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The Costs and Benefits of Bus Public Transportation in Chittenden County, Vermont

In this report, we examine the costs and benefits of mass public transportation, specifically bus transportation. We will discuss the benefits of bus public transportation through environmental, public health, and business factors. Additionally, we analyze the different formations of public transportation and bus public transportation in comparable counties to Chittenden County. As of 2023, the population of Chittenden County was 169,481.¹ Chittenden County has 536.8 square miles of land area.²

Benefits of Public Transportation

Environmental

The buildup of greenhouse gases, such as methane and carbon dioxide, are causing the atmosphere to warm.³ Greenhouse gases cause the temperature of the surface of the Earth to rise.⁴ As a result of the warmer climate there have been, “changes in precipitation patterns, storm severity, and sea level.”⁵ Minimizing greenhouse gas emissions is a fundamental way in which international states can reduce their harmful impacts on the environment. In the United States, transportation accounts for 28% of the total greenhouse gas emissions.⁶ According to a 2010 report released by the United States Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration, there is substantial evidence that “public transportation produces significantly lower greenhouse gas emissions per passenger mile than private vehicles.”⁷ The Environmental

¹ United States Census Bureau, *Quick Facts, Chittenden County, Vermont*, accessed December 1, 2024. www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/chittendencountyvermont/PST045223

² United States Census Bureau, *Chittenden County, Vermont*, accessed December 1, 2024. https://data.census.gov/profile/Chittenden_County,_Vermont?g=050XX00US50007

³ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), *Carbon Pollution from Transportation*, May 14, 2024. <https://www.epa.gov/transportation-air-pollution-and-climate-change/carbon-pollution-transportation>

⁴ U.S. Energy Information Administration, *Energy and the Environment Explained*, June 18, 2024. <https://www.eia.gov/energyexplained/energy-and-the-environment/greenhouse-gases-and-the-climate.php#:~:text=Greenhouse%20gases%20warm%20the%20planet&text=In%20computer%2Dbased%20models%2C%20rising,storm%20severity%2C%20and%20sea%20level.>

⁵ U.S. Energy Information Administration, *Energy and the Environment Explained*.

⁶ U.S. EPA, *Carbon Pollution from Transportation*, May 14, 2024. <https://www.epa.gov/transportation-air-pollution-and-climate-change/carbon-pollution-transportation>

⁷ U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration, *Public Transportation's Role in Responding to Climate Change*, January 2010.

Protection Agency (EPA) has placed regulations on various kinds of motor vehicles in an effort to reduce these emissions.⁸ However, these regulations do not minimize greenhouse gas emissions to the same degree that public transportation does.⁹

Public Health

According to the Centers for Disease Control Foundation, public mass transportation lowers the chances of motor vehicle related injuries and minimizes traffic congestion.¹⁰ Public mass transportation and walkable neighborhoods increases the likeliness that residents will meet their daily recommended 22 minutes of physical activity.¹¹ As of 2020, 43% of residents in walkable areas achieve these physical activity targets compared to only 27% in less walkable areas.¹²

Business

Public mass transportation makes jobs more accessible to residents who do not have their own mode of transportation. By providing a reliable means of transportation, public transportation allows residents to work in neighboring counties. Busses also minimize the number of personal vehicles on the roads which could minimize traffic. Less traffic could result in increased hours of productivity for working residents.¹³

Formation of Public Transportation: Public, Private, Public-Private Partnership (PPP)

In this section we compare and provide examples of how mass transportation industries have formed in different counties of the United States. Most of these counties and cities were chosen because they are comparable to Chittenden County, Vermont in terms of population and/or geographic size. The three different types of mass transportation that are explored are public mass transportation, private mass transportation, and public-private mass transportation (PPP). Their funding and function will also be explained. Green Mountain Transit, the primary bus transportation in Vermont, is public.¹⁴

<https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/docs/PublicTransportationsRoleInRespondingToClimateChange2010.pdf>

⁸ U.S. EPA, *Carbon Pollution from Transportation*, last updated May 14, 2024. <https://www.epa.gov/transportation-air-pollution-and-climate-change/carbon-pollution-transportation>

⁹ U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration, *Public Transportation's Role in Responding to Climate Change*.

