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# Ontario County CATS Route Analysis Stakeholder Interview Summary

*REVISED: July 2009*

During May 2009, Stuart I. Brown Associates conducted stakeholder interviews with major employers, representatives of educational institutions, medical and human service providers and civic leaders. Interviews were conducted in-person and by telephone. Stakeholders were asked to provide an overview of how their constituents use CATS service in Ontario County, their overall impressions of the service, any issues or concerns, and suggestions for improvement.

The following narrative summarizes the findings from these interviews.

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## EMPLOYER STAKEHOLDERS

The following employer stakeholder representatives were interviewed.

<b>Centerra Wine Company</b> (Constellation/Canandaigua Winery) Barbara Bagshaw, HR Director	<b>G.W. Lisk</b> Mark Kowaski
<b>Geneva General Hospital</b> Lina Brennan, Employee Recruiter	<b>Stone Construction Company</b> Larry Filipski
<b>Clifton Springs Hospital</b> Ethan Fogg, Community Relations Director (formerly worked in HR Department)	<b>Pactiv</b> James Feneli, HR Director
<b>Ontario County Industrial Development Agency</b> Jim Armstrong, Consultant to OCIDA	<b>Rochester Insulated Glass</b> Rick Wolk
<b>Veterans Administration Medical Facility</b> Joseph Olzsewski, HR Director	<b>Ontario County Department of Workforce Development</b> Kathy Bailey, Placement Specialist
<b>F.F. Thompson Hospital</b> Jennifer DeVault, HR Director	<b>Zotos International</b> Jack O'Donnell
<b>Hobart William Smith College</b> (The College contracts with Sodexo, Inc. for food service and housekeeping services) Terri Travis (Manages housekeeping staff) Scott Brignal (Manages food services staff)	<b>Finger Lakes Community College (FLCC)</b> Grace Loomis, Vice President of Human Resources

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## Overall Perception of CATS

Nearly all of the employer representatives were unaware if any of their employees utilize CATS to commute to and from the work site. Most speculated that few, if any, of their employees utilize CATS for commuting. A couple of employer representatives said that they have seen from time to time a few employees using CATS, but the number using CATS service “could be counted on one hand.”

None of the employer representatives interviewed said that they had any problems recruiting or retaining employees due to a lack of transportation. A couple of employer representatives stated that in the past they would occasionally encounter situations where an employee was having transportation problems. These employers have virtually eliminated such problems, however, by screening out employment candidates who do not have a reliable means of transportation or who do not reside within walking distance. The representative of one of the employers that has employed people from time to time who have relied on CATS to commute to work said that the company was willing to make some adjustments to the work schedules for such employees to better align the employees’ work schedules with the bus schedules.

One employer located in Clifton Springs utilizes ARC clients as contract employees through an agreement with Ontario County ARC. The employer said that it takes an excessive amount of time to transport their clients to and from the job site. As a consequence, the ARC clients can work only a six (6) hour shift instead of an eight (8) hour work shift. The employer was not certain, however, if CATS, ARC or some other agency provides the transportation nor why it took the agency transporting the ARC clients such a large amount of time to transport them to and from the worksite.

None of the employer representatives had ever approached CATS to explore the potential for CATS to provide specialized services. This is probably due to the fact that employee transportation has not been problematic for any of these larger employers. A couple of employers said that they do provide nominal assistance to their employees by providing bulletin boards for employees to post ride-sharing opportunities, but that is the extent to which any of the employers interviewed are involved in employee transportation.

A job placement specialist with Ontario County Department of Workforce Development [a subsidiary of the Finger Lakes Workforce Investment Board (WIB)], said that it is often very difficult to place clients who lack education or have no or low skills into positions, even if entry-level and low-skilled jobs are available, if the clients do not have their own means of transportation. Most such clients cannot afford to purchase and maintain an automobile.

Manufacturers in Wayne, Ontario and Yates counties affiliated with the FAME group conducted a survey of employees in early 2009 to determine the interest in using public transportation. Manufacturers located in Ontario County who participated in the survey were Gorbelt, Raytec and Retrotech. These businesses are located along Fishers Run, east of Route 96 in the Town of Victor. The responses from these manufacturers, summarized in the table on the following page, indicate that there would be support for a Park & Ride service located within five miles of the worker’s home.

