



**Montgomery County, VA Request for the Feasibility of Public Transportation Services for  
The Warm Hearth Retirement Village and Surrounding Area**

***FINAL REPORT***

November 1, 2010

Erik C. B. Olsen, Transportation Planner  
Blacksburg Transit, a Department of the Town of Blacksburg

**Table of Contents**

Table of Contents ..... 2

Executive Summary ..... 3

Introduction ..... 5

Background ..... 5

    Support for Warm Hearth ..... 6

    Request for Study ..... 6

Survey Results ..... 7

    Overall ..... 7

    Residents ..... 7

        Demographics ..... 7

        Transportation ..... 9

        Desired Service ..... 11

        Destinations ..... 13

        Service Times ..... 14

    Staff ..... 15

        Demographics ..... 15

        Transportation ..... 15

        Destinations ..... 16

        Service Times ..... 16

    Resident & Staff Comments ..... 16

Focus Group Results ..... 16

    Residents ..... 16

    Staff ..... 17

Conclusions ..... 17

Further Discussion ..... 18

    Related Planning Efforts ..... 18

    Funding ..... 18

Implementation Steps ..... 19

References ..... 20

Appendix A: Maps of Montgomery County, Blacksburg, Christiansburg, and Warm Hearth Retirement Village, VA ..... 21

Appendix B: Warm Hearth Village Map ..... 22

Appendix C: Existing Transportation Services in and near Warm Hearth ..... 23

Appendix D: Feasibility Study Request Letter from Montgomery County to MPO ..... 29

Appendix E: Warm Hearth Survey Cover Letter ..... 30

Appendix F: Warm Hearth Survey ..... 31

Appendix G: Warm Hearth Survey Respondents - Counts for Resident Locations ..... 34

Appendix H: Resident and Staff Open-Ended Comments from Survey ..... 35

Appendix I: Resident Focus Groups Results Warm Hearth Survey (with summary table) ..... 39

Appendix J: Staff Focus Group Results ..... 43

## Executive Summary

Blacksburg Transit (BT) has been engaged in discussions with Warm Hearth Village and Montgomery County for the last several years about possible public transit services to Warm Hearth. This report outlines recent efforts with a timeline for providing transit services to Warm Hearth and nearby neighborhoods within the County, starting with a 2-page executive summary.

Long-standing and well-documented support exists for expanding bus services to Warm Hearth and within the County. In 2009, Montgomery County formally requested that the Blacksburg, Christiansburg, Montgomery Area MPO evaluate the feasibility of bus service to the Warm Hearth area. This study is an area feasibility study and summarizes existing and future transit needs within the County near Warm Hearth. A survey and two focus group meetings were then administered by BT to Warm Hearth residents and staff. This report documents those efforts.

During 2010, a total of 600 printed 2-page surveys were distributed to Warm Hearth residents and staff. Two information sessions were conducted by BT representatives to provide participants with further information about the survey and to review the funding process. A total of 133 completed surveys were collected with an overall response-rate of 22 percent.

Separate focus groups were then conducted for residents and staff. Each group included participants selected by Warm Hearth to represent a range of ages, abilities, income levels, viewpoints, and genders. The purpose of the focus group was to gather information not captured by the survey and hear from a small group about their ideas for transportation at Warm Hearth.

**Survey & Focus Group Highlights.** A large majority of residents (98 percent) and staff (96 percent) believe there is a need for public transit services at Warm Hearth. Even residents that currently drive foresee a time in the future when they would stop driving and would use transit. Over 73 percent of resident respondents indicated they would use a bus service one to three times per month or more, and almost 70 percent indicated they would be very likely or somewhat likely to use a Warm Hearth public bus service. Top reasons for bus service include making medical trips, for shopping, to maintain independence, and to attend evening events such as at the Lyric Theatre, local restaurants, Virginia Tech Sports and music events, and the annual Virginia Tech retiree's luncheon.

Survey and focus group results revealed that resident respondents want a service that operates all days, especially on Tuesday and Friday into the evening, that can transport more than one wheelchair user. For staff respondents results indicated that bus service should start before 7:00 a.m., the time that many of them start work. Results also indicated that residents and staff want an affordable service, such as one that costs \$0.50 to \$1.50 for a one-way trip, and both groups would benefit from training about the existing bus system.

**Conclusions.** Overwhelming support exists for providing public bus service to, within, and near Warm Hearth, as evidenced by results from this survey and the focus group meetings. Some Warm Hearth residents that currently drive themselves would likely use public transit and most of these respondents foresee a time in the future when they would stop driving and would use transit. Top reasons for bus service include making medical trips, for shopping, to maintain their independence, and to attend evening events throughout the county. Survey respondents indicated that they would like service should for all days of the week, especially on Tuesdays and Fridays with evening hours operating until as late as 11 p.m. The current Warm Hearth vehicles can only transport one wheelchair user, and respondents indicated a desire for the ability to transport more than one wheelchair user at a time. For staff, many of which start their shift at 7:00 a.m., respondents indicated bus service should start early and should connect on-site buildings. Residents and staff suggested the cost should be \$0.50 to \$1.50, one-way. Residents are able and willing to be away from home for up to 4 hours, and both residents and staff would benefit from learning about BT's current bus services and how to best use the system.

**Further Discussion.** At least two additional topics need to be discussed with stakeholders, beginning with members of the MPO Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and the MPO Policy Board. First, several related planning efforts are taking place simultaneously including a BT 6-year Transit Development Plan (TDP), an update of the MPO Transportation Plan for 2035, and planning for the Multi-Modal Transit Facility (MMTF) to be located on the Virginia Tech campus. Results from these efforts will be integrated with expansion of public transportation for Warm Hearth and the County.

Second, funding of public transportation is extremely important and sometimes difficult to understand. At the core of funding transit is the advantage of leveraging local funds. The local match, the portion typically provided by a municipality and/or private organization, matches a portion paid for by state and federal grants. For operating costs, the local match is often 50 percent which could be split between various partners. Some programs, such as the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) Senior Transportation Program, only require a 5 percent local match. For capital costs, the calculations for the local match portion are more complicated, but generally about 80 percent of capital is covered by state and federal grants.

**Implementation Steps.** Four steps are further detailed in this report. The first step is to review this report. If requested by the County, the second step is to prepare a 2/1/11 DRPT proposal. The third and fourth steps involve identifying potential partners and developing a multi-phase implementation strategy.