¹⁰ Center for Disease Control Foundation, *Public Health Action Guide: Public Transportation*, accessed October 7, 2024.

https://www.cdcfoundation.org/sites/default/files/files/HI5_TransportationGuide.pdf

¹¹ Todd Litman, "Evaluating Public Transportation Health Benefits," *Victoria Transport Policy Institute*, April 3, 2020. https://www.vtpi.org/tran_health.pdf

¹² Todd Litman, "Evaluating Public Transportation Health Benefits."

¹³ Simeon Swaby, "The Health Benefits of Public Transport," *Cornell Healthcare Review*, January

8, 2024. <https://www.cornellhealthcarereview.org/post/the-health-benefits-of-public-transport#:~:text=The%20study%20showed%20other%20benefits.accessing%20food%20and%20health%20service>

¹⁴ Green Mountain, *Green Mountain Transit*, accessed November 11, 2024. <https://ridegmt.com/about-gmt/>

Public

Public mass transportation systems are funded through federal, state, and local governments.¹⁵ Publicly funded mass transportation organizations also rely on revenues from tickets and fares.¹⁶ The functions of publicly funded transportation organizations are explored below.

Operation funds and capital funds will be used to provide the funding breakdown for the following examples of public transportation organizations. Operations funds “refer to the expected revenues and expenses related to running the region’s transit system.”¹⁷ This includes sources like fares, state taxes, etc.¹⁸ Capital funds are funding sources that are used to invest in long-term maintenance and improvements of a transportation system.¹⁹ This funding comes from a variety of local, state and federal money.²⁰

Public: Carver County, Minnesota

Carver County, Minnesota has a similar population to Chittenden County but is smaller in square miles. It has a population of 106,922 and is 353.9 square miles.²¹

SouthWest Transit, the public mass transportation system for Carver County,²² emerged in 1986 when the southwest suburbs of Minneapolis—Chaska, Chanhassen, and Eden Prairie—decided to opt out of the Metropolitan Transit Commission system that served greater Minneapolis.²³ SouthWest Transit was formed under a joint powers agreement between the three cities.²⁴ SouthWest Transit provide service from three transit stations. These stations take customers to places such as Downtown Minneapolis, the University of Minnesota, Normandale Community College, and the Best Buy Headquarters.²⁵ SouthWest Transit offers SouthWest Prime, which is an “on-demand rideshare service to and from select locations and/or services.”²⁶ Every year

¹⁵ Congressional Budget Office, *Federal Financial Support for Public Transportation*, March 2022.

<https://www.cbo.gov/publication/57940#:~:text=Together%2C%20federal%2C%20state%2C%20and%20local%20governments%20represent%20the,relly%20on%20passenger%20fares%20and%20other%20operating%20receipts>

¹⁶ Congressional Budget Office, *Federal Financial Support for Public Transportation*.

¹⁷ Regional Transportation Authority, *Understanding Capital vs. Operating Funding and Why it Matters*, February 2, 2023. www.rtachicago.org/blog/2023/02/02/understanding-capital-vs-operating-funding-and-why-it-matters

¹⁸ Regional Transportation Authority, *Understanding Capital vs. Operating Funding and Why it Matters*.

¹⁹ Regional Transportation Authority, *Understanding Capital vs. Operating Funding and Why it Matters*.

²⁰ Regional Transportation Authority, *Understanding Capital vs. Operating Funding and Why it Matters*.

²¹ United States Census Bureau, *Carver County, Minnesota*, accessed October 15, 2024.

https://data.census.gov/profile/Carver_County,_Minnesota?g=050XX00US27019

²² SouthWest Transit, *About Us*, accessed October 13, 2024. <https://swtransit.org>

²³ SouthWest Transit, *About SWT*, accessed October 13, 2024. <https://swtransit.org/about-sw/>

²⁴ SouthWest Transit, *About SWT*.

²⁵ SouthWest Transit, *About SWT*.

