

Kent County Transit Needs Assessment

Scope of Work

Introduction

In May, 2009, the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council (GVMC), in cooperation with Kent County and the Interurban Transit Partnership (ITP)/The Rapid, was awarded a Service Development and New Technology (SDNT) grant from the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). The SDNT grant will be utilized to complete a needs assessment for transit services in Kent County¹. Bidders must comply with Federal Transportation Administration procurement guidelines.

Problem Statement

Presently, several existing transit service providers serve various portions of Kent County, of particular importance, ITP/The Rapid. To best provide the most appropriate level of transit service on a county-wide basis and to provide direction for the most efficient future transit service model, research is required to assess the demand for transit service within the region, especially in outlying areas².

The purpose of the Kent County Transit Needs Assessment (KCTNA or ‘the Study’) is to complete a needs assessment study to provide information for the potential expansion of transit service beyond the current scope of existing transit providers in the county. The Study will involve an analysis of latent transit demand throughout the county but particularly in outlying areas. The primary goals being to a) examine the current transit use and service provided and identify gaps in service, b) anticipate future transit demand by identifying areas that may need transit to meet demand, and finally c) if a latent demand is identified, to identify options and financial implications of future public transportation service.

Project Scope

A. Purpose

The purpose of the Kent County Transit Needs Assessment Study is to complete a needs assessment for expanded transit service in Kent County and to provide a spectrum of demand paired with service provision options.

B. Assessment of Existing Public Transit Service Conditions

1. Service Provider Identification

Identify all of the transit agencies that provide transit services within Kent County. This list should include, but is not limited to, the following:

- a. Interurban Transit Partnership (ITP)/The Rapid
- b. North Kent Transit – Hope Network
- c. Hope Network – Network 180

¹ All of Kent County shall be considered with regard to the ultimate impacts of transit service options and funding, however the needs assessment portion of the Study shall be focused upon the outlying areas of the county, particularly those parts of Kent County not currently served by ITP/The Rapid, but may be served by other non-profit transit service providers.

² Outlying areas shall be considered all areas of Kent County outside the ITP/The Rapid line haul service provision boundaries.

- d. Ride Link – Senior Transit
- e. American Red Cross of Greater Grand Rapids
- f. Ambulance services
- g. Heath Care Associates Transportation
- h. Ready Ride
- i. ACSET
- j. Senior Neighbors
- k. United Methodist Community House
- l. GO! Bus, PASS and County Connection
- m. K-12 School transportation systems
- n. Indian Trails
- o. Greyhound
- p. Amtrak
- q. Service Providers from Ottawa County into Kent County³:
 - i. Pioneer Resources
 - ii. Georgetown Seniors
- r. Service Providers from Montcalm County into Kent County

2. Service Provider Assessment

Once all of the transit service providers have been identified, assess the services provided and the ridership of each agency⁴. This assessment shall include an analysis of the following items:

- a. Type of transit service(s) provided (i.e. demand-response, fixed-route, senior transportation, transportation for disabled persons)
- b. Types of delivery options available which may include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - i. Park and Ride
 - ii. Fixed Route
 - iii. Circulator
 - iv. Curb-to-curb, advance reservation or circulator style
 - v. Door-to-door, including personal assistance with packages, children, car seats, childcare drop-off along the way, vehicle waiting for errands
 - vi. Door-through-door, assistance getting ready to get into the vehicle (coat, closing and locking the door, assistance at destination)
- c. Service area (both inter-jurisdictionally and intra-jurisdictionally), fixed-route locations, number and location of bus stops or transfer points, and route frequency. Maps and/or digital GIS (geographic information system) data shall be provided displaying the geographic extents of the service area, fixed-route locations, bus stops, and transfer points.
- d. Hours of operation
- e. Fare structure for all transit services provided

³ While the Study area does not include eastern Ottawa County, non-profit transit service providers often provide service into Kent County, particularly for medical appointments.

⁴ Methods used to collect this information may include, but are not limited to, on-board surveys and data collected by the transit provider.

