

Summary of Round 1 Public Outreach: September 2019

The Lower Connecticut River Valley (LCRV) Transit Study is evaluating local transit services within the region. These include local bus transit services provided by the Middletown Area Transit District (MAT) and the Estuary Transit District, doing business as 9 Town Transit (9 Town). Two rounds of public outreach are planned as part of this study. Round #1 was held in September 2019 to gather feedback from MAT and 9 Town riders on how local transit is meeting their needs today and on how services might be improved. Public comments are also being collected via the project website LCRVtransitstudy.org.

Informal Pop-Up events were held at locations convenient to transit riders. These included three events within MAT’s service area and three events within 9 Town’s service area (see Table 1). All events featured giveaways and those participating also had the chance to win raffle prizes.

Table 1 | Pop-Up Outreach Event Locations

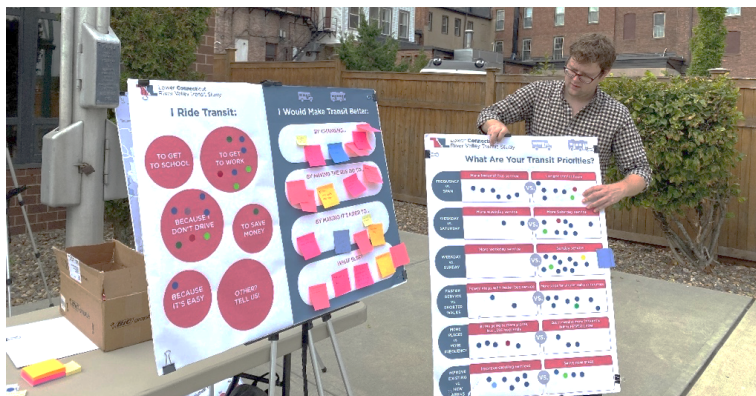
Location	Date
Middletown Area Transit Passenger Terminal	Thursday, September 26, 2019
Walmart, 161 Berlin Road, Cromwell	Thursday, September 26, 2019
Clinton Town Hall	Friday, September 27, 2019
Scranton Gazebo, Madison	Friday, September 27, 2019
9 Town Bus Shelter at Old Saybrook Station	Friday, September 27, 2019

At each Pop-Up event, people were informed about the purpose of the study and asked to participate in a number of interactive activities. Individuals could ask questions of project staff, provide written comments on comment cards, and share specific comments or ideas via prompts presented on two boards. The boards posed questions such as Why do you use transit? How would you improve service? and What are your transit priorities?

Other materials available at the Pop-Up events included maps of existing transit routes and 2019 ridership volumes, as well as a one-page handout providing a general description of the project. See Appendix.

The results from these outreach events were only provided by a relatively small number of participants and may or may not represent views widely held by each the transit system’s ridership.

Figure 1 | Display Boards Used to Collect Comments



General Themes

In summary, the most commonly expressed needs during Round #1 of public outreach were similar in both parts of the region. These included:

- A desire for Sunday service
- More frequent service in general, and specifically on: MAT Routes 581, 584 and 586 (formerly Routes A, D and E); and, on 9 Town Routes 641 and 644.
- Later service hours on weekdays and Saturdays. 9 Town riders also expressed an interest in an earlier service start.
- Reliability improvements – making improvements to help buses run on time, with MAT Routes 581 and 583 (formerly Routes A and C) most commonly noted as running late.
- Introducing bus stops (rather than a flag system) and having benches or places to sit at bus stops.

In Middletown, many commented on route alignment changes made in June 2019. These changes were largely aimed at operating routes bi-directionally, rather than in loops. Many riders expressed satisfaction with these changes, particularly to Routes 585 and 590 (formerly Routes E and M), and expressed a desire to make other routes operate bi-directionally. However, several people who lived along discontinued segments such as West Lake Drive or other segments on Routes 583, 584, 585 and 590 (formerly Routes C, D, E and M) expressed frustration at the loss of service to some parts of town.

Other changes suggested by more than one rider in the Middletown area included:

- Changes to Route 581 (formerly Route A) to: 1) make it more reliable; 2) add more service; 3) operate more directly to Middlesex Community College; or 4) serve additional medical facilities on Saybrook Road.
- Switch to an hourly pulse
- Improved coordination and integration with *CTtransit*, particularly fare integration and more seamless transfers, having *CTtransit* enter the MAT terminal, and offering more service to Hartford.
- Extensions to Route 590 (formerly Route M) offering more destinations in Meriden other than the transit center.

In the 9 Town area, many riders indicated they like recent changes (e.g. new vehicles and XtraMile) and generally find the service reliable and a good way to get to many places in the region. Most changes suggested were general and related to increased service levels. However, specific changes suggested by more than one rider in the 9 Town area included:

- Better connections to Middlesex Community College on Route 644, such as running later at night to allow students to catch the bus after classes get out at 9:30 PM.
- Improved information on when buses will arrive (e.g. real time arrival information), where bus stops are located, and how to find out more about schedules and services available for people with mobility needs.