²⁶ SouthWest Transit, *About SWT*.

SouthWest Transit selects certain popular events such as sporting events or concerts to provide transportation to.²⁷

During what SouthWest calls “peak” hours, the fares to ride the bus are more expensive than during regular hours: \$3.25 for adults, youth, and seniors, but free for children five years old and under.²⁸ Peak hours are Monday through Friday 6:00 am to 9:00 am, and 3:00 pm to 6:30 pm. During non-peak hours, the fares are \$2.50 for adult ages 13-64, \$1.00 for youth ages 6-12, \$1.00 for seniors ages 65 and up, and free for children five and under.²⁹

A customer can also purchase a Thirty-One Day Pass that aligns with these categories. For example, it is \$120 for a 31-Day Pass; if a customer would normally pay \$3.25 for their fare, or it would be \$65 for a customer that would normally pay \$2.00 for their fare.³⁰ Other passes are available such as a Go-To/U-Pass Card. This provides unlimited rides to the University of Minnesota students on regional buses and trains.³¹

The most recent funding information for SouthWest Transit from 2022 is listed in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1. Sources of Operation Funds Expended, SouthWest Transit 2022.³²

Directly Generated	\$2,478,997
Federal Government	\$3,482,211
Local Government	\$74,320
State Government	\$5, 387, 681
Total Operating Funds Expended	\$11,423,209

Table 2. Sources of Capital Funds Expended, SouthWest Transit 2022.³³

Directly Generated	\$0
Federal Government	\$0
Local Government	\$0
State Government	\$5,431,867
Total Capital Funds Expended	\$5,431,867

Private

²⁷ SouthWest Transit, *About SWT*, accessed October 13, 2024. <https://swtransit.org/about-swt/>

²⁸ SouthWest Transit, *Fares*, accessed October 14, 2024. <https://swtransit.org/fares/>

²⁹ SouthWest Transit, *Fares*.

³⁰ SouthWest Transit, *Fares*.

³¹ SouthWest Transit, *Go-To/U-Pass Card*, accessed October 14, 2024. <https://swtransit.org/fares/go-to-card/>

³² U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration, *2022 Annual Agency Profile-SouthWest Transit*, accessed October 14, 2024. https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/transit_agency_profile_doc/2022/50518.pdf

³³ U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration, *2022 Annual Agency Profile-SouthWest Transit*.

Mass transportation primarily lies in the public sector and, despite a trend of privatization of state-owned enterprises, “public ownership continues to be a widespread feature...in the field of local public transport.”³⁴ Some scholars, such as Lynn Scholl, conduct case studies to see the pros and cons of privatization. Scholl explains how some mass transit organizations seek deregulation in bus services in order to control fares, entry, routes, and the standards of the bus vehicles.³⁵ It can be argued that privatization can lower costs and improve service quality due to increased competition and profit motivation.³⁶ However, critics of privatization argue that privatization of transportation can lead to “inadequate coordination and integration of routes and fares” as well as the possibility of leaving “the less profitable routes underserved.”³⁷

Private: Atlantic City, New Jersey

The Atlantic City Jitney Association (ACJA) is a private mini-bus company with around 190 owner-operated vehicles.³⁸ According to information listed on the ACJA, ACJA service runs 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. The one-way fare to ride the jitney to one of their several stops is \$3.³⁹ The ACJA claims they also offer free shuttle services to the Atlantic City Rail Terminal and that hotels near the rail station decided to subsidize the ACJA for that service. This service was formally operated by New Jersey Transit. The ACJA used to provide an airport service but no longer does. ACJA routes run all over the city. The ACJA claims their company also provides private services such as pub crawls, winery tours, and private shuttle services. The ACJA’s service extends to Cape May, North Wildwood, Wildwood, Wildwood Crest, and Ocean City.⁴⁰

The ACJA created an app called Jitney Surfer. According to the ACJA, this app allows users to purchase tickets for rides ahead of time on their phones. However, according to the ACJA, if a customer wishes to purchase a senior-citizen ticket, a disabled ticket or frequent rider packs, they can be purchased at their participating locations in Atlantic City.⁴¹

