

Executive Summary

The Ontario County Planning and Transportation Departments retained the consulting team of Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates, the IBI Group and Stuart Brown and Associates “the study” team) to prepare a system and route-by-route analysis of Ontario County’s public transportation system, branded as County Area Transportation Services (CATS). The objective of the analysis was to identify where existing transit resources are distributed, how efficiently they operate and how effectively they meet public transportation demand. The study team also worked to identify key system and service deficiencies, potential improvements and ideas for funding.

Needs Assessment

A critical part of developing service recommendations was to understand the perspectives, priorities and needs for public transportation services. We relied on two main sources to help us understand transit needs: a community profile/market assessment and input from stakeholders, CAT riders and members of the general public. Based on this data, our assessment of public transit needs includes:

- Service needs to be re-aligned to incorporate growing travel markets in the northwest corner of Ontario County, especially the towns of Victor, Farmington and Manchester.
- Consistent with the population shift, there is a call for direct service between Geneva and the Eastview Mall in Victor. Services may support employment and ideally will be timed to meet RGRTA commuter routes.
- FLCC is a major generator of ridership for CATS. A future potential need will be to connect the FLCC main campus in Canandaigua with the Science and Technology Campus planned in the Town of Victor.
- Regional services are increasing in importance. There is potential to improve connections between CATS and other regional transit providers, especially in Victor and Geneva.
- There is a need to develop a transfer location off of the Main Street in Canandaigua. While the current site has a lot of visibility, it requires buses to pull in and out of traffic and the location is a difficult place for passengers to cross the street.
- CATS needs more marketing and outreach efforts. Comments and data from riders, stakeholders and non-riders demonstrate a lack of information and awareness about the service in general.
- CATS may conduct targeted marketing efforts to specific employers or institutions, including by not limited to FLCC.
- Data shows the importance of walk access to the fixed-route service, especially for transit dependent riders. Changes to existing route alignments and plans for new services should bear in mind the importance of walk access and egress from bus service.
- There may be potential to incorporate senior van service into mid-day fixed-route services by offering a higher level of service during those times with door-to-door service between key facilities.

Recommendations

The CATS system consists of three types of general public services:

- City routes that operate within the Cities of Canandaigua and Geneva and provide connections among local destinations. These routes also function as feeder/distributor routes for passengers traveling into Canandaigua and Geneva.
- Intra-county routes that provide connections between larger communities in Ontario County and offer connections from these locations to destinations in Canandaigua, Geneva and the Town of Victor.
- General public dial-a-ride services that are intended to provide county-wide transportation services for individuals not living near fixed-route services.

Our analysis of the system suggests that while the fixed-route service is doing a good job carrying passengers, the system may be improved to better meet passenger needs and expectations. These improvements primarily involve making routes faster, more direct and easier to understand and communicating the service more clearly. Accordingly, we propose a series of changes that will increase service frequency on main streets, maximize direct connections to/from key destinations, improve coordination among services and design routes so buses travel out and back on the same alignment. A map of the proposed changes is shown in Figure ES-1.

