

**Rimrock Public Workshop Notes
Bozeman Public Library
November 30, 2010**

Welcome and Introductions

Participants were welcomed and introduced themselves. Project team members including Tom and Jean Forseth were introduced. There were 17 attendees plus five project team members at the meeting. Attendees represented WTI, MSU-Bozeman, the Mayor's Climate Task Force, Karst Stage, LINX (Yellowstone Business Partnership), the Montana Independent Living Project, Bozeman Transit Inc, and citizens.

Facilitator Beck explained the two-fold purpose of the project—to provide intercity bus service in Montana that meets customers' needs and to produce a business plan for Rimrock that will ensure sustainability. This is one of six public workshops being held across the state. The team is also gathering information from onboard surveys and company data. Handouts were provided with information about existing intercity service, an agenda and a briefing paper with the website and contact information.

Participants' Expectations

Consider how intercity service connects with local transit or other options (bike) once arriving in a community on intercity bus.

About Rimrock (Tom Forseth)

Tom gave a brief presentation about Rimrock's history and current service. The power point presentation will be posted on the project website.

Information

Participants were asked if they had tried to get information about Rimrock's services. One participant had tried to obtain online information about Rimrock's services. He found that it was easier to get information on individual segments than all options or how Rimrock's services fit in the bigger picture.

Others reported having phoned depots in Missoula and Billings and receiving inconsistent and inaccurate information. Billings provided the accurate information. Searching on line had been unsuccessful. A suggestion was made to make some test calls to check the accuracy and consistency of information. Greyhound shows its own schedule and not Rimrock's where the routes overlap.

The group discussed how they believe people should be able to get information about schedules and services.

- Online—Rimrock should come up in searches

- At depots—agents should be knowledgeable, professional, and trained

- 800 numbers—not every community has a facility or agent

The way schedules are presented can be difficult to understand and confusing.

Many potential riders aren't even aware that the intercity service exists. Need to increase awareness and then direct people to the website where they can get more detailed information. Consider things like refrigerator magnet as give-aways to students.

Suggestions

- Increase professionalism of agents
- Provide good customer service
- Make sure people feel safe related to schedules and layovers, etc.
- Make sure facilities are clean
- Balance the central (downtown) locations of depots with safety
- Consider having a ticket agent on campus
- Put WiFi in depots
- Market the safety of traveling on buses, in particular, Rimrock's safety record
- Tie in with local climate change efforts
- Transportation industry as a whole needs better coordination

Group Brainstorm "Factors that could affect future demand for transit"

- Gas prices and cost of operations
- Demographics--aging population, youth population
- Population density
- National policies (additional funding could mean better connections)
- Drop off locations—safety, access
- Perception and awareness of bus services
- Distances
- Personal safety/security
- Advertising and marketing
- Intra vs interstate service
- Availability, frequency, convenience of schedules
- Amenities on buses and in depots
- Customer service, quality of the bus riding experience
- Comparison with other options (cost, timeliness, convenience)
- Availability of other options
- Exposure
- Maintenance and safety record
- Overall trip cost
- Fuel efficiency requirements for coaches
- Cost of buses
- Attractiveness of facilities
- Links to other transportation services
- Complete, easy to follow, easy to plan a trip website information
- Economy of the country
- Numbers of facilities, routes, people

- Environment

Participants were asked to discuss and describe the ideal bus experience

- Entire experience from start to finish is positive
- Leaves and arrives on time
- Clean, safe facility and equipment (depots and buses)
- Clean, comfortable seats with plenty of room, smooth ride
- On bus amenities (DVD, screens, WiFi)
- Hygiene of other passengers
- Professional, courteous drivers
- Friendly driver that establishes a relationship with passengers
- Stop at facilities with food and restrooms
- Riders knowing what to expect
- Inexpensive (value –cost vs outcome)
- Length of time trip takes compared to alternatives, no long waits
- Good connections within bus system
- Ability to take bike along
- Getting on and off—making a trip/vacation
- Contrast with train (“romantic”) experience
- Beautiful scenery—leave the driving to us, relaxing
- WiFi, power outlets, ability to work while traveling
- Purchasing ticket is easy

Possibilities for Additional Services

Billings to/from Riverton, Lander

Livingston to/from Gardiner and Mammoth

Bozeman to/from West Yellowstone (provide for carrying bikes)

Billings to Red Lodge

Who should be working together for mutual benefit?