Private: New York City, New York

A form of semi-formal, once unregulated, public mass transportation is the “dollar vans” that serve the New York, New York neighborhoods of Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx.⁴² While

³⁴ Kai Wegrich, “Public Sector,” *Britannica*, September 2, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/money/public-sector>

³⁵ Scholl Lynn, “Privatization of Public Transit: A Review of the Research on Contracting of Bus Services in the United States,” *Berkley Planning Journal*, 2006. <https://doi.org/10.5070/BP319111493>

³⁶ Scholl Lynn, “Privatization of Public Transit: A Review of the Research on Contracting of Bus Services in the United States.”

³⁷ Scholl Lynn, “Privatization of Public Transit: A Review of the Research on Contracting of Bus Services in the United States.”

³⁸ Atlantic City, NJ, *Atlantic City Jitney Association*, accessed October 14, 2024.

<https://www.atlanticcitynj.com/details/?id=35#:~:text=The%20Jitney%20Association%20is%20comprised%20of%20190%20individual,vehicles%20servicing%20AC%2024%2F7%2C%20365%20days%20a%20year.>

³⁹ Jitney, *Atlantic City Jitney Association*, accessed October 14, 2024. <https://www.jitneyac.com>

⁴⁰ Jitney, *About Atlantic City Jitney Association*, accessed October 14, 2024. <https://www.jitneyac.com/info>

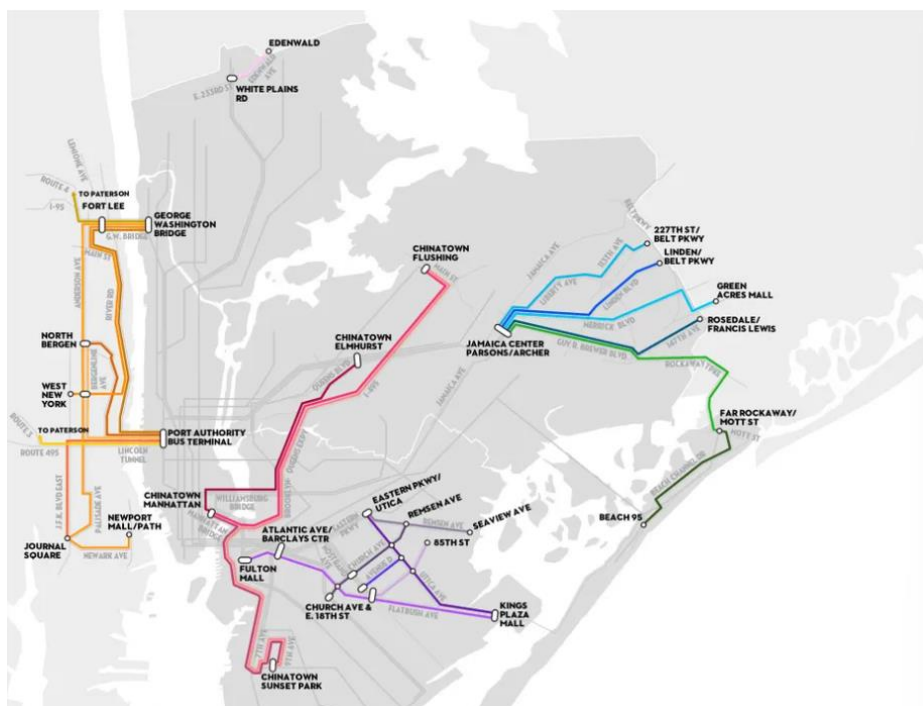
⁴¹ Jitney, *About Atlantic City Jitney Association*.

⁴² Angel Torres, “Thousands of commuters rely on dollar vans, NYC’s other transit system,” *Queens Eagle*, April 26, 2019. <https://queenseagle.com/all/dollar-van-transit-system>

Chittenden County does not contain the same population or infrastructure as New York City, we are providing this information because it is relevant to show how different private bus companies can emerge.

