Summary of Public Input Gathered at the FRTA Community Conversations

June 13, 2014

Franklin Regional Transit Authority
and the
Franklin Regional Council of Governments
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Introduction

The Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA) is currently in the beginning phases of conducting a Comprehensive Service Analysis (CSA) with the assistance of a consultant for its fixed route services. This CSA will result in a Regional Transit Plan that:

- Examines existing ridership;
- Analyzes existing service to determine effectiveness;
- Reviews regional economic development needs to determine potential for expanded transit service;
- Examines alternative service scenarios; and
- Makes service improvement recommendations.

The Regional Transit Plan, when completed in June 2015, will outline the specific needs to improve transit in the region and provide a foundation for future funding investment for the state legislature. As an important basis for this planning, the FRTA recently conducted a public outreach effort to better understand what the public’s transit needs and priorities are. The public input received from these efforts will help form the goals of the Regional Transit Plan, guide the alternative service scenarios to be examined, and prioritize FRTA service strategies.

Community Conversations

For the public outreach effort, the FRTA partnered with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) to conduct a series of “Community Conversations.” The timing of FRTA’s Comprehensive Service Analysis coincides with the FRCOG’s update to its Regional Transportation Plan. The FRCOG will begin updating this Plan in the Fall of 2014 and will examine all modes of transportation, including transit. The Comprehensive Service Analysis is focused solely on fixed route services. However, the FRCOG Regional Transportation Plan
will be able to complement this by examining and making planning recommendations regarding the remainder of FRTA’s service – the demand response/paratransit services.

The FRTA and FRCOG created a series of public forums called “Community Conversations” to gather public input on the future of transit in the region. These Community Conversations were designed to be informative, educational, and interactive for participants. Four Community Conversations were held throughout the region at fully accessible locations on fixed bus routes to facilitate attendance. In addition, they were held at times that coincided with the bus schedule to make it easier for transit riders to attend and provide input. The dates and times of the locations were:

- Monday, May 12 - Turners Falls, Great Falls Discovery Center, 4-6pm
- Wednesday, May 14 – Greenfield, John W. Olver Transit Center, 12:30-2:30pm
- Monday, May 19 – Shelburne Falls, Shelburne-Buckland Community Center, 3-5pm
- Tuesday, May 20 – Orange, Orange Amory, 3-5pm

An additional Community Conversation will be held in July at the Greenfield Farmer’s Market to further expand the outreach efforts. Volunteers have also come forward to conduct on-board surveys of transit riders to make sure that feedback from riders is fully captured.

The format of the Community Conversations was designed to be interactive with multiple ways in which people could provide their thoughts on transit. At the beginning of each of the events, a powerpoint presentation was given that provided: 1) an overview of the FRTA and its services; 2) what the Comprehensive Service Analysis was and why it mattered; 3) and interactive polling questions that asked the participants about themselves and their current/potential use of transit.

After the short presentation, the participants had the opportunity to have an open conversation with each other and FRTA/FRCOG staff about public transit. Following this conversation, participants were asked to make their way around the room at their own pace and stop at the several stations set up in which participants could give feedback on different topics. These topics included short term priorities, long term desires, important destinations/routes, and what public transit means to them. In addition, surveys and comment boxes were placed throughout the room for people to provide more specific information. FRTA and FRCOG staff were also available for participants to speak with, ask questions, and provide their input on the current and future state of transit in the region.
To reach as many and diverse members of the public as possible, the FRTA and FRCOG prepared an outreach strategy to let people know about the upcoming Community Conversations. This strategy included radio ads on local radio stations advertising the time and locations of the forums. Press releases were sent to all local newspapers. There were several prominent articles in the Greenfield Recorder discussing the public forums. Targeted mailings were also sent to a large and diverse group of regional stakeholders, including: social service groups, elected representatives, environmental groups, housing authorities, senior centers, municipal officials, chambers of commerce, and more. Flyers were posted on all buses, in the John W. Olver Transit Center, and in key locations throughout the region, such as popular stores. In addition, information about the events were posted on the FRTA and FRCOG Facebook pages and widely “shared” and “liked” by other organizations’ Facebook pages. Finally, word-of-mouth was employed as FRTA and FRCOG staff met with the various groups from the region in their day-to-day business.

