

Westport Citizens Transit Committee (CTC) Interim Report

July - December 2012



January 10, 2013

Westport CTC Mission

The Citizens Transit Committee shall evaluate Westport's bus transit system, including but not limited to routes, usage, cost, and related matters and make recommendations to improve efficiency, service, and value to stakeholders.

The committee shall work in cooperation with the Transit District directors, the Westport Police Department, other town bodies, and outside agencies, including the South Western Regional Planning Agency (SWPRA) which is also conducting an evaluation of Westport's bus transit system.

The committee will be a resource for these bodies and hopefully members will contribute time and expertise in such areas as marketing, publicity, and use of social media in helping promote Westport's transit system.

Westport Transit District: *Serving our Entire Community*



Westport Public Transit: Vital to Westport Citizens

Westport Public Transit is available to all - commuters, the elderly, people with disabilities and students in after school programs.

Serving Westport Citizens In Need

- * Metro-North commuters on railroad parking waiting list and one-car commuter families
- * Elderly/people with disabilities who cannot drive and need affordable transportation to medical appointments, therapy, shopping and the Senior Center
- * Students who attend after school religious and extracurricular activities who have no access to transportation

Enhancing Westport Quality of Life

- * Lessens congestion and pollution, making Westport safer and healthier
- * Enables employees/nannies/customers to access Westport businesses and families
- * Encourages and provides access to public facilities (Library, Toquet Hall, Senior Center, Levitt Pavilion, Compo Beach, Longshore, Sherwood Island) and town events
- * Fosters increased community interaction among riders and leads to new friendships, partnerships and opportunities within Westport

Westport Transit District (WTD) At-a-Glance



250+ Commuter riders per day

Over **60,000** rides per year

10 vehicles used daily

14,000 hours of service annually

18 -22 Door to Door trips/day

7 commuter routes



36 students daily on average
using **After School** shuttle



About Westport CTC

- * Committee has met 18 times since July 2012 to:
 - * Better understand Westport Transit District system, its challenges and opportunities
 - * Hear from key constituents on their transportation needs
 - * Provide recommendations

"We had a bit of a wake up call in April when the system was critiqued heavily by the (Westport) Board of Finance," said Co-Westport District Transit Director, Jennifer Johnson.

"We are very much listening and learning and hopefully we can go back to the Board of Finance with a clearer picture of what we want transportation to be."

Who We Heard From...

- * Norwalk Transit District
- * Greater Bridgeport Transit
- * Westport Board of Finance
- * Former & Current Westport Transit District Directors
- * Westport Senior Center (Disabled & Elderly)
- * South Western Regional Planning Agency (SWRPA)
- * Toquet Hall Director
- * ITN-Coastal CT
- * Westport Youth Commission
- * Westport Police Department/Railroad Parking
- * Westport PTA
- * Westport Planning and Zoning

What We Learned from Transit Experts and Providers

- * No Public Transit system is self-funding/profitable
- * CT law provides for CT towns/cities to form Transit Districts in order to qualify for Federal and State public transportation grants
- * In 1969, Westport citizens voted to create the Westport Transit District
- * Over the past 6 years, about 67% of the funding for WTD has come through Federal and State Transportation grants

What Westport Citizens are saying...

Senior Center

- * Increased marketing and outreach to overcome low awareness among seniors and those with disabilities
- * Add Saturday service for Door-to-Door (non ADA)
- * Pre-paid card for transit services
- * More special event transportation
- * Improve scheduling and rider administration support

Youth Commission

- * Add monitor to reassure parents about child safety
- * Increase focus on middle school-aged students
- * Send out a message to PTA to find out what activities are popular for kids in middle school
- * Create new programs that incorporate transit – i.e.: *Downtown business after-school internship program with transportation provided from Staples*



Future Meetings (2013)

- * Commuters
- * Mid-Fairfield County Association of Realtors
- * Downtown Merchants Association
- * Chamber of Commerce
- * RTM Transit Committee
- * Downtown 2020
- * Green Initiative

Key Recommendations

Key Transit Recommendations

- * Greater integration of **Westport Transit District (WTD)** within Westport Town Government
 - Dedicate town resources and budget for WTD management and administration (budget preparation, marketing, planning/development, administrative support)
 - Consider establishing a Department of Public Transportation or place WTD under an existing Town department
 - Combine or closely coordinate WTD commuter plan and budget with Railroad Parking
- * Outsourcing WTD operations to Norwalk Transit continues to be the most efficient and cost-effective way to provide public transportation to Westport citizens
- * Encourage Transit Directors to consider incorporating private, commercial transportation providers to enhance services to the elderly and people with disabilities
- * Encourage Transit Directors to pursue Federal and State Transportation Grants in conjunction with town planning and zoning initiatives which could include public transportation funding
- * Create a Strategic Westport Transit Marketing Plan in preparation for and in conjunction with SWRPA's Westport Bus Service Operations & Needs Study and Westport Rail Parking Study to more effectively inform Westport citizens

Marketing Recommendations

Awareness among citizens of the existing community bus services in Westport is low. Many people simply don't know about the specific routes, schedules and fares available to commuters, senior citizens, the disabled and students in after-school programs.

*CTC recommends that a Strategic Marketing Plan for the WTD be developed and implemented in conjunction with the SWRPA Westport Bus Service Operations & Needs Study and Westport Rail Parking Study

*CTC believes that WTD Transit Directors should consider low cost and high impact opportunities to raise overall citizen awareness, increase ridership and enhance service for Westport citizens

Westport Transit Marketing Opportunities

- *Design and distribute a clear marketing message/campaign to inform the community about bus services in Westport.
 - Printed materials and signage at train stations, Senior Center, Town Hall, Library, Toquet Hall, etc.
 - Post easy-to-access WTD information on Town website and with online media
 - Send via regular mail, email and social media WTD information and feedback requests(surveys)
- *Work with the many supportive organizations, businesses, town departments and local publications in the distribution and posting of the marketing message.
- *Create buzz-worthy features and events like the recent Guaranteed Ride Home Program, Christmas Tree Lighting, etc.
- *Regularly and broadly communicate WTD updates/developments

Recent Westport Transit Accomplishments

- * Appointment of 2 new Transit Directors
- * Funding and initiation by SWRPA of the “Westport Bus Service Operations & Needs Study ”
- * Free taxi voucher program for off-hours travel (Guaranteed Ride Home)
- * Created an email list for citizens who wish to receive WTD updates
- * New commuter bus schedule brochures available to public at train stations
- * New bus signage at Saugatuck station
- * Created CTC email: wpctc@westportct.gov
- * CTC Chairman’s Letter to the Editor
- * Working with local realtors to distribute WTD information to prospective homebuyers in Westport
- * Westport Dept. of Human Services “[Westport Transportation Resources for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities](#)” guide available online
- * WCTC Facebook page
- * Special Event Transportation: Holiday Tree Lighting, Senior Center Meeting

Westport Transit District in the News...

WestportNews

WestportNOW

 MINUTEMAN
NEWS CENTER

TheHour.com (New Haven)

WestportPatch

WESTPORT
Daily Voice

WestportNOW

Westport's 24/7
News & Information
Source Since 2003



News

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2012

Opinion: Westport Transit on the Move



By Jim Ross

On behalf of the Westport Citizens Transit Committee, I want to take this opportunity to update Westport residents on some great progress being made for Westport's public transportation services.

For over 40 years, public transportation has been a valuable service for commuters, downtown businesses, seniors, people with disabilities, folks concerned with congestion or who support the "green-initiative," children going to after school activities and citizens who simply want or need to get around Westport.

Though many surrounding towns do not support public transportation like Westport, it certainly is one of the key features and benefits that make Westport a truly unique and amazing place.

This year, there was much discussion about public transportation in Westport which brought a renewed awareness and commitment to this "crown jewel" of Westport. And since June, Westport Transit has really been on the move. Here is an update.

In June, First Selectman Gordon Joseloff formed the Citizens Transit Committee (CTC) which is tasked to evaluate the current transit service and make recommendations for increasing awareness and ridership as well as enhancing our transit services to meet the evolving needs of today's Westport citizens.

The CTC members are Westport residents, transit riders, Westport town officials and citizens interested in Westport public transportation. It has met nearly every week through the summer and is charging into the fall with an active public meeting schedule. The CTC posts its schedule and agenda on the Westport town website and encourages the public to attend.

Comments? Questions?

For comments, questions, feedback, email us at: wpctc@westportct.gov

Westport Citizens Transit Committee Members:

Jim Ross, Chair

Melissa Salottolo

Carl Lindahl

Carolin Sigal

Peter Gold

Zoe Cohen

James Manning

Terry Giegengack, ex-officio, Assistant Director, Westport Human Services Dept.

Chief Dale Call, ex-officio, Westport Chief of Police