

APPLICATION

STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROGRAM Federal Transit Administration Section 5304 (FY 2009 ROUND)

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

- a. Name of Applicant (Regional Planning Commission)

Southwest Region Planning Commission

- b. Address

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- d. Name of Project Director

J. B. Mack

Senior Planner

2. PROJECT BACKGROUND & JUSTIFICATION

The Southwest Region Planning Commission (SWRPC) proposes to partner with four agencies that provide transit and paratransit services in Southwest New Hampshire in conducting a planning study for the purposes of examining the feasibility of expanding public transit and paratransit services on the Route 12 Corridor north of Keene. The four participating agencies include American Red Cross - New Hampshire West Chapter, Community Transportation Services, Connecticut River Transit and Home Healthcare, Hospice and Community Services. The corridor focus area of the proposed study examines Route 12 and its connections to Keene, Westmoreland, Walpole and Charlestown in New Hampshire as well as Westminster, Rockingham and Springfield in Vermont.

The four agencies have been meeting for several months with State Representative Tara Sad (Cheshire - District 2), Easter Seals and SWRPC to discuss coordination and service expansion improvements on Route 12. Since meeting, Representative Tara Sad (with support from Connecticut River Transit and American Red Cross) has approached the Town of Walpole to inquire about Town financial support for either a shopping shuttle or a local volunteer driver program. Both agencies currently provide partial service in the area, but would require additional funding in order to provide an adequate level of service to community residents. The Town has agreed to include a warrant article this March to vote on appropriating local match for a volunteer driver service, but the Selectboard has expressed that it does not have an adequate sense of community need to make informed decisions to support transit or paratransit services at this time.

The response of the Walpole Selectboard illustrates an existing dilemma facing the four agencies in a part of the state where there is little familiarity on the part of public and private sector with transportation alternative opportunities other than the single occupancy vehicle. While the four agencies have anecdotal evidence suggesting that expanded services are a need, the agencies would benefit from a market and needs study in order to understand potential ridership, the level of need of various population groups as well as the kind of political and financial support that can be expected from Route 12 community stakeholders. These are just two of several initiatives that the four agencies would like to explore to improve connectivity and accessibility in the Region. Other services that the group is interested in implementing include:

- A commuter shuttle linking Springfield, VT with Keene, NH or alternatively Rockingham, VT with Keene, NH;
- A shuttle connecting Walpole, NH to Keene, NH;
- A transit or paratransit connection between Walpole, NH and Charlestown, NH;
- Coordination of rural rides programs with existing bus services;
- Coordination of transportation among the various agencies for medical appointments to Cheshire Medical Center, the Keene Dialysis Center, Springfield Hospital and Dartmouth Hitchcock Hospital; and/or
- Development of an additional park and ride lot in the Region with possible transit or paratransit connections.

Existing travel data shows that roughly 3,500 workers make commutes to other towns in the defined Route 12 Region (this number does not include people that work and live in the same municipality). On the southern end of the corridor, Keene, NH employs approximately 1,250 of the workers residing in the Route 12 Region. On the northern end of the corridor, Rockingham, VT, Walpole, NH and Springfield, VT employ a number of workers in the Region as well (648, 447 and 456 jobs respectively).

Medical institutions servicing the region include two community hospitals (Cheshire Medical Center and Springfield Hospital) and Dartmouth Hitchcock Hospital in Lebanon, which is currently available using American Red Cross' volunteer driver program and Connecticut River Transit's commuter shuttle. There is considerable evidence that Vermont residents travel to tax-free New Hampshire to purchase goods and also to take advantage of Walpole and Keene's shopping opportunities. Additional benefits to New Hampshire residents are access to public transportation services including Connecticut River Transit, Deerfield Valley Transit Authority, Vermont Transit Lines, and Amtrak.

3. SCOPE OF WORK

Through contractual arrangements between SWRPC and the NH Department of Transportation Bureau of Rail and Transit (NH DOT), SWRPC will perform a scope of services and deliver prescribed products as agreed upon by NH DOT and SWRPC. SWRPC will lead implementation of the prescribed planning services in cooperation with the American Red Cross, Community Transportation Services, Connecticut River Transit and Home Healthcare, Hospice and Community Services using a team approach. If the proposal is funded, a second tier of participants, including Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission, Windham Regional Planning Commission, Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission, local area employers and human service providers will be invited to participate in the study.

The proposed project will include a market study, a needs assessment, an exploration of support for future transit and paratransit services and an analysis of suitable future transportation services. SWRPC with consultation of the four transportation providers and possible assistance from other regional planning commissions will provide support in the project to understand the potential ridership market, needs and private and public sector support. A private consultant will be hired to assist the four transportation providers in designing a comprehensive market and needs study, while assessing the most suitable future service or package of services. Public workshops are planned in New Hampshire and Vermont at the beginning of the project and prior to final recommendations. SWRPC in conjunction with the four transit agencies will solicit proposals for professional services to provide technical services for this project.