Almost 60 people attended the Community Conversations. Through the electronic polling questions conducted in the powerpoint presentation, the FRTA/FRCOG staff know that most of the participants were working age (61% were aged 31-64 years old) and that almost half (48%) of the participants have never used the FRTA public transit system. The Appendix contains more detailed information about the age and frequency of transit use of the participants.

Summary of Feedback

The feedback provided by participants at the Community Conversations was very constructive and informative. Summarized below is the input received at each of the “stations” at the forums.
Overwhelmingly, participants support an expanded transit system that has greater frequency of service, weekend service, and evening service.

What Public Transit Means to Me

At this station, forum participants were asked to write down on sticky notes what they felt public transit means to them. The goal of this station was to understand the needs of people interested in transit. For example, do many people use transit because they have no other transportation alternatives or do they use it because they choose do so for environmental reasons? The responses can be grouped into the following 3 general categories:

Public transit.....
1) Is necessary for survival/work (24%)
2) Helps the environment (37%)
3) Provides travel options (39%)

These results indicate that many people depend on FRTA’s fixed route system for their basic daily needs. But some participants also have their own vehicle and are interested in transit for the additional options that it provides them and the benefit to the environment it allows by reducing carbon emissions.

Short Term Priorities

At this station, participants were presented with a large poster listing 10 actions that the FRTA could take with little or no increase in funding in the short term (as defined immediately or in the next several years). Participants were asked to identify which of these actions would be their top 4 priorities. The top recommendation was that FRTA should add more direct, short shuttle trips to specific destinations. This was closely followed by
providing more connections with PVTA bus routes and offering various pass options. Table 1 below shows in detail the ranking of the priorities by the participants at the Community Conversations.

Table 1. Ranking of Short Term Priorities for FRTA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Short Term Priorities</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Add more short, direct shuttle trips (to GCC, hospital, grocery stores, attractions)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Offer day, monthly, &amp; student pass options</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Provide more connections with PVTA bus service</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Add bus shelter amenities (bike racks, lights, trash cans)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Improve marketing of bus services</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Improve customer service and communication with bus riders</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Staff the ticket and information booth in the Transit Center lobby</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Improve the bus schedules to make them easier to read</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Add WiFi access on buses</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Re-design and enhance the FRTA website</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Transportation Hot Spots

Another of the interactive stations at the Community Conversations was geared towards finding out where people live and where they go. This would help inform the FRTA as to whether they are currently serving popular destinations, and if not, where there could be additional opportunities to serve with the goal of increasing ridership. Specifically, participants were asked to place little dot stickers on a large map of the greater Franklin County region showing generally where they live and their most common destinations. The attached Map in the Appendix depicts the locations of the most popular origins and destinations for participants. Most participants live in/or originate in the towns of Greenfield, Shelburne Falls, and Montague. The most popular destinations varied widely across Western Massachusetts and even extended to Boston, New Hampshire (Keene), and Vermont (Brattleboro). The Table below shows the top destinations.
### Table 2. Top Destinations of Community Conversation Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Overall Top Destinations</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Greenfield - downtown</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Northampton</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Amherst</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Greenfield - west of I-91</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ashfield</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Montague - Turners Falls</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Holyoke</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Brattleboro VT</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Charlemont</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Shelburne Falls</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Athol</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Orange - downtown</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Hadley</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Northfield</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Long Term Ideal Transit System

