

Commuter Needs for the
Hartford-Lebanon-Hanover Employment
Center:

An Assessment of Park and Ride Facilities in the
Upper Valley

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for the

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INTRODUCTION

This report is an update to the 1998 Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission (UVLSRPC) Park and Ride needs and priorities for Vermont communities. The report describes existing conditions for Park and Rides within the UVLSRPC Region and identifies needs and strategies to improve the system. The report is organized to include needs and priorities for both New Hampshire and Vermont communities which comprise the Hartford-Lebanon-Hanover Labor Market Area.

It is an objective of UVLSRPC to plan for an integrated, seamless, region-wide transportation network that would provide frequent service and connectivity between employment centers, commercial service areas and large residential areas. The Park and Ride lot system is an integral part of carpooling and public transit. Park and Ride lots facilitate intermodal connections and encourage transit use. Inbound commuters and their Park and Ride needs and priorities are the focus of this report.

BACKGROUND

The three Vermont communities within the UVLSRPC Region are within the Hartford-Lebanon-Hanover Labor Market Area (LMA). One of the Park and Ride lots which serves this LMA is located in the Town of Hartland at Exit 9, Interstate 91. It is the only Park and Ride facility in the Vermont portion of the UVLSRPC Region. Two additional formal park-and-ride lot facilities, listed below (Table), are located within the NH portion of the Region. Other facilities outside of the Region also serve commuter traffic to UVLSRPC's Hartford-Lebanon-Hanover employment center. See map.

The LMA has experienced steady growth in employment which has increased demands on the region's transportation network. In addition to those who commute to Hartford, many Vermont residents are crossing state lines to employment opportunities in NH. This places significant peak hour impacts on the roads that act as gateways into NH (Ledyard Bridge, US Route 4 and Interstate 89). These pressures negatively impact Vermont communities in many ways including reducing highway capacity and increasing air pollution.

Possibly exacerbating commuting pressures, is the fact that the NH portion of the LMA has had a larger share of the job growth, while housing development is split nearly 50-50 between New Hampshire and Vermont communities. This job/housing imbalance is contributing to increasingly decentralized land uses and traffic congestion within the employment center.

Formal Park-and-Ride Facilities Serving the Hartford-Lebanon-Hanover Labor Market Area

TOWN	LOCATION
Ascutney, Vermont	VT 131, I-91 Exit 8
Hartland, Vermont	US 5, I-91 Exit 9
Lyme, New Hampshire	NH 10, Village
New London, New Hampshire	NH 103A, I-89 Exit 12
Royalton, Vermont	VT 14, at junction of VT 110
Sharon, Vermont	VT 132, I-89 Exit 2
Springfield, Vermont	US 5, I-91 Exit 7
Thetford, Vermont	VT 113, I-91 Exit 14

The Region's largest employers are experiencing significant growth and the resulting parking needs are proving difficult and costly to address. A number of employers, most notably Dartmouth College and Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, are relying much more heavily on transit services to reduce employee usage of single-occupant vehicles. Dartmouth College is exploring the possibility of developing satellite parking lots serviced by bus for employees rather than building additional parking spaces on valuable land. The Upper Valley Transportation Management Association (UVTMA) was formed

as a mechanism to foster cooperation among employers, local government and other public agencies to facilitate actions to lessen the demands on the region's roads. Additional Park and Ride facilities have been identified as a high priority to satisfy the region's commuting needs.

Park and Ride facilities that are currently served by transit are heavily used by commuters. Many lots are over capacity, pointing to unmet demand for facilities. In fact, during the recent evaluation for a Park and Ride lot in White River Junction, it was estimated that the maximum daily demand for the commutershed was between 48-145 vehicles. The UVLSRPC Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) identified the expansion of the Hartland Exit 9 Park and Ride, and additional lots to serve the employment center, as high priorities.

Still, funding for the construction of Park and Ride facilities is limited. This has caused some communities such as Hartford, to address some of the unmet need by planning for municipal parking facilities that provide spaces for commuters as well.

EXIT 9 PARK AND RIDE, HARTLAND

The Hartland Park and Ride is located in the southeastern quadrant of the I-91 Exit 9 interchange. It is a paved lot with a capacity of 20 vehicles, two of which are reserved for the handicapped. There is an information kiosk and lighting. The lot is accessed from US Route 5 and is served by commuter transit service.