Tasks

The Scope of Work will consist of the following tasks. Tasks 1 and 2 will be the responsibility of SWRPC:

Task 1: General Planning

- Serve as project manager and point of contact;
- Lead and facilitate outreach efforts and communications with the general public and other stakeholders;
- Prepare for and facilitate meetings and communications with the transit providers and other advisors;
- Facilitate coordination with local and regional planning efforts and documents; and
- Oversee the development, production and distribution of a **Final Report** documenting the project methodology, findings and recommendations.

Deliverables: Agendas, meeting minutes, log of planning coordination activities related with this project and **Final Report**.

Task 2: General Administration

- Oversee all reporting requirements to NH DOT; and
- Administer all disbursement and billing of all finances associated with the project.

Deliverables: Monthly narrative and billing reports.

Task 3 will be the responsibility of SWRPC with approval and consultation with the four transit providers. If this proposal is funded, SWRPC will invite Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission, Windham Regional Planning Commission and Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission to subcontract in implementation of surveys, interviews and workshops in respective regions.

Task 3: Identification of Market, Needs and Support

- Development and implementation of household survey with populations representing potential transportation need (for the purposes of this study this includes surveys targeting low income, labor force, senior citizens, disabled and youth);
- Development and implementation of interview process with significant destinations of populations representing transportation need including major employers, shopping destinations, educational institutions, medical institutions, etc;
- Analysis of potential park and ride lots and landowner interest;

- Hosting of two public workshops (one in Vermont and one in New Hampshire) to enhance understanding of household and destination transit and/or paratransit needs, support and perception;
- Development of a **Report Identifying Market, Needs and Support** as a guideline for a **Technical Evaluation of Transit and Paratransit Improvements**. In addition to an identification of market, needs and support for transit and paratransit, the report will identify potential service scenarios.

Deliverables: Household survey and results, interview guidelines and results, meeting minutes from two public workshops, and development of a **Report Identifying Market, Needs and Support**.

Task 4 activities are the responsibility of a private consultant providing assistance on this project:

Task 4: Technical Evaluation of Transit and Paratransit Improvements

- Consultation in development of final methodology for **Report Identifying Market, Needs and Support** for use in **Technical Evaluation of Transit and Paratransit Improvements**;
- Preliminary analysis of potential service scenarios identified in the **Report Identifying Market, Needs and Support**. Preliminary analysis shall include short and long term estimates for ridership, funding sources, fare revenue and gross/net cost of each service;
- Presentation of preliminary analysis workshops (one in New Hampshire and one in Vermont);
- Development of priority alternative consisting of one or more transit or paratransit improvements. The priority alternative will include a short and long-term **Operations, Service and Financial Plan** that provides substantial detail estimating future capital and operations needs, service design, and planned sources of revenue.

Deliverables: Presentation(s) for preliminary analysis workshops and development of a **Technical Evaluation of Transit and Paratransit Improvements** including a short and long-term **Operations, Service and Financial Plan** for the priority alternative.

4. PROJECT BUDGET

TOTAL:	\$36,000
FEDERAL PORTION (80%):	\$28,800
LOCAL PORTION (20%):	\$7,200

Local Match requirements will be provided partly through cash and in-kind contributions from American Red Cross, Community Transportation Services, Connecticut River Transit and Home, Healthcare, Hospice and Community Services. In addition the study will include in-kind services of an Advisory Committee composed transportation providers, as well as key individuals from the public and private sector. Antioch University and/or Keene State professors and students will be invited as partners in designing surveys and methodology. In-kind contributions will also include workshop space and refreshments for public workshop events.

Up to \$12,000 of the proposed budget is reserved for professional consultant services (Task 4). If the proposal is approved, SWRPC will go out to bid for professional consultant services in accordance with NH DOT and Federal Transit Administration requirements.

5. PROJECT SCHEDULE

This proposal anticipates a 12-month project duration. The following schedule depicts the timeline for key milestones associated with this project. The project will proceed after notification that the budget is approved.

Milestone	Description	Month Number											
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	Advisory Committee Recruitment Completed	■											
2	Targeted List for Stakeholders for Surveys and Interviews Completed, Consultant RFP Completed		■										
3	Survey and Interview Methodology Completed			■									
4	Needs Workshops Completed				■								
5	Report on Market, Needs and Support Completed							■					
6	Potential Services Finalized								■				
7	Preliminary Analysis Workshops Completed									■			
8	Presentation on Technical Analysis Completed										■		
9	Final Report Completed											■	