## Introduction

For the last several years, Blacksburg Transit (BT), a department of the Town of Blacksburg, has been engaged in discussions with Warm Hearth Village and Montgomery County (see map, Appendix A) about possible public transit services to Warm Hearth. In 2008, a request was submitted by the County to the Blacksburg-Christiansburg-Montgomery Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to evaluate bus service to Warm Hearth. Following the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) Transit Service Design Guidelines (DRPT, 2008), this study is an area feasibility study and summarizes existing and future transit needs within the County near Warm Hearth, with a focus on short term and medium term phases.

This effort culminated in a survey and two focus group meetings administered to Warm Hearth residents and staff. This report documents those efforts and includes a timeline and draft recommendations. A final vision for a refined service proposal is still under development for the County and Warm Hearth, and will incorporate preliminary findings from BT's 6-year Transit Development Plan (TDP) currently underway (launched October 12, 2010; to be completed March, 2011). This vision could be clearly articulated and then submitted as a proposal to DRPT, if supported, for the February 1, 2011 deadline for funding consideration. If accepted, DRPT usually would likely release funds in about October 2011.

## Background

The government of Montgomery County, Virginia has been investigating alternative transportation solutions in the form of expanded transit (bus) services within the county on behalf of its citizens. This document serves as the basis of a full proposal for transit services within the County, with a focus on the area near the Warm Hearth Village Retirement community.

Amongst the numerous services provided by the County, expanded transit service is on the horizon for select areas. The benefits of expanding transit service are numerous including providing sustainable mobility for all, environmental benefits from the reduction of the number of private automobiles on the roadways, increased connectedness between communities, increases in economic development, and safety. With fluctuating fuel prices, a focus on healthy living and the environment, and safety, citizens are seeking out reliable alternatives to driving. Transit services meet the need of providing mobility and independence for County citizens. For these reasons, the County is investigating the possibility of expanding transit services.

Summary data from various sources indicates that there is a need for additional services in the County. For example, conclusions from the Montgomery County 2025 plan (Montgomery County, 2004) recommended:

- The County will encourage development of planned, mixed use, pedestrian and transit friendly communities (p. 46)
- Neighborhoods will have a discernable center or square to allow a transit stop (p. 50)
- Survey respondents stressed the need for broadening public transit opportunities (p. 210).
- Encourage Blacksburg Transit to provide more efficient and well-planned service routes with safe bus stops and safe access to bus stops (p. 223)
- Request that the Blacksburg-Christiansburg-Montgomery Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) evaluate mass transit extensions including (p. 223):
  - Extension of the Two Town Trolley service between Blacksburg and Christiansburg including Radford
  - Evaluate BT micro-shuttle service to area businesses within the core shopping area

- Make mass transit more usable by all citizens by finding an additional off-campus transit transfer area (p. 224)

### ***Support for Warm Hearth***

Long-standing requests have been made for expanded, public transportation services for Warm Hearth Village (see map, Appendix B). Specifically, additional service is needed for residents and employees of Warm Hearth. For example, a public meeting was held July 20, 2005 to review projects under consideration in the Blacksburg/Christiansburg/ Montgomery Area 2030 Transportation Plan. This plan was developed by the MPO. Public input was sought with respect to the proposed projects and priorities, as well as other projects that meeting participants believed should be considered as part of the Plan. From the meeting, recommendations included the need to expand transit service (to Warm Hearth), promote roadway improvements that support transit, and maintain the SmartWay bus service (MPO, 2005).

Warm Hearth was specifically mentioned in response to a survey item regarding the need for additional stops or destinations, in a survey focused on students and faculty at Virginia Tech (Virginia Tech, 2008). There were additional comments for expanded service including more service to the Montgomery Regional Hospital, earlier service to and from Christiansburg, bus service to and from Radford, and comments regarding expanding service in connection with the Smartway Bus to get to the Roanoke Airport.

### ***Request for Study***

In 2008, the County requested that the MPO evaluate bus service to Warm Hearth. On July 14, Clayton Goodman, then County Administrator, emailed a request to BT on behalf of Bill Brown of the Board of Supervisors. Mr. Brown reported that some citizens contacted him to ascertain if the BT would consider running buses to Warm Hearth. Mr. Goodman asked that BT evaluate if the request for service was possible, and identify potential conditions and cost to the County.

Blacksburg Transit developed a draft summary of existing services in Warm Hearth, updated portions of which are included in Appendix C, and BT provided a September 2008 response to Clay Goodman outlining the recommendation for a new route. This recommendation was based on the relatively high concentration of residents and staff in Warm Hearth, the fact that these residents are a large specialized group with special needs (with an average age of 74 and some with disabilities and/or in limited resources), because both the County and BT receive regular requests from potential users in Warm Hearth, and because long-range plans include a potential route to serve the area. At that time, BT's recommendation was for a new route and the response included a brief explanation of how the cost of service depends highly upon services desired, the hours of operation, and the infrastructure and capital required. In addition, it was recommended that a meeting be held with the County, Warm Hearth, and BT.

Following this, a formal request to the MPO was then made on April 10, 2009 by Carol Edmonds, Interim County Administrator, to request the MPO conduct a feasibility study for transit services to the Warm Hearth Village area (See letter, Appendix D). In October 2009, a planning meeting was held with BT, the MPO, Montgomery County, and Warm Hearth to discuss a plan and to draft a survey. In January 2010 surveys were distributed to the large majority of Warm Hearth residents and staff members to ascertain what residents and staff members desire in terms of bus service. A focus group was held with Warm Hearth residents in April 2010 and as well as with staff in July 2010. The next section describes the method for data collection and survey results.

**Survey Results**

In January 2010, 600 printed surveys were distributed by Warm Hearth. Warm Hearth included a cover letter (Appendix E) from the President and CEO explaining the purpose of the survey and to encourage residents and employees to complete it. The 2-page survey (Appendix F) included 15 items consisting of forced-choice, multiple-choice, and open-ended response items. Warm Hearth collected the completed surveys and BT collected them from Warm Hearth. Two 1-hour information sessions were also held at Warm Hearth with BT representatives on January 12 and 13 to explain the background of the survey, to provide participants with further information about the survey process, and to review the general process of funding transit (e.g., via local funding to match a State/Federal fund proposal).

**Overall**

A total of 133 completed surveys were returned to BT by Warm Hearth. The overall response rate was 22.2 percent.

**Residents**

A total of completed by 107 Warm Hearth residents completed the survey with a response rate for residents of 28.5 percent.