- Climate change task forces and Rimrock
- Linx and Rimrock to determine demand
- Rimrock and other line route providers
- Walking and biking “communities” (groups)
- Bike touring, rails to trails
- Rail
- Tourism groups like Yellowstone County

Wrap-up

Notes will be posted on website provided on handout. Attendees were thanked for attending and participating!

Rimrock Public Workshop Notes
Carroll College, Helena
December 2, 2010

Welcome and Introductions

Participants were welcomed and introduced themselves. Project team members including Tom and Jean Forseth were introduced. The meeting was attended by 11 people representing MDT, WTI, HUD, DPPHS, HATS, City of Helena, North Central Montana, and Opportunity Links, plus four from Rimrock and the project team.

Facilitator Beck explained the two-fold purpose of the project—to provide intercity bus service in Montana that meets customers' needs and to produce a business plan for Rimrock that will ensure sustainability. This is one of six public workshops being held across the state. The team is also gathering information from onboard surveys and company data. Handouts were provided with information about existing intercity service, an agenda and a briefing paper with the website and contact information.

About Rimrock (Tom Forseth)

Tom gave a brief presentation about Rimrock's history and current service. The power point presentation will be posted on the project website.

Intercity Schedule

Lisa Ballard from Current Transportation Solutions provided and explained a handout of the current intercity carriers and their schedules.

Information

Participants were asked to discuss how they currently get information about Rimrock's services.

- Phone call
- Check website
- Ask other riders who are friends
- Difficult to piece trips together through website
- Don't understand pre-paid ticket fee of \$14 or pay for friend to pick up ticket

The group discussed how they believe people should be able to get information about schedules and services

- Internet—needs to work
- Internet is the only way to get information when agents are not available
- Links to/from other carriers' websites
- Ticket agents
- Printed materials provided by other carriers
- VisitMontana.com tourism websites

Brainstorm “Factors that could affect future demand for transit”

(+ indicates a positive effect, - indicates a negative effect)

+link with local transit systems (share depots)

-system integration (interlining)

-information, pricing information

-overselling

+Gas prices

+Loss of other modes/options (rail, air service on High Line)

-Ridesharing (Craig’s List, others)

+Consistency of information

+Overall use of public transportation

+Serving Montana with freight, packages

+Marketing (tell a good story)

+Amenities (WiFi, bathrooms, etc.)

+National information

+Regional connectivity

Reauthorization of the Transportation Enhancement Act (funding levels, emphasis areas, regulations and requirements)

State of federal highway trust and federal government budget

SB 554 (proposed safety legislation)

MT state legislation requiring seatbelts

Safety and security screening and other possible requirements

Lack of awareness about value/opportunities to use public transportation

Changing demographics—seniors and Gen Y

Demand for transportation from rural towns to medical facilities

Coordination with and between the 42 local services

Availability of parking for cars (less parking available at colleges)

Participants were asked to describe the ideal bus experience

- Leaves and arrives on time
- Fast, direct, travel time similar to taking a car
- Clean, safe facility and equipment (depots and buses)
- Clean, comfortable seats
- On bus amenities (DVD, screens, WiFi, legroom, food)
- Professional looking and acting, friendly drivers
- Economical compared to options
- Ability to take bike along
- Be able to track timing of bus/route
- Good customer service
- Family friendly (seats facing each other)
- On-time performance, reliability
- Roomy seating

Opportunities/Suggestions

- More advertising and awareness
- Better technology-easier to update
- Show connections to other systems
- Tell the “good guy” story (we carry blood, books, etc.)
- Attract college student riders
- Make ticketing and tracking available with mobile devices
- Have a top notch website
- Add service connecting the Highline with Billings
- Carry the foreign workforce (they are used to public transportation, don't have car)
- Work more closely with tourism groups
- Work with bike groups
- Carry bicycles
- Tie in with local food movement to carry their products (freight)

Who should be working together for mutual benefit?

