

Public Transportation Advisory Committee Meeting
Wednesday, October 24, 2018 2:00 p.m.
McHenry County Transit Plan Update- Discussion of Draft Concept Alternatives

The meeting began with a PowerPoint presentation describing the four draft concept alternatives for the Transit Plan Update. General Plan recommendations as well as details for each concept alternative were reviewed. Once the presentation was over, the attendees were asked to distribute themselves equally around five tables to participate in a workshop exercise to review each concept alternative. Information including the draft report showing proposed services, a map of each concept, costs and other information, discussion questions, and comment cards were distributed at each table. A note taker was assigned at each table.

The attendees were asked to first review Concept 1 at their individual tables and discuss the pros and cons for the concept. Pro comments and con comments were recorded and handed in at the end of a set time period. Attendees were then asked to get up and sit at a different table to discuss Concept 2 with another group of participants. The distribution of attendees at different tables allowed each member to hear unique opinions during each round of discussion. The same format was followed for each subsequent concept. At the conclusion of discussions, the pro and con comments submitted for each concept were grouped with similar comments and posted on the wall. Finally, a general discussion about the results from each concept was held. Attendees were asked to clarify their comments, if necessary.

The following is a brief synopsis of the pros and cons discussed for the four concepts. The number in the parentheses indicates the number of similar comment cards posted. The complete set of comments is attached as an Appendix to the meeting minutes.

Concept 1

Pros:

- Fare savings
- Cost effectiveness
- Increased service/expansion of service to all (5)
- Connections to outer zones
- Door to door service, similar to Uber (3)

Cons:

- Service seems convenient but execution is problematic
- Need to transfer to another vehicle sometimes
- Confusing
- Possible increase in fares if traveling to different zones (2)
- Need a Ventra card or app to pay fares
- Length of trips could be long

Concept 2

Pros:

- Serves largest population centers (3)
- Not as limited as other concepts
- Less expensive compared to other concepts (2)

Cons:

- Route 570 extension could be problematic for current riders; already a long route in Lake County
- Less efficient service
- Does not expand MCRide (2)
- Pace doesn't typically go cross county borders unless it is an express route
- Eliminates fixed routes to smaller communities (2)

Concept 3

Pros:

- Efficient service/increase frequency (4)
- Increase in destinations service
- No need to schedule each trip

Cons:

- Bad connectivity to other communities/not access for all (4)
- Doesn't increase MCRide service area
- Length of circulators is a concern; riders would need to get on at one point and ride quite a distance in some cases
- Redundant service to MCRide; MCRide serves shorter, local trips which is what the circulators are intended to do
- Increased cost (2)

Concept 4

Pros:

- Extends service area/better access to transit (4)
- More convenient
- More visibility for transit (i.e. see buses on the streets)
- Greater potential for increased riders
- No need to schedule a trip (2)

Cons:

- Connectivity is an issue
- Only seniors/disabled can use MCRide (2)
- No service proposed on weekends

- Problem is getting to bus stops due to lack of infrastructure (i.e. no sidewalks in some areas)
- Expensive concept (4)

Overall Discussion

- Circulator in Cary-Fox River Grove a good idea; that area of the County only has Metra service, no MCRide service
- Ideal would be to have circulators in select areas and expand the MCRide service area
- Get buy-in from larger employers to have services to them
- Feel that the circulators should connect with each other
- Keep the potential for Metra expansion in mind when deciding on a preferred option- i.e. what will the future look like if Metra yard is relocated to Woodstock
- If you expand MCRide service to the entire county with the same budget, there will be longer trips and slower service
- Need to have a “little of both”- i.e. some fixed route in urban areas and more MCRide services for rural areas
- Concept 1 really serves the type of County that we have right now
- If we do circulators, need to make sure we are not taking away service from people who need it (i.e. MCRide) and put in service that doesn't make sense or won't be used
- Should have less long-distance intercommunity bus routes

After discussion, it was stated that it makes sense to identify a preferred alternative as some type of combination of Concepts 1-4.

APPENDIX

Comment Cards

Concept 1 – Expand MCRide

Pro:

- Possible customer fare savings
- Cost effectiveness
- Get away from fixed route
- Door to door service
- Regional coverage
- Mirrors Uber, ride sharing
- Serves 100% of population
- Simplifies service for consumer
- Convenience factor
- Dial a ride availability everywhere is beneficial
- Extends to entire county
- Serves all needs- everyone can ride
- Benefits greater population density
- Transfer has connectivity with other zone rides

Con:

- Zone system hard to understand
- Length of trips could be long
- Riders' cost increased
- Possible increase in fare
- Need for additional \$.5million in funding
- Don't know cost of/fee structure
- Using cash could be difficult
- Transfer points are fixed – may not align with trip
- Need to transfer for rides greater than 2 zones

Concept 2 – Core Fixed Routes

Pro:

- Reduced costs
- Cost savings
- Efficiency of fixed routes in high demand areas
- Concentration on two population centers
- Serves largest population centers
- Throughout the work day (i.e. not as time limited)
- Keeps MCRide in place
- Less of a change for existing ridership

Con:

- Not as much robust activity in outer areas
- Eliminates fixed routes to smaller communities
- Does not address rural areas
- Extension of 570 may be difficult for current riders
- Less efficient compared to Concept 1
- Gaps remain in ridership
- Service not expanded
- Does not expand MCRide

Concept 3 – Long Routes to Circulators

Pro:

- Ease for local trips
- Smaller travel area for drivers- can be more efficient in transporting riders
- More exposure to each community from ridership
- Time efficient
- Increase frequency of services
- Rider time decreases within community
- Cary-Fox River Grove more access to Metra
- No need to schedule each trip
- Increase in primary destinations
- Yes would be nice
- MCRide still available

Con:

- Does not increase MCRide service area
- Increased costs
- Cost?
- Increased cost overall
- Wait times
- Connectivity outside each community
- Doesn't get people to a work location in a different town
- Length of circulator is a concern
- Excludes exposure/transit to smaller communities
- Not access to everyone
- Is it a redundant service (i.e. to MCRide)?

Concept 4 – Expand Fixed Routes

Pro:

- Greater accessibility to areas outside of McHenry County, i.e. airport/recreation
- Services beyond county area
- Extends some service areas
- More convenient with better and consistent service
- Riders know how long trip will take

- No need to schedule rides
- Hours of service excellent
- See more busses mean better marketing for routes
- Greater access to entire county
- Implement in phases
- Greater potential to increase ridership

Con:

- Connectivity could be a nightmare
- Stop locations especially in winter
- Service on weekends
- Cost: \$6.1 million. How fund?
- Expensive
- Greater expense to provide services
- Only seniors and disabled can use MCRide
- Less focus on demand response?
- Time schedule is inconsistent- confusing
- Negative impact on existing schedules