

# Westport Bus Operations and Needs Study

## Final Report



Submitted to  
Western Connecticut Council of Governments

Submitted by  
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In association with  
Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.



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## Executive Summary

The South Western Regional Planning Agency (SWRPA)/Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG), in partnership with the Town of Westport and the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), conducted a study to explore ways to improve bus service and enhance public transportation's role in Westport. The study assessed current operations to develop an updated service and administrative plan for Westport Transit District (WTD) bus services including fixed route services to the two Westport rail stations, after-school shuttles, ADA paratransit, and services for the elderly. The plan presented in this study positions WTD to better serve residents' travel needs into the future. The Study Work Plan is contained in Appendix M.

### *Transportation Services*

Norwalk Transit District (NTD), a designated recipient of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) funding, provides bus service in Westport through an agreement with the Town of Westport. NTD has operated the Westport bus services since 1992. Two types of services are provided: fixed route (Commuter and After-School Service) and ADA and elderly demand response (also referred to as door-to-door). Westport WTD's fixed route services include Commuter Routes (Figure ES-1) and After-School routes (Figure ES-2) [The After-School routes ended in June 2015].

Seven Westport commuter routes connect with MTA Metro-North Railroad New Haven Line at Westport (Saugatuck) Station and Greens Farms Station. Service is provided in the morning and evening peak periods. There is no mid-day service. The commuter services in Westport are more oriented for travel to the south and west and, generally, are designed to bring riders to jobs and other destinations in New York City, Stamford or other towns southwest of Westport. If Westport continues its current service agreement with the NTD, the fixed route services will be enhanced by implementation of an Automated Vehicle Location (AVL) system. This capability will provide information to transit users about bus schedules, arrivals, delays as well as maintenance information, and data for route and service planning. At the meeting, the NTD representative advised that ITS would be active for NTD services in 2016 for both Norwalk and Westport transit services.

Until June 2015 there were three After-School routes that provide one daily trip for students traveling between Westport schools and after-school programs.

Door-to-Door is a demand response service which includes service for senior citizens within Westport, Town-to-Town service for persons with disabilities residing in Westport and travelling within southwest Connecticut towns (Norwalk, Wilton, New Canaan, Darien, Stamford or Greenwich), and ADA service along the US-1 corridor. Four individual programs comprise the overall Door-to-Door program offered in Westport:

1. Senior: service available to senior citizens (age 65+) within the Town of Westport.



2. ADA: service required by the Americans with Disabilities Act in conjunction with the fixed routes operated by WTD in Westport. ADA service is also provided by the joint operators of the Coastal Link for trip origins/destinations within  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile of the Coastal Link route (described below).
3. Municipal Dial-a-Ride: service for the elderly and disabled provided throughout the Town of Westport to complement the  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile requirement relating to fixed route services.
4. Town-to-Town: service for disabled residents of Westport traveling to Norwalk, Wilton, New Canaan, Darien, Stamford, or Greenwich.

Other transportation services operating in Westport include the Coastal Link, a fixed bus route providing service along US-1 in Westport and operating between Norwalk and Milford, Connecticut, and commuter rail provided by MTA Metro-North Railroad. Private transportation companies and organizations, such as taxicab companies and senior transportation organizations, also provide transportation services in Westport.

Figure ES-1: Current Westport Transit District Commuter Routes

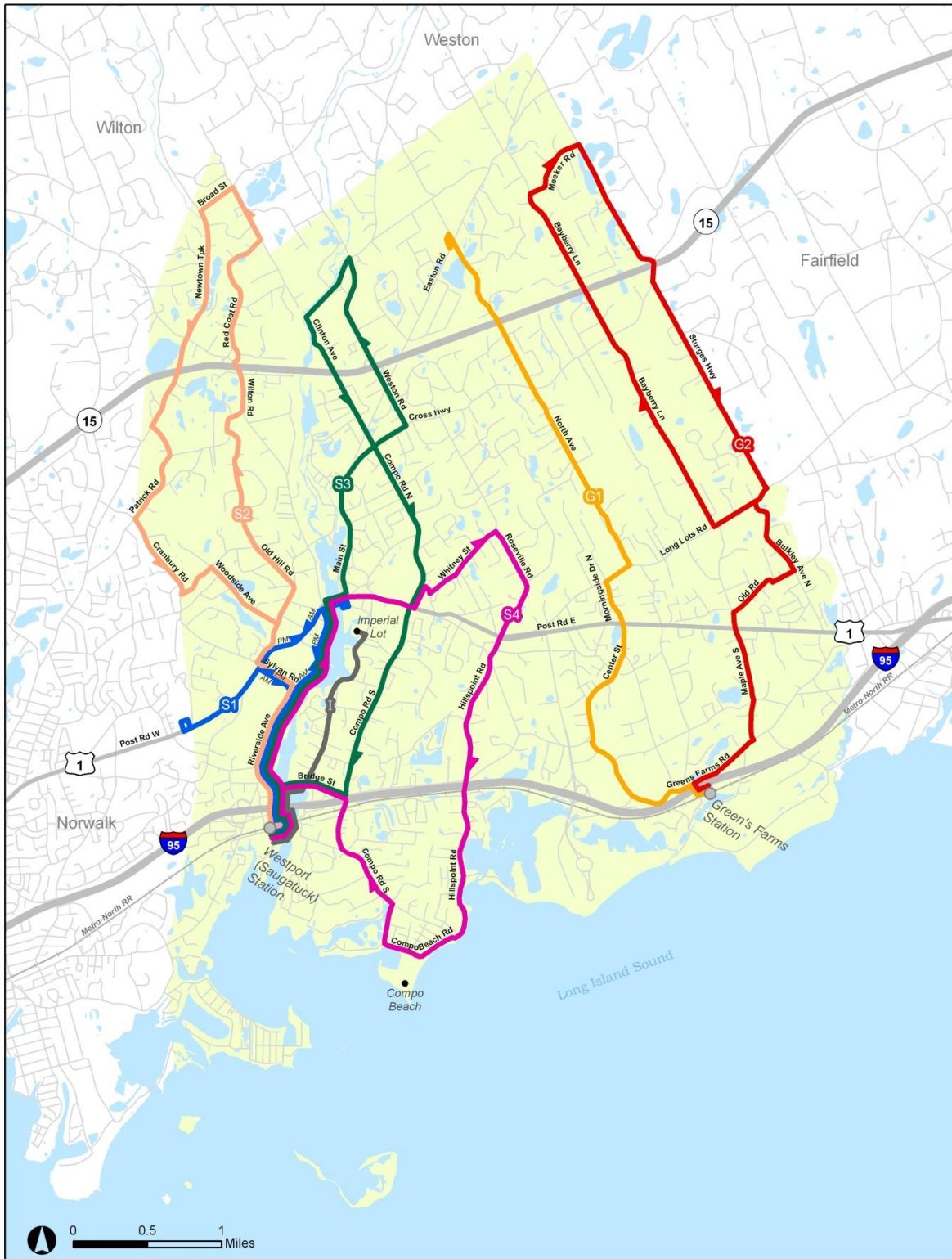
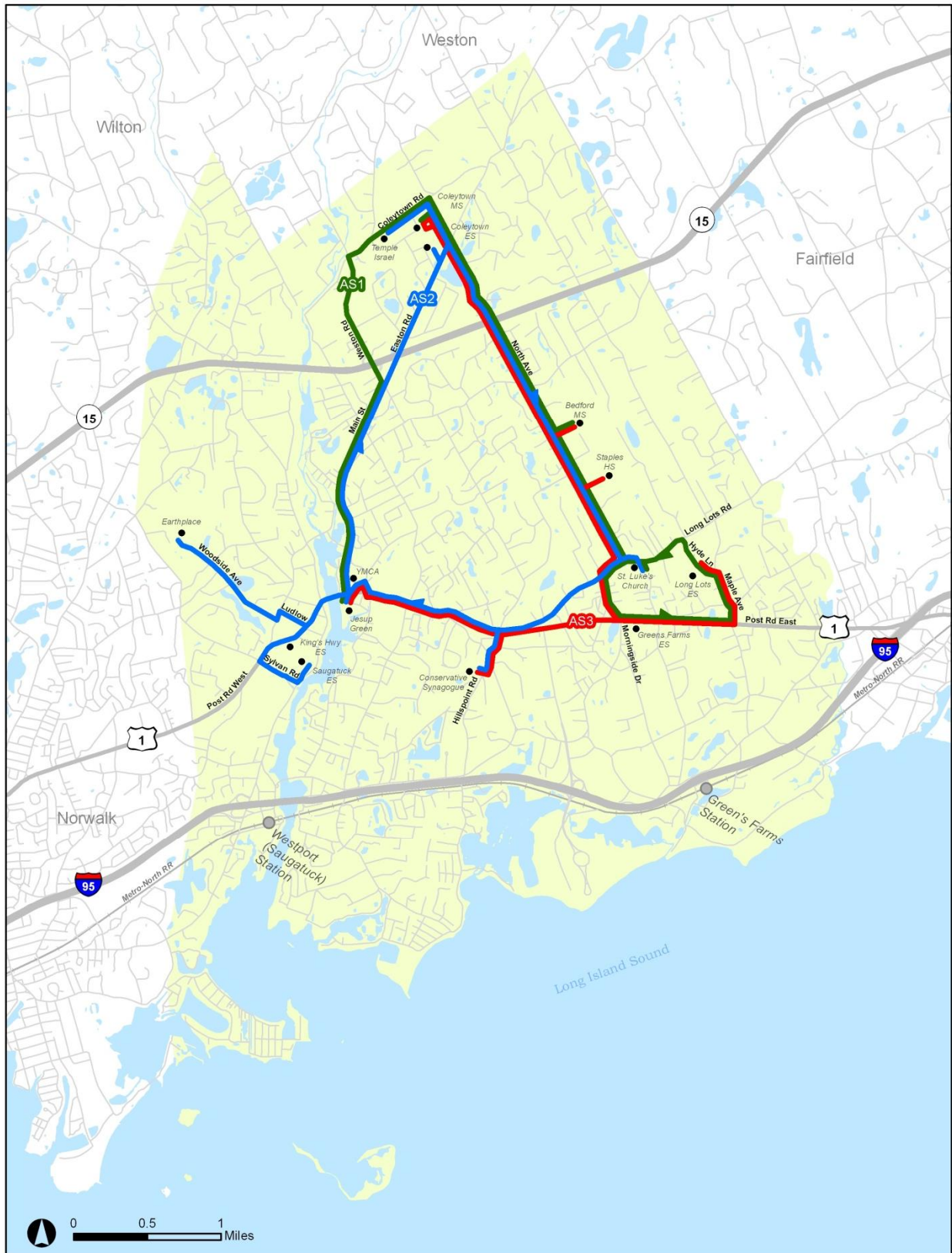


Figure ES-2: Current Westport Transit District After-School Routes (Eliminated 6/2015)



## Westport Bus Trends

Over the past five years, Westport bus services experienced relatively large decreases in ridership and service (revenue hours and revenue miles) provided. Operating expenses also declined but by a more moderate percentage. There were significant reductions in service in FY 2012 which correspond to the elimination and restructuring of several routes due to budget constraints, including Daytime Route 1, Greens Farms Shuttle, Nyala Farms Office Parks Shuttle, Pepperidge Farm Shuttle, and Norden Park Shuttle. Service was further reduced in FY 2013 to keep costs even and ridership declined by about four percent. [Appendix L contains updated operating and financial data from FY 2014 for the Westport Bus Services which only became available in November 2014 after the work for this study was completed]

**Table ES-1: Westport Bus Trends**

Year	Ridership	Revenue Hours	Revenue Miles	Operating Expenses	Ridership	Revenue Hours	Revenue Miles	Operating Expenses
FY 2009	99,451	18,455	173,223	1,246,062	-	-	-	-
FY 2010	91,388	18,524	173,874	1,277,480	-8.1%	0.4%	0.4%	2.5%
FY 2011	91,481	18,425	169,925	1,340,041	0.1%	-0.5%	-2.3%	4.9%
FY 2012	73,605	12,974	150,104	1,144,135	-19.5%	-29.6%	-11.7%	-14.6%
FY 2013	70,521	12,304	140,307	1,127,790	-4.2%	-5.2%	-6.5%	-1.4%
Overall Change	(28,930)	(6,151)	(32,916)	(118,272)	(29.1%)	(33.3%)	(19.0%)	(9.5%)

Note: The ridership decline from FY 2012 to FY 2013 reflects the transfer of the Norden Park Shuttle from WTD to NTD operation.  
Source: NTD Westport Service Ridership Statistics, FY2007-FY2013, NTD Westport Services Budget, FY 2013, Westport Services Daily Vehicle Hours and Miles FY2009-FY2013

## System Issues and Opportunities

Several issues and opportunities were identified through an analysis of existing conditions and during public open houses, stakeholder meetings and drop-in outreach sessions. Some of those issues and opportunities brought to the consulting team for consideration included:

- There is a base of support among the public within town government for transit service provision in Westport.
- Westport is challenged with rebuilding ridership and productivity of the system and enhancing mobility for residents and employees in the town in an era of constrained municipal budgets.
- The system provides good geographic coverage throughout the town for commuters; however, temporal coverage is limited to peak periods. Since the elimination of midday service, fixed route options have been limited to commuting without flexibility for off-peak trips.
- Commuter service hours should be increased and evening commuter shuttles should run later into the night. A Westport Rail Station Study is being done concurrently with this study and the two studies are sharing information and findings, and will ensure that recommendations from each study are fully integrated. [The extension of shuttle service hours on three routes were initiated on 10/12/15 based on funding availability and input received from passengers.]



- Ridership is declining and productivity levels are relatively low on all routes, although the most substantial decline since 2012 was due to the transfer of the Norden Park route to Norwalk Transit District and did not represent a true loss in demand for Westport bus services. The Town of Westport must evaluate transit policies, service productivity, and costs within the context of congestion mitigation, parking policy, resident mobility, and land use and development. NTD service productivity measures can be used for benchmarking services and changes.
- Public Transit is a significant element of the Town Plan of Conservation and Development (2008).
- Westport Door-to-Door service exceeds required ADA service levels by operating at times when commuter fixed routes do not operate. This represents a policy decision on the part of the town to provide mobility beyond legal ADA requirements. This decision was part of the original plan for the system and was implemented at its inception, and it has carried forward ever since that time.
- After-school service was limited to one trip each on three routes, despite the extensive activities that take place throughout the afternoon at the local schools. End times for these activities varied, pointing to demand for more service options for students (and their parents). The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) determined that the Westport after-school busing could not use federally funded assets to provide the service. Through an appeal from the Town of Westport and the Norwalk Transit District, after-school busing was permitted to continue through June 2015 to enable a transition to alternative after-school transportation. (See Appendices D and E.) Westport bus services require continued, dedicated funding for marketing, planning and customer service functions.
- Westport bus services/Westport Transit District could be integrated into a Town Department, rather than being a miscellaneous item in the Town Budget.
- There is a need to serve or better serve some locations in town including condominium complexes, where a number of elderly residents reside, EarthPlace, the new YMCA and the library.
- Do not forget to consider the needs of the employees who take the train to Westport to work at jobs in Westport. These shuttles are vital to many.

Issues regarding the orientation of Westport services towards the west (Norwalk, Stamford) and possible unmet service needs to the east (Fairfield, Bridgeport) were identified as concerns that should be included in a Westport Paratransit Study, which should be recommended for inclusion into the next Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) of WestCOG.

### *Recommendations*

A broad set of recommendations have been developed to improve service and address many of the service issues raised during public outreach sessions. The recommendations include changes to existing service, new route proposals and a staffing addition at NTD. The route changes and proposals are meant to enhance bus service for customers who currently use the

routes for trips between their home and the train stations in Westport, attract new riders, and reduce demand for station parking. The staffing change is meant to improve and support marketing and communications between the town, NTD and the customer. The study recommends that Westport maintain its current administrative arrangement with the NTD.

The proposals include:

- Extension of Westport Commuter Route service span (hours of operation)
- Introduction of a daytime connection between the Saugatuck rail station and downtown (Figure ES-3)
- Introduction, if previous changes are successful, of a daytime town circulator
- Westport funding to the NTD, for help support additional planning and marketing through additional staff or consulting services

An implementation plan will guide the execution of the proposed changes. The plan lays out phases for implementation and the estimated costs of the services. See Table ES-2 for the implementation timeline, costs and the benefits and service needs of each proposal. Several changes are proposed in the short-term with the daytime bus service recommendations following in the medium to long-term.

**Table ES-2: Implementation Plan**

Year	Action	Gross Operating Cost	What This Addresses
1-2	Extend AM and PM service span on Commuter Routes by one hour  Additional Marketing/Communications and planning at NTD	\$270,733 - \$329,588  \$ 40,000	Schedule flexibility, reduce parking demand at station lots  Additional coordination, planning, and marketing/outreach with Westport.[ In January 2016 Norwalk Transit District advertised for a Manager of Planning and Marketing and hired a person for this position in March 2016]. Develop a marketing plan
2-3	Downtown Connector	\$188,336 - \$223,649	Daytime service need, link between downtown area and train station for residents and visitors, reduce parking demand at station lots, creates a quick connection between Imperial Lot and train station for commuters
4+	Town Circulator	\$188,336 - \$235,420	Daytime service for trips within Westport provides a transit option for shopping, work, medical, after-school and other trips as needed.
Total	All Proposals	\$737,405 - \$878,657	

The map shows the proposed bus route for the Westport (Saugatuck) Station area. The route is a loop starting at Charles St, going north on Riverside Ave, then east on Post Rd West, then east on Post Rd East, then south on Main St, then south on Imperial Ave, then south on Charles St, and finally south on Westport (Saugatuck) Station. The map includes labels for Town Hall, Library, Imperial Lot, and various streets. A scale bar indicates 0 to 0.5 miles.

# 1 Existing Transit Services

## 1.1 Introduction and Background

The South Western Regional Planning Agency/Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG), in partnership with the Town of Westport and the Connecticut Department of Transportation conducted a study to explore ways to improve bus service and enhance public transportation's role in Westport. The study assessed current operations to develop an updated service and administrative plan for Westport bus services including fixed route services to the two Westport rail stations, after-school shuttles, ADA paratransit, and services for the elderly. The plan presented in this study will better serve residents' travel needs into the future.

