

GMTA may merge with CCTA for more efficient transit service

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Green Mountain Transit Agency (GMTA) director Chris Cole summarized the need for more efficient public transit infrastructure at the November 20 meeting of the Mad River Valley Planning District Steering Committee.

Cole said GMTA is in the process of gathering feedback from service areas and has drafted a preliminary proposal for structural revisions to the transit agency's composition and organization.

While currently GMTA and The Chittenden County Transit Authority (CCTA) are two different entities funded by a mix of local and federal funding (both requiring 50 percent matching funds), Cole proposed legally joining the two agencies to provide a more cohesive, efficient service structure.

DUPLICATE EVERYTHING

"Under the current structure, we have to duplicate everything," Cole said.

A preliminary written draft, previously distributed among the MRVPD committee members, reads, "Currently, the shared management staff is answerable to two boards and must operate two separate corporations; each entity requires its own budget preparation, financial reports, bank accounts, insurance, audits, cost allocation plans, fixed asset inventories, employee manuals, web sites and board support."

In addition to marrying the two transit agencies, Cole pointed to the need for a regional funding source, rather than the current mixed local/federal funding base, "that is predictable, sustainable, and reflects the regional nature of the services provided," he said.

The proposal continues, "A regional funding mechanism, subject to voter approval, would allow decisions about investment and system growth to better reflect regional needs and benefits." It would also allow for a more functional and equitable approach to funding."

REGIONAL FUNDING

Cole said that creating a regional funding mechanism would act as a government entity, to support services, which would depend on the support of the legislature, administration and individual municipalities.

By creating a regional funding source and combining the two separate agencies, it would "eliminate the need for two separate administrative processes and create the capacity for staff and management to focus on improving the system. Governance for such a system could be provided by a board composed of representatives elected on a regional or county basis," the draft further states.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Members of the MRVPD Steering Committee discussed how they could best support the structural changes. Cole requested that when the issue comes up, individual town support and communication with elected state representatives would best facilitate the initiative. Cole said that he considers public transit to be "infrastructure" that "requires a long-term strategy" in order to form "dynamic route structure that responds to changing community needs."

Necessary accessory entities such as park and rides, busses, garages and shelters are essential capital infrastructure necessary to support sustainable and efficient public transit.