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
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

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

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

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