The strength of the Westport community's involvement in transportation, environmental, and social issues was clearly demonstrated in 1968 when residents petitioned for the creation of local public transit service. Westport showed its responsiveness by creating the Westport Transit District (WTD) in 1969. Bus service in an affluent suburban community was unique at the time, and the resulting bus service was a model studied by the federal transit program and other communities around the country [**The Westport Connecticut Integrated Transit System, Final Report, Service and Methods Demonstration Program, U.S.DOT, 1979**]. To this day, Westport transit services have few direct peers given the relatively low density of development, varied service types, socio-economic profile of the town, and a commuter market that consists of many users who own and are able to commute by private vehicle but who choose to take public transit.

The WTD "Minnybus" began operations in 1974 with two types of fixed route service: commuter-oriented routes serving Westport and Greens Farms stations during peak periods, and local routes for intra-town circulation during the rest of the day. The original design of routes in a loop format was ultimately revised in favor of more linear services during a 1982 reconfiguration. WTD's daytime operations were among the first in the country to employ a timed transfer or "pulse" system, to connect all points in the service area through a single, coordinated location at Jesup Green. In a pulse system, all routes meet at the coordinated location and depart the location at the same time so that a seamless transfer can be made by riders. The routes, geared toward family use and use by children over the age of 12 in particular, were heavily used by school age children, relieving a significant transportation burden on parents.

A second innovation at the time was the development of family passes, precursors to today's eco-passes, which provided semi-annual and annual passes at modest rates for an entire family. Eco-passes, which have become a more prevalent way to increase transit ridership, are an employer-based transit benefit by which the employer purchases rights for employees to use a transit system at a reduced cost. The rights are offered to employees to reduce the demand for on-site parking at employment locations. Eco-passes are also commonly used for students by schools and universities.



Conditions changed throughout the 1980s and 1990s, however, and the ambitious level of WTD bus service, which was ubiquitous during its earliest years, was scaled back substantially in response to a reduction in federal funding, and ridership losses. As transit service levels were reduced, remaining routes drew proportionally fewer trips and hastened ridership declines, a typical pattern in the transit industry. WTD also faced legal challenges from local taxi providers citing anti-competitive conduct in the operation of yet another innovative service, Maxy Taxy, a shared ride service begun in the late 1970s. The two taxi companies cited Maxy Taxy's negative impact on their businesses; Maxy Taxy was ultimately discontinued in 1979 though legal challenges lingered until 1995 when the Town of Westport paid a financial settlement to the taxi companies.

In 1992, at the request of the Town of Westport and the CTDOT, Norwalk Transit District (NTD) assumed operation of WTD bus services. An agreement between the Town of Westport and NTD set the framework for management and operations that are in effect now. Appendix A provides a copy of the agreement.

What remains of the Minnybus system today is commuter operations complemented by ADA paratransit and dial-a-ride services for the elderly. After school busing was provided until June 2015. Commuter routes are now the core fixed route service of the Westport bus service and, after contentious budget meetings in 2012 and the spring of 2013, were fully funded in FY 2013. It is also evident from recent budget meetings that there continues to be a strong latent interest in having transit service in the community, reminiscent of the meetings of the 70s and 80s, and a belief by many that comprehensive, town-wide transportation (peak hour commuting and daytime in-town routes) is a valued public service. Westport's history is one of strong and broad community support for transit as a socially and environmentally progressive program. The 1997 and 2007 Plans of Conservation and Development (POCD) affirmed support for public transportation services as a valuable component of community sustainability.

Westport, through its contract with the Norwalk Transit District (NTD), provides fixed route bus transit service and demand response service within Westport. The Coastal Link, a fixed bus route providing service along US-1 in Westport and operating between Norwalk and Milford, Connecticut, is operated jointly by NTD, the Greater Bridgeport Transit (GBT), and the Milford Transit District (MTD). On October 31, 1999, the Coastal Link began operation, addressing the need for all day service along Post Road in Westport. The creation of the Coastal Link allowed NTD to restructure Westport bus services to avoid duplication in the corridor and daytime local service along Post Road (US-1) was discontinued at that time.

Other modes of transportation are also available in Westport. MTA Metro-North Railroad provides commuter rail service in Westport. Private sector services, such as taxicabs, are available for Westport residents, and employer shuttles provide rides for rail commuters from the Metro-North stations in Westport to work locations. Taxicab service is provided by Westport Star Taxi and Saugatuck Taxi. Rides for seniors are available through the Independent Transportation Network of Coastal Connecticut (ITN).

## 1.2 Westport Bus Services

NTD, a designated recipient of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) funding, provides bus service in Westport through an agreement with the Town of Westport. NTD has operated the Westport bus services since 1992. Two types of services are provided: fixed route (Commuter and After-School Service) and ADA and elderly demand response (also referred to as door-to-door). Commuter services connect with MTA Metro-North Railroad New Haven Line at Westport (Saugatuck) Station and Greens Farms Station. Up until June 2015 there were three After-School routes that provided trips for students traveling between Westport schools and after-school programs. Door-to-Door is a demand response service which includes service for senior citizens within Westport, Town-to-Town service for persons with disabilities residing in Westport and travelling within southwest Connecticut towns (Norwalk, Wilton, New Canaan, Darien, Stamford or Greenwich), and ADA service along the US-1 corridor. The available transit services in Westport are more oriented for travel to the south and west and, generally, are designed to bring riders to jobs and other destinations in New York City, Stamford or other towns southwest of Westport.

### 1.2.1 Westport Transit District (WTD)

The establishment of the Westport Transit District (WTD) was begun as a grassroots effort in 1968 which led to an affirmative referendum on the 1968 ballot which officially established the Transit District in accordance with state enabling legislation. During the ensuing five years studies were done to establish the bus system and its funding base [**The Westport Connecticut Integrated Transit System, Final Report, Service and Methods Demonstration Program, U.S.DOT, 1979**].

Under state regulation [**Title 7, Chapter 103a of the Connecticut General Statutes**] a transit district in a community of over 25,000 persons has to have two directors. WTD had one director up until 1973 based on its initial referendum question; in 1973 the issue of having the transit district was hotly debated, with the Representative Town Meeting (RTM) finally voting in favor of a second director and thus implicitly in favor of the system by a 21-16 margin. [**Ibid.**, 1979]. For reference, the CT General Statutes for transit districts (Chapter 103a), and the bylaws of several CT transit districts are included in **Appendix R**.

The WTD directors thus went ahead with providing the operational foundation for the system, including personnel recruitment, securing a federal capital grant, state matching funds, and local operating assistance, and the negotiation of support contracts for system maintenance and marketing.

In 1974 the system was inaugurated with seven daytime loop routes and ten rail station oriented commuter routes during the AM and PM peak periods, using 16 passenger Mercedes D309 buses. [**Ibid.**, 1979]

In 1992, the Minnybus system was having serious problems with regard to ridership, finance, and especially capital equipment. The Connecticut Department of Transportation ordered the vehicles off of the road due to poor maintenance and major safety violations, and along with the town asked the Norwalk Transit District (NTD) to step in and take over the program, including administration, operations, and maintenance. At that time NTD leased used vehicles from other operators, which enabled the system to keep going, and placed NTD staff in the Westport DPW facilities on the Sherwood Island Connector. NTD administrative staff took over all of the financial, grant, and other day to day activities for the system. In 2001 all staff, maintenance, and vehicle storage were moved to the new Norwalk maintenance facility.

The operations, maintenance, and administration for the system have not changed substantially since that time, with the NTD still under contract to the Town of Westport. WTD no longer owns any of the capital equipment and facilities associated with the system. These are entirely provided as part of the contract by the NTD.

Policy direction is still set by the town and carried out through its two appointed WTD Directors, with oversight for the town provided by the RTM. The CT General Statutes pertaining to transit districts has the following statement on the role of the Directors:

The directors shall meet at least four times annually or more often on the call of the chairman and shall elect officers from among their number. They may adopt bylaws and rules for the conduct of the affairs of the district. They shall appoint and fix the salary of a district manager, who shall be the chief executive officer of the district, and such other employees as are required for district purposes. [[CT Gen Stat § 7-273c \(2012\)](#)]

The WTD holds regular monthly meetings that are open to the public and attended by the NTD.

As to the role of the RTM, per the Westport Town Code of Ordinances, "The proper sphere of business of the RTM Transit Committee shall include all matters concerning the operation of the Westport Transit District and all parking within the Town of Westport, including the Railroad Parking Authority and the budget appropriations therefore." [Appendix B]

Although the Town has chosen to have the NTD administer and operate the bus system, the WTD has transit district statutory authority under Connecticut Statutes Chapter 103a and can choose to reinstate its status as a designated recipient of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and CTDOT funding. WTD can apply for funds from these two sources, but the process for applying is a time intensive, multi-step effort with continuing administrative responsibilities.

### **1.2.2 Budget (Expenditures) and Funding Sources**

Westport bus services had a budget of approximately \$1.13 million in FY 2013, about a 1.4 percent decrease from the FY 2012 budget. About 56 percent of the budget is devoted to labor. The remainder of the budget is split between fringe benefits (24 percent) and materials and supplies (20 percent). No funds in the FY 2013 budget were devoted to marketing bus services;

however, \$20,000 in marketing funds for WTD was included in the FY 2014 Westport budget. See Table 1-1 for the WTD FY 2013 expenditures.

**Table 1-1: Westport Transit Services Expenditures FY 2013**

Budget Item	FY 2013 Actual Fixed Route	FY 2013 Actual Door-to-Door	FY 2013 Actual Total	Percent Change from FY 2012
<b>Labor</b>				
Operators	\$288,831	\$122,351	\$411,182	-0.2%
Maintenance	\$63,420	\$26,886	\$90,306	-3.9%
Administrative and Supervisory	\$85,672	\$45,335	\$131,007	+11.8%
<b>Total Labor</b>	<b>\$437,923</b>	<b>\$194,572</b>	<b>\$632,495</b>	<b>+1.5%</b>
<b>Fringe Benefits</b>				
FICA and Medicare	\$33,501	\$14,885	\$48,386	+1.5%
Retirement	\$40,912	\$12,462	\$53,374	+9.8%
Employee Insurances	\$121,778	\$46,780	\$168,558	-17.8%
State Unemployment	\$3,065	\$1,121	\$4,186	-12.1%
Uniforms	\$1,997	\$690	\$2,687	-47.1%
Exams and Glasses	\$503	\$139	\$642	+33.8%
<b>Total Fringe Benefits</b>	<b>\$201,756</b>	<b>\$76,077</b>	<b>\$277,833</b>	<b>-10.9%</b>
<b>Services</b>				
Marketing	\$0	\$0	\$0	0.0%
<b>Materials and Supplies</b>				
Fuels and Lubricants	\$134,749	\$15,816	\$150,565	+11.3%
Tires	\$11,490	\$1,250	\$12,740	+4.0%
Spare Parts and Other Materials	\$51,292	\$5,600	\$56,892	-7.3%
<b>Utilities, Insurance and Misc.</b>				
Utilities	\$0	\$0	\$0	0.0%
Insurance	\$0	\$0	\$0	0.0%
Miscellaneous	\$0	\$0	\$0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>				
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$837,210</b>	<b>\$293,315</b>	<b>\$1,127,790</b>	<b>-1.4%</b>

Source: NTD Westport Services, FY 2013

The majority of funding for operations and capital projects for Westport bus services comes from FTA and state funding which go to NTD, the designated recipient. As shown in Table 1-2, state funding accounts for 66%, the Town of Westport contributes 22%, and fares account for 17% of operating costs. Passenger fares are a relatively low percentage of funding for Door-to-Door service. In general, passenger fares cover a greater proportion of fixed route service expenses than demand response (dial-a-ride) service expenses, since demand response service is more expensive to operate and does not typically carry as many passengers per trip as fixed routes.

**Table 1-2: NTD Funding Sources for Westport Operations, FY 2013**

Source	Fixed Route		Door-to-Door		Total	
	Funding Amount	Funding Percent	Funding Amount	Funding Percent	Funding Amount	Funding Percent
CTDOT (State)*	\$554,172	66.4%	\$193,186	65.9%	\$747,358	66.3%
Town of Westport	\$159,549	19.1%	\$88,844	30.3%	\$248,393	22.0%
Passenger Fares	\$120,754	14.5%	\$11,285	3.8%	\$132,039	11.7%

Note: CTDOT Door-to-Door funds and Total funds include a \$25,306 Municipal Grant.

Source: NTD Westport Services Budget, FY 2013

### 1.2.3 Westport Transit Capital Funding

Since the takeover of operations by the NTD, under contract to the town, all capital equipment and facilities used to provide Westport bus services are the property of the NTD. Westport benefits from this arrangement by having access to shared equipment and facilities that would otherwise be unobtainable due to cost as well as designation by the state and FTA of NTD as the designated recipient of these grants. This means in real terms that all vehicles used in Westport are shared and used for other non-Westport purposes; that Westport has access to a fully equipped and state-of-the art maintenance facility; and that Westport can benefit in the near future from the ITS system that NTD is currently in the process of installing, which will provide real time information and other tools directly to the customer.

All capital is obtained through grants applied for by the NTD, and thus has to be used in compliance with all FTA rules and regulations.

### 1.2.4 Westport System-Wide Service Trends and Changes

#### 1.2.4.1 Service Changes

Several of Westport's transit services were discontinued or transferred to the NTD in FY 2012 due to Town of Westport budget reductions, including:

- Daytime Route 1 (Discontinued)
- Greens Farms Shuttle (Discontinued)
- Nyala Farms Office Parks Shuttle (Discontinued)
- Pepperidge Farm Shuttle (Discontinued)
- Norden Park Shuttle (Transferred to NTD)

As of FY 2012, the Norden Park Shuttle, formerly a Westport bus service, operates as a NTD service. Daytime Route 1, a daytime service that operated between Westport (Saugatuck) Station and downtown Westport, was discontinued in August 2011. A commuter service with more limited hours, Route S1, was introduced to provide some service in place of the route. Route S1 also fully incorporates the eliminated Pepperidge Farm Shuttle in its route path.

### 1.2.4.2 Service Trends

**Table 1-3: Westport Transit Service Trends**

Year	Ridership	Revenue Hours	Revenue Miles	Operating Expenses	Ridership	Revenue Hours	Revenue Miles	Operating Expenses
FY 2009	99,451	18,455	173,223	1,246,062	-	-	-	-
FY 2010	91,388	18,524	173,874	1,277,480	-8.1%	0.4%	0.4%	2.5%
FY 2011	91,481	18,425	169,925	1,340,041	0.1%	-0.5%	-2.3%	4.9%
FY 2012	73,605	12,974	150,104	1,144,135	-19.5%	-29.6%	-11.7%	-14.6%
FY 2013	70,521	12,304	140,307	1,127,790	-4.2%	-5.2%	-6.5%	-1.4%
Overall Change	(28,930)	(6,151)	(32,916)	(118,272)	(29.1%)	(33.3%)	(19.0%)	(9.5%)

Note: The ridership decline from FY 2012 to FY 2013 reflects the transfer of the Norden Park Shuttle from WTD to NTD operation.

Source: NTD Westport Services Ridership Statistics, FY2007-FY2013, NTD Westport Services Budget, FY 2013, Westport Services Daily Vehicle Hours and Miles FY2009-FY2013

Westport ridership (unlinked passenger trips), service levels (revenue hours and miles) and operating expenses all declined between FY 2009 and 2013. While the amount of service remained steady between 2009 and 2011, ridership decreased and operating expenses increased. There were significant reductions in service in FY 2012 (a 34.5 percent reduction in revenue hours operated and 12.9 percent reduction in revenue miles operated), which corresponds to the elimination and restructuring of several routes. That percentage decrease in service resulted in a reduction of costs and a decline in ridership. In FY 2012, ridership declined by approximately 20 percent and the costs of running the system declined by about 15 percent. With service further reduced in FY 2013 to keep costs even (5.2 percent reduction in revenue hours and 6.5 percent reduction in revenue miles), ridership declined by about four percent.

There are a few key contributing factors for service and ridership reductions that should be mentioned. First, the economic realities of the five year time period, during which there was a recession, corresponds with average declines of 5.9 percent in national transit ridership over the three years following the beginning of the recession in 2008.<sup>1</sup> Service eliminations and reductions also contributed to the decline in service and loss of riders. Ridership and service decreases in FY 2012 and 2013 also reflect the transfer of the Norden Park Shuttle from Westport bus services budget and reporting to NTD operation. Norden Shuttle riders did not necessarily stop riding transit, however, the riders, hours, miles and costs of operating the route are no longer assigned to Westport and do not appear in the data that is presented herein.

## 1.3 Westport Commuter Routes

There are six Commuter Routes that provide service to the two Metro-North Stations in Westport, four routes (S1-S4) serving the Westport (Saugatuck) Station and two routes (G1 and G2) providing service to the Greens Farms Station. A shuttle service is also provided for commuters, which operates between the Westport (Saugatuck) Station and an auxiliary parking

<sup>1</sup> APTA 2013 Public Transportation Fact Book, Appendix A, Table 1: Unlinked Passenger Trips by Mode, Roadway Modes (1902-2011), Total Bus and Demand Response.

lot on Imperial Avenue at Thomas Road. Information on the services is available on the Norwalk Transit District website at: [http://www.norwalktransit.com/westport\\_cr.htm](http://www.norwalktransit.com/westport_cr.htm)

### 1.3.1 Commuter Service Descriptions

The following section describes the route path of Westport commuter routes. Figure 1-1 shows a map of the commuter routes.

- **Route S1** operates on Riverside Avenue, Sylvan Road, Post Road West, and Post Road East to Jesup Green.
- **Route S2** operates via Riverside Avenue, Sylvan Road, Kings Highway North, Old Hill Road, Partrick Road, Wilton Road, Red Coat Road, Hermit Lane, Cavalry Road, Broad Street, Newtown Turnpike, Crawford Road, Partrick Road, Cranbury Road, Stony Brook Road, and Woodside Avenue.
- **Route S3** operates via Riverside Avenue, Post Road, Main Street, Cross Highway, Weston Road, Ford Road, Clinton Avenue, Compo Road and Bridge Street.
- **Route S4** operates via Riverside Avenue, Post Road, Compo Road North, East Main Street, Whitney Street, Roseville Road, Hillspoint Road, Compo Road South, Bradley Street, Compo Beach Road, Compo Road South and Bridge Street.
- **Route G1** runs on Greens Farms Road, Center Street, Morningside Drive, Long Lots Road and North Avenue.
- **Route G2** operates via Greens Farms Road, Clapboard Hill Road, Maple Avenue, Old Road, Bulkley Avenue North, Long Lots Road, Bayberry Lane, Meeker Road, and Sturges Highway.
- The **Imperial Lot Shuttle** operates via Riverside Avenue, Bridge Street and Imperial Avenue.