- f. Overall capabilities, including the types of riders that can be accommodated. Types of riders shall include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - i. Seniors
 - ii. People with disabilities
 - iii. School children
- g. Population served and the demographics of riders served. Population served shall include, but is not limited to, the following groups:
 - i. Seniors (60 and older)
 - ii. People with disabilities
 - iii. School children
 - iv. Low-income individuals
 - v. Unlicensed drivers
 - vi. General commuters
 - vii. Recreational transit riders
 - viii. Demographics analyzed shall include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - a. Age
 - b. Income
 - c. Race
- h. Total number of rides provided (current and historical figures)
- i. Geography of user market/ridership
 - i. Trip origination and destination and type/purpose of trip (advance reservation, or subscription/work related, social, medical, or school)
 - ii. Within existing and future projections for ridership, some level of understanding of land use will need to be considered including especially demand generators that include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - a. Major employers
 - b. Medical centers/campuses
 - c. Schools, Colleges, and Universities
 - d. Places of worship
- j. Financial analysis of existing service and some determination of the functioning level of the program. Examples may include a determination of a strongly-demanded yet under-funded service or a weak program which continues to exist due to dedicated funding or other reasons.
 - i. Current cost per trip shall be analyzed including but not limited to the following:
 - a. The cost of no-shows and cancellations
 - b. Associated subsidies

C. Determination of Latent Demand

The Consultant shall conduct a needs assessment for transit services for residents of Kent County, particularly those areas of Kent County currently not served by ITP/The Rapid.

1. Determine the need (extent of demand) for transit demand in Kent County. This analysis shall examine the following issues:

- a. Determine levels of need and the correlating level of service to provide:
 - i. “Good” – service that meets the needs of the transit dependent population
 - a. Considering capacity constraints
 - b. Individual ability to travel independently
 - ii. “Better” – service that meets and exceeds the needs of the transit dependent to provide service for the general population.
 - iii. “Best” – service directed towards commuters and a mode shift from automobiles; service that is comprehensive county-wide.
- b. Determine the types of riders which would utilize the various levels of service. Types of riders may include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - i. Seniors (60 and older)
 - ii. People with disabilities
 - iii. School children
 - iv. Low-income individuals
 - v. Unlicensed drivers
 - vi. General commuters
 - vii. Recreational transit riders
- c. Determine the type of trips needed (e.g. work related, school, medical appointments)
- d. Determine the delivery options needed which may include, but is not limited to, the following:
 - i. Park and Ride
 - ii. Fixed Route
 - iii. Circulator
 - iv. Curb-to-curb, advance reservation or circulator style
 - v. Door-to-door, including personal assistance with packages, children, car seats, childcare drop-off along the way, vehicle waiting for errands
 - vi. Door-through-door, assistance getting ready to get into the vehicle (coat, closing and locking the door, assistance at destination)
- e. Determine the geographic location of transit need. A map and digital geographic information system data shall be provided displaying the geographic extents of the need -- particularly the locations of major trip originations and destinations within Kent County.
 - i. Major locations where transit need may originate may include but are not limited to, the following:
 - a. Higher density residential areas
 - b. Community centers
 - c. Assisted living facilities
 - d. Senior housing
 - ii. Major destinations that may need transit may include but are not limited to, the following:
 - a. Major employers
 - b. Medical centers/campuses

- c. Schools, Colleges, Universities
 - d. Government facilities
 - e. Shopping centers
 - f. Places of worship
 - g. Recreational destinations
- f. Determine the distribution of transit need both temporally (times, days, seasons) and frequency of use
- g. Determine ridership projections for the various service levels for the following years: 2010, 2015, 2020, 2025, 2030, and 2035.

D. Transit Service Options

Using the latent demand research results and understanding of transit need, the Consultant shall develop a spectrum of delivery and funding alternatives related to levels of need.

