Transportation Stakeholders Planning Meeting on Reducing
Single-Occupancy Vehicle Commuting
Hosted by the High Meadows Fund
December 7, 2011
Vermont College of Fine Arts – Noble Lounge (Noble Hall)

Core questions and themes to address at today's meeting:
1) How do we reduce single occupancy vehicle use in Vermont? What are people doing, what is working, what's coming down the pipe?
2) Is there value in bringing people together on this topic, and/or value in some sort of continuing network. In what ways can High Meadows support that?
3) What are the principles of behavior change? How can they be applied successfully in our work? Our work is not to convince people to do what we want them to do, it's about finding out what they want to do and making it easy and fun for them to do that. We don't make our decisions based on logic, we make decisions for social reasons.

Themes from among the group's responses to Steffi's question: Who are you, and what do you want to get out of the meeting today?
- Transportation is all about synergy – synergy among the individuals and groups working on transportation issues in Vermont (including bike/ped groups and mobility groups), and synergy among the various modes of transportation. Behavior change related to one mode of transportation can act as a gateway to other modes and behaviors.
- There is a need for people working in this arena to understand the resources available to them, and to be aware of the work being done throughout the state by various individuals and groups.
- How can we engage and learn from what's going on regionally and nationally?
- There is a regional/local planning component here too – we should be in tune with folks working on compact development and planning (i.e. complete streets legislation)

Vital Communities – Smart Commute Program
Community based social marketing (CBSM) applied in the Upper Valley to reduce single occupancy vehicle (SOV) commuting.

What is Community-Based Social Marketing CBSM all about? How does it apply to commuting behavior?
- Be careful in selecting and targeting the behaviors we are actually trying to change. Is our work really addressing those specific behaviors?
- It takes a lot of research and time up front to figure out what works within a particular workplace. But the result is a marketing strategy that is more efficient at targeting specific behaviors and generating outcomes.

- CBSM is about delivering and measuring success based on outcomes, rather than outputs.

Smart Commute's Experience and Strategy
- **Direct involvement with the employer/workplace from day one** with an extensive survey process. Motivations, barriers and incentives vary greatly from employer to employer, and it pays to thoroughly understand those unique factors.
- **Critical to measure progress along the way** – that means a lot of surveys
- **Seeking out interested employers** – example of Hypertherm (metal cutting systems manufacturer), whose incentives for working with Smart Commute included the following factors:
    - Hypertherm is building a new facility, aiming for LEED certification, and hoping to reduce the need for parking capacity by encouraging alternatives to SOV commuting.
    - Social responsibility is a component of their public relations strategy – they have a genuine commitment to reducing their impact.
    - They see transportation/commuting incentives as an employee benefit
- **Incentives to employees are not enough on their own.** Using them is a behavior, and we need to encourage that behavior.

Questions and Discussion
- **What is the "bang for buck" of your program?** Conservatively 5:1. Closer to 8:1 with respect to High Meadows Fund and federal dollars.
- **Have you dropped the term "alternative transportation" in your messaging strategy?** YES
- **Have you done anything with social recognition as a motivator?** Some company newsletter highlighting and commuter profile work.
- **How did you decide what would constitute success?** Looking at programs across the county, we realized we are rural, so we aimed low, and we hit high! We consciously said we weren't going to engage in a traditional marketing campaign – went out on a limb. We're following the CBSM model and measuring outcomes rather than outputs.
- **What made employers agree to be involved?** It varies business to business. You just have to ask what they want and make that your metric.
    - Focus on that $1.3 million figure of money that has stayed in the Upper Valley as a result of Smart Commute's efforts in 2010. That's the message that is compelling to businesses.
    - Social responsibility is an important public relations strategy. Some companies have a genuine commitment to reducing their impact.
    - Some want to provide an employee safety net – to lose employees to high gas prices is rough. Transportation/commuting incentives can be offered as an employee benefit.

