

**PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED AND RESPONSE
2018 TIP AMENDMENT TO TRANSIT ELEMENT**

The public comment period for the 2018 TIP Transit Element Changes and Amendments began Friday, June 8 and closed at 4:00 p.m. Monday, June 18. Thirteen (13) individuals submitted written public comments via e-mail during this period. All relevant comments received are in response to the proposed new project for the City of Bangor to undertake a transit planning study using Section 5307 funding.

Comments Submitted

The city of bangor needs to work with TFA and BACTS a lot more and we need this study done and the city of bangor needs to give us results on this study

And we need this process to be done

And we need to have a better transit system for the greater bangor Area and surrounding cities and towns that utilize the community commuter

Is by doing this study and get better results out of it

We also need Is a place where the public to enjoy is a better Pickering Square and a better bus depot to make it safer for those who take the bus to there destination

We need Designated stops as well that's a big improvement that needs to be done so that way it can be better safer for the public to wait for there buses

I hope you can put my input into consideration.

-John B.

I'd like to see bus shelters or metal benches on each of the routes as we community connector users really shouldn't have to wait for the bus in inclement weather the elderly, disabled need a place to be able to sit while waiting for the bus I myself had 3 surgeries on my right knee and have a hard time standing for long periods at a time my wife Debbie also has a hard time standing because of her bad back thanks for your understanding regarding this matter if you need help installing bus shelters or benches let me know thanks.

-James J. and Debbie B.

I have a loved one at Cedar Haven Mobile Home Park in Brewer. He cannot drive, and the bus route does not go out that far on 1A. Thing is, many of his neighbors in the park don't drive either or are too low income to finance a car.

Walking on 1A to the bus is life-threatening in the summer due to tourist traffic going too fast, and it's perilous in the winter due to ice. There is no sidewalk.

I'd like that routing decision re-examined, because of the number of lives affected.

I misspoke. Cedar Haven is in Holden, not Brewer, just past the bus route. I did not overstate the danger of walking 1A to get to a bus.

-MaryEllen R.

I am a member of Transportation for All, and I do not have a car, so the bus is my primary means of transportation. I was surprised and disappointed when I moved up here last summer to find out that the bus doesn't run past 6:00 in the evenings and not at all on Sundays. I have not found this to be the case in any other city where I've lived, large or small. After meeting and talking with many other people who ride the bus, I believe I can safely say that I am not alone on that.

One of the things that bothers me most about those hours is that it makes it very difficult for bus riders to participate in our local democracy, since all city council meetings take place after the buses stop running. This, in effect, shuts many of us out of the process.

If BACTS decides to move forward with this transit study, I would like to make two requests:

Please focus on extending hours as one of the primary goals of the study.

Please have some meetings and/or public comment times (I'm not really sure what the process is, but would very much like to know) during bus hours so that us riders can attend if we so choose.

-E. Darcy C.

Priorities for Transit Study:

Expansion of Routes: If Essex St. were a route, people could come to the Free Community Meal every Thursday from 4-6 at First United Methodist Church of Bangor. Also people in the Mobile Home Parks would have access to public transportation. Expansion on Broadway would help seniors living in Cortland Circle and Orchard Hills Estates.

Designated Stops: Well-used stops could be designated stops now.

Extended hours: This should be part of any study. The current hours prevent people from getting to and from work, shopping, churches and events.

The focus of the study needs to be improving the Community Connector. Transportation for All of Faith Linking In Action/Food and Medicine, AARP, and Bangor Livable Communities recognize that public transportation is vital to people of all ages and abilities.

The study needs to be done in a transparent manner, involving the public, especially riders and drivers.

-Rosalyn F.

I live in Orono, do not drive and have been a regular bus user since the 1970s. Since I know public funding for the bus system is very tight, my first choice for the \$100,000 designated for the proposed study was to spend it for more immediate purposes for the upcoming fiscal year (FY19)-- improving bus cleaning and dispatch, implementing a trial of designated stops-- and planning for a comprehensive study in the fiscal year following.