An important station at the Community Conversations asked participants what they would like FRTA’s fixed route system to look like if there were no constraints on funding or resources. Participants could draw new routes and bus stops on maps provided or write ideas down on paper. In terms of service, participants almost universally agreed that there should be more frequent service – particularly to align with employee and school schedules; weekend service (Saturday service seemed to be more desired than Sunday); and evening service. The most common additional routes that people wanted include the following:

- Greenfield to Amherst via South Deerfield
- Greenfield/Turners Falls to Northfield via Bernardston/Gill
- Northfield/Millers Falls to Amherst
- Millers Falls/Montague Center to Northampton
- Greenfield to Boston/Fitchburg via Orange
- Shelburne Falls to Amherst/Northampton via Route 116
- Greenfield/North County to Brattleboro
Surveys

Surveys with specific transit and demographic questions were also available at the Community Conversation forums for participants to fill out. A copy of the survey is included in the Appendix. In addition to paper copies, electronic versions of the survey were also made available through the FRTA and FRCOG websites and Facebook pages. Through both the paper and electronic versions, 94 people responded to the survey. Key findings from the survey are:

- A large number of respondents currently use transit for school (50%), work (41%), and shopping (40%). A smaller percentage use it for social activities/leisure (36%) and medical appointments (25%).
- Most current riders use transit because it is convenient (54%). But 43% use it for financial reasons (it is cheaper than driving) and another 38% use it because they do not have access to a car.
- Many of the respondents said they would like more service to Amherst and Northampton.
- The most common reasons people do not currently use transit is because: 1) the bus schedules do not match their need (66%); 2) the bus service is not frequent enough (59%); and the bus routes do not go to the places that they need to get to (36%).
- The top 3 recommendations to improve transit in the region are:
  - More frequent bus service (70%)
  - Weekend bus service (50%)
  - Evening bus service (44%)

*The percentages will not add up to 100% because respondents were allowed to select multiple answers.

General Comments

Participants at the Community Conversations were also encouraged to write down any comments they may have and place them in envelopes throughout the room. Many constructive comments were received (See the Appendix for full listing). The following image is a “wordcloud” that visually summarizes the comments received. The larger words in the wordcloud indicate the most frequently mentioned words. From this image, it is clear that participants at the Community Conversations want more service – particularly additional hours and on the weekend. They also want more bus service to serve Greenfield and
Turners Falls residents and that the bus needs to get them to work and school.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The Community Conversations were very informative. General needs were identified and prioritized. But also very specific short term needs were identified that the FRTA can look into implementing immediately, such as providing transit service to Just Roots – the Greenfield community farm; or altering a route to provide bus service to elementary students in Turners Falls. The Community Conversations also confirmed what the FRTA and FRCOG have long been hearing – residents want more service. From these events, we now know that residents would like more frequent service first and foremost. Weekend service
(particularly on Saturday mornings) is a second priority and that later evening service (to accommodate different work shifts and school classes) is a third, but important, priority.

The input received at the Community Conversations will provide the FRTA and its consultant detailed transit scenarios to evaluate and cost out as part of the Comprehensive Service Analysis. This will result in concrete recommendations to improve service and the amount of funding required to make any service changes. These scenario evaluations will also be able to rank recommendations based on their overall feasibility and the time-frame in which they can be implemented.

Figure 4. Participants at the Turners Falls Community Conversation providing feedback.
Appendix

Age Breakdown of Participants

- 18 years or younger: 6%
- 19-30 years old: 4%
- 31-64 years old: 61%
- 65 years or older: 29%

How Frequently Participants Use Public Transit

- Daily: 15%
- Weekly: 17%
- Monthly: 2%
- Several times a year: 17%
- Never: 48%
Transportation Hot Spots in Greater Franklin County

Legend
- Top Origins
- Top Destinations

Transportation hot spots were obtained from the FRRA Community Conversations held between May 12 and May 20, 2014. The dots indicate the participants’ most popular transportation origins and destinations.
Public Transit Survey

What are your thoughts on Transit in Franklin County? We want to understand who lives in the region and what their transportation needs may be. Please fill out this survey and let us know!

