

# GMTA asks towns for money — earliest year-round transit in 2010

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If local voters agree to pony up \$30,000 in matching funds at Town Meeting next year, there may be year-round public transit in The Valley by 2010.

Alternately, local towns could agree to pony up funds almost immediately for there to be public transit in 2009.

Public transit in The Valley is provided by the Green Mountain Transit Agency (GMTA). GMTA representatives have been to Warren, Waitsfield and Fayston recently, requesting matching funds from local select boards to provide public transit. All three towns have agreed to put the matter on their Town Meeting agendas for March 2009, but that means transit would not become a reality until 2010.

Aaron Frank, of GMTA, was present at July 14 meetings of the Fayston and Waitsfield Select Boards to discuss the request. In Waitsfield he explained that the towns have two options. Towns can agree to supply the 20 percent match needed for a federal CMAQ grant, totaling \$30,000 in local funds. Alternately, the towns could agree to supply 10 percent of the funding and divert some of the existing transit monies that come from The Valley.

Currently GMTA receives \$67,500 from Sugarbush, \$9,440 from the chamber and \$588 from Fayston, \$923 from Waitsfield and \$943 from Warren. The bulk of those funds provide ski season transit up and down the access road, to and from Lincoln Peak and Mount Ellen, and one route from the ski areas into Waitsfield. The town contributions currently help fund transportation for the elderly and those with special needs.

GMTA is considering creating a commuter route for The Valley, based on funding. The route would provide year route commuter service from Warren to Waitsfield to Moretown and on to Montpelier-Barre.

Chris Coles, GMTA director said that local towns could have a year-round commuter service earlier, in 2009, if the towns were willing to pony up \$30,000 or \$15,000 right now. A local contribution of \$30,000 either now or next year would provide a commuter route and keep the winter service at the ski areas intact. A local contribution of \$15,000 now or next year would impact the winter service at the ski areas.

He said that the decision of whether to use some of the funding that currently pays for seasonal on-mountain service for local year-round service would be made by the GMTA board.

Concurrent with GMTA's work towards creating a commuter route for Valley residents, is work restructuring the winter Valley Floor route.

"We have to do something with The Valley Floor service sooner versus later regardless of whether we turn it into a commuter route this winter or not. Ridership on that route isn't meeting performance expectations of the state of Vermont. Knowing that, maybe the local region would rather have a commuter route rather than a seasonal service," Coles said.

He said that GMTA had received many requests from The Valley community for a commuter service.

"If that's the case and that's what the community wants, then the local towns will have to support that service with funding," he said.