Dollar vans emerged because of the 1980s transit strike in New York City, which caused complications in commuting for residents of New York. Therefore, the name “dollar van” was coined as private van/minibus owners charged one dollar for their unregulated and unsanctioned service to make up for the loss of public transportation in the 1980s.⁴³ Dollar vans continue to be used today.

Despite public mass transportation in New York City remaining popular since then, many rely on dollar vans as a mode of transportation. The dollar vans are often the most robust in poorer communities and neighborhoods that lack adequate Metropolitan Transportation Authority subways or buses. Figure 1 shows an estimated map created of the dollar vans that function in New York City created by journalist and mapmaker Aaron Reiss of *The New Yorker*. According to the *New York Times*, dollar vans assist around 100,000 passengers a day.⁴⁴



This information is taken from a single newspaper source and is provided in this report as an example of a private, for-profit public transportation system. We were unable to find internet listings for the services of the Dollar Vans, nor any official source of information.

⁴³ Angel Torres, Queens Daily Eagle, “Thousands of commuters rely on dollar vans, NYC’s other transit system,” *Queens Eagle*, April 26, 2019. <https://queenseagle.com/all/dollar-van-transit-system>

⁴⁴ Annie Correal, “Inside the Dollar Van Wars,” *The New York Times*, June 8, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/08/nyregion/inside-the-dollar-van-wars.html>

Figure1. Estimated Map of the Paths of Dollar Vans in NYC⁴⁵

A more formalized version of the “dollar vans” is Dollarride. As explained on their website, Dollarride is a company that finances drivers in urban areas with new technology and infrastructure to provide transportation in underserved communities.⁴⁶ The company was rewarded a \$10 million grant by New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) to be used for developing a plan to convert Dollarride vans to electric as a way to subsidize and provide a cleaner alternative vehicle to the gasoline powered vehicles used for this transportation.⁴⁷ NYSERDA also assists commuter van operators in New York City through insurance subsidies as insurance costs continue to rise. Eligible applicants for the grant can receive up to \$40,000.⁴⁸ The grant can be used for “auto insurance subsidies and commuter van safety, technology, and equipment that will reduce insurance risk” and further regulate the dollar van industry. The program hopes to reimburse van owners for their upgrades and stabilize the commuter van industry. In order to be eligible for the grant, the van commuter operator must contain a Taxi and Limousine Commission Commuter Van License.⁴⁹

Public-Private Partnership (PPP)

Public-private partnerships (PPPs) are a business mechanism that allows for the private sector and the public sector to work together to implement services that benefit the public.⁵⁰ Risks and responsibilities are reallocated to different agencies across the public and private sectors after an analysis of objectives occurs.⁵¹ Some bus transportation companies are turning towards this mechanism.

PPP: Denver, Colorado

While Denver Colorado is larger in terms of geographic size and population size than Chittenden County, Vermont, both do contain a universities. Denver was the only city we found as an example of a PPP in bus transportation that was relevant to Chittenden County. While much of the work for this Colorado PPP focused on train projects, it also incorporated bus reform as well.

As a part of the Regional Transportation District (RTD) FasTrack initiative, Denver, Colorado, created the Eagles Project, which began operating in 2016.⁵² It aimed to “expand rail and bus

⁴⁵ Aaron Reiss, “Interactive: New York’s Shadow Transit System,” *The New Yorker*, June 27, 2014.

<https://www.newyorker.com/business/currency/interactive-new-yorks-shadow-transit-system>

⁴⁶ Dollarride, *Revolutionizing Urban Transit with Dollarride*, accessed December 1, 2024. www.dollaride.com

⁴⁷ Spencer Chin, “Startup Uses Tech to Upgrade the ‘Dollar Van.’”

⁴⁸ Empire State Development, “Commuter Van Stabilization Program,” *New York State*, accessed October 14, 2024.

<https://esd.ny.gov/commuter-van-stabilization-program#objective>

⁴⁹ Empire State Development, “Commuter Van Stabilization Program.”

⁵⁰ World Bank Group, *About Public-Private Partnerships*, accessed October 15, 2024.

