

## Chapter 6: Public Participation

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This chapter describes efforts to obtain ideas and suggestions from area residents interested in the future of fixed-route bus service in the Bangor region. In addition to Advisory Committee meetings and public workshops, the consultant met with stakeholders at Eastern Maine Healthcare and the University of Maine. Bus drivers were also given an opportunity to meet with the consultant to present their suggestions and concerns.

The chapter presents findings and results from four outreach efforts:

- Section 6.1 Advisory Committee Meetings
- Section 6.2 Public Workshops
- Section 6.3 Stakeholder Meetings
- Section 6.4 Meetings with Bus Drivers

### 6.1 Advisory Committee Meetings

A special Advisory Committee was appointed by BACTS to oversee the consultants' work on this transit plan. This group met at various stages during the planning effort to discuss the goals of the project, to review draft materials, and to provide guidance to the consultants on future steps. Advisory Committee members included:

- Bangor's mayor and other elected City Council members from Bangor and Brewer
- Town managers and planners from several participating municipalities
- Faculty and staff from the University of Maine
- Bus riders and other interested citizens

*April 4, 2002*

At this introductory meeting, the consultant reviewed the project scope of work and described the various tasks to be completed during the course of the study. The main topic of discussion was the immediate need for a new name, logo, and paint scheme for the region's fixed-route bus system. Committee members shared their hopes and expectations for the transit service and discussed how a new corporate identity could help broaden the acceptance and usefulness of the service for area citizens.

*April 16, 2002*

Committee members reviewed and discussed two sets of names and logos proposed by the consulting team: "River Line" and "BAT: Community Connector." After choosing "BAT: Community Connector," the group discussed the merits of three different

proposed BAT paint schemes and selected the design they felt would be most distinctive. The consultant also provided an update on his efforts to analyze ridership and evaluate existing services. He asked Advisory Committee members to help him identify significant changes that have occurred in their communities during the past six years.

*June 10, 2002*

The Committee reviewed a number of draft background chapters, including an analysis of transit ridership and the consultants' evaluation of existing services. The group discussed the types of service improvements that they would like to consider during the course of the study. In general, the committee would like to see the bus service become relevant for a wider cross-section of the community. While low-income and disabled populations now use the service extensively, the Committee would like the bus system to become part of the accepted day-to-day infrastructure for a larger number of middle-class residents.

*August 6, 2002*

The Committee briefly discussed public workshops scheduled for the afternoon and evening of August 6. Members then participated in a lively discussion of a wide range of possible service alternatives currently being developed by the consultant. The group talked about the strengths and weakness of various approaches and helped the consultant to narrow the focus of his service design alternatives.

*October 16, 2002*

The Committee examined various fare alternatives developed by the consultants. This included a review of ridership and revenue results predicted by a computer demand model. The group also discussed suggestions received during public workshops and refinements to proposed route and service alternatives.

*February 10, 2003*

The Committee reviewed draft five-year financial and capital plans for the transit program. The proposed timeline for adding service to the Odlin Road and outer Hammond Street was discussed. Committee members suggested that implementation should be moved forward in the plan from FY 2006 to FY 2005. The group also reviewed draft chapters on transit hub alternatives and employee retention strategies.

*May 23, 2003*

A final Advisory Committee meeting was held to review the overall project findings and recommendations. Scheduling for a final public meeting was also discussed. It was decided to publish the final report in June, and to present the findings in afternoon and evening public meetings sometime in July.

## **6.2 Public Workshops**

Two public workshops were held on August 6, 2002. One took place during the middle of the afternoon at the Pickering Square bus depot. This meeting was scheduled to allow maximum participation by bus riders, many of who have difficulty traveling to evening

meetings. A second evening workshop was held on the same day in the conference room at Eastern Maine Development Corporation.

At both workshops, Bus supervisor Joe McNeil briefly described the transit study and then introduced the project consultant. The consultant asked those in attendance to voice their views and concerns about the bus service. He said he would like to hear how people use the service now, whether they have problems or concerns about the existing service, and what they would like to see included in future plans.

