



STAGECOACH SPOKES

Stagecoach Transportation Services, Inc.
Providing Public Transportation Services in Central Vermont

A Seasonal Edition

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DATES TO REMEMBER



Staff members arrive at the Vermont Technical College campus in Randolph Center via Stagecoach's new 89er North.

Stagecoach Introduces The 89er North

By Holly Brown

As morning breaks in downtown Montpelier, the capital city is just coming to life... shops with freshly brewed coffee and oven-hot pastries are opening their doors; one by one, lights pop on, piercing the darkness; and residents begin their daily routines.

Since mid-January, this routine for some has included boarding the 89er North, a bus route operated by Stagecoach between Montpelier and South Royalton. Before the 89er North made its debut, there was no public transportation linking this segment of Interstate 89. Riders eagerly share some insight into their experience using this service.

Dwight Cross, a staff member at Vermont Technical College, cites economy as being the biggest factor influencing his decision to take the bus. "I can't even start my vehicle up for the price of a fare!" He further states that taking the 89er North keeps him on schedule. Although it makes for a little longer day, Dwight feels "it's worth it", and sometimes uses extra time before the return trip to exercise at the SHAPE facility on campus.

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CURRENT NEWS

More Towns Support Public Transportation

Four more towns approved funding for the Stagecoach at this year's Town Meetings, adding their recognition to the increasing importance of public transportation in the area. With articles approved by the voters in Braintree, Newbury, Sharon, and Vershire, the number of area towns supporting the services of the Stagecoach has increased to fourteen. The ten other towns that renewed their support include Granville, Hancock, Rochester, Stockbridge, Bethel, Randolph, Royalton, Chelsea, Fairlee, and Bradford. The total municipal funding, which has now reached almost \$18,000, is a vital element to the overall Stagecoach budget. By acknowledging the importance of these transportation services that enable people to get to jobs, medical appointments, social services, and shopping, municipal funds are a catalyst for up to four times as much in federal public transportation funds.

New Stagecoach Vehicles Ready to Roll

Stagecoach is pleased to announce that it has taken delivery of three new buses. The new vehicles, each with a seating capacity of twenty-four passengers, will be placed into operation this spring on commuter route service. Two of the vehicles were made possible by funding through the America Relief and Recovery Act (economic stimulus funds). The new vehicles will play an important role in assuring the continued operation of good, reliable equipment. See related article on page 4, regarding bike racks on the commuter routes.

- MAY 1, 8, 15, 22, 29
- ✓ JUNE 5, 12, 19, 26
- JULY 3, 10, 17, 24, 31
- Saturday West Lebanon Trip
- ✓ MAY 14, JUNE 11, JULY 9
- Friday West Lebanon Trip
- ✓ MAY 26, JUNE 23, JULY 28
- Wednesday Rutland trip
- ✓ MAY 17 - 21
- Way to Go!
- Commuter Challenge
- (See details on the Stagecoach website)
- MAY 6, 13, 20, 27
- ✓ JUNE 3, 10, 17
- JULY 1, 8, 15, 22, 29
- Thursday Chelsea to Randolph Trip
- MAY 7, 21, 28
- ✓ JUNE 4, 18, 25
- JULY 2, 16, 23, 30
- Friday Rochester Valley/ Bethel to Randolph Trip



Stagecoach & Vermont Health Access: The Road to Medical Care

By Holly Brown

While national healthcare reform recently made headlines, Vermont Medicaid has afforded generous coverage under its program for many years.

Rides to healthcare appointments for Medicaid clients who lack transportation constitute a whopping 28% of the trips provided through Stagecoach. Under this plan, eligible persons are transported to medical, mental health, substance abuse treatment, and physical therapy appointments as well as to pharmacies.

To better understand this aspect of its services, Stagecoach offers the following insights:

An area couple and their three children gave up their only vehicle last fall when both parents were laid off from jobs. Faced with trying to maintain the family's health, they turned to Stagecoach for rides to pediatric and dental appointments through the Medicaid system. Without such a benefit, this family probably would not be able to reach routine healthcare.