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**Table 1**  
**Summary of FAME Survey Results**  
**Gorbel, Raytec and Retrotech Employees only**

**Pickup Location**

Bloomfield	1
Canandaigua	3
Honeoye	2
Macedon	2
Marion	1
Palmyra	1
Rochester	3
Victor	2
Walworth	1
Penfield	1
Fairport	1

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**6. What days of the week would you ride the bus?**

Answer	# of Respondents	% of total
<b>Monday-Friday</b>	16	88.9%
<b>Other</b>	2	11.1%

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**7. Would you consider a Park and Ride option?**

Answer	# of Respondents	% of total
<b>Yes</b>	15	83.3%
<b>No</b>	3	16.7%

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**8. How far will you commute for Park and Ride transportation?**

Answer	# of Respondents	% of total
<b>0 Miles</b>	1	6.7%
<b>1 Mile</b>	1	6.7%
<b>2 Miles</b>	1	6.7%
<b>3 Miles</b>	1	6.7%
<b>4 Miles</b>	1	6.7%
<b>5 Miles</b>	8	53.3%
<b>6 Miles</b>	0	0.0%
<b>7 Miles</b>	2	13.3%

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## Issues/ Unmet Needs

Such clients face two major transportation obstacles. One, the bus schedules do not coincide with employers' work shifts. And two, many clients reside too great a distance from the CATS bus routes to be able to utilize the service.

### 1. Disharmony Between Work Schedules and Bus Schedules

Most of the manufacturing employers with entry level and/or low-skilled job opportunities operate two or three work shifts. Persons hired at entry level are typically placed on the second or third shift as more senior employees occupy the positions on the first shift. This is due to work rules that give more senior employees preference for selecting the shifts they work. The second shift typically begins at 3:00 p.m. and ends at 11:00 p.m. The third shift typically begins at 11:00 p.m. and ends at 7:00 a.m. The CATS bus service begins at 6:00 or 6:30 a.m. depending on the route and ends at 6:30 p.m. Even persons who are close enough to a CATS route to use the service cannot use the bus service to commute to and from their work site if they work the second or third shift. In addition, a few manufacturing companies have unusual work schedules or swing shifts that further contribute to the transportation problems of employees who do not have access to a motor vehicle.

Even employees who reside along a CATS route and work the first shift may not be able to use CATS to commute to work if their start time is 7:00 a.m. Their ability to use the bus for commuting depends on the location of their residences, the location of their worksites and the travel times between the two. For example, a person residing in Naples or along CATS Route 6 cannot use CATS to travel to a job in Canandaigua if his/her work shifts begins at 7:00 a.m. as the first trip from Naples does not arrive in Canandaigua until after 8:00 a.m.

Entry level employees hired to work in retail businesses or hospitals face even greater transportation challenges. Most entry level and low-skilled employees must work weekends or at least one weekend day when the level of CATS service is reduced.

### 2. Lack of Service or Distance to Bus Route Too Great

Certain areas of the Ontario have no fixed route service. In other areas, where CATS fixed route service is available, residents are geographically dispersed and may not reside close enough to a CATS route to use the service. The areas with no fixed route service include the Towns of (a) Canadice, (b) Richmond, (c) West Bloomfield, and (d) Gorham. Although CATS fixed routes run through the Towns of (a) Naples, (b) South Bristol, (c) Bristol, (d) Hopewell, (e) Seneca, and (f) Geneva, large areas of these Towns are remote from the routes. The southwest and western portions of Ontario County are the areas where transportation for employment purposes represents the greatest problem.

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## Suggestions for Improving CATS Service

Although virtually all of the employer representatives lacked knowledge of CATS bus routes and schedules, they nevertheless offered some general suggestions for improving bus service. Not all suggestions, however, were directly related to bus service for employment purposes. For purposes of completeness, all suggestions employer suggestions are identified below.