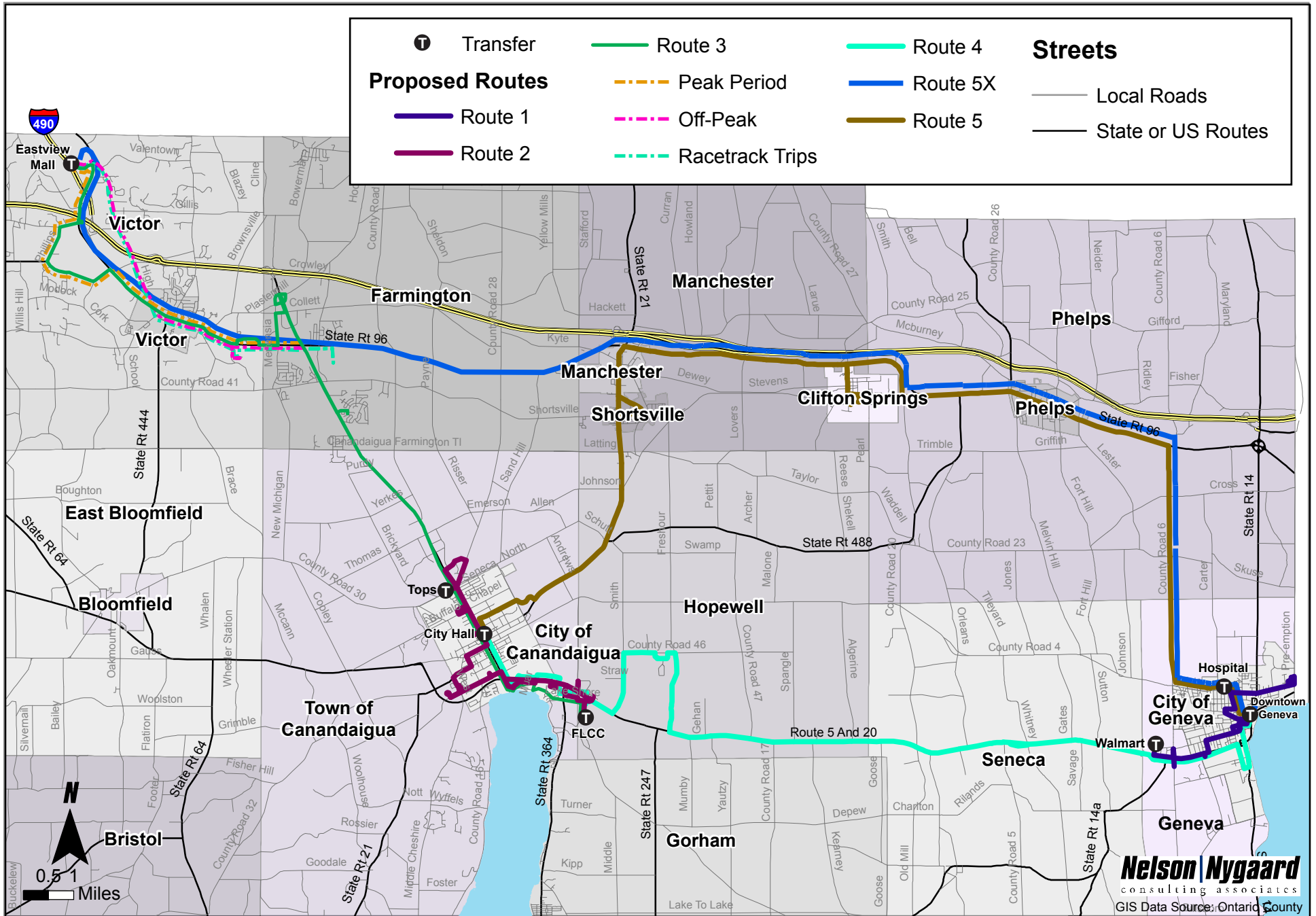
The study team is also recommending a series of strategies to improve the efficiency of CATS dial-a-ride (DAR) services. The existing DAR service provides excellent access to public transportation countywide and is appreciated by members of the public. The service, however, is expensive to operate, and as demand continues to grow the service has become unsustainable. Our recommendations, therefore, include ideas to improve the efficiency of existing operations, primarily through the implementation of technology and software.

Changes to the services will also require updates to the passenger schedules and information systems. We recommend using this information to improve the existing system so that both printed and web-based information materials are clear, accessible and easy to understand. Service changes also provide an opportunity to expand marketing and outreach activities, with a particular focus on major destinations and/or institutions, especially destinations and institutions that have significantly improved service.

In summary, service recommendations include:

- Improve existing fixed-route services by realigning routes to provide more direct services to the most important destinations. We also suggest using a series of hybrid services to manage dial-a-ride service costs but continue to provide an acceptable level of services.
- Use technology and service changes to manage costs of general public dial-a-ride services.
- Improve marketing to increase awareness of the services and make them easier for members of the non-riding public to use.

Figure ES-1 Proposed CATS Fixed-Route System



- Improve transit infrastructure by moving the transfer point off of Main Street in downtown Canandaigua to a safer location.
- Establish performance measures to help measure and track system performance.