- o If the company is expanding, like Hypertherm in New Hampshire, a program like smart commute could help a new building earn LEED certification, or even reduce the amount of parking you have to provide for a new facility.
  - o Other areas of the country have had success requiring employers to have these programs (i.e. Boulder CO). There are examples and ways to do it. Changing habits is hard, things like hospitals charging for parking would help.
- **What would be necessary to grow the Smart Commute program?** Smart commute is expanding to 50 employers. That may mean simplifying the report/recommendations process to be less writing intensive, and spending more one-on-one time with HR/sustainability reps so employers are equipted to run programs with limited outside support. A peer network of participating employers will be critical.
- **What are the weak links in your set-up?** People leave their positions at partnering employers and don't tell us, and suddenly we don't have our contact at that business.
- **Not every community has big employers – is there a minimum employee count?** We didn't have an official minimum limit, but we didn't look at anyone below 50ppl. We are now expanding, and have signed on an employer with 15 employees. There has been more success at Carshare with smaller employers. It can be easier to have contact/influence with the company's decision makers if the company is small.
- **How much does it cost to work with an employer?** Using Hypertherm as an example (and as we go along, we may grow to be more efficient than this)
  - Outreach at the business – 40 hrs/yr for the first year. They wanted more labor intensive services so this is probably not representative.
  - 20hr/yr consulting time
  - $15,000-$20,000 for survey through a firm – it can be done on a non-verified online platform for closer to 400$/yr.
  - Smart Commute has spent time working and developing relationships in the upper valley, and getting TMA and chamber of commerce engaged.
- **What's it going to take to apply the Smart Commute CBSM-based method more broadly?** Smart Commute would like this to be a turnkey project. Goal: pare it down and get it out the door so it can be cost effective for everybody else.
- **What can volunteer energy committees do?** Transportation is hard to take on at the energy committee level. Waterbury has identified carpooling and bike/ped as the two strategies. It would be great to have a systematic review of the options out there for interested groups to tackle the SOV problem in their communities, or better yet a model that groups could plug into. In the meantime, BETA-testing with smaller employers is the way to go for energy committees.
  - Can we pool support resources regionally to support community-based efforts?

- Can volunteers help in places where there is no TMA? The data collection and crunching is expensive and hard to do well. That's a challenge for volunteers.
- Finding and engaging internal champions within businesses and within the community is very helpful.
- **How can regional planning commissions (RPC's) plug in?** Many have a transportation planner on staff. They could come up with or help distribute surveys, centralize data collection, work with the energy committees to find funding, and helping to manage the volunteers/project. The turnkey model is a great idea, could we turn it over (with some $$) to the RPCs?
  - o RPC's could be a good place to centralize that data collection. But the relationship with an employer is ESSENTIAL – they need to make sure that relationship building is happening, within RPS and in collaboration with community orgs. Let the transportation people deal with the data. The turnkey approach is SUPER, could we hand it over with some $$ to the RPCs?
- **How much of the process can be standardized/mass-produced?** The customized relationship with each employer is essential, but can we provide web-based services that are easily adaptable and customizable? How far do we need to take it, can we take it, so RPCs, community orgs, businesses etc, can plug in and run with it. Goal: minimize local time is spent on what could be done in a centralized/standardized way.
- **GoVermont wants to be a starting point/resource for all of this kind of work in the state.** GoVermont is looking to make improvements and serve evolving needs as well as they can. They want to develop that connection between local and state efforts.
  - o GoVermont is a brand – why not team up with local orgs like Waterbury LEAP and ACTR to spread the brand and strengthen local efforts with centralized support.
  - o GoVermont can help match people within a company, or within a geographic region.
  - o Addison County wants to build on GoVermont, apply the behavior change lessons of Smart Commute, and work at a programmatic level. ACTR is constrained for resources, and benefits from an energetic staff, but how can they do this? They have tons of info on ridership and what's needed, but lack lack of resources to implement programming. Volunteer engagement is hit or miss.

What organizations and programs are working in Vermont on transportation and/or behavior change?
- **Waterbury Local Energy Action Partnership (LEAP)**
- **Addison County Transit Resource (ACTR)**
- **Chittenden County (CCTA)** bike commuting program, based on workplace wellness, tied into national effort.

- **Transportation Demand Management Pilot Project in Chittenden County**, funded through a federal Transportation, Community and System Preservation grant. Project involves six programs. Partners include Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization (CCMPO), CarShare CT, CATMA and others. (contact: Bryan Davis bdavis@ccmpo.org)
- **Efficiency Vermont** – Energy Leadership Challenge to reduce all energy use by 7.5% (transportation is included in that goal), 60 businesses signed up. http://www.efficiencyvermont.com/for_my_business/energy_leadership_challenge
- **Efficiency Vermont** is also working on a smart grid demonstration project, focused on energy efficiency coaching and behavior change. There may be materials on efficiency-related behavior change coming from EVT down the road.
- **Vital Communities**, working with the Vermont Land Trust to examine municipal policy options – not funded yet
- **CIRC alternatives task force** – 5 projects put forward, one of them is over a million for transportation demand management http://www.circtaskforce.org/
- **Idle-free fleets program** – working in Chittenden and Rutland counties, one-on-one work, wants to work with 10 towns to implement programming.
- **AARP** is working on access/mobility through partnerships at the Health Department, VTRANS, the complete streets program and others.
- **Amtrak** may be extended to Montreal in the near future. They are also working on developing an electronic ticketing program.