1. Conduct an alternatives analysis to determine the appropriate services to provide.
 - a. Develop levels of services that match the previously identified levels of need
 - i. “Good”
 - ii. “Better”
 - iii. “Best”
 - b. Some delivery options to be examined include but are not limited to the following:
 - i. Park and Ride
 - ii. Fixed Route
 - iii. Circulator
 - iv. Curb-to-curb, advance reservation or circulator style
 - v. Door-to-door, including personal assistance with packages, children, car seats, childcare drop-off along the way, vehicle waiting for errands
 - vi. Door-through-door, assistance getting ready to get into the vehicle (coat, closing and locking the door, assistance at destination)
 - c. Indicate a variety of delivery models (consolidated vs. non-consolidated) and the financial impacts of each model
 - d. Indicate levels of service delivery. Picking up numerous clients at one location and taking them to multiple locations or vice versa – addressing the time implications of each.
2. Determine the financial impacts of replacing, partnering, or consolidating local/nonprofit transit services. Utilizing the options for transit service based upon the researched level of need, conduct a feasibility analysis that addresses the following:
 - i. Overall Cost
 - a. Determine the capital, administrative, and operational costs associated with the three service delivery options (Good-Better-Best)

- b. Examine the cost projections for both the agencies providing service and for the riders in the following years: 2010, 2015, 2020, 2025, 2030, and 2035.
- ii. Funding
 - a. Identify all funding sources that could be utilized/consolidated to implement and sustain county-wide transit service as it relates to the three service delivery options (Good-Better-Best)
 - b. Identify any funding gaps to county-wide transit service, examining revenue sources that could be utilized such as fare box revenues, local millages, grants, or advertising/marketing promotions.
 - c. Identify funding options for the following years: 2010, 2015, 2020, 2025, 2030, and 2035.
- iii. Sustainability – assess the sustainability of the delivery service models, especially in terms of long term financial support.
 - a. Determine the willingness/ability of each of the transit service and demand response providers to contribute to a county-wide transit system, in terms of financial capabilities, organizational capabilities, and readiness.

E. Recommendations

Based on the options for county-wide transit service the Consultant shall make final recommendations for the most efficient and effective service delivery option, as paired with demand, funding, and other variables influencing the effectiveness of the system.

- 1. The Consultant will provide recommendations based on the results of the latent demand analysis, and shall meet (to the greatest extent possible) the demand for transit services in the most cost-efficient and feasible manner.
- 2. The Consultant will, based on their research, provide a recommendation for the most efficient and effective transit system.
 - a. The consultant will recommend the most efficient collection of services and services provider(s) including considering the following:
 - i. Cooperation/coordination of existing providers.
 - ii. Consolidation of service providers
 - iii. Consolidation to a single county-wide service provider

F. Study Coordination

Several public transportation studies are being conducted in West Michigan. The results of these studies may be utilized to fulfill any of the requirements listed herein, but only if their use will not add expense, time, or undue burden to the Study. Eliminating any duplication of work between transit studies whenever possible is essential. These studies include:

- 1. The Hudsonville/Eastern Ottawa Impact Study: This study is being conducted by Disability Network/Lakeshore. The purpose of the study is to analyze the impact that the lack of transit has on individuals residing within the Hudsonville/Jamestown/Georgetown Township area.

2. West Michigan Transit Linkages Study: This study is being conducted by Ottawa County. The purpose of this study is to complete a needs assessment and feasibility study of providing commuter transit services in West Michigan (connecting Grand Rapids, Muskegon, Grand Haven, and Holland).
3. ITP/The Rapid Master Plan: This study is being conducted by ITP/The Rapid as part of their long range transit planning process. Coordination is especially crucial, as their long range plan service areas may overlap with some of the outlying areas of Kent County not currently served by transit.
4. Grand Valley Metropolitan Council Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP): This GVMC long range transportation planning document includes plans for every mode of transportation, including transit, through the year 2035.
5. Grand Valley Metropolitan Council Metropolitan Framework: This GVMC Planning Department document is an important resource pertaining to county-wide land use planning.
6. Grand Rapids Master Plan: The City of Grand Rapids has developed a Master Plan that incorporates transit hubs and areas intended for development that coincides with transit service. While the Study focuses upon the outlying areas of Kent County, an understanding of urban land use planning and transit may be helpful.

