Westport Board of Finance
FY20 Budget Meeting

March 12, 2019
Westport Transit District services

- **Commuter shuttles** to and from Saugatuck and Greens Farms train stations

- **Door-to-Door** transportation for seniors and residents with disabilities “within Westport”

- **Door-to-Door** transportation for residents with disabilities between Westport and Fairfield County communities to our west (“Town-to-Town”)

- Services are provided under subcontract arrangement with Norwalk Transit, which supports the WTD in a number of ways.

  -- The WTD determines scope of operations after considering input of elected officials and the public, oversees arrangements with Norwalk Transit and manages activities such as marketing and budgeting.
Commuter shuttle route structure
Westport Assistance to WTD – FY19 Budget

- The Town of Westport’s FY19 budgeted assistance to the WTD is $358,300, or 0.17% of its $210 million annual budget.

Note: In addition, the WTD forecasts CT funding of $562.4K and $31.6K for the Commuter shuttles and Door-to-Door services, respectively.
Major initiatives
Commuter shuttle marketing program

Is your walk from the station parking lot longer than the drive to the station?

Visit WestportTransit.org

Our shuttle drops you off right at the station platform.
Our new App lets you track where our shuttles are. Our intelligence agencies are very jealous.

Every day, you fight this inner conflict of whether to choose convenience or being green. Now, both win.

Is your walk from the station parking lot longer than the drive to the station?

With our new myStop app, you can track our shuttles, so you can step out of your door and onto the shuttle. And our shuttle drops you off right at the station platform. So you avoid the time it takes to park and then the long walk to the station.

For routes, schedules and myStop app, visit WestportTransit.org

Riding the commuter shuttle reduces Westport's carbon footprint. And with our new myStop app, you can be green while enjoying the epitome of convenience. With our new app, you can actually track our shuttles, so you can step out of your door and onto the shuttle.

For routes, schedules and myStop app, visit WestportTransit.org

Believe it or not, now taking the Westport commuter shuttle can be faster than driving yourself. With our new myStop app, you can track our shuttles, so you can step out of your door and onto the shuttle. It then drops you off right at the station platform.

For routes, schedules and myStop app, visit WestportTransit.org
Commuter shuttle marketing program

• Integrated campaign components:
  -- Series of 8 email messages sent to RR parking permit holders, people on permit waiting list and Parks and Rec email lists.
  -- New billboards and posters installed at RR stations.
  -- “Take One” cards placed at train stations, Saugatuck coffee shops, library, Town Hall, real estate agencies and other locations.
  -- Worked with management of selected apartment buildings to place WTD Take One cards in prominent locations (e.g. 1177 Post Road E).
  -- Flashing banner ad placed on WestportNow for one month.

• Campaign generated close to 1,000 additional visits to WTD website.
Familiarity with Westport’s bus system and routes

- The proportion of Other train riders who are “extremely” or “considerably” familiar with Westport’s minibus system and the routes both rose over the past two years.
  - The percentage of Other train riders who have no or “slight” familiarity with Westport’s minibus system and bus routes is lower than in 2016.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Other train riders - 2018</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bus system</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus system</td>
<td>Not at all/Slightly familiar</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderately familiar</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Considerably/Extremely familiar</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus routes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus routes</td>
<td>Not at all/Slightly familiar</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderately familiar</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Considerably/Extremely familiar</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Q1. First, before taking this survey, how familiar would you say you are with Westport’s minibus bus system (provided under contract by Norwalk Transit)? (unweighted 2018 n=373) AND Q2A. How familiar are you with the commuter bus routes? (Top 2-box) (unweighted 2018 n=373)
Development of new commuter shuttle model

• WTD is researching several “microtransit” pilots in the US to ascertain whether that model could be beneficial to Westport.

• We have developed a vision of a potential “hybrid commuter shuttle model” which would combine fixed routes and microtransit (Door-to-Door group ride service using an App).

• Selective integration of microtransit into WTD shuttle operations has the potential of reducing costs and / or improving service (more trains covered, door-to-door service, and shorter trips in some cases) – which could make the WTD shuttles more attractive to our commuters.