### 1.3.2 Commuter Service Details

Schedule information for commuter routes and the Imperial Parking Lot Shuttle are shown in Table 1-4. The commuter and Imperial Parking Lot routes operate in the morning and evening peak periods and do not operate during the midday period. The S1 Route has the longest service span of all commuter routes and also provides the most trips and the highest service frequency. The Imperial Parking Lot Shuttle follows the S1 in terms of longest span and number of trips, and operates with a similar frequency to the S1.

**Table 1-4: Westport Commuter Route Service Details, FY 2013**

Route	Span		Number of Trips		Frequency (Minutes)		Route Length (Round-trip in mi.)
	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	
S1	5:55AM-9:35AM	3:50PM-7:40PM	10	9	19	22	5.9
S2	6:00AM-7:49AM	6:10PM-7:59PM	3	4	40	27	10.5
S3	6:05AM-7:48AM	6:10PM-7:58PM	3	4	38	27	8.9
S4	5:55AM-7:48AM	6:10PM-7:59PM	4	4	28	27	8.4
G1	6:10AM-7:45AM	5:55PM-7:50PM	3	3	40	50	9.8
G2	5:58AM-7:45AM	5:55PM-8:02PM	3	3	40	50	11.3
Imperial Shuttle	6:04AM-8:27AM	6:08PM-8:11PM	7	7	22	19	3.4

Source: NTD Schedules and Daily Schedule Effective November 2012



The map displays the proposed Metro-North Railroad extension in Westchester County, New York. The main line is shown in blue, starting from the Westport (Saugatuck) Station and heading south towards Norwalk. Several branches are highlighted in different colors: green (S3), orange (S2), red (S4), and yellow (S5). The map includes major roads, water bodies like the Long Island Sound, and surrounding towns such as Wilton, Weston, Fairfield, Norwalk, and Green's Farms. A scale bar at the bottom indicates distances in miles (0, 0.5, 1).

### 1.3.3 Commuter Route Fare and Transfer Policies

#### *Fare Policy*

Fare policy for the bus system is set by the WTD Board of Directors and has been historically tied to customary charges that operators in the area use, adjusted for local concerns or conditions. There is no set guideline for fixed route prices; for ADA pricing, by law the fare cannot exceed twice that of the fixed route fare. The State has to approve any fare changes, and a public hearing on them has to be held as well before they can be implemented.

Fares for Westport commuter route services can be paid with a variety of fare media, including cash, token or fare card. Discounted fares are offered for those purchasing packs of tokens or a 10-ride fare card. Reduced fares are available for persons with disabilities, senior citizens over 65 years of age, and persons with Medicare cards. Reduced fares apply to both single cash fares and 10-ride reduced fare cards.

UniTickets provide customers the ability to carry one ticket good for both Metro-North commuter rail service and Westport fare payment. The ticket is discounted for both the bus and rail portion of the trip, given a typical daily commute pattern. Weekly and monthly UniTickets can be purchased at Metro-North stations or through the Metro-North Mail & Ride program. The average cost per ride for UniTicket and other pass programs naturally varies according to each rider's usage, i.e., the relative discount decreases if commuters do not ride every weekday.

**Table 1-5: Westport Commuter Route Fares 2014**

Fare Type	Cost	Cost per One-Way Trip
Cash- Full Fare	\$1.50	\$1.50
Cash- Reduced Fare	\$0.75	\$0.75
10 Token Pack	\$13.50	\$1.35
20 Token Pack	\$27.00	\$1.35
40 Token Pack	\$54.00	\$1.35
10 Ride Fare Card	\$13.50	\$1.35
10 Ride Reduced Fare Card	\$7.50	\$0.75
Weekly UniTicket	\$9.75 + Metro-North weekly fare	\$0.98*
Monthly UniTicket	\$29.00 + Metro-North monthly fare	\$0.69*

Note: UniTicket costs per trip are estimates for the Westport fare only based on 10 trips per week and 42 trips per month.

Source: NTD August 2014

All commuter route fares include a free transfer. While it is included in the fare, customers should rarely need to transfer between various Westport commuter routes since the network is geared towards bringing commuters to the train station. A transfer can be used for connections between Westport routes and the Coastal Link bus.

### 1.3.4 Commuter Route Ridership

Ridership is shown in Table 1-6. Ridership is defined as the number of individual unlinked passenger trips recorded.

**Table 1-6: Westport Commuter Route Annual Ridership FY2009 – FY2013**

Route/Service	Ridership						Percent of FY 2013 Total Ridership
	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	
Daytime Route 1 <sup>1</sup>	20,487	18,119	15,303	15,245	1,431	n/a	n/a
S1 <sup>1</sup>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	14,513	17,353	29.1%
S2	5,549	5,538	4,552	4,897	5,067	5,194	8.7%
S3	12,209	12,930	11,575	11,363	11,696	10,031	16.8%
S4	5,818	5,004	6,961	7,314	6,684	7,427	12.5%
G1	3,416	4,259	5,411	5,789	6,128	4,951	8.3%
G2	3,303	3,827	4,215	4,264	4,432	4,551	7.6%
Imperial Shuttle	12,190	9,361	9,021	9,136	10,246	10,046	16.9%
Norden Park <sup>2</sup>	27,602	18,766	15,874	14,534	1,089	n/a	n/a
Greens/Nyala Farms	4,761	2,914	2,410	2,757	939	n/a	n/a
Pepperidge Farm	4,202	3,666	3,119	3,263	222	n/a	n/a
<b>Total</b>	<b>99,537</b>	<b>84,384</b>	<b>78,441</b>	<b>78,562</b>	<b>62,447</b>	<b>59,553</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Percent Change</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>-15.2%</b>	<b>-7.0%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>-20.5%</b>	<b>-4.9%</b>	<b>n/a</b>

Note 1: Daytime Route 1 was eliminated in August 2011. Commuter Route S1 replaced the service.

Note 2: Norden Park services were transferred from Westport to NTD in FY 2012.

Source: NTD Westport Services Ridership Statistics, FY '07 to FY '13

Over the past five years, FY 2008 through FY 2013, ridership on Westport fixed routes decreased by approximately 40 percent, in part due to service reductions as well as overall ridership trends seen in years previous to this five-year period. The largest decreases in ridership occurred from FY 2008 to FY 2009 and from FY 2011 to FY 2012, largely due to the economic downturn, the closure of Gibbs College, and service cuts and adjustments. Ridership numbers typically declined year over year but remained relatively constant between FY 2010 and FY 2011. In FY 2012, the elimination of shuttles to Greens Farms/Nyala Farms, Pepperidge Farm, and the transfer of the Norden Park Shuttle operation to NTD were largely responsible for the drop in total ridership. While ridership on the system declined overall, several routes saw modest ridership growth in FY 2013, including the S1, S2, S4, and G2.

### 1.3.5 Commuter Route Revenue Service Hours and Miles

Table 1-7 shows the annual revenue hours and miles operated for all Westport fixed routes. Revenue hours and miles show the number of hours and miles operated while a route is in revenue service. These figures do not include deadhead hours and miles, which are those that are operated when the bus is not operating revenue service.

The highest numbers of revenue hours are operated by commuter routes serving Westport (Saugatuck) Station. Route S1 has the highest number of revenue hours and miles devoted to it of all fixed routes by far. Other commuter routes serving Westport (Saugatuck) Station, including the Imperial Lot Shuttle, operates a similar number of service hours annually. The two routes serving the Greens Farms Station operated a similar number of revenue service hours.

**Table 1-7: Annual Revenue Hours and Miles by Commuter Route, FY 2013**

Route/Service	Revenue Hours	Revenue Miles
S1	2,587	24,552
S2	1,133	18,228
S3	1,069	15,450
S4	1,153	16,666
G1	890	14,582
G2	930	16,814
Imperial Shuttle	1,057	10,962
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,819</b>	<b>117,254</b>

Source: Westport Service Run Times, Fixed Route Revenue Hours and Fixed Route Revenue Miles, July 2012 and Daily Vehicle Miles and Hours, FY 2013

### 1.3.6 Commuter Route Operating Expenses

Table 1-8 provides the annual operating expense of each Westport fixed route.

**Table 1-8: Annual Operating Expenses by Commuter Route, FY 2013**

Route/Service	Operating Expenses
S1	\$245,550
S2	\$107,590
S3	\$101,469
S4	\$109,473
G1	\$84,518
G2	\$88,285
Imperial Shuttle	\$100,292
<b>Total<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>\$837,176</b>

Note: A unit cost per hour for fixed route service of \$94.93 was derived from FY 2013 Westport fixed route costs and revenue hours.  
 Note 1: The total shows the operating expenses for Westport commuter routes. The total does not match the total fixed route budget because After-School Routes are not figured into the expenses in this section.

Source: Fixed Route Revenue Hours, July 2012 and NTD Westport Services Budget, FY 2013

Operating expenses by route were calculated using a FY 2013 unit cost per revenue hour of service of \$94.93 for the Westport fixed route network. The unit cost per hour was multiplied by the number of revenue hours for each route to get the operating expense. Of all routes, the routes serving Westport (Saugatuck) Station had the highest operating expenses, which is directly related to the amount of service provided.

### 1.3.7 Commuter Route Farebox Revenue

Passenger fares brought in about \$120,000 in FY 2013. Table 1-9 shows revenue collected from passenger fares for all fixed route services, including commuter and after-school routes. Farebox revenue was only provided for fixed route services and was not broken out by fixed route service type.

**Table 1-9: Fixed Route Farebox Revenue, FY 2013**

Service	Farebox Revenue
Fixed Route	\$120,754

Note: Farebox revenue includes Westport Commuter and After-School services.

Source: NTD Westport Services Budget, FY 2013

The farebox revenue figure represents an increase of about \$4,500 from FY 2012.

### 1.3.8 Commuter Route Service Indicators

Service indicators are measurements of route productivity, determining how many passengers are carried per unit of service operated; in other words, how much the service is used relative to the amount of service provided. Two service indicators were looked at to measure route productivity on an annual basis: passengers per revenue hour and passengers per revenue mile. While specific service standards pertaining to route productivity have been used in the past, at present WTD does not employ benchmarks for productivity, ridership, or other service indicators. However, the 1993 Ecosometrics report [Westport Transit District Review, July 1993] established benchmarks that were initially adopted by WTD and reported by NTD. A previous WTD Board of Directors subsequently abandoned the requirement for reporting benchmarks, although the NTD has always kept records on ridership and financial measures as part of its oversight and planning. Appendix C contains the pages with the benchmarks.

A recommendation of this study is to re-institute the reporting of key benchmarks as part of the regular monthly reporting by the NTD to the WTD Board of Directors.

Commuter routes were compared with one another to understand which routes were more utilized and which were less utilized based on how much service operated along the routes. The most productive commuter routes, in terms of passengers per hour, were the Imperial Lot Shuttle and Route S3. Both of these routes showed high productivity relative to the commuter route average. The routes with the fewest passengers per hour were Routes S2 and G2. In terms of passengers per mile, the most productive routes were the Imperial Lot Shuttle and Route S1. The least productive routes were Routes S2, G1 and G2. See Table 1-10 for passengers per hour and passengers per mile.

**Table 1-10: Commuter Route Service Indicators**

Route/Service	Ridership	Annual Revenue Hours	Annual Revenue Miles	Passengers per Hour	Passengers per Mile
S1	17,353	2,587	24,552	6.7	0.7
S2	5,194	1,133	18,228	4.6	0.3
S3	10,031	1,069	15,450	9.4	0.6
S4	7,427	1,153	16,666	6.4	0.4
G1	4,951	890	14,582	5.6	0.3
G2	4,551	930	16,814	4.9	0.3
Imperial Shuttle	10,046	1,057	10,962	9.5	0.9
Commuter Route Total	59,553	8,819	117,254	6.8	0.5

Source: NTD Westport Service Ridership Statistics, FY 2013 and Daily Vehicle Miles and Hours, FY 2013

### 1.3.9 Commuter Route Financial Indicators

Financial indicators are a gauge of efficiency, showing the expenses required to provide a unit of service or a passenger trip. Two financial indicators were used to evaluate efficiency on an annual basis: operating cost per revenue mile and operating cost per passenger. See Table



1-11 for financial indicators. Since operating costs for each route were calculated using a unit cost, all routes have the same \$94.93 cost per hour. FY2014 audited operating and financial statistics are provided in Appendix L.

**Table 1-11: Commuter Route Financial Indicators**

Route/Service	Operating Expenses	Annual Revenue Miles	Ridership	Cost per Mile	Cost per Passenger
S1	\$245,550	24,552	17,353	\$10.00	\$14.15
S2	\$107,590	18,228	5,194	\$5.90	\$20.71
S3	\$101,469	15,450	10,031	\$6.57	\$10.12
S4	\$109,473	16,666	7,427	\$6.57	\$14.74
G1	\$84,518	14,582	4,951	\$5.80	\$17.07
G2	\$88,285	16,814	4,551	\$5.25	\$19.40
Imperial Shuttle	\$100,292	10,962	10,046	\$9.15	\$9.98
Commuter Route Total	\$837,176	117,254	59,553	\$7.14	\$14.06

Source: NTD Westport Services Ridership Statistics, FY 2013, Daily Vehicle Miles and Hours, FY 2013, and NTD Westport Service Budget, FY 2013

In terms of cost per passenger, the Imperial Lot Shuttle and Route S3 were the most efficient routes. Routes S2 and G2, the least productive routes, were also the least efficient according to this measure. This indicator ties the resource utilization to the cost to provide a single trip and is the most viable indicator in terms of cost-effectiveness in the most objective sense. This does not take into account external benefits related to congestion relief, resident mobility, etc.

In terms of operating cost per mile, Route S1 and the Imperial Lot Shuttle exhibited the highest costs associated with each mile of service operated, a result of their shorter operating distance and slower average speed. The average speeds for the S1 and Imperial Shuttle, calculated by dividing the number of annual revenue miles by the number of annual revenue hours, were around 10 miles per hour while other commuter routes had average speeds closer to 15 miles per hour and higher. The most efficient routes were the two routes operating to Greens Farms Station. Traffic congestion to Greens Farms Station is generally less pronounced than congestion approaching the Saugatuck Station, notably on Bridge Street and on Riverside Avenue when I-95 is congested. The shorter S1 and Imperial Lot Shuttle routes face congestion in downtown Westport and approaching the Saugatuck Station, lengthening the time it takes to perform a trip.

### 1.3.10 Commuter Route Revenue Indicators

Farebox recovery is commonly used as an indicator of the effectiveness of fare policy in recovering a portion of the operating cost. Specifically, it shows the percentage of costs that are covered by passenger fares. Farebox recovery is tied to the ridership productivity but, also, to WTD's fare policy and revenue recovery expectations. Farebox recovery was calculated for Westport fixed routes as a whole, including commuter and after-school routes, since farebox revenues were not available by route or service type. See Table 1-12 for Westport fixed route farebox recovery.

**Table 1-12: Fixed Route Farebox Recovery**

Route/Service	Farebox Revenue	Operating Expenses	Farebox Recovery
Fixed Route Total	\$120,754	\$837,210	14.4%

Note: The farebox recovery rate is for all Westport fixed routes including Commuter and After-School services. Farebox revenue was reported for all fixed route services and not by service type.

Source: NTD Westport Services Budget, FY 2013

## **1.4 Westport After-School Routes**

Westport's After-School Bus program began when the system was still operating a full set of all-day community routes, and were designed as trippers augmenting the capacity of these routes to serve the schools and after-school programs. After the community's all-day routes were discontinued, the after-school routes continued to operate as independent routes to ensure that there were still connections for students between their schools and the afternoon program sites.

In reviewing these routes and their operation, their purpose and regulatory status was called into question, and on July 1, 2014 the Norwalk Transit District received a letter (Appendix D) stating that, "Based on the FTA's review of the service provided by NTD, FTA has determined that NTD is currently operating unauthorized school bus service." While the routes at one time were legitimate tripper routes and covered under the Act (49 CFR Section 605.3) they are not acting as such at present.

Note that this does not prohibit the town from offering after-school services, only that it cannot use any capital equipment purchased using FTA funds such as those operated by the NTD or other transit agencies.

This study examined options for providing after-school transit services but found no viable option that would provide a truly public, open door and usable set of routes that would pass FTA examination.

- Westport and NTD asked for and received a 90 day extension from the FTA to continue to operate the after-school program while it undertook a study of alternatives. The August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2014 letter granting the extension is also in Appendix D. The First Selectman formed an Advisory Committee on After-School Transportation in September 2014, and this committee examined options for the 2014-15 school year. The town requested a further extension to the end of the 2014-15 school year. FTA granted continued operation of this service until June 2015.
- In the spring of 2015 the Town of Westport did seek an alternative service provider that would be funded by the after school programs, parents or a combination of both. Working with the Westport Board of Education (BOE) the Town piggy backed onto a 5 year School Bus Transportation RFP and added the after school routes as an "optional extra" that transportation providers could bid on as part of the total bid or

separately. One Company did provide an optional bid just for the after school routes, a company that specializes in transportation for private schools, after school transportation and “specials”. The after school programs met with the provider and after negotiation decided that this company’s lowest bid was still too expensive for them to engage.

- After June 2015 after school bus service is not provided. There is no longer afterschool bus service. One after school program, Earthplace, has a van that they use for their program. Other after-school programs worked with the BOE to identify as many regular school bus routes as possible from the schools that ran by the drop their locations. Where there is available capacity and proximity to the programs some students are using regular BOE routes. Where BOE routes are not available, parents have to make their own arrangements.

Appendix E contains the FTA regulations, and a description of the after-school program as it was operated during the time of this study, through June 2015 as well as the post June 2015 options.

## **1.5 Westport Demand Response Service**

### **1.5.1 Door-to-Door Service Description**

Door-to-Door is an umbrella term for demand response service for persons with disabilities. Four individual programs comprise the overall Door-to-Door program offered in Westport: Town-to-Town, Westport Elderly Services, Westport Municipal Dial-a-Ride, and the Coastal Link ADA service. Because Norwalk Transit District is the contract operator for all Westport services, as well as the designated operator of the state-funded Municipal Dial-a-Ride service, the Door-to-Door options within Westport are seamless.

1. Senior: service available to senior citizens (age 65+) within the Town of Westport, Monday – Friday 8AM – 5PM.
2. ADA: service required by the Americans with Disabilities Act in conjunction with the After-School fixed routes operated for Westport by NTD. ADA service is also required for the Coastal Link for trip origins/destinations within  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile of the Coastal Link route (described below). Coastal Link is operated by NTD, Greater Bridgeport Transit and Milford Transit seven (7) days a week and the ADA service has the same days and hours as it does.
3. Municipal Dial-a-Ride: service for the elderly and disabled provided throughout the Town of Westport to complement the  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile requirement relating to fixed route services, Monday through Friday 8AM – 5PM.
4. Town-to-Town: service for disabled residents of Westport traveling to Norwalk, Wilton, New Canaan, Darien, Stamford, or Greenwich, Monday – Friday 8AM to 5PM.