**Demographics**

Respondents were asked three primary demographical questions: gender, age, and residence. Females constituted the majority of the respondents at 73 percent, with males constituting 27 percent (see Table 1). A total of 39 respondents (36%) did not indicate gender. It should be noted that some respondents indicated they were responding as a married couple; also some respondents probably missed the question, as it was placed in an awkward position (see survey). The primary age groups represented were the 70-79 and 80-89 brackets, at 38 percent and 44 percent respectively (see Table 2 and Figure 1). A total of 4 respondents (3.7%) did not indicate age. Data provided by Warm Hearth for residents living independently (Table 3) verified what was found from the survey. Place of residence was fairly evenly represented. The two extremes were Trolinger House at 27 percent, and Showalter Center at 2 percent (Table 4 and Figure 2 and Appendix G).

**Table 1. Gender of Resident Respondents**

Gender	Count	Percent
Male	19	27%
Female	52	73%

**Table 2. Age of Resident Respondents**

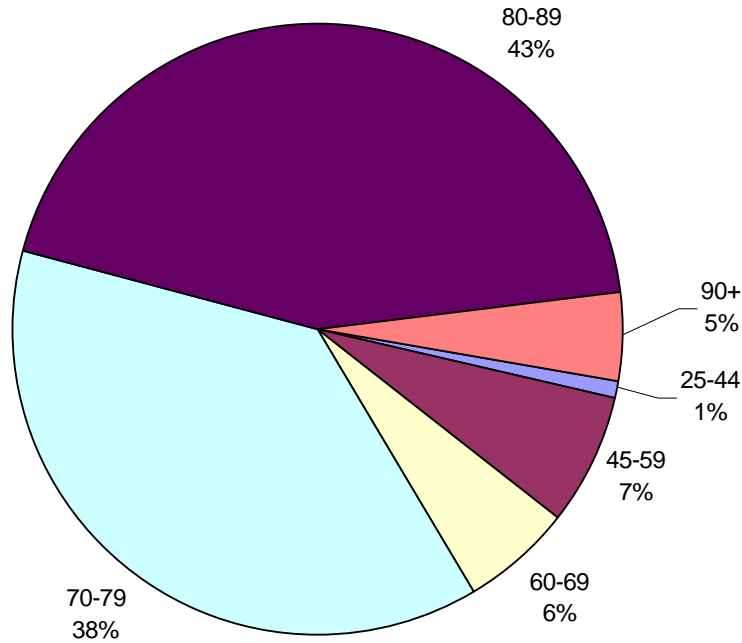
Age	Count	Percent
25-44	1	1%
45-59	7	7%
60-69	6	6%
70-79	39	38%
80-89	45	44%
90+	5	5%

**Table 3. Independent Living Demographics**

Total Residents	354
Single	200
Couples	77
Female	245 (69%)
Male	109 (31%)
Age Range	48 – 101
Average Age	74
% with Car	71%

*Data Courtesy of Warm Hearth Village – April 13, 2010*

**Figure 1. Age of Resident Respondents**

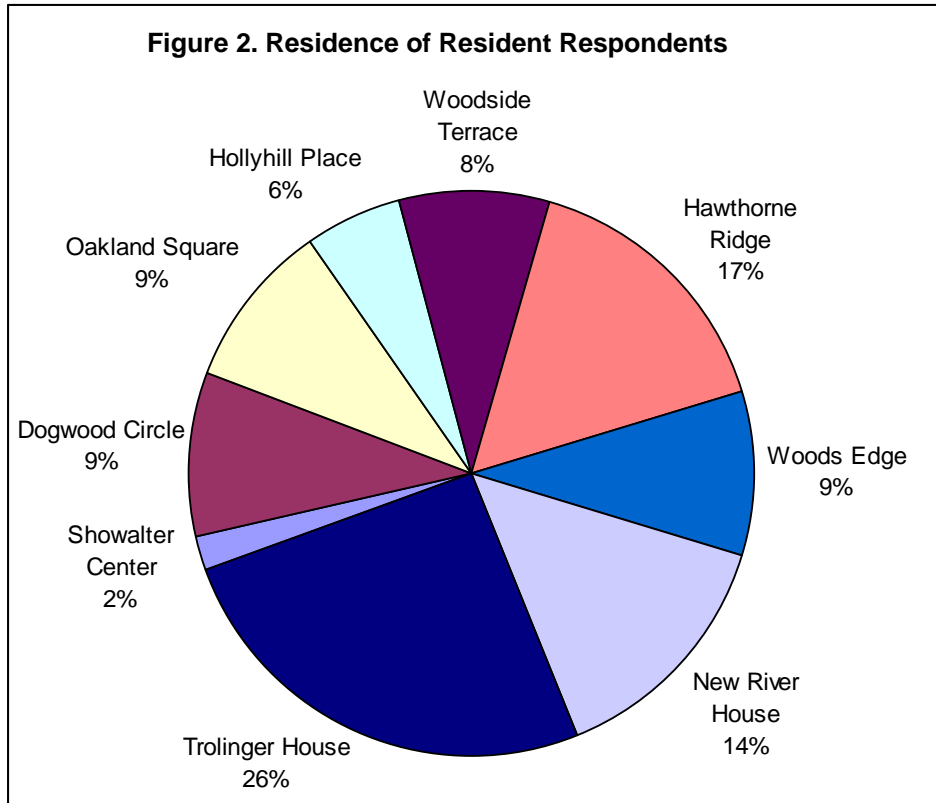


**Table 4. Residence of Respondents**

Area	Count	Percent
Trolinger House	27	25%
Hawthorne Ridge	17	16%
New River House	15	14%
Dogwood Circle	10	10%
Oakland Square	10	10%
Woods Edge	10	10%
Woodside Terrace	9	9%
Hollyhill Place	6	6%
Showalter Center	2	2%

(Also see Appendix G for Map)





**Transportation**

Respondents were asked five questions related to transportation needs and habits, including driver status, primary mode of transportation, perceived need for public transit, and intended use of future public transit. For driver status, respondents were asked if they drive an automobile or other motor vehicle. A total of 76 percent responded “yes” and 24 percent responded “no” (see Table 5).

Respondents were also asked about their primary mode of transportation: 60 percent primarily drive themselves, and 18 percent ride with a family or friend. The remaining 22 percent use other means such as Warm Hearth Transportation Service, walking, BT, etc. (see Table 6 and Figure 3). An overwhelming 98 percent of resident respondents believe there is a need for public transit services for Warm Hearth residents and staff (see Table 7).