<https://ppp.worldbank.org/public-private-partnership/applicable-all-sectors/about-public-private-partnerships>

⁵¹ World Bank Group, *About Public-Private Partnerships*.

⁵² Emily Han, “Denver Eagle P3 Begins Operation,” *Eno Center for Transportation*, April 28, 2016.

<https://enotrans.org/article/denver-eagle-p3-begins-operations/>

transit throughout the Denver metropolitan area.”⁵³ Some of the outcomes were a total of 122 miles of commuter rail plus light rail, 18 miles of rapid bus transit, the redevelopment of the Denver Union Station (DUS), and 21,000 new parking spots.⁵⁴

The Eagle Project is a concession agreement between RTD and Denver Transit Partners. The agreement is for 34 years to “design, build, finance, operate, and maintain the project’s components.”⁵⁵ RTD will have ownership over fare and fare policies, retain assets, and keep the project revenues. Performance metrics are how the RTD makes payments to the concessionaire.⁵⁶

Table 3. Funding Sources for Eagle P3 (PPP) Project⁵⁷

Direct Public Funding	
FTA New Starts Full Funding Grant Agreement	\$1,030.4 million
Regional Transportation District contributions from FasTrack sales tax revenues	\$128 million
Federal Grants	\$62 million
Local city and county governments	\$40 million
Additional Funding	
Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act Loan	\$280 million
Tax-exempt Private Activity Bonds	\$398 million
Revenue bonds proceed	\$48 million
Private equity contributions	\$54 million

The private companies involved in the Eagle Project were Hyundai-Rotem, John Laing, Alternate Concepts, Inc., Ames Construction, Aberdeen Infrastructure Investments, Balfour Beatty, and Fluor.⁵⁸ All of these companies make up the Denver Transit Partners, which “is a joint venture that includes leading construction, financing and transportation companies.”⁵⁹

The Eagle Project emerged as a result of the Regional Transportation District (RTD) and local communities desiring a comprehensive, regional transit program.⁶⁰ In response to an increase in the costs of the current transportation programs in 2008, RTD turned to the use of public-private

⁵³ U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, *Project Profile: Eagle Project*, accessed October 15, 2024. https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ipd/project_profiles/co_eagle_project.aspx

⁵⁴ U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, *Project Profile: Eagle Project*.

⁵⁵ U.S. Department of Transportation, *Eagle Project*, accessed October 15, 2024.

<https://www.transportation.gov/buildamerica/projects/eagle-project>

⁵⁶ U.S. Department of Transportation, *Eagle Project*.

⁵⁷ U.S. Department of Transportation, *Eagle P3 Project, Denver, CO*, accessed October 15, 2024.

<https://www.transportation.gov/buildamerica/projects/project-highlights/eagle-p3-project-denver-co#:~:text=Sources%20of%20direct%20public%20funding%20for%20the%20construction,in%20contributions%20from%20local%20city%20and%20county%20governments.>

⁵⁸ Denver Transit Partners, *Partners*, accessed October 15, 2024. <https://denvertransitpartners.com/partners/>

⁵⁹ Denver Transit Partners, *Partners*.

⁶⁰ U.S. Department of Transportation, *Eagle P3 Project, Denver, CO*, accessed October 15, 2024.

<https://www.transportation.gov/buildamerica/projects/project-highlights/eagle-p3-project-denver-co#:~:text=Sources%20of%20direct%20public%20funding%20for%20the%20construction,in%20contributions%20from%20local%20city%20and%20county%20governments>

partnership (PPP).⁶¹ PPP would allow RTD to “deliver a large portion of the program in order to reduce costs and transfer certain risks to the private sector.”⁶² The Federal Transit Administration eventually accepted the RTD’s proposal to pilot the Eagle Project as a PPP project.⁶³

Public Mass Transportation Funding in Comparable Counties

In this section we provide examples of bus transportation systems in counties that are comparable to Chittenden County.

Saratoga County, New York

Saratoga County is located approximately two and a half driving hours south of Burlington, Vermont. It covers 810 square miles and had a population of 235,509 as of 2020.⁶⁴ The county is home to Skidmore College and is part of the bigger Capital District (Region 1), which includes Albany, New York, the state capital.

Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA) is the main public transportation in Saratoga County. CDTA’s Universal Access Program, supported by close to fifty partners at the state, federal, and local level, provides unlimited access to its route network.⁶⁵ This program collaborates with businesses, hospitals, schools, and universities to offer universal transit access.⁶⁶ CDTA operates five routes in Saratoga Springs.⁶⁷ CDTA receives funding through its Capital Plan. For the 2024-2025 fiscal year, the Capital Plan is funded at \$46.9 million, primarily from federal and state grants.⁶⁸ The Capital Plan focuses on large infrastructure projects, such as upgrading the - rapid transit stations, introducing new mobility hubs, electrifying the bus fleet, and improving technology to support CDTA’s operations.⁶⁹

Rockingham County, New Hampshire

⁶¹ U.S. Department of Transportation, *Eagle P3 Project, Denver, CO*.

⁶² U.S. Department of Transportation, *Eagle P3 Project, Denver, CO*, accessed October 15, 2024. <https://www.transportation.gov/buildamerica/projects/project-highlights/eagle-p3-project-denver-co#:~:text=Sources%20of%20direct%20public%20funding%20for%20the%20construction,in%20contributions%20from%20local%20city%20and%20county%20governments>

⁶³ U.S. Department of Transportation, *Eagle P3 Project, Denver, CO*.

⁶⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, *Saratoga County, New York*, accessed October 3, 2024. https://data.census.gov/profile/Saratoga_County,_New_York?g=050XX00US36091.

⁶⁵ Capital District Transportation Authority, “CDTA’s 2025 Spending Plan Reflects Progress, Growth, and a Bold Vision for the Future,” *CDTA Newsroom*, October 25, 2023. <https://www.cdta.org/news/2025-spending-plan#:~:text=The%20customer%20revenue%20line%20is%20being%20fueled,provide%20greater%20ease%20and%20convenience%20of%20use>.

⁶⁶ Capital District Transportation Authority, *Universal Access Program*, accessed December 2, 2024. <https://www.cdta.org/news/cdta-adds-new-ua-partner>

⁶⁷ Capital District Transportation Authority, *Routes and Schedules: Saratoga County*, accessed October 3, 2024. <https://www.cdta.org/routes-and-schedules/saratoga>

⁶⁸ Capital District Transportation Authority, *CDTA Board Approves Operating Budget and Capital Plan for 2025*, accessed October 3, 2024. <https://www.cdta.org/news/2025-spending-plan>

⁶⁹ Capital District Transportation Authority, *CDTA Board Approves Operating Budget and Capital Plan for 2025*.

Rockingham county is located less than three driving hours from Burlington, Vermont and is sixty minutes north of Boston, MA. As of 2020, Rockingham County covers 695.4 square miles and has a population of 314,176.⁷⁰

The Rockingham County region is served by two regional mass public transit agencies. The Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation (COAST) provides service to eleven communities across Rockingham, Strafford, and York counties, while the Cooperative Alliance for Regional Transportation caters to five communities in western Rockingham County. Additionally, the Rockingham County communities of Portsmouth and Newington benefit from the University of New Hampshire's Wildcat Transit service, which is primarily designed to meet the commuting needs of students and faculty but is also open to the public.⁷¹

COAST's annual operating budget typically falls between \$7.5 million and \$8.0 million.⁷² As a nonprofit organization, COAST's funding comes from a variety of sources, including federal, state, and local funds.⁷³ Federal funding usually requires matching contributions from state or local sources, which COAST primarily secures from the municipalities it serves. Additional funding is obtained through charitable contributions from businesses and individuals, as well as specific service agreements and advertising on buses and in bus shelters.⁷⁴

Cooperative Alliance for Regional Transportation is funded by the Federal Transit Administration and member towns, and as a non-profit 501 (C) 3 it relies on charitable donations.⁷⁵ It provides fixed-route and curb-to-curb demand-response transportation services throughout Southern New Hampshire.