1. CATS should consider offering bulk fare discounts to the larger employers. These employers could pass the savings on to employees as a means to encourage their respective employees to use CATS for work-related commuting or to at least give the service a try.
2. CATS should consider implementing a pilot project to provide express commuter service between the Victor area and the City of Geneva. Both Geneva General and Hobart William Smith College have a significant number of administrative personnel who commute from the Rochester and Victor areas. A park-and-ride express service operating in the early morning and late afternoon might be used by these employees. The employers may be willing to financially co-sponsor or underwrite some of the cost for such a pilot project.
3. CATS should undertake a promotional and advertising campaign periodically to make Ontario residents aware that CATS is a public transit service. The employer who made this suggestion was surprised to learn that CATS provides public transportation. He was under the impression that CATS was some sort of human service agency and that the buses were used to provide transportation only for agency clients. Other residents in Ontario County may have similar misconceptions.
4. CATS should consider operating express service between Canandaigua and Eastview Mall for shoppers. The bus stop should be located where parking is not problematic, for example, a site other than the Canandaigua City Hall. The suggestion was to establish a park and ride lot at the location of the former Wegmans supermarket at the foot of Main Street or in the parking lot of one of the shopping plazas along Routes 5 and 20. The level of service would have to be adequate for the needs of those shopping at Eastview Mall in order to garner ridership. The lowest level of service would probably need to involve at least a midmorning trip to Eastview with a return trip at noon or early afternoon and an early afternoon trip to the Mall with a late afternoon return trip. Parking and boarding the bus needs to be easy, fast and convenient; otherwise people will not use the service.
5. Periodically, perhaps twice a year, CATS should offer free rides to the public to points of interest or to popular destinations (such as Eastview Mall) to encourage Ontario residents who have never ridden a CATS bus to give it a try. The employer who made this suggestion intimated that there may be a stigma attached to riding CATS and that offering free rides from time to time for such purposes my help to dispel any stigma that may exist if residents who had never ridden a CATS bus were to ride one.

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## EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Representatives at the following educational institutions were interviewed with regard to student transportation.

Hobart William Smith College Rob Flowers, Vice President of Student Affairs Carol Urbaitis, Vice President of Student Enrollment and Management	Desales High School Charles Evangelista, Director of Advancement and Recruitment
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### Hobart William Smith

As nearly all (95%) of the 2,100 students enrolled at Hobart William Smith College reside on campus and the 5 percent who reside off campus live within two or three blocks of the College, transportation to and from classes is not a problem. It appears that few, if any, students utilize CATS service to get around in the City of Geneva or to travel to other destinations in Ontario County. The speculation is that the lack of student riders is due to the students' lack of knowledge of the routes and schedules.

The Hobart William Smith College provides a shuttle service for students in the evenings. The service is provided through a year-to-year contract with a local bus touring company. The shuttle transports students from the campus to the City's downtown business district, to Wegmans supermarket (in or near downtown) and to the Walmart store on Routes 5 and 20, a short distance west of the City. The shuttle operates on Sundays through Thursdays from 7:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m. and on Fridays and Saturdays from 7:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m. Students are not charged a fare to ride the shuttle; the College underwrites the full cost of the service.

The Finger Lakes Community College (FLCC) conducted an on-line transportation survey in September 2008. The survey was open to students and employees. The number of respondents totaled 248, of which 97 (39.1%) were full-time FLCC employees and 25 (10.1%) were part-time employees. Student respondents totaled 125 and comprised 50.4% of the responses. One (1) respondent identified him/herself as neither an employee or student. The largest concentration of students resided in Canandaigua followed by Geneva and Farmington. As demographic information was not cross tabulated with the responses to substantive questions, comparisons of the responses of various cohorts is not possible. A summary of the survey results follows.

Most respondents (82.2%) had regular access to a vehicle

Most respondents (83.3%) arrived at the campus between 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m.

Departure times were spread out over a somewhat longer time period:

24.5% departed between 3:00 p.m. 4:00 p.m.

31.8% departed between 4:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m.