Information about transportation services for seniors and persons with disabilities as well as ADA eligibility is on the Norwalk Transit District website at:

[http://www.norwalktransit.com/info\\_services.htm](http://www.norwalktransit.com/info_services.htm)



The *Know How to Go Mobility Resources for Southwest CT: A Guidebook for Seniors, People with Disabilities, and Veterans* is available at <http://knowhowtogoc.org/images/pdf/Know%20How%20To%20Go%20Guide.pdf>

### 1.5.2 Door-to-Door Service Details

Customers must reserve a Door-to-Door ride at least one day in advance. Reservations can be made Monday through Friday between the hours of 8:00AM and 5:00PM. Three services operate on weekdays between 8:00AM and 5:00PM, as noted above. The Town of Westport provides residents the Door-to-Door services for the elderly and Town-to-Town services above and beyond the legal requirements of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) paratransit in the community, which is only required for WTD's After-School routes and the Coastal Link operated by NTD, GBT, and MTD. Coastal Link ADA users must have trip origins and destinations within a ¾ mile buffer of the route.

The Town of Westport pays for operating costs (minus fare revenues) of the senior service and of residents' trips on the Town-to-Town service. The State of Connecticut contributes funds to support the operation of the Municipal Dial-a-Ride service, which effectively fills in the gaps between ADA zones relating to fixed route services and the remainder of the town. This service is open only to ADA-eligible customers.

The fact that Westport Door-to-Door and Town-to-Town services are not tied to ADA requirements relating to the Coastal Link means that the Town of Westport and NTD may set the service hours as it desires and not directly in conjunction with the service span of the Coastal Link bus. At present, the Door-to-Door service days and hours are more limited than the Coastal Link ADA service.

### 1.5.3 Door-to-Door Fare Policy

Effective January 1, 2014 the Door-to-Door cash fare is currently \$3.00, which is twice the cash bus fare. Westport Door-to-Door fares are paid with a ticket that must be purchased in advance of a trip. Cash fares are not accepted by drivers. Discounted prices are available for buying Door-to-Door tickets in bulk. Tickets can be purchased by mail, phone, or in person at Westport Town Hall or the Westport Center for Senior Activities. Westport Door-to-Door fares can be found in Table 1-13.

**Table 1-13: Westport Door-to-Door Fares 2014**

Fare Type	Cost	Cost per One-Way Trip
Door-to-Door Single Ride Ticket	\$3.00	\$3.00
Door-to-Door 10 Tickets	\$24.00	\$2.40
Town-to-Town	\$3.00x2 = Trip across 1 town border	\$6.00
	\$3.00x3 = Trips across 2 or more town borders	\$9.00

Source: NTD

### 1.5.4 Door-to-Door Ridership

Ridership on the Door-to-Door service declined continually between FY 2008 and FY 2013, with relatively large decreases seen between FY 2008 and FY 2010. Ridership continued to decline in FY 2013. See Table 1-14 for Door-to-Door Ridership. Note that Coastal Link ADA ridership in Westport is included in ADA ridership figures.

**Table 1-14: Annual Ridership, Door-to-Door ADA Service FY2008-2013**

Service	Ridership					
	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013
ADA	5,636	5,445	4,164	3,446	4,001	4,005
Town-to-Town	3,176	2,254	2,412	2,853	2,228	1,988
Municipal Dial-a-Ride	5	227	517	711	695	690
Total Door-to-Door	8,817	7,926	7,093	7,010	6,924	6,683
Percent Change	n/a	-10.1%	-10.5%	-1.2%	-1.2%	-3.5%

Note: All Door-to-Door ridership figures include Coastal Link ADA service provided within Westport.

Source: NTD Westport Service Ridership Statistics, FY 2007-FY 2013

Municipal Dial-a-Ride service, run by the NTD, began operation in FY 2008. The service is funded by a state grant. Beginning in FY 2010, the service benefitted from a higher budget than the \$32,213 grant, as NTD was permitted to carry over funds that were not spent in previous years. The amount of the grant was lowered in FY 2013, however, the number of trips provided remained relatively unchanged from FY 2012 as funds were carried over into FY 2013 from previous years.

### 1.5.5 Door-to-Door Revenue Service Hours and Miles

Table 1-15 shows annual revenue hours and revenue miles.

**Table 1-15: Door-to-Door Revenue Hours and Miles, FY 2013**

Service	Revenue Hours	Revenue Miles
Door-to-Door	2,915	15,149

Source: NTD Daily Vehicle Hours and Miles FY2009-FY2013

### 1.5.6 Door-to-Door Operating Expenses

Door-to-Door operating expenses can be found in Table 1-16. Door-to-Door service costs accounted for approximately 26 percent of the Westport service budget.

**Table 1-16: Door-to-Door Operating Expenses, FY 2013**

Service	Operating Expenses
Door-to-Door	\$293,315

Source: NTD FY 2013

### 1.5.7 Door-to-Door Farebox Revenue

See Table 1-17 for Door-to-Door farebox revenue. Door-to-Door service is projected to bring in about 8.6 percent of total Westport service farebox revenues in FY 2013.

**Table 1-17: Door-to-Door Farebox Revenue, FY 2013**

Service	Farebox Revenue
Door-to-Door	\$11,285

Source: NTD Westport Services Budget, FY 2013

**1.5.8 Door-to-Door Service Indicators**

Service indicators are measures of productivity, including the number of passengers per hour and passengers per mile. Demand response and ADA services are typically less productive than fixed routes due to the nature of the more personalized service, dispatching, and lower overall demand. Door-to-Door service does, however, see more passengers per mile than some WTD fixed routes. Also, the number of passengers per hour is within line of other demand response services. See Table 1-18 for Door-to-Door passengers per revenue hour and passengers per revenue mile.

**Table 1-18: Door-to-Door Service Indicators**

Service	Ridership	Revenue Hours	Revenue Miles	Passengers per Hour	Passengers per Mile
Door-to-Door	6,683	2,915	15,149	2.3	0.4

Source: NTD Westport Service Ridership Statistics, FY 2013 and Daily Vehicle Miles and Hours, FY 2013

**1.5.9 Door-to-Door Financial Indicators**

Table 1-19 presents Door-to-Door financial indicators. The cost to provide an hour of service is just over \$100 and the cost to provide service per passenger trip is about \$44.00.

**Table 1-19: Door-to-Door Financial Indicators**

Service	Operating Expenses	Revenue Hours	Revenue Miles	Ridership	Cost per Hour	Cost per Mile	Cost per Passenger
Door-to-Door	\$293,315	2,915	15,149	6,683	\$100.62	\$19.36	\$43.89

Source: NTD Westport Service Ridership Statistics, FY 2013, Daily Vehicle Miles and Hours, FY 2013, and NTD Westport Service Budget, FY 2013

**1.5.10 Door-to-Door Revenue Indicators**

Customer fares cover only a relatively small percentage of the costs associated with providing Door-to-Door service. This is typical of demand response (particularly ADA) services. These services are more expensive to operate, yet ADA fares are limited to two times the fixed route fare by federal regulation. See Table 1-20 for Door-to-Door revenue indicators.

**Table 1-20: Door-to-Door Revenue Indicators**

Service	Operating Expenses	Revenue	Farebox Recovery
Door-to-Door	\$293,315	\$11,285	3.8%

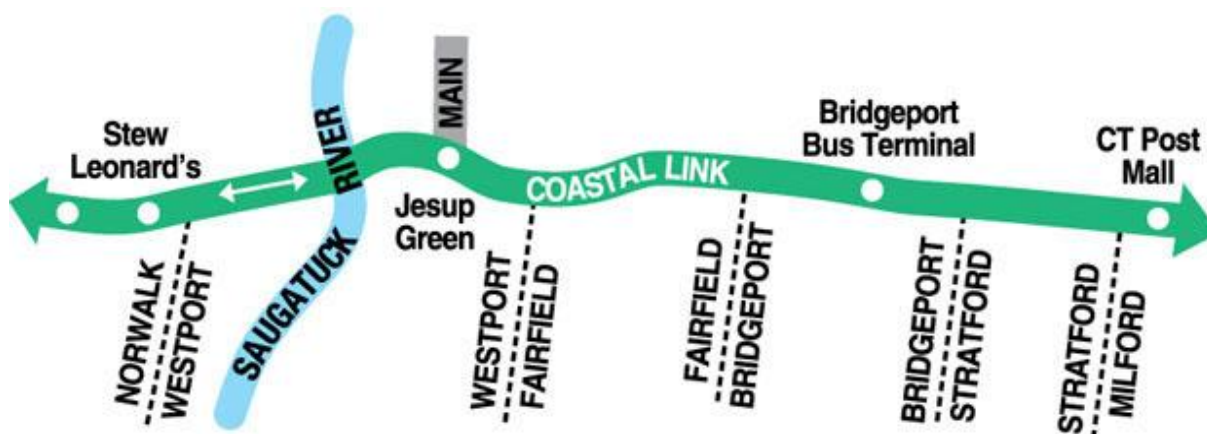
Source: NTD Westport Service Budget, FY 2013

**1.6 Coastal Link Bus Service**

The Coastal Link is a regional bus route that operates between the Norwalk WHEELS Hub in Norwalk and the CT Post Mall in Milford. In Westport, the route operates in the US-1 corridor,

also called Post Road West and Post Road East, and serves the town's downtown area. NTD, GBT and MTD each contribute to the operation and cost of the route. Westport does not contribute to the cost of the route. See Figure 1-2 for a schematic map of the Coastal Link. For more information about Coastal Link bus service see the recent SWRPA report, *Coastal Corridor Bus Study*, prepared by AECOM. Information on Coastal Link bus service is available on the NTD website at: [http://www.norwalktransit.com/coastal\\_link.htm](http://www.norwalktransit.com/coastal_link.htm)

Figure 1-2: Coastal Link



Source: NTD

The Coastal Link operates seven days a week, including during the midday and evening when Westport bus service does not operate. During its operation, Coastal Link ADA service is provided by regulation as previously described. See Table 1-21 for details of Coastal Link service in Westport, including span (when operating through Westport) and frequency.

Table 1-21: Coastal Link Service Details

Coastal Link	Span	Frequency	
		Peak	Off-Peak
Weekday	6:09AM-10:19PM	20	60
Saturday	6:09AM-10:19PM	30	60
Sunday	8:30AM-6:30PM	-	60

Source: NTD

## 1.7 MTA Metro-North Railroad

Commuter rail service is operated by MTA Metro-North Railroad. There are two train stations located in Westport: Westport (Saugatuck) Station and Greens Farms Station. Both stations are on the railroad's New Haven Line which operates between New Haven, Connecticut and Grand Central Terminal in New York City. See Figure 1-3 for a New Haven Line diagram.

**Figure 1-3: MTA Metro-North Railroad New Haven Line**



Service to Grand Central Terminal and to New Haven operates about 19 to 20 hours of the day on weekdays, Saturdays and Sundays. Select trains do not make station stops at Greens Farms. There is more frequent service at Westport (Saugatuck) Station. Service details including span and frequency are included in Table 1-22. Note that the schedule shown is from April 2013 when the inventory for this report was conducted, and that Metro North makes schedule changes several times a year in response to demand and construction activities. As these changes are made, the NTD makes adjustments as needed to its commuter bus schedules.

**Table 1-22: Metro-North (Westport Stations) Service Details**

Station	Span		Average Frequency (Minutes)	
	To NYC	To New Haven	Peak	Off-Peak
<b>Westport (Saugatuck) Station</b>				
Weekday	4:47AM-12:14AM	7:04AM-2:55AM	18	38
Saturday	5:24AM-12:14AM	7:01AM-2:55AM	30	41
Sunday	5:24AM-12:14AM	7:01AM-2:55AM	-	41
<b>Greens Farms Station</b>				
Weekday	5:16AM-12:10AM	7:35AM-2:59AM	27	53
Saturday	5:19AM-12:10AM	7:05AM-2:59AM	-	60
Sunday	5:19AM-12:10AM	7:05AM-2:59AM	-	60

Source: MTA Metro-North New Haven Line Schedule, April 2013<sup>2</sup>

Parking is available at both Metro-North Stations in Westport for commuters to park and ride. There are 1,213 parking spaces laid out in eight separate parking lots at the Westport (Saugatuck) Station. Greens Farms Station has three adjoining parking lots with 468 parking spaces.

An annual or daily permit is required for parking and the parking permit program is managed by the Town of Westport Police Department. Permit holders may park at either station. The cost of daily and annual parking permits is shown in Table 1-23.

**Table 1-23: Town of Westport Station Parking Permit Costs**

Permit Type	Current Rate
Daily	\$5
Annual	\$325

Source: 2013 SWRPA Rail Station Parking Update – July 2014

<sup>2</sup> Metro-North service improvement implemented on November 9, 2014 improved the frequency of train service at the Saugatuck Station

The demand for station parking is greater than the parking supply. About 1,238 people are on a waitlist for a station parking permit. The wait is approximately 3 years before a permit will be issued for those who have just been applied for a permit. See Table 1-24 for permit and waitlist information and Table 1-25 for station parking utilization rates.

**Table 1-24: Westport Stations Parking Permit Information**

Annual Permits	2012	2015
Permits Issued	2,727	n/a
Ratio of Permits Issued to Permit Spaces	2:1	n/a
Persons on Wait List	2,438	1,238
Estimated Time on Wait List	4-5 years	3 years, 4 months

Source: SWRPA Rail Station Parking Update – April 2013 and Westport Police Department November 2015

**Table 1-25: Westport Stations Parking Utilization 2013**

Utilization	Westport (Saugatuck) Station		Greens Farms Station	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Daily Spaces In-Use	186/186	100.0%	96/106	90.6%
Permit Spaces In-Use	911/981	92.9%	348/355	98.0%
Handicapped Spaces In-Use	25/28	89.3%	4/5	80.0%
Other Spaces In-Use	20/20	100.0%	0/0	0.0%
Total Spaces In-Use	1,142/1,215	94.0%	448/466	96.1%

Source: Westport Rail Stations Parking Study Draft Existing Conditions Report, September 2013

An analysis of station parking facilities is currently being conducted - the *Westport Rail Stations Study*, which will provide recommendations for parking improvements, demand management, and mobility at the two Westport railroad stations, Westport (Saugatuck) Station and Greens Farms Station. The station parking analysis is coordinated with this study of transit service. The study website is <https://westcog.org/transportation-studies/>

## 1.8 Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT)

Nine of the twelve parking lots located at the two Westport railroad stations are owned by CTDOT and leased to the Town of Westport, including six of the eight parking lots at Westport (Saugatuck) Station and all three parking lots at Greens Farms Station. The lease requires no fee be paid for the property but that the town maintain the train stations and parking areas and invest any surplus from parking revenues into upkeep of the facilities.

The term of the lease agreement, signed in 2002, is 10 years with options to extend the lease for two additional 10 year periods. Westport recently renewed the lease on the land in 2011 for another 10 year period. The leasing arrangements and parking operations are covered in more detail in the *Westport Rail Stations Study*. Appendix S contains the two station leases with CDOT. The CTDOT-Westport rail parking lease allocates half of the excess funding to the Town of Westport with no restrictions on use. The Town determines the use of the funding. The other half of excess funding is controlled by CTDOT.

CTDOT, through its CT Rides service, provides Guaranteed Ride services for UniTicket holders. If a UniTicket-holding commuter has an emergency and requires a ride to or from either Westport train station at times when Westport bus services do not operate, CT Rides will provide a ride at no cost. UniTicket holding commuters are eligible for up to four guaranteed rides per year. The trips are provided by a local taxi company contracted by CT Rides.

## **1.9 Taxicabs and Senior Transportation**

Taxicab services are located at the Westport (Saugatuck) Station. The services are provided by Westport Star Taxi and Saugatuck Taxi.

ITN offers transportation services specifically geared toward seniors whose mobility is restricted because they can no longer drive. The service provides rides for seniors to run errands or attend other activities as one would if they were independent. The drivers of the vehicles are volunteers and assist customers getting between the vehicle and their destination and with carrying any bags or other items.

The cost of ITN's service is a flat \$3.50 and an additional \$1.50 for each mile travelled. Customers may also donate a vehicle for credit. Customers set up an account with ITN and any charges are deducted from the account. Money is not exchanged in the vehicle. Customers must be members in order to receive the service. The service operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Rides using ITN services can be scheduled in advance or booked on-demand.

## **1.10 Demographics**

### **1.10.1 Community Characteristics**

The Town of Westport had a population of 26,391 in 2010. Just over half of the town's population is 18 to 64 years of age, i.e., post high school or working age. Thirty percent of residents are children under 18 years of age while 16 percent are over 65. There is an even split between seniors between 65 and 75 years of age and those older than 75. (Table 1-26) Figure 1-4 provides a more detailed geographic description of senior populations within Westport.

Senior populations are most concentrated in parts of Westport adjacent to the two train stations, in downtown Westport, and to the north of Post Road East in eastern areas of Westport. All of these areas are served by one or multiple existing WTD commuter routes. Additionally, the Coastal Link operates on Post Road (U.S. 1), along the boundary of these areas of higher senior densities.

**Table 1-26: Westport Population Distribution by Age 2010**

Age Group	Population	Percent of Total
Under 18 years	7,867	30%
18 to 64 years	14,298	54%
65 to 74 years	2,177	8%
75 and older	2,049	8%
Total	26,391	100%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 U.S. Census

#### **1.10.1.1 Working Population**

Westport has grown as an employment destination, particularly as retail and commercial interests have fueled growth in the downtown area and along the Post Road. The Census 2007-2011 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates put the town's total number of workers at roughly 18,000; however, varied work hours clearly mean that this is not representative of the employees who work in Westport simultaneously. See Table 1-27.

