Carlisle Circulator Study
May 3, 2012

BPT Contract #4400006253 / RFP 358R10 – MMOE2 (Baker)

Work Order #91 – Carlisle Circulator Study

Task #1 – Gather Background Information and Identify Transit Needs

Deliverable #1b – Focus Group Outreach Meeting Package
Focus Group Outreach Package

In order to further understand local public transit needs, additional targeted outreach was conducted with local employers, non-profits, and Dickinson College students. Each group represents different perspectives and expectations for a new circulator service and their responses provide additional insight into the justification and issues facing the design of transit services to meet the variety of public transportation needs expressed herein. The outreach was conducted with the following individuals or groups on the following dates:

Employers:
- March 23, 2012 – Interview with Carol Lennon, Manpower Temp Agency
- March 27, 2012 – Interview with Kim Wells, JFC Temps
- April 4, 2012 – Interview with Dennis Trautman, Allen Distribution
- April 16, 2012 – Interview with Mark Altmeyer, Ross Dress for Less
- May 2, 2012 – Interview with Berks and Beyond Temp Agency
- May 11, 2012 – Interview with Margaret Weitzel, Employment Skills Center

Non-Profit Organizations:
- April 4, 2012 – Interview with Sherrie Davis, United Way of Greater Carlisle Area / Cumberland County
- April 30, 2012 – Interview with Elaine Herstek, Sadler Health Center

Dickinson College Students:
- April 12, 2012 – Dickinson College Student Focus Group

Meeting notes from each interview or focus group were summarized and are included in the sections that follow. This information is directly informing the alternative development (routes, schedules) and next steps of the project. Due to scheduling, some additional focus group outreach (Amazon, Salvation Army) will be scheduled in the weeks to come. This information will further complement the existing information.
Carlisle Area Employers Outreach Notes
Interview with Carol Lennon

Manpower Temp Agency

Interview Date: March 23, 2012

- Carol’s organization has contracts with the following warehouses/operations:
  - Amazon (Allen Road)
  - CenturyLink (call center)
  - Penske (Whirlpool)
  - Carlisle Transportation Products (Distribution for Tire and Wheel)
  - Ames True temper
  - Excel Logistics

- Carol indicated that 75% of the workforce for these operations comes from residents who live in the borough

- She indicates that hourly rates for these operations range between $7.75 and $12.00.

- She believes that the vast majority of the employees come from lower income households

- Those that do not have vehicles (and she indicated that quite a few are in this category) are using bicycles or walking to get to work; some share rides with other workers

- She mentioned two organizations that we may want to speak to in the near future:
  - Carlisle Area Personnel Association (meets monthly but not in July or August)
    - Carol is the contact for this group; I’ll find out when the meeting is April will be
  - CareerLink Employee Advisory Council (meets every other month-next meeting would be in May; contact is Director of the Career Link (Marcia Myers) who I am acquainted with

- She thought the proposed circulator service was very much needed and is a terrific idea.
Interview with Kim Wells
JFC Temps

Interview Date: March 27, 2012

• Kim’s organization has contracts with the following warehouses/operations:
  o Allen Distribution
  o Alacer (now Pfizer)
  o Pepsi
  o Jacobson
  o Ames True temper
  o Acuity Lighting
• Kim indicated that a majority of the employees for these operations live in Carlisle Borough
• She agreed with Carol Lennon that transportation for the first and second shifts would be critical; 3rd shifts are only on seasonally (usually around the holidays or late winter/early spring in the case of Ames True temper
• She noted that the first shift begins at 6AM for some operations (not 7AM) and goes to 2:30PM; the second shift begins at 2PM and goes to 10:30PM; there is a half hour overlap between shifts
• She thinks the proposed service is a terrific idea because many that work in the warehouses are walking or riding bikes to get to work
• She mentioned that in her opinion as many as 25% of the workers would use the circulator service; she agreed to search her data base of workers to tell us how many lack car transportation to the workplace.
• She mentioned that the CAT Charter bus service that service Ross Distribution is a charter service from Harrisburg and does not make any stops in the residential areas of Carlisle.
Interview with Dennis Trautman