**Table 5. Driver Status of Respondents**

Status	Count	Percent
Yes	74	76%
No	24	24%

**Table 6. Primary Mode of Transportation for Resident Respondents**

Mode of Transportation	Count	Percent
Drive Myself	76	60%
Ride With Family or Friend	23	18%
Walk	6	5%
Hired Driver	1	1%
Warm Hearth Transportation Services	17	13%
Blacksburg Transit	1	1%
New River Valley Community Services (Community Transit)	1	1%
Other	1	1%

**Table 7. Resident responses to "Do you think there is a need for public transportation service for Warm Hearth residents and staff?"**

Response	Count	Percent
Yes	96	98%
No	2	2%

When asked how often they would use public transit if it was available and met their needs, a total of 73 percent (72/98) said that they would use it one to three times per month or more (Table 8).

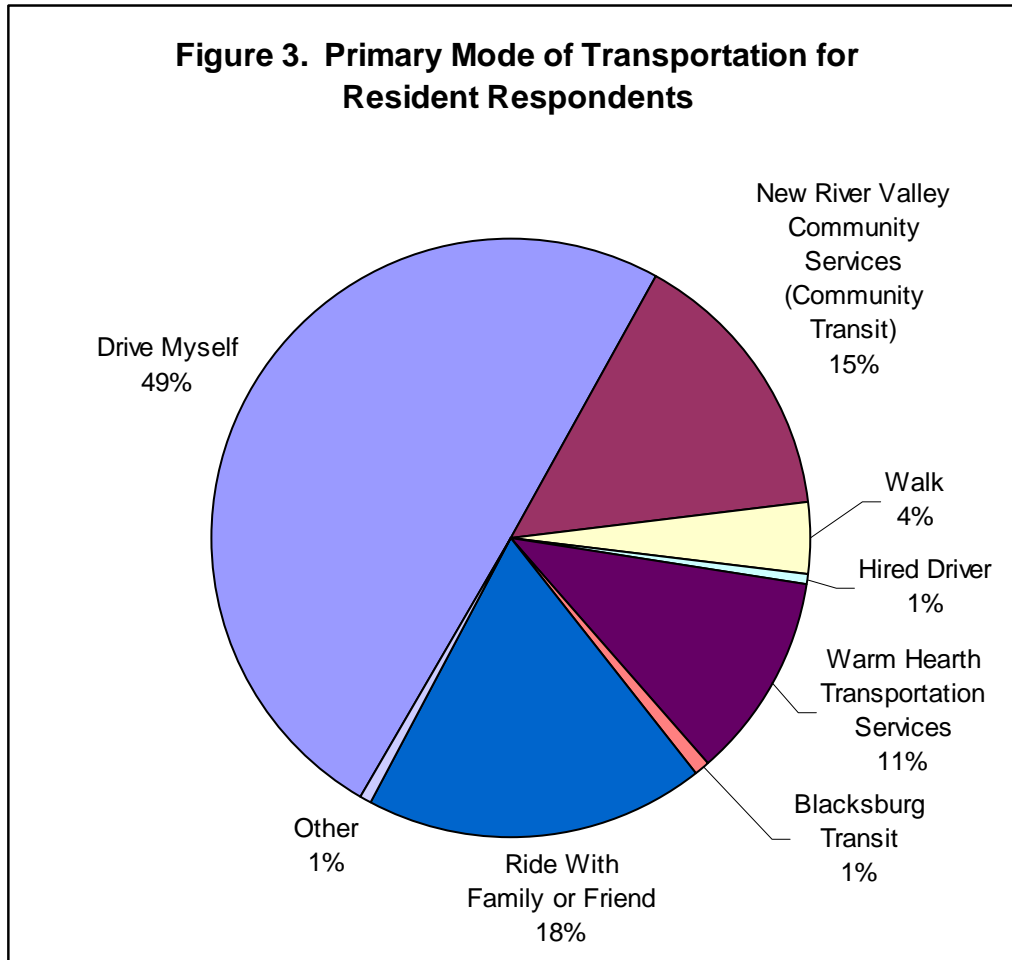
**Table 8. Resident responses to "How often would you use this service if it was available and met your needs?"**

Response	Count	Percent
Less Than One Time per Month	26	27%
1 - 3 Times per Month	33	34%
1 - 3 Times per Week	32	33%
4 - 7 times per Week	7	7%

Finally, respondents were asked how likely they were to use a public bus that services Warm Hearth: 70 percent indicated they were either “very likely” or “somewhat likely” (Table 9).

**Table 9. Resident responses to "How likely is it that you will use a public bus that services the Warm Hearth area?"**

Response	Count	Percent
Very Likely	36	35%
Somewhat Likely	36	35%
Somewhat Unlikely	8	8%
Not Likely	23	22%



**Desired Service**

Respondents were asked a series of forced-choice and open-ended questions to describe the type of transit service they would like to see. First, they were asked how important service to various locations would be to them. Responses were mostly evenly distributed; however the majority of respondents ranked the Montgomery Regional Hospital area, Pepper’s Ferry Shopping Area, and Walmart as “Very Important” (see Table 9). There was also an open-ended component to this question, for those responses see Open Ended Questions.