On the other hand, I do agree that a comprehensive study is needed. For example, commercial activity in the Stillwater/Hogan Road area has exploded since the Bangor Mall was built but bus service has not kept pace-- and this is a notoriously difficult area for pedestrian access, so bus service is critical. Some kind of shuttle service with easy transfer points to buses going downtown for transfer elsewhere would help. Meanwhile as malls proper have declined as focal points for commercial activity, the Mall Hopper has seen a decline in ridership. Another example is the VOOT route, where service was cut back from half-hourly to hourly as an emergency budget-cutting measure back in the '80s and never restored. Meanwhile the University tries in vain to incentivize bus travel. A route reconfiguration that restores half-hourly service, at least on the heavily traveled half of the route from downtown Bangor to the University of Maine, would help.

To be effective, a study must be well designed. I'd love to see a study that didn't just tweak the existing route structure but began with a comprehensive look at transit demand-- and potential demand-- in towns served by the bus system. To do this, we would need both sophisticated survey technology and a big outreach/media campaign to enlist public participation. We should also enlist the aid of community groups (public libraries, senior citizen groups, senior meal sites, programs for people with disabilities) to reach people who might use the bus but may not be tech savvy or have computer access.

In addition, demand must be actual demand, democratically determined. All too often well meaning, well heeled people who don't use a service themselves feel entitled to make decisions on behalf of the low-income people who do use it. An example is the repeated contention that we ought to move the bus hub to a location out of downtown and more convenient for "bus people"-- i.e. next to DHHS or the Unemployment Office. Breaking through one's own preconceptions is the most difficult of intellectual tasks-- you don't understand what you don't understand. For this reason, I hope this study will deviate from the conventional model (hire consultant, let him rip, limited public comment on a draft report at the end). Instead I hope can find a way to build public participation into the whole study process--from survey design to final report--by means of focus groups, open meetings and online feedback opportunities.

In short, I'd love to see an open, inclusive planning process that looked at public transit needs without preconceptions, and left us with a workable road map on how to get from here to there.

-Lisa F.

The following is my statement regarding TFA and the study.

I do think it would be a tragedy for the city to continue to push the idea of moving the bus hub from Pickering Square. It needs to be stated over and over that none of the citizens of Bangor want this. The only people who want the bus hub moved are business and real estate interests who are looking to decrease the visibility of poverty in downtown Bangor. I have been recently happy with the shift in attitude of City Council Members to work with TFA's suggestions for the upcoming study. That being said, I don't support the study in the slightest if there's ever any indication that the underlying purpose of the study is to move the bus hub. If the Council wants to move forward with exploring expanding bus hours or designated stops, they will have the full support of TFA and all its members.

Moving forward, we must be focusing on improving the Bangor bus service. The best way we can do this is by increasing access to our bus service. The hub in Pickering Square is very accessible, so let's forget about that (it doesn't represent your average Bangor resident at all anyway), and move towards the next steps in making our bus service even more accessible. Designated stops is a logical step forward that helps give more structure to the bus system, as well as it has economic advantages in regards to repairs (the buses' breaks wear down too quickly in the flag system, among other things). Extending hours also improves access, and gives the most disenfranchised people more agency over their lives. People can work eight hours in a day and still have plenty of time to take the bus to shop, eat, or enjoy entertainment.

I think that is how we should proceed forward. An entire shift away from a from a hub replacement (and while a route study is helpful, it can't be the main focus of this study), and a shift towards accessibility and extending hours. Also, I hope that the City's attitude is shifting and they are incorporating some of TFA's ideas, and will continue being responsive to public input.

-Zach C.