Allen Distribution

Interview Date: April 4, 2012

- Allen employs 200 people FT; contracts for temp help (through temp agencies) for another 300 workers (150 FTE’s) mainly in the March through October time frame
- The 200 permanent employees get to work by driving; they are paid fairly well and probably not good candidates for the proposed system
- He estimates that about 50% of the 150 FTE temp workers get to work by walking (1%), biking (1%), sharing a ride (20%), or being transported by an agency, friend of relative (25%)
- He estimates that 75% of the temp part-time workers live in Carlisle Borough
- The first shift is 6AM-3:30 PM; the second shift starts at 3:30; Workers generally work M-F although for about 20% of the weekends from May to September temp workers are used for Saturday and Sunday work as well
- Dennis indicated that “transportation has not hampered growing his business” and so he questioned whether the service was needed from a strictly business standpoint. He feels that the temp agencies could speak to the need among the employees that they hire for his business operations. He felt that the workers at Ross and Amazon (which use temps heavily) would be the main beneficiaries of the service
- Note: Dennis is on the Carlisle Area Chamber of Commerce board
Interview with Mark Altmeyer
Director, Human Resources, Ross Dress for Less

Interview Date: April 16, 2012

- Mark indicated that there are 460 FT permanent employees at Ross and 90% have no difficulty getting to work; however, in addition to this group, Ross (through a temp agency) has 300 FT temp employees. To the extent that these temp employees live in Carlisle (see comments below) they are sharing a ride to work.
- The first shift is from 7AM-3PM; the second shift is from 3:30PM until 11:30 PM. Most of the time the staff is there M-F however in the fall they do have weekend work.
- CAT provides bus services from Harrisburg and Steelton to the facility; employees purchase bus passes for this service; Ross does not subsidize the service in any way.
- 4. Mark indicates that most of the FT employees come from Shippensburg, Chambersburg and Harrisburg because of the lack of affordable housing in the Carlisle area.
- Mark indicated the proposed service is a good idea; he gave me the contact information for the temp agency they use (Berks and Beyond). The contact at the local office has not returned my calls about an appointment to meet.
- He felt that there is also a need for service from Shippensburg and Chambersburg as well as from Mechanicsburg (along Trindle Road) although I indicated that those areas would probably be beyond the scope of this study.
Interview with Rose Marie Larson and Stephani Williams

Berks and Beyond Temp Agency

Interview Date: May 2, 2012

- Rose Marie confirmed the number of temps at Ross-150 FT first shift; 120 FT 2nd shift
- The first shift is staggered and begins from 5:30-6:30 AM; the second shift begins between 3-4PM; both shifts last 8 ½ hours.
- Because of transportation issues very few of the temp employees come from Carlisle. Those that do work there from Carlisle find their own transportation.
- Ross Marie indicated that if public transportation was available Catholic Charities would likely be interested in resettling people from Nepal into the Carlisle area. B/B has worked with Catholic Charities in the past in Reading and Harrisburg.
- Rose Marie confirmed that most of their temps are coming from Harrisburg/Steelton (due to the chartered CAT service) and the Chambersburg/Shippensburg/Mechanicsburg Area. Apparently there are some people who take the regular CAT bus service from Mechanicsburg into Harrisburg to catch the chartered service to Ross from Harrisburg. Then at night they take the chartered service to the transfer point in Harrisburg then take the regular service to their home in Mechanicsburg.
- Rose Marie indicated that Berks has a contract with MasterBrand which assembles cabinets for Lowe's. They have 140 Temp workers there; MasterBrand is in the vicinity of Ross.
- Rose Marie mentioned the construction of a new distribution center that is visible from I-81; this facility is owned by Liberty Trust; the speculation is that a national retailer will be leasing this for their distribution.
- Rose Marie indicated that the temp workforce also comes from Perry County and Dillsburg. If service was provided from Adams County migrant workers would be able to work at temp jobs during the non-growing season. The migrant caseworker at the Adams County Career Link would be a good contact.
- The entry level wage for a temp worker is $8-9 an hour. Temps frequently move to higher paid temp jobs with other employers but when their temp jobs ends, they are no longer welcome back at the previous employer (who paid the lower hourly rate). This means that temp workers that pursue higher paid temp jobs sometimes run out of temp employment options.
- The temp workers at Ross that ride the CAT service from Harrisburg and Steelton buy monthly bus passes; B/B will withhold from their pay to purchase a pass but that is at the option of the employee. The monthly bus pass is $84.
- Rose Marie indicated that higher paid, skilled temp positions (temp to hire) are available in part because of the lack of transportation. These individuals are eventually hired by the employer as permanent full-time employees. These positions include fork lift operators, people who operate equipment, and even supervisors. Hourly rates can be in the $13 range.
Interview with Margaret Weitzel
Executive Director, Employment Skills Center