This facility has been over capacity for some time. Recent usage counts conducted during November 2003 show the facility is operating between 15-65 percent over capacity. Vehicles tandem park within the facility and park on the shoulder of US Route 5 creating safety and maintenance problems. The Hartland Interchange Study completed by UVLSRPC in January 2003 identified the expansion of the Exit 9 Park and Ride as a priority to improve safety and support alternative transportation. Expansion of the Park and Ride lot and the addition of a shelter and bicycle racks are generally supported by the Town of Hartland. Landscaping improvements were identified as a way to improve the appearance of the Park and Ride from Route 5 (Scenic Byway) in keeping with the general scenic qualities of the interchange area.

An Exit 9 Park and Ride user survey completed by Deerfield Valley Transit is appended to this report.

NEEDS RELATED TO PARK AND RIDES

Using available information from the Regional Transportation Plan and the transportation needs identification process completed by UVLSRPC in January 2003, the following commuter Park and Ride-related needs were identified.

- Decrease the number of individuals who commute to work in a single occupant vehicle and thereby reduce congestion and lessen transportation impacts to the natural and social environment.
- Enhance the transportation infrastructure to better enable the use of alternative transportation modes and ridesharing.
- Support development patterns that allow alternative transportation use.
- Provide better linkages between existing transit providers, existing Park and Ride lots, and bicycle facilities.

It is widely accepted that additional Park and Ride lots, if located appropriately, would encourage greater transit ridership and vehicle sharing, thereby satisfying our identified needs. Ideally, Park and Ride lots should be located along transit routes and be convenient to residential areas so that they could serve commuters to the Hartford-Lebanon-Hanover employment center. The size and use of Park and Ride lots differ. Providing parking for shared automobile use can be achieved either with several small lots or one large lot for each commuting corridor, depending upon the circumstances. Both have strengths and weakness; either can serve the LMA's needs.

Many of the existing Park and Rides in Vermont are designed to serve long-distance commuting and are often used for recreational purposes like a day trip to the ball game or skiing. The nature of the Park and Ride facility is driven by the demands of its users. Given the LMA's demographics, it is estimated that the primary users of our Park and Ride facilities are commuters who use the lots as satellite parking to allow car sharing or

access to transit service to the employment center. This is supported by recent surveys of the Hartland and Ascutney Park and Ride lot users. The VTrans priority for the deployment of Park and Rides is to serve 'outbound' commuters who travel long distances. The primary demand for Park and Ride lots is to serve 'inbound' commuters to the Hartford-Lebanon-Hanover employment center.

Additional Park and Ride capacity will satisfy the region's transportation needs only to a point. Once the demands for parking within the commutershed are met, coordination among transit providers, employers and public agencies will be paramount in achieving an integrated and seamless region-wide transportation network.

REGIONAL PRIORITIES RELATED TO PARK AND RIDES

To mitigate the increasing use of single occupant commuting vehicles, the following measures are proposed:

- Construct a Park and Ride facility in the vicinity of Norwich to serve commuters crossing the Ledyard Bridge.
- Construct one or more Park and Ride facility in the vicinity of White River Junction, beginning with the reevaluation of the options contained the 2000 Park and Ride scoping report to identify suitable sites.
- Construct one or more Park and Ride facility along the Vermont US Route 4 corridor between Rutland and White River Junction.
- Expansion of the Exit 9 Park and Ride lot in Hartland to include shelter, bicycle racks and landscaping.
- Construct a Park and Ride in Claremont, NH.
- Construct a Park and Ride facility between Lebanon and Claremont, NH.
- Study and better understand the nature of Park and Ride demand.
- Support for Advance Transit and Community Transportation Services in Claremont, NH.

- Support Stagecoach Transportation Services in the development of the I-89 commuter service from Randolph to the VA Hospital and the DHMC; and connections with Advance Transit.
- Support the Upper Valley Transportation Demand Management Association and Upper Valley Rideshare.

Note: 'Construction' of a Park and Ride facility includes the evaluation process required to find a suitable site.

The UVLSRPC Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) reviewed these regional Park and Ride priorities and needs at their November 25, 2003 meeting. At that time, the TAC supported these mitigation measures (above) as the region's top priorities in terms of Park and Ride facilities and commuter needs. Emphasis was added to facilities or functions that support enhanced transit use.

SOURCES

UVLSRPC Regional Transportation Plan, 2003

Hartland Interchange Study, 2003

Dartmouth College Commuter Survey, 2001

Deerfield Valley Transit Commuter Survey, 2003

Upper Valley Housing Study, 2001

UVLSRPC Evaluation of Transportation Needs, January 2003

Hartland, Exit 9 Park and Ride Usage Counts, November 2003

VTrans TAMS Report, 1991

Hartford Park and Ride Alternatives Study Report, January 2000