Ulster County, New York

Ulster County is located approximately four and a half driving hours south of Burlington, Vermont. As of 2020, Ulster County had a population of 181,851 and covers an area of 1,124.2 square miles.⁷⁶ The county includes the Hudson River Valley, parts of the Catskill Mountains, and the city of Kingston.

Ulster County as of 2024 is providing Fare Free (no cost to the rider) service for all riders on both fixed routes and demand-responsive services through Ulster County Area Transit

⁷⁰ U.S. Census Bureau. *QuickFacts Rockingham County, New Hampshire*, accessed October 3, 2024. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/rockinghamcountynewhampshire,US/PST045222>

⁷¹ Rockingham Planning Commission, *Public Transportation*, accessed October 3, 2024. <https://www.therpc.org/transportation/transit/public-transportation>

⁷² Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation, *Mission, Vision, and Values*, accessed October 3, 2024. <https://coastbus.org/about-coast/mission-vision-and-values>

⁷³ Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation, *Mission, Vision, and Values*.

⁷⁴ Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation, *Mission, Vision, and Values*.

⁷⁵ Cooperative Alliance for Regional Transportation, *CART Brochure 2015*, accessed October 3, 2024. http://cart-rides.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/CART_Brochure2015-English.pdf

⁷⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, *Ulster County, New York*, accessed October 3, 2024. https://data.census.gov/profile/Ulster_County,_New_York?g=050XX00US3611

(UCAT).⁷⁷ This is possible due to multiple federal and state funds. In December 2023, the Ulster County Legislature passed a local law raising the occupancy tax on hotels, motels, and short-term rentals from 2% to 4%.⁷⁸ Then, in the 2024 Adopted Budget, 25% of occupancy tax revenue was allocated to fund the UCAT public transportation system.⁷⁹

In the 2018 fiscal year, Ulster County sought federal and state financial assistance for its public transit program. The project is anticipated to be funded mainly through Federal Section 5339 public transportation funds and Federal Section 5307 funds.⁸⁰ Notably, the Federal Section 5339 program provides financial resources to states and direct recipients for the replacement and rehabilitation of buses and related equipment, as well as for the construction of bus-related facilities.⁸¹ This funding also supports technological upgrades and innovations aimed at modifying low or zero-emission vehicles and facilities. The funding is accessible through formula allocations and competitive grants.⁸²

Additionally, Federal Section 5307 funds, under the Urbanized Area Formula Funding program (49 U.S.C. 5307), provide federal resources to governors and other recipients for transit capital and operating assistance, as well as transportation-related planning in urbanized areas.⁸³ An urbanized area is defined by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, as an "Urban Area" with a population of 50,000 or more.⁸⁴ In the 2024 Adopted Budget 25% of occupancy tax revenue was allocated to fund the UCAT public transportation system.⁸⁵

This report was prepared by Carolena Bellini, Isabelle Shields, and Rae Cruea on November 19, 2024, under the supervision of VLRS Deputy Director, Dr. Jonathan "Doc" Bradley, and VLRS Director, Professor Anthony "Jack" Gierzynski, in response to a request from Representative Leonora Dodge.

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⁷⁷ Ulster County Area Transit, *Routes and Schedules*, accessed October 3, 2024.

<https://ucat.ulstercountyny.gov/routes/>

⁷⁸ Ulster County Government, "Ulster County Legislature Approves Occupancy Tax Allocation to Fund Housing." *Ulster County*, June 20, 2024. <https://ulstercountyny.gov/news/executive/ulster-county-legislature-approves-occupancy-tax-allocation-fund-housing>

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⁸³ U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration, *Urbanized Area Formula Grants (5307)*, accessed October 3, 2024. <https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grants/urbanized-area-formula-grants-5307>.

⁸⁴ U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration, *Urbanized Area Formula Grants (5307)*.

⁸⁵ Ulster County Government, "Ulster County Legislature Approves Occupancy Tax Allocation to Fund Housing," June 20, 2024. <https://ulstercountyny.gov/news/executive/ulster-county-legislature-approves-occupancy-tax-allocation-fund-housing>

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