Getting Rutland On Board:
Recommendations for Enhancing Sustainable Transit

Environmental Studies Senior Seminar 401 B
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Executive Summary

Transportation is a significant concern in Vermont given the state’s low population density. The rural nature of the state makes access to goods and services challenging for those without an automobile. Yet, Rutland County is one of the best-connected areas in Vermont with a comprehensive bus system, an Amtrak station and a regional airport. The train and the airport connect Rutland to the rest of New England, while The Bus (the local public transit option) increases access within Rutland County and the state of Vermont. The Bus has five routes in Rutland City, as well as connections to towns such as Middlebury, Castleton, Manchester and Fair Haven.

This project was the product of a collaboration with the Marble Valley Regional Transit District (MVRTD) aimed at improving marketing surrounding The Bus. On March 4\textsuperscript{th} 2014, The Bus lost its local funding from Rutland City, which was tied to a significant amount of federal funding. Our project focused on identifying community concerns about The Bus that may be tied to funding votes and working on strategies to address some of these concerns. We found an important disconnect between the riders of The Bus and the voters: the individuals who ride The Bus regularly and understand its value do not generally vote, and those who do vote oftentimes are not aware of the value The Bus provides the community. To address this gap, we collected stories from a variety of individuals whose lives have benefited from the public transportation service and compiled the narratives into an advertising brochure.
1. Introduction

1.1. Project Background

This report was written for the Environmental Studies Senior Seminar at Middlebury College. Our group worked with the Marble Valley Regional Transit District in order to address issues associated with The Bus in Rutland. Our community-connected learning focused on the importance of sustainable transportation.

1.1.1. Sustainable Transportation

A comprehensive sustainable transportation system is one that is accessible to all members of society and meets everyone’s needs equitably, economically and efficiently, without extensively harming the environment (Schiller et al., 2010). Sustainable transportation provides an alternative to the traditional model, by focusing on access, efficiency, quality and multi-modality. It includes reducing automobile and other private motorized vehicle use and increased reliance on public transportation alternatives (Litman, 2003). In contrast, the current global transportation paradigm focuses on mobility and continually looks for expansions and investments related to roads and existing infrastructure (Schiller et al.). Governments tend to prioritize increasing the number of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) over social and environmental costs of transportation development (Atkison et al., 2009). This is in part because an essential aspect of American culture is based around automobile ownership and the freedoms that accompany it. This cultural dependence, together with society’s resistance to change, has made a shift towards sustainable transportation particularly challenging.

Dependence on personal automobiles varies by region, and is especially prevalent in rural areas. In a mountainous and rural state such as Vermont, people can live at great distances from one another, which poses obstacles for creating streamlined public transportation networks that are convenient for all. In 2010, Vermonters drove a total of 7,243,500,000 miles (Section 40 Committee, 2013). Total VMT is high because residents need to travel further than those in more densely populated states to get to work or to run errands (USDA, 2011). This increased travel time also affects spending, as Vermonters spend more money on commuting.

Despite geographic reasons for driving more, in the past few years VMT has decreased in Vermont. Figure 1 below illustrates that Vermont was one of two states to decrease VMT between 2002-2006 as compared to 1991-2002 statistics (Puentes and Tomer, 2008). Part of this change may have been due to heightened oil prices, as shown in Figure 2 below (EIA). Given Vermont’s VMT total, increased oil prices affect the population significantly and could motivate individuals to use their vehicles less to save money. If this is the case and a strong public transportation system is in place, sustainable transportation benefits may be amplified by shifting from away from automobiles towards multi-modal methods of transportation that do not depend on oil.
Figure 1. Map Illustrating the Change in VMT Across the United States Between 2002 and 2006. Map from: Puentes and Tomer, 2008.

Figure 2. Graph Illustrating the Change in Oil Price in the United States Between 1975 and 2010. Graph from: http://www.eia.gov/dnav/pet/hist/LeafHandler.ashx?n=PET&s=F000000_3&f=A
In addition to being able to help address the cultural and geographic challenges noted above, a strong public transit system can offer more equitable access as there are certain population groups that do not have access to vehicles such as low-income residents, senior citizens and youth. Low-income citizens and senior citizens may be hindered from accessing services due to financial or health limitations (USDA, 2011). Youths are affected because until they can drive, they are entirely dependent on their parents and the services available to them. The lack of options may lead to childrens’ inability to participate in school events, club sports and other activities, or after-school jobs.

Addressing these transportation challenges requires funding that can often be hard to find in rural communities. The lack of economic resources is oftentimes linked to a past dependence on resource extraction. Towns that used to depend on a resource-extractive industry lose population as the industry diminishes, causing a demographic shift toward a more aged and impoverished population that is heavily dependent on the social services the town can provide (USDA, 2011). This was seen in Rutland during the marble industry boom, where the population increased significantly until the collapse of the industry in the late 1970s (West Rutland Vermont, 2014). As population decreases, the tax revenue falls, a factor that reduces the probability of the local government funding sustainable transportation initiatives (Noxon Associates, 2009). Furthermore, small town governments often lack access to the public and private funds needed to invest in transportation (USDA, 2011).

A lack of funding inhibits a community’s opportunity to develop an effective multi-modal transportation system that is accessible to all. Yet, an effective system is incredibly valuable to rural communities—it provides an option for transportation to all because it assists the elderly, provides alternatives to cars, increases the mobility of both the labor force and the consumer base and has the potential to increase tourism (Noxon Associates, 2009). Given these funding challenges, the federal government works with numerous rural communities to help develop sustainable living through initiatives such as the USDA Rural Development loans, HUDs Small City Community Grants and the U.S. Department of Transportation rural transit expenditures (USDA, 2011).

1.1.2. Rural Sustainable Transportation

This section will offer a brief summary of research on rural sustainable transportation in order to lay a foundation for understanding how people perceive public transportation options as viable alternatives to the use of cars or other modes of sustainable transportation, as well as some of the challenges facing the development and implementation of rural sustainable transportation. A synopsis of some examples will provide an effective context upon which we can determine what MVRTD and Rutland have to learn and gain from the proven successes of others.

A 2011 report by the British Department for Transport, gauging public attitudes towards various modes of public transportation, found that people’s concerns about traffic congestion, exhaust fumes, and the effect of transportation on climate have reached record lows in recent years. Further, the same report showed that women were more likely to care about environmental issues related to transportation than men (Crown, 2012). Studies looking at willingness to use sustainable transportation as an alternative to short-distance (< 2 miles) rides in personal vehicles found that 42% of people believed
that they could very well walk many short-haul trips for which they currently use a car. Of the same population, 38% believed that the same trips would be easily bikeable, and 33% of surveyed individuals said that they would be willing to undertake the same trips via bus (Crown, 2012, 16). Another 2010 report from the British Government found that younger people were more likely than older populations to be apathetic towards the idea that reductions in personal car use on an individual basis will do tangible good for the environment (Taylor, 2010). These findings will provide an interesting foil against which to judge the results of our own surveying.

Public transportation has long been a staple of life in urban areas, but recent years have seen a rise in the development of public transportation systems designed to accommodate the needs of people in rural environments, as well as a surge of research analyzing how such systems function in the areas they serve. A 2012 report from Reconnecting America points out that across the country, the role of public transportation as an important resource for the 71 million Americans living in the nation’s rural areas has increased significantly in recent years and identifies six main trends in the development of public transportation systems in rural areas. First, smaller communities are making considerable efforts to differentiate the kinds of transportation investments they are engaging in—in addition to implementing and improving fixed circular routes that link residents to various community services and creating unifying transit hubs for regional services, communities are also engaging in partnerships with different stakeholders in the community, linking transit investments to local destinations, and building on traditional fixed-route, demand response, and paratransit services through incremental changes that play to the needs of the larger transportation network (Reconnecting America, 2012). Second, the manner in which transit developments in rural communities can contribute to increases in the economy and quality of life in smaller communities, pointing to examples of towns like Kent, OH where development of a multi-modal transportation center will create nearly 300 construction jobs as well as 700 full-time jobs once the center begins operations, resulting in $105 million in public and private development and $5.8 million in annual tax revenue. Third, public transportation systems can be developed with special attention to keeping with the local character of the areas they serve. Fourth, small-scale improvements to sidewalks, transit stops and transit vehicles have the power to improve access to and usage of a given transit system. Fifth, public transportation systems can increase collaboration and coordination between different community actors – Prairie Hills Transit in South Dakota was started primarily as a tool to connect people to community resources concerning food and medical services, and has continued to serve that purpose. Finally, the federal government also plays an important role in facilitating the development and success of rural public transit. In 2009, the federal government appropriated nearly $500 million to rural public transportation agencies in capital and operating expenses (Reconnecting America, 2012).

Numerous other studies have pointed to the benefits public transportation provides in rural areas. A 2010 publication from Transportation for America examined a number of different ways public transportation can contribute specifically to increases in the livability of smaller towns and rural areas. Participants in a meeting of Envision Utah, a coalition focusing on developing planning initiatives in the state, found that many of the coalition’s goals related to regional development could be best achieved through a more
connected transportation system. What emerged from that meeting was a vision statement that calls for higher capacity development to reduce infrastructure costs, enhance peak-time bus loops, and develop potential bus-rapid-transit lines. The report also detailed how the revival of Meridian, Mississippi’s city center was made possible by the construction of a new transportation hub, which along with investment in intercity transportation networks linking public transportation, passenger rail, and intercity buses has helped expand the mobility of this largely rural portion of the U.S. (Barry, 2010). These stories point to the good that can be done by developments in rural transportation that are deliberate, well-planned, and focused on connecting communities.

Another report by the American Public Transportation Association helps illustrate exactly how rural public transportation can contribute to the prosperity of a region in different ways than traditional metropolitan transportation services. In contrast to urban areas, fixed route bus service is offered in only 32% of rural bus services. On the other hand, deviated fixed route service—which is characterized by the allowance for breaks from scheduled routes in order to meet the specified needs of individual passengers – is more prevalent, being the predominant mode of service offered by 43% of bus operators in rural communities. A mix of fixed route and deviant fixed route service is provided by the remaining 14% of rural transportation providers (American Public Transportation Association, 2011). This is beneficial to the community because it allows for the flexibility needed to service rural communities that is not necessary in traditional densely-populated urban settings.

These studies illustrate the importance of rural public transportation and the abundance of opportunities for growth that still remain. The above information will help provide a standard against which we might evaluate Rutland’s efforts to develop sustainable transportation through MVRTD.

1.1.3. The Context

Rutland is a hub of transportation, in close proximity to an Amtrak station and the regional airport. The Amtrak station serves as the connection point between major East Coast cities—such as Washington D.C. and New York City—and Vermont. The regional airport directs planes to upstate New York and Boston. Within Vermont, Rutland is connected to the other major hubs, namely Middlebury and Burlington, through the public transportation system, as shown in Figure 3 below.

On August 29th, 2011, Tropical Storm Irene hit Vermont, resulting in extensive damage to the Rutland transportation network that cut off entire towns from the rest of the region (Burlington Free Press, 2011). One of the hardest hit areas was Rutland County, where roads were closed, bridges were damaged, and lives were lost as a direct result of the storm (Curtis, 2011). As part of the emergency response, Rutland’s regional transportation service, colloquially referred to as The Bus, transported evacuees to shelters (City of Rutland). This service was crucial for the residents of Rutland who did not have access to a vehicle and were dependent on the options available in the county.

1 MVRTD and The Bus are used interchangeably throughout this report.
Figure 3. Compiled Bus Routes Across All Vermont Transit Districts. Map from: Favalaro et al., 2014.
Tropical Storm Irene brought the community together to work towards addressing the damages caused—The Bus was an integral part of that effort and continues to play a role in the emergency plans of Rutland City.

The increasing frequency of natural disasters, such as Tropical Storm Irene, and the climate science confirming global warming give us reason to shift towards a more sustainable development model. Sustainable development, according to the United Nations Brundtland Report, is defined as ensuring development “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (United Nations, 1987). One subset of this shift requires moving away from a carbon-dependent economy towards renewables, other modes of transportation, and decision-making that incorporates environmental and social impacts (Litman, 2003). According to the latest calculations, 44% of Vermont’s carbon dioxide emissions stem from transportation (Vermont Agency of Transportation, 2014). Vermont has pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 50% from 1990 levels by 2028 and 75% by 2050.

One of Vermont’s goals is to develop an effective and efficient public transportation system to increase accessibility amongst towns, as well as reduce the dependence on fossil fuels (Vermont Council on Rural Development, 2009). Transportation is an important issue to this state, particularly considering increases in the price of fuel and the externalities associated with using fuel-based transportation (Vermont Council on Rural Development, 2009). In 2009, the Council on the Future of Vermont prepared a comprehensive document compiling the thoughts on Vermont in the present day and how Vermonters envision the state in the future. Local communities are acutely aware of their environment and wish to ensure that it is not harmed by development practices (Council on the Future of Vermont, 2009). In order to achieve these goals, Vermont must shift to more sustainable methods of transportation and incentivize its citizens to use them.

