

Northeast New Jersey Metro Mobility Study
Educators' Summit
Friday, January 22, 2010
William Paterson University

Meeting Notes

As part of the study effort for the Northeast New Jersey Metro Mobility Study, representatives from the colleges in Bergen and Passaic counties, as key stakeholders in the area, were invited to attend a meeting to help NJ Transit better understand their institution's present and future transit needs. In addition, NJT wished to solicit suggestions on how to better serve the transit needs of their students, faculty and staff. William Paterson University hosted the session. The summit involved an overview presentation about the study followed by open discussion.

Jim Gilligan, NJ TRANSIT – Welcomed the attendees on behalf of NJ TRANSIT, North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA), and Coach USA.

Dr. Arnold Speert, President of William Paterson University (WPU) – Welcomed the attendees on behalf of the University stating that it is his hope that this event will be the first of a number of meetings.

Jim Gilligan – Provided an overview of the day's agenda

Jim Gilligan – Gave a Power Point presentation of the study's goals, objectives, and work completed to date.

John Pavlovich, Jacobs Engineering (Study Team Consultant) led the group discussion –

Discussion

Francisco Diaz, WPU

- Difficult to make full transit trip to and from WPU without a 2-hour long wait
- Parking is a problem for students at their points of origin for catching a bus. Many communities have parking restrictions near bus stops, limiting the time cars can be parked, or charging expensive parking fees. Students cannot afford to park their cars near bus hubs as a result.
- Frequency of bus service does not work for students – Poor off-peak service, span of service and little flexibility.
- Bus schedules geared too much toward regular commuters (9AM-5PM) – student schedules typically don't match such a schedule (class hours and work shifts issues) – more flexibility needed.

- Multiple bus transfers are required to travel from suburban residential areas to college; transfers involve a lot of waiting time.
- Poor off-peak service for resident students – Safety concerns getting back to school from bus stops at night.

Allen Williams, WPU

- Students need to get to NYC for internships. Students will drive to WPU to park and use the #198 bus even if they don't have a class on campus; however, bus schedule restricts students' ability to take full advantage of possible internships.
- Need to increase number of hubs, smaller hubs, better integration of service
 - 744 Route (Staff & Students)
 - 198 Route
 - Suggested major locations in Morris/Passaic/Bergen Counties in order to reduce overall commuter time.
- Service frequency and schedule are issues with WPU staff/faculty who live in NYC and don't drive, especially for those who teach night classes)

Bobbie Davies, Eastwick College

- The NJT student discount is only for home to school travel, and not intended for use to internships or field work. Honest students are nervous about using their student pass for these educationally-related reasons.
- Eastwick nursing students need to access hospitals and institutions from campus. Pedestrian connections from Route 17 bus stops are difficult and the walking environment is dangerous; relocate stops with pedestrian safety in mind.
- Better connections to health care facilities in the Bronx for student training purposes is also needed

Trans Robinson, WPU Student

- Frequency is a primary issue with bus service.
- Lack of flexibility in scheduling is an issue, as well, as is the span of service. The last bus from campus leaves around 10pm. This is particularly a problem during exam time.
- There is difficulty in getting to WPU from portions of Essex County, such as East Orange. Better WPU direct Essex County connections required. The NJT 75 service does not operate frequently enough to serve this need.

Tom Ng, Ramapo College Student Government President

- There are 10,000 students at Ramapo; 4,000 are commuters.
- Short Line, a private bus carrier, provides some service from Ramapo College, but service is limited to two trips each day.
- There is a need for cheaper bus tickets for students on a budget)
- Coach USA also provides bus service to Manhattan
- Commuter students need their vehicles.
- Need more frequent bus service between the rail station and the campus.

- This student spoke about major Ramapo student commuting sheds are Passaic, Bergen & Essex counties)

Elizabeth Joyce, Ramapo College

- College pays Coach USA to provide shuttle service to stores and train station. Service starts at 2 PM, none in the AM.
- Survey in 2008 showed that students were interested in shuttle from Mahwah, Suffern stations.
- Ramapo College will provide the study team with data from their transportation surveys (see attachment A)

Donna Orbach, Bergen County Planning

- How does the study team propose to reach non-transit users?
- Jim Gilligan suggested that the study team can provide the colleges with the survey to administer to students, faculty and staff.
- The outreach effort also includes activities aimed at reaching non-users, such as a mall kiosk

