

October Discussion:

Using a small group discussion process, about 45 people representing community agencies met to provide input to the City of Rochester update of its plans for transit services. Discussion focused on three questions:

1. What are the biggest transportation needs of your clients?
2. What options should be considered to provide better transit/public transportation?
3. What action could the Community Networking Group or your agency pursue to improve client access to services?

Current Transit System:

It was generally agreed that the current transit system has limitations in meeting the needs of transit-dependent residents. The current system, with its single hub, is designed to bring workers to the downtown area during regular business hours. It was frequently noted that agency clients have difficulty using the current fixed route system:

- Service does not readily connect residents to other work sites, community agencies, schools or other services. Service is not available when needed evenings and weekends
- Affordability is often an issue for agency clients.
- Understanding how to use the bus system is difficult.
- Accessibility for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency are also issues.

Improving the Transit System:

Short-term/Simple Improvements:

- Allow more time for bus transfers to be valid.
- Improve signage and provide information at each bus shelter/stop.
- Make the website more user friendly.
- Create an app that will provide current information and allow plotting a “personal route”. Currently under development.
- Use color coding.
- Provide more user friendly materials to teach people how to use the system. Need multiple languages.
- Increase the bus stops/shelters and add access to bus routes at all schools and at community agencies such as United Way, Community Dental Clinics, and senior housing complexes. What is the cost per shelter?
- Work with the City to address pedestrian safety issues at bus stops on busy streets.

Promote/Create Incentives to Use Bus Transit:

- Expand the availability of employer-sponsored bus passes.
- Create discounts for agencies to purchase bus passes for their clients.

- Provide a “Family Pass” for low-income families
- Create student passes. This already exists for children between the ages of 6-18, usually need a school id to obtain.
- Add bike racks at Park and Ride locations and at key bus stops.
- Improve handicapped accessibility. Zips hours of operation coincide with primary system, yielding the same difficulties with time.

Transit System Improvements:

- Expand the hours of operation: 5 am – 11 pm, weekends
- Increase the number of transit hubs and transfer points
- Increase the frequency of service
- Provide cross town and/or circular routes
- Expand the number of Park and Rides.
- Use Passenger vans or smaller buses on ancillary routes
- Develop an agreement with the school district to transport students in grades 6-12 on city buses and provide bus passes for staff and faculty
- Make all schools regular stops on bus routes.
- Coordinate the expansion of walking and bike routes.
- Coordinate disparate buses (private providers) through technology- master dispatch- get attorney on board early. Do auto dealers have a role to play?

Other:

The City should allow/encourage development of a shared ride service such as Uber. Poor transit is impacting business opportunities, as well as our clients, it’s an economic development concern.

Action by Community Networking Group or Agencies:

There was strong interest in having the Community Networking Group continue the discussion about how community agencies might advocate or work together to improve transit services for clients. Ideas included:

- Combining funds to improve transit services
- Sharing drivers and vehicles
- Developing a coordinated plan – explore liability and department of transportation barriers that exist to increasing coordination.
- Advocating on behalf of clients and employees