One person with a disability who has never driven depends on Stagecoach to attend weekly counseling sessions and

therapist-conducted programs twenty miles away. The Medicaid transportation provision through Stagecoach enables this person to access vital support.

In another situation, a widow who relied on her husband to drive everywhere must now find rides to daily cancer treatments over the next four weeks. Through Medicaid's collaboration with Stagecoach, she has a safe and comfortable way to access this necessary care.

Weekly physical therapy sessions following a sprain were recommended for an elderly man. Thanks to Medicaid's transportation plan, this follow-up care that helps ensure his complete recovery is facilitated via Stagecoach's door-to-door Maxi-Taxi bus.

Early every morning, a young addict residing in a housing shelter needs rides to a substance abuse treatment program that offers life-changing hope. An area taxi service with whom Stagecoach contracts provides transportation for this individual.

Medicaid rides through Stagecoach obviously represent a crucial link to health care for individuals and families in a wide variety of situations. ➤➤

Stagecoach Awarded \$1.2M Grant to Try Horsepower

Stagecoach has recently been contacted about receiving a \$1.2M federal grant for a model project demonstration on the use of horsepower for public transportation. The grant announcement came from the Department of Defense. Manager, David Palmer, explained it had been brought to Stagecoach's attention that an allocation exists within the Defense Budget for a study on the use of horsepower. According to Palmer, "This long overlooked and forgotten appropriation has apparently remained on the books for over a hundred years. After the Civil War, the then Department of the Army wanted to see just how many troops could be moved by a single horse drawn conveyance." The award letter commented that with the Pentagon's interest in lessening dependence on foreign oil, this topic is again timely.

Since Stagecoach submitted the only application in a century, it was actually selected for funding. "We were absolutely amazed," exclaimed Marketing Coordinator, Holly Brown. Stagecoach is now seeking temporary stabling facilities in the Randolph and Bradford areas.

The grant award will allow Stagecoach to buy up to six teams of two horses, as well as buckboard style wagons with passenger benches. It is expected that this type of arrangement will be most useful on many of the back hill roads that Stagecoach has to reach. "One particularly tough spot," commented Palmer, "is due east of West Brookfield." Another difficult location is just past the Lower Village of Upper Vershire. Resident Ina Pickle was quoted in the funding application as saying she has not been away from her house for almost three years because nobody can get to it, especially in winter.

To deal with wintertime travel, the grant also contains a provision to seasonally convert the wagons to use on skids. Operations Manger, Don Ferris, likes that idea, indicating, "This should work really slick." However, cautioned Palmer, town crews on certain

roads in the winter may have to return to rolling snow rather than plowing. He notes that since most towns have not formally abandoned their snow rolling policies, they should be ok with this.

In combination with this award, Stagecoach has also submitted a grant request to the Department of Energy. This application seeks funding for methane converter bags to hang behind the horses, as well as the conversion of the current gasoline bus engines used by Stagecoach to a methane/gasoline hybrid. Palmer concluded, "This should be a green – green situation for everyone. The by-product of one energy choice becomes the fuel we actually use as another." If Stagecoach is successful with these plans, before the year is out, you should hear the crack of a whip and the Driver yelling, "whoa" and "giddy-up" in a town near you.

The original announcement date for this grant award was intended to be April 1st. Holly Brown pointed out, "That date should tell you something about all this bull."



Concord Stagecoach, circa 1836, owned by Ed and Marge Cowles of Randolph Center. Under their ownership, this "Hotel" model was restored for use at special events. It can be seen at the Concord Coach Society in Hopkinton, NH.

To receive rides from Stagecoach through this program, clients must qualify for Medicaid benefits, and their destination must be a Medicaid-approved service within 30 miles of their residence. Additionally, there should be no other means of transportation available in the household.

