Sustainable Transportation and Calvin College - Action Steps

Commuter Rail – Holland to Grand Rapids

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What is Commuter Rail?

- Connects a central city to neighboring communities within the metropolitan area
- Passenger rail service provided on existing track also used for freight and intercity rail.
- Commonly used for transportation to employment.

What are the Benefits?

For the Community...

- Compact residential and economic development along corridor
- Jobs creation (e.g. construction, operations)
- Stimulus for alternative transportation improvements (e.g. bicycle paths, walkable neighborhoods)
- Reduced highway congestion and maintenance costs

For the Environment...

- Reduced greenhouse gas emissions
- Decreased fossil fuel consumption
- Improved air quality

For the Users...

- Time to read, work, or rest during commute
- Reduced frustration (e.g. from traffic congestion)

For Calvin College...

- Improved connection with surrounding areas (e.g. commuter students and professors, visitors to Calvin)
- Opportunity to study transit operations and design
- Increased access to experiential learning (e.g. field work, educational and service trips)

Proposed Network

Holland to Grand Rapids Service

- Use existing CSX-owned track (approx. 25 miles)
- Intermodal connections: Rapid Central Station (Grand Rapids) and Padnos Train/Bus Depot (Holland)
- 6-12 round trips per day (mainly morning and late afternoon)
- Monthly fare passes - $100-150

Stations

- Holland
- Hudsonville
- Grandville
- Grand Rapids
- Zeeland

Service area (via bus connection)

- East Grand Rapids
- Wyoming
- Walker

Estimated Costs

Capital Costs: $1.2-6.7 million/mile*
Operating Costs: $0.3-2.4 million/mile*

*based on WALLY and DDAA plans

Estimated Ridership

MDOT traffic counts

- Approx. 17,500 roundtrips between Grand Rapids and Holland

US Census Bureau - 2000 data

- Over 3000 commuters between Holland, Zeeland, Hudsonville, Grandville, and Grand Rapids
- Over 20,000 additional commuters within potential service area (through intermodal connections)

Necessary Actions

- Estimate Ridership and Fares
- Develop Business Plan
- Create Authority to Manage Service and Operations
- Assess Environmental Impact

- Secure Funding
  1. Federal Grants (e.g. FHA)
  2. Michigan Grants (e.g. MDOT)
  3. Municipalities in Service Corridor (millage)
  4. Private investment (bonds)

- Negotiate Train Schedule
  - Depends on current rail carrier schedules (Amtrak, CSX, NS, etc.)
  - Work with bus schedules (The Rapid, MAX)

- Construction and Capital Investments
  - Track improvements to increase allowable speed
  - Warning devices at roadway crossings
  - Passenger rail cars (e.g. refurbished from Metra)
  - Locomotives (e.g. used from CSX)
  - Station improvements (Parking, ADA, aesthetics)

References

- Ann Arbor - Detroit Regional Rail Project. SEMCOG. * http://www.senmocog.org/AADD.aspx
- Tom Bytle, Kent County Road Commission.
- Brad Watts, W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research.