#### *Afternoon Workshop at the Bus Depot*

Approximately 45 individuals participated in the afternoon workshop at Pickering Square. Nearly all of the participants were bus riders who attended the workshop between bus rides. Nearly all of those present offered suggestions about ways to improve the bus service. The following comments and suggestions were received:

1. The Bus should provide Saturday evening service. This would be especially nice for Saturdays evenings when special events are scheduled at Bass Park.
2. Bus access is needed for special events that take place on the Orono campus of the University of Maine. Many of these events take place in the evening when there is no available bus service.
3. Buses should operate later than 5:00 p.m. This is especially important for evening classes at Bangor Community College on the Hammond Street bus route.
4. Hampden bus service needs to operate all day. The midday interruption makes it very difficult to plan errands in Bangor.
5. The Center Street route is often late. The route needs to be fixed so buses can operate on time.
6. The Hampden route should have Saturday service.
7. Bus service to the University of Maine needs to operate later than 6:15 p.m. People should be able to depart the University as late as 10:00 p.m. Even departures at 8:30 or 9:00 p.m. would be a great improvement over the existing situation.
8. Workers and shoppers need bus service to the Bangor Mall on Sundays. Evening service to the Mall is also needed.
9. Some passengers need help placing their bicycles on the bus bike racks.
10. There needs to be a front-door bus stop at Eastern Maine Medical Center. The stop on State Street is too far away, especially during the winter. In addition, buses to the Medical Center need to run more frequently than once an hour.

11. Buses from Hampden should make scheduled stops at the Shaws Supermarket on Main Street in Bangor.
12. Hampden bus service should operate all day.
13. A bus riders who works at the Bangor Auditorium said that he needs evening bus service, as late as 8:00, 9:00, and sometimes 10:00 p.m.
14. The Center Street bus should offer stops at more locations within the Broadway Shopping Center.
15. The Center Street bus should serve Birch Hill Estates.
16. There should be a 5:45 p.m. Center Street trip. Currently, the last Center Street bus departs downtown at 5:15 p.m., which is too early.
17. Bus service to Wal-Mart should be available earlier in the morning. Currently, the first Mount Hope bus that serves Wal-Mart departs downtown at 9:15 a.m. Later service to Wal-Mart and Shaws is also needed, at least until 5:00 p.m.
18. Evening bus service is needed for people who work late and for people who attend meetings or who shop in the evening.
19. The Old Town route to the University of Maine should operate every 30 minutes. Old Town Saturday service should be more frequent than once every two hours.
20. There should be at least minimal bus service available on Sundays.
21. The frequency of Saturday bus service is inadequate on the Hammond Street, Center Street, and Old Town routes. Saturday schedules on these routes should be the same as weekdays.
22. The Center Street route should be extended to serve St. Joseph's Health Care and the NEH-MRI facility on outer Broadway.
23. There should be a more direct outbound bus service to the Airport. A bus link to the Airport is also needed in the evening.
24. The Hampden route needs one more trip in the evening.
25. Bus service is needed along Ohio Street between Westland Street and Griffin Road.
26. The Bus should operate evening bus service for shoppers between Thanksgiving and Christmas.

27. There needs to be a bus stop and a cross-walk on Broadway near MacDonald's and Friendly's.
28. On some buses, it is difficult to read the destination signs.
29. There should be a shuttle bus circulator within the Mall complex, connecting the Bangor Mall, K-Mart, Wal-Mart, the Maine Square Mall, and other shopping destinations.
30. There should be a more direct bus link between the Airport Mall, the Broadway Mall, and the Bangor Mall.
31. One of the drivers on the Center Street route drives too fast trying to keep the bus on schedule.
32. There is not enough time for wheelchair riders on the Center Street route.
33. A bus link is needed to the Bomarc Industrial Park.
34. One bus rider said she has difficulty transporting her cat to the veterinarian. She was apparently unaware that pets are allowed on buses if they are in carrying cases.
35. Bus service to the Bangor Mall area should operate in the evening. One bus user said she cannot accept a promotion from K-Mart unless she can get a bus ride home at 10:10 p.m. She said that many restaurant and retail employees need bus service seven days a week.
36. Stop cords on buses need to be lower for short people. One rider with arthritis said she has difficulty reaching up to pull the stop cord.
37. Bus service is needed to the Oak Ridge medical facilities on outer Stillwater Avenue.
38. Change machines are needed to assist drivers when they sell tickets.
39. There should be a clock outside at the Pickering Square bus depot so waiting passengers can see the time without going into the waiting room.
40. Bus service is needed to the Maine Square Mall.
41. A bus link is needed between the University and Norumbega Hall.
42. Brewer bus service should be extended north to the Eddington town line to accommodate bus riders who live beyond the end of the current north loop.
43. Buses should serve Orrington, Holden, and Eddington.