Since Stagecoach arranges rides using a network of Volunteer Drivers and contracted taxis, requests for transports need to be called or faxed in to Stagecoach at least 24 hours in advance, preferably 1-2 weeks (especially where Volunteers provide the rides). In cases of special appointments beyond the 30-mile limitation, the patient's primary care provider must submit a "Physician Referral Form" for pre-approval by the Office of Vermont Health Access (OVHA).

Other guidelines must be followed to ensure coverage under Medicaid's plan. Ride Coordinator Kelly Wheatley emphasizes, "It is rewarding to provide our services to those in need of transportation, but passengers need to abide by program rules. Our goal is to get clients to scheduled appointments safely and economically."

For more information about Medicaid funded transportation, contact the Stagecoach office at 802-728-3773.

Stagecoach Introduces The 89er North

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One Vermont Law School student claims that the 89er North makes her life easier and that "I get a lot of work done on the bus!" John Miller who formerly commuted to work at VLS via single-occupancy vehicle, uses the 89er North every day. He and other riders exclaim, "It's a nice way to start and end the day!" John further divulges that "we have our own little bus community!"

Indeed, there is a mix of visiting, reading, napping, and studying along the trip amid an overall pleasant atmosphere. Once passengers get into the rhythm of using public transportation, they readily point to its advantages: environmental ethics, financial savings, convenience, and avoiding driving hassles, especially in the winter.

The 89er North is funded for an initial three-year period by the Federal Transit Administration through the Vermont Agency of Transportation. A key component to securing this grant funding is local match commitment being provided by Vermont Technical College, Gifford Medical Center, and the Vermont Law School.

"Stagecoach commends these community partners for their involvement in planning and supporting this route. Their dedication to public transportation and its benefits helped make this new service possible," notes David Palmer, Stagecoach Manager.

While the core ridership at this point consists of students and employees from these three supporting organizations, others are realizing diverse reasons for using the 89er North.

Randolph resident Patrick French recently rode the late afternoon bus from Randolph to join his wife, Patsy, a legislator, for dinner and a show at the Barre Opera House. Pat found the bus trip to be "reasonably priced and enjoyable", adding that as a passenger rather than a driver he had "a chance to look around!"

"[The 89er North] saved us from having two cars in that area; I would definitely do it again!"

One woman from Barre used the 89er North to come visit family members in Randolph village, and another person from that area has made use of this route for appointments at Gifford Medical Center.

Certainly, the 89er North is filling a void and taking a foothold in the lives of people considering alternative methods of traveling to their destinations on both ends of this route.

The 89er North originates on Montpelier's Main Street (by Shaw's) at 6:50 am, stops at the Exit 8 Park-and-Ride lot at Montpelier Junction, continues down I-89 to the Exit 7 Park-and-Ride, then goes to Northfield's Exit 5 Park-and-Ride before traveling on to the Randolph Center Park-and-Ride lot at Exit 4. There, passengers remain on board to alight at VTC, Gifford Medical Center or downtown Randolph, or they can transfer to a second bus bound for the Vermont Law School in South Royalton. The evening trip north reverses this route.

89ER NORTH

SOUTHBOUND Monday - Friday

Montpelier (Main Street @ Shaw's)	6:50AM
Exit 8 Park & Ride lot	6:55AM
Exit 7 Park & Ride lot	7:05AM
Exit 5 Park & Ride lot	7:18AM
Exit 4 Park & Ride lot (connect to VT Law School)	7:35AM
Vermont Technical College	7:40AM
Gifford Medical Center	7:52AM
Stagecoach Office	7:55AM
Vermont Law School	7:55AM

NORTHBOUND Monday - Friday

Vermont Law School (connect to Exit 4)	5:05PM
Stagecoach Office	5:02PM
Gifford Medical Center	5:05PM
Vermont Technical College	5:17PM
Exit 4 Park & Ride lot	5:23PM
Exit 5 Park & Ride lot	5:40PM
Exit 7 Park & Ride lot	5:52PM
Exit 8 Park & Ride lot	6:00PM
Montpelier (Main Street @ Shaw's)	6:05PM

Holly's Helpful Hints...

