

Smart **C**ommute **U**pperValley

Working to Reduce Reliance on Driving Alone



Smart Commute Hartland Action Plan

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*Report Contact:
Bethany Fleishman, Transportation Program Assistant
Vital Communities
195 North Main Street
White River Junction, Vermont 05001
bethany@vitalcommunities.org
802-291-9100*



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The Survey

Background: The Town of Hartland and Vital Communities administered the first Smart Commute Hartland survey in spring 2015. The survey collected data on 213 Hartland residents' driving habits, barriers to accessing transportation options (e.g., The Current bus), and opinions on potential new projects to help residents drive less. The survey responses reveal low-cost, immediate promotional activities the Town could use to encourage non-drive alone travel, as well as more long-term infrastructure changes.

Surveys were collected via posts on the Hartland community discussion list ("Listserv"), promotion at community events, and distribution at the public library and Damon Hall, the town hall.

Demographics: 77% of survey respondents were aged 45 and over, including 23.2% that identified as 65 or over (compared to 14.2% in the US Census 2013 American Community Survey for Hartland). 23% of survey respondents were between the ages of 25 and 44 (compared to 21.2% in the 2013 American Community Survey for Hartland).

82% of respondents were employed (compared to 66.7% in the 2013 American Community Survey for Hartland). A little over 17% identified as retired. The only self-identified student attended OSHER – Dartmouth's lifelong learning institute; there were no high school or college students. 41% of survey respondents have a post-graduate degree, as compared to 20.9% of Hartland residents as a whole, according to Census data.



Damon Hall

Although nearly one quarter of respondents declined to indicate their household income range, among those who did, the income distribution is roughly similar to that of the 2013 American Community Survey for Hartland. However, the median household income range of survey respondents was higher (\$75,000 to \$99,999) than the median household income in Hartland reported by the ACS (\$62,438).

These statistics generally reflect the adult population as found in the 2013 American Community Survey for the town, though we collected surveys from a slightly higher percentage of older residents, working residents, and residents with a high level of education than is reflected in the general Hartland population.

We surveyed approximately 6.3% of the town's total population, with the following geographical breakdown:

<i>Village/neighborhood</i>	<i>Percent of respondents (number of respondents)</i>
Toward Quechee/Quechee-Hartland Rd.	28% (56)
Four Corners/Jenneville/Fieldsville	22% (44)
Three Corners	18% (36)
North Hartland	2% (34)
Other	7% (14)
Route 12/Toward Woodstock/West Woodstock	6.4% (13)
Cobb Hill	6% (12)
West Windsor/Reading	1% (2)
Brownsville	0.5% (1)

Current Transportation Habits: When asked how they completed their most recent trip, Hartland residents said:

<i>Mode</i>	<i>Smart Commute Hartland Survey 2015</i>	<i>U.S. Census 2013 American Community Survey for Hartland</i>
drove alone	69%	78.6% (+/- 7.1%)
carpooled	5%	12.6% (+/- 6.4%)
took a bus	1.3%	0.0% (+/- 1.1%)
rode a bike	1.3%	0.0% (+/- 1.1%)
walked	3.2%	1.6% (+/- 2.6%)
telecommuted	15.4%	7.2% (+/- 3.3%)

In addition, respondents reported they do the following in a typical month to reduce the amount they drive:

- 53% worked from home
- 7.4% walked
- 28.5% carpooled
- 7.3% rode a bus
- 10% rode a bike

We acknowledge that people who have an interest in transportation—for economic, socio-political reasons, or both—may have been eager to take the survey and thus most of these mode share numbers are slightly higher than those for the average population. This has been a pattern seen in other Smart Commute Upper Valley towns.

An unusually large percentage of respondents (45.2%) reported that they are self-employed and/or that their business is based out of their house, which accounts for the very high rate of telecommuting.

Attitudes about Transportation: The primary reasons that respondents gave for having carpooled, taken the bus, biked, or walked were (1) because it was easy and convenient, (2) to save money, and (3) to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

Recommendations

Short-Term Promotional Projects

1. Promote The Current Bus Service and Promote Google Transit to Encourage Ridership

Nearly 19% of survey respondents had never heard of The Current, and almost 46% of respondents had heard of it but never tried it. Promoting the service could increase the total number of residents who use the system and the frequency of their rides – 26% of respondents said that “basic information about the bus” would encourage them to ride. Promote The Current through the Hartland community discussion list and through community outreach (see Work Plan for more details).