1. What town do you live in? Please write in:

2. How often do you ride public transit?
   - Regularly—at least once a week
   - Sometimes—at least once a month
   - A few times a year
   - I do not use public transit

If you do not use public transit, please go to question #6.

3. If you use public transit, please select the routes that you currently use. (Select all that apply.):
   - FRTA Route 22 Montague/Greenfield
   - FRTA Route 31 Northampton/Greenfield
   - FRTA Route 32 Orange/Greenfield
   - FRTA Route 41 Charlemont/Greenfield
   - FRTA Route 23 Amherst/Greenfield
   - FRTA Route 21 Greenfield Community Route
   - PVTA Route 46 UMass/South Deerfield
   - PVTA Route 31 Sunderland/South Amherst
   - MART G-Link
   - Other: ____________________________

4. Please select the types of destinations you use public transit to get to. (Select all that apply.):
   - School
   - Shopping
   - Social activities/leisure
   - Courthouse
   - Department of Transitional Assistance
   - Work
   - Child care
   - Medical appointments
   - Veteran appointments
   - Other: ____________________________

5. If you currently use public transit, what are your reasons?
   - I do not have access to a car.
   - I do not have a drivers license.
   - I have a disability that makes driving difficult/not possible.
   - It is cheaper than driving.
   - Convenience
   - Other: ____________________________

Please turn page over to complete survey.
6. What destinations would you like to be able to get to using public transit that you currently can not?

__________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________

7. If you do not currently use public transit, why not? (Select all that apply.)

☐ There is no bus service near my home.
☐ Bus schedules do not align with my needs.
☐ Bus service is not frequent enough.
☐ The bus takes too long compared to driving.
☐ Bus routes do not go to the places I need to get to.
☐ The cost is too high.
☐ I am not aware of what public buses services are provided in the region.
☐ I have other transportation options.
☐ I have limited mobility/it is hard for me to use the bus.
☐ Other: ____________________________________________

8. What changes would most improve transit service in our region? Select your TOP THREE choices.

☐ Evening bus service
☐ Weekend bus service
☐ More frequent bus service
☐ Faster, more direct routing to key destinations
☐ Fare discount for students
☐ New service to unserved areas
☐ Improved waiting areas (Ex. benches, signs, shelters, sidewalks, etc.)
☐ Increased and more accessible public information on what services are available
☐ Other: ____________________________________________

9. Please provide additional comments or suggestions regarding specific routes or bus service overall:

__________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

Please return this survey to Megan Rhodes at the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, 12 Olive Street, Greenfield, MA 01301. Megan can be contacted at mrhodes@frcog.org or 413-774-3167.
General Comments Received from Community Conversations on Transit

**Turners Falls Event, May 12, 2014**

- Shuttles or stops at the Montague Elementary School (Sheffield and Hillcrest buildings) at arrival (8-8:30am), dismissal (3:15-3:30pm) and end of extended day program (5:15-5:30pm) would be very helpful for families who live too close (1.5 miles) to be eligible for students to take the school bus, but still have to overcome obstacles to get their children to and from school. Mark Andrews, MES Principal.