Addison County Transit Resource (ACTR)

Where are we now? ACTR recently conducted a ridership survey to determine who is riding and why (for full results contact Nadine Barnacle)
- Demographics:
    - 10% over age 50; 22% under age 25
    - 74% household income <$30,000
- Why do they ride?
    - Riding to: work (73%), shop (42%), reduce CO2 footprint (38%), medical appointments (38%), school (19%)
    - 73% are transit dependent
    - 40% have no access to a car

How can ACTR do more?
- **Increasing service mean increasing ridership:** A March 2010 40% increase in service resulted in 40% increase in ridership (note: ACTR tracks # of rides, not # of unique riders). Next goal is for a 30% increase in ridership to be accomplished by increasing service without increasing the route map (physically expanding service and plugging gaps in service takes a lot of time).

- **Provide access to more modes** - partnerships with GoVermont, local businesses, bike/ped groups.
- **Market to the "white collar" commuters** - This group is barely represented within current ridership.
- **Staff/Resource constraints** – many of ACTR's programs rely heavily on the enthusiasm and tirelessness of ACTR's limited staff.

Discussion/Suggestions/Feedback
- **Kick-start model for expanding service and ridership**? – Potential riders prepay for bus-passes that aren't binding until the service is provided.
- **Social Marketing** – profiling riders, especially riders who are well known in their communities.
- **Rider Perks** - Offering incentives, raffles, other rider perks. Are there subsidies for transit at local employers? Middlebury College gets that, ACTR has found that others aren't hugely interested.
- **GoVermont** has found that 70% of transit users say cost savings is their primary motivator. We shouldn't lose the environmental marketing message completely because that remaining 30% are the early adopters and true believers. We need them too.
- **Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC)** – some options for employers include setting up a pre-tax account for employees to use for transit passes, or making it possible for transit passes to be purchased at/through the employer.
- **An investment in good service will get you ridership** – but you have to dig up the funding first.
- **Tax credits** – There are tax credit benefits available to help employers support transit programs. For example: under ARRA, employees to get a $230/mo benefit through employer-based transit/vanpool programs. This benefit will be reduced to $125/mo unless congress steps in. For more information: http://www.metro-magazine.com/News/Story/2011/12/APTA-failure-to-extend-transit-commuter-benefits-favors-drivers.aspx?ref=Express-Tuesday-20111206&utm_source=Email&utm_medium=Enewsletter
- **Think about the problem in terms of behavior and lifestyle** - It's very convenient to drive and park, so why not (unless, like 70% of public transit riders, you can't afford to make that lifestyle choice)? In order to motivate people to do something that is not convenient, we have to be willing to make things less convenient (good luck)
- **CATMA's Emergency Ride Home Program** – This addresses a particular barrier for some employees in choosing transit. Program covers up to $60 in cab fare in case of a midday emergency on a day when you took alternative transit to work. Free service for employees at CATMA membership institutions who use alternative transit modes on a regular basis.
- **WE ENCOURAGE MORE THOUGHTS**

Waterbury Local Energy Action Partnership (LEAP)

The Waterbury Community – why is Waterbury ideal for a community based transportation initiative?
- Compact downtown, home to major employers (green mountain coffee and Ben and Jerry's), located right off I-89 so many people have overlapping commuting routes.
- Supportive town leadership, highly active Waterbury LEAP (501c3 energy committee) and Waterbury MOTION (bike/ped)

What Waterbury LEAP wants to do:
- Approach major employers (three large employers, then the next biggest are 10-20 employees). Distribute internal surveys and identify: what do they want to accomplish, what are the major travel patterns, what incentives might work for the company and/or its employees.
- Reach out to neighborhoods, families, and individuals and generate a critical mass of people interested in transit alternatives
- Determine whether a web-based solution might be helpful. It would be wonderful to personalize as much as possible. Questions like, do you drop kids off at school before work? Where do you work?
- Goal: a community-wide, multi-year effort.

Is it reasonable to expect Waterbury LEAP to take this on?
- LEAP is one of the more sophisticated energy committees in the state but it is still a community, volunteer based group. How can volunteers do what smart commute and the state can do?
- LEAP is all about going green, and that's not what the majority of riders want to hear. LEAP recognizes that the green message can't reach everyone, and they have adjusted their message appropriately. They would have no problem having this transportation effort exist outside the LEAP umbrella if that's what it takes to make it successful.