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21.6% departed between 5:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

The most frequently cited reasons for *not* using public transit included the following:

- 46.1% preferred to use their own vehicle
- 35.5% were not aware of the bus routes
- 29.0% did not reside near a bus route
- 15.2% indicated the lack of transportation in the event of an emergency
- 13.8% indicted the hours of operation were not convenient

The survey further revealed that while only 25 (10.2%) of the respondents indicated that they used public transit to commute to and from the campus, 99 (46.7%) indicated that they would consider using CATS to commute to the FLCC if park-and-ride service were offered. Most such respondents further indicated that the park-and-ride lot would need to be within five (5) miles of their homes in order for them to be willing to use the service.

### **DeSales High School**

A total of 113 students are enrolled in Desales (Catholic) High School located in the City of Geneva. Nearly all the students, except those who walk to school, are transported by the public school districts in which they reside. Public school districts are required to transport parochial school students who reside within the public school district to a parochial schools provided that the students reside within 15 miles of the parochial schools they attend.

Currently the Canandaigua Public School District transports a few Desales student who reside distances greater than 15 miles from Desales High School due to unique circumstances. One Desales student resides in an area of Gorham that is also within the Canandaigua School District and within 15 miles of Desales High School. This is the only Desales student currently residing in the Canandaigua School District that the School District is required to transport. Working together Desales High School and the parents of the other students residing in or west of Canandaigua worked out arrangements whereby the Canandaigua School District would transport Desales students from a pick-up and drop-off point at St. Mary's Church in Canandaigua. Parents are responsible for transporting their children to and from St. Mary's Church. As the Desales student residing in Gorham will soon graduate, the Canandaigua School District will no longer be required to provide transportation for the other Desales students that the School District is currently transporting. The termination of this transportation service will likely be very disruptive to the parents and students who have relied on the service for the past few years.

### **Suggestions for Improving CATS Service**

1. CATS should work with Hobart William Smith to prepare and/or compile bus route and schedule information to distribute to new students at orientation and upperclassman at the beginning of the fall semester. Such efforts will increase student awareness of the availability of public transit service in the City of Geneva and between Geneva and other communities and may increase student ridership. The College also has the ability to distribute such information via e-mail blasts to students. CATS may want to consider

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providing students with free passes good for the first week of the semester or for a limited number of rides as a means of encouraging students to become familiar with the available bus service.

2. CATS should initiate discussions with Hobart William Smith College officials to explore the possibility of working with the College to establish evening bus service that would accommodate the transportation needs of the College's students. If the service is partially subsidized by the College, it may enable CATS to significantly expand the level of public bus service in the City of Geneva.
  
3. CATS should initiate discussions with Desales High School officials to explore ways in which CATS may be able to fill the student transportation void that will occur when the Canandaigua School District ceases to provide transportation for Desales students residing in and west of Canandaigua.

### MEDICAL AND HUMAN SERVICE PROVIDERS

A medical service providers roundtable discussion conducted on May 8, 2009 was attended by representatives of Thompson Hospital, Lakeview Mental Health, Happiness House, FLACRA, and Eastview Dialysis. Senior staff of the Ontario County Department of Social Services contributed their insights at a meeting on May 19. Representatives from the Ontario County Office for the Aging were interviewed on May 11. Additional telephone interviews were conducted with representatives of STOP-DWI and the Veterans Administration Medical Group.

<p><b>F.F. Thompson Hospital, Continuing Care Center and Sands Cancer Center</b> Mary Savastano, Director of Social Work</p>	<p><b>Happiness House</b> Dionne Abraham, Director of Structured Day Program</p>
<p><b>Finger Lakes Addiction Counseling &amp; Referral (FLACRA)</b> Joan Sewert</p>	<p><b>Lakeview Mental Health</b></p>
<p><b>Eastview Dialysis</b> Ethan Fogg, Community Relations Director (formerly worked in HR Department)</p>	<p><b>Ontario County STOP-DWI</b> Dru Malvesi</p>
<p><b>Veterans Administration Medical Group</b> Melissa Moshier, Outpatient Coordinator</p>	

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## **Overall Impression of CATS**

CATS bus is used frequently by patients at major hospitals. Several human service agencies buy tokens and passes for consumers in order to encourage them to be independent.