This project focuses specifically on sustainable transportation in Rutland, Vermont and The Bus transportation service in Rutland County. The Bus connects many of the towns in Rutland County to the city and other regional destinations, but a large portion of its citizens rely on less sustainable forms of transportation, specifically private vehicle use.
1.2. Project Focus

1.2.1. About Rutland

The City of Rutland, located in southwestern Vermont, has a population of about 17,000 people. It is the third largest city in the state and has a rich history as one of the hubs of commerce and transportation in Vermont.

Early in the 19th century, deposits of high-quality marble were discovered in Rutland County. Further exploration during the 1830s revealed a large deposit in what is now West Rutland. Several small groups began extracting the marble in the 1840s. The profitability of the Rutland marble quarries drastically increased in the 1850s with the arrival of the railroads. The development of four railroads through Rutland in the 1850s led to economic growth in the city. Increased productivity coincided with the decline of Italian marble quarries, which became dangerously deep and unworkable. Rutland became a world leader in producing marble by capitalizing on these circumstances (Coolidge, 1859).

Transportation options have expanded dramatically since the mid-1800s. Increased access to the region in the past has stimulated economic growth. However, over the last two decades, Rutland has experienced a downturn in productivity. The marble quarries started to close in the 1980s and 1990s, and many jobs in the area were lost because of it. Population peaked at almost 20,000 in the 1970s, and it has been declining ever since.

Along with economic and population decline, Rutland City has recently experienced social decline because of the use and sale of heroin. Vermont governor, Peter Shumlin, dedicated his 2014 State of the State message to addressing the heroin crisis in Vermont. Rutland is at the forefront of the battle against opiate addiction, and the first step was acknowledging the severity of the problem (Seelye, 2014). Rutland law enforcement and social services are working collaboratively to treat and rehabilitate drug abusers rather than solely relying on punishment to combat the problem. Access to goods and services through transportation for its citizens is necessary as Rutland fights to “reclaim its neighborhoods and its young people” (Seelye, 2014). Rehabilitation of citizens does not end when addiction ends. The goal is to help people become reintegrated as productive members of the community, and to reconnect all members of the community. The Bus can help attain these goals through the provision of a low cost transportation service that is beneficial to the entire community regardless of whether or not that service is not utilized by all of Rutland’s socioeconomic or demographic groups.

Rutland is on a mission to revitalize the city. Rutlanders are trying to move away from the image of Rutland an industrial and manufacturing region with drug problems and towards an image that reflects the principles of sustainability, local food, new technologies and farming (Vermont CEDS, 2013). Part of this vision is to develop an efficient and effective public transportation system in order to facilitate movement across the county and state. Locals are aware of their rich history and culture, and wish to channel that into the revitalization of their community.
1.2.2. Marble Valley Regional Transit District

The Marble Valley Regional Transit District (MVRTD) is a public bus system that serves Rutland County. The Bus is Vermont’s largest “non-urban” public transportation system, operating in and around Rutland for the past 35 years (MVRTD-b). Over the past five years, it has facilitated an average of 592,892 rides annually (639,739 rides in 2013) and covered 1,091,505 miles annually (1,122,707 miles in 2013). Riders range in age, gender, and ethnicity, although the majority of riders are from lower socioeconomic classes (Dana, 2014). MVRTD’s mission is “to provide safe, reliable, accessible, and coordinated public transit service to enhance the economic, social, and environmental quality of life throughout Rutland County and the surrounding communities” (MVRTD-b).

Ridership can be broken down into three distinct segments of the services The Bus offers (Figure 4). Approximately half of the riders on The Bus use the five in-city fixed routes that run on half-hour loops departing from the Rutland Transit Center. These routes provide access to essential services around Rutland City including grocery stores, regional transit hubs, residential areas, schools, and the hospital. These routes are 50¢ per ride and operate Monday through Friday from 6:30 AM to 6:00PM, with an abbreviated service on Saturdays. This segment has seen modest growth since a low point in 2007.

Another segment that is widely used by bus riders is the Killington connection. While this route connects locals or tourists who stay in Rutland City to the Killington Resort, seasonal workers who commute to Killington are the primary users of this service. Services vary seasonally, as the majority of riders use this route during ski season. The ridership on this route is also dependent on ski conditions. For example, in 2007, ridership fell below 200,000 when Killington received only 191 inches of snow, almost 60 inches below their average (Killington Resort, 2014). This segment has seen its ridership fall by 25% since 2006. The causes of this decline are unclear. The third segment of service that The Bus offers is a number of regional connections to surrounding towns including Middlebury, Fair Haven, Manchester, and Ludlow. The schedules of these routes vary according to ridership and distance from Rutland City to the destination. Figure 4. Ridership data for The Bus from 2006 to 2013. Data provided by Minga Dana, Executive Director at MVRTD.
Rutland. Ridership has remained relatively constant in this segment over time, although it spiked in 2009 in conjunction with the decrease in use of the Killington route. One theory for this spike is that a large number of commuters who work seasonally in Killington were not hired early in the year, causing them to find work in other areas.

The Bus offers a number of additional services to help achieve its mission of improving the quality of life throughout Rutland County. The Bus helps people with limited financial resources by offering a monthly pass for $15 that allows riders to take an unlimited number of trips over that time period. This is a valuable service for people who travel on The Bus each day and are on a limited budget. The Bus also provides services specifically aimed at helping people with disabilities. People who are registered through the protocols set forth in the American Disabilities Act are eligible to be picked up within three quarters of a mile from the fixed routes as part of the complementary paratransit service.

In the past few years, MVRTD has also begun a new initiative called the Unlimited Access Program to help connect large institutions to bus routes. As part of this program, institutions pay a set fee and all of the members of that institution are allowed to ride The Bus for free. This can be a valuable service to businesses because it provides additional employee (or in some cases student) benefits, and it can make it easier for workers to commute. Some of the current member institutions include the Rutland Regional Medical Center, Community College of Vermont, and Green Mountain College. This program has grown annually, and it is expected to account for over 12,000 rides by the end of the 2014 fiscal year (Figure 5). These services that MVRTD provides demonstrate that The Bus can be an asset to many different parts of the community, and that a large population within Rutland County consider The Bus an essential service.

MVRTD is one of the most successful public transportation providers in the state of Vermont (VTrans 2014, 25-31). The Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) has created standards for various metrics to assess the success of transit providers in Vermont. In almost every case, The Bus exceeds the most stringent standards, and it is a leader in many categories including tourism, cost per passenger, and rural commuter cost per passenger. In 2013, each route that
MVRTD offered exceeded the “acceptable” standard determined by VTrans, a major achievement (Table 1). In addition to the success of individual routes, MVRTD is the leader in demand response boardings in terms of quantity of riders and cost per passenger (VTrans, 2014). Demand response boardings refer to minor deviations from fixed routes to pick up passengers, so being a leader in this category indicates that The Bus can be flexible to meet the needs of the public.

In order to help maintain these valuable services, The Bus receives funding from local, state, and federal sources. Each year on the first Tuesday in March, towns in Vermont hold a Town Meeting to vote on important community affairs including Board of Alderman elections, school commissioner elections, and budget affairs (17 V.S.A. § 2640). Each year in the Town Meeting elections, MVRTD asks for funding from each community it serves in Rutland County. This funding request varies depending on the size of the community and level of services The Bus provides to that community. For example, in Fair Haven the 2014 request was $2,500, while in Rutland City the request was $46,140. Since Rutland City is the largest city in Rutland County with a high concentration of bus routes, it annually pays for the largest share of local funding. State and federal institutions base their funding obligations on local contributions, so when local residents appropriate less money to MVRTD, the operating budget falls significantly.

For the majority of the past twenty years, MVRTD has consistently received funding from Rutland City, but recently community support for The Bus has begun to waver. Since 1988, the article on funding MVRTD has passed twenty-four times. The first time that the article did not to pass was in 2010. This was an unanticipated result at the time because the year before the article had passed by 14%. Since 2010, the voting

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Rutland City has grown large enough that the “town meeting” does not include a formal gathering where people discuss issues together and vote, but rather a conventional election.
margin has never exceeded six points, although the article has passed every year. This year (2014), voters decided again against funding The Bus in a 1,230-1,215 decision, a margin of 0.6%. Average voter turnout in these elections since 2007 was 3,896 people, but this year only 2,445 residents cast votes. While MVRTD had the opportunity to appeal the election results and call for a revote, the organization’s leadership ultimately decided against this option.

Losing funding via this year’s election was a major cause for concern for administrators at MVRTD. While the total loss of funding taking into account state and federal decreases was unclear at the time this report was written, the executive director of The Bus Minga Dana estimated that the total impact could reach up to $500,000 (Dana, 2014). In consultation with the Board of Directors, the leadership at MVRTD decided to maintain current route schedules up until the end of the current fiscal year, June 30. At that time, it is likely that some changes in service will be required in order to make up for this unanticipated funding shortfall.

1.3. Project Goals

The goal of this project was to understand what caused people to vote against funding The Bus and identify strategies to ensure MVRTD has support from Rutland City in the future.

Unexpectedly losing funding for the second time in five years has been challenging for MVRTD. Considering the narrower elections in recent years, there is reason to believe that this issue needs to be addressed more actively than it has been in the past. The most important objective of our project was ensuring that the article to fund MVRTD passes in future elections. In order to achieve this goal, we focused on four key objectives:

**Objective 1: Determining what factors led people to vote against funding The Bus**

In order to ensure The Bus wins funding in future elections, we needed to have a clearer understanding of what caused people to vote against the measure this year. We wanted to identify if there had been changes in management or service that influenced the vote or if other factors outside the control of MVRTD had influenced this shift.

**Objective 2: Identifying specific ways that The Bus benefits the Rutland**

Public transit can improve mobility and accessibility, provide transit opportunities for low income and senior residents, expand the labor market and customer base for local businesses, and help support the tourism industry (Noxon Associates, 2009). People are often unaware of the direct benefits they receive from the existence of a public transportation program that they do not actively use. Understanding and quantifying these benefits specific to MVRTD’s service would allow us to develop a convincing narrative for why residents should support The Bus in the future.
Objective 3: Developing marketing materials to highlight the benefits of The Bus to the Rutland community

A key component of our work was developing appropriate marketing materials to communicate the benefits we identified in Objective 2 to the Rutland community. This required selecting a medium that would be both financially feasible for The Bus to distribute and relatively easy to edit or append going into the future. We developed a template to administer this marketing strategy as well as initial materials that could be used this year.

Objective 4: Developing recommendations to improve the image and functionality of The Bus

Finally, we identified a number of areas where The Bus could update and improve their services. These recommendations represent promising opportunities to increase ridership and community awareness about MVRTD’s services. They were based on an amalgamation of our research, survey results, personal experiences with The Bus, and our interactions with different community members.

2. Process

Our methods included field work, research, intercept surveys, and interviews in order to identify the primary barriers preventing people from using The Bus. We used the data and stories we collected to formulate a plan to overcome these barriers and created a pamphlet that aimed to tell the stories of people who have been positively affected and aided by The Bus’s service in Rutland. These stories can be distributed to Rutland community members through the pamphlet we developed that also showcases revealing data and debunks common myths and misconceptions about The Bus. A full discussion of the pamphlet framing can be found in Chapter 3. Through our research, we also compiled a set of recommendations to assist The Bus in further meeting the needs of Rutland. To share our work with the community, we gave a public presentation of our work at the Rutland Library in May 2014. A conceptual map of our methodology is presented below in Figure 6.
2.1. Site Visits

An integral component of our understanding of Rutland and the local transportation systems was practicing hands-on observation. We went to the city center and recorded our findings at locations such as the Transit Center, seen in Figure 7, the downtown area, and the road networks that the buses travel on. Our observations helped us understand some positive and negative aspects of The Bus and how it relates to the community.

As this project was focused on The Bus, our first stop was the Transit Center, which is the local hub for bus activity. Every bus in Rutland comes through the Transit Center to pick up and drop off riders on a half-hourly rotation. The center is a sheltered outdoor parking lot with benches for residents to sit on. There is an indoor waiting room where people can access information about routes and wait while avoiding the cold. When we visited the Transit Center, it was buzzing with activity, with Rutlanders on the move and in conversation with one another.
The Bus offers a very important and convenient service to Rutlanders. However, there is potential to improve communication of these services to the public. While infrastructure is expensive to put in place, having covered bus stops, well-labeled signs, and route maps could make The Bus substantially more appealing to a wider array of Rutlanders. From field observations, we found that there is a lack of effective physical signage and route maps in areas away from the Transit Center. The existing bus stops are discrete or faded, as shown in Figure 8 and Figure 9. Though some stops had benches, most lacked overhead cover, and all lacked route maps. Newer riders are especially dependent on route maps and would benefit greatly from access to them at each stop.