- Put bus stop structure at Food City
- Promote bus service
- FRTA needs to do a better job at communicating with bus riders. Information should be displayed in numerous areas and boldly to catch attention.
- Students should get a fare break
- Pay $3.00 all day or $42.00 monthly ride all you want.
- Make Route 23 a normal route – 4 times a day with $1.50 fare.
- FRTA should shift its focus from so much Demand Response Service to more, and more inclusive, fixed route services. Take Gill for example. Several years ago, Gill had 2 fixed bus routes, not it has none. Yet Gill’s FRTA assessment has not changed for a number of years. For the # of riders who call for ADA service in Gill, that town could be better off paying for taxi cab services for its ADA residents
- Reestablish fixed route service to Gill along Route 2. This would add riders. Gill residents would be more than open to taking public transportation to work, shopping, etc.
- Fixed route service should be extended to Northfield (through Gill center and NMH) and to Wendell center (picking up park and ride customers from New Salem) and Leverett center. These communities have aging populations acutely attuned to environmental issues. Give them buses and they will ride.
- Buses should be retrofitted for biodiesel, natural gas, hybrid motors and braking systems.
- Service that goes later into the evening and weekend service
- More times (maybe a bus an hour)
• Please have the different routes sync up so that one can go from Turners Falls to Greenfield to catch the Northampton bus or the GCC bus for example. And from downtown Greenfield to the Academy of Early Learning
• Try to work something out with the local colleges. People in Hampshire County don’t realize that Franklin County has bus service.
• One fare ($3.00) is too much and it is silly for folks going to Greenfield when an available bus goes by and they feel the need to wait for the $1.00 bus.
• Buses that run later. For example, I work in Northampton and live in Turners Falls and I take the last bus that leaves Northampton. There is no bus to take me home. The routes end far too early.
• The bus should run frequently enough between Montague Center and Amherst that I could take it to work. And between Montague Center and Greenfield (with a stop at GCC) that my daughter could take it to or from school.
• It’s great that there’s a way to connect to Amherst via S. Deerfield. I wish there were more options for leaving Greenfield to go to Amherst (UMass) in the morning (7am). The next bus leaving Greenfield doesn’t connect to the PVTA to get to UMass (this might be a PVTA issue). Or maybe there should be more frequent trips between Greenfield and S. Deerfield
• It would be great to have weekend service (even if very minimal – 1-2 trips to Northampton).
• Student rates or frequent traveler passes would be great.
• Service into the evenings
• At first, limited Saturday service within Greenfield and Turners Falls and Greenfield to/from Northampton
• If you can put up the times the buses come in and are leaving along with the weather outside
• Why can’t you tell me about your meetings – stop being so biased.
• Put Athol service back on bus route
• Recreate or put back the bus #21 route the way it was
• Saturday service
• Need more convenient times – I used to work in Greenfield and live in Montague but the bus would have gotten me to work late and I would have had to leave early. Not convenient.
• Broaden the base of public transit
• Reduce energy. Get people out of their cars.
• Make Route 23 a normal route
• Weekend service
• Later service
• More times on run so there’s less waiting times for buses
• Better transfer connections
• Please keep Route 23 that goes from Greenfield through Montague and Leverett and ends at Hagis Mall at Umass. It brings employees to work at both UMass and Amherst College. The FRTA needs to market this route and maybe increase the buses to/from. Most people do not even know that this route exists. Others do know it exists, but the bus hours do not work for them.
• Weekend service is needed in Franklin County. At least on Saturdays for the morning. Franklin County is so big and folks don’t earn that much at their jobs. With gas at almost $4 gallon and some folks not having cars, weekend service to at least the supermarkets would help many. I see many people taking a taxi to get groceries over the weekend.
• If money were no object, would love to take a bus to the Holyoke or Hadley malls.
• Food City stop is quite active. Any plans to put in a full bus stop?
• Would like bus transportation for local school students from after school programs in downtown Turners. Need at 5pm Mon-Thurs. (Marty Espinola, Gill-Montague Schools, 863-3252)
• There is not public transit to the Greenfield Community Farm. A stop at the intersection of Leyden Road and Barton Road would be ideal since there is an existing path into the farm at this location. (Justroots.org)
• Its great to add the higher tech communication options for those who would utilize/expect these, but the lower tech options can be much more effectively displayed. The GCC compilation and new Corporate Center shuttle are printed such they are put sideways in your existing display racks and therefore much less likely to catch someone’s eye who wasn’t searching for it.
• Market to non-traditional bus users – those who don’t need to use the bus. Need “value-based” marketing – making the “environmental choice.”