44. Bus service should be extended to the business parks on outer Hammond Street.
45. A bus user questioned why there needs to be a \$.50 charge for transfers to and from the Old Town route.
46. Early morning bus service should accommodate work shifts at K-Mart and Wal-Mart that begin at 6:00 a.m.

*Evening Workshop at EMDC*

Approximately a dozen people participated in an evening public workshop in the EMDC conference room. Suggestions included the following:

47. Evening bus service should be available at least until 7:00 p.m., but preferably until 10:00 p.m.
48. Bus service needs to be provided to more work sites to expand employment opportunities for people who do not drive. Sites that need service include the Bangor Daily News, the Post Office distribution center, and outer Hammond Street.
49. Time needs to be added to the Center Street schedule to allow buses to operate on time.
50. Buses should include space for onboard storage of strollers.
51. The fee for monthly passes should be lower.
52. There should be some way to discourage pass holders from staying on buses for extended periods of time.
53. The Center Street bus should offer a stop closer to the high school. Saturday schedules should allow students to arrive at the high school before the 8:00 a.m. start of Saturday SAT tests. These tests are offered one Saturday a month between October and June.
54. Saturday schedules on the Center Street and Hammond Street routes are confusing.
55. The Mount Hope bus should offer service to medical offices at Evergreen Woods.
56. Buses should serve the Odlin Road. The walk from Hammond Street is too long.
57. Because the Hampden route does not operate on Saturdays, there is no Saturday bus service to Bangor locations on lower Main Street.
58. The condition of some buses needs to be improved.

59. There should be an audio announcement of bus stops.
60. Bus service should extend into the evening. A bus rider commented: “Even an extra hour or two would be some help.”
61. The Bus program could generate extra revenue by selling advertisements inside the buses.
62. Bus service on the Brewer side of the river is inadequate. There are too many needs and these cannot be met with only one bus.
63. People are often unsure where buses will stop. Bus stop signs are needed.
64. The Hammond Street bus should offer inbound service as it travels on Saturday mornings from the garage to Pickering Square. The bus on this route offers this type of inbound service when it departs the garage on weekday mornings.
65. Monthly passes and bus tickets should be available for sale at the Pickering Square bus garage.

### **6.3 Stakeholder Meetings**

In addition to regular transit planning workshops, meetings were held with two additional groups that have a direct interest in regional transit services. The consultant participated in a transportation workshop with students and staff at the University of Maine. He also met with members of the Parking Committee at Eastern Maine Medical Center.

#### *University of Maine*

A public workshop was scheduled at the University of Maine in Orono in conjunction with the BACTS University of Maine Transportation Study. Students and staff were invited to share their views and concerns about transportation, parking, and pedestrian access on the Orono campus. The workshop was held on April 29, 2002. Prior to the meeting, the consultant met with a member of the University of Maine Student Senate who has been actively involved with transportation and parking policies.

Students expressed a variety of concerns about how cars and pedestrians interact on the Orono campus. One participant observed that in the confrontation between automobiles and pedestrians, automobiles often get the upper hand. Another student remarked that parking seems to be more important than pedestrian safety. Some students said it was difficult to cross roadways between classes. Others talked about speeding cars and a need for speed bumps and reduced on-campus speed limits.

Several students said that there was inadequate lighting on campus, and that this posed a security issue for some students. One student said that lighting was particularly important near cross walks. One participant suggested that better walkways were needed

for people who park near the Maine Center for the Arts. Another said that safer walkways were needed between the library and student dormitories.

One participant said that roadways seem to have precedence over sidewalks for snow clearing.

Several students suggested that revenues from parking stickers and parking fines should be used to pay for parking improvements, pedestrian lighting, and shuttle bus services.

A member of the student senate said that money is needed for transit services and better lighting. He indicated that car usage is currently too easy for students, and that the demand for auto usage needs to be managed.