**Box 1: A Ride on The Bus**

To get a first-hand account of what riders experience on The Bus, we rode a full loop on the Hospital Route, one of the five in-city fixed routes. This route leaves every thirty minutes from the Rutland Transit Center. It passes from the center of town, out to a senior living community, and then it goes to the hospital before returning to the city center. We arrived at the Transit Center at 12:53 on Tuesday April 1, and we waited inside the center, where we saw a diverse assortment of patrons. There were some people with grocery bags, others in wheelchairs, a few young families, and other patrons waiting for buses. We got onto the bus promptly at 1:00pm, paid our fifty-cent fare, and took our seats towards the back. Five other passengers got on with us. One was holding groceries from the Price Chopper. Another wore a hoodie sweatshirt with his hood up and listened to music in his headphones. Others talked together or sat alone. At 1:04, the bus pulled out of the transit center and we were on our way.

Our experience on The Bus was completely positive. The bus was comfortable and steady, and the radio was tuned to an unobtrusive classic rock station. Passengers generally kept to themselves, as many people were using electronic devices or just looking out the window. People got off at different places including the hospital, an office building, and a trailer park. There was also a stop at The Maples, a senior living community where a hearing-impaired elderly gentleman got onto the bus. The driver was friendly, waiting patiently for people to find change and cheerfully answering any questions he was asked. We pulled back into the Transit Center at 1:30 sharp, with two new passengers and one other who had ridden the entire loop with us. We disembarked and headed back to meet up with the rest of our group.
In addition to making better, more visible signs and also placing route maps at bus stops, The Bus could improve its ridership and appeal by erecting more substantial shelters for bus stops. There are some shelters throughout Rutland City, as shown in Figure 10, but more would protect riders from the harsh Vermont winters and may well encourage increased ridership.
2.2. Interviews

Mere presentation of information and statistics is not always the best method to convince people of something. Bates (2004) argues that narrative interviewing is particularly valuable in situations where the researcher wants an in-depth view of the participant’s experience. Through this relaxed and relatively informal setting, interviewees feel more comfortable sharing their experiences and divulging details that would not be extracted through rigid and formal questioning. Further, scholars such as Reinard (1988) argue that narratives developed from interviews are persuasive because individuals can relate to them emotionally.

Narrative interviewing was an important part of our work because there is value to having a personal explanation of a phenomenon as opposed to receiving a vast amount of impersonal information (McKenzie-Mohr, 2011). We decided that an emphasis on statistics and narratives, with the inclusion of some data figures, in our pamphlet would most effectively portray the information we gathered. Our objectives for conducting interviews included procuring stories from locals about the impact The Bus has personally had on their lives, elucidating the value of The Bus, and also meeting and interacting with Rutlanders to gain a more thorough appreciation of our project mission. Talking with the people emphasized the importance of what we were doing and gave us fuel to become passionate about our work.

To ensure that we conducted professional, well-orchestrated interviews, our group learned interview skills and techniques. We were fortunate enough to work with both Greg Sharrow, Co-Director of the Vermont Folklife Center in Middlebury, VT, as
well as critically-acclaimed documentary filmmaker Emmanuel Vaughn-Lee. Both of these accomplished interviewers gave us tips for hearing the stories people have to tell.

The key tools we used in interviewing were interest in body language, eye contact, listening deeply to the interviewees and embracing the silence (Sharrow, 2014). According to Greg, silences can turn golden when an interviewee feels the need to fill the silence with a more elaborated afterthought that can bring the whole picture together. The other important aspect of interviewing was easing interviewees into the process by starting discussion on topics such as their family, the weather and other small talk (Vaughn-Lee, 2014).

The interview sample was based on initial identification of individuals from Minga Dana and chain-referral interviewing, which involves identifying an initial set of actors and then increasing the sample through referrals (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981). The people we interviewed included: Mayor Chris Louras, Fire Chief Robert Schlachter, Judy Knopf of Langrock, Sperry and Wool Attorneys at Law, Peter Werner of Kinney Pike Insurance, Karen of Rutland (no last name provided), Nick Devonshire of Washington, D.C., and Michelle Folger of Vermont Adult Learning. In addition to long-form interviews, we also informally interviewed people during the surveying process and in locations such as the farmer’s market. Our interviews all took place in the Rutland area to ensure interviewees were in comfortable environments.

Some of the key themes that emerged from these interviews were that The Bus is very important to a wide variety of people, and that The Bus has helped people in a variety of different ways. The pamphlet we created to illustrate these stories can be found in Appendix A and the full transcripts of our interviews are provided in Appendix B. By conducting interviews with the aim of collecting stories for a pamphlet, our team was able to hear firsthand the importance of The Bus in the lives of Rutlanders. The stories we gathered from the interviews had a strong appeal to pathos, and were compiled for the pamphlet to inspire an emotional impact in the Rutland community.

2.3. Survey

2.3.1. Survey Design

In order to focus the knowledge we gained from our firsthand observations and interviews, we conducted a survey to further solidify our understanding of the barriers and benefits to riding The Bus. The secondary goal was to understand more about what influenced people’s vote in the Town Meeting day election. These two goals influenced the design of our survey. The survey was designed to reach a diverse audience within Rutland County, and having a focused, concise set of questions allowed us to distribute our survey to a large audience. It was written so that it could be taken by not only people from within Rutland City, but also people who lived further away in other areas within Rutland County. This provided valuable information about the different ways people view The Bus based on where they were from, their socioeconomic background, and if and how often they ride The Bus.

The primary way our survey was distributed was through intercept surveying. On three separate occasions, teams of two went to Rutland and asked residents to take our survey. We focused on three areas in particular to administer the survey. The first place
we selected was the Rutland Plaza Shopping Center. Located right in downtown Rutland across from City Hall, the Rutland Plaza Shopping Center was an ideal spot to survey a diverse crowd of people. It contains both a Walmart and a Price Chopper store, so there was constantly high foot traffic throughout the day. The next location we surveyed was the MVRTD Transit Center. Since the in-city fixed routes stop at the Transit Center every half hour, there was a consistent stream of people, who in many cases were waiting for buses and had time to respond to surveys. The final location that we surveyed was the Vermont Farmers Food Center. Home of the largest farmers market in the state, the Food Center allowed us to survey a different demographic than we reached at our other surveying locations. Intercept surveying was valuable not only because of the responses we received on the survey, but also because it provided us with an opportunity to discuss The Bus with a wide range of people with different opinions about MVRTD. These conversations were invaluable in shaping our perceptions and ultimately our final recommendations in this report. In total we surveyed 78 people through intercept surveying.

While intercept survey respondents constituted the majority of the people who took the survey, we also elected to distribute the survey through one other medium. With encouragement from the MVRTD staff, we elected to put surveys directly on buses so riders could fill them out during their commute. This accounted for an additional eleven surveys. MVRTD administrators redacted three questions from these surveys, so this accounts for a smaller sample size for some responses in the data.3

Our survey went through a number of different drafts that led to the survey included at the end of this report in Appendix C. By administering small samples of our survey and analyzing responses, we were able to hone in on specific wordings for problematic questions. Many questions went through wording changes over the course of our samples, and some question were added and removed between the first draft of the survey and the final survey. These changes occurred throughout our surveying, which limited our response rates to some questions.

2.3.2. Results

In total, we surveyed 89 people, 83 of whom reside in Rutland County. Of these respondents, 55% rode The Bus, while 45% did not ride The Bus. Out of the bus riders, 80% reported riding at least once per day, and 45% rode The Bus between three and five times a day. Income distribution was skewed, as 54% of respondents reported an annual income of less that $25,000 per year, 43% reported between $25,000 and $50,000 in annual income, 22% reported between $50,000 and $90,000, and only 1 respondent reported an income exceeding $90,000.

This survey provided us with data to support many of our anecdotal findings. We found that choice riders represent a minority of riders on The Bus, although we were surprised that 33% respondents self-identified as choice riders (Table 2). The response rate for this question was particularly low because it was added later than other questions, and only people who ride The Bus were asked to answer it. Only 35% of respondents agreed with the statement: “It is easy to understand the schedule and routes provided by The Bus,” but when looking only at bus riders this percentage rose to 57%. This

3 The redacted survey questions were questions 4, 5, and 10 on the survey in Appendix C.
confirmed our belief that it can be difficult for people to understand where and when
buses run, particularly if they do not ride The Bus with regularity. While we already
knew that The Bus was valuable to the community, one of the most surprising results was
that 75% of respondents reported that they considered The Bus as part of Rutland’s
transportation future. This was higher than we expected and particularly surprising for
two reasons: 1) the article to fund MVRTD did not pass this year and 2) both people who
ride The Bus and people who do not ride The Bus indicated that it was important for
Rutland’s transportation future. This was perhaps because 81% of respondents indicated
that they knew at least one other person that rides The Bus and 49% knew at least three
people who ride. We believe that these findings support our conclusions that MVRTD
provides a valuable service to the Rutland community.

Table 2: Select survey results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question:</th>
<th>Choice</th>
<th>Necessity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you ride The Bus by choice or necessity?</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you see The Bus as part of Rutland’s transportation future?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 77</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True or False: It is easy to understand the schedule and routes provided by The Bus.</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>False</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 50</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the data provided above, the survey revealed some of the reasons
that people ride The Bus. The most common reason that people cited for taking The Bus
was to run errands, with almost two-thirds of bus riders selecting this option. Taking The
Bus for medical and social reasons rated highly as well, with over 30% of respondents
citing this as a reason they ride The Bus. One category was lower than we anticipated.
Only 26% of bus riders indicated that commuting to work was a reason that they ride The
Bus (Figure 11). While this may be indicative of The Bus not being widely used for
commuting to work, it is possible that this low response rate is related to our method of
surveying. Most of our surveying took place during weekdays between 11:00am and
4:00pm. Many commenters who use The Bus would be at work during these hours, so it
is possible that our results underrepresent this population. In addition to the given
responses, three people used the “other” space to write in “school” as an additional
reason for riding The Bus.
Figure 11. This graph depicts responses to survey question 7. Respondents could select more than one option. Only bus riders responded to this question.

The survey also gave us insight to some of the barriers for increased ridership on The Bus. Question eight, “What prevents you from riding The Bus more?” focused on identifying these barriers. For this question, respondents were able to select one or more from a list of options. The results, depicted in Figure 12, demonstrate that a number factors contribute to people not riding The Bus more often, and they differ depending on if the respondent was a bus rider or not. A preference for driving, weather, inconvenient schedules, and inconvenient routes were all options that received votes from over 20% of respondents. Weather was a greater concern for bus riders, while schedule or routes was seen as a barrier for people who do not ride The Bus. Non-bus riders cited a preference for driving and being uncomfortable with the passengers much more often than people who ride The Bus. This may suggest that the people riding The Bus do not have the option to drive as much, which was something people mentioned to us when filling out surveys. Also, it suggests that there is a stigma against The Bus held by people who do not actually use the service. Many people also opted to write in their own responses as well, and these included fares and commute time.
Figure 12. This graph depicts responses to survey question 8 based on if the respondent was a bus rider or not. Respondents could select more than one option.

We were unfortunately only able to obtain information about how people voted on the funding article from 13 respondents. Of these 13, 9 respondents (70%) voted against the article; however, this sample size too small for us to draw any substantial conclusions from these data. The actual distribution in the vote was 50.3% against, indicating that our responses were not representative of the population. While we were disappointed that we were not able to obtain this information, we believe that this survey still provided us with valuable data to supplement our other research methods.

2.4. Analysis

Our research identified four types of barriers that prevent MVRTD from being a more successful bus service: political, psychological, technical, and other barriers.

2.4.1. Political Barriers

One of the major barriers that MVRTD faces is political. A common narrative that we heard in our research was that the people who ride The Bus were not the people actively participating in the political process. While we did not receive enough responses in order to gather conclusive evidence about this claim from our survey, anecdotes from people who work at MVRTD along with interviews with bus riders indicates this is a problem. One survey respondent lamented that while working two jobs and raising kids, she was too busy to be politically attuned. For many people who use The Bus, it is
difficult to find time to vote. This has both direct and indirect impacts on The Bus because politicians do not cater to the non-voting population as explicitly as they do to the voting population, and public meeting votes directly affect funding for The Bus. This is not a problem that is unique to Rutland or public transportation, but is a broader justice issue on the inaccessibility of the political process to marginalized populations (Bergstrom, 2012). This significant barrier is interrelated with the immediate political issue, specifically the loss of local funding for The Bus.

