

Transportation Council Completes Bus Service Expansion Study

Poughkeepsie – The Poughkeepsie-Dutchess County Transportation Council (PDCTC) announced the completion of the *Dutchess County Bus Service Expansion Feasibility Study*. The study, completed with assistance from industry expert, Wendel Companies, was conducted to determine the feasibility of expanding Dutchess County bus services in the City of Poughkeepsie without adding cost to the County. The study includes a service analysis of the City’s Bus System, comparing City bus services to service currently provided by the County and identifies route redundancies as well as opportunities for service expansion in the Poughkeepsie area. The study found that it is possible for the County to expand its current service and become the sole bus operator in the City of Poughkeepsie at no additional county cost if specific conditions were met. Should City and County officials decide to have Dutchess County serve as the sole bus service provider, the City could realize annual savings of between \$450,000 and \$600,000 based on analysis of prior year costs to the City.

Dutchess County Executive Marcus J. Molinaro said, “The study shows there is a real cost-benefit opportunity to provide efficiency and eliminate duplication of services should the County become the sole bus service provider in the City of Poughkeepsie. A fully integrated countywide bus service, especially at no additional cost, would improve commuter connections to employers, retail and commercial establishments throughout Dutchess. Further, a more efficient countywide service would benefit those seeking employment, those struggling in poverty, seniors citizens too often feeling isolated and our special needs-special abilities residents. Additionally, there is an environmental benefit to a more robust service. We will await the City of Poughkeepsie’s response to a promising opportunity.

City of Poughkeepsie Mayor John Tkazyik said, “We are very encouraged by this study and its findings. The savings for our residents could be significant and create greater efficiency within City government. However, we need to look at the routes carefully to ensure the level of service necessary to serve our residents is available.”

As noted, the study has determined the County could expand bus service in the City without adding costs to county taxpayers. However, this could only occur under a set of specific conditions; the most notable being the transfer of capital equipment at no cost to the County and the full use of the City’s share of federal transit funding. The study estimates four new routes would be needed within the City of Poughkeepsie at an annual cost of \$1.2 million. That investment would generate approximately \$1.2 million in federal, State, and farebox revenue (assuming the county retains 50% of the city’s current ridership, a conservative estimate in the industry). The benefits of expanding LOOP service include the following, making it cost neutral for the county and less costly to the city:

§ A single public bus operator would improve the delivery of transit service and streamline the programming of federal and State transit funding

§ Economies of scale would reduce the cost to provide bus service.

§ The City would no longer need to provide local funds to operate a standalone bus system.

§ The new LOOP routes would provide additional service hours compared to the current City system. On an annual basis, there would be an additional 4,000 hours of service in the City.

§ The City downtown and Metro-North train station would be better connected with more frequent bus service, providing greater mass transit and tourism connectivity.

§ Most LOOP routes would realize operational improvements since they would no longer have to serve the train station, reducing vehicle congestion at the station.

§ Saint Francis Hospital and Vassar Brothers Medical Center would gain more frequent service, including direct access to Saint Francis.

§ Dutchess Community College would gain more frequent service.

§ LOOP Route C would no longer detour off of Route 9, enabling it to provide direct access to Marist College and the Hyde Park Stop-and-Shop.

Any expansion of LOOP service in the City will require close coordination among all responsible entities, including the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), while implementation will ultimately rest with the responsible executive and legislative bodies of the County and City.

Dutchess County Legislature Chairman Robert Rolison, who also represents the City of Poughkeepsie, said, “It is important the County continue to look for opportunities for shared services and streamlined operations. This bus service opportunity is one that should be carefully evaluated and considered. We must continue to work with the City to provide opportunities to provide savings for the City and preserve the services City residents depend on.”

The four new LOOP routes proposed in the study would significantly expand the County’s service in the Poughkeepsie area:

§ **Route H:** expand LOOP service to serve the Main Street corridor from the transit hub to South Grand Ave. and then Fulton St. to Vassar College, providing follow-on service to Adams, Stop-and-Shop, and Kmart on Route 44.

§ **Route I:** expanding LOOP service in the northern part of the City by creating a corridor service from the transit hub to Saint Francis Hospital, DCC, and the Poughkeepsie Housing Authority.

§ **Route J:** LOOP service expansion in the southern part of the City with a new route that travels along Hooker Ave between the transit hub and Vassar College that would include regular service to Vassar Brothers Medical Center and Saint Simeon/Fox Hill housing developments.

§ **Route K:** Create a dedicated lower Main St. shuttle bus between the transit hub, Poughkeepsie train station, and Waryas Park with 15 minute service intervals. This would streamline LOOP bus service on LOOP Routes A, B,C, D and E, easing bus congestion at the train station.

Each route would operate six days per week (Monday-Saturday) for approximately 15 hours per day, with most service beginning at 7:00 a.m. and ending at 10:00 p.m, with 60 minute service intervals between time stops (except for Route K which have 15 minute service intervals outlined above.)

Dutchess County's Transportation Program Administrator, Mark Debold, said, "This study continues the PDCTC's long-standing tradition of leveraging federal funds to support local transportation planning efforts and, in turn, providing communities with the tools necessary to make informed decisions about their transportation system. We stand ready to support the County and City as appropriate, and look forward to assisting other communities with their transportation planning needs."

The *Dutchess County Bus Service Expansion Feasibility Study* is available for review online at the PDCTC's webpage at:

<http://www.co.dutchess.ny.us/CountyGov/Departments/TransportationCouncil/22833.htm>

About the PDCTC: Established in 1982, the PDCTC serves as the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for

Dutchess County. Federal regulations require that Urbanized Areas (U.S. Census defined metropolitan areas with over 50,000 people) be represented by a MPO, which is responsible for ensuring that Federal highway and transit funds are committed through a locally driven, comprehensive planning process. The PDCTC includes representatives from local municipalities, the New York State Department of Transportation, and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

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