-- 16% of train riders who don’t take the shuttles are “considerably” or “extremely” interested in using a microtransit service (WTD survey).
Development of new commuter shuttle model

-- Use of microtransit for the evening commute appears more promising than for the morning commute due to some uncertainty of making the desired train with AM microtransit.

• WTD will now be able to leverage NTD’s experience with its ‘Wheels 2U service’ (launched in September 2018) and also benefit from its strong working relationship with a key microtransit software vendor.

• WTD has begun to work with NTD to tailor a microtransit application to Westport’s needs.

• We are currently targeting a test of the replacement of two PM shuttle routes with microtransit to commence in the middle of calendar 2019.
Other initiatives

- Addressing “last mile” transit needs of commuters into Westport.
  -- Changed route of two S1 trips to accommodate employees of investment firm that moved to downtown location (and others).
  -- Refined S1 evening schedule to better accommodate reverse commuters.
  -- Discussed utilization of commuter shuttles with Property manager of Greens Farms Road office complex (required hours of service not compatible with nearby WTD route).

- Developing commuter shuttle email marketing campaign for in-town employees / employers to be delivered in coordination with Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Merchants.

- Working with Human Services department to determine feasibility of possible “shopping bus” route developed by WTD.
Commuter shuttles
Evaluation of commuter shuttles

Excerpt from March 13, 2018 WTD Budget presentation to Board of Finance:

• In December 2016 Town-wide survey (1,500 respondents): 59% supported Town funding of shuttles and 29% opposed.

  -- WTD will commission a new survey in the Fall to measure citizen opinions about shuttles based on 2018 facts.

• WTD plans to solicit input from RTM Transit Committee and the full RTM on future strategy for shuttles in November / December.
2018 Town-wide WTD survey

- As planned, in July 2018 the WTD engaged Beresford Research to do a new survey to ascertain current Westport resident perspectives about public transportation taking into account 2018 information. The survey objectives were:
  - Measure the perceived importance of WTD services to the community and attitudes about funding
  - Quantify the level of satisfaction with the commuter shuttle services
  - Measure awareness of the WTD services
  - Elicit citizen input on possible new services.

- The survey was in the field from 10/22/18 to 11/2/18. Participation was excellent: 1,704 responses (compared to 1,421 responses from Westport residents in 2016, out of 1,500 total).
Value of low-cost bus service to the community

- Over three-fifths of Westport residents feel low-cost bus service to the train and door-to-door service for persons with disabilities is “considerably” or “extremely” valuable to the Westport community as a whole.
- Support is lower for door-to-door service for seniors without disabilities (47%).

Note: Q16. How valuable to you and your family, and to the Westport community as a whole, is regular low-cost bus service to the train? (“considerably” and “extremely” valuable shown) (weighted n=1,704); Q19. How important is it to you, your family and to the Westport community as a whole to have the Town provide low-cost (subsidized) door-to-door bus service for persons with disabilities? (“considerably” and “extremely” important shown) (weighted n=1,704) AND Q20. How important to the Westport community as a whole is low-cost (subsidized) door-to-door bus service within Westport for all seniors without disabilities (including those who can drive themselves)? (“considerably” and “extremely” important shown) (weighted n=1,704).
Westport residents were provided the following statement about the Town’s support of the bus service:

- The commuter buses to and from the Saugatuck and Greens Farm stations are currently used by an estimated 100 to 125 regular riders (with more people using the service occasionally). Most of the riders use the service as part of their commute to and from New York City; a smaller number utilize the buses to travel between the Saugatuck station and their job in Westport. Ridership has decreased somewhat in recent years as a greater percentage of commuters have been able to secure railroad parking permits.

In cities and towns across the United States, fares provide only a portion of the cost of public transportation. In Westport, fares cover about 10% of the expenses and are supplemented by a significant subsidy from the state of CT. Additionally, the Town of Westport currently spends about $225,000 annually, which is about one-tenth of 1% (0.1%) of the Town’s $210 million operating budget, on the commuter bus service.
After reading the statement on the preceding page, three-fifths of Westport residents (61%) “strongly” or “somewhat” agree that the bus service should receive public financial support from the Town of Westport.