All of the medical and human service provider stakeholders were very familiar with CATS and are appreciative of the service. Several noted the “very responsive staff” and indicated that it is a “wonderful service,” especially the wheelchair and Dial-a-Ride service.

## **Issues/ Unmet Needs**

### **Frail elderly and others cannot tolerate riding in CATS vehicle**

When frail hospital and nursing home patients need to be transported from one facility to another, specialty transportation is needed as such patients need care that is not available on CATS vehicles. Many people in need of transportation require assistance on and/off the vehicle. For some patients, jostling during the bus ride aggravates medical conditions. Some patients require oxygen and need to be transported in ambulances.

Certain roads are more bumpy than others. Drivers and schedulers should be aware of this and factor slower driving speeds into the scheduling. Riders with medical conditions such as brain injuries cannot tolerate too much jostling.

### **Transportation needs cannot always be identified 24-48 hours in advance**

Service providers often do not know 24-48 hours in advance that a ride will be needed, and thus are not able to schedule service using CATS Dial-a-Ride. Such situations include hospital discharges,

### **Long rides using Dial-a-Ride service are uncomfortable and make consumers late for appointments**

Some patients find that multiple stops and increased length of the trip is very difficult to endure.

### **Dial-a-Ride reservation system is cumbersome and sometimes unreliable**

Agency staff frequently arrange for Dial-a-Ride service on behalf of their consumers. Several agency representatives commented on the need to confirm reservations via phone call; relying on fax confirmation has not been sufficient to avoid a reservation being “lost.” A considerable amount of staff time is devoted to coordinating with CATS.

Sometimes CATS Dial-a-Ride bus will show up for a pickup even if the ride had been cancelled 24 hours in advance. When this happens, the patient is considered a “no show” and risks losing Medicaid coverage. Sometimes drivers continue to show up for cancelled rides for several weeks.

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Some service providers have reported that rides scheduled through Dial-a-Ride sometimes do not arrive or arrive later than expected. When several riders are transported through Dial-a-Ride in the same vehicle, rides take longer and sometimes result in patients arriving late for appointments.

When patients miss appointments, their treatment is compromised. If patients arrive one-half hour late for a one-half hour appointment, they do not receive needed treatment; the consequence is physical decline.

Agencies and riders need more certainty that a ride will arrive within the expected time if it has been scheduled. Better communication from CATS is needed to notify staff if a ride will be late or will not arrive.

### **Weekend and evening service needed**

Few taxi companies available for this service. Transportation is often needed on weekends or evenings, when CATS service is not available. For example, Continuing Care Center residents often need transportation home for weekend visits. Many dialysis patients are on a Tuesday/ Thursday/ Saturday schedule. Substance abuse counseling and other classes are often held in the evenings.

Without available public transportation, staff drive many consumers to these appointments. Without overnight service available, patients have had to wait in the emergency room until 9-10 am to get a ride from staff back to their community residence.

Buses do not run late enough at night to offer an alternative to drinking and driving.

### **Record-keeping and rider tracking need improvement**

It would be helpful to know how many patients' trips are funded by various agencies or grants (such as the funding Office for the Aging received for dialysis transportation.)

### **Drivers do not always respond properly to riders' needs**

While many drivers are very nice, helpful and have good relationships with the riders, driver attitudes are sometimes a problem. For example, a driver went inside the Clinic to ask people to move their cars. This was disruptive to the patients, many of whom are frail.

### **Medicaid reimbursement for transportation is sometimes difficult to obtain**

Medical service providers are sometimes unable to obtain prior approval from Medicaid for eligible transportation costs. This occurs when rides are needed with little advance notice, or during evenings and weekends. It also occurs when dealing with Departments of Social Services from other counties for transportation within Ontario County.

### **Coordination with public transportation in other counties is sometimes difficult**

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Many consumers of medical and human service agency services travel from outside of Ontario County. WATS/CATS coordinate transfers at Port Gibson.

WATS also makes frequent trips to the Canandaigua VA, Happiness House and Eastview Dialysis. Suggestion: Use these locations more formally as hubs to coordinate inter-county transfers.