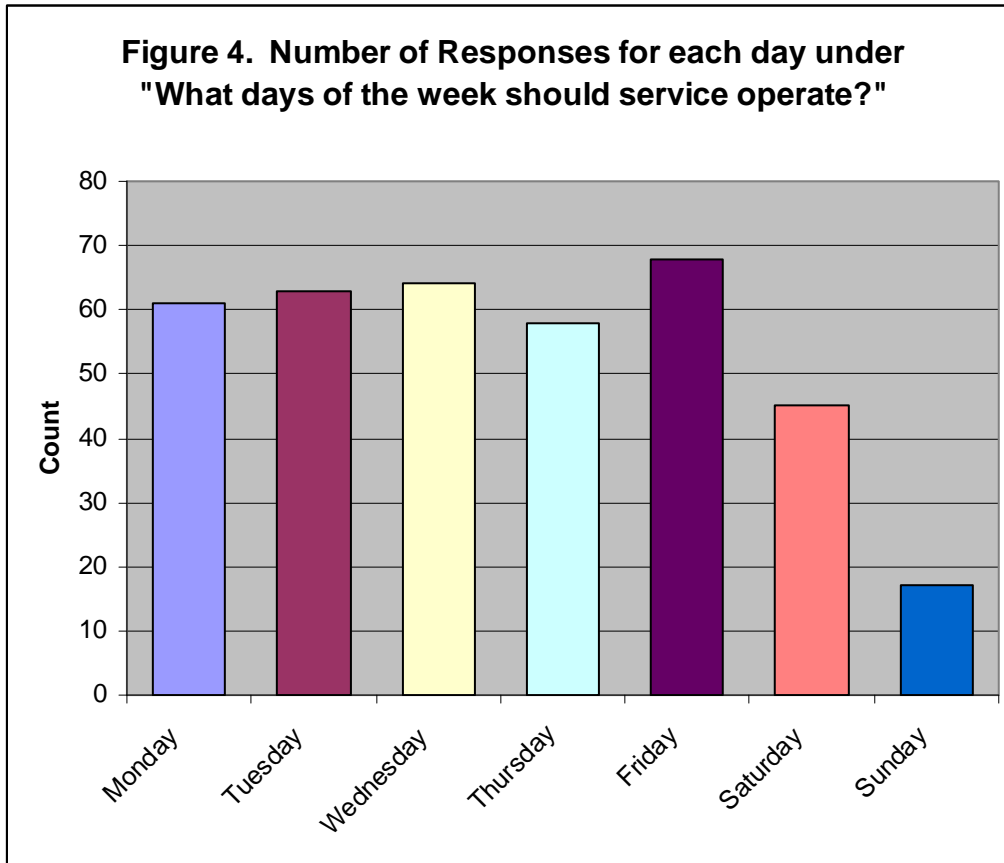
**Table 9. Resident responses to "Please rate how important service to each location/area is for you"**

Location	Very Important		Somewhat Important		Not Really Important		Did Not Respond	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Downtown Blacksburg	26	29%	38	43%	25	28%	14	14%
First and Main Area	20	25%	38	48%	22	26%	23	22%
University Mall Area	20	24%	42	49%	23	27%	18	17%
Montgomery Regional Hospital Area	55	59%	27	29%	11	12%	10	10%
Pepper's Ferry Shopping Area	48	53%	36	40%	6	7%	13	1%
Walmart	53	56%	26	27%	16	17%	8	8%
Downtown Christiansburg	13	17%	32	41%	34	43%	24	23%

Respondents were also asked what days of the week service to Warm Hearth should operate. Weekdays had roughly the same percent of residents (an average of 59 percent for all five weekdays) indicating when service should operate. Fridays had the highest number of responses (64 percent). Saturdays had a lower percent (42 percent), and Sundays had the lowest percent, with 19 percent of residents indicating when service should operate (see Table 10 and Figure 4).

**Table 10. Resident responses to "What days of the week should services operate?"**

Days	Count	Percent (Out of all Residents Surveyed)
Monday	61	57%
Tuesday	63	59%
Wednesday	64	60%
Thursday	58	54%
Friday	68	64%
Saturday	45	42%
Sunday	17	16%



**Destinations**

Respondents were also asked to list the three destinations that they visit most in a week, as part of the question, “Please rate how important service to each location/area is to you?” The most common was Kroger, which was listed 74 times. Walmart was listed 51 times, and the NRV Mall was listed 22 times. Other common locations included the Blacksburg Public Library, Montgomery Regional Hospital, Spradlin Farms, University Mall, and First and Main (see Figure 5).

**Write-in Destinations.** Respondents also had options to provide write-in responses regarding the areas to which they would like to travel on a public bus service (question 10). Respondents were given three fill-in-the-blank categories to rate: “Other Medical/Municipal, Other Shopping Centers/Major Stores, and Other.” See Table 10 (note that different number of comments were written in for each of these three categories).

For “Other Medical/Municipal”, 34 write-in comments were included. The most common response was the Carillion Clinic on Plantation Road in Blacksburg. The Clinic was rated by 10 out of 34 (29 percent) respondents of whom seven rated it “Very Important” and three rated it as “Somewhat Important.” The second most common response was the Carillion New River Valley Medical Center. This center was rated by 5 out of 34 (15 percent) respondents of whom two rated it was “Very Important” and three rated it as “Somewhat Important.” Some other popular destinations included dentist’s offices and independent doctor’s offices.

In the “Other Shopping Centers/Major Stores” category, the most popular location was the Kroger/Gable Shopping Center, rated by 8 out of 32 (25 percent) respondents receiving five “Very

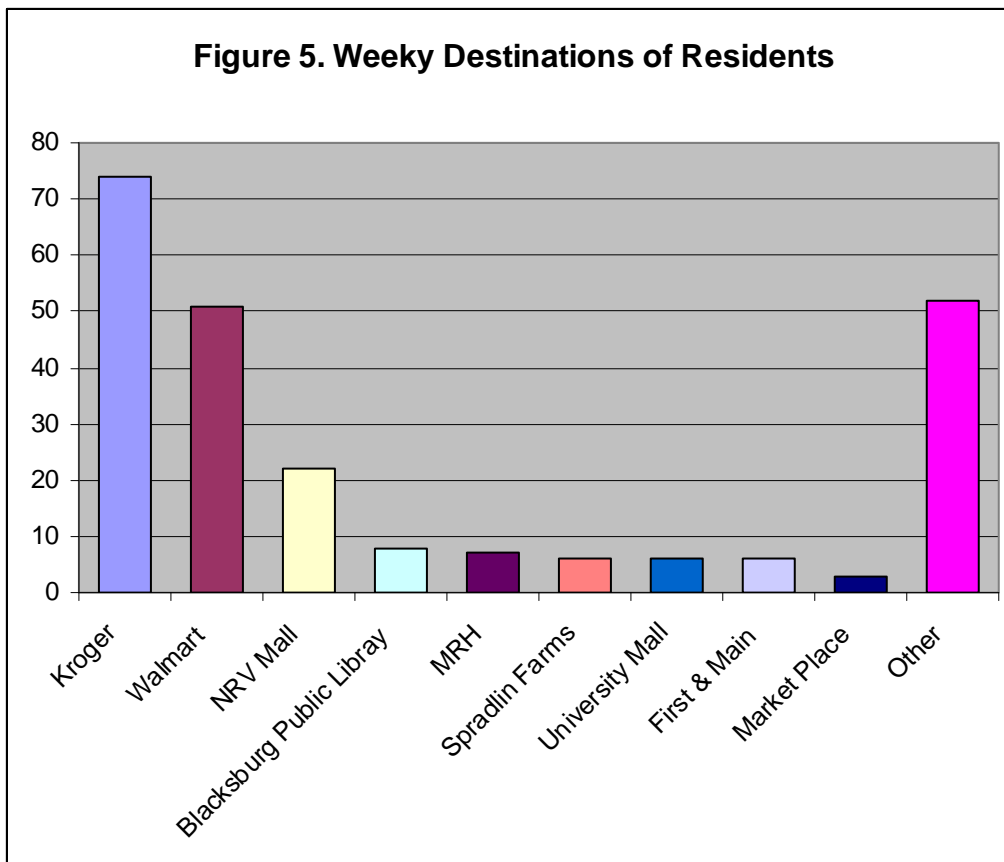
Important” ratings and two “Somewhat Important” ratings. The second most popular location was the Kmart and nearby areas with 7 comments (22 percent) with 2 rated “Very important” and four rating it