This year, voter turnout was particularly low making it more difficult for the funding article for MVRTD to be passed. One survey respondent was blunt in explaining that he voted against The Bus because “taxes are too high and we don’t have the money for more handouts.” This was a sentiment that we heard from at least two other people we spoke to about the vote. People with strong opinions, like the one presented above, are more motivated to vote, so in years of low voter turnout, these people are more likely to be voting than moderate supporters (Palfrey and Poole, 1987). Supporters of The Bus are generally more moderate in their support, and MVRTD is more likely to gain funding in high turnout years than low turnout years. In presidential election years, typically the years of highest voter turnout in the four-year cycle, the funding article has always passed by at least a 7% margin (over 200 votes). Addressing political barriers by helping bus riders understand that it is important that they vote and making it more convenient for them to vote would go a long way to ensure MVRTD wins future votes for funding.

2.4.2. Psychological Barriers

There are two key psychological barriers that prevent MVRTD from operating more effectively. One barrier we alluded to in the survey section is the stereotype that only poor people with no other means of transportation ride The Bus. This stigma against The Bus has created a negative community image for some. Another barrier The Bus faces is an appearance of low ridership that makes people believe that MVRTD is a wasteful expense. MVRTD uses full sized buses, and when people see that they are not always full, they assume that this is a waste of resources. These psychological barriers could have contributed to a loss in support for The Bus in recent elections.

In conversations with public officials and people we surveyed, we often heard that The Bus has a negative stigma for many Rutland residents. Question eight of our survey was specifically focused on understanding barriers to people riding The Bus, and our metric for the negative stigma was the “uncomfortable with other passengers” response. Figure 12 in section 2.3.2. depicted how people who do not ride The Bus were much more likely to select this as an option. Additionally, when looking at the survey respondents who stated their income above the lowest option, $25,000 per year, 21% of the 38 respondents selected “uncomfortable with other passengers” as a reason that they do not ride The Bus more often. These data suggest that people who do not ride The Bus have a perception about its image that is different from people who actually ride The Bus. One person we interviewed explicitly told us that the reason she voted against The Bus was that it was “filled with druggies and homeless people.” She continued to say that the times she has ridden The Bus, she has felt unsafe with the people on it, and she does not allow her children to ride. These strong concerns could be related to the fact that Rutland County is the epicenter of Vermont’s heroin epidemic (Seelye, 2014). This negative
perception of The Bus has likely contributed to some of the problems facing MVRTD today, although it is unclear from our research how this stigma problem may have changed over time.

While stigma is a major psychological barrier, another is the appearance of low ridership. Since 2006, the number of times people have ridden The Bus has fallen by over 111,000 rides, although in recent years ridership has begun to rebound (Figure 4, section 1.2.2.) This represents a decline of over 17% of total rides, although much of this decrease is from the Killington Route as opposed to the fixed in-city routes. Over this same period of time, services have expanded, and total mileage that buses travel has increased by almost 14%. This means that the number of riders per bus mile traveled has decreased, so buses appear emptier than they did eight years ago (Figure 13). Despite this decline in ridership, MVRTD ranks among the leaders in Vermont in terms of ridership and cost-effectiveness (VTrans, 2014). While MVRTD is quite successful in terms of its services, many people believe that the buses are often empty. On an average day, people take 604 rides on the in-city fixed routes. Unlike the smaller transit services in Vermont, MVRTD uses full-sized buses. While during peak hours these buses are full, most of the time this is not the case. The full-sized buses have been an area of complaint for some residents for many years. At a public meeting in 2008, a number of people commented that the buses were too large and often empty (MVRTD-a). An anecdote we heard from multiple sources was that people believe that buses have tinted windows to hide that they are empty all of the time (in fact, this is an energy efficiency measure, and you cannot buy large buses without tinted windows). The concern that buses are always empty has contributed to the negative image of The Bus.

These psychological barriers affect the public perceptions of The Bus. These concerns are not new, but they have become more important as funding votes have become more contested in recent years. They represent a significant challenge to MVRTD going into the future.
2.4.3. Technical Barriers

In addition to the political and psychological barriers inhibiting the bus, there are also a number of technical barriers to a more successful system. These barriers affect the general public’s ability to access and understand bus schedules both online and at bus stops.

One technical barrier that MVRTD faces is the design of its website. The website for MVRTD lacks in both functionality and visual appeal (MVRTD-b). It does not integrate route information or provide clear, detailed schedules without intensive searching. This makes it difficult for new users to navigate the routes online. While comprehensive information is available at the Rutland Transit Center, this has yet to be digitized and added to the website. There is also no way to see how MVRTD routes connect to other bus systems like Addison County Transit Resources, its neighbor to the north. This problem is not unique to but is reflective of a disjointed statewide bus system that others have been working to address through a statewide map of transit routes transfer stops and park and ride locations (Favalaro et al., 2014; Figure 3 of this report). Additionally, the layout of the MVRTD website makes it difficult to navigate. In order to move between pages of the website (http://www.thebus.com/), a user has to click on a row of tabs at the center of the page. Each tab leads to a new page with a new subset of tabs, and it is easy to get lost within these pages because some subsets do not have a homepage option while others do. This is representative of a relatively basic design structure, and newer websites have integrated dropdown tabs in order to go to subsets of pages without losing links to the primary pages. This structure is much easier for new users to navigate. In the future, this is an area where The Bus should consider investing to make its services more accessible.

The inaccessibility of the route schedules is a problem that is not limited to the website. One of the key findings from our survey was that people found it difficult to understand the schedule and routes provided by MVRTD (Question 9). Of the 50 people asked the question, only 18 believed they were easy to understand, while 15 disagreed and 17 said that they did not know. This was particularly true for people who do not ride The Bus regularly, where almost 80% of respondents said it was not easy to understand the routes and schedules. These data may confirm our personal observations that it can be difficult to find route schedules, times, and even bus stops in some cases. This problem could be addressed at relatively low cost and would increase the public image of The Bus by making it appear more complete. At the Rutland Transit Center, route information is available. It provides comprehensive information on stops and estimated times for most of the routes, however each route is on a separate sheet of paper. This information could to be put together onto a set of maps and put up at bus stops, and people would understand the route structure better.

These technical challenges make it difficult for new users to understand The Bus, and addressing them could expand the capacity for The Bus to increase its ridership for locals and visitors.
2.4.4 Other Potential Barriers

We identified three other potential barriers to MVRTD operating more successfully that do not fit into the categories presented above. While some of these barriers are out of the control of The Bus, like the weather, there are a number of steps that can be taken to mitigate these issues.

The weather is a significant barrier to more people riding The Bus. Vermont has a harsh winter climate that can make it difficult to wait outside for public transit to arrive. Ridership declines in the winter months for almost all of the routes that MVRTD offers, including all of the five in-city fixed routes. The one exception to this trend is the Killington route, which understandably sees an increase in ridership in winter months because of the ski resort. Almost 30% of respondents, second most out of all options, cited weather as a reason that prevents people from riding The Bus. While MVRTD cannot control the weather, they can take steps to mitigate this issue by improving bus shelters to make them block wind and snow.

Inconvenient routes and schedules are another barrier to increased use of The Bus. These reasons were often cited as why people do not ride The Bus. In our survey, 26% of respondents cited routes and 21% indicated the schedule prevented them from riding The Bus. One of the key features of the fixed routes is that they run on 30-minute loops. While this limits commuting times, it also limits the number of places that buses can stop within that time period. Making routes and schedules more convenient is always a struggle for public transit providers competing with the ease of private services, a problem that is even more difficult in a rural context (Noxon Associates, 2009). While improvements in service can always be made, it is important to note that these constraints exist. While MVRTD also leads Vermont in demand-response boardings—indicating that their service is relatively flexible currently—expanded flexibility should be considered going into the future as MVRTD continues to adjust its routes and schedules.

A final barrier we identified was that people prefer driving to taking public transportation. Many people in Rutland own and rely on their own cars, and they simply prefer using cars to taking The Bus. While this preference for driving is understandable for people who do not live near bus routes or need to travel when The Bus does not run, it is problematic for people who rely heavily on The Bus as their primary mode of transportation. Unfortunately, we do not have data on the number of people who drive in Rutland, but it is large enough that The Bus does not run every day of the week. Because many people do not use The Bus to travel, it can be seen as less of an essential service. There is little that The Bus can do to directly address this barrier other than to provide the best services possible. Although this barrier may remain, The Bus can focus on making it clear that MVRTD is an essential service to the community even for people who do not actually ride The Bus.
3. Framing

In order to address the barriers we identified through our research, we developed a marketing strategy to highlight the benefits The Bus provides to the community. When deciding on a marketing strategy, it needed to fit a number of criteria. Most importantly, it needed to be an effective way to reach Rutlanders. In our interview with Mayor Louras, we learned that traditional paper marketing is still the most effective way to distribute information in the Rutland community (Louras, 2014). While social media and internet marketing have been becoming increasingly valuable, the majority of Rutlanders have not yet become fully attuned to advertising on these new mediums. Additionally, our marketing tool needed to be easy to maintain, update, and add to, so that it could be used going into the future. We decided that the most effective way to convey our ideas and understandings of the issue was through the creation of a marketing pamphlet that focused on telling stories of Rutlanders who ride The Bus.

3.1. Economics and the Environment

One of the most illuminating insights that emerged from our conversation with Rutland’s Mayor Louras was that Rutlanders have a pragmatic attitude, steering towards economic rationale over environmentalism (Louras 2014, see Appendix B for full transcript). One particularly reassuring aspect of Rutland’s community personality today has to do with the city’s commitment to building a creative economy. The Mayor proposed that Rutland has embraced the development of green energy resources and green, community-centered initiatives related to food because they see such ventures as ones that make good economic sense. The people have committed to these two aspects of sustainability, according to Louras, because of the entrepreneurial opportunities that come with their development and their alignment with certain pragmatic principles.

Unfortunately, the community does not view The Bus in the same light. Louras offered that The Bus and the services it provides are viewed by the community as dirty and inefficient. People see large, gas-guzzling buses running most hours of the day and immediately think that their operations should be downsized. This is a particularly problematic perception, because the sizes and models of buses used by MVRTD and the routes and schedules they run are determined precisely by pragmatic economic analyses that show The Bus how to maximize efficiency and meet the needs of their riders. As we’ve stressed to no small extent, people in Rutland struggle to make the connection between the service provided by The Bus and the good that service does for the community. The fact that people see the presence of public transportation—what the studies in Section 1.2.2. above identify as necessary factors in the creation of sustainable communities capable of promoting widespread access—in their community as detrimental to community sustainability is a major problem in and of itself.

These trends Louras discussed are indicative of larger patterns observed on a national scale. The United States has an entrepreneurial culture in which mastering and controlling the environment are central goals (Schultz and Zelezny, 2003). People in Vermont display a wide array of financial positions, and trying to keep up with capitalistic society can affect how people view and act towards the environment. One’s level of financial stability can be associated with their actions toward environmental
protection or sustainable behavior, so long as those actions and behaviors result in that which makes the most financial sense. If one holds capitalistic values at a higher weight than environmental protection, their choices in lifestyle will be unlikely to help the environmental movement. It is a matter of revamping the current system to make environmental choices accessible and appealing to people of different socio-economic categories.

The acknowledgement of these perceived barriers in the community suggests that an important step in helping the Rutland community embrace MVRTD’s services might be to connect The Bus and the good it does in the community to the region’s larger commitment to a green, entrepreneurial spirit. Our conversation with Mayor Louras indicated that when sustainability is conceptually tied not only to economics, but also to an ethic of self-sufficiency and pragmatism, the public is far more likely to embrace a particular measure of sustainability. Thus, a key aspect of the framing of our marketing materials has been focused on connecting The Bus’ services to enhancing individuals’ access to opportunities for learning and employment.

3.2. Pamphlet Framing

Our team crafted a pamphlet to deliver the narratives we collected (see Appendix B for interview transcripts). We drew inspiration from the Addison County Transit Resources (ACTR) 2013 Annual Report. Their pamphlet shares various stories of ACTR users and demonstrates to readers how their service plays a key role for various member of the community. The stories include elderly citizens accessing medical treatment, students riding to class, and even choice riders commuting to work to reduce their carbon footprint. The ACTR pamphlet also includes fiscal information, ridership data, and an explanation of their services. We chose to create a pamphlet because The Bus can use and update the document beyond our involvement with this project. It can be delivered to targeted locations in Rutland at appropriate times as determined by The Bus.

The framing of the story collection was crucial to our project because we needed to target the specific barriers and stigmas we identified in our research. We collected stories based on what we thought would address the issues we identified. Each of these stories was carefully crafted to tell the honest account of these individuals and the benefits of The Bus, whilst creating an emotional impact from the reader. We wanted to maintain a balance between working on a marketing campaign whilst also avoiding the framing of stories in a manner that did not reflect the interviewee’s experiences.

