

2. BUSINESS LEADER FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Business Leader Focus Group Summary Report

June 5, 2009

**Prepared for:
Community Transit**

**Prepared by:
Norton-Arnold & Company
With Nelson/Nygaard Consulting Associates**

Workshop Summary Report

Community Transit conducted a business leader focus group on Thursday, May 28 at Everett Station in Everett, Washington. Community Transit recruited business leaders from their existing business database and invited twenty business leaders that represent a cross-section of the businesses in their service area to participate in the focus group. Seven local business leaders attended the focus group, which included participants from the Chamber of Commerce, area community colleges, government, and medium to large employers. Most participants said that they did not use transit regularly but had employees or students that do or would consider using transit.

The two-hour focus group was designed to share information about Community Transit's Long Range Transit Plan and vision for a corridor-based transit system that encourages riders to "Think Transit First." In addition, the focus group was designed to gather feedback from attendees regarding the long-term vision of Community Transit and their proposal to move over time to a network of fast, frequent, high quality transit services operating in transit emphasis corridors.

The information gathered at this event will be used to shape and influence the draft Long Range Transit Plan, which is due to be complete in later in 2009. A public outreach process will then be conducted to gather comments, feedback, and advice on the draft plan. This feedback will, in turn, be used to shape and influence the final Plan.

Workshop Format

The focus group was devoted to group discussion to enable attendees to share their thoughts, perspectives, and ideas directly with consulting team members. The discussion guide used for this session is included as an appendix to this report.

After ground rules and introductions were made, the first topic addressed focused on *Use Cases*. The group was asked to comment on a list of questions about their organizations' existing usage of Community Transit's services. We started with -- how does your organization use Community Transit's services? They then shared their ideas about the role of transit with regards to economic development, community planning, and land use. They were then asked questions about perceived barriers to using public transit, their opinions about Community Transit's "Think Transit First" vision, and the potential impacts and design implications of transit emphasis corridors on local communities.

Although the majority of the group did not personally use the bus system, there was significant agreement between the various participants responses. The "raw notes" from the session are attached as an appendix to this report and a broad summary of the group discussion follows here.

Focus Group Findings

In general, the business leaders agreed that Community Transit's vision was proactive and appropriate. They thought the vision of transit emphasis corridors was timely considering the projected growth in the region and strong interest in sustainable

community development. During the discussion, they had several suggestions for how Community Transit can develop an effective Long Range Transit Plan for the next twenty years.

The **main findings** that focus group participants conveyed to Community Transit about their organization's ridership habits and the proposed corridor-based system were:

Use Cases

- **Community College #1:** The college representative informed the group that their campus has over 10,000 students to which they offer free bus passes that 3,000 students use. He noted that 30-40 staff purchase bus passes at a reduced rate. He emphasized that the college has a growing demand for bus service especially since there is a transit center on campus.
- **Public Utility:** The public utility representative reported having 1,000 employees and offering ridership promotions to staff. He did not know the ridership numbers but was certain Community Transit and Metro were both transit services used by employees.
- **Bank:** The bank representative reported having 450 staff, ridership programs, and a van pool service from the peninsula. He claimed that there was not much ridership on Community Transit buses to the best of his knowledge.
- **Community College #2:** This college also had a student body of 10,000 but was not sure what the current bus ridership was. Their representative reported ongoing partnering problems with Community Transit and Everett Transit as an issue to resolve. He asserted that parking was a huge challenge for the campus and that providing more of it would be a financial burden. He hoped transit could help alleviate some of the pressure for more parking.
- **Chamber of Commerce:** The representative said that the organization supports over 60,000 employees including the area's largest businesses. She affirmed that the Chamber has a bus program for eight employees. She informed the group that the type of bus pass purchased depended on where the employee lived but she was sure they were not exclusive to Community Transit.

Role of Transit in Economic Development

- The group agreed that more public transit was needed to help support and bolster the region's growth. They saw the existing service as limited, and somewhat difficult to use, and as an inherent impediment to the area's economic development.
- There was a general concern that there was a lack of consistent access to public transit. Several participants mentioned that transit-oriented development (TOD) and other carbon footprint reduction measures would be worthwhile strategies to pursue. Everyone attending supported the idea of building development around identified stations that used bus rapid transit. The overarching idea was that transit needs to work with developers to effectively integrate public transit into

communities. They argued that access to public transit has to be better and easier for riders or usage will not improve.

Barriers

- All of the participants acknowledged that lack of access or long distances to public transit are barriers to potential riders.
- The infrequency of local service and the disproportionate amount of resources spent on commuter services rather than local services is a problem.
- The aging population is becoming more transit-dependent and there is not enough service and access to support their growing need.
- Integration with other regional transit plans needs to happen to avoid redundancy and provide efficiency to make the whole system work.
- The infrequent local service makes shopping and running errands during or after work difficult.