**Table 1-27: Westport Workers and Working Population 2011**

Total Workers in Area		Working Population 16 Years and Over	
Estimate	+/-	Estimate	+/-
18,097	1,012	11,014	438

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



Figure 1-4: Westport Senior Population

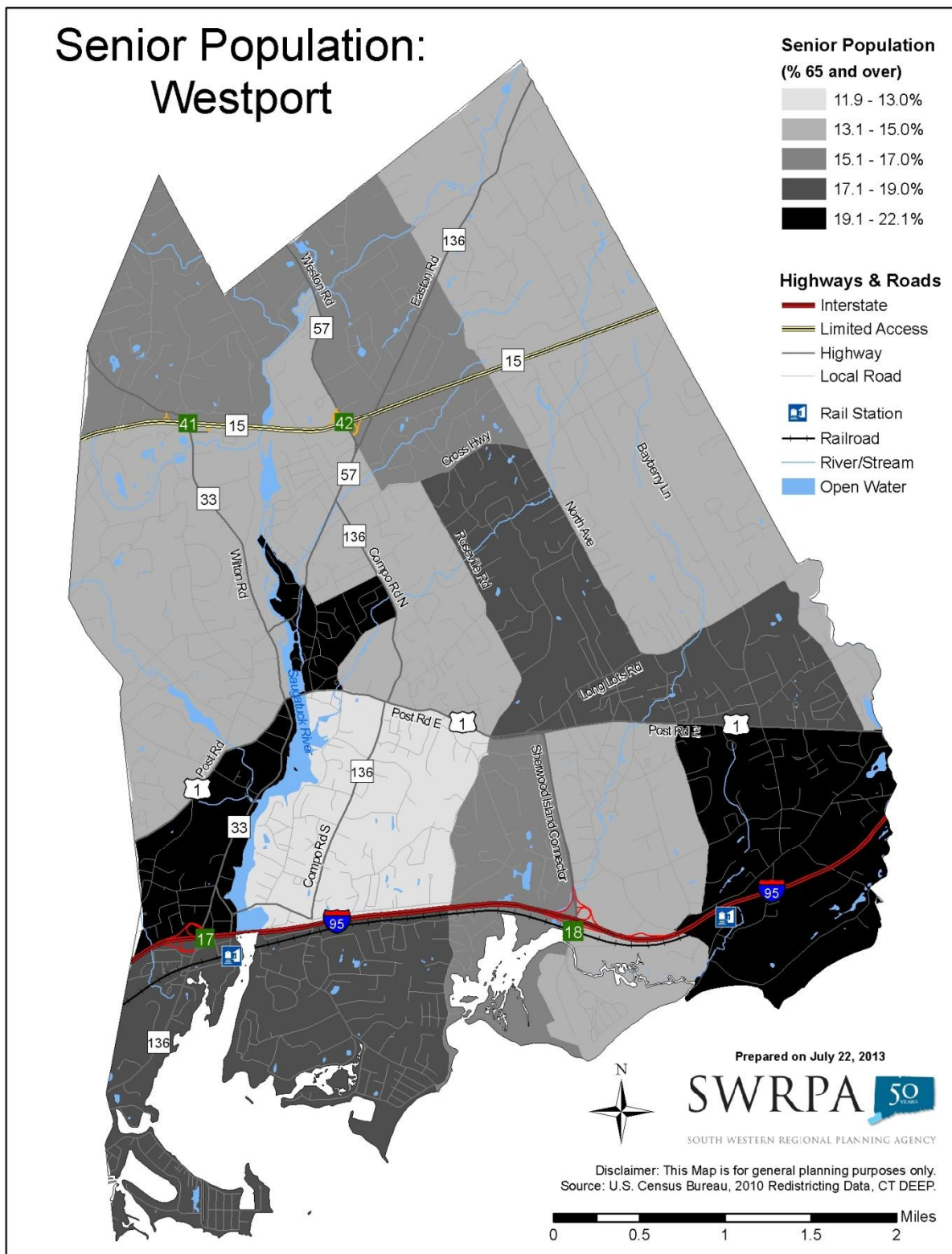


Figure 1-5 shows the means of transportation to employment for workers age 16 and over. The graphic highlights the primary mode of travel, thus bus access to rail services may be underrepresented or fail to be represented at all. Driving alone and taking the train represent the vast majority of travel modes, 59 percent (6,498 workers) and 20 percent (2,203 workers) of all Westport workers, respectively. The number of workers who commute by rail far exceeds the number of parking spaces available at Westport Metro-North stations. There are about 2,500 boarding commuters at Saugatuck and only about 1,200 spaces; given there are so many more commuters than parking spaces available requires some of those commuters to get a ride to the station or utilize other modes of transportation such as buses, carpools, or bicycle or walk to the station. The ratio at Greens Farms is better, with 725 daily boardings and about 470 parking spaces.

#### 1.10.1.2 Population with Disabilities

The U.S. Census Bureau's 2009-2011 American Community Survey estimated approximately 1,922 Westport residents with disabilities. These residents are among those able to take advantage of Door-to-Door and other dial-a-ride services if they meet eligibility requirements. See Table 1-28.

**Table 1-28: Westport Population with Disabilities 2011**

Total Civilian Non-Institutionalized Population		With a Disability	
Estimate	+/-	Estimate	+/-
26,282	122	1,922	390

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2011 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates

#### 1.10.2 Trip Generators

The Westport fixed route services are designed specifically to serve specific destinations, notably the Metro-North rail stations, schools and after-school activities. Of interest are those destinations most frequently scheduled by riders of the Door-to-Door and Town-to-Town services. See Figure 1-6 for a map of the trip generators listed below.

The five most frequented destinations within Westport are:

- Westport Center for Senior Activities
- Westport Library
- Stop & Shop
- CVS
- Medical buildings at 129 and 162 Kings Highway

The five most frequented out-of-town destinations are:

- 40 Cross Street, Norwalk (medical office building)
- 31 Stevens Street, Norwalk (dialysis)
- 148 East Avenue, Norwalk (medical office building)

- Norwalk Community College
- Norwalk Hospital

Figure 1-5: Means of Transportation to Work

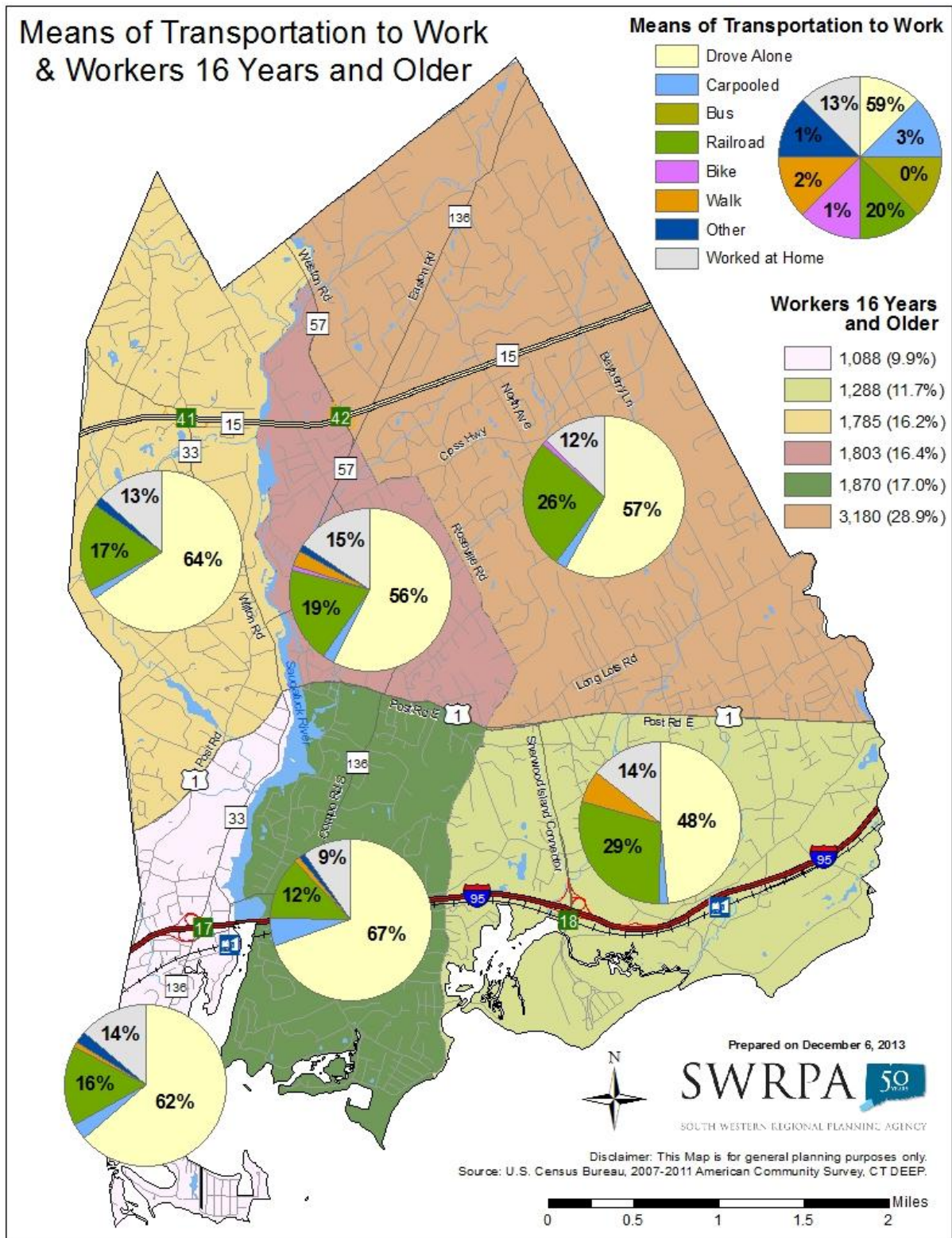
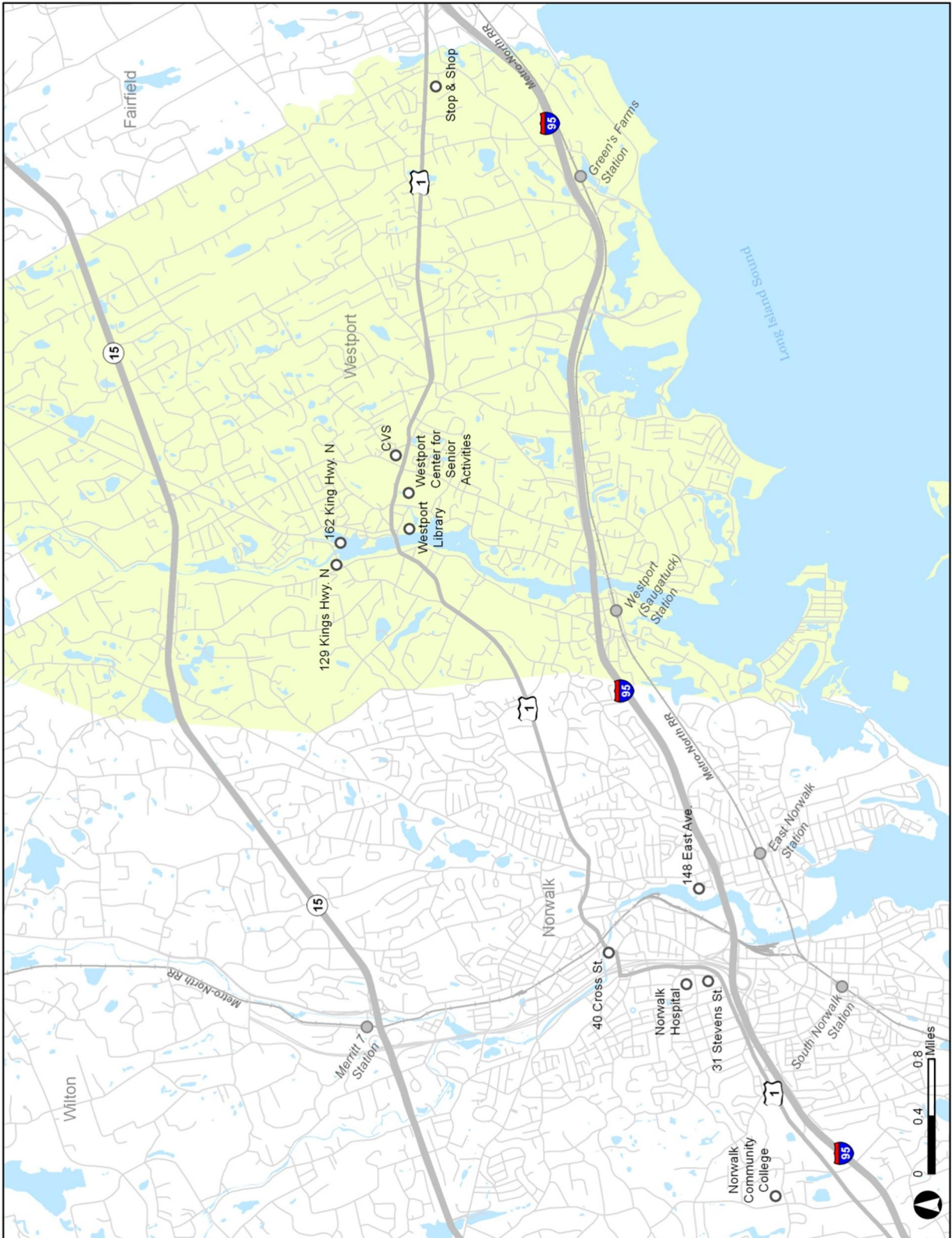




Figure 1-6: Door-to-Door Trip Generators



## 1.11 Transit Marketing

In 2013, WTD received \$20,000 from the Town of Westport for marketing efforts, focused on signage at the rail stations and posters for display at key locations in town. In recent years, no dedicated marketing budget has been available for the town's transit services. The WTD directors developed handouts and informational items, mounted signs about bus services at the Saugatuck train station, and an information display at the Westport Senior Center. The [westporttransit.org](http://westporttransit.org) domain name has been registered, and other efforts are underway.

Currently, there are no bus stop signs marking the location of Westport bus stops. Bus stop signs, besides notifying existing customers to a bus stop location, are also a useful marketing tool that could assist in publicizing available fixed route and commuter services. The convenience to customers of a flag stop system (whereby operators may stop at any safe location along a route) is weighed against the visual clue, marketing impact, and potential safety benefits of specific bus stop locations.



As an operation of the NTD, Westport services are also part of the transit agency's marketing program that includes NTD services and Coastal Link, among other services such as web posting of bus, shuttle and demand responsive services. Furthermore, with the NTD ITS/AVL project reaching the implementation stage with a pilot test beginning in December 2014, an extensive marketing program with social and traditional media has been proposed. AVL capability will provide information to transit users about bus schedules, arrivals, delays as well as maintenance information, and data for route and service planning. At the meeting, the NTD representative advised that ITS would be active for NTD services in 2016 for both Norwalk and Westport transit services. This approach will be a significant benefit to the Town of Westport as long as the town continues with its present administrative relationship with the NTD.

## 1.12 Summary Evaluation

### 1.12.1 Findings

Overall, the system exhibits low productivity when compared with traditional fixed route bus services, but among commuter rail station shuttle services nationally, current productivity levels are typical. The Town of Westport goes above and beyond legal requirements (ADA) with its all-day demand response service for seniors and ADA eligible residents, while the commuter services have been pared to peak periods only. The following observations frame discussions with stakeholders and the public as preliminary scenarios for improvement were considered.

- The Westport Transit District was created in response to progressive community planning and a desire to ensure mobility for residents and visitors, mitigate traffic congestion and limitations on rail parking, and provide sustainable, environmentally-conscious transportation options. Many residents have voiced support for Westport services as an important town service, without expectation of financial self-sufficiency.
- In its early years, more extensive Westport bus services provided greater coverage both geographically and temporally throughout the town, and a historical high ridership of nearly 800,000 annual trips reflected the system's utility as compared to 70,500 in FY2013
- The amount of funding for Westport bus services has been reduced substantially since its inception in 1968 with substantial funding from the Urban Mass Transit Administration, now FTA.
- Due to budget reductions by the Town of Westport, and decreases in ridership, the number and breadth of services provided by Westport bus services has been reduced in recent years. This in turn directly impacts ridership and overall productivity by limiting travel options and convenience.
- Transit need is related, but not limited to, the availability of parking at the rail stations. Either by choice or by necessity, some commuters without parking permits for rail parking take advantage of the shuttle services, while non-shuttle users without permits walk or receive rides and/or drop-offs. The Imperial Parking Lot serves as overflow for rail station parking.
- Due to the high number of rail commuters, there is a strong potential customer base. Most parking spaces are filled on a regular basis at the town's two rail stations.
- The system provides good geographic coverage throughout the town for commuters; however, temporal coverage is limited to peak periods and a short period after-school. Since the elimination of midday service, fixed route options have been limited to commuting without flexibility for off-peak trips.
- Transit services in Westport are oriented more for travel to the southwest and, generally, are designed to bring riders to jobs and other destinations in New York City, Stamford or other towns to the southwest of Westport. There are more limited morning peak options for transit trips between Westport and points east.
- Convenient fare options exist for regular commuters using both Westport bus services and Metro-North.
- Ridership is declining and productivity levels are relatively low on all routes, although the most substantial decline since 2012 was due to the transfer of the Norden Park route to Norwalk Transit District and did not represent a true loss in demand for Westport services. The Town of Westport has recently begun to evaluate transit policies, service productivity, and costs within the broad context of congestion mitigation, resident mobility, and other factors.
- The service span of the commuter routes is limited to the peak AM and PM periods, approximately 5:50AM - 7:45AM and 5:03PM - 7:55PM as of October 12, 2015. This represents an enhanced service span as a result of this study.



- Westport Door-to-Door service exceeds required ADA service levels by operating at times when commuter fixed routes do not operate. This represents a policy decision on the part of the town to provide mobility beyond legal ADA requirements.
- There is a lack of daytime connectivity between downtown Westport, businesses on Riverside Avenue, the Coastal Link bus on Post Road, the Imperial Parking Lot, and Westport (Saugatuck) Station.
- No weekend service exists to serve residential, retail, and recreational areas (e.g., Compo Beach) within Westport. Access to commercial employment in Westport is a week-long need for employees of local businesses, as well as a potential mobility enhancement for local patrons and mitigation of congestion and parking demand.
- After-school services were ended in June 2015 because FTA determined that the NTD-provided service cannot use federally-funded equipment (See Section 1.4 and Appendices D and E.) FTA granted permission for the after-school busing service to continue through June 2015 to enable a transition to alternative after-school busing. The after-school service was limited to one trip each on three routes, despite the extensive activities that take place throughout the afternoon at the local schools. End times for these activities vary, pointing to demand for more service options for students (and their parents). Afterschool service is now being provided by a combination of existing BOE routes and by parents dropping off and picking up students.
- Westport is challenged with rebuilding ridership and productivity of the system and enhancing mobility for residents and employees in the town in an era of constrained Westport budgets.

## **2 Public Outreach**

Information on the public outreach process can be found in Appendix F.