The first story was from the fire chief, Robert “Bob” Schlachter. The executive director of MVRTD informed us of a rainy and cold evening where the Bus kept operating in order to provide shelter and warmth for the firemen who were putting out a fire late into the night. This story illustrated that The Bus serves a purpose beyond simply transporting passengers on a fixed route. During our interview, we also discovered that The Bus played a critical role during Tropical

Figure 14. Robert Schlachter-Fire Chief. Image from: Sara Arno
Storm Irene by evacuating individuals to shelters. This was valuable information to share because Irene affected all the population, regardless of their socioeconomic level, and it would help people appreciate the value of the Bus because they would realize that it could have helped them in an emergency.

Individuals identified safety and the rider demographic as one of the barriers to using The Bus. To counter this argument, we found a story of Kristen Werner who, at 12 years old, rode The Bus alone every day from Brandon to Rutland, and then switched buses within Rutland, in order to get to a ballet class. By illustrating her trust in The Bus, we hoped to alleviate concerns regarding other users of The Bus.

Another story that addressed part of the stigma related to The Bus was from the Regional Manager at Vermont Adult Learning. Michelle’s story illustrated that low-income residents were using The Bus as a means of getting an education in order to access better career opportunities. This story is particularly inspirational because it highlights that The Bus has increased attendance levels at VAL and is being used as an opportunity for individuals to get ahead in life and become good citizens who contribute to society.

A fourth story addresses the stigma of the riders: the choice rider from Pittsford to Middlebury. Judy Knope is one of the choice riders we interviewed who use The Bus to save themselves the mileage and gas costs. Including her story was important because it gave a different demographic perspective, as she works at a law firm in Middlebury. Her choice to ride The Bus not only highlights the variety of riders on The Bus, but also identifies other reasons for riding The Bus as opposed to simply a lack of a vehicle.

We also included a story from one of the MVRTD employees, Jackie Moller. Jackie’s story is particularly emotional because it talks about the importance of the drivers and their role in the functioning of The Bus. We framed her interview to accentuate the dedication of the drivers and the relationships that are cultivated between riders and drivers. By creating an emotional response from the readers, we demonstrated that The Bus is not an uncomfortable place to be, but rather a small social gathering.

The last story we included was from Karen (no last name provided). Her words exemplified the voice of a Rutlander, since she was interviewed on the street during the intercept surveying. She rides The Bus regularly and relies on the services to provide
warmth in winter and cold in summer, as well as social comfort. Finding Karen and her story was eye opening because her voice came from a crowd of riders, and her heartfelt appreciation of The Bus gave us a picture of what the bus-riding local thought of The Bus. Please refer to Appendix A below to see the complete marketing pamphlet.

4. Recommendations

Through our research, we have developed some recommendations that MVRTD could consider incorporating in their future work.

4.1. Engage the Public

Many individuals we spoke to and surveyed in Rutland are not aware of the benefits The Bus provides the community as a whole. We suggest a targeted marketing campaign near the time of the town vote, in order to educate the public about the good the company provides the community as a whole and how it functions beyond simply a transit company taking people to specific locations.

Part of this campaign could use the narratives we have collected during our research, which address a variety of reasons why The Bus is an asset to Rutland. These stories can be used for various mediums. First of all, they can be edited into short stories for newspapers and local magazines, offering snapshots of The Bus ridership. The audio clips collected from these interviews could be used for short radio segments about The Bus, for a similar purpose as the newspaper articles. We hope that the use of stories will motivate individuals emotionally to appreciate the importance of The Bus and acknowledge that even though they may not use it, it has value to the community as a whole.

4.2. Improve Bus Stops

As discussed in the Site Visits section (2.1), many of The Bus signs within Rutland City are worn and faded, which makes it difficult for individuals without knowledge of bus stop locations to access The Bus. As seen in Figure 10 in section 2.1., it can be incredibly difficult to locate the stops if they are not visible and blend into the background. Additionally, bus shelters do not protect riders as well as they could from harsh weather conditions. We suggest that MVRTD update faded signs to ensure that all bus stops are clearly marked and improve shelters. This will improve the public perception of The Bus and enhance services.

It would also be beneficial to add bus schedules to all stops. A study identified that availability of schedules has the potential to increase ridership (Transportation Research Board, 2007). Basic transit development recommends including bus schedules at most bus stops, as well as a bench, small shelter and potentially real-time bus-arrival displays (Transportation Research Board, 2013). While real-time route displaying is not feasible at the current time, we believe that MVRTD should strongly consider including printed bus schedules at every stop to increase the quality of their service and potentially increase ridership.
4.3. Improve the MVRTD Website

We found that the MVRTD website could provide additional and more accessible information to online visitors. Route information is separated into different tabs, so it is difficult to see how the individual routes overlap with one another, as indicated in Figure 17. This is problematic as individuals who have not used The Bus before don’t have access to schedule information, a comprehensive map of all the routes The Bus takes, and the intersections amongst these routes. We suggest prioritizing redesigning the website and updating the content to include one map that has all the routes as well as a comprehensive schedule. Other technical barriers include a complicated design layout, as discussed in section 2.4.3.

Another project group from our seminar created a map that shows the connections between the various bus services that Vermont has to offer, so people can travel between towns more easily. We would suggest that this map (portrayed is in Figure 3) also be included on the website, to make it easier to find the location of park and ride sites and identify transfer points between bus providers.

4.4. Actively Address Criticisms

We found that a common miscommunication was why MVRTD used large buses when there weren’t enough riders to fill them. Even though MVRTD has known that this criticism has existed, it has persisted. There could be more outreach to the public explaining why MVRTD uses full-size buses with tinted windows, as this miscommunication has negatively impacted the public’s perception of The Bus. Minga Dana explained during an interview that the reason these buses are used is two-fold: these buses are tied to federal funding and thus MVRTD does not have the option of not using them if they wish to continue receiving funds. These buses are more energy-efficient because the tinted windows conserve heat, and they are more fuel-efficient than the old vehicle fleet of smaller buses. They are also safer because they can effectively lower to the ground and decrease the distance between the pavement and the step of the bus for elderly riders, who could trip and hurt themselves. The number of lawsuits has decreased since MVRTD transitioned to larger buses, as fewer riders have injured themselves from getting on and off the bus (Dana, 2014). This information, however, is not available to the public.
Part of our recommendations includes more openness to suggestions. One example from our research was the inclusion of a suggested change in the bus schedule in the surveying work we did. Our community partner was very hesitant to include this information on the surveys because she didn’t want to mislead riders by implying this change was feasible when it wasn’t. While we agree that misleading riders is wrong, we think that if the survey results had shown significant push for a different schedule, the agency should consider altering the route schedule. Simultaneously, if there are significant reasons as to why the schedule cannot change, MVRTD could voice these reasons and be transparent about the process. One way this could change is if the office location is changed to a more accessible location, as mentioned in Recommendation 4.5. Increasing access to the community could in turn affect transparency as MVRTD would have more opportunities to engage with the community and explain their decision-making process.

4.5. Improve Access and Collaboration

The location of the MVRTD offices makes it relatively inaccessible for riders to provide feedback. While some riders do call in their complaints or suggestions, it would be easier and more universally accessible if the offices were in the downtown region, near the Transit Center. The separation of the office from the Transit Center is highlighted in Figure 18. While we acknowledge that changing the geographic location of the office is not in the immediate future of MVRTD, we think there are several important reasons to consider this recommendation as part of the long-term development plan of the organization.

A different location would improve accessibility to riders, increase collaboration with the local government and consolidate the three functions of MVRTD (the kiosk, the mechanical shop and the offices) to one location. Studies have shown that rider loyalty depends on satisfaction, and part of the satisfaction equation is ensuring that riders feel that their complaints are heard and addressed (Lai and Chen, 2011). Citizens also feel more inclined to ride The Bus if they feel that they can communicate and contribute to the overall workings of the system and become involved. Relocating the offices would also decrease travel time between offices and facilitate the shift changes of bus drivers, which directly links to the discussion of the use of the large buses as opposed to smaller ones. In an interview with Minga Dana, she mentioned that switching from larger to smaller buses during the low-ridership hours was not feasible due to the time it took for bus drivers to switch buses. By decreasing the distances, MVRTD could implement...
changes in vehicles from large to smaller buses during the lunchtime hours, when ridership is particularly low.

If changing location is not feasible, MVRTD would benefit from further collaboration with Rutland City, in particular City Hall. The Bus is a semi-public organization and has a mission statement “to provide safe, reliable, accessible and coordinated public transit service to enhance the economic, social and environmental quality of life throughout Rutland County and surrounding communities” (MVRTD-b). These goals align with the local government’s desire to strengthen the local economy and keep the money local. The Bus provides opportunities for individuals to access jobs and services, which can strengthen the local economy. The Bus could partner with the local government to make initiatives that would spur ridership, such as welfare-to-work (Transportation Research Board, 2007, 7). The goals of the local government and MVRTD are similar and could be intersected if communications were stronger.

4.6. Continue to Improve Bus Routes

MVRTD constantly works to find ways to make their schedule more efficient and connect more people with the service. This is a practice that is very valuable and we believe that the organization should continue to explore new routes and locations for The Bus to access. Mayor Ouras referenced Regency Manor, a potential location that would benefit from The Bus stopping there. There is a bus stop outside this complex but ridership would increase significantly if The Bus stopped inside the community because a large portion of the community is elderly and can’t walk the distance to the bus stop. Identifying these small hubs is particularly valuable because oftentimes certain communities are easy targets to increase ridership, as with the case mentioned previously. A study reviewed 31 U.S. transit agencies between the years of 2000 and 2002 and found that the biggest increase in ridership occurred after the agencies adjusted their schedules and increased services (Transportation Research Board, 2007).

4.7. Align MVRTD with New Projects in Rutland

The Bus has an opportunity to meet the needs of more Rutland citizens by aligning with new initiatives in the transportation network. For example, there is a project on Woodstock Avenue that widens the shoulders for bikers. The Bus can seek to support similar projects with the goal of boosting multi-modal transportation, which could increase ridership. Public transportation has always had the problem of “first mile, last mile,” where individuals would use The Bus but don’t due to the fact that there is time associated with getting to bus stops and transit centers from their homes (Utne, 2009). One way of addressing this issue is by aligning the bus stops and centers with multi-modal methods of transportation, such as bike lanes.
5. The Bigger Picture

5.1. Broader Conclusions

Discovering how important The Bus has been to the Rutland community has been inspiring for thinking about sustainable transportation in other communities on a far-reaching scale. When a sustainable transportation option, such as The Bus, is capable of connecting and bringing together a community, it brings hope for the future. If the potential of a sustainable transportation system is high, then we believe that services like The Bus can be successful in other communities as it has been in Rutland.

Sustainable transportation needs to be more than simply a choice for the sake of the planet, and therefore must be integrated into local systems to the point where people do not have to make the difficult choices. The first step is establishing a system that works for both the people and the environment. The Bus is not the Utopian vision of a future free of fossil fuel consumption, but it is a start in the right direction. In the case of Rutland, the message of keeping the community strong was more important than the message of sustainable transportation, so for us, we had to examine our audience and adapt our efforts accordingly.

5.2. Limitations to Findings

Having sustainability as the overarching motivator behind our actions was both daunting and inspiring. We had to be creative in working toward an abstract goal within the narrow time constraints of twelve weeks. The Bus is and will continue to be an integral part of Rutland. We want to help maintain the importance of The Bus both for people that already ride and also for newcomers to The Bus. Our products are such that we aimed to put a framework in place for ways that The Bus in Rutland could improve its marketing and become more accessible to more people, thereby increasing the utilization of sustainable transportation in Vermont.

We would have liked to have had more complete and revealing survey data. We had a limited number of respondents and we surveyed most frequently on Tuesday mornings. We also visited the Saturday farmer’s market, but the times and locations of survey administration limited our results. Some surveys were given to people riding The Bus, but we had to adjust the questions so that our community partners approved of our survey.

Probably the most important difficulty we faced was being outsiders to the Rutland community. It takes time and personal connection to bridge that gap, and while we did put time into getting to know our community partners, we were not immersed in Rutland culture for the length of our project. Further immersion could have helped us really get to know the people and establish a relationship of trust, which could have lead us to deeper and more personal connections that would have aided our storytelling abilities.

Just as we are using the voices of locals to communicate the importance of The Bus, the voices doing the telling (ours) hold weight as well. If we had been part of the
Rutland community, perhaps our storytelling would have had a stronger impact in the community.

5.3. Suggestions to Future Researchers

Time has been a limiting factor for this project. We have had to do the best work possible within the twelve week time constraint of our semester. This has been both productive and hindering, for while we have created a base for future work, the project was not long enough for us to experience and work off tangible results. More time would have allowed us to follow up and see if our efforts were impacting ridership and community support for The Bus. Future researchers would benefit, as we did, from hitting the ground running and starting work and project building efforts as soon as possible.