Program Proposals

- *Frequency* was a top priority for the group. The business leaders agreed that buses on a corridor-based system need to run often and provide easy transfer points to allow riders to shop or run errands during the work day.
- There was broad and eager consensus on *spacing one bus stop per mile* as a second priority. Participants recognized that stops cannot be in front of everyone's businesses. The leaders said convenience is important to making the transit corridor vision work well.
- Several of the participants felt that *faster travel* for buses via designated lanes and technology should be a lesser priority. They saw convenience at the starting travel point as the big issue to address.
- Similarly, *transfers* were emphasized as a lesser priority amongst the group. Everyone agreed that transfers need to be well-defined points but feared that travel corridors with frequent stops would become undesirable places to live due to traffic. One participant asked, "who wants to live on 99?" (I'm confused by what we're saying here. Sound's like we're mixing a comment on density/housing along corridors with the transfer vs. single-seat-ride topic?)
- Another lesser priority was new *Park N' Rides* focused in the urban/rural transition area with smaller parking lots. The group suggested that Park N' Rides should gather riders from further out as a way to keep people from driving in. There was broad agreement that paid parking at Park N' Rides should be considered as land and construction costs of these facilities need to be considered.

Perceived Impacts of Transit Emphasis Corridors on Local Communities

- The business leaders felt it was Community Transit's role to point out to citizens what the cost implications would be for locating major facilities in their community.
- The group requested that all transit decisions need to have sound business models and conservative budgets. If public transit is too expensive for riders, there is a huge risk that the service will not be used.
- The business leaders were not certain that all businesses would make development decisions based on the location of transit. However, they encouraged Community Transit to make sure that the region's Chambers of Commerce and larger employers were informed about Community Transit's Long Range Transit Plan.
- One business leader expressed concern that it would be difficult to develop major transit centers in areas that were already intensively developed.

Design Implications of Transit Emphasis Corridors

- Participants saw the vision of transit emphasis corridors as an initiative that would need national, state, and local coordination for it to be truly successful.
- Overall, the business leaders had not thought about the role design plays in shaping our local communities. Several business leaders were skeptical that people would be willing to get out of their cars to use public transit given the choice.
- Several of the business leaders thought that there would need to be public education about the design strategies of transit-oriented development. However, they admitted that younger people were developing a new philosophy about what makes a city work and what's important to designing sustainable communities; they added that younger generations also are less likely to have long-held feelings about the need to have a car.
- Through this discussion, the business leaders agreed that transit emphasis corridors need to make travelling by bus convenient and cheap to be effective.
- The business leaders recognized a subtle societal change working to make people change their habits and think about using public transit first.

DISCUSSION GUIDE – Business Leader Group

oo:oo Introduction

(Moderator introduces self, unbiased third party, and then explains:)

Purpose of the Focus Group:

We're holding this discussion with you today to understand some of your feelings about the long-term vision of Community Transit. We'll discuss these topics and then we'll talk about a few potential service changes later on and ask your opinions about them.

What is Community Transit's Vision?

Community Transit recognizes the need for planning a future that goes well beyond maintaining the system of the past 20 years. Population growth, traffic congestion, regional transit measures and efforts to build a sustainable community for the future cause us to re-consider our future. We have adopted a Big Harry Audacious Goal (BHAG) of "Think Transit First." We envision that, in the future, people will view public transportation as their first mode of transportation. The ease and comfort of being transported will make driving their private car a second choice. The long range transit plan is just one part of our efforts to make our "Think Transit First" vision a reality.

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The Long Range Transit Plan will identify the policies and service strategies that will help Community Transit support the "Think Transit First" vision. More than just a written plan, the Long Range Transit Plan will begin a process of coordinating public transportation services with local communities' plans. Over time, we look toward development of compact transit oriented development that can be supported with a network of fast, frequent, high quality transit services, operating in transit emphasis corridors.

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Ground Rules/Disclosures:

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- No right or wrong answers, want your honest ideas, perceptions, and suggestions
- We don't identify individuals when we quote ideas, but present the information in a combined form
- While we promise to keep the information confidential (i.e. not associated with individuals by name) we can only ask and hope that you would do the same and that you respect each others' privacy and not repeat any personal details once you leave this room

Respondent Introductions:

First name? What city/town you live in? Type of organization?

00:10 Use Cases

Does your business or organization depend upon Community Transit's services? How?

What role do you see transit playing in economic development, community planning, and land use?

Barriers

What are the primary barriers that keep transit from fulfilling these roles? (prompt if necessary: too many transfers; lack of service; don't know where the bus routes are; lack of service connections; poor night service)

00:30 Program Proposals

Community Transit is completing a study about moving to a corridor-based system that closely ties transit improvements with development patterns along major travel corridors.

The Long Range Transit Plan will begin a process of coordinating public transportation services with local communities' plans. The goal is to create a network of high quality transit services, with frequent and speedy transit routes operating along a network of transit emphasis corridors that support compact transit oriented development.