Discussion, Suggestions, Feedback
- **Has LEAP considered promoting public transit?** Waterbury is in a decent location to access public transit.
- **Plug into the RPC**, they may have some data that may be useful
- **Start Small -** Your goals are so ambitious – schools, neighborhoods and employers are three big, separate issues. Smart Commute started with one employer and took a year to do it. And Smart Commute is staffed! In the case of CATMA, Fletcher Allen, UVM and Champlain College are so close together, and it made sense to collaborate on transportation initiatives.
- **CarShare VT** has developed a guide for other communities interested in carsharing initiatives, and is looking for communities to play the leadership role in determining whether carsharing can work in a rural setting.

However, CarShare spent 18 months just focusing on carsharing. It's a big undertaking, and probably more than what Waterbury wants/needs right now.

- **Social marketing** via Front Porch Forum, Facebook, other networking resources.
- **GoVermont** – there is a $500 program for energy committees just to incorporate GoVermont programming in their communities. Whatever you end up doing, be sure to involve GoVermont. The work you describe is a valuable case study.
- **Partnerships outside of motorized transportation** – Bike/Ped groups, health groups, community coalitions. The health department was a huge partner for CCTA's bike program. Kimberly Clarke (huge paper products company) is a growing partner for bike commuting. They stumbled into it in a competition Wisconsin, now they're rolling it out nationally, with an incredible web platform.
- **Involve GMTA** - you can't beat their infrastructure

WRAP-UP

Takeaway Points
- **Information Sharing:** Most participants weren't aware of all the programs that were mentioned. It is clear that this group needs a way to be more up to date on what's happening across the state. Could GoVermont take on that role of collecting and sharing information? Could UVM-TRC's newsletter be a tool for this if people send Tom McGrath updates on their work?
- **We need to understand how each of us fits into the bigger picture.** Who are the experts? Where are the turnkey projects? How can we work together, not step on each other's' toes, and use our resources efficiently? Who is getting paid to do what, and what are our roles and responsibilities working towards the greater combined goal of reducing single occupancy vehicle use across the state.
- **Community Based Social Marketing has a huge role to play.** Effective marketing is so much more than just putting up a website and passing out fliers. Next time you're getting ready to launch a campaign, STOP, THINK! We have to do it a different way. CBSM can help us to have the greatest impact with the resources we have.

Other Thoughts
- **Need for research and data analysis –** Where is the research, where are the holes in our knowledge, who are potential research partners
- **What are the roles for funder networks?**
- **We need policy change as well as behavior change.** We need a forum to support each other in current agendas, and to figure out what policy measures would support us in doing that better. We should seek

partnerships with statewide advocacy orgs that focus on policy – like AARP and VNRC. Also note that the state's Comprehensive Energy Plan includes transportation in the state's energy strategy.

- **Who are partners we aren't recognizing?** Some of the best behavior change sparks in the communities are people who work with people all the time. League of cities and towns, small businesses who work with people
  - Wellness promoters in public schools across the state, i.e. the Vermont school boards insurance trust.
  - Safe routes to schools
  - Faith Communities, Cultural Communities.
  - Getting conservative voices in the mix – make it non-partison
  - Let's bring in some NOT like-minded people. Now that we've got the choir assembled we need to figure out why people are NOT on the bus.
  - Economic development groups – workforce investment boards (WIBs)
  - Downtown partnerships
  - Private developers – people creating new neighborhoods and communities
- **What about CBSM training in Vermont**
  - Doug McKenzie Mour is costly and formulaic - we need a flexible system.
  - What about funding a certain amount of consulting help for orgs involved in this sort of work. Orgs could apply for that assistance. You could require that recipients have to mentor another group.
  - Bring in people from around the country with experience applying this stuff – like King County Washington and their TBM perspective.

Next Steps

1. **Maintain and expand the group gathered here today** – who is missing from the conversation, who should know that we are meeting and forming partnerships around these issues? We encourage you to send us feedback, suggestions, connections, etc.
2. **Establish a list-serve for ease of communication**
   - Tom McGrath will ask for updates and input from the group before publishing the Clean Cities Newsletter – that can serve as an knowledge sharing tool for the group.
   - The list can also serve as a forum for feedback as members of the group develop their initiatives.
     - GoVermont would like to use us as a technical advisory committee
     - Waterbury LEAP and ACTR will continue to need feedback
     - Smart Commute as they expand their work
     - Others?

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3. **Establish a core committee** to develop the network and plan for the next meeting in mid/late March.
   - o Core group to include VTRANS, CCTA, VEC, are others interested?
   - o Core group will help to identify the need for specific working groups for next meeting and beyond (topic ideas include policy, marketing, information sharing)
   - o Next meeting is likely to involve a working session element, where sub-groups form to get into the weeds on certain issues and report back.
   - o Consider creating a diagram or other descriptive tool to help us visualize the network we are creating here.