### 3 Development of Service Alternatives and Recommendations

The development of service alternatives and recommendations was an iterative process conducted by the consulting team in cooperation with the WTD Directors, Westport Police, SWRPA/WestCOG and NTD staffs, and the Citizen's Transit Committee, using inputs from the outreach process, and transit and demographic data. Alternatives were considered for the following elements of the overall Westport bus system:

- Commuter routes
- After-school and Midday services
- Door-to-Door services

#### 3.1 Development of Alternatives

The objectives in developing alternatives were based on the identified desires of the community to address any or all of the following in an efficient and cost-effective manner:

- Gaps in the provision of peak hour commuter services
- Journey to work needs of Westport residents and workers
- Restoration of a daytime connection between the Metro-North Saugatuck Station and downtown Westport.
- Daytime connections for Westport residents, including seniors, with area trip generators, such as shopping centers, medical offices and community facilities.
- Services for students between Westport schools and after-school programs.

During the process, the consulting team sketched alternative services/routes for each of the three elements, reviewed the pros and cons of these alternatives with the aforementioned individuals and groups, and arrived at a set of recommendations. The process for each of the three areas is described briefly below, followed by the recommended plan.

The team also reviewed other operations of a similar nature to Westport, focused on home to station commutation services. The comparable services for Westport are other rail station shuttles and not community wide transit services. Shuttles of this type are associated with several of the major commuter rail systems in the country and were described in *Transit Cooperative Research Program Reports: 55*

[http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/tcrp/tcrp\\_rpt\\_55-a.pdf](http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/tcrp/tcrp_rpt_55-a.pdf) and 116

[http://www.tcrponline.org/PDFDocuments/TCRP\\_RPT\\_116.pdf](http://www.tcrponline.org/PDFDocuments/TCRP_RPT_116.pdf), More recent data is available from Norwalk Transit District which provides the services.

##### 3.1.1 Commuter Routes

The commuter bus network covers all of the major north-south streets in the community and serves both train stations. While the ridership on each varies and some are stronger than others, it is apparent that each has its core of riders and each needs to be retained in order to serve everyone. The routes are logical and fit into the running time parameters needed to

effectively serve enough trains, and are modified in terms of schedule times as Metro-North makes adjustments to its schedule. The ends of the route and turn-around locations are appropriate and given the on/off patterns none of the routes should be truncated. Route deviations are impossible given the constrained running times and also the impossibility of going in and out of the numerous private roads and cul-de-sacs that characterize Westport.

The sole route change requested and considered was to cross routes G1 and G2 on the Post Road to better serve residential enclaves between Morningside Drive North and Maple Avenue South. However, in reviewing this with the NTD, assessing the travel time increase that would result, and looking at the most recent Metro-North schedules, it was found that this change would increase travel times and would jeopardize the reliability of the routes.

Schedule changes to the commuter routes were reviewed in detail as well and based upon ridership patterns, discussions at outreach meetings and with others, and journey to work patterns it was determined that extending the hours for these services was a viable alternative.

Therefore, in the recommendations that follow the commuter route network itself is not changing but the hours of service are.

A sketch of the Routes G1/G2 modification is included in Appendix G.

### **3.1.2 After-School and Midday Routes**

A topic of concern during the study was the after-school transportation program – what it currently does, how it is shaped, and whether it complies with FTA regulations.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) determined in a letter of July 1, 2014 that the Westport after-school busing could not use federally funded assets to provide the service. Through an appeal from the Town of Westport and the Norwalk Transit District, after-school busing was permitted to continue through December 31, 2014 to enable a transition to alternative after-school transportation. (See Appendices D and E). Before the FTA regulatory decision was handed down on July 1, 2014 the consulting team addressed the issue by evaluating if and how the program could be expanded and re-designed to serve more after-school activities at the schools themselves as well as afternoon general public needs. This process, begun in the fall of 2013, looked at the parameters which guided the development of the three school routes, each of which only operated one time. Those parameters were very constraining: according to those who were consulted the buses needed to be at the schools at dismissal times or very shortly thereafter, and had to provide service as directly and timely as possible to the program locations around the community. Complaints were already being made of how long students were being kept on the buses and that was a very key part of the considerations.

The consulting team mapped the dismissal times at each school, which vary, the destination points, and took into account the need for directness as well as a shift of destinations to include Earthplace and possibly the new YMCA. The team developed a number of route structures, but none met all of the parameters. Furthermore, in order to make this a viable

service for all members of the community, not just school students, an attempt was made to consolidate the routes to create general purpose routes, but given the constraints none were deemed suitable for the primary school programmatic needs.

It was ultimately determined that the school bus program could not be developed into a general purpose afternoon program based on current resources; and further, that the demand in the community does not exist at the present time to expend additional resources. It was pointed out, however, that in its present incarnation the after-school program was likely not in compliance with FTA regulations and that the town would need to consider, now or in the near future, taking action to ensure that they could bring it into compliance.

The only midday (Daytime) service that appeared to be feasible, based on the outreach process and review of data, is a downtown connection between the center of town and the Saugatuck station that also connects with the Coastal Link and serves the park and ride lot on Imperial Avenue, Senior Center, and employment along Riverside Avenue. This would be the restitution of a former link that was terminated previously for lack of support. In order to succeed this time it is imperative that it be supported by downtown businesses, by more communication about the Imperial lot, and by outreach to the employers on Riverside Avenue, among others.

Sketches of the route proposals are included in Appendix H.

### **3.1.3 Door-to-Door Services**

After the review of the four door-to-door elements it was determined that no changes were necessary to them. However, better communications and marketing of the services would help customers who may be confused about the roles of each option, service hours, etc.

### **3.1.4 Presentation of Alternatives**

The viable alternatives from the three elements above were presented at the study Stakeholder meeting on March 25, 2014. The alternatives were chosen based on their ability to effectively serve vital functions. Draft service concepts were developed for each alternative, with information that included route path, service span, service frequency, operating expense, and vehicle requirements. The stakeholders and public provided input on the alternatives. After the preliminary draft Final Report was issued, SWRPA consulted with NTD, as operator of the system, and provided comments on the preliminary draft which included development of additional service alternatives, and well as other enhancements to the preliminary draft report. The recommendations included in the revised preliminary Draft Final Report reflect the revised alternatives and enhancements. The sketches for all alternatives are included in Appendices.

## **3.2 Short Term Recommendations (Years 1-3)**

A broad set of recommendations were developed to improve service and address service issues. The recommendations include changes to existing service, new route proposals and identification of Westport bus service administrative options.

### 3.2.1 Modifications to Existing Commuter Routes

Two recommendations are proposed for modification to existing Westport Commuter Route services; however the first is subject to the Metro-North rail schedule and cannot be implemented at this time due to inadequate time between trains at Greens Farms. It has been included as a proposal if the train schedule will allow it at some future time. The changes are meant to enhance bus service for customers who currently use the routes for trips between their home and the train stations in Westport, to attract new riders, and to reduce demand for station parking.

A change to the alignments of Routes G1 and G2 is the proposal that will have to be held in abeyance until such time as the train schedule is conducive to this adjustment. The routes will cross by operating along Post Road East, providing service to condominium developments along Post Road East such as Harvest Commons and Regent's Park. Route G1, which formerly served the North Avenue corridor, will serve Bayberry Lane and Sturges Highway. Route G2 will replace Route G1 on North Avenue. This change will add a small increment in running time for customers and operating cost for the operator for the additional small increment in mileage. Again, it is a change that will be held for the future. See Figure 3-1. NTD has stated that this change is not feasible.

A study recommendation to extend the span of service of existing Westport Commuter Routes during the morning and afternoon/evening periods was initiated on October 12, 2015. This enhancement reallocated after-school funding to this service. Details about the Westport Commuter Services is available on the NTD Westport Commuter Services webpage [http://www.norwalktransit.com/westport\\_cr.htm](http://www.norwalktransit.com/westport_cr.htm)

The other proposal is to extend the service span of existing Westport Commuter Routes by one hour during the morning and afternoon/evening periods for those seeking to arrive at Grand Central before 9AM. This comment was received from the outreach sessions for this project, and was also a frequent comment in the survey taken of rail users as part of the Westport Rail Stations Study being conducted concurrently with this one. The additional hours of service will permit greater flexibility for existing riders and make bus service more attractive to potential riders. Comments during public outreach have suggested that earlier service is needed during the morning period and later service is needed during the afternoon/evening period. An additional hour of service scheduled at the beginning of the morning peak period would have the added benefit of allowing riders to connect with trains making local station stops for work commutes to other towns within Connecticut. See Table 3-1 for current and possible service spans based on the proposed extra hour of morning and afternoon service. See Table 3-2 for the change in daily revenue service hours and additional operating costs required for the proposal.

Without the G1/G2 modification the route alternatives require the same equipment as at present. Running times for the routes are between 22-25 minutes so these changes would allow the routes to meet about two more trains.

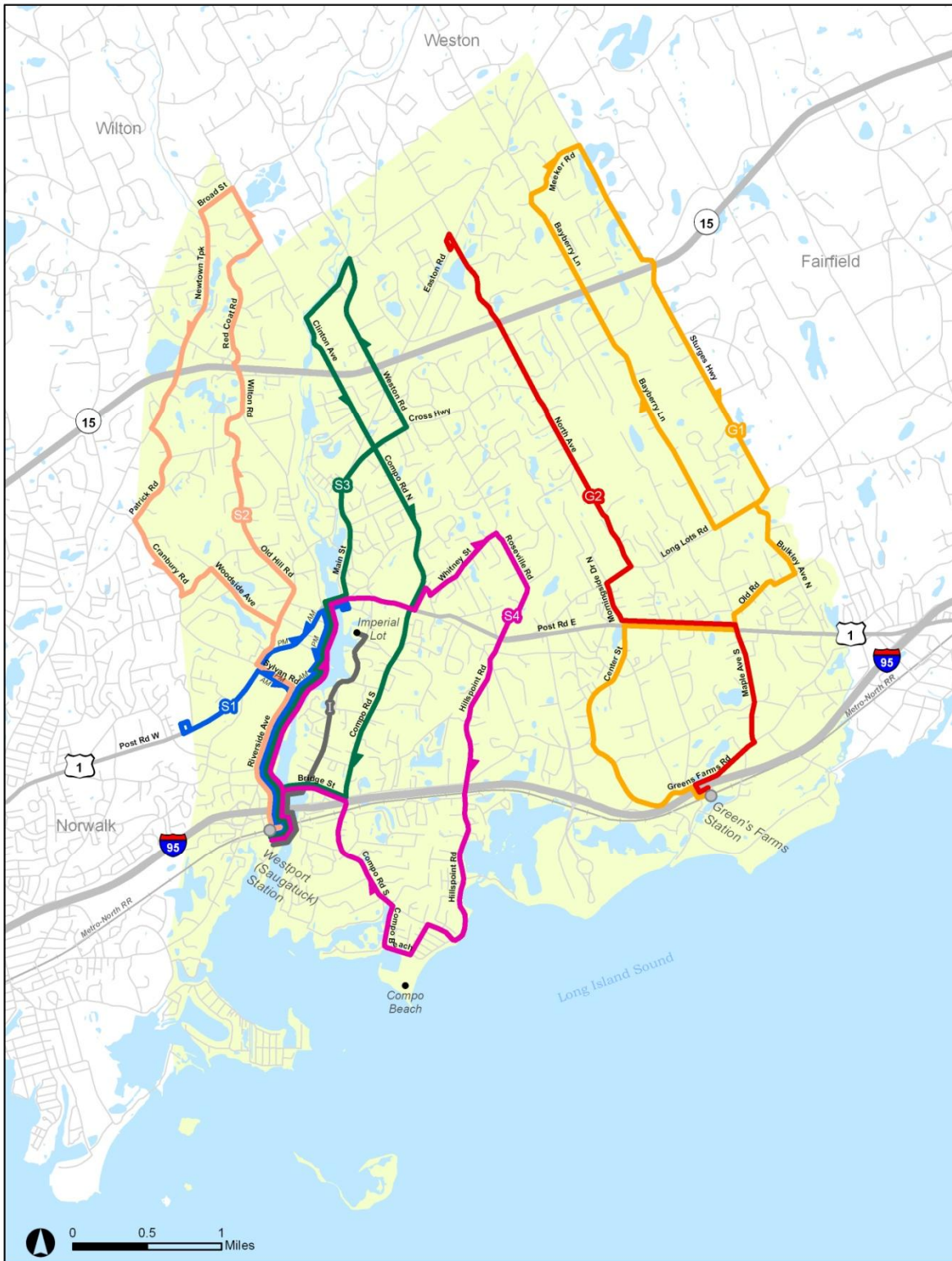
**Table 3-1: Proposed Service Span**

Route	Current Span	Alternative 1 AM: 1 Hour Earlier/ PM: 1 Hour Later	Alternative 2 AM: 1 Hour Earlier/ PM: 1 Hour Earlier	Alternative 3 AM: 1 Hour Later/ PM: 1 Hour Later	Alternative 4 AM: 1 Hour Later/ PM: 1 Hour Earlier
S1	5:55AM - 9:35AM/ 3:50PM - 7:40PM	5:00AM - 9:30AM/ 3:45PM - 8:45PM	5:00AM - 9:30AM/ 3:45PM - 7:45PM	6:00AM - 9:30AM/ 3:45PM - 8:45PM	6:00AM - 9:30AM/ 3:45PM - 7:45PM
S2	6:00AM - 7:49AM/ 6:10PM - 7:59PM	5:00AM - 8:00AM/ 6:00PM - 9:00PM	5:00AM - 8:00AM/ 5:00PM - 8:00PM	6:00AM - 9:00AM/ 6:00PM - 9:00PM	6:00AM - 9:00AM/ 5:00PM - 8:00PM
S3	6:05AM - 7:48AM/ 6:10PM - 7:58PM	5:00AM - 8:00AM/ 6:00PM - 9:00PM	5:00AM - 8:00AM/ 5:00PM - 8:00PM	6:00AM - 9:00AM/ 6:00PM - 9:00PM	6:00AM - 9:00AM/ 5:00PM - 8:00PM
S4	5:55AM - 7:48AM/ 6:10PM - 7:59PM	5:00AM - 8:00AM/ 6:00PM - 9:00PM	5:00AM - 8:00AM/ 5:00PM - 8:00PM	6:00AM - 9:00AM/ 6:00PM - 9:00PM	6:00AM - 9:00AM/ 5:00PM - 8:00PM
G1	6:10AM - 7:45AM/ 5:55PM - 7:50PM	5:00AM - 8:00AM/ 6:00PM - 9:00PM	5:00AM - 8:00AM/ 5:00PM - 8:00PM	6:00AM - 9:00AM/ 6:00PM - 9:00PM	6:00AM - 9:00AM/ 5:00PM - 8:00PM
G2	5:58AM - 7:45AM/ 5:55PM - 8:02PM	5:00AM - 8:00AM/ 6:00PM - 9:00PM	5:00AM - 8:00AM/ 5:00PM - 8:00PM	6:00AM - 9:00AM/ 6:00PM - 9:00PM	6:00AM - 9:00AM/ 5:00PM - 8:00PM
Imperial Shuttle	6:04AM - 8:27AM/ 6:08PM - 8:11PM	5:00AM - 8:30AM/ 6:00PM - 9:00PM	5:00AM - 8:30AM/ 5:00PM - 8:00PM	6:00AM - 9:00AM/ 6:00PM - 9:00PM	6:00AM - 9:00AM/ 5:00PM - 8:00PM

**Table 3-2: Estimated Operating Costs**

Route	Alternative 1 AM: 1 Hour Earlier/ PM: 1 Hour Later		Alternative 2 AM: 1 Hour Earlier/ PM: 1 Hour Earlier		Alternative 3 AM: 1 Hour Later/ PM: 1 Hour Later		Alternative 4 AM: 1 Hour Later/ PM: 1 Hour Earlier	
	Change in Daily Hours	Additional Annual Operating Cost	Change in Daily Hours	Additional Annual Operating Cost	Change in Daily Hours	Additional Annual Operating Cost	Change in Daily Hours	Additional Annual Operating Cost
S1	2	\$47,084	1	\$23,542	1	\$23,542	0	\$0
S2	2	\$47,084	2	\$47,084	2	\$47,084	2	\$47,084
S3	2	\$47,084	2	\$47,084	2	\$47,084	2	\$47,084
S4	2	\$47,084	2	\$47,084	2	\$47,084	2	\$47,084
G1	2	\$47,084	2	\$47,084	2	\$47,084	2	\$47,084
G2	2	\$47,084	2	\$47,084	2	\$47,084	2	\$47,084
Imperial Shuttle	2	\$47,084	2	\$47,084	1.5	\$35,313	1.5	\$35,313
Total	14	\$329,588	13	\$306,046	12.5	\$294,275	11.5	\$270,733

Figure 3-1: Proposed Commuter Route Network (Future if possible pending MNCR schedule adjustments)





### 3.2.2 Daytime Route: Saugatuck to Downtown Circulator

Westport does not provide fixed route bus service during non-commute hours except for its after-school program which was suspended after June 2015. The Coastal Link is available all day, however, and does serve a long swath of the town along Route 1 even if it does not penetrate most of the town's residential areas.

General public bus service to the entire community is not feasible for the foreseeable future, based upon previous experience, demographics, and funding. However, the reinstitution of a connection between downtown and Westport (Saugatuck) Station, is potentially feasible, based largely upon the support voiced during the outreach process, continued demand for Metro-North service for in-state commuters, employment on Riverside Avenue and in town, and growing congestion on I-95.

A new daytime service is proposed between Westport (Saugatuck) Station and downtown Westport that would operate during the gap between morning and afternoon commuter service, effectively extending and combining part of the S1 route with the route of the Imperial park and ride service

The new route (Figure 3-2) would provide a loop service using Riverside Avenue and Imperial Avenue as the primary north-south spines. The proposed route is a loop route that operates clockwise during the late morning and counterclockwise in the early afternoon. Service would operate every 30 minutes and would require one bus. See Table 3-3 for these service details. The service detail options correspond to the proposed modifications to the service span of the Imperial Lot Shuttle and commuter routes as discussed in the prior section. The rail station route span would be affected by where additional hours of span were added to the current schedule and the operating costs would vary accordingly. Alternative 1 represents the span and operating costs if the route were implemented with the current commuter route schedule. The modifications to the commuter route spans are shown in parentheses in the column header.