Interview Date: May 11, 2012

- Ms. Weitzel described the five programs operated by the Employment Skills Center:
  - GED Program—serves about 150 persons and is offered in Carlisle and Mechanicsburg; the classes offered in Carlisle alternate between the ESL office at 29 South Hanover Street and the Career Link Office on Alexander Spring Road.
  - ESL (English as a Second Language)—offered at the 29 South Hanover office; serves many people who eventually find work in warehousing.
  - Literacy Programs—offered at 29 South Hanover Street for adults with low or beginning level readers. Also offered in Mechanicsburg.
  - Nurse Aid programs—100 people in program; first three weeks offered at 29 S. Hanover; clinical training (three weeks) offered at Claremont Nursing Home on Claremont Road or at Harrisburg Area Community College. Transportation is a big issue in getting to clinical work sites.
  - Currently people are carpooling, riding bikes, or walking, this program provides entry level positions for people from lower income households many of which (estimated at 80%) come from the Borough of Carlisle; other households come from Mt. Holly and Perry County; many of the nurse aids who complete the program work at the county nursing home on Claremont Drive or the senior care facilities along Walnut Bottom Road in South Middleton (Leader, Thornwald, Forest Park) and public transportation to these areas is critical.
  - Basic Computer Training—prepares adults 55+ with computer job readiness skills.

- She indicated that the organization serves 400-500 unduplicated clients; she estimated that her organization could serve 30% more clients if the transportation issue was addressed.

- Ms. Weitzel also felt it would be helpful to have service at least from Plainfield and ideally, Newville.

- The building is open between 8:30AM and 4:30 PM.
Carlisle Area Non-Profit Organizations Outreach Notes
Interview with Sherrie Davis

United Way of Greater Carlisle Area/Cumberland County

Interview Date: April 4, 2012

- The United Way completed needs assessment about 6 months ago; public transportation ranks very high as a need. However, the question posed was more about whether public transportation is a need in their neighborhood rather than whether their household has that particular need.


- Sherrie indicated that people are not able to get to appointments for services or are not able to get to the food bank; the county public assistance and county unemployment office are located several miles from the center of town in South Middleton Township.

- Children and youth are also unable to get programming at various locations.

- She believes that the following United Way agencies would have a need for transportation of clients to their offices:
  - Sadler Health Center (I have a meeting scheduled with Director later this month)
  - Project Hare (food bank)
  - Employment Skills Center

- Sherrie indicated that the Salvation Army runs a van(s) for its clients; will follow up with the Major there as to the extent of their service.

- She was not aware of any other agencies that have vans to transport clients.

- Sherrie invited me to talk with the United Way Agency directors about the proposed service at their next meeting on 5/16/2012 at 9:30AM.

- She also offered to distribute a quick survey at their United Way “Taking It To The Streets” events over the summer; there will be six festival type events that are designed as public relations events for the United Way. They will be held in different communities in the United Way Target area. The survey (which we can talk about) should be short with the objective of determining if public transportation is a need for their household. We may want to include a line for address so we can plot those who need transportation on a map. I can get a list of dates; Sherrie agreed to hand out and collect the surveys at the event(s).
Interview with Elaine Herstek

Executive Director, Sadler Health Center

Interview Date: April 30, 2012

• Elaine indicated there are about 11,000 unduplicated clients that use the health center for medical and dental services; her best estimate is that about 10-15% would use the proposed circulator service.
• She indicated that many of these clients use the Cumberland County Transportation System which is a demand responsive service that requires 24 hours advance registration; however, clients frequently wait a long time for a ride home after their appointment. In addition, children of clients are not permitted to ride the service.
• Elaine indicated for those who don’t use the county transportation service and who are transportation dependent, friends and relatives provide rides.
• Sadler does have a small benevolent fund to take clients for testing at other local facilities; they contract with a local taxi service for these rides.
• The health center is open from 7:45AM to 5:45 PM Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday. It is open 7:45AM to 7:45PM on Thursdays. There are no hours on Saturdays or Sundays although they are contemplating hours on Saturday mornings at some point.
• The health center’s board ranks the need for public transportation as one of the top three needs for its clients.
• Sadler employs 76 employees; because parking is limited, Sadler pays for leased parking for its employees; Elaine indicated that she would be amendable to paying for bus passes instead. Employee worked staggered start times at 8, 8:30, 9 and 9:30; they work an 8 ½ hour day.
• Elaine would like to receive regular updates about the status of the circulator study. She also offered to put questionnaires in the lobby for clients to indicate their interest in the service.
Dickinson College Focus Group Outreach Notes
Focus Group with Dickinson College Students

Focus Group Date: April 12, 2012

Students in Attendance:
- Timothy Damon
- Elliot Hecht
- Marissa Galtman
- Steven Finley
- Tania Marinos

Five students were in attendance. They included freshmen (2), sophomores (2), and one senior. Two students had cars on campus; three did not.