We believe that there are many more positive stories out in the community, and future researchers should prioritize finding these stories because it holds promise of deepening a relationship of trust. The more people that are connected through work of this type, the more avenues are opened to create further positive change. Talking amongst a community will deepen collective knowledge, and social behavior can influence other community members’ actions.

Any person in the Rutland area and beyond can benefit from the services of The Bus. Further researchers could broaden connections so that the network would widen. There are more members of the Rutland community that could benefit from The Bus, and more extensive efforts could have reached these people.

5.4. Sustainable Transportation in Today’s World

Today, the information, reports, and scientific facts have already been released. We know that our anthropogenic fossil fuel consumption activities are changing global climate systems and moving our world towards something formerly unrecognizable. There has been a direct correlation associated between human activities that release massive amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and the greenhouse gas effect that is causing the earth to warm and change global systems (EPA, 2014).

Despite the available information and looming warnings published in journals and the media, the cultural habits formed in America have held on with alarming strength, and these habits strengthened and became part of American identity before we knew that our consumption was harming our local and global environments. Despite all of the evidence, many Americans still deem it appropriate to have multiple cars for a family, and to use these cars even for the shortest of grocery store runs (Kirk, 2014).

As global population numbers continue to rocket to levels beyond previously conceived global carrying capacity, citizens must call upon themselves, their governments, and their community organizations in order to integrate infrastructure and other systems that will support our people and not degrade the planet further. As said by Bill McKibben in his recent book *Eaarth*, “we'll need to figure out what parts of our lives and our ideologies we must abandon so that we can protect the core of our societies and
civilizations. There’s nothing airy or speculative about this conversation; it’s got to be uncomfortable, staccato, direct.” (McKibben, 2009)

We, as a collective society, need to re-envision the way we imagine transportation and work together to change cultural norms that determine acceptable behaviors. Individuals in society must consider where we derive our joy from; is it from the revving of an engine, or from the solace of sitting on a patch of grass on a clear day? It is true that there is no one size fits all solution. Humanity has developed a variety of settlement types, spanning from layered urban landscapes to spare rural farmlands. Every place has different transportation needs, and thus there are many different solutions to improving transportation systems. From a large scale to a small scale, there are possibilities for making transportation systems more sustainable and more resilient.

Sustainable transportation, now and in the future, means creating a system that provides the best of services to the largest number of people. The Bus is part of that future. We can build upon existing infrastructure to the point where the sustainable options are the ones that make the most sense, are the most convenient, and provide a sense of comfort and community. The Bus already supplies many of those services to Rutland, and now time and environmental pressure will help communities such as Rutland create the changes necessary for a thriving planet and a healthy community.

We hope that our research provides a reference point from which we can begin to envision a future where systems are better integrated, optimized, and appreciated and supported by the community—where sustainable community choices are perceived to be consistent with good economic sense and movement towards more equitable social organizations.
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MISSION STATEMENT

To provide safe, reliable, accessible and coordinated public transit service to enhance the economic, social and environmental quality of life throughout Rutland County and surrounding communities.
MOVING RUTLAND

Marble Valley Regional Transit District (MVRTD), generally known as The Bus is in its 35th year of service to the residents of the greater Rutland region. It is the largest non-urban public transportation system in the state.

The Bus provides transportation to the general public throughout Rutland County as well as to social and human service agencies, schools, and area businesses. These services enhance self-sufficiency for the elderly, disabled, and non-drivers who rely on public transportation. The Bus also serves a growing population committed to the environmental benefits of public transit use in Vermont.
EMERGENCY RESPONSE

ROBERT SCHLACHTER,
Chief of Rutland City fire department, knows The Bus is an integral part of emergency management in Rutland. The Bus provided a shelter for firemen on a cold winter night when the firefighters battled a local structure fire.

Chief Schlachter, who is chair of the Local Emergency Planning Committee, relies on The Bus to transport citizens during severe natural events like Hurricane Irene. The Bus is the choice responder to bring citizens to the emergency shelter at the local high school.

Schlachter says, "I think the bus has capacity to help in an emergency situation and has already demonstrated on multiple occasions the willingness to help."
OPENING OPPORTUNITIES

The students of Vermont Adult Learning (VAL) have greatly benefited from the school’s partnership with The Bus. Students taking a class get a free bus pass, giving them access to the transportation security provided by The Bus’s Unlimited Access Program (UAP).

MICHELLE FOLGER explained how The Bus not only helps get VAL students to their classes but also opens the entire Rutland area up to them. “There are some students that would never be able to get here because they are too far out of town. Students may get here once or twice with a friend or parent but then we set up a schedule, they realize they don’t know how they will get here. Their parents work, their friends can’t drive them and there is no one near them.” The Bus is dependable, affordable, and makes their education possible.

Vermont Adult Learning Ridership
2012: 169 (6 months); UAP membership began
2013: 1,658 (12 months); First full year
2014: 2,564 (as of March); projected to be 3,205
ESTABLISHING FRIENDSHIPS

JACKIE MOLLER
works at the Marble Valley Regional Transit District and occasionally drives the buses. Jackie sees almost everyone who passes through the transit center and has made friends with daily riders.

“There is a woman that comes in every day who changes her hair color a few times a month. It was her birthday last week and we got her a cake. She always brings us fudge.”

People who ride The Bus form a community and develop friendships. Drivers go out of their way to help passengers, which oftentimes means having shorter lunch breaks in order to get people to where they need to be. It is these types of interactions that make the Bus unique.

DID YOU KNOW the windows of MVRtD’s buses are tinted specifically to keep the interior of the bus cool. By blocking out radiation from the sun, it’s easier to keep the cabin at a comfortable temperature, and protects riders from harmful UV rays. In addition to keeping the bus cooler, these measures also help save fuel, because the drivers can wait a little longer to turn the bus’s air conditioner on.
SAFE SERVICE

KIRSTEN WERNER
loves to dance. With both parents working, she had no way of getting to her ballet class four times a week in Rutland City from her home in Brandon. At 10 years old, she started using The Bus, as it was the only way she could do the thing she loves. She took The Bus from Brandon to Rutland, switched buses at the transit center and got to her class. This experience gave Kristen the opportunity to pursue one of her passions, and simultaneously taught her independence and the importance of public transportation.

Her dad, Peter, confessed that he was a bit nervous at first but that The Bus staff were particularly helpful and took good care of his daughter. “Honestly, The Bus was a life saver. Without it, Kirsten would not have been able to take her ballet classes.”
AFFORDABLE AND RELIABLE

JUDY KNOPE,
who works at Langrock, Sperry and Wool Attorneys at Law, has been riding The Bus from Pittsford to Middlebury every day since 2008, choosing to do so for the economic benefits of saving gas and car mileage. “It saves me 27 miles a day. Instead of filling up every week, you fill up every two weeks or less. It is quite the difference.” Riding on The Bus has also allowed Judy to develop relationships with the other riders, as well as the drivers and has given her the opportunity to relax and spend her commute to work relaxing after a busy day. Judy has found an effective way to make the Bus schedule work for her needs.

Additional fare information available at: http://thebus.com/fares.htm

KAREN
For some Rutlanders, The Bus acts like a safe haven—from the cold icy conditions of winter, to the cool air conditioning it provides in summer. Karen rides even though she has a car. She likes to listen to her community members chatting on the bus, and she feels joy when interacting with the polite drivers. “Knowing that the bus is there makes me feel so much safer. It goes by the stores, the Laundromat, the hospital, it goes by my doctors appointments so I don’t have to miss them, so it’s very important to me.” The Bus helps many Rutlanders for many reasons, and for Karen, the bus is a positive part of her daily life.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO RIDE THE BUS?

- Rutland City Full Fare Monthly Pass $15.00
- Rutland City Senior/Disabled Monthly Pass $7.50
- Rutland City Full Fare $0.50
- Rutland City Senior/Disabled $0.25
LONG DISTANCE COMMUTING

NICK DEVONSHIRE
keeps his romance up and running by using The Bus. He uses public transportation to get from Washington, D.C. to Middlebury, VT, and passes through the transit hub of Rutland in order to reach his girlfriend.

“I don’t know how I would maintain my long distance relationship without these convenient, cost-effective public transportation options. $2 got me from Middlebury to Rutland, pretty much as fast as I could drive it, but also allowed me to get some work done on the bus. Then I hopped on my Amtrak to DC. That’s probably the most sustainable possible way to travel 500 miles, which genuinely matters to me.”

DID YOU KNOW riding The Bus can decrease your personal carbon footprint? 44% of Vermont’s greenhouse gas emissions come from transportation. By using The Bus once a week for a year instead of driving, you could save approximately 1.25 tons of carbon dioxide from going into the atmosphere. If 100 people did that, we could save 125 tons!
Vermont Transit Lines

Important Note to passengers:
Most the bus companies are willing to do a route deviation within a quarter mile.
Please contact the bus companies ahead of your departure to process this request.

- Bus Transfer Stops
- Park & Ride
- GMCT
- DVT
- CRT
- RCT
- Vermont

STS
CCTA
ACTR
GMCT
DVT
CRT
RCT

0 5 10 Miles
RUTLAND CITY ROUTES

These routes run Monday-Friday every half hour from 6:30 AM to 6:00 PM and Saturdays from 8:00 AM to 5:30 PM. For additional information regarding routes or schedules, please visit our website at www.thebus.com
STEADY GROWTH

Total ridership has increased from 584,999 rides in 2009 up to 639,739 rides in 2013, nearly a 10% increase in just 4 years.

The unlimited access program (UAP) continues to grow. Please contact Executive Director, Minga Dana (minga@thebus.com), if your organization wants to join!

**MVRTD Ridership**

- Total riders also includes other regional routes, which were omitted from the graph for clarity. The in-city and Killington routes account for the majority of MVRTD annual ridership.

**UAP Ridership**

- 2014 numbers are projections based on early year ridership data.
  - CCV - Community College of Vermont
  - CSC - Castleton State College
  - CSJ - College of St. Joseph
  - GMC - Green Mountain College
ABOVE AND BEYOND

The Bus provides special services beyond the standard schedule routes in order to meet the needs of everybody.

MEDICAID TRANSPORTATION: MVRTD operates the Medicaid Transportation Program for Rutland County. This program offers free transportation to medical/Reach-up/ Fair Hearing appointments for qualified Medicaid recipients. This program authorizes, arranges, provides, and reimburses trips through fixed route service, volunteers, or taxi: whichever is most appropriate and least expensive. Prior day’s notice requested for in Rutland City transportation, seven days notice for out of area transportation.

COMPLIMENTARY PARATRANSIT: MVRTD offers Complementary Paratransit service as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This point-to-point service is available within 3/4 of a mile of its fixed route system for individuals who are unable to access existing fixed route public transit services. Individuals must be registered and certified as ADA eligible. To apply for ADA complementary service, call MVRTD at 747-3502. Service is available at times concurrent with the Rutland City fixed route schedules.

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE: MVRTD offers flexible, point-to-point Subscription Service throughout Rutland City and Rutland Town. This service provides Transportation to individuals who make the same regularly scheduled trips two or more times per week and whose needs are not met by the fixed route service. Seven day advance notice required.

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Although the information in this document/website/video has been funded in part by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under assistance agreement to Bates College, it may not necessarily reflect the views of the Agency and no official endorsement should be inferred.
Interview with Judy Knope (Langrock, Sperry and Wool Attorneys at Law)
April 29th 2014.
Conducted by: Eleni Polychroniadou

When did you start riding the bus to Middlebury?

Since 2008.

What motivated you to choose to ride The Bus?

The savings on gas. It is not more convenient on time because I leave the house 20 minutes earlier than I normally would and I get home about 45 minutes later than I would, but the cost savings and mileage on the car is worth it.

Are there times when you prefer to use your car?

There are times when I have to, if I have to be somewhere earlier than I would get back on The Bus or if I have an appointment in the morning somewhere other than in town, dentist, doctor, that kind of things.

Have you gotten to know the bus driver and other rides?

Yes, you do! Some, you don’t want to know and some you do.

So it’s almost a social setting?

Yeah absolutely.

What do you do with the extra time you have?

I use the time to just sit back and relax. I can’t read in a moving vehicle.

What would you say is the worst part of riding The Bus?

Just some of the riders that are, you know, less than probably ideal.

What about the best?

I think the savings on the miles of the car and the gas. Instead of filling up every week, you fill up every two weeks or less. It is quite the difference.

Has your choice influenced the people around you to ride The Bus?

I don’t think so. Probably not because they aren’t as willing to give up that ultimate inconvenience of not having your vehicle. People hear you do it and tell me it’s cool and
wish they could it, but maybe they can’t because of the bus route and don’t have that convenience.

Is The Bus stop near your house?

I drive about 4 miles and leave the car there. It saves me 27 miles.

Do you think the biggest obstacle is people depending on their car or not willing to give up their time?