One rider asks: How can I become a Volunteer Driver for Stagecoach?

Answer: Stagecoach welcomes Volunteer Drivers to help provide rides throughout its 29-town service area.

Interested persons are asked to complete an application and to submit copies of a valid driver's license, current vehicle registration, and proof of auto insurance.

Additionally, several background checks are conducted on each potential Volunteer Driver, and an interview process takes place to clarify terms of the program.

Volunteer Drivers use their own vehicles and receive mileage reimbursement for their travel expenses. The hours are flexible, and the decision to furnish a ride is always up to the Volunteer.

If you would like to join our network of Volunteer Drivers, please stop by the Stagecoach office or contact us by e-mail (kwheatley@stagecoach-rides.org) or by 'phone (802-728-3773).

Mail or e-mail your questions to:

Stagecoach Spokes
Stagecoach Transportation Services, Inc.
PO Box 356
Randolph, VT 05060

Park & Rides and Bike Racks

The Vermont Agency of Transportation is again seeking funding in its annual budget for the Municipal Park & Ride Grant Program. If approved by this session of the legislature, funding in the 2011 state fiscal year will further promote the development of municipality-owned and maintained park & ride facilities.

When the 2011 program is formally announced, towns within the Stagecoach service area are encouraged to apply. Collaboration with the public transportation provider is an important application element. Of course, there are commitments towns must meet to be eligible for funding. Interested applicants may contact the Stagecoach (Holly Brown) or the Two Rivers Ottaquechee Regional Planning Commission (Rita Seto) for further information.

As a way to encourage carless travel, the Stagecoach is planning to install additional bike racks on its buses during the 2011 fiscal year. These industry standard racks allow for quick loading and unloading without scratching since all contact points are on the bicycle's tires. One bike rack is currently in use on the 89er North commuter route.

With additional park & ride lots and bike racks in store, people will have more options for planning their trips. To turn a well recognized advertising phrase, "Your car – you can leave home without it."

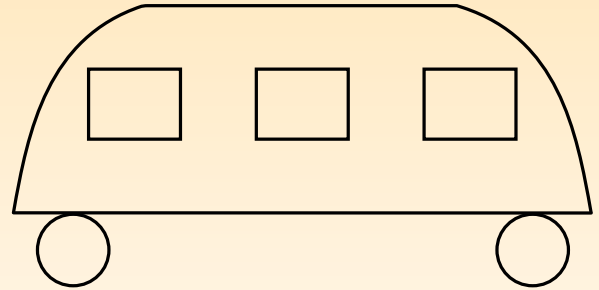


STAGECOACH SPOKES



A Pre-School Test For You

Which way is the bus below traveling?
To the left or to the right?



Can't make up your mind? Look carefully
at the picture again.

90% of Pre-schoolers, when shown the picture,
gave the correct answer. Not as smart as
these little guys?

See answer indicated below.

Answer: Most Pre-schoolers correctly answered that the bus is
traveling to the left because you can't see the door to get on the bus.

Suggestions, Anyone?

In an effort to better understand the needs and concerns of the public it serves, Stagecoach encourages feedback from its riders. Comments, ideas, and input may be submitted to Stagecoach via:

e-mail: dpalmer@stagecoach-rides.org
(David Palmer)

hbrown@stagecoach-rides.org
(Holly Brown)

phone: 802-728-3773

mail: P.O. Box 356,
Randolph, VT 05060



Keep the Wheels Turning...

Did you know? The purchase of buses such as those recently acquired to update Stagecoach's fleet is aided by a significant bequest made nearly 10 years ago. As a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, Stagecoach Transportation Services, Inc. welcomes tax deductible donations, memorial contributions, and monetary gifts to help support the services it provides. For more information, please contact us at:

Stagecoach Transportation Services, Inc.

Depot Square, Randolph, Vermont 05060
1-802-728-3773

www.stagecoach-rides.org
TDD Relay Service 711

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