as “Somewhat important.” The third most popular location included retail stores in the Pepper’s Ferry Shopping Area (Lowe’s, Target, etc.) with 5 comments (16 percent) where one respondent rated “Very important” and three respondents rated it “Somewhat Important.”

Destinations in the “Other” category varied drastically and included 29 comments. The one notable location was the Blacksburg Library which was rated four times as “Very Important.” Other locations included Dollar Tree, Lyric Theatre, Montgomery County Government Center, a number of banks, local restaurants, and the Blacksburg Recreation Center.

**Service Times**

The range of responses was very broad for “What time of day should services operate to be convenient?” Most residents responded in the range of 10:00 am to 4:00 pm for all days, with some responses indicating earlier or later service. During the week days (Mon-Thurs.) the latest time was up to 9:00 p.m. It appeared that more people wanted services later on Friday (until 10:00 p.m.) and Saturday (until 11:00 p.m. or later). Saturday and Sunday had fewer responses than weekdays.



**Table 10. Common Other Destinations (Write-in) for Question 10.**

Other Destinations	Count	Percent
Carillion Clinic, Plantation Rd, Blacksburg	10	29
Kroger/Gable Shopping Center	8	25
Kmart and nearby areas	7	22
Pepper's Ferry Shopping Area	5	16
Carillion New River Valley Medical Center.	5	15
Blacksburg (County) Library	4	14

**Staff**

The response rate for Warm Hearth staff was 11.6 percent (27 completed surveys). Staff members were asked the same questions as residents, except for the exception of where they live. In general, staff comments were aimed at supporting service for residents. Very few comments appeared to be aimed at the needs of staff. For this reason, only a short summary of staff responses have been included.

**Demographics**

Of the 27 staff respondents, 10 indicated their gender (5 males and 5 females). The most represented age group was 25-54 at 54 percent (Table 11). Residents were asked to indicate their municipality of residence and nearest major intersection. Christiansburg and Blacksburg were the most represented, along with a few other areas in and around the New River Valley (Table 12).

**Table 11. Age of Staff Respondents**

Age	Count	Percent
18-24	3	12%
25-44	14	54%
45-59	7	27%
60-69	2	8%

**Table 12. Residence of Staff Respondents**

Residence	Count	Percent
Christiansburg	9	35%
Blacksburg	5	19%
Radford	4	15%
Elliston	2	8%
Pearisburg	2	8%
Newport	1	4%
Pilot	1	4%
Pulaski County	1	4%
West Virginia	1	4%

**Transportation**

All staff members indicated that they drive an automobile or other motor vehicle. All respondents also indicated that their primary mode of transportation is by driving themselves, with one respondent indicating that they also ride with family or friend. Almost all staff respondents (96 percent) indicated that they believe there to be a need for public transit within the Village. Staff respondents are less likely

to use future transportation services than resident respondents. Eleven respondents out of 24 (46 percent) indicated that they would use public transit in or to Warm Hearth less than once per month, while eight (33 percent) indicated that they would use it once per week or more. Thirteen respondents (54 percent) stated that they were either very or somewhat likely to use future public transit service.

### **Destinations**

Most staff respondents indicated that they travel to the Pepper's Ferry shopping area on a weekly basis. Most comments by staff respondents indicated that they support service to Warm Hearth.

### **Service Times**

Staff respondents mostly indicated that service should operate seven days a week, and run schedules around working hours (7:00 am to early evening).

### ***Resident & Staff Comments***

The final item in the survey asked, "What comments do you have about public transportation for or near Warm Hearth?" There were 76 different open-ended comments (Appendix H). The majority of comments (52 percent) were in support of bus service to Warm Hearth. Other comments raised questions about future service, or offered suggestions to improve the current Warm Hearth service. Example comments included:

"I can't walk without assistance of my Rollator."

"BT service would give us more freedom and a sense of independence."

"Three of my neighbors have had to stop driving."

"Each year more Warm Hearth folks will have to stop driving."

Many respondents (24 percent) stated that while they do not need bus service now, they foresee a need in the future. Comments included:

"I have my own car, no personal need, but fine if enough people need it."

"I am 81; needs may change!"

"As fuel prices increase and driving skills decrease it becomes important."

### **Focus Group Results**

Separate focus groups were also conducted for both residents and staff. Participants were selected by Warm Hearth to represent a range of ages, abilities, income levels, viewpoints, and genders. The purpose of the focus group was to provide an alternative format to hear from people about their ideas for transportation at Warm Hearth. Discussion was targeted to clarify and expand upon the survey results; as well as gather information not captured by the survey. A list of prepared issues were developed prior to the session and written on separate sheets of a large flip chart. The nominal group technique (NGT), a group decision making method, was used collect comments that were written on each sheet throughout the session. To conclude the session, each participant was then provided with red stickers and was able to vote on the most important issues on each sheet of paper, distributed around the room. Results were then ranked in order of importance.

### ***Residents***

BT conducted a 90 minute focus group with Warm Hearth residents on 4/28/2010 with eight participants. Important issues included the desire to attend special events in the evening, have lower



rates (e.g., \$0.50 to \$1.50 one-way), include expanded Tuesday and Friday service, and the ability to transport more than 1 wheel-chair passenger. Conclusions drawn from the focus group (Appendix I) include the following:

- Some residents put-off moving to Warm Hearth because of the lack of transit service.
- Warm Hearth's current transportation service is inadequate for the demand (particularly for wheelchair users), runs insufficient hours, has policy issues with the reservation system, and charges too high of a fare (\$5.00).
- Along with Friday, Tuesday is the one of the most popular days for bus service because of senior discounts.
- Warm Hearth residents would be flexible with times and transfers as long as service is regularly scheduled.
- Residents would be comfortable with transfers and with trips away from home as long as 3 to 4 hours.
- They would be open to a shuttle to the hospital to connect to current BT routes
- Residents know very little about BT's current bus services.