I am writing in response to the notice for public comments on the BACTS TIP Amendment. I do not currently rely solely on the Community Connector, but for multiple years in college I did rely entirely on the Community Connector to commute from Bangor to Orono for classes. I have gone to school or worked in the Bangor area for 10 years. I want to emphasize how important it is for any study that costs a significant amount of money to address the needs of people who rely entirely on the Community Connector for all their transit needs. These are the regular riders whose contributions in bus fare is most consistent and that the Community Connector depends on heavily. Making the system work for them will increase ridership and provide the funding that the system needs to maintain itself.

I was recently involved in a volunteer effort through the group Transportation for All that asked over 370 riders about their public transportation needs. By far the most common response was that expanded hours are need in order to make the Community Connector work for riders. This was the response from regular riders and occasional riders. All said they would use the bus more often if this was made available. People also talked about the way this is was essential for them to be involved in community life- evening events including events for their children and dependents were out of the question for many because of the lack of availability of evening

busses. For these reasons I again emphasize that taking the input of regular riders seriously is essential to making this system work.

If the city plans to spend \$100,000 on a study it should focus heavily on how to make evening hours work- what would a reasonable plan and time frame look like for making this happen. Even if it is aspirational it is the only way to improve the system to make it work for all, so should be a core part of what the study investigates. I understand this necessarily includes looking at a comprehensive view of the system, but if the scope and purpose of the study do not focus heavily on that from the start then I feel the money would be wasted and should instead be used to address immediate needs like hiring more dispatchers, drivers, bus cleaners, or doing real-time service updates.

-Amy H.

I am a Bangor resident and businesswoman who supports going ahead with the transit study IF the primary focus is on ending up with a system that:

- best supports the needs of people who rely on such a system as their sole means of transportation:
- **does not marginalize or attempt to marginalize** those people who rely on such a system
- ends up with a designated route system that makes the most sense and is the easiest to maneuver
- leads to the creation of a viable capital plan that best improves the bus fleet and...
- allows for extended hours that jibe with the schedules of those who rely on the bus to get around.

As a businesswoman who has primarily managed and owned downtown residential property for over 15 years I see no conflict between the needs of the current and potential Community Connector ridership and the business community. In fact I have seen a dramatic increase in the number of downtown residents who have noted the value of a well run transit system to a vibrant urban community. I look forward to the possibility that this study will help our city come up with such a system, especially by including public participation at all stages of its development.

-Suzanne K.

I would like to make public comments in regard to the request for funding by the city of Bangor for a transit study.

If the city of Bangor is going to do a transit study through hiring a consultant, then what follows are some considerations that, in my opinion, would be vital for a successful study:

- That the study has as its primary goal to improve the Community Connector. I want a transit system that is even more effective for all riders, especially those for whom The Community Connector is the sole means of transportation. A well-designed, well-run transit system is also the sign of a true urban center that people “from away” look for in a potential residence.

- Though I would prefer that the \$100k for the study be used immediately for purposes including dispatch, cleaning, tablets as well as other uses and do the transit study next year, however, given the likelihood of the Transit Study going forward, I want to make it the best it can be. In that context, here are my priorities:
 - **Routes:** I believe the study should make suggestions for route improvements.
 - **Capital and bus replacement:** I want to see that the study recommends a clear time table and necessary steps for extended hours becoming a reality.
 - **Hub:** I believe it important that what is best for the Community Connector is the primary cause to any change to the system. Other causes, such developmental interests related to Pickering Square should not be seen as a primary factor in changing the system. This is especially relevant given the over six years of lobbying to move the bus out of Pickering Square.
 - **Designated Stops:** I believe a study would be beneficial for designated stops. However, I wonder if some stops, that are so obviously vital to riders, might receive designated stop status now.
 - **Management and structure:** I look forward to learning more about what the city of Bangor has in mind regarding a potential Transit District. In considering such changes, I look to retain the public nature, with its robust mechanisms for accountability.
 - **Extended Hours:** I believe this should be part of any study as extending hours relates to routes, capital bus replacement, designated stops and municipalities.
 - **Public Participation:** I want the study to be done in a transparent and inclusive manner involving and incorporating public and stakeholder participation- especially that of the riders and drivers - in all aspects of the study and specifically in reviewing past studies, shaping data collection, analyzing data and making recommendations. I think this would be accomplished by forming an advisory committee to the study.