Major health centers and Rimrock
American Cancer Society and Rimrock
Rimrock should participate in local TACs
Regional coordination of transit service providers
North Central
Walking and biking “communities” (groups)
Tourism groups like visitmontana.com, travel Montana areas

Wrap-up

Notes will be posted on website provided on handout. Thanks for attending and participating!

Rimrock Public Workshop Notes
Kalispell, Flathead Valley Community College
December 1, 2010

Welcome and Introductions

Participants were welcomed and introduced themselves. Project team members, Ballard, Beck, Tom and Jean Forseth were introduced. There were five attendees plus the four project team members at the meeting. Attendees represented Eagle Transit, Kalispell Agency on Aging, and Rimrock Kalispell.

Facilitator Beck explained the two-fold purpose of the project—to provide intercity bus service in Montana that meets customers' needs and to produce a business plan for Rimrock that will ensure sustainability. This is one of six public workshops being held across the state. The team is also gathering information from onboard surveys and company data. Handouts were provided with information about existing intercity service, and an agenda and a briefing paper with the website and contact information. Lisa briefly explained how to read the intercity schedule.

About Rimrock (Tom Forseth)

Tom gave a brief presentation about Rimrock's history and current service. The power point presentation will be posted on the project website.

Information

People use online services to get information. Eagle Transit provides information about Rimrock. It's currently impossible to put Kalispell into the Rimrock website as a destination. It cannot be done through Greyhound's site. The average customer would not know that this can be done through Greyhound's site. There is currently a lack of awareness on the part of the college students about bus options. They are a good potential market.

People should be able to get information on line, at depots, and at local transit's sheltered stops. A printed schedule is too hard for most people to understand. On line information needs to be accessible by entering a location into Google.

Factors that could influence future demand

- Availability of information
- Culture change
- Expectations for access to technology
- Expectations for multi-modal travel and connections (ski, bike, hike, etc.)
- Good or bad previous experience elsewhere with public transportation (e.g. foreign workers)
- Technological advances that reduce the need for business travel (virtual meetings...)
- General economic situation (less income, fewer vehicles, more riders)
- Price to ride, availability of discounts
- Gas prices

- Size of the traveling party (one person ride the bus, two or more drive a personal vehicle)
- Demographics (more older riders in the future, young will ride in higher numbers)
- Aging population has more time to plan trips
- Availability of workforce related to the general economic situation (competition for wages)
- Average tenure of future employees will be less than at present
- Training requirements will be more costly

Participants offered the following suggestions as opportunities to increase ridership.

Montana culture has not looked to public transportation. We need a culture shift.

Need to get more information out about bus service

There is lack of knowledge that there is a transportation system

Advertise to Flathead Valley Community College students and their parents

WiFi is an important amenity for the college demographic

Rimrock needs to let potential riders know how long it takes to get between Kalispell and Missoula

People need to know where Rimrock picks up

Pursue potential opportunity to work with Big Mountain Commercial Association on minimal transportation facility across from the Whitefish train depot

Exploit the movement of freight, same-day service

Ideas for additional routes

Train station in Whitefish to Glacier Park. There are currently no options for visitors and this is a huge opportunity. Rimrock would need to work out fee collection at the Park entrance. The numbers of passengers carried and the timing of the runs would need to be coordinated with the Park shuttle system. Tourist-based businesses in the valley would benefit and also be likely partners.

Between Yellowstone National Park and Glacier National Park—ride Rimrock!

Who should be working together for mutual benefit?

- Need open forums with owners and operators, chance to share information
- Rimrock and its riders
- Rimrock and the Salish and Kutenai Tribes
- State and federal elected officials
- Rimrock needs to share information with its riders on other transportation services

Wrap-up

Notes will be posted on website provided on handout. Attendees were thanked for attending and participating!