Seneca County service (STS) meets the CATS bus at the Geneva Greyhound station. No such neutral meeting spot is available for buses from Livingston County.

It is difficult to access medical facilities in Rochester.

## **CATS fixed routes should stop at service providers and senior housing facilities**

It would help if the bus stopped at the Lakeview Mental Health facility regularly. Several other agencies are at the same location, including ARI, Job Coach and other services.

## **Bus drivers need to wait at Geneva General Hospital for riders to come out from the inside waiting area**

At Geneva Hospital, riders wait inside the hospital. If the driver does not see anyone outside at the bus stop, they may not stop or they may not wait long enough for riders to get up and outside to the bus.

## **Fear/ dislike/ stigma/ lack of knowledge around public transportation**

Many people are hesitant to ride the bus. Programs such as a “bus buddy” may encourage people to ride the bus and build familiarity. Better marketing is needed to encourage ridership.

The bus schedule and route map are difficult to read. More education is needed.

## **Lack of fixed route service in certain parts of Ontario County**

Lack of service in Honeoye, Bloomfield, Canadice and other areas limit residents’ mobility.

## **Suggestions for Improving CATS Service**

1. Standardize the process to schedule Dial-a-Ride and confirm reservations. Reduce the need to continually call to confirm rides.
2. Use the Canandaigua VA, Happiness House and Eastview Dialysis more formally as hubs to coordinate inter-county transfers.
3. Consider a shuttle from the Rochester Outpatient Clinic to the VA.

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4. Consider installing rails at entrance to buses for riders who need assistance getting on and off vehicle.
5. At the Geneva Hospital stop, consider incorporating some wait time in the schedule so riders have enough time to get out to the bus from the inside waiting area.
6. Establish a regular shuttle to medical facilities in the Rochester area.
7. Consider offering free rides with assistance as a way to introduce potential riders to the system.

### **CIVIC LEADERS**

Phone interviews were conducted with:

- Sal Pietropaolo, Director, Canandaigua Business Improvement District
- Collette Barnard, Community Development Specialist, City of Geneva Department of Planning & Economic Development
- Barbara Walters, Director, Canandaigua Chamber of Commerce

### **Perception of CATS**

Public transportation can help to reduce automobile congestion downtown. The Canandaigua BID and the Canandaigua Chamber of Commerce has, in the past, sponsored a free bus service (the “Spot Hop”) through the City of Canandaigua which was operated by Finger Lakes bus service. The service was discontinued because of the cost (\$30,000/ 2-3 months) and lack of sponsor.

Within downtown Geneva, people can walk where they need to go so bus service is not needed.

### **Issues/ Unmet Needs**

Community College students need transportation to Eastview Mall and other sites.

CATS schedule makes it difficult to use the bus to get to work.

New residential development in and around Canandaigua, such as along the lakefront, by the hospital and near Wegmans, should be served with public transportation.

Many people come into Ontario County for employment. These people should have the option of using public transportation. For example, Hartman’s Sausage recently opened a facility on Brickyard Road in the Town of Canandaigua. Although many of the jobs may be suitable to people who do not have cars, the plant is not on a regular bus route.

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Tourists and visitors frequently request information about public transportation and need to travel to various locations within Canandaigua. The Chamber of Commerce receives inquiries several times per week regarding the availability of public transportation service.

Transportation to Rochester from Canandaigua is a need. While it is possible to take CATS to Eastview Mall and transfer to an RTS bus, a direct service to Rochester from Canandaigua would be welcome.

Bus schedules are difficult to read and understand.

In general, people are not aware that there is public transportation available to Ontario County residents. "CATS" is not listed in the phone book.

### **Suggestions for Improved Service**

1. Develop a transit hub off Main Street to get buses off the street. Consider sites near the Courthouse, where traffic is very congested, such as County-owned space at the Depot building or the outhouse property.
2. Capitalize on the community's increasing "green" consciousness to encourage bus ridership. Try to acquire buses that run on clean fuels.
3. Consider establishing Park & Ride lots.