G. Public/Community Involvement

1. A Study/Technical Team was developed with assistance from The Grand Valley Metropolitan Council and ITP/The Rapid in order to oversee and guide the progress of the Study, entitled the Kent County Transit Needs Assessment Study Team. The Kent County Transit Needs Assessment Study Team, The Grand Valley Metropolitan Council, ITP/The Rapid, and many other stakeholders must be taken into consideration throughout the Study. The Study shall incorporate creative and comprehensive public involvement in the course of the latent demand/needs assessment process. Some of the stakeholders that must be taken into consideration include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - a. Schools, including special education transition programs
 - b. Health care providers – hospitals and medical facilities
 - c. Medical practices
 - d. In-home health care services
 - e. Local units of government (cities, villages, townships)
 - f. Kent County
 - g. Religious and community organizations
 - h. Youth organizations – youth and those without licenses or cars
 - i. Senior organizations
 - j. Area Agency on Aging of West Michigan
 - k. AARP

- l. Parents of children (some adult children) with disabilities
 - m. Social workers for mentally ill and well as developmentally disabled population
 - n. Disabled community
 - o. Disability Advocates of Kent County
 - p. Minority, low-income, and limited English proficiency (LEP) groups
 - q. West Michigan Environmental Action Council
 - r. Transit advocacy groups
 - s. Michigan Department of Transportation
 - t. Kent County Road Commission
 - u. Economic development organizations – The Right Place Inc.
 - v. Workforce Development Board
 - w. Downtown Development Authorities (DDAs)
 - x. Local business community and major employers
 - y. Chambers of Commerce
 - i. Grand Rapids
 - ii. Kentwood/Wyoming
 - iii. Cutlerville/Gaines
 - iv. Rockford
 - v. Hispanic Chamber
2. Multiple public involvement strategies shall be incorporated into the Study process. Examples include but are not limited to the following:
- a. Surveys – phone, Internet, intercept
 - i. Special consideration to the disabled and LEP communities
 - b. Public meetings that focus attention upon underrepresented groups
 - i. Special consideration to meeting accessibility and alternatives for those who may not attend in person
 - ii. Provide multiple input opportunities in addition to formal meetings
 - iii. Provide materials in a variety of formats (ex. hardcopy, cds, word/pdf, on the internet)
 - c. Larger group meetings as required

H. Deliverables

Input shall be solicited from the Study Team throughout the entire study process. The Consultant shall propose a schedule for regular meetings in order to keep the Study Team up-to-date on the Study progress and outcomes. Other deliverables required of the Consultant include, but are not limited to, the following:

- 1. Assessment of existing public transit service conditions
 - a. Meet with the Study Team to review results
 - b. Presentation to the larger Kent County Transit Needs Assessment Group
- 2. Qualitative and quantitative market research that determines latent demand for transit service in Kent County
 - a. Meet with the Study Team to review results
 - b. Presentation to the larger Kent County Transit Needs Assessment Group
- 3. Analysis of transit service delivery options

- a. Service efficiency analysis
- b. May include increased coordination of services and possibly consolidation of service, among other options
- c. Meet with the Study Team to review results
- d. Presentation to the larger Kent County Transit Needs Assessment Group
4. Development of final recommendations for the most efficient and effective service delivery option(s) and provider(s), as paired with demand, funding, and other variables influencing the effectiveness of the system for Kent County
 - a. Meet with the Study Team to review results
 - b. Presentation to the larger Kent County Transit Needs Assessment Group
5. Comprehensive public outreach and involvement throughout the research and development of recommendations
 - a. Incorporating participation from the relevant stakeholders as listed above
 - b. Smaller stakeholder meetings as required and requested to gather input and additional information for the Study
 - c. Provide review of any public materials, surveys, information collection strategies etc., by the Study Team and other stakeholders in advance
6. Printed and electronic materials
 - a. Monthly status reports
 - b. Final report
 - c. Presentations, with opportunities for public comment
 - d. Final presentation, including an audience representing:
 - i. Kent County Transit Needs Assessment Group
 - ii. Kent County
 - iii. GVMC Board
 - iv. GVMC Transportation Committees
 - v. ITP/The Rapid
 - e. Digital copies of all reports/presentations, particularly GIS and mapping data (as referred to above) spreadsheets, databases, and any other relevant electronic materials.

Please email (andrea.dewey@gvmc.org) or call (616.776.7601) with questions.

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