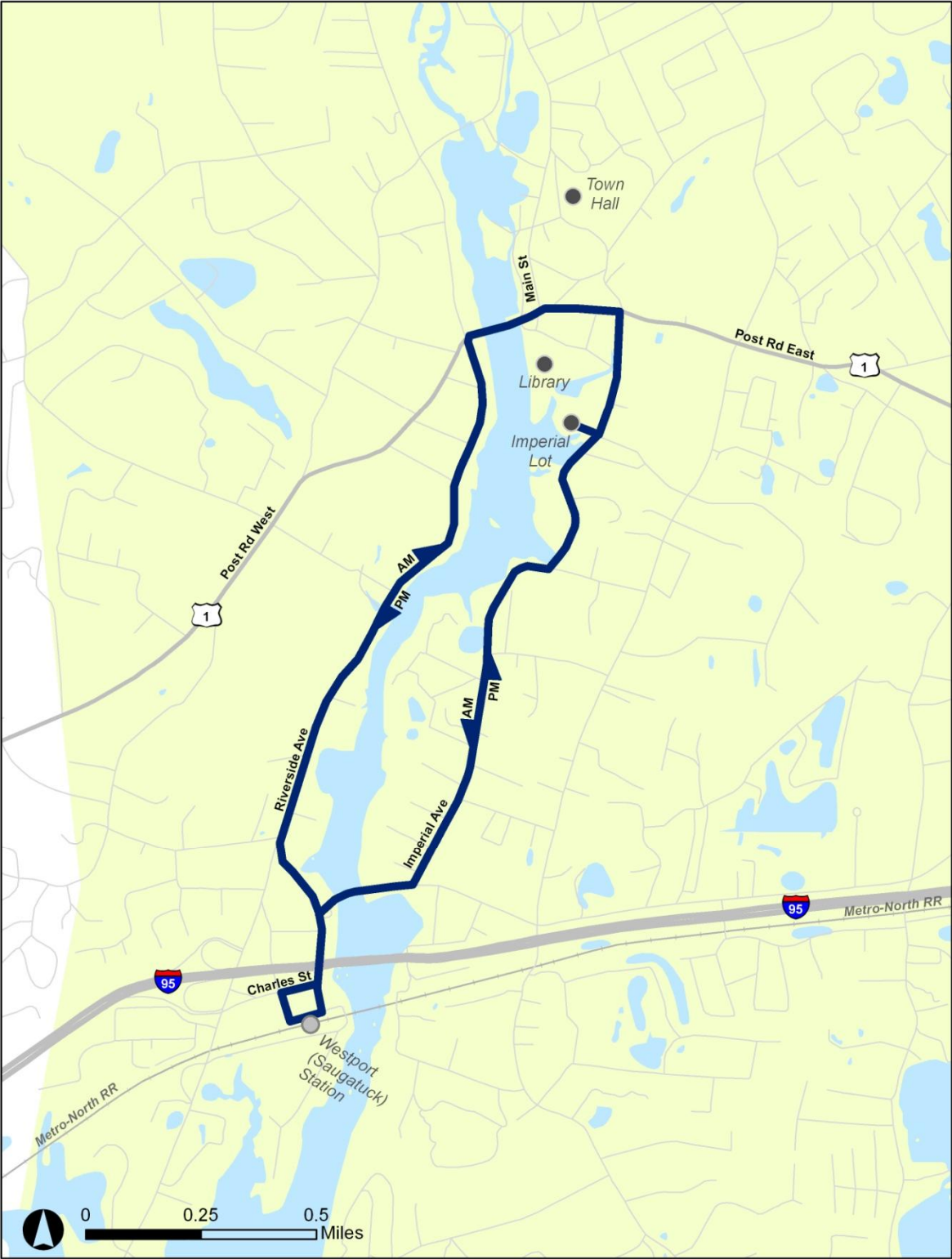
At times when station parking lots may be at capacity, the route would provide a connection to parking at the Imperial Lot. The direction of travel, either clockwise or counterclockwise, is designed to provide shorter trips between the Imperial Lot and the station and for potential commuters along Riverside Avenue. In the morning, when more trips are directed to the station, riders from the Imperial Lot would have a more direct ride as would commuters to work sites along Riverside Avenue. Imperial Lot users would also have a shorter trip back to their cars in the afternoon, when Metro-North passengers are more likely to be returning to Westport.

**Table 3-3: Downtown Connector, Service Details**

Rail Station Route	Alternative 1 (AM: 1 Hour Earlier/ PM: 1 Hour Later)	Alternative 2 (AM: 1 Hour Earlier/ PM: 1 Hour Earlier)	Alternative 3 (AM: 1 Hour Later/ PM: 1 Hour Later)	Alternative 4 (AM: 1 Hour Later/ PM: 1 Hour Earlier)
Service Span	8:30AM – 6:00PM	8:30AM – 5:00PM	9:00AM – 6:00PM	9:00AM – 5:00PM
Frequency	30	30	30	30
Bus Requirement	1	1	1	1
Annual Operating Cost	\$223,649	\$200,107	\$211,878	\$188,336

In concert with this recommendation, Westport should work with the NTD to seek FTA funds to develop a mini-hub station on the Imperial lot, which might include benches, a canopy, a transit information kiosk with bus schedules, real time vehicle locations, Metro-North schedule and real time information, and other simple amenities. This would provide needed upgrades and possibly increase use of the remote parking lot for those without a pass. . Subject to further development of the concept, public acceptance, Town boards' approval and funding availability, the amenities could include: bus shelter(s), bus schedule information, benches and illumination. This must be balanced against current uses (school bus layover, farmer's market, and the Library Lane proposal of the Westport Downtown Master Plan (2015)).

Figure 3-2: Proposed Downtown Connector



### **3.3 Long Term Plan (Years 4 and beyond): Town Circulation**

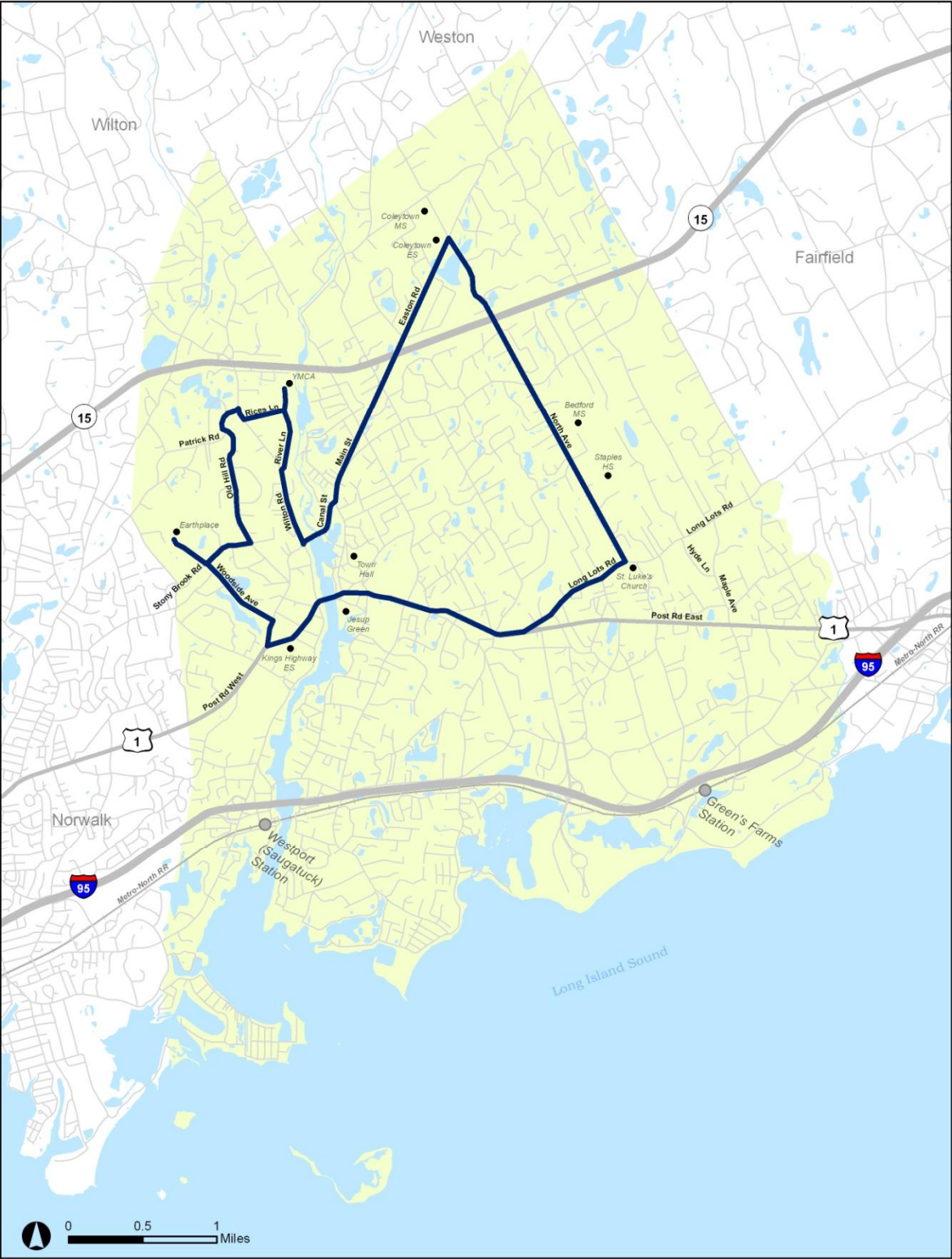
Westport is a community whose demographics and land use patterns define a need for only a limited amount of transit service. With low levels of transit dependency and a strong door-to-door network for those who are dependent needing rides, any town-wide service has to rely upon choice riders, which is quite difficult to do. Furthermore, choosing the areas to be served would be another issue; while commercial locations, schools, and major activity centers could be identified and covered, trying to provide service in all residential sections of town would be impossible for a start-up, and thus choosing where to begin would be a thorny issue. At one time it took seven routes to cover the town.

If and only if the initial rail-town circulator is successful should Westport look into an expansion of daytime service, and then only if a feasible service can be developed using a single vehicle to start. This constrains the service with respect to coverage and to frequency for any fixed route or flexible service that might be considered, but other options include subscription services and demand response that might be potentially feasible.

At this time the options should remain open. The consulting team did investigate some fixed route options for the purpose of demonstrating what one bus could do in fixed route, or route deviation, service, but for illustration only and not as a formal recommendation. A new town circulator would need to provide a transit option linking some residential areas, work locations, shopping centers, after-school programming, downtown and medical offices. If a fixed or flexible route (route deviation) service was developed, it would operate hourly during the day and require one bus.

The consulting team developed a number of routing proposals as examples of the kinds of services that could be provided with the constraint of one bus and 60 minute frequencies and in all cases they alternatives were limited to selected residential areas. One such loop is shown in Figure 3-3, a loop route that covers each of the major middle schools and Staples High School, downtown and the Post Road East, EarthPlace and the YMCA, and residential areas along Easton road and North Avenue as well as in Old Hill. This is not a recommended route but rather an example of what a route might look like, especially one that would serve the schools. It does not provide any services south of the Post Road or serve such locations as Compo Beach, The Conservative Temple, Hales Court, and others. It does coordinate with the Saugatuck-Town circulator and the Coastal Link.

Figure 3-3: Illustrative Daytime Town Circulator



There are many other sketch alternatives that were considered and can be reviewed as the time nears to consider all day service, many of which do serve areas south of the Post Road. [Appendix H]

The fixed routes shown can be enhanced by providing route deviation services. That is, for a small surcharge over the base price, customers can call in and request that they be picked up at their home or at least closer to home in the case of a cul-de-sac. Route deviation would be applicable in any of the residential areas of the two; however the deviations would be limited by the large number of discontinuous streets and cul-de-sacs.

One non-fixed route concept that could be considered would be a subscription service. Riders requesting service on a regular basis can request regular pick-ups. If there is a sufficient level of subscription demand, the operator can develop its route on a dynamic basis that meets the calls. This has been used by NJ Transit and the concept there is called a flex route. As enough riders use the subscription service the route gradually becomes more and more defined and once defined becomes easier for subscribers and non-subscribers to use. Any of the existing routes could be operated in their current forms augmented by subscription service. Subscribers would have to arrange a pickup site which would either be at their driveway or, in the case of a cul-de-sac, at a convenient location.

Alternatively, if the demand for general public service is modest, some areas have integrated a general public demand response service with their ADA services, notably in Denver and in Victor Valley CA. The calls are taken by the same office and dispatched together, with the public service provided if there is capacity to do so or if a vehicle is added to the fleet. In this case Door-to-Door would be the provider for both services. The general public demand response service would be applicable in all the residential areas of town. Riders could be picked at their homes assuming the vehicles could turn around in driveways or otherwise go in and out of some of the town's smaller streets.

It must be stated that Westport would have to consider the integration of general public and ADA services very carefully in light of the ruling against the District regarding Maxy Taxy, which found that the District was engaging in unfair practices by competing for the same types of trips with the non-subsidized taxis.

Finally, since the study was done Uber has become a growing option for transport, including transit in some communities, and the Town may wish to explore subsidizing Uber trips for its customers as another option. Uber is currently developing contract services with some local transit agencies, although it has also been rejected at times by others; but its marketing plan calls for expansion of its service to work with public transit for special needs, including last mile services.

Once again these are all options for consideration in the longer term, i.e. not until at least Year 4 and then only if the initial service plan proved to be successful. One bus operated for 9 hours

of the day (9AM – 6PM) for any of the options would have an annual cost of \$211,878 based on operating cost data provided by the NTD in today's dollars.

### **3.4 Governance and Administration**

The overall Governance and Administration, funding, and responsibilities for transit service delivery in Westport were reviewed within the context of the operations planning study. Governance and Administration pertains to how the Town of Westport provides public transportation services, the staff and capital resources engaged for that service delivery, and how day-to-day operations are coordinated with broader policy objectives.

When Westport first provided public transportation in 1974 the town, the WTD, ran the service in-house, purchasing vehicles and hiring administrative staff, drivers, and maintenance personnel directly. By the end of the 1980s and early 90s, this model proved unsustainable for the town. The system faced innumerable operations, funding, and capital challenges, including being ordered to take its vehicles deemed unsafe off the road. At the request of the town and the CTDOT, the service was shifted in its entirety to the NTD. Since 1992 NTD has served as the contract operator for the town, with policy direction the WTD under the auspices of the RTM Transportation Committee. NTD assumed all operating, maintenance and management functions. NTD then became the designated recipient of FTA and CTDOT funds for Westport bus services and equipment.

At present, Westport services continue to be provided by NTD in accordance with the 1992 NTD agreement with the Town of Westport. The Westport Transit District provides policy guidance. Appendix A provides a copy of the 1992 Agreement between the Town of Westport and NTD.

This section identifies a range of alternative administrative formats that were considered in this study, and which the Town could consider were it to desire a change. Pros and cons and recommendations concerning each are included in this discussion.

An issue beyond the charge of this study but related to it is the larger governance picture for all transportation activities in the Town, which has been raised by the WTD and the Citizen's Transportation Committee. These activities would include, but are not necessarily limited to, rail station and station parking oversight, maintenance and fee schedules; and human service agency transportation services. A study of the current transportation arrangements, including responsibilities, staffing, finance, et al. and potential alternatives and their costs and benefits to the town, is recommended to address these concerns. Thoughts on these issues from the WTD commissioners are contained in Appendix J.

#### **3.4.1 Maintain the Status Quo**

NTD has now operated the Westport bus services for over 20 years and is highly regarded for their professionalism and quality of the operations by their transit peers.



Given the strength of the overall operation, the quality of the vehicles and the maintenance services, the facility and storage in Norwalk, and of the administrators of the NTD, one option would be to continue the current structure, the Town of Westport contracting with the NTD for service. Westport currently receives significant administrative support, grant writing, and contract compliance services from NTD.

Westport can take advantage of NTD's staffing and information systems by enhancing the NTD budget for marketing and customer services and integrating the marketing program for all services provided by NTD, which includes not only their local routes and Westport services, but also the Coastal Link, regional ADA services, and the Greenwich shuttle program, all operated in full or in part by the NTD. Furthermore, with the upcoming introduction of a comprehensive intelligent transportation system (ITS) program, NTD has hired staff to oversee the ITS implementation and eventually its use, including use of the information in a real-time manner by customer service agents. It makes sense for Westport to share all of the customer and marketing services, getting maximum value by funding a shared position or consultant services from a marketing/advertising agency or similar organization. Having a fully integrated marketing and outreach program will allow Westport to leverage the resources of the NTD and should provide more "bang for the buck."

Instead of an NTD staff person or consultant services, the WTD Directors proposed that the Town hire its own staff person to provide outreach services and administrative oversight services, and created a job description for the position, shown in Appendix J. This person would be based in Westport and would report to the WTD Directors and the RTM Transportation Committee on a regular basis, and would carry out the policy direction as approved by them. It is the opinion of the WTD Directors that a Town of Westport employee would coordinate transit, parking, and other transportation functions within the Town of Westport. This would be a new Town-funded position.

NTD understands the need to ensure that Westport will benefit from the communication, marketing, and outreach services provided by NTD at present and in the future; and the town understands that it is more cost-effective to use NTD services than to create a new town position. The town and the WTD will still provide oversight and policy direction, will still have regular meetings with the NTD, and will still have input into marketing and planning efforts through the budget that the town has set aside for that function. And in that regard, it is also strongly recommended that the WTD Directors work closely with the NTD on marketing to maximize the impact of the dollars expended and to take full advantage of the ITS program.

In summary, this option, the Status Quo – NTD to continue Westport services, recommends that NTD enhance marketing and planning through additional staff, consultant services or a combination of staff and consultants along with additional training of NTD customer agents about the Westport bus system and community.



### **3.4.2 Town of Westport/WTB Self-Operation**

Westport could consider returning to its original model and operate, manage, and maintain the bus service on its own. While it probably could do this, it would come at a range of costs and issues that would far outweigh the benefits. Among the issues would be: the complexity of hiring an entirely new staff of experienced professionals; the need to either expand the DPW facility on the Sherwood Island Connector or build an entirely new facility; the need to purchase an all-new fleet; the need to set up all the systems and reporting and administrative programs; and, to reactivate FTA designated recipient status and meet FTA requirements.

The expense and effort entailed in this option would exceed the system and services in place or exceed in the foreseeable future as described in the previous section.

### **3.4.3 Town of Westport/Alternative Contractor Services**

Another option is to contract with a different operator, e.g. an operator other than NTD. Candidates for the operation could be the Greater Bridgeport Transit (GBT) or Connecticut DOT. In the case of the CTDOT, it is likely that the service would be contracted to a private operator, as they do in Waterbury, where the Transit District serves only in an advisory role. It is unlikely that CTDOT would use the CT Transit Stamford Division but it will be discussed here for the sake of completeness. Westport could also look to a private operator or national contract operator like First Transit or MacDonald Transit, and could put the service out to bid.