Another student senator observed that a significant percentage of students live off-campus. He suggested that peripheral lots be developed to reduce the demand for parking in the center campus.

A faculty member indicated that the hourly bus service provided to the University by the Old Town route is too infrequent. He suggested that on-campus shuttles need to operate at least every 10 minutes.

#### *Eastern Maine Medical Center*

The consultant attended a meeting of EMMC's parking committee to discuss current and future parking issues that are being addressed by the Medical Center. In advance of this meeting, he met with EMMC's Vice President for Development, and he also spoke with bus drivers operating the hospital's parking lot shuttle service.

Eastern Maine Medical Center faces increasing demands for off-site parking due to expanding facilities, increased staffing, higher levels of patient turnover, and the use of existing parking lots for building expansion.

The hospital recently discontinued a shuttle bus service from the Wing Lot opposite the Medical Center, because the buses were needed to operate a temporary shuttle between the hospital and the downtown Bangor parking garage. Hospital officials are investigating the possibility of building an off-site parking lot on the Sylvan Road near Interstate 95. Officials recognize that there will be a continued long-term need for parking lot shuttle buses to serve off-site locations.

The consultant discussed with hospital officials the need for a bus stop and turn-around driveway near the front entrance to the Medical Center. With the current roadway design, arriving and departing automobiles regularly block the traffic circle at the main entrance. The consultant stressed that a convenient bus drop-off will be essential if the Medical Center hopes to convince employees and visitors to travel to the main hospital without their cars.

The consultant suggested that there may be an opportunity for EMMC to enter into a partnership with the city transit system to help improve car-free access and to expand the operation of parking lot shuttle services. Officials indicated that their two chief concerns are saving the hospital money and ensuring that a quality transportation service is available for EMMC employees.

#### **6.4 Meetings with Transit System Bus Drivers**

Bus drivers were invited to meet with the consultant to present their suggestions and concerns. Drivers were notified that the consultant would be available at the transit office on Wednesday, October 16, between 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. This allowed most drivers to stop at the office before or after their work shift.

Some employees met with the consultant in person. Others submitted written suggestions. A range of route and service design ideas were presented:

1. In general, bus drivers agreed that schedule times on some routes are too tight. They cited Center Street and morning Mount Hope service as the most serious problem areas. One driver said that the Old Town loop is also tight when traffic is heavy on Stillwater Avenue.
2. A number of drivers commented on the routing of inbound Capehart buses through the “New Capehart” subdivision adjacent to the Griffin Road. Some drivers suggested that inbound buses should turn from Ohio Street to Bolling Drive, following the same route as outbound buses through this subdivision. Others suggested that inbound buses should remain on Griffin Road without passing through the subdivision. Both groups agreed that they did not like the right hand turn from Griffin Road to Mitchell Street.
3. One driver suggested that Capehart buses do not need to be routed past the Department of Human Services offices on Saturdays.
4. A number of drivers cited a need for two buses on the Mount Hope route in the morning. They report that the morning half-hour express schedule is unrealistic.
5. A number of drivers said problems arise because bus stops are not clearly identified. This is especially true with new bus riders who are not familiar with where buses usually stop to pick up riders. Telephone pole markings often confuse new passengers because inexperienced bus users believe that these indicate bus stop locations.
6. One driver said that elimination of one or two parking spaces on Water Street adjacent to the Main Street intersection would make for easier and safer right-hand turns from Main Street to Water Street.
7. A driver said that rules should be established to stop monthly pass holders from riding continuously on one bus.

8. Another employee reported that he receives many requests for evening and Sunday service.

9. A Capehart driver suggested that only outbound buses serve the airport and DHS, with inbound passengers transferring to the outbound bus at the Airport Mall to reach these destinations.

10. Two Brewer bus drivers agreed that the route needs to be adjusted to eliminate the need for left-hand turns exiting the Twin City Plaza.

Other driver suggestions included:

- Better connections downtown, especially for Mount Hope and Center Street buses
- Better two-way radios, with a repeater system to ensure good radio communication
- Onboard flyers to publicize temporary route detours
- Eliminating special request route diversions
- Opening an office at Pickering Square to sell tickets and answer customer questions

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