

Dutchess County Evaluating Bus Service Expansion into City of Poughkeepsie

Public Transit System Under Review, Other Options include local service in Beacon

Poughkeepsie, NY... Could there be a benefit for taxpayers if the Dutchess County LOOP Service were to expand into the City of Poughkeepsie and become the sole public bus operator in the City? The Poughkeepsie-Dutchess County Transportation Council is working with a transportation consultant to find out. Wendel Companies of Buffalo, New York will conduct a service analysis of the City of Poughkeepsie bus system to compare its services to those already provided by the County and recommend potential timetable and route adjustments to the existing LOOP bus routes to serve City residents perhaps as early as summer 2013. This analysis is a component of County Executive Molinaro's Public Transportation Strategic Review.

"As with every area of County Government, we are looking closely at our public transit services to see how we can improve and find greater efficiencies, with the goal of saving our taxpayers money and providing better service," said County Executive Molinaro. "If, as part of our Public Transportation Strategic Review we can expand our service into the City of Poughkeepsie with minimal cost to the County's budget, it would be a logical move to simply have one bus system."

The study, which will be paid for primarily with federal transit funds, will include detailed financial and operational review of the City of Poughkeepsie bus system, including staffing analysis, capital equipment review, and compliance with Federal and State requirements. It will also conduct a service review that will include: comparison of LOOP and City routes and timetables; identification of overlapping or redundant services and potential service gaps; and identification of locations (such as senior/low income housing or hospitals) not currently served by the City that should be included on the LOOP system if the County were to become the sole public bus provider.

It is believed that the consultant's analysis will show there would be minimal cost to the County to expand services into the City of Poughkeepsie. Dutchess County already has the infrastructure in place to support bus service. The additional cost of drivers, mechanics and related fuel costs for expanded service in the City could be offset by fare revenue and the use of existing 5307 federal and matching New York State dollars. Wendel will focus on culling duplicative services and make recommendations for efficiencies in the City routes. The review is expected to take several months. If the contractor can make recommendations that meet the needs of current City bus passengers, without adding additional costs to

Dutchess County, then the County would consider expanding LOOP bus service into the City by early summer 2013.

“Public transit is very complex and must be in compliance with all Federal and State requirements, since that is where much of the funding comes from. It is going to take several months to review, but we are looking forward to the possibility of expanding LOOP service into the City of Poughkeepsie,” said Dutchess County Mass Transit Administrator Cynthia Ruiz.

City of Poughkeepsie Mayor John Tkazyik said, “Our goal is to always look at ways to save the taxpayers’ money. If there is an opportunity to save taxpayer money, while maintaining and enhancing our public transit services, it will be beneficial for the City. We look forward to reviewing the consultant’s final analysis.”

“Our goal is to rightsize the overall size of government to fit the needs of our residents. Although the County would have to expand its investment in bus service, the overall cost is lower than having two separate operators. These are the types of changes that make sense to look at and review,” said County Executive Molinaro.