NTD is a first rate operator, as are GBT and CT Transit, but it is doubtful that either of the latter two are any better at providing the service than NTD and neither has the long history with the town that the NTD senior management has. Additionally it is critical to have facilities close to the town to keep deadhead costs (i.e. mileage and hours to and from the base of operations to the start of a route that is operated in non-revenue service) to a minimum and to facilitate the movement of vehicles in and out of service in the case of breakdowns or accidents. GBT and CT Transit's nearest facilities are on the east side of Bridgeport and close to the Intermodal Terminal in Stamford respectively which would substantially increase deadheading and thus operating expense. Third, it is unclear that the unit costs from these two agencies would be competitive to the NTD, which has tightly controlled the overhead costs through staffing that serves both NTD and Westport. Finally, it is not clear that either company has the vehicles at present to take over the program, so capital purchases would be needed. In short, there are no advantages that outweigh the disadvantages of using either operator cited as an example.

As noted at the outset of this section, it is more likely that CTDOT would contract with a private operator than with CT Transit if CTDOT took over operations. In Waterbury CTDOT uses Northeast Transportation, which has a local base in Waterbury. In the case of Westport there is no local private bus company so CTDOT would either have to contract with an operator from out of town, or would have to work with a private operator to locate and lease a maintenance and storage facility at additional cost to the program. The cost for the operation would increase under such an arrangement as compared to the NTD contract. Furthermore, under this

arrangement the Town and WTD have a significantly reduced role as solely an advisory body and there would likely be a diminishment of local control and input in to the service.

Westport could contract directly with a private operator as they do now for school bus service. The contractor would provide the maintenance and storage facility, vehicles, and all related capital equipment in addition to a transit manager and all staff. Finding a contractor with vehicles might not be too difficult, but finding a location and equipping it appropriately would be challenging. The selected operator would amortize all of the capital costs into its cost per hour for the contract, and would also include a management fee. Given the NTD cost structure for Westport that does not include amortization of vehicles or a fully allocated overhead, it is doubtful that a private contractor could approach to costs associated with the NTD contract to the town. Furthermore, once again a contractor will not be as familiar with the program, the town, and its relationships and history.

In summary none of the options appear to be better than the current arrangement with the NTD. In assessing possible advantages from a change of operator – better service, vehicles, maintenance, communications and marketing, administration/management – none appear to be likely given the quality of service that NTD provides.

#### **3.4.4 NTD Becomes a Regional Transit District (or Regional Transit Authority)**

The role of the WTD was changed in 1992 when the NTD contract was initiated. The WTD ceased to be an operating entity and became a policy board that, along with the RTM Transportation Committee, provides policy direction and monitors the services provided under contract between the town and NTD. Once the change was made, the WTD had limited responsibilities except to see that the NTD was carrying out the contract services effectively and efficiently, to monitor monthly reporting, and to convey issues and concerns of the town on a regular basis.

With this as background, it is not clear that the town requires a WTD anymore, since these same responsibilities could be carried out by the RTM through its committees and through the designation of a committee chair to be the liaison with the NTD.

The option is the designation of the NTD as a regional transit operator, either as a transit district or transit authority, which is different only in name. A Regional Transit Authority can consist of as few as two towns; in this case, however, NTD would logically discuss the option with each of its adjoining towns – Darien, New Canaan, Wilton, Weston, and Westport – to demonstrate the advantages and disadvantages and assess interest. As a regional agency, towns choosing to participate would pay or be assessed a charge based upon population or the amount of service provided in proportion to all other towns participating and service in turn would be provided by the new NTD. The service would not be done through a contract.

A town participating in the regional agency would have a seat on the Board so that it would have a role in making decisions on service and other agency matters. In this case Westport

would have a board member and there would no longer be a WTD. Westport's input would be through its director who likely would have policy direction from the RTM, Finance Board or other town boards.

It is unclear whether regional transit authority option would be better or the same as the current structure until the details about membership, assessments, policy board roles were established. et al. Depending upon how the NTD would assess Westport to provide service it might be a stabilizing force for a sustainable future. How Westport would direct its service needs and implementation would have to be determined, but a role on the Board is a first step. In other regional systems often the town negotiates the service it would like and the agency determines its cost so that the town can decide on its value and make a decision.

Additional study of a regional transit authority is needed before the pros and cons can be determined for NTD, Westport and other stakeholders.

### **3.4.5 Summary of Findings and Recommendation**

In this section four administrative options were described and analyzed:

1. Maintain the Status Quo: Westport would continue to contract with the NTD, and enhance marketing and planning services through funding of additional NTD staff or consultant services. NTD has run a highly professional service for Westport for over 20 years at a very competitive rate. There is no overriding reason to change, especially given the issues with the other three administrative options. The current NTD administrative structure offers the most benefits to Westport and provides continuity, understanding of the community and its transit needs with quality technical and administrative services. This is the recommended option.
2. Town of Westport/WTD Self-Operation: Westport could return to its original model and operate, manage, and maintain the bus service. To do this would require the purchase of equipment, creation of a maintenance facility, hiring of qualified administrative, maintenance, and driving staff, and reactivation of the FTA designated recipient status. The expense to do this is prohibitive, especially given the modest amount of service that is being provided and modest projections for expansion in the coming years. This is not a recommended alternative for Westport.
3. Town of Westport/Alternative Contractor Services: Westport could issue a solicitation for transit operators. Preparation of the solicitation by an entity other than NTD would require consultant assistance. The GBT and CTDOT options were discussed in the previous section with the conclusion that an operator other than NTD solicit other providers would not provide a higher level of service or lower cost than the current NTD status quo option. In addition, under the CTDOT alternative Westport would have less control over transit policy and operations.
4. NTD Becomes a Regional Transit District (or Regional Transit Authority): In the future this option may one to consider for the region. It would create a multi-town district similar to the GBT or to Housatonic Area Regional Transit (HART) in the Danbury area.

However, additional analysis of advantages and disadvantages and political is needed. If a regional transit administrative alternative is considered, Westport should be a part of the evaluation of benefits and disbenefits. The 2016 - 2017 NTD comprehensive operational analysis should evaluate the regional transit authority option.

In conclusion, Westport should continue to operate within the same administrative structure that was put in place in 1992 which has provided the town with a professionally run system since that time. Westport should use its transit marketing budget to enhance the arrangement with NTD either through joint funding a position at the NTD or through the engagement of professional marketing services. This will take advantage of the NTD staff and systems, including the new ITS system at NTD, and will maximize its investment in marketing, outreach, and communications.

#### **3.4.6 Governance and Administration: Next Steps**

The next step in the process is for the Town to review and discuss the administrative options. These discussions should occur with the Selectman's office, the RTM, and the WTD Directors, and through them the public. Among the issues would be how the town will be represented in the future with regard to its role as the policy body for the contract. Specifically whether or not the current structure of the WTD as a policy board reporting to the RTM Transportation Committee continues or is modified or eliminated, whether the RTM Transportation Committee itself should be the policy board, or whether another option should be developed by the town.

Following the discussion the town should select a preferred alternative to implement.

#### **3.4.7 Funding**

Funding for the operating cost of the bus system comes from a variety of sources, and varies according to function. The town makes its request for service, or confirms the continuation of service, for the annual budget cycle, and the NTD prepares a budget estimate and presents it to the Board of Finance for approval in the spring before the start of the next fiscal year. The estimate includes funding from all sources, although the town is only responsible for the approval of its share. Current funding sources for each service were shown in Table 1-2 of the inventory.

All fixed route services are funded by the Connecticut Department of Transportation, the town of Westport, and by fare revenues CTDOT funding is the largest share. Coastal Link ADA is funded in the same manner as the fixed routes, while other door-to-door services are provided by the town and other state funding sources which support expanded coverage of ADA paratransit services throughout the town beyond the minimum.

During the course of the project a review of the terms of the station lease between the town and CTDOT for Saugatuck Station was undertaken, including comments provided by the CTDOT Transportation Supervising Rail Officer (Appendix K). According to the lease, any excess parking or rental revenue that accrues at the end of a fiscal year is split between CTDOT and

the town and deposited in accounts maintained by the town. CTDOT approval is required for expenditure of the CTDOT account which must be spent on activities and services related to the station. The town is able to use its portion of excess revenues freely for either the station or other purposes. The language of the agreement is broad and it provides latitude in appears that transportation, including shuttle buses, would be an allowable operating expense. Thus, expansion of hours of current services or of the Imperial park and ride shuttle, and a midday connector would be allowable expenses. However, funding of transit may restrict capital and operating improvements to rail parking.

A funding opportunity for transit therefore exists in the effective management of rail parking revenues. One possible use of parking revenues for transit service is to fund the proposed mid-day connection from the Westport (Saugatuck) Station to downtown via the Imperial Lot. Sustainment of supplemental transit service through rail parking revenue cannot be assured since rail parking capital and operating needs are first priority for the use of rail parking revenue. This supports rail parking management by enabling overflow parking at the Imperial Lot and offering all-day connections between downtown and the rail station.

The town is not responsible for any local share of Westport bus service capital funding, as all of the capital for the system is owned in full by the NTD, which is the designated recipient for the FTA and CTDOT funds for operating and capital funds.

## 4 Implementation Plan

This section presents a guide for implementation of the proposals described in the previous section of the report. All recommendations and the timing of implementation are predicated upon the availability of funds and demonstrated interest in the community.

### 4.1 Phasing

The recommendations laid out in the report are not meant to be implemented all at once. The implementation plan is phased, identifying proposals that can be executed in the short-term and others that may require more intense resource or funding commitments that would be implemented in the medium to long-term. The phasing plan, including timeline, measures, costs and what need is being addressed can be found in Table 4-1.

#### 4.1.1 Short-term (1-3 years)

Proposals that can be enacted in the short-term are those that would be relatively easy to implement based on estimated costs and/or ease of adaptability with current transportation delivery. Year One would be Fiscal Year 2015-16 and begins on July 1, 2015.

Three items are identified for this period:

- Extension of the hours of commuter services (implemented on three routes October 12, 2015.)
- Enhancement of marketing by NTD
- Implementation of the Midday Saugatuck-Downtown Circulator
- Install bus shelters at key locations

In the short-term, the town began by **extending the hours of the commuter shuttles** by one hour each on three routes. Using more inputs from customers through surveys at the stations and operating results, the town and NTD should determine which extensions are best, e.g. earlier in the morning or later, and most likely later in the afternoon. Thereafter the NTD should provide the operational planning for additional changes or modifications, redoing driver assignments if needed, and should provide the town with a final refined cost estimate for implementation. If a vehicle is needed, which it appears is not the case, NTD would need to develop a grant for one.

This proposal would improve upon the existing Commuter Route services, giving customers greater flexibility and mitigating demand for parking at Westport's rail station parking lots.

Year One entails service planning as soon as the funding for action is approved by the town and CTDOT, which would either be the second half of Year One or the beginning of Year Two. Marketing and communications for the change should begin approximately 6 months prior to implementation.

The second short-term recommendation is for the Westport to provide a marketing budget to the NTD for the **addition of an NTD staff or marketing consultant services**. The position would free the WTD co-directors to focus time and energy on policy and budget issues with other departments and agencies in the town. This should be done by the NTD this year assuming that Westport provides a budget for these services. [In January 2016 Norwalk Transit District advertised for a Manager of Planning and Marketing and hired a person for this position in March 2016.] One of the first tasks is to develop a marketing plan for the program. Marketing concepts are included in Appendix P and include the 1993 Westport Bus report findings and strategies from GBTA. Furthermore, the Norwalk Transit District Comprehensive Operational Analysis scheduled for 2016-2017 will include a marketing element.

A key part of the marketing plan should be recommendations aimed at improving the visibility of services to the elderly and disabled including the ADA population.

The third short term recommendation is to **plan and implement the midday circulator between Saugatuck Station and downtown**. In order to implement this recommendation, the town and NTD need to develop a detailed operating plan for it, which would include finalizing the route, estimating running times by time of day, and developing a master schedule for the service. Also on the agenda would be determining how the fleet would accommodate the new service and if another vehicle is needed, which would be part of a NTD grant, and also seek FTA funding to develop a station at the Imperial park and ride lot. While this planning is going on, the funding basis for the service will need to be developed as a collective effort of the town from general revenues, the railroad fund, CTDOT funds, farebox revenues, and private funding by the downtown association and its member firms along with other commercial entities that might for example be located on Riverside Avenue. A funding plan using these sources should be agreed upon in Year One and should match with the estimated operating costs coming from the service plan.

Allowing for enough time to develop the plan and funding resources, it is estimated that this service would not be up and running until at least midway through Year Two or Year Three so that it could be placed into the Year Two budget.

The final recommendation is to install bus shelters at key bus stops. These stops would be determined by boarding counts. Each location would include the shelter, benches, public information, lighting, and a concrete bus pad. While most of the shelters would be single bay, shelters at the Imperial Lot may be larger to accommodate those who use the park and ride.

Designated bus stops are not intended to replace flag stops for the majority of the system. Note that stops were also included in the Westport Downtown Master Plan (2015) along with other recommendations supporting transit. Transit-related excerpts of the *Westport Downtown Master Plan (2015)* (pages 72-74 and 77) are included in Appendix Q.

#### 4.1.2 Medium and Long-term (4+ years)

If the initial rail-town circulator is successful expansion of daytime service should be considered. One option for a feasible service could be developed using a single vehicle to start. This constrains the service with respect to coverage and to frequency for any fixed route or flexible service that might be considered, but other options include subscription services and demand response that might be potentially feasible.

At this time the options should remain open. A new town circulator would need to provide a transit option linking some residential areas, work locations, shopping centers, after-school programming, downtown and medical offices. If a fixed or flexible route (route deviation) service was developed, it would operate hourly during the day and require one bus.

#### 4.1.3 Other Recommendations

Three other recommendations were noted in the study:

1. NTD should re-institute reporting of key performance indicators as part of its regular monthly reporting to the WTD and Town. NTD keeps the data internally for use in its operations planning and can easily provide the data. Standards should be set for these indicators by service type and monitored on a route by route basis, as well as for the door-to-door services. Key indicators that should be reported are passenger trips per hour or mile, operating cost per hour or per mile, farebox revenue as a percentage of operating cost, fare per passenger trip, and passenger revenue to operating cost ratio.
2. The Town should undertake a management and organization study of its town public transportation services, most notably the bus system, human service agency transportation, and the management and operations of the rail stations. The study would review how each of these elements is operated and administered, the staffing for each, financial information, and reporting requirements between the managers of these programs and the town's elected officials.
3. The Town should sponsor a Westport Paratransit Study to look in greater depth at the programs for the elderly and disabled including the ADA population. A study of this type should be recommended in the next Unified Planning Work Program of WestCOG.

## 4.2 Costs

Estimated implementation costs for each of the service recommendations, in 2014 dollars, are shown in Table 4-1. The numbers represent the **incremental increase** to the system for each. Values are shown as a range due to the differences in costs attributed to how the morning and afternoon commuter route service is extended. The extension of commuter service would also affect the span of the midday circulator service in the medium term, which is the reason that the cost of that proposal is also shown as a range.

The operating costs represent gross costs to deliver the new services over and above the base operating cost for services now provided. [Note that there will be a gross savings beginning this



fall with the elimination of the after-school program, which cost approximately \$58,000 per year to operate, of which about \$11,000 was Westport's share. In October 2015 these funds were reallocated to add commuter service.

The potential exists to use a contractor to install and maintain the bus shelters in exchange for advertising revenue that would accrue to the contractor. Westport could have a clause regarding appropriate advertisers for the shelter.

At present, the Town of Westport share for bus services is about 20 percent, with an additional 14.5 percent coming from the farebox. If CTDOT funds the new services, then the net cost to Westport would be less than shown in the Table 4.1.

**Table 4-1: Implementation Plan**

Year	Action	Gross Operating Cost	What This Addresses
1-2	Extend AM and PM service span on Commuter Routes by one hour	\$270,733 - \$329,588	Schedule flexibility, reduce parking demand at station lots
	Additional Marketing/Communications at NTD	\$ 40,000	Additional coordination and marketing/outreach with Westport
2-3	Downtown Connector	\$188,336 - \$223,649	Daytime service need, link between downtown area and train station for residents and visitors, reduce parking demand at station lots, creates a quick connection between Imperial Lot and train station for commuters
	Install Bus Shelters (est. 6)	\$90,000	Bus shelters would be provided at key locations
4+	Town Circulator	\$188,336 - \$235,420	Daytime service for trips within Westport, provides a transit option for shopping, work, medical, after-school and other trips as needed.
Total	All Proposals	\$737,405 - \$878,657	

Studies not shown in the table above include the Norwalk Transit Comprehensive Operations Study, already funded in the UPWP, and the recommended Westport Paratransit Study, which would have to be brought to the MPO for inclusion in the upcoming UPWP. There is also a Statewide CT Bus Study currently underway that will include Westport.

### 4.3 Next Study Steps

The draft Final Report reviewed by WestCOG, NTD, WTD, the First Selectman, CTDOT, and other stakeholders. The findings were presented at public information sessions during the study and then for the draft Final Report, and this Final Report reflects the outcome from those reviews and meetings. All presentations are provided in Appendix N.

## Appendices

There are several appendices that follow, providing reference documents and guidance, alternatives that were eliminated from the discussion, details on the outreach process, and a description of the after-school program as it was operated in 2013-14 prior to dissolution.

Appendix A	1992 agreement between the Town of Westport and Norwalk
Appendix B	Section of the Westport Town Code of Ordinances
Appendix C	Westport Transit District review July 1993, pages 73 – 77
Appendix D	July 1, 2014, August 29, 2014, and December 9, 2014 letters to NTD from the Federal Transit Administration
Appendix E	E.1 FTA school bus regulations E.2 Description of Westport after-school program 2013-15 E.3 After school busing alternative development and result
Appendix F	Public outreach
Appendix G	Proposed Routes G1/G2 modification
Appendix H	Other route proposals considered
Appendix I	Long-term daytime route sketches
Appendix J	WTD comments and issue papers
Appendix K	CTDOT e-mail regarding the use of excess station revenues for shuttle bus services
Appendix L	FY 2014 Westport bus system operating and financial statistics
Appendix M	Study work plan
Appendix N	Westport Bus Operations and Needs Study final report presentation
Appendix O	Westport commuter service expansion October 12, 2015
Appendix P	1993 marketing pages and GBTA presentation
Appendix Q	Transit related pages from the Westport Downtown Master Plan
Appendix R	CT statutes and district by-laws
Appendix S	Station leases