Input from Interactive Boards, Comment Cards & Website

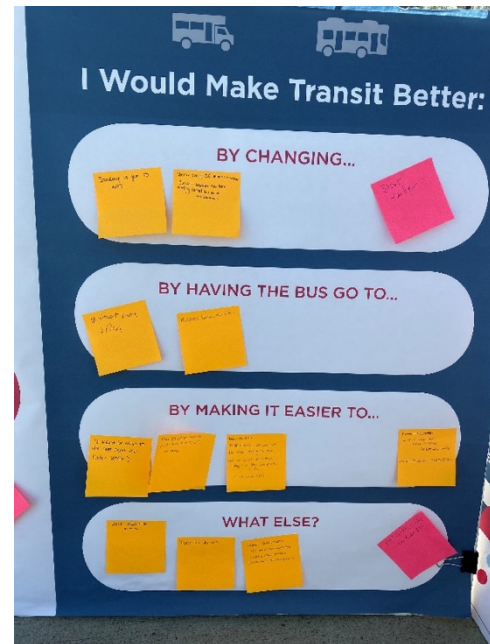
Specific input captured from participants is recorded below. Certain comments may be paraphrased and it should be noted that some comments may contradict or fail to recognize current transit district policies or services.

How Would You Make Transit Better Activity

Middletown Area Transit

- More frequent service: More service throughout the day, Sunday service, later service on weekdays and Saturday evening.
- Improved integration and easier transfers with CTtransit and 9 Town Transit.
- Clear and consistently applied policies regarding where passengers may be picked up, ticket expiration, and the window of time a ticket may be used once issued
- Improved service reliability, especially on Route 581 (formerly Route A)
- Direct service to Middlesex Community College.
- More service to Connecticut Valley Hospital later in the day.
- More service/connections to Hartford.
- Direct connections to New Britain and/or CCSU
- Long-term parking at the terminal.
- Designated bus stops (instead of the flag stop system) with benches or places to sit.
- Town Halls and libraries were suggested as locations to share information on transit service.

Figure 2 | I Would Make Transit Better Activity Board



9 Town Transit

- More frequent service (hourly or better)
- More Saturday service
- Sunday service (on XtraMile as well)
- Extended service spans (begin earlier and end later in the day). This included specific requests to run service later on Routes 644 and 655.
- Serve Walmart and Middlesex Hospital more often.
- Put benches or seating at key stops.
- Improve communication with customers about the status of buses (e.g. real time information).
- Improve reliability so buses arrive on schedule.

Several attendees at Pop-up events in the 9 Town area were not regular riders. Their comments included:

- Serve more areas off of Route 1
- Make it easier to find information about transit services offered, including services for those with limited mobility options.

Figure 3 | Public Engagement in Old Saybrook



Why Respondents Ride Transit

People use transit for a variety of reasons. For those who shared why they use transit during the pop-up events, the most popular reasons are to reach work and because they do not drive. Below is the breakdown of how people surveyed September 26th and 27th answered the question. Participants were able to select more than one reason.

Results are consistent with the on-board customer survey conducted in May 2019, which found that most riders use MAT or 9 Town Transit services to get to work or because they don't drive.

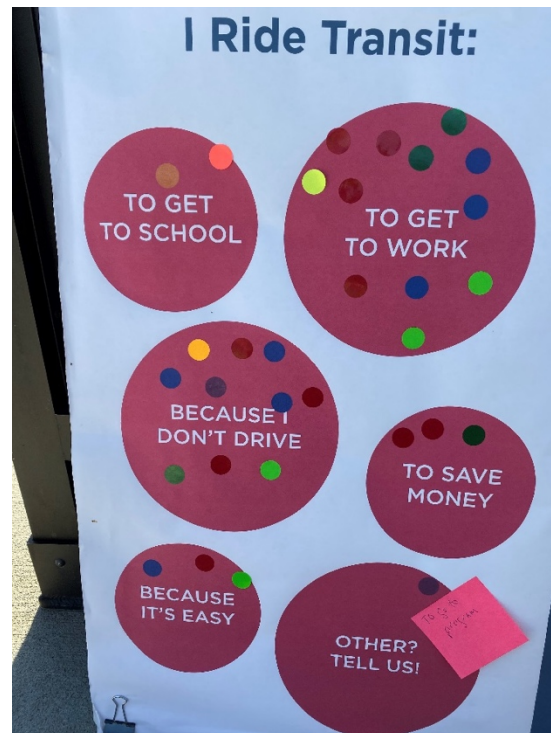
Table 2 | Why I Ride (MAT Riders)

Reason	Number of Dots
To Get to School	1
To Get to Work	7
Because I Don't Drive	7
To Save Money	1
Because It's Easy	1
Other	1 – All of the time. For everything

Table 3 | Why I Ride (9 Town Riders)

Reason	Number of Dots
To Get to School	1
To Get to Work	5
Because I Don't Drive	3
To Save Money	2
Because It's Easy	2
Other	1 – To go to program

Figure 4 | I Ride Transit Activity



Transit Priorities

At the Pop-Up events, participants were asked about their transit priorities as part of a trade-off exercise. This exercise helps the project team understand what is important to riders, and what kinds of changes they prioritize.