All had experience riding transit in their hometowns and/or major cities and were supporters of public transportation. When asked if any had written the CAT service, one student responded yes. However, her experiences were not positive (concerns about safety based on a conversation overheard on the bus) and the timeliness of the bus service (did not arrive on time necessitating the need for $50 cab ride to Harrisburg to catch the train).

The students provided their thoughts on bus stops on or near campus:
- Dickinson Athletic fields on Ritner Highway (“Dpark”),
- Biddle fields (Belvedere and High Streets),
- Cherry and West Louther (near Kline Center-gymnasium),
- N. College and West Louther (Holland Union Building) and
- North West and West Louther (Stearn center).
- West Pomfret and South West Street

They did not propose stops on High Street expressing concern that the bus stops might back up traffic.

Destinations included the Carlisle Commons Mall (Walmart), the Carlisle Crossings Mall (Target and Kohls, and Giant (supermarket) on South Spring Garden Road. I had provided them with a shorter version of the kick-off meeting hand-out (see attached) which indicated that the service would operate in and around Carlisle. The students did mention that there is a need for regular service to Wegman’s on Route 11 in Silver Spring Township, and the Harrisburg Train Station.

The students indicated that the service should begin around 8AM for students (recognizing that service should begin earlier for residents traveling to work). The service should operate frequently from 8AM to 10AM (about every 5-10 minutes), less frequently from 10AM-2PM (every 20 minutes), then increase in frequency after 2PM. The service should continue to 2AM on Friday and Saturdays; 12 midnight all other nights.
Interesting information obtained at the focus group:

- A Dickinson shuttle is run by the Public Safety Department that transports students to various locations. This shuttle known as the ‘safe ride” program transported over 4,000 students last year. It is a demand response service; a student calls the Public Safety Office and asks to be picked up at a certain location (presumably on or near campus) and transported to another (such as Walmart). The service is available during the evenings (9PM-3AM). Students drive the vans and are paid minimum wage (work study?).

- A special bus is run by the Campus Life department to transport students to the bus station and other places (Barnes and Noble in Camp Hill). A sign-up sheet is posted in the Union building but the service is frequently cancelled because of lack of interest. There was confusion on the part of the students whether the service still exists.

- The students were willing to pay a modest fare ($1) for the circulator service but felt that the College should consider providing a contribution to the operation of the proposed circulator service; several pointed out the college could come out ahead financially depending on the cost of the shuttle service referenced above that Dickinson runs between 9PM and 3AM.

- There was a universal feeling that there should be a single point of contact for transportation for students (as indicated above, the Public Safety Department operates one service, Campus Life another, and during breaks there are shuttles to New York City and Washington, DC).

- Two students at the focus group were working on a project to study public transportation issues for students; they were doing this as their class project for an environmental economics class. They suggested that I contact the Professor (Sebastian Berger) to obtain a copy of their work product when the semester ends.

- According to one of the students attending, the College master plan mentions phasing out some surface parking lots and turning those areas into green space. The circulator service could be helpful in this regard and the College could justify its decision that because of the availability of transit, the number of parking spaces can be reduced.

Several of the students mentioned that Dickinson has a culture that reinforces the importance of sustainability and should be supportive of the service; however one of the focus group members mentioned that many Dickinson students come from very high income households and have very expensive cars and SUVs on campus; the focus group member indicated that these students will continue to use their cars/SUVs to get to places in and around town. The only hope to get these students to use transit would be to create a “bandwagon effect”; in other words, using transit would become the “in-thing” on campus.

When asked to respond to the question, how can we generate interest and excitement in the proposed circulator service, the following ideas were mentioned:

- Provide an initial period when free service would be offered for students to try out the service
- Use alternative fuels vehicles (such as recycled vegetable oil, bio-fuels, or electric) to generate more interest, reduce noise and pollution
  Note: A portion of Dickinson’s fleet operates from recycled vegetable oil from the food service operation
- Make the circulator service part of the dialogue of sustainability that the College is promoting.
- Provide discounts on merchandise in downtown stores for users of the service
- Use smart technology at bus stops to tell students when the next bus will be arriving; provide a bench at bus stops in addition to bus stop signs
- Have a kick-off day that would be widely promoted among the Dickinson community

At the focus group it came out that there is a board called the “Idea Fund”, which administered a revolving fund for sustainability projects that can be initiated by members of the Dickinson community. The ideas have to financially feasibility and demonstrate cost savings. One member of the focus group serves on the Fund’s board and indicated that there was a proposal under consideration to replace two vehicles that Dickinson was leasing with alternate fuels vehicles; the leases on these vehicles will expire in the near future.

The session was very interactive and while the group was relatively small, the students were very forthcoming with suggestions and comments.