-Jack M.

I am a Bangor resident since late August of 2017. I am commenting on the City of Bangor amending the 2018-2021 Transportation Improvement Program regarding the Transit Planning Study. My comments come to you as a member of Transportation for All, (TFA) and as a citizen of Bangor who wants to see positive change that benefits everyone.

I moved to Bangor from southern Maine. I previously lived in downtown Portland then shortly in Scarborough before moving here. During my time there, I saw Portland's Metro bus system continue to improve and grow. I remember that Portland not too long ago had very limited Sunday service and now provides full service. New routes have been added and tweaked and service to surrounding towns and beyond were planned and implemented. A transportation system evolves to the needs of its current ridership with a plan of attracting new riders.

Portland's ridership continues to attract and grow. I believe that Portland is a good example that Bangor could follow only in a smaller scale. I am one of those people from "away" that needed and wanted to move to this beautiful part of Maine. The fact that Bangor has the Community Connector was an important reason in our decision to move here. I do not own an

automobile and rely a lot on active transportation to get to work, do errands and all of the things that most of us need or want to do on a regular basis. The current Community Connector schedule does not fulfill all of my needs mostly due to not having evening and Sunday hours. Mostly, it makes it very difficult to find employment that corresponds to its current schedule. Many opportunities cannot even be considered.

Below I have included some talking points from Transportation For All which I do agree with. My major point is to include the public; current riders, future riders and anyone interested in making Bangor a better place to live/work/visit, in this process as much as possible.

Given the likelihood of the Transit Study going forward, we want to make it the best it can be. In that context, here are our priorities:

- **Routes:** We believe that there could be improvements made to routes.
- **Capital and bus replacement:** We agree that it makes sense for there to be a capital plan, particularly when considering the system going to later hours.
- **Hub:** It is important that what is best for the Community Connector and its riders is the primary cause to any change to the system as opposed to real estate or developmental concerns pushing for changes. This is especially relevant given the over six years of lobbying to move the bus out of Pickering Square.
- **Designated Stops:** We appreciate that a study would be beneficial for designated stops. Transportation for All has done some work on this issue and believe that some funding now would be helpful for those stops that are so well-used that they could readily be determined a designated stop now.
- **Management and structure:** We look forward to learning more about what the city of Bangor has in mind regarding a potential Transit District. In considering such changes, we look to retain the public nature, with its robust mechanisms for accountability.
- **Extended Hours:** We believe this should be part of any study as extending hours relates to routes, capital bus replacement, designated stops and municipalities.
- **Public Participation:** We want the study to be done in a transparent and inclusive manner involving and incorporating public and stakeholder participation- especially that of the riders and drivers - in all aspects of the study and specifically in reviewing past studies, shaping data collection, analyzing data and making recommendations.

-Dominick R.

I am a Bangor resident and was recently diagnosed with Epilepsy. This has prevented me from being able to legally drive and from riding a bike. Without the Community Connector, it would have been extremely difficult for me to keep my job (and also my health insurance). Being without reliable transportation has been extremely eye-opening. Without a reliable bus system, many folks in this area would not be able to get around, would not be able to patronize local businesses. I support a system which will best support the needs of people who rely on the Community Connector year round. Most people who rely on the Community Connector have limited means and the right thing to do is to extend hours and routes. This will help grow our community and local economy.

-Adam T.

I'm a long-time resident of Bangor (over 26 years), a tax-payer, now retired. I own a car but use the bus when it fits my needs and schedule, and I can foresee a time when I am no longer able to drive when I will depend upon the bus for all my transportation.

