

Putting Transit to Work in Main Street America

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What is Reconnecting America?

Reconnecting America is a national nonprofit that advises civic and community leaders on how to overcome the challenges associated with community development, to create better communities for all.

Our partners:



Why This Report?

- To help counter the myth that rural places do not have “real” transit
- To showcase rural transit strategies that can serve as models for other communities

Putting Transit to Work in Main Street America

How Smaller Cities and Rural Places
Are Using Transit and Mobility Investments
to Strengthen Their Economies
and Communities



Unique Challenges of Rural Areas

- Long distances between destinations
- High transportation costs
- Disproportionately impacted by rising fuel prices
- Older than average population
- Geographically isolated, as intercity bus and rail service has declined
- Require regional approaches for employment, health care, education

Transit in Rural Areas

Rural Transit Systems Nationwide

	2007	2008	2009
Total	1,293	1,358	1,358
Type Service Offered			
Total Fixed Route	453	440	429
Traditional Fixed Route	206	225	243
Deviated Fixed Route	319	287	278
Both	72	72	92
Demand Response	1,085	1,149	1,169
Demand Response & Fixed Route	239	228	235
Van Pool	8	16	14
Other Or Not Specified	25	40	22

Source: Small Urban and Rural Transit Center, 2011

Findings

1. Smaller communities are making a wide variety of transit investments.

- Implementing and improving bus and circulator routes
- Creating transit hubs and intermodal facilities
- Improving intercity/regional connections



Findings

2. Transit has had a positive impact on the economy and quality of life in smaller communities.

- Increased transit ridership
- Revitalized downtowns
- New businesses and employment opportunities
- Increased tourism
- Improved access to community and regional services



Findings

3. Improved transit service can be seamlessly integrated into a community.

- Successful projects take into account the historic character of the community.
- Community support is often essential to a project's success.



Findings

4. Incremental or small-scale improvements in transit service can yield significant benefits.

- No one-size-fits-all solution
- Both large and small-scale projects can have an impact



Findings

5. Successful projects require coordination among multiple partners.

- Cities and counties
- Transit agencies
- Regional planning bodies
- States
- Businesses, universities, and other trip generators
- Nonprofits and community stakeholders



Findings

6. The federal government is an essential partner in small-town transit projects.

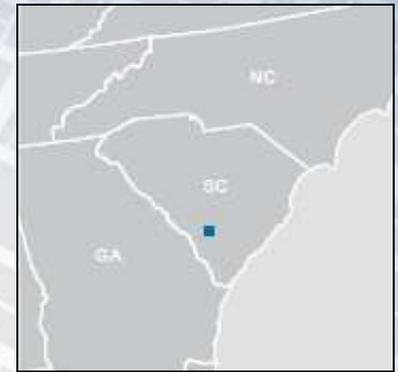
- FTA Formula & Discretionary Programs
- FHWA CMAQ Program
- FTA Specialized Transportation Programs
- Medicaid Non-Emergency Transportation
- DOT TIGER Program
- Veterans Transportation and Community Living Initiative



Case Studies

LOCATION	AGENCY / TYPE	POP.*	PROJECT	FUNDING SOURCE
IMPROVED BUS NETWORK				
Addison County, VT	Addison County Transit Resources	37,000	Increased shuttle bus routes	Federal, State, Philanthropic
Allendale County, SC	Lower Savannah Council of Governments	11,200	Coordinated regional bus network	Federal, State, Regional, Philanthropic
Choctaw Nation (Oklahoma)	Choctaw Nation Tribal Transit	84,670	ADA-accessible bus upgrades	Federal (Bus Livability Grant and stimulus funds)
CIRCULATOR				
Bozeman, MT	Human Resource Development Council	40,000	Bus Circulator	Federal, University, County, Philanthropic
Sanford, ME	York County Community Action Corporation	20,800	Trolley Bus Circulator	Federal, Business, Local
Monterey, CA	Monterey-Salinas Transit	28,000	Trolley Bus Circulator	Federal, City, Transit Agency, Monterey Bay Aquarium, Regional
INTERMODAL TRANSIT CENTERS				
Kent, OH	Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority	30,000	Multimodal Transit Center	Federal (TIGER), Transit Agency, City, University
Spearfish, SD	Prairie Hills Transit	10,400	Transit Facility	Federal (ARRA), land contributed by the City
INTERCITY TRANSIT/RAIL IMPROVEMENTS				
Fitchburg, MA	Montachusett Regional Transit Authority	40,000	Commuter rail line extension	Federal (TIGER), Regional, Local

Allendale, South Carolina



- Highest poverty rate in the state
- Allendale County and Lower Savannah Council of Governments hired mobility manager to coordinate transit services among many providers.

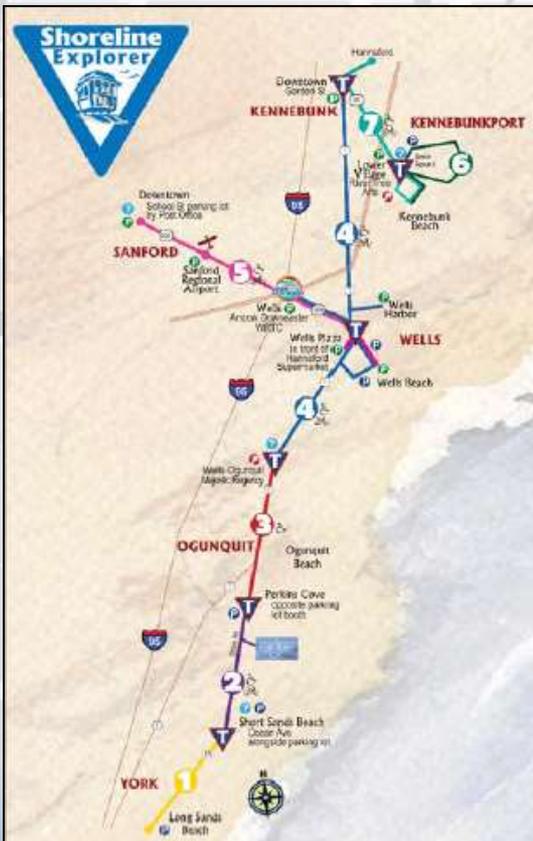


Trips jumped from 113 in August 2004 to 871 in April 2005, with 44% of trips for daily commuting.

Allendale County Scooter

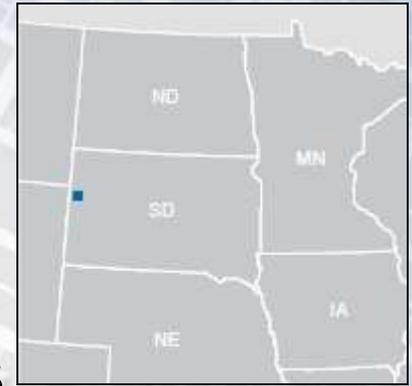
Sanford, Maine

- Inland town of Sanford had high unemployment, while coastal areas needed workers



York County Community Action Corporation, with local chambers, private trolley companies, and others, created a shuttle service for employees, residents, and tourists

Spearfish, South Dakota



- Prairie Hills Transit (PHT) serves 15 communities over 12,000 square miles
- PHT needed a new facility, and more staff



PHT built a new facility with office space, daycare center, and ticketing area for Jefferson Intercity Bus Lines, meeting several community needs

Fitchburg, Massachusetts

- An old paper mill town 50 miles west of Boston
- New industries – health care, chemical, and tech – are moving in
- Commuter rail line brings workers from Boston to support these new industries, revitalizing the whole community



Thank You!

Download the full report at www.reconnectingamerica/2012rural

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