Scott MacDonall, Bergen Community College (Lyndhurst Campus)

- Routes 76/192 – Limited Service
- The Meadowlands area suffers from a lack of service. Bus service reaches the area only four times each day. However, classes are scheduled between 9 AM and 10 PM.
- Bergen County Community College of the Meadowlands expects its student population to double in the coming years. Access will become a bigger issue over time.
- He indicated that they also need direct intra-BCC campus service between Lyndhurst and the main campus in Paramus)

Evrin Ay, Montclair State University (MSU)

- Better transit improves ability of MSU to compete for students within the tri-state region. Heavy marketing of MSU to NYC students.
- One of the primary reasons students choose MSU is access to major highways.
- NYC students are now attending MSU because there is train service.
- How can NJT connect universities with residential, shopping areas as well as between universities?
- Need connections for rail, bikes, major bus routes.
- How can we collaborate to improve transit?

John Pavlovich queried the group – How many students have never used transit?

At Farleigh Dickinson – 283 students use bus passes. The number should be more, but it takes about 1½ hours to travel by bus from Manhattan to the campus, whereas driving takes less than half that time. There is no easy access by bus from Manhattan to the campus.

John Pavlovich suggested that transit use be brought into the curriculum or discussed when internships and co-ops are established. Many students may be unfamiliar with transit because their families never used the bus.

- Identify key university groups who could take the lead in an informational campaign for transit use.
- Inform students of the Trip Planner feature at the NJ Transit website.

The attendees discussed the issues related to the discount bus pass program:

- One pass per month is \$100; this price is still too high for students.
- Affordability and confusing zone structure penalizes and discourages users
- Social use of bus is important for students especially foreign students and underclassmen who may not be allowed to keep an automobile on campus.
- There is a need to connect with other universities.
- What can be done to improve student use of bus service?
- Greek society and other student organizations are connected across campuses, how can we get them to use transit?
- Amenities – Amtrak adding WiFi to trains. Can NJ Transit do this on buses?
- Provide chargers for laptops.
- Use of cell phone technologies to update riders with real time info would be desirable.

Evrin Ay, Montclair State University

- MSU campus design has been changing as the campus expands. The present bus stop used to be the center of student activity, but it does not work as well anymore. The Student Center is now the campus hub. Can bus service be changed to reflect this change?

Leesa Fitzgerald, MSU

- The #28 bus line's last stop is MSU. Drivers occasionally have a 20 minute layover. Idling buses create some issues with traffic movement on campus if the drivers layover in the wrong location.
- Having enough printed NJT bus schedules is another issue.

Allen Williams, WPU

- Would it be possible to provide ticketing kiosk on campus? Can transit partner kiosk with ATMs and sell tickets through ATM's, like they do postage stamps.

Tom Ng and Elizabeth Joyce, Ramapo College

- Ramapo sells bus tickets at their student activities box office.

Jayne Yost, Jacobs Engineering, asked the group if universities can pool their resources to provide a "last mile" shuttle from designated transit hubs. This way, students would know

they have a ride back to campus if they are out later than bus service runs to campus. This would help to meet NJ TRANSIT "half way" in finding solutions.

- WPU said that they are about to enter the procurement phase and can look into the cost of shuttle service.
- Ramapo College has experience in contracting with private providers and can share their experience with the other colleges.

Donna Orbach, Bergen County Planning

- Last trains from NYC were not late enough to get people back to NJ after hours. This must also be a problem for students who would like to socialize in NYC but do not because of the lack of transit service.

Evrin Ay, Montclair State University

- Rail schedules are geared to working commuters. Schedule should service new traditional users better.

The study team summarized the issues raised at the meeting:

1. Span of service/frequency
 - Early/late
 - No midday
2. Student discount passes are not as effective as they could be (cost and use restrictions)
3. Provide amenities to encourage students to use transit.
4. There is a community of students that exists between the different campuses in the study area. Service between campuses and between other facilities and internships in Manhattan & NJ needs to be improved
5. Highway stops are dangerous and poorly planned.

Jim Gilligan provided a closing summary with a preview of some new services offered by NJ TRANSIT including the Go Bus service, cell-phone dial-up at bus stop to get real time information on arrival time of next bus; and the improved NJT web site. Jim encouraged all of the attendees to stay in touch, especially through the project's web-site (www.NENJMMS.com), and continue to share with the study team their comments and ideas via the email addresses provided during the meeting presentation.

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