Results virtually identical to the 2016 results, in which 59% overall agreed.

Note: Q29. Given this information, please indicate whether you agree or disagree that this community service (i.e. scheduled local commuter bus service to and from the train) should receive public financial support from the Town of Westport. (weighted n=1,704)
Funding for the commuter bus

- Should a reduction in State funding require a $100,000 increase in the Town subsidy of the commuter shuttles, two-fifths of respondents (40%) believe Westport should provide the additional funding for commuter buses if necessary, with another 24% supportive of an additional $50,000 of funding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Westport should provide the additional funding</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service should be reduced so that Westport’s assistance remains at $225,000</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service should be reduced so that Westport’s assistance is capped at $275,000</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The commuter buses should be eliminated</td>
<td>11%</td>
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</tbody>
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Note: Q30. Given Connecticut’s fiscal challenges, State support of the Westport commuter buses may be reduced in the future. Should that occur, the Town of Westport’s support of the buses would need to increase by an equal amount or the services offered (such as the number of routes) would need to be changed to produce similar savings. For example, in the event that a change in State funding necessitates a $100,000 increase in Westport’s subsidy of the commuter buses to maintain the current level of service (i.e. from $225,000 to $325,000), do you believe: (weighted n=1,704)
Almost all (92%) of bus riders are “somewhat” or “strongly” satisfied with the Westport bus service for train commuters. Satisfaction levels comparable to the 2016 results.

Note: Q24. Please rate your overall satisfaction with the Westport bus service for train commuters. (unweighted n=123)
December 3, 2018 RTM Committees meeting

• RTM Transit, Long-Range Planning and Finance Committees held a public meeting to discuss the commuter shuttles. Brian Stern and Nancie Dupier of the Board of Finance, Jim Marpe, First Selectman, and members of the public also participated.

• Peter Gold, Chair of RTM Transit Committee, reviewed the history of the WTD and noted that “the purpose of this meeting is to provide the BOF with a sense of what the three most relevant RTM committees feel about the continuation of the WTD commuter shuttles.”

• WTD gave a presentation about commuter shuttle operations.

• Beresford Research reviewed results of the 2018 WTD survey.
December 3 RTM Committees meeting (cont’d)

• There was a thorough discussion among the RTM members and BOF members present, the First Selectman and others about the benefits, challenges and opportunities of the shuttles.

• At end of the meeting, all the RTM members present gave their opinions about the shuttles. While there were concerns expressed about the viability of the WTD shuttles, particularly given its reliance on uncertain funding from the State, “the general consensus was one of strong support for the WTD’s commuter shuttles.” (quote from meeting minutes)

• Please refer to the minutes of the meeting for a more detailed summary of the discussion.
Key characteristics of commuter shuttles today

• WTD commuter shuttles are a Westport asset.
  -- Provides Westport residents with convenient, dependable, cost-effective transportation to and from the train stations.
  -- Helps new residents with transportation to the train station before they secure permits – supporting real estate market.
  -- Transports employees from train station to their jobs in-town.
  -- Reduces parking demand and congestion.
  -- “Green” transportation
  -- Differentiates Westport from other communities.

• Riders are very happy with the commuter shuttles.
  -- 92% of riders said they are somewhat or strongly satisfied with the service in the WTD’s 2018 survey.
Key characteristics of commuter shuttles today

• Ridership has been negatively impacted in recent years by:

  -- Increase in parking permits issued and reduction in waiting list – facilitating more commuter driving to station

  -- Increase in Metro-North trip duration, making commuters less tolerant of (1) real or perceived longer trip time of shuttles vs. driving and/or (2) an additional mode of public transit

  -- Increase in telecommuting

  -- Until recently, lack of awareness-building marketing.

• Ridership has stabilized since early 2018.