I have been following the Bangor City Council discussions about the Community Connector and their request for another study. I wasn't convinced another study was necessary... I would have preferred a more extensive look at the last study and using the 'study money' to try extended hours on a few routes or some other trial to improve bus service ... but it looks like we are having another study. With this new comprehensive study, I urge you to keep these basic thoughts in mind:

- The transit system needs to be improved for all riders, especially those who use it as their only means of transportation.
- Please keep the mindset that people who ride the bus are full and contributing members of our community. Our tax dollars support people who own and drive cars to a much greater extent than we do people who ride the bus. We need to treat bus riders with equal respect.
- Looking at the location of the bus hub is important but must consider what is best for riders, not for businesses advocating for moving the Hub away from downtown because of perceived 'problems' with riders. The truth is... those problems nearly always occur in the evening when the buses are not even operating.
- Extended hours must be a part of any study, as that is the single most important request from riders. To help Bangor become a vibrant city, people need to get downtown and to other places in the evenings. Extended hours are necessary... the study should consider HOW we make that happen.
- Route study and designated stops... both important to look at.
- Public participation: It is critical to have bus riders, bus drivers, and other community members in the loop and part of the conversation.

I love my city Bangor. My friends and community are here. I raised my two daughters here (who have since moved to the Boston area where they BOTH use buses and the T to get to their jobs). I believe an improved transit system, particularly with extended hours, can only boost our city's liveability and image.

-Geraldine G.

Response to Comments

The majority of respondent comments have a common theme and refer to desired service levels and priorities for the proposed study, including expanding service hours and frequency, designating stops, providing additional amenities and allowing for public involvement and transparency in the decision making process. Some respondents expressed concern that the primary intent of the proposed study was to remove the bus hub from Pickering Square.

Additionally, some respondents commented that the funding to be used for the proposed study could be better used for other purposes such as improving dispatch, designated stops, bus cleaning and tablets.

Some respondents referred to the proposed project as a BACTS study. While BACTS is responsible for programming all federal transportation funding, including the funding requested by the City of Bangor to complete the proposed transit planning study, it is important to understand the proposed study is not a BACTS sponsored study. The proposed study is to be carried out by the City of Bangor.

BACTS believes the public comments received did not raise any new material issues which would require an additional public comment period. As the comments received are directly related to the operations and projects of the Community Connector, all comments will be forwarded to the City of Bangor Management, Community Connector staff and the BACTS Municipal Partners Transit Committee.

BACTS is aware that the City of Bangor 2019 budget documentation published identifies the proposed study as a “Transit Hub Study and Service Equity Analysis.” Public comment and opposition to the City of Bangor budgeting funds for a transit hub study, when such a study was just completed in 2014, instigated further discussion. Based on public comment and feedback during the municipal budget workshop process, the City of Bangor revised the study description and drafted a proposed scope of services for a “Transit Planning Study” to evaluate the systems design, routes, and schedules.

Because of the conflicting information, BACTS understands the respondents concerns about clarity on the focus and scope of the proposed study. The project scope provided to BACTS staff and members of the BACTS Municipal Partners Transit Committee, which is the basis for the proposed project described in the TIP amendment, describes the goal of the study “to examine all aspects of the current system design and provide recommendations on how to best operate and manage the system.” It further describes the purpose “to enhance reliability, efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the bus service, limiting the time required to travel between important origin and destination points and servicing the geographical areas on the days and times with the highest transit demand.”

It has been more than a decade since a system-wide Transit Route Redesign Study has been completed in the BACTS area. Ridership has been progressively declining over the past several years and economic and demographic trends have shifted dramatically in that timeframe. The greater Bangor area has undergone substantial economic development in recent years; however the types and locations of growth have changed. Some of this growth has had negative impacts on the efficiency of the Community Connector bus system. A holistic analysis of most appropriate system design, routes, schedules and operations can build the necessary foundation to develop an organized plan of action required to enhance the reliability and sustainability of the region’s public transit service.