

VILLAGE OF DOWNERS GROVE
REPORT FOR THE VILLAGE COUNCIL MEETING
FEBRUARY 19, 2008 AGENDA

SUBJECT:	TYPE:	SUBMITTED BY:
Local Circulator Study Resolution	✓ Resolution Ordinance Motion Discussion Only	Robin A. Weaver Interim Director of Public Works

SYNOPSIS

A resolution has been prepared to confirm the best alternate service plan for a potential local circulator bus program.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT

The Village's Five Year Plan and Goals identifies *Exceptional Municipal Services*. An objective is *Continuously Looking for Opportunities, Innovations, and Ways to Improve Management and Service Delivery*.

FISCAL IMPACT

Approval of the resolution does not commit the Village to any current or future financial obligations. It will require an estimated six hours of staff time on a monthly basis.

UPDATE & RECOMMENDATION

This item was discussed at the February 12, 2008 Workshop. Please be advised the Local Circulator Study Resolution has been amended to include an eleven member Task Force with members to be chosen by the Mayor and approved by the Village Council.

Staff recommends approval on the February 19, 2008 active agenda.

BACKGROUND

At the Village Council Workshop on January 22, 2008, Tam Kutzmark, Transportation & Planning Director for the DuPage Mayors & Managers Conference (DMMC), made a presentation to the Village Council about the Local Circulator Study and the options that are available to the Village. During the Workshop, the following questions were posed by the Village Council.

1. *Will the current/new buses used for the Grove Commuter Shuttle be able to be used for the local circulator?*
 The Village's current and new buses can be used for the local circulator. DMMC considered this fact when selecting communities and developing route alternatives.
2. *What other equipment may be needed?*
 The current number of buses the Village has is sufficient. Based upon the current design of the proposed local circulator, additional personnel would need to be hired as dispatchers and drivers.
3. *What are the funding options? What grants are available? Have these grants been available to the Village to date to use for the Grove Commuter Shuttle?*
 The Local Circulator Study is funded by a \$150,000 grant obtained through the Regional Transportation Authority and the Illinois Department of Transportation. The Village is currently using a grant it received from IDOT's Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality grant program (CMAQ) for

the purchase of five buses at 80 percent of the cost. For funding annual operating expenses of a local circulator, grants could be sought from various sources, including:

- CMAQ - Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality
- JARC - Job Access Reverse Commute
- Transportation Enhancements grants
- Illinois Tomorrow grants
- Regional Technical Assistance Program (RTAP) - This program has been utilized to date for planning and could be used again if further planning/refinements were needed.

4. *Are there any economic studies available to supplement anecdotal information provided in the DMMC's report?*

Studies were completed by LSC Transportation Consults, Inc., the consultant firm working with DMMC on the Local Circulator Study. The completed economic and feasibility studies reported a positive economic impact from local circulator bus systems. A complete copy will be on file can be provided by DMMC upon request.

5. *What is the next phase? Will the Transportation and Parking Commission play a role?*

A advisory group would need to be formed (it is proposed that the group be called "The Circulator Study Task Force") to review the selected route and make suggestions about stops, formulate community education and marketing ideas and identify any more specific information that is needed. Members of this task force are suggested to be recruited from groups that are most likely to benefit from a circulator program, e.g. senior citizens or individuals that are employed in the northwest part of the Village. Upon completion of the task force's findings, the Village Council may refer the task force's findings to the Transportation and Parking Commission for review. It is not proposed that the Commission and the Task Force be one in the same. Staff recommends the proposed Resolution be modified to clearly stipulate the size of the Task Force and that the Mayor with confirmation of the Council will appoint the members of the Task Force. DMMC recommends that the Task Force be comprised of seven to twelve members.

6. *What is the level of staff time and commitment for the next phase?*

It is proposed that the Task Force meet once a month for six months. It is anticipated the establishment and recruitment of the Task Force and its members will take about eight to 10 staff hours. Monthly meetings will require six hours of staff time, two hours each for prep work, attendance and follow-up.

The attached resolution has been requested by DMMC so that the future planning and work on a potential local circulator bus program will be done in the direction preferred by the Village Council.

In 2002, DMMC and the DuPage County Board jointly adopted the *DuPage Area Transit Plan*. During the planning process, localized bus service emerged as a primary piece of mobility needed in the DuPage area. Circulators are community-based, locally-oriented bus transit services that bridge the gap between the larger bus or train routes and residential, commercial or workplace destinations. DMMC received a \$150,000 grant from the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) and the Illinois Department of Transportation to initiate a *DuPage Area Local Circulator Study*. RTA's Regional Technical Assistance Program was created to help communities with preliminary transit planning, and its goal is to initiate activities that result in a more comprehensive transit system.