Present the corridor vision, one element at a time, asking participants about the importance of each: (prioritize elements)

- Frequent service, operating on nights and weekends.
- Stops limited to about one per mile, usually at major activity centers. Local services will continue to use intermediate stops.
- Faster travel, taking advantage of bus-only lanes and technologies that give buses priority at intersections.
- Transfers to other corridors at major intersections.
- New park & ride capacity will be focused in the urban/rural transition area with smaller lots (200 spaces) collecting riders. An emphasis will be placed on bus feeder service to major facilities like Ash Way Park & Ride and Lynnwood Transit Center rather than expanding parking at those locations.

Discuss the perceived impacts of transit emphasis corridors on local communities:

- Businesses and facilities in the vicinity of transit corridor stops would receive much more service than today, allowing many more people to access surrounding facilities via transit. Would this benefit your organization/business?
- Bus travel times would be faster, sometimes even less than cars. Would you expect that this would benefit your organization?

Discuss the community design implications of transit emphasis corridors:

- To make transit emphasis corridors practical, local communities will need to promote moderate to high densities in the vicinity of transit corridor stops. Is this reasonable?
- Another essential part of making transit emphasis corridors work is ensuring there are convenient pedestrian routes from adjacent neighborhoods to the transit stops. Can this need be accommodated without sacrificing other concerns?
- One strategy for promoting transit use along corridors is to eliminate minimum parking requirements, or to place a maximum limit on the amount of parking. Are such proposals reasonable?
- Another strategy communities use is to require that new development be oriented towards the street, with parking in back. This makes it easier for pedestrians to reach a business by eliminating the hassle and safety concerns of walking across a parking lot. Will such requirements work here?

Summary Discussion of Corridor Vision

Now that we've talked in detail about the transit emphasis corridors, do you think they are a good idea that Community Transit should pursue? Why or why not?

01:50 Wrap up

Is there anything else that we haven't mentioned that you would like to tell Community Transit to do to address how transit fits into your vision of the future?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH for taking the time to participate in this focus group.

Raw notes: Business Leaders Focus Group

How does your organization use Community Transit?

- Community College #1:
 - 10,000 students
 - Offer free bus passes of which 3,000 students use; 30-40 staff purchase passes at a reduced rate
 - Growing demand especially since they have a transit center on campus
- Public Utility:
 - 1,000 employees
 - Offers ridership promotions
 - Don't know the numbers but we do use Metro and Community Transit
- Bank:
 - 450 employees
 - Offer ridership programs and van pools from the peninsula
 - Not much ridership to my knowledge
- Community College #2:
 - 10,000 students

- Have partnering issues and a desire to improve coordination between Everett Transit and Community Transit
- Parking is a big issue and there are big costs to provide it
- Chamber of Commerce:
 - Represent 60,000 employees and largest businesses
 - Chamber has bus program for 8 employees
 - Dependent on where you live

Role in Economic Development

- Need more transit to help support region
- Lack thereof is an impediment
- Lack of consistent regular access to transit
- Transit-oriented development and carbon reduction measures
 - BRT – identifiable stations to develop around
 - Need to work with development to make it work
- Better, easier access needed – different access does not encourage use

Barriers

- Lack of access
 - Long walk to bus
- Infrequency for local trips
- Allocation between commuter and local service
- Aging population becoming more transit dependent
- Integration with other plans?
- Challenging to do shopping and side trips during or after work

Program Proposals

- Provides information that people can use to make decisions
- Good to act versus react – need a plan in place
- Need to coordinate with development of infrastructure (i.e. water, sewer)
 - Reality of services based on where they live
 - Appropriateness given GMA requirements
- Coordination with other agencies and jurisdictions is key
- Frees up more revenue to areas that need it most
- Is it equitable to rural areas that pay same taxes as city dwellers

Frequency (nights, weekends)

- #1 priority for commuter, different priorities for different users
- Need ability to do shopping at work or after work

Stops, one per mile

- Convenience is important

Faster Travel (bus only)

- Convenience at beginning point is a big issue

Transfers

- People don't necessarily want to live on 99

Park N' Ride in urban rural areas (smaller)

- Value to capturing people farther out – keep them out of their cars
- Paid parking? Why allow people to park for free

Should Community Transit remain silent on land use decisions?

- Should point out cost implications to decisions on locating major facilities
- Can't make it too expensive for riders – then they won't use it
- Will businesses make decisions based on transit
- Difficult for major transit centers to be developed within areas that are already intensively developed

React to giving transit priority over cars?

- Need national, state, and local coordination
- Hard to get people out of cars
- Education – philosophy changing in younger people
- Evolving change to get people used to transit
- Has to be convenient and cheaper

Comments

- Outreach idea
- Go through chamber newsletter and meetings