Table 4 | Transit Priorities Exercise Responses (Middletown Area Transit)

Trade-Off	Option 1	Dots	Option 2	Dots
Frequency vs. Span	More Frequent Bus Service	9	Longer Service Hours	8
Weekday vs. Saturday	More Weekday Service	5	More Saturday Service	10
Weekday vs. Sunday	More Weekday Service	1	More Sunday Service	13
Faster Service vs. Shorter Walks	Fewer Stops with Faster Bus Service	3	More Stops for Shorter Walks to bus stops	10
More Places vs. More Frequency	Buses going to more places, but less frequently	5	Buses running more frequently, but fewer places	5
Improve Existing Service vs. Serve New Areas	Improving existing services	10	Serve New Areas	4

The priorities in Table 4 indicated by riders in the MAT service area differ slightly from the results of the on-board customer survey conducted in May 2019. The on-board survey results (which had a much higher response rate) showed a greater preference for longer spans of service, and buses running more frequently but to fewer places.



Table 5 | Transit Priorities Exercise Responses (9 Town Transit)

Trade-Off	Option 1	Dots	Option 2	Dots
Frequency vs. Span	More Frequent Bus Service	5	Longer Service Hours	6
Weekday vs. Saturday	More Weekday Service	4	More Saturday Service	8
Weekday vs. Sunday	More Weekday Service	7	More Sunday Service	5
Faster Service vs. Shorter Walks	Fewer Stops with Faster Bus Service	8	More Stops for Shorter Walks to bus stops	3
More Places vs. More Frequency	Buses going to more places, but less frequently	4	Buses running more frequently, but fewer places	5
Improve Existing Service vs. Serve New Areas	Improving existing services	5	Serve New Areas	5

The priorities in Table 5 indicated by riders in the 9 Town service area differ slightly from the results of the on-board customer survey conducted in May 2019. The on-board survey results (which had a much higher response rate) showed a greater preference for more frequent service, for Sunday service over weekday service, and for improving existing service rather than going to new areas.

Appendix

Figure 3 | Project Fact Sheet





What is the LCRV Transit Study?

Shaping the future of transit in the Lower Connecticut River Valley

The Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments (RiverCOG) is studying bus transit in the region to make service more effective. The study is being conducted with Estuary Transit District (operating as 9 Town Transit), Middletown Area Transit (MAT), and the CT Department of Transportation. Completion of this study will help us to better understand regional needs.

- Who are current and potential customers of MAT and 9 Town Transit?
- Where do current and potential transit riders wish to travel?
- How are MAT and 9 Town Transit performing?
- How can MAT and 9 Town Transit services be improved?




Why is this study happening?

The study will involve an in-depth look at existing services and will consider potential enhancements to better match service with demand, improve regional connections, and serve key activity centers. The study will also evaluate whether service expansions would be effective. The study will be complete in early 2020.


Meet members of the study team and learn more:

- Thursday, September 26, 2019**

 - **9:00 to 11:00 AM and 1:00 to 3:00 PM**
Middletown Area Transit Passenger Terminal
340 Main Street, Middletown
 - **4:00 to 6:00 PM**
Walmart, 161 Berlin Road, Cromwell


- Friday, September 27, 2019**

 - **9:30 to 11:00 AM**
Clinton Town Hall/Green Room
54 East Main Street, Clinton
 - **1:00 to 3:00 PM**
Scranton Gazebo, Madison
 - **3:30 PM to 5:00 PM**
9 Town Bus Shelter at Old Saybrook Station




 **Find out more | www.lcrvtransitstudy.org**

Figure 4 | I Ride Transit Board

Lower **Connecticut**
River Valley Transit Study


I Ride Transit:

- TO GET TO SCHOOL
- TO GET TO WORK
- BECAUSE I DON'T DRIVE
- TO SAVE MONEY
- BECAUSE IT'S EASY
- OTHER? TELL US!



I Would Make Transit Better:

- BY CHANGING...
- BY HAVING THE BUS GO TO...
- BY MAKING IT EASIER TO...
- WHAT ELSE?

Figure 5 | Transit Priorities Board



Lower **Connecticut**
 River Valley Transit Study

What Are Your Transit Priorities?

FREQUENCY vs. SPAN	More frequent bus service	VS.	Longer service hours
WEEKDAY vs. SATURDAY	More weekday service	VS.	More Saturday service
WEEKDAY vs. SUNDAY	More weekday service	VS.	Sunday service
FASTER SERVICE vs. SHORTER WALKS	Fewer stops with faster bus service	VS.	More stops for shorter walks to bus stops
MORE PLACES vs. MORE FREQUENCY	Buses going to more places, but LESS frequently	VS.	Buses running more frequently, but to FEWER places
IMPROVE EXISTING vs. NEW AREAS	Improve existing services	VS.	Serve new areas