The Village of Downers Grove was one of the initial supporters for this initial grant application. This grant was awarded and a consultant was selected by DMMC to perform this work. The DMMC provided the Village an update and proposed scope of work for the project in August, 2004. Due to the time required by IDOT in reviewing the final contract with the consultant the work did not actually begin until late 2005.

The scope of work referred to as Phase I (subsequently referred to as Phase 1 & 2) included the Market Analysis and Service Area development has been completed and the top four routes have been selected to move forward for the Phase II -Design portion of the project (subsequently referred to as Phase 3 & 4). The Village of Downers Grove was selected as the top qualifying community out of the eleven communities participating in this project and the Village was notified by letter dated November 15, 2006. Addison, Lombard and Wheaton were also selected as the first communities for design of the new service.

On January 16, 2007, the Downers Grove Village Council approved a resolution to support continued participation in Phase 3 and Phase 4 of the Circulator Study. A copy of that resolution is attached. Subsequently, alternative ideas for circulator services were developed based on a market analysis and input obtained through community surveys, focus groups and public meetings.

This past summer, each community presented the draft service alternatives and invited feedback from residents, employees and other travelers in the community. The final design of the circulator service – or the preferred alternative – was selected based on local preferences. The process to gather this input included community choice forums, small group meetings, comment cards, on-line surveys and one-on-one conversations with community members.

Each service design reflects the unique needs of the community. The preferred alternative for the Downers Grove Circulator would coordinate with and enhance existing service provided through the Grove Commuter Service.

The recommended circulators offer a unique, cost-effective innovation in local service called “flex routes.” Also known as route-deviation service, flex route transit vehicles follow a designated route but leave the route to serve origins and destinations within a specified area surrounding the route based on a scheduled request to a central dispatcher. The specified area is called a “flex-route buffer” and covers three-quarters of a mile area along the route. The transit vehicles then return to the designated route to ensure that all stops along the route are served. The passengers on the bus may have a longer travel time than for traditional “fixed-route” service, and the arrival or departure time at any stop may vary by five minutes. These services are planned to link with each other through transfer points at the Lombard Metra Station and Yorktown Center.

The preferred alternative outlines specifications for vehicle type, stop locations, hours of operation, headways, staffing requirements and standards for the type of service (fixed or flex route). A financial plan outlines fares, capital/operating costs, and existing and potential revenue sources. Recommendations are also made for an organizational and operating structure. The Executive Summary is attached.

The next step in the process is to develop an implementation strategy that sets forth how it might be possible to implement the preferred service design. DMMC and its consultant, LSC Transportation Consults, Inc., will continue to work with the four communities. Important considerations in this phase are how to obtain funds, operate, market, and monitor the service. It is recommended that this be done through the establishment of an ad hoc task force whose members would meet once a month for six months. It would ideally represent different segments of the Village who would be likely to utilize the potential circulator service.

RESOLUTION NO. _____

**A RESOLUTION ACCEPTING THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE
IN PHASE 3 OF THE DUPAGE MAYORS AND MANAGERS CONFERENCE
LOCAL CIRCULATOR STUDY**

WHEREAS, the Village of Downers Grove has been an active participant in Phase 1, 2, and 3 of the DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference Circulator Study; and

WHEREAS, the Village of Downers Grove has received a Service Specifications Report, which outlines several alternatives for Circulator Service including service type, destinations to be served, hours and frequency of operation, estimates for capital and operating costs, and operating structure; and

WHEREAS, the Village of Downers Grove has solicited feedback on these alternatives through a community comment period in July 2007, including a community forum, comment cards, and the project website; and

WHEREAS, the Village of Downers Grove received an evaluation of each alternative, using community feedback and numerical criteria (for example destinations, estimated cost and ridership, and transfer opportunities); and

WHEREAS, the Village of Downers Grove has received a recommendation for the preferred alternative, based on this extensive evaluation

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Village of Downers Grove agrees to accept this recommendation as the best design for local circulator service,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Village of Downers Grove agrees to diligently work towards developing an Implementation Plan for the recommended service design, including pursuing potential funding resources and submitting applications to these sources in concert with DuPage Mayor and Managers Conference staff and consultants.

1. That the Mayor shall appoint, with the concurrence of the Village Council, a Circulator Study Task Force comprised of seven (7) members for purposes of participating in Phase IV of the Local Circulator Study.

2. That all resolutions or parts of resolutions in conflict with the provisions of this Resolution are hereby repealed.

3. That this Resolution shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage as provided by law.

Mayor

Passed:

Attest: _____
Village Clerk