Sample language to promote The Current:

Have you wanted to try our commuter bus but not known how it works? Visit crtransit.org to see how you can use The Current bus to commute to major Upper Valley workplaces, including Dartmouth College and Dartmouth-Hitchcock, Hypertherm, and the VA Hospital.

Google Transit can be used to plan out a trip on The Current. Promoting this simple, easy-to-use online tool could be effective in increasing ridership by addressing one major barrier: not understanding the bus schedule or routes, which 11% of respondents cited.

Sample language to promote Google Transit:

Do you know you can use Google Maps to plan a trip on The Current bus and other transit routes in Vermont and beyond? Go to maps.google.com, type in your starting point and destination, and click on the “bus” icon at the top of the menu to see your route. Take The Current from the Exit 8 & 9 Park & Rides to White River Junction, Lebanon, and Hanover.

2. Promote Park & Ride Improvements and Go! Vermont on the Hartland Community Discussion List

A transportation recommendation in the Hartland Town Plan is to encourage carpooling through promotion of the I-91 Exit 9 Park & Ride. Recent improvements to the Park & Ride included installation of level 1 electric vehicle chargers and the construction of a bus and carpooler shelter.

Sample language to promote the Hartland Park & Ride:

Check out the new and improved Hartland Park & Ride! It now features level 1 electric vehicle chargers and a shelter for The Current bus passengers and



The new shelter and bike rack at the renovated Exit 9 Park & Ride. The blue sign in the background designates one of the several EV chargers.

carpoolers! Never tried The Current? Check it out at crtransit.org. Looking for a carpool buddy? Go to connectingcommuters.org.

In concert with promoting the park & ride, the town could consider promoting other resources to help carpoolers. Almost 28% of respondents said that they don't carpool because they don't know anyone to share a ride with. Go! Vermont, the statewide carpool and vanpool matching service, is a free resource that almost 80% of survey respondents do not know exists. Furthermore, 29% of survey respondents indicated that their preferred method of meeting carpool partners is through a website, a preference which outnumbered asking friends and neighbors or meeting at the town park-and-ride at a designated time. The below comments from the survey illustrates that promoting Go! Vermont in Hartland could be an important step:

"Jeez, are these things advertised on the local town list-serves? Otherwise, folks who rarely come up for air don't hear about them..."

"I knew that it was for regular commutes but I didn't know about the one-time trip carpooling matches."

"I will definitely check out the Go! Vermont website. I used to carpool every day, but now that I've moved, I don't know anyone traveling from Hartland to Waterbury."

Sample language to promote Go! Vermont:

Thanks to everyone in town who took our transportation survey this spring. Your answers revealed some promising new projects for our town.

For starters, 29% of residents said that their preferred method to meet a potential carpool partner is through a website, and 80% were not aware that one already exists! If you haven't tried [Go! Vermont](http://Go!Vermont.com), the state carpool and vanpool matching website, give it a try! You can use it for regular commuting, one-time trips, and even to promote ridesharing to a conference, party, or other large event. When you sign up with Go! Vermont, you'll also be eligible for a **guaranteed ride home** from a taxi or rental car if you have an emergency and need to miss your carpool or bus ride.

Nearly a quarter of respondents said that they don't carpool for fear of needing a vehicle for an emergency during the day. Specific promotion of Go! Vermont's Guaranteed Ride Home benefit could let potential carpoolers feel more confident sharing a ride.

"If I didn't have to worry about getting a call during the work day from daycare about a sick kid, I would probably car pool."

Sample language to promote the Guaranteed Ride Home Benefit:

Do you avoid carpooling for fear of needing a car in an emergency? Go! Vermont's Guaranteed Ride Home benefit is for registered carpoolers who share a ride at least two days per week. If a work-related or family emergency prevents you from traveling with your carpool, the program reimburses travel costs (from a taxi or rental car) up to \$70. See connectingcommuters.org/guaranteed-ride-home-benefit/ for more info.

3. Other Promotion

Survey respondents said that they would like to be able to take their bicycles on the train. Amtrak will soon pilot bike racks on the Vermonter. Stay tuned, and promote this new program to residents once it's launched.

4. Coordinate with Regional Efforts to Improve Volunteer Driver Programs and Other Senior Transportation

Though 90% of retired people or people with disabilities who took the survey said they don't have trouble accessing services now, more than 75% said that they worry about how they'll get around if they have to stop driving. The concerns are not just about getting to medical appointments but how to maintain a quality of life and remain a valued member of the community. See the survey comment below:

“One needs to keep their self-respect and not be reduced to begging. Can't there be some 'fair exchange' built in? And also not judgement on where you choose to go...”