### ***Staff***

For Warm Hearth staff, BT conducted a 90 minute focus group on 7/29/2010 with nine participants. The discussion was intended to elaborate on topics from the survey, examine staff needs for transit options for Warm Hearth, and consider staff ideas for needs of residents. Issues were identified prior to the session that were relevant to both residents and staff separately. First, issues related to staff using transit were discussed.

The conclusions relevant to the needs of staff (Appendix J) include:

- Cost of commuting is the biggest issue for staff, particularly in an effort to save on gas.
- Most staff start work at 7 a.m.
- A bus service for staff would need to include a way to get home for emergencies.
- The service should also move from building to building on-site.
- There was interest in a monthly pass.

Staff input regarding bus services for residents included:

- Transport to the hospital is needed to connect with current services
- Tuesdays are an important day to have service (senior discount day)
- Boarding and bag help is important for Warm Hearth residents riding buses
- Transit service needs to be improved from residents' independent activity, such as shopping, appointments, and attending events in Blacksburg or Christiansburg
- Most staff members have no knowledge of the BT system (nor Warm Hearth's system) and desire education on the current services

After the meeting, one staff member mentioned the lack of sidewalks and the speeding problem on the grounds. He suggested a single parking lot at the entrance of the campus with a shuttle service being the only cars in the village.

### **Conclusions**

Overwhelming support exists for providing public bus service to, within, and near Warm Hearth, as evidenced by results from this survey and the focus group meetings. Some Warm Hearth residents that

currently drive themselves would likely use public transit and most of these respondents foresee a time in the future when they would stop driving and would use transit. Top reasons for bus service include making medical trips, for shopping, to maintain their independence, and to attend evening events throughout the county.

Survey respondents indicated that they would like service should for all days of the week, especially on Tuesdays and Fridays with evening hours operating until as late as 11 p.m. The current Warm Hearth vehicles can only transport one wheelchair user, and respondents indicated a desire for the ability to transport more than one wheelchair user at a time. For staff, many of which start their shift at 7:00 a.m., respondents indicated bus service should start early and should connect on-site buildings. Residents and staff suggested the cost should be \$0.50 to \$1.50, one-way. Residents are able and willing to be away from home for up to 4 hours, and both residents and staff would benefit from learning about BT's current bus services and how to best use the system.

### **Further Discussion**

This section identifies the need for further discussion about related planning projects and funding. Finally, four implementation steps are presented.

### ***Related Planning Efforts***

As progress toward realizing public transportation to Warm Hearth and the areas surrounding continues, additional planning efforts should be noted. For example, a 6-year Transit Development Plan (TDP) is currently underway to evaluate current services and provide guidance for the next 6 or more years. The final report is to be completed by March, 2011.

Simultaneously, the Blacksburg-Christiansburg-Montgomery Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is updating its Transportation Plan for 2035, and the Blacksburg Transit has recently hired a project manager for the Multi-Modal Transit Facility (MMFT). The MMFT is to be built on the Virginia Tech campus near the intersection of Perry Street and West Campus Drive. Planning for the MMFT is underway and a preliminary design should be available by Spring 2011.

Blacksburg Transit will integrate preliminary results from these efforts into any proposals, so that planning for public transportation will be integrated into expansion efforts. Blacksburg Transit can then continue to expand and improve its services, by coordinating results from these planning efforts. In this manner BT continues to serve citizens within this region, and is actively working to develop service expansion to Warm Hearth and nearby neighborhoods within Montgomery County.

### ***Funding***

This document does not provide a detailed proposal of funding for transportation services for Warm Hearth. The cost of a route varies depending upon numerous factors including the number of days of service, the hours of operation, the vehicles used, and an estimate of the local funds required (to match potential state and federal grants) for operational and capital costs.

### Implementation Steps

Progress has already begun toward realizing public transportation to Warm Hearth and the areas surrounding it. Four steps are described including review, proposal, partners, and phases for implementation.

**Step 1 - MPO & County Review:** The study report should be reviewed and accepted by the MPO and a final report submitted to Montgomery County. Montgomery County should review and evaluate the report so that a 2/1/11 DRPT proposal could be prepared.

**Step 2 - Proposal:** If requested by Montgomery County, Blacksburg Transit will prepare a proposal for submission to DRPT. The proposal would be for a maximum of \$20,000 in funding to provide public transportation services as part of a pilot-program for one year, from the Senior Transportation Program. A local match of \$1,000 would be needed.

**Step 3 - Partners:** Identify potential partners to assist BT and Montgomery County in meeting the local match portion required for state and federal grant proposals.

**Step 4 - Phases:** A multi-phase implementation strategy should be developed. These phases could be implemented within the next 1 to 6 years.

## References

Blue Ridge Business Journal (2006). Business digest. December 18, 2006. Available on-line at:  
<http://www.bizjournal.com/content/article.php?id=387>

Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DPRT) (November 2008). Transit Service Design Guidelines. Author: Richmond, VA.

Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DPRT) (November 2009). Public Transportation and Commuter Assistance Grant Program Application Guidance. Author: Richmond, VA. Online at:  
<https://olga.drpt.virginia.gov/downloads/DRPTGrant%20Program%20Application%20Guidance%20-%20Final.pdf>

DOTPA (1988). Handbook for Purchasing a Small Transit Vehicle. Department of Transportation, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Available at: <http://ntl.bts.gov/DOCS/STV.html>

Easter Seals (1990). Easter Seals Project ACTION. You Can Really Go Places - An Easter Seals Project ACTION Brochure. Washington, DC. Available online at  
<http://projectaction.easterseals.com/site/DocServer/02GI1.txt?docID=3195>

El Dorado County Transportation Commission (2005). 2025 Regional Transportation Plan – Chapter 7- Transit. Available on-line at [http://www.edctc.org/pdf/non%20agenda%20pdf/RTP/ch7\\_Transit.pdf](http://www.edctc.org/pdf/non%20agenda%20pdf/RTP/ch7_Transit.pdf) (or RTP page at [http://www.edctc.org/\\_rtp.htm](http://www.edctc.org/_rtp.htm))

Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) (2005, November). Blacksburg/Christiansburg/Montgomery Area 2030 Transportation Plan. Montgomery County, VA. Summary online at  
<http://www.nrvpdc.org/Transportation/bcmfinal2030textside.pdf>

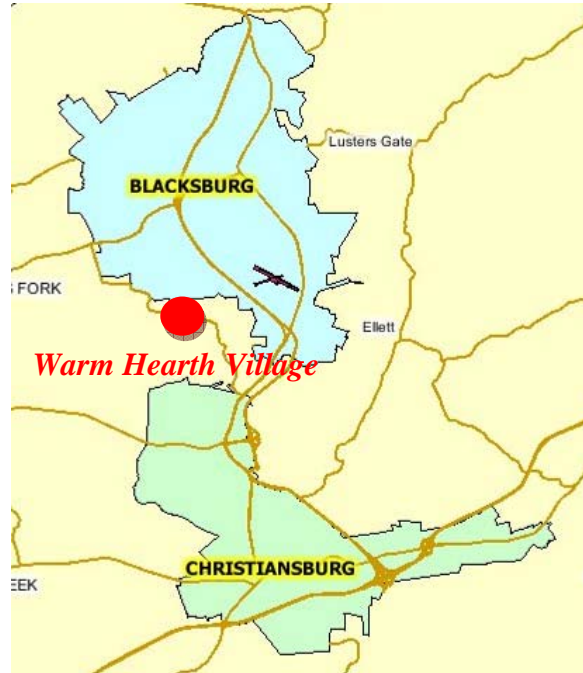
Montgomery County (2004, October). Montgomery County 2025 Plan. Available at:  
<http://www.montva.com/content/1146/98/167/1903.aspx>

Pullin, B. (2006). Embers – Warm Hearth Village newsletter. Summer 06 edition. Available at:  
<http://www.retire.org/pdfs/Summer%202006%20embers.pdf>

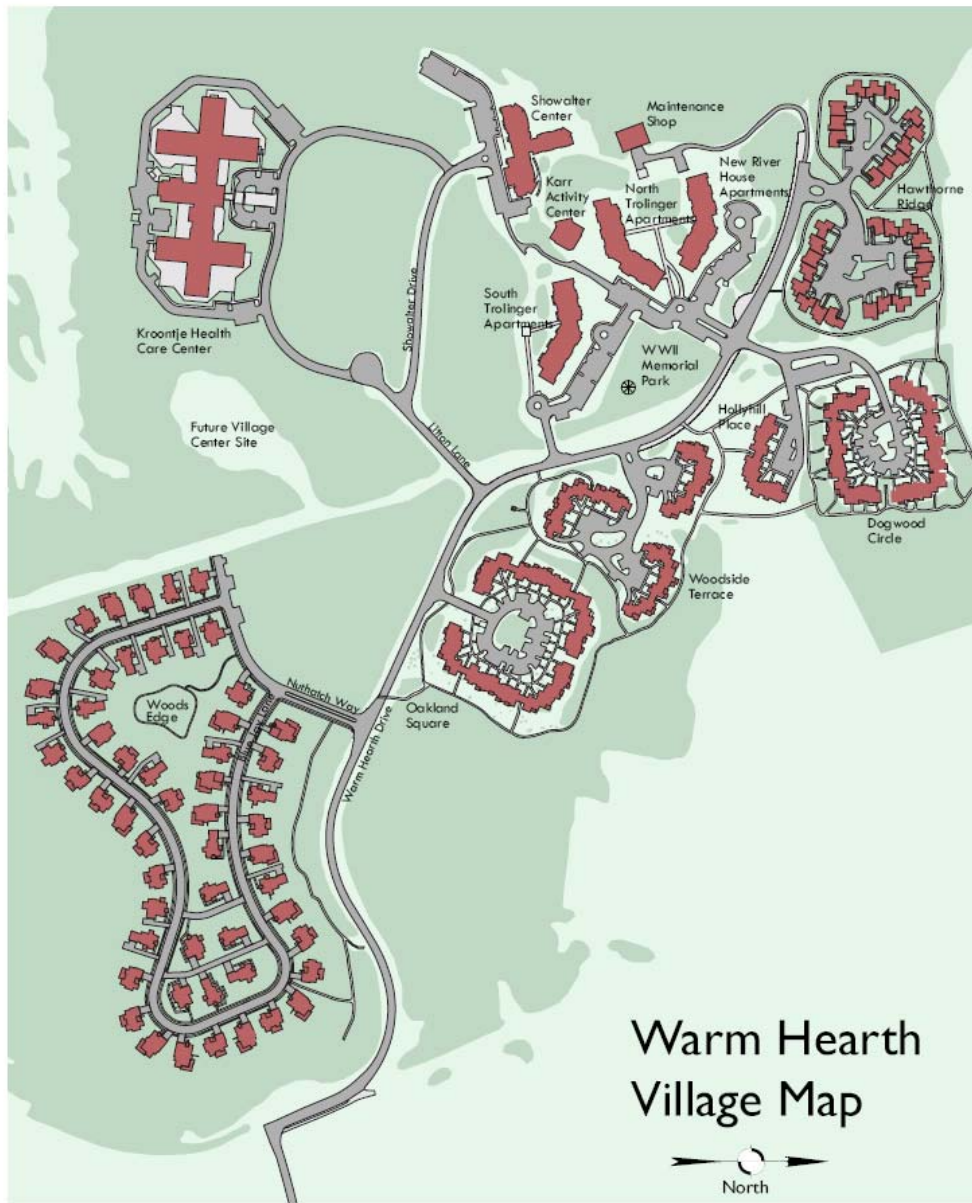
Town of Blacksburg (2007). 2046 Comprehensive Plan (Planned Environment - The Southwest Sector, p. 3). Author, Blacksburg, VA. Online at <http://www.blacksburg.va.us/Index.aspx?page=1152>

Virginia Tech (2008). 2008 Virginia Tech Office of Transportation Survey: Summary of Results. Prepared by The Virginia Tech Center for Survey Research, May 2008. Available on-line at  
[http://www.facilities.vt.edu/documents/ot/Transp\\_Survey\\_May\\_2008.pdf](http://www.facilities.vt.edu/documents/ot/Transp_Survey_May_2008.pdf)

**Appendix A: Maps of Montgomery County, Blacksburg, Christiansburg, and Warm Hearth Retirement Village, VA**