Rimrock Public Workshop Notes
Missoula Council Chambers
December 3, 2010

Welcome and Introductions

Participants were welcomed and introduced themselves. Project team members, Ballard, Beck, and Earle, Tom and Jean Forseth were introduced. There were 20 attendees plus the five project team members at the meeting. Attendees represented the Associated Students of UM, Bitterroot Bus, MRTMA/MTA, Homeward, M.U.D., T4America, Missoula Aging Services, Missoula in Motion, Mountain Line, Summit Independent Living Center, Salt Lake Express, State Vocational Rehab, State Corrections, Department, OPG Trans, the Montana Association for the Blind, and riders/citizens.

Facilitator Beck explained the two-fold purpose of the project—to provide intercity bus service in Montana that meets customers' needs and to produce a business plan for Rimrock that will ensure sustainability. This is one of six public workshops being held across the state. The team is also gathering information from onboard surveys and company data. Handouts were provided with information about existing intercity service, an agenda and a briefing paper with the website and contact information. Lisa briefly explained how to read the intercity schedule.

About Rimrock (Tom Forseth)

Tom gave a brief presentation about Rimrock's history and current service. The power point presentation will be posted on the project website.

Information

Participants were asked if they had tried to get information about Rimrock's services. Information is currently obtained by phone calls and the Internet. Participants commented that neither Rimrock's nor Greyhound's websites were friendly for the visually impaired. The UM representatives would like information that they can provide to parents and students at orientation. They now refer people to the depot. Another reported encountering an extra charge for purchasing online (pre-paid ticket.) The hours of operation of the depot are inadequate and a problem. One person reported that she had an experience where she felt the depot staff was not friendly.

Meeting attendees would like to be able to get information as follows:

- A flawless internet purchasing system (including through Google Transit search)
- Quickly
- With the ability to compare options with other modes of transportation
- Through a phone call with a live person
- Want to be able to reserve a seat
- Through travel agents
- Want information about bus delays (from GPS on buses)

Factors that could influence future demand

- General economic situation (tough times might mean fewer personal vehicles)
- Fuel costs
- Bad weather/bad road conditions
- Access to information, marketing by Rimrock
- Ability to link with other transportation providers (seamless system)
- Accessibility
- Location of bus depot (Missoula plans call for core location)
- Community plans
- Number of stops along route (if no stops, locals don't realize service is available)
- Ease of purchasing tickets, have ticket sales available in local communities
- Walkable distance between Rimrock depot and local transit
- Aging population
- Federal legislation
- Amtrack southern route
- Personal safety for riders, disabled riders
- Perception about quality of bus experience (nice choice)
- Clean, comfortable facilities
- WiFi
- Undesirable demands of airport security

Participants offered the following suggestions as opportunities to increase ridership.

Change the perception of the quality of the experience

Look at the model in Mexico (quick, safe, reliable)

Provide accessible bathrooms on coaches

Run Sprinters and increase the frequency to several times per day between major cities

Use local mechanics as appropriate to avoid having the run buses to Billings for maintenance

Work with other transportation providers across the state to coordinate assets, facilities

Provide WiFi and information on where buses are along routes

Better scheduling and routing for aging population

Do more frequent public involvement—stay closer to the customer to understand needs

Monitor demographic trends closely

Provide information to public on how to use Rimrock

Increase brand awareness

Be part of a well-integrated transportation system with reliable points of contact “no wrong door”

Capture recreation traffic

Provide a handout to UM with contact information and link to schedules

Have state of Montana issue vouchers for employee travel on Rimrock

Ideas for additional routes

Missoula to Hamilton

Missoula direct to/from Helena several times per day

Serve state employee traffic

Who should be working together for mutual benefit?

Rimrock with travel agents

Rimrock with University of Montana

Rimrock with Summit Independent Living Center (info about traveling with wheelchairs)

Rimrock with State of Montana (Pat Sanders, DPPHS)

Rimrock with Greyhound

Local services with Rimrock

Wrap-up

Notes will be posted on website provided on handout. Attendees were thanked for attending and participating!