Greenfield Event, May 14, 2014

• Regular bus stops throughout Greenfield with signs for pick up and drop off.
• Route 23, 31, 41 – Friday and Saturday daytime and evening routes
• Route 21 – Saturday to Green River swimming area.
• Weekend and later evening hours would be great
• Evening buses to Shelburne Falls, Turners Falls, Northampton, Amherst. 11pm round trip
• Better signage at Fosters with schedule and everywhere
• More bus stops on major arteries in Greenfield and Turners
• Bus service from Greenfield to Boston area direct
• Bus service to Fitchburg to connect to Boston
• I recommend going ahead with surveying potential riders at the Turners Falls Industrial Park and the Greenfield Indust. Park to determine shifts, number of potential riders. Glad to know plans have already started.
• My neighbor works at Hillside Plastics in Turners Falls and can get to work at 8am but cannot come back home to Greenfield at the end of this 12 hour shift.
• I would like more hours, often hours, weekend buses. I work to go to the school, and can’t get to my weekend activities because theirs no weekend buses.
• It would be perfect if the waiting area and bathrooms could be open in the winter and of course sealed properly from the rest of the building
• No buses to Turners and Greenfield on weekends to use parks, library, shopping, seeing family and friends. Taxi $10 one way. Cannot take advantage of any events.
• No timely bus routes to industrial parks and not enough routes
• Bus routes to Green Rivers Swimming Park
• I would like more later hours around till 10pm and weekend hours. At least till 8pm/9pm.
• Easy, identifiable stops in Greenfield and Turners with drops on Industrial Blvd at or near Hallmark Ed. Center
• Evenings and weekend hours
• Student discounts
• Weekend between Greenfield and Turners Falls
• Weekend between Greenfield and Northampton
• Saturdays to Greenfield swimming area
• Saturdays to town farm
• Get verbal feedback from folks
• Weekend service. People need to shop
• Evening service so people can participate in evening meetings and entertainment
• Your On Demand service is AMAZING. Do people know about it?
• Service from Greenfield to Social Security office in Holyoke
• Thank you for all your efforts to make FRTA really awesome.
• There is no reason why then must be cut outs to have bus stops. There are not any in most of Boston. Cars stop. Drivers learn where buses stop.
• The best marketing tool for buses would be bus stops. If folks know that a bus will stop somewhere and when they will use it.
• Offer Wi-Fi on buses.
• Direct route to Fitchburg for Boston trains
• Get state legislature to increase funds for FRTA
• Improve frequency to include weekends or late nights.
• Service to and through Leverett.

**Shelburne Falls Event, May 19, 2014**

• Need service from Shelburne Falls to Four Rivers (currently approx. 42 kids involved) that will accommodate school schedule.
• More service to major employers (Greenfield, Deerfield, Turners Falls, Whatley Industrial Parks) at hours that would allow workers to get to and from work for normal shifts
• Regular service from population centers to important service providers (DTA, DCF, Courts, etc)
• Turners Falls residence need schedule/route (Turners Falls to Cherry Rum without transfer)
• Shift Route 41 schedule to stop at Four Rivers in morning and evening

**Orange Event, May 20, 2014**

• As Wendell’s representative to FRTA, I encourage the consideration of a study of potential ridership in East County, including Wendell. In Wendell, we border towns with services – Montague, Erving, and Orange – yet are virtually totally dependent on personal vehicles because of the distances to any bus stop. Except for Wendell Depot, a tiny section of town, the extensive state forestlands on our western and northern borders put our center of population considerable distances from any current routes. It might be that the highly conservation-oriented Wendell demographic favors public transit and would use services at a higher rate than some other towns. I encourage a regional transit study to look closely at eastern Franklin County and the possibility of including Wendell in fixed-route transit services. (Jonathan von Ranson)