Implementation Costs and Funding

The net increase in annual operating costs associated with the proposed recommendations is estimated at approximately \$260,409 (see Figure ES2). This estimate is based on 2008 costs (\$37.18 per hour) and reflects operating costs only. No costs associated with the purchase of equipment (software), increased marketing efforts or administrative costs have been included. Furthermore, cost estimates reflect several broad assumptions and should be used for planning purposes only. Our estimate of costs to implement the proposed recommendation is based on the following assumptions:

- An increase in fixed-route service from approximately 30,000 to nearly 51,200 annual service hours.
 - The increase in service hours results from increased service frequency, the addition of Route 5X (peak period commuter service between Geneva and Victor) and transforming Routes 6 and 7 into flex-services.
 - The span of service on some routes will also change. Accordingly, CATS will transition from seven peak buses to 11.
- Dial-A-Ride operations, on the other hand, will reduce service hours from approximately 72,250 hours to an estimated 57,220.
 - Savings will be achieved through increased efficiencies gained by adopting scheduling software. By using scheduling software systems to schedule general public DAR service will increase the number of passengers per hour carried from approximately 1.17 to 1.46. This translates to approximately a 25% reduction in general public DAR service hours.
 - Implementation of flex-services will also work to reduce reliance on general public DAR services. In total, we broadly estimate that flex services will reduce general public service hours by an additional 10%.
 - For purposes of this analysis, we have assumed that DAR Medicaid trips will decrease by 10%. Reduced gains in efficiencies reflect the inherent complexities of Medicaid trips that are more restrictive as compared with general public DAR.

The proposed service recommendation will also have an impact on the amount of STOA funds received by Ontario County. Based on broad calculations, we estimate that using the mileage formula alone, Ontario County may raise an additional \$211,633 in STOA revenues (see Figure ES3). Funds may also be raised through federal sources, especially the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) program 5316 Job Access Reverse Commute, which could be used to support the proposed Route 5X and potentially increased service hours on other routes.

Service changes may need to be implemented incrementally to realize some cost savings while additional funds are being identified. As a first step, therefore, we recommend that Ontario County purchase scheduling software for its dial-a-ride and medical assistance transportation services. As staff becomes accustomed to using this software, CATS should see a reduction in the number of vehicles and drivers needed to operate the services. Once realized, these resources can be deployed to increase and improve fixed-route services. The scheduling software will also be helpful to support the introduction of the hybrid services.

As discussed, service changes should be accompanied by an extensive marketing and outreach effort to ensure passengers understand the changes. These efforts may include development of new schedules; signage and system maps to help riders and non-riders understand services. Additional outreach efforts to social service providers, medical institutions, colleges and major employers will also help CATS promulgate changes.

Figure ES2 Estimated Cost of Recommended Service Changes – Operating Costs Only

	Current	Proposed	Net Change (Hours)	Net Change (Costs)
Fixed-Route Service Hours	29,115	50,726	21,611	\$803,497
DAR - Medicaid	37,570	33,813	(3,757)	(\$139,685)
DAR – General Public	34,680	23,409	(11,271)	(\$419,056)
Sub-total All DAR	72,250	57,222	(15,028)	(\$558,741)
Total Service Hours	101,365	107,948	6,583	\$244,756
Estimated cost per hour	\$37.18	\$37.18		
Total System Costs	\$3,766,751	\$4,013,507		

Source: Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates

Notes: Fixed-route service hours based on existing schedule (see Figure 7-9). Proposed service hours based on recommended services (see Figure 7-11). DAR operating hours is based on data provided by Ontario County Transportation Department. Split between Medicaid and general public services is based on ridership. Hourly cost of services based on data provided by Ontario County Transportation Department.

Figure ES3 Additional Vehicles Miles Associated with Recommended Service Network

	Existing	Proposed
Fixed Route	380,000	819,284
Flex Services	-	137,108
General Public Dial-A-Ride	1,113,000	843,322
Total	1,493,000	1,799,715
STOA Funding per Mile	\$0.69	\$0.69
STOA Mileage Revenue	\$1,030,170	\$1,241,803
Net Change	-	\$211,633

Source: Ontario County Transportation Department and Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates

Notes: Existing hours based on CATS 2008 Annual Budget; Proposed estimated based on service hours and calculated average operating speed of 18.5