• Due to low ridership, cost per passenger is high (about $22/trip, of which about $6 / trip is paid by Westport).
Commuter shuttle ridership

- Estimated 39,000 trips in FY18; Average of 155 one-way trips/day.
- There are typically about 100-110 riders on a peak day morning. Ridership is lower in evenings and on Fridays and holiday/vacation periods.
- WTD estimates there are 100-125 regular commuter shuttle users, with an estimated 20-25 of these reverse commuters. More people use the service occasionally.
- (Estimated ridership statistics are somewhat different than those in some pre-2019 WTD presentations due to new information.)
Annual shuttle ridership trends (% change)

- Ridership decreased by an estimated cumulative 28% from FY15 to FY18.
  -- RR parking waiting list has decreased by 38% since FY15.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FY16</th>
<th>FY17</th>
<th>FY18</th>
<th>FY19 Jan YTD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-15.3%</td>
<td>-8.5%</td>
<td>-7.1%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
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Some WTD Next steps

• Prepare for microtransit pilot in middle of calendar 2019.
  -- Continue to study other microtransit applications (e.g. Long Island).
  -- Define all aspects of microtransit test.
  -- Work with NTD and software vendor to configure microtransit application to Westport’s needs.
  -- Software vendor will do a simulation of microtransit application in targeted areas.

• Continue to evaluate productivity metrics, route structure, schedules and alternative service models.
  -- Possible TBD route and / or schedule changes

• Collaborate with Westport Human Services and other organizations to consider additional services to support Westport population.
Some WTD Next steps (cont’d)

• Expansion of shuttle marketing campaign to in-town employees / employers in coordination with Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Merchants.

• Refresh of shuttle marketing campaign toward outbound commuters (new messages focusing on mechanics of using the system; replacement of Saugatuck station house poster)
Funding of the Westport Transit District
FY19 Budget update

- Westport’s FY19 contribution to the WTD is currently forecast to be about $303K vs. $358K Budget.

- CT funding for Shuttles and Door-to-Door was maintained.
  -- WTD followed NTD in not implementing planned fare increase.

- Unusually low Door-to-Door ridership
  -- FY18 and FY19F average of about 2,900 trips / year vs. FY15-17 average of 4,300

- FY19 Payroll and fuel expense are higher than Budget.
  -- Adverse workers comp and FMLA experience
State funding of the WTD

- CT reimburses the WTD for 67% of shuttle operating costs, subject to a cap.
- Going into the last two budget cycles (FY18 and FY19), CT DOT indicated that funding for municipal-sponsored transit districts would be significantly reduced, which didn’t occur.
  -- DOT has also discussed implementing productivity standards for fixed route services, which could be problematic for the WTD shuttles.
- WTD has historically received $31.6K in State funding for Door-to-Door services. There is no info yet on continuation of this program into FY20.
- FY20 WTD Budget assumes receipt of about $575K in State funding for the commuter shuttles and $31.6K for Door-to-Door services.
- Given CT fiscal challenges, State support continues to be an area of uncertainty and risk to the WTD, although recently passed Special Transportation Fund “lockbox” is a positive.
Key FY20 Budget Assumptions

• Revenues and cost structure based on existing services
  -- WTD may make TBD changes to services.

• Commuter shuttle ridership unchanged from FY19 forecast. Door-to-Door ridership of 3,500 vs. estimated 2,900/year in FY18-19 and 4,300/year in FY15-17

• No increases to fares

• Payroll cost / hour + 2% vs. FY19F. Fuel, parts and supplies + 3% vs. FY19F. Budget includes an assumption for the increased costs associated with a new allocation system for Door-to-Door.

• State funding arrangements unchanged
## Proposed FY20 Westport Assistance to WTD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>($000)</th>
<th>FY19 Budget</th>
<th>2/19F</th>
<th>Proposed FY20 Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shuttles</td>
<td>$225.4</td>
<td>$226.6</td>
<td>$237.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Door-to-Door</td>
<td>132.9</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>117.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$358.3</td>
<td>$302.8</td>
<td>$355.0</td>
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