Probably a little bit of both.

**Interview with Peter Werner (Kinney Pike Insurance)**
*April 30th 2014.*
*Conducted by: Eleni Polychroniadou*

How old is your daughter now?

She is 17 now.

And you guys are based in Rutland?

No, we live in Brandon, which is why The Bus was so important. My wife works in Middlebury and I work in Rutland City. Brandon is halfway in between and her ballet is down here in Rutland and starts around 4:30 04 5:30pm, so it was hard. There was no way for us to juggle going home and getting her every day. This year she dances three days a week, but last year it was four days a week. The Bus really was the only way it would work because how else would she get there? So she would get the school bus into Brandon. She would have an hour or hour and a half until The Bus passed, so her best friend’s parents run Café Provence in town so she would go there and do homework until The Bus came.

How many years did she do it?

She has her license now, so she drives, but it was about five years.

So she was young?

Yes, she must have been about 10 or 11 years old when she started doing this. It was a little nerve wracking for her at first but she got the hang on it. Occasionally there would be a creepy person on The Bus, but it turned out okay.

How about you as a parent? Were you nervous?
The Bus is a client of mine, I had pretty good connections, so she got extra special care. But they were wonderful to work with and I’m sure they would be just as helpful to anybody else. Initially, I was nervous. She was hanging out in downtown Brandon, not that it is a metropolitan area, but she would also change buses at the transit center. Once she got the hang of it though, it was fine. Then she felt empowered.

Did you have any concerns about other users on The Bus?

Not really. A couple of times she would mention that there was a weirdo on there but nothing substantial for sure. Essentially she rode The Bus several times a week for the entire school year.

So now she drives?

It is more convenient for her. And honestly it is more convenient for me, because I would stay in Rutland until she was done, which sometimes was late (around 8:30pm). So her driving helped me out too and not have a very long day. It was a life saver and an enabler for her.

Did you consider not taking ballet or did you think about The Bus immediately?

It was more of if this is going to work, then this is what needs to happen. She couldn’t have done it otherwise.

Do you think her experience has led her to be more sensitive towards The Bus?

Oh I’m sure. I’ll ask her for certain but she certainly understands the absolute benefit that she enjoyed.

**Transcription of Interview with Michelle Folger**

**April 1st 2014, Michelle Folger (Vermont Adult Learning)**

**Conducted by: Eleni Polychroniadou and Julian Macrone**

How did VAL hear about the UAP?

My office manager, who lives in Ludlow, was reading a Rutland magazine and in that magazine, it spoke about the colleges having unlimited access. So that was Green Mountain College, Castleton, St Joseph’s and CCV. When she saw it, she brought that information to me because I live in New York and don’t read all the Vermont newspapers and magazines. She brought it to my attention and said why couldn’t we have a partnership with the Bus? So I said call, found out and see if it is possible. Much to my surprise, she knew Minga! I guess they live in the same town. So that’s how I knew about it, otherwise I would never have known that the colleges have unlimited access and that there’s an option for us to play a small fee since we are a non-profit.

Was it a hard process?
It was very easy. It was a one-page contract that basically said VAL would provide 300 dollars annually and that they would provide us with data regarding ridership so we would know how many of our students are actually using the Bus. It probably stated that it wasn’t just transportation to the education program and back, but rather students could use it for personal use, and that’s how we’ve explained it to students. If you have a doctor’s appointment or you want to go to the mall and don’t have gas, you can use it. A lot of our students are unemployed, so to drive from the city to the mall is difficult. I know just recently I’ve seen some students up at the mall and I thought to myself, they would never have been up there if it wasn’t for the unlimited access pass.

So you have had good response from the students?

Absolutely. Prior to that, if students are in the high school diploma completion program with us, we are able to provide them with gas cards, if they have a car. If they don’t have a car, gas cards don’t help them to get here. And gas cards are only to bring them here, whereas the unlimited access allows for more flexibility to be able to get in and out the city.

How geographically diverse are the areas your students are from?

All from Rutland County, so Fair Haven, Poultney, some people in Brandon. There are some places in Brandon that are so far from the bus stop, that it’s a problem, whereas others live close enough to the stop to take advantage of the bus. There are some that live right on the Middlebury-Brandon line and two of them have to catch the bus early, but they do a lot of work with us so that’s okay. But they would never have been able to get here otherwise and work on their education if it wasn’t for the Bus. It really has been a huge asset for us. We had a young lady at our other center who was working at Friendly’s restaurant and either at the end of the month or at the end of the week, we weren’t seeing her. Her teacher asked her why and she told us she didn’t have enough money for gas. So we told her that we can give her a gas card because she needs to be in classes. She wasn’t aware that we offered that, but if at that time we had the bus pass, everyone would have known it. She could have hopped on the bus and come to the classes and save money for other reasons. Like is aid, a lot of our students are unemployed. We used to have an older population but we have more 16-21 year olds and so if they are unemployed, they don’t have a car and the money to pay for insurance and gas. If they do, it goes from week to week. When we have orientation, I tell our students that we have bus passes once they enroll, they need to come to the first class, they get a pass if they requested it. Certain students say they don’t need it because they have a car, but oftentimes they don’t plan for the future. They haven’t had the experience of planning. For example, if your car breaks down but your education is important, you would have your bus pass. Instead of calling and saying you can’t come to class because you don’t have gas or your car broke down, you can jump on the bus. A lot more of our drivers are now getting bus passes. Before, it was almost as if those with cars thought they couldn’t also ride the bus and have a pass. We wanted to let them know to plan ahead. What if you are short on money and you don’t have gas? Use the bus, by all means. And more have done that recently since we had this discussion.
Has there been increased attendance since the introduction of the bus pass?

Oh absolutely. There are some students that would never be able to get here because they are too far out of town. Students may get here once or twice with a friend or parent but then we set up a schedule, they realize they don’t know how they will get here. Their parents work, their friends can’t drive them, there is no one near them. Well can you get to the bus stop nearby? Then they realize they can get here using the Bus. For some, it is uncomfortable initially because they have never ridden the Bus before. A year ago, we knew we would have student that would be hesitant to ride the Bus because they are hesitant to come here. Many have had bad experiences in the public school system, whether that’s mental health or bullying. Whatever the reason, they are afraid to come here. They also have a fear of the bus. So we thought it was important for all of us to ride one of the buses in town and know what the experience is like. Some of my staff members have been on a New York City bus or a travel bus, but we needed to know what it was like to be on the Bus here and to be at the bus station, so we could reassure our students. So one Friday we picked the Bus up at the bus station and took it to Killington. We saw where the stops were, they dropped us off at the restaurant, we had lunch there and we made sure we knew what time the bus would be back. Initially, we spend a lot of time with our students to figure out if the schedule will accommodate their needs. We don’t seem to be checking the schedule so much anymore. At this point, it is a natural part of their life. But we were doing the same bit, figuring out schedules, so it was good for all the staff that encourages students to use the bus to have that same experience so that when students ask for help, we were a little more comfortable responding. Though we all laughed about it, we felt it was valuable to do.

Are there any staff members that use the Bus regularly?

Not regularly, but intermittently they do within the city. We have a few staff members who live in the city and so they make use of it.

How well do you think the current service of the Bus meets the needs of your students and staff? Are there any areas for improvement?

I have to say that I think Minga’s staff is very responsive because we had a young man last winter who was coming to us from the Killington area and he was not picked up a couple of times. He would get here late after hitching a ride. He told us the bus didn’t pick him up. So we called and at that point we didn’t know that it was important to give the number of the bus and other information. It happened again and this time we had the information so then they were able to communicate with the appropriate bus driver. They were very responsive and helpful. So that was very positive, because another student had a similar situation. We called again and that was rectified immediately, so as far as fixing something… I know trying to get to Middlebury, there’s a bit of a gap, but I don’t really know because our students come from Rutland County. From what I understand, it does a darn good job. For the real rural areas, it’s so hard. How much can you expect from any public transportation? I feel what it does here, especially around Rutland city; I think
that’s wonderful. I am sure there are people that would tell you that it needs to do more and go further out, but I think for the most part it’s excellent.

Do you think it would be more helpful to have more concretely marked stops or are the students trying to wave the bus down?

I guess I don’t know what the distance is between stops. In order for me to think about more stops, I would need to know what that distance is. The other piece is flagging the bus, wouldn’t that be ideal? That you didn’t have to go to a specific stop, but rather flag them down. But the thing is, they need to know where the bus is going, otherwise it would end up like a taxi with people going in different directions. But for us, it has just been fabulous. The other centers in Vermont only wish that they had the transportation. Burlington, they’re all set, but Brattleboro and Springfield, the bus goes somewhere that way but transportation is an issue for rural Vermont. Our students are typically are low-income, not all but the majority, and they are unemployed. That is why they can come during the day. A few have night jobs, but the majority don’t have one. I can’t remember when the Bus stops in the evening. Tuesday and Thursday evenings, we offer classes that go until 6:30pm. I don’t know when the bus stops running, but I remember some students saying that they couldn’t get transportation out of the city if we went until 6:30. But again, those are very small classes so it probably affects one or two students. If we had that transportation a little bit later, chances are we would have larger evening classes though.

Do you think there are any reasons why your staff is less inclined to use the Bus to commute to work and back?

I’m thinking of one person who lives right on the bus route and doesn’t use it. I don’t know if it jives with her time. She typically works 9-5 and maybe it has to do with what time she has to be here, or with the flexibility of going home and letting the dog out.

What year did you get on the access program?

2 years ago. Never did we think about how we could include transportation for our students. We figured they would find a way, but the big thing is for us it keeps them coming. When you’re short 2-3 dollars… there was a student in the Killington area and it was 2 dollars one way. When we told him he could have a bus pass, he goes: that’s going to save me four dollars a day! It was absolutely huge for him. He clearly needs that money. He had been incarcerated in the past, so trying to get a job is difficult until he gets an education. Four dollars is a lot of money who doesn’t have a job and wants to better himself. 4 times 4 (since we are open four times a week) makes 16 dollars a week, which comes up to a lot of money per month. I see transportation as really helping people get out in the work force by getting their GED or diploma. It helps get them out in the community and helps them be productive students. And in many cases, students go on to CCV and other colleges.
How aware do you think the general public of Rutland is of the good that the Bus is doing for your students?

I don’t think they are aware of it at all. I have been with VAL for a little over three years and when I came here, I didn’t know what VAL did. As I went to Chamber mixers and had our nametag, everyone would ask me what VAL is. People in the city didn’t know what VAL did or what it provided. I have spent a lot of time marketing this educational facility. Now, I go to a business show and people know friends and acquaintances who have been to VAL. The city didn’t know VAL existed, to say nothing about it’s a statewide agency with six centers! They don’t know where it is or what it has done, let alone know about the unlimited access program. All you have to do is take one class and you get a free bus, you don’t have to be getting a GED or a diploma. I use this information oftentimes when I am with other agencies like the Department of Labor and when we are talking about their clients and their lack of money and transportation, I will tell them to tell their clients about the unlimited access program if they become students. Some of their clients have diplomas and obviously we want the ones that don’t have diplomas, but they might enroll in classes about technology or career readiness. We work on soft skills such as resumes, dealing with bosses and peers. If they come just for career ready, they get a bus pass. And again, they are on Reach Up. They are receiving state funds to help their family, they are not working, they need to do community work, isn’t transportation a great benefit? The bus can take them to a place to apply for a job! It’s not just come here and it will take you to Price Chopper, but it can take you to job interviews. To me, it’s huge. It’s huge. So now we use it as a marketing strategy. Sometimes free transportation can be the carrot to get them to come. I was concerned initially that once we said it at orientation that after enrolling and coming to one class, they would get a bus pass, that people would abuse the system and come only to one class to claim the pass and then stop coming. I had my office manager watch for that and we haven’t had that! If they don’t stay, it’s for a reason. It’s a good marketing tool to get them here. Sometimes, it’s hard enough if they are uncomfortable and don’t want to come. We have that hurdle but for them, the other hurdle is how much is it going to cost me. If you come here, you don’t have to pay anything. But it’s getting here and getting home that is the issue. To be able to say we have a bus pass for you, that ends one of those hurdles. Part of our training is that we know our students come in with a lot of baggage. We work on counseling and advising them on what’s going to stop them from succeeding here. It used to be that they didn’t have cars or a means of transportation. That was a huge challenge for us, because we couldn’t solve that. It was a hurdle. Now, it’s one of the hurdles that we can get off the table. What else is going to stop you? Lack of daycare? We think about the different options and help them to plan ahead. With the transportation, we can depend on it. Except for a snow day, you can depend on public transportation. It is a wonderful hurdle to get off the table.
Transcription of Interview with Mayor Christopher Louras of Rutland, VT.
Interview Date: April 15, 2014
Conducted by: Julian Macrone, Eleni Polychroniadou and Daniel Hellman

(please note that this interview began with an informal interview)

I want to push you on some of the stuff you were talking about, you seem to think that the main demographic we are talking about is the low income. Do you not think that the middle-class would benefit from using the bus, or is it?