Many jobs and services are located in towns to Hartland's north or south.

More than one third said that volunteer drivers are a good resource for seniors and people with disabilities – though this service exists already, many said that it needs to be more robust. One third also said that a bus service more tailored to the needs of seniors would be helpful, and several said the same about a senior van service. One idea is illustrated in the comment below:

“Vans with accessibility for seniors and people with disabilities. Somewhere between a taxi and a bus??? Or... Über - lol! Perhaps a shared vehicle with surrounding small towns if not enough need here in Hartland. Could this be a small business venture?”

Aging in Hartland coordinates senior transportation via Volunteers in Action, a community program based at Mount Ascutney Hospital. However, like other volunteer driver programs in the Upper Valley, Volunteers in Action has more demand than it does

drivers to fulfill the need.

When asked by the survey, “Are you interested in being a volunteer driver for a local human services agency? You can be reimbursed 57.5 cents/mile and meet new people,” almost 85% of survey respondents said, “No.”

Not only around the region, but nationwide, agencies struggle to recruit volunteer drivers to meet demand. The most effective recruitment strategy seems to be personal or word-of-mouth recruitment by drivers themselves. There are several Hartland residents who are volunteer drivers, and perhaps they can be engaged to help find additional drivers in the community. Vital Communities staff will coordinate with Aging in Hartland and other organizations serving Hartland seniors and people with disabilities on volunteer driver recruitment efforts.

Any longer-term efforts to address the transportation needs of seniors and others in Hartland should coordinate with similar efforts around the Upper Valley. Although Stagecoach's transit

system doesn't serve Hartland, the town is in the service area of Stagecoach's Dial-A-Ride service, and coordination with that agency would be wise. In addition, the United Valley Interfaith Project (UVIP) has an Aging with Dignity campaign that is looking at transportation needs of seniors, among other issues. UVIP hopes to be able to coordinate with other organizations in the region to begin tackling this and related issues in a comprehensive way.

Looking to the Future: Infrastructure Improvement and New Programs

5. Install Sidewalks and Add Bike Lanes to Roads

Only 10% of those surveyed biked to their destination in the month prior to the survey. This is not surprising, given a real or perceived lack of safe roads and that many people in Hartland must travel some distance to get to work and other destinations. It likely also reflects the national lack of culture around biking for transportation. The following comments from the survey reflects these realities:

"I love biking and walking whenever road conditions allow. I am not comfortable on the high-speed state roads that lead me into town and/or into other towns with such little shoulder room, drivers unused to seeing bikers/walkers, and the still pervasive distraction of electronic devices while driving. That's what eventually stopped me."

"Based on distances to access supplies, drugs, basic needs - combined with cold temperatures 5 months out of the year it is difficult to find biking a realistic alternative. Getting people to share rides, take a bus and carpool vs. thinking about costly installation of walking/biking paths (to where?) seems a lot more practical."

The latter comment aside, survey results show that residents want better bike and pedestrian infrastructure. Its lack hinders their ability to adopt biking and walking as a practical transportation mode.

"Would love for Route 5 between 3 Corners and the park and ride to be more bike and pedestrian friendly. Especially from 3 Corners to Martinsville and Rice Road, it is treacherous!"



Martinsville Road, on the way to Hartland Elementary School

"I bike to Woodstock but it doesn't feel at all safe on Route 106. I would love to bike more if there were bike paths. A bike path up route 5 to WRJ would be great. There's just NO good biking options around here."

A third of respondents said that they don't bike or walk because it's too dangerous – this was the second most common barrier for people.

That data confirms the town master plan's focus on progressive bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. Almost 60% of people surveyed said that more bike lanes and almost 33% said

that more sidewalks in Hartland would appeal to them. An open-ended question about where

residents would like to see bike paths in the future revealed that Route 5 and between Three Corners and Four Corners are two priority areas.



The current Three Corners intersection from Damon Hall.

A good start will be the upcoming redesign of the Three Corners intersection. The redesign will reduce the number of stop signs from seven to four, and each will include a crosswalk, making the intersection safer and less confusing for drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians. Further improvements in town would likely result in more people biking and walking for transportation.

Developing the local bike and walk infrastructure can encourage people to bike and walk to destinations in town, even if they still

have to drive to get to work. Almost 63% of respondents cited living too far from work as a reason for not commuting by bike and on foot. The promotion of electric assist cargo bikes could lessen the distance barrier for some people and allow more people to bring bike commuting into their daily routine.

Brattleboro, Vermont is an example of a local community that is working to change the culture around biking—and it's a place that shares the Upper Valley's winter weather, steep terrain, and spotty bicycle infrastructure. A small group of Brattleboro residents rides and promotes cargo bikes—heavy duty, often longer-framed bikes built to easily carry heavy loads, making them more useful and family-friendly than a regular bicycle. Cargo bikes often sport electric assist motors to aid in hill climbing and traffic dodging. Though the cargo bike movement is still small, it's gaining popularity in Brattleboro and nationwide. This success story from another Vermont community suggests that Hartland too could become a town where bicycle travel is more common. Fortunately, Hartland is home to one of the state's experts on cargo bike travel, Karl Kemnitzer, who makes and rides solar-powered electric-assist cargo bikes.



Hartland resident Karl Kemnitzer bikes Mount Washington on his solar-powered electric-assist cargo bike.

Fifteen survey respondents indicated that they would be interested in “a local place to test ride and buy cargo bikes/electric assist bikes and a community of people using these bikes in the area.” Though that is less than 10% of total survey respondents, these cultural changes start small. A handful of people interested might be enough for Karl and the Hartland Energy Committee to hold a worthwhile cargo-bike test ride perhaps followed by a community ride.

6. Expand and Improve Transit Infrastructure

Hartland residents who took the survey are hungry for better transit infrastructure. Almost half of respondents said they would like expanded bus service in town. In fact, among the several “wish list” transportation projects to choose from in the survey, this was the second most favored by respondents. More than 20% indicated specifically that “more frequent service”



The Current bus serves the Exit 8 and 9 Park & Rides.

would encourage them to use transit. Almost 32% said they would like to see a transit stop in the middle of town.

“More public transportation is vital as the population ages.”

“Rumor has it that a schedule synchronized with the 10-hour shifts at DHMC would garner many more bus riders.”

“To take the bus system to work I need to transfer from the Current at the VA stop. By the time that stop is made, the bus I need to get to work is already gone. Same problem on the return trip.”

A municipality or group of citizens likely has little control over these types of transit infrastructure improvements. However, these data from the survey could be used in the future to lend support for improvements made by the transit company.

7. Other Projects

The survey asked residents about what transportation options they would like to see in the future. Aside from improvements to bike, pedestrian, and transit infrastructure, the next most popular option was in-state or light rail service – 30% of respondents chose this. Many (28%) would also like to see more businesses located in the town center, which would allow more people to drive less for work, groceries, and other needs.

Some people (17%) indicated that they would be interested in a Hartland car-share program. Rural car-share is very difficult to implement, and though there is some interest in town, there likely isn't enough to warrant further effort on this.

Funding Opportunities

1. Strong Communities, Better Connections Grant

The Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) and Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) have partnered to offer a new grant program called Strong Communities, Better Connections. The program funds planning projects that link land use and transportation and can lead directly to implementation. Projects should fulfill the Livability Principles adopted

at the federal level by HUD, EPA, and DOT.¹ \$200,000 will likely become available in early 2016, and the state will likely fund 4-5 projects. The grant requires a 10% local or municipal match and will be funded 10% through ACCD and 80% through VTRANS.

Projects Funded in Round One:

- Multi-town Mad River Valley bicycle and pedestrian facilities plan,
- Study to examine biking and walking connections between downtown Vergennes and the Basin Harbor area,
- West Rutland/Rutland Town Smart Growth Plan.

Noting that two of the three successful projects thus far involved multiple towns, Hartland might consider doing a more in-depth study of biking and walking connections with a neighboring town.

The Agencies do not intend to fund broad studies, such as a town master plan. However, a town bicycle and pedestrian improvement plan is acceptable.

Contact information:

Jackie Cassino, Vermont Agency of Transportation
jackie.cassino@state.vt.us 802-828-2758
vtransplanning.vermont.gov/programs/scbc

Go! Vermont Mini-Grant

The Town of Hartland can qualify for a \$500 mini-grant for promoting the Go! Vermont program, including its carpool matching service and vanpool program. Vital Communities and town partners can record ways that Smart Commute Hartland has promoted the Go! Vermont program. A final report to VTrans is due six months after the letter of intent, and Vital Communities is happy to write this report on the town's behalf.

Contact information:

Ross MacDonald, Vermont Agency of Transportation
ross.macdonald@state.vt.us 802-828-5577

¹ For more information on the federal Livability Principles, visit sustainablecommunities.gov/aboutUs.html.