

# Upper Valley Transportation Management Association

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[www.vitalcommunities.org/transport/](http://www.vitalcommunities.org/transport/)

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Connecticut River Transit  
Advance Transit

Ram Maddali  
Planning Bureau, NHDOT  
Room G01  
John O. Morton Building  
7 Hazen Drive  
Concord, NH 03302

June 12, 2008

Dear Mr. Maddali,

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the New Hampshire Long Range Transportation Plan.

For too long our state has neglected to invest adequately in a multi-modal transportation policy – public transit, park and ride facilities, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and transportation demand management (TDM) solutions. The national transportation policy begun by the Eisenhower administration in the 1950s achieved its goals, but the system is at a crisis point. Our existing transportation system is coming close to failing as roads and bridges built in the 1960's need replacement at the same time as they have exceeded their design capacity. The choice before us is clear: we either build more capacity to keep up with our single-occupant-car culture at costs we cannot afford, or we adopt a new paradigm. The Upper Valley Transportation Management Association (UVTMA) recognizes local public opinion is in front of New Hampshire Department of Transportation policies. The state's Long Rang Transportation Plan (LRTP) is an opportunity to catch up.

As a fiscally constrained state we must, as the proposed LRTP suggests, shift money from projects that create additional capacity towards projects that protect and use our current infrastructure more efficiently. This shift will only be successful if we reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) on our roads by providing alternative commuting options and incentives to use them. Increased commuting options and incentive programs are an investment in a more efficient, flexible and cost-effective transportation system. The Upper Valley is a living example of the paradigm change that the UVTMA is calling for. As noted in our report, A Widening Gap: Public Transit Funding in the Upper Valley, this area has seen a sustained increase in transit ridership over many years. Since A Widening Gap was released in 2007, ridership has increased at an even higher rate. This spring Advance Transit, one of our local transit providers, has reported ridership growth of up to 30% over last year's values.

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We urge the State of New Hampshire to adopt some specific proposals for investment in a new transportation policy:

- Increase funding of public transit to the national average of \$30.08 per capita. Currently New Hampshire spends \$1.17 per capita (using FY07 numbers supplied by NHDOT). The LRTP suggests an increase of 50% (from 6% of the state's transportation budget to 9%), but an increase of that magnitude could easily get lost in one rail project in the southern part of the state.
- Don't let increased funding for rail overwhelm the need for increased bus transit funding. Bus transit is more flexible, less capital intensive, and more effective at attracting riders than rail. The strongest argument for a bus-based policy is that the corridors – arterial roads, interstate highways – are already built and generally in good shape.
- Invest ongoing operating funds in regional transportation management associations (TMAs) such as the Upper Valley TMA (now in its sixth year of operation), the nascent Keene TMA, Seacoast Commuting Options, Concord's PATH, and others. The public/private partnership model of regional TMA's will dramatically leverage public funds with private sector support. TMA's are the "boots on the ground" of transportation demand management solutions.
- Invest in park-and-ride lots throughout the state; particularly in underserved areas where local demand has demonstrated a need for increased capacity.
- Use Vehicle Miles Traveled and attainment with air quality standards as an indicator of State DOT success. To achieve a reduction in VMT we must dramatically increase funding for alternatives to single-occupant-vehicle commuting.

In the next few years the State of New Hampshire must make hard decisions about funding its transportation infrastructure. It is time to take bold steps and invest in public transit, TDM and increased mobility options. This investment will pay large dividends when it provides the citizens of the state with meaningful transportation options.

Sincerely,



Erica Wygonik  
Chair, on behalf of the  
Upper Valley Transportation Management Association