Good Question. I think as one of you had said, I think the middle income are went to their cars. They don’t want to have to, when its time to leave, they want to leave point A at 5 ockock and the bus isn’t going to go by that point until 5:25 and 5 of 25 after the hour and 5 minutes to the top of the hour. I think people who have the means are using their cars. They don’t want to modify their behaviors in order to take the bus. My wife, she uh, the bus where we live, we live on a four way intersection, not the corner house but next to the corner house, and the bus stop is kitty corner which is right there, and my wife would come down regular basis with the little kids in tow with the little kids in tow and go to the coop or come over to my dad’s shop and that was, she would do it because she had the time, and because she wanted to do the public transportation thing for all the right reasons. However, it is, it required her to try and manage her schedule to go at that time.”

Would you say that. I haven’t read anything on this. How green-oriented is Rutland, because I know that it isn’t doing badly economically, and its not doing phenomenally economically right now; is there a sense of ‘let’s be green, let’s be sustainable’ or is it more like jobs.. convenience… life goes on kind of thing because I think it affects the way we market as well. If we use such terminology, will it alienate people and make them think ‘oh this is a luxurious thing,’ or will it appeal to people?

That’s a good question. I think the majority of people in the community who are embracing what we call the new green economy, whether its sustainable energy, or sustainable foods, recognize those two sectors as economic development opportunities, so its not done.. less for the environment and more so as a model of economic development. It could be because you have people like me who recognize it both ways, but then, knowing what I think the constituency of the city responds to, I say its all about economic development. Me personally, you know, ‘Ive got my own 24 hundred square foot garden, 60 by 40. I buy as much as I can that’s locally grown. Im a carnivore, and I don’t eat much chicken at all, and all our beef comes from Hathaways. You know you can go pet the cows, and if im going to be killin’ em and eatin’ em at some point in the future, and I buy into and I subscribe to the sustainable arguments for local ag. However, when I talk about it publicly, I talk about it as an economic driver. Its entrepreneurship, its small business growth, its family owned businesses, its keeping the money local. And the way I present it when I’m talking about it with the public, yeah, I have been able to go touch the cow that I eat, and, I like the fact that I’m not supporting factory farms, whether they’re 500 miles away in the Midwest, or whether it’s a, uh, maple meadows eggs which is up in Salisbury, half way between here and Middlebury. It’s considered a local egg farm, but
still it’s pretty industrial. The free range thing, they’re eating dirt, they’re eating grain, and um, so, I have a little bit of a visceral reaction to the Monsantos of the world and the factory farms, but if I were to try to sell that as the reason to eat local, it may turn some people off, so I’ve got to focus on it as economic development. Young couples that have their own farm here. I want those young, passionate individuals in this community. They’re the future of this community, life blood of the community, and them having a family-owned business, um, is how I sell it, if you will, to the public- and the same thing goes for the green, with the sustainable energy and the innovation center. Its about jobs, its about, an energy innovation center, a solar city initiative. Its tactile, you can touch it, you can see it, you can identify it as ‘wow, look at all the solar panels- this is good stuff.’ That’s not what’s sexy to me. That’s easily recognizable, but the stuff that they’re doing at the energy innovation center, that I explained to you guys earlier, that’s where I really see the benefit, and that’s in economic development, not being socially responsible, or environmentally conscious.

Is there a way that we can get that same demographic that you’re appealing to with that strategy on the bus, and can we apply that same strategy and that same approach to sustainable transportation in Rutland?

This is a very pragmatic community. So I think one of the ways that The Bus can be successful is to appear to be efficient, and this is a question for Minga. You know one of the hits, whether its right or wrong, one of the hits on the bus is, look at these big buses driving around, empty, spewing all the exhaust. And I have no reason to believe that the situation is different now, but we would bring that up as board members fifteen years ago, the response was ‘those size buses are the only buses we can access federal funds for. They’ve got to be that big, they’ve got to have the handicap accessibility. Would the public more readily embrace the bus if we used smaller vehicles? It’s very possible. Like I said, it’s a very pragmatic view, and if they were able to pull out a fleet of twelve passenger vans, increase their personnel costs, but reduce their operating costs, instead of having four fixed routes, expanding to six fixed routes, um, I believe the public would more readily embrace them than having four routes driving around with the big buses. Because then you’re serving the community in a more efficient way and a more effective way.

We were wondering about the buses, why the buses are so big?

What we were told as board members was those are the buses we have to use. I don’t know if it is a convenient excuse or whether it really is true.

Are the buses more full during the ski season?

Yeah, yeah, but it’s for the employees that live down here that don’t have the access to drive up there.

Earlier you talked about how there isn’t much of a relationship between the city government and the bus, I’d be interested in hearing what you envision it would be if it
were a better relationship, how that would work out, or how the two could help each other?

I think what that looks like to me is, the word I used before, is being responsive. That because the bus is a quasi-public organization, and yes it does have its own board, but because there is not an elected board, that’s the nature of what we deal with in America, is the people who are the individuals who the public sees as responsible are generally elected officials. You know, that’s my representative, that’s my alter man and that’s my mayor. I can, they’re humble to me, I can walk up to them at Price Chopper and put my finger in their chest and say ‘You need to do this.’ When you’re a board member on the bus, there’s nobody in the world, they might not even know your name, much less feel that they have the authority to walk up to you, put their finger in your chest, and say ‘you need to fix what you’re doing with the bus.

So opening themselves up at the same time.

Correct, and, helping the bus better interact with the municipality, that would be to, I don’t even know if, there is already a member of the board of aldermen sitting on the bus, so they will continue, that’s already there. But there’s still that disconnect between the bus being responsive to the constituency and, if someone has agreed, how is that remedied, how is that remedied through that representative. That’s the only way I can think the city can better interact with the bus, is to be that conduit with the public. But the flipside is you have the board of the bus, administrators at the bus, who will not, and frankly should not, cede their authority to run their own organization to an outside entity like the city who doesn’t understand all the inter-workings of their budget, their schedule, their rules, all that stuff. And then, I could frankly be all (14:42)? about this, you’re just askin’ me what my opinion is, and I could be just plain wrong.

This is just throwing an idea out there. Long term, do you think it would be more helpful, because I know the bus’ office is kind of on the fringe of town, it didn’t seem like there was anybody walking by it, would it be better if the bus had an office in the town center, something that people could walk into. More easily accessible?

Yes. Two reasons why I say yes is: One reason, it’s a completely separate organization, redevelop an authority, it used to be around the corner up yonder from city hall, but the redevelopment authority is the economic development arm of the city, and they are chartered under the Rutland city chart, which is state statute and all the rules and the rules of statute that the city has to operate under, but they’re a wholly separate organization, and there always had been this, the RRA isn’t accountable to the city even though the mayor appoints all the board members there. But the ED is separate, not a lot of interaction. The executive director changed after the board reassessed its mission several years ago, and part of the outcome of that was that the RRA be in city hall, he’s literally right next to my office. The RRA director is next door to me. And now the level of interaction between the two organizations is not just more positive, but he comes to my department meetings, he acts as if he is a member of the cabinet. So to your point, that’s one reason that model worked for the RRA, but originally when the big transit center, the
big parton deck was built downtown, that was built by Marble Valley. That was built by The Bus. They were originally going to own it and operate it, they started out being in that kiosk, not a kiosk—in the lobby. And then they pulled out. They’ll tell you one of the reasons they pulled out was for budgetary reasons, that type of thing, but I can tell you one of the reasons they pulled out ultimately was they didn’t like the public walking in and wagging their finger at them and telling them their problems. Ill tell you, this is under the previous administration, okay, not Minga, the previous executive director, was that he didn’t want people coming in, wagging their finger at him, and telling them what to do, so to you’re point, when its on the fringes down there on Spruce St., and its not accessible easily, maybe that’s one of the problems. Maybe it shouldn’t be hiding or be inaccessible.

So it sounds like you have a pretty good push towards the community towards local what we would call sustainability and all that. Do you see energy and transportation as part of that vision of what you have for Rutland, regardless of how you frame it, but do you envision as mayor, or for however long you stay in politics, to really push for more energy efficiency, to really decrease carbon dioxide emissions and help Vermont sort of reach that goal that it has?

Okay, so this is where yes and no. Yes for vehicles, but at the same time, I’m a realist as far as the needs of industry. That we can’t, there are some types of processes in industry that need to be done with heat, that need to be done thermally, that renewables, or any type of energy generation, electricity, can’t do. Sometimes you gotta burn stuff to create heat, and that heat in turn, is necessary to a process. So let’s talk about natural gas, as just something that is very controversial, especially in Addison County, in the Rutland-Middlebury area. Here, this may come across as being flip but I’m gonna say it. If we as a state decide its not in our interest to push that pipeline to Middlebury over by international paper, down to Rutland, then I contend we should just have a moratorium and not allow any more hookups up in Chittenden and Franklin county because first we don’t want any more international gas coming through, therefore we shouldn’t push it to Middlebury through Cornwall down to Rutland because we don’t want to rely any further on natural gas then there should be also a public policy decision made that we’re not going to allow any more natural gas or any future hookups anywhere in the state.

So just in terms of ideological consistency…

Yes, because the Rutland area is at a disadvantage for jobs and industry, traditional jobs and industry because we don’t have natural gas. That’s a fact. There are organizations right now, companies, that are transitioning from number two or number six fuel oil to compressed natural gas that’s trucked in, and that’s better for the environment than the number two or number six. However, it’s still more expensive to truck it in than it is to have a pipeline.

So the same thing that the college is dealing with?

So this is where I’ve taken some hits. And you guys may be of this mindset, and that’s okay, because I can appreciate it. Its how can I as a person, how can I embrace
sustainable ag, sustainable energy, as not only philosophies, but also lifestyles to reduce
the carbon footprint but at the same time say ‘oh and by the way I want to bring gas in.’ I
do see natural gas as complimentary to renewable energy because there are always going
to be industries in this area that rely on these dirtier types of thermal energy—fuel oil
gasoline—and I say that if we’re going to be reliant, and on some level we have to be,
we’re going to be reliant on that thermal energy, um then lets just do it as clean as we
can, and get rid of the gas, the gasoline, get rid of the diesel, get rid of the number two,
get rid of the number six and I fully appreciate and understand if people say ‘bullshit,
mayor. What the frick are you talking about. You can’t embrace renewables and say
reduce energy at the same time we’re building the fracked natural gas pipeline. Forget it.’
But. I feel I’m being realistic in saying we’re always going to have some level of dirty
energy, at least in my lifetime, so lets try to keep it as clean as we can. That’s where I see
the transportation side is really important. Especially with compressed natural gas,
Cosello waste management, were been cutting up there several years ago, in Chittenden
county where all the Cosselo waste management garbage trucks all operate on CNG, they
built a depot, they fuel all the trucks up there, and if we’re gonna have to have trucks on
the road that right now the technology and the near future technology is not there to push
trucks using electrical energy. It’s a lot of horse power. We can do it with passenger cars,
but it’s a lot more difficult to do with trucks, so if we’re going to have to have trucks on
the road, why not make them CNG instead of diesel, but I can see the other side of it
though.

So, a CNG bus depot in the near future?

I think that would be freakin’ great if these buses were made smaller, and ran on CNG.
Absolutely.
Appendix C: Survey

Survey for The Bus in Rutland

Community Questionnaire

Your answers to the following questions will help us gather information about the barriers to using The Bus, and we will use the information to improve our marketing strategies to keep The Bus an important part of transportation in Rutland. These responses will be confidential.

Using The Bus

1. Do you ride the bus? If no, continue to question 4. YES NO

2. How many times a day do you ride the bus? More than 5 3-5 1-2 1 x week 1 x month never

3. Do you ride The Bus by choice or necessity? CHOICE NECESSITY

4. In the March 4 City Election, there was an annual provision to fund The Bus. How did you vote?
   Voted YES Voted NO Did not Vote

5. Why/Why not?

6. How many people do you know that ride The Bus? None 1-2 3-5 6-10 11+

7. Why do you typically ride The Bus?
   Errands Work Medical Social Skiing Other

8. What prevents you from riding The Bus more?
   Inconvenient routes Inconvenient schedule Weather Uncomfortable with the other passengers Prefer Driving Other:

9. Is it easy to understand the schedule and routes provided by The Bus? Yes No NOT SURE

10. Do you see The Bus as a part of Rutland's transportation future? YES NO

Demographics

11. Where do you live? Rutland City Rutland Town Other Town in Rutland County Other

12. What is your age?
   Under 18 18-30 31-50 51-64 65+

13. What's your income?
   Under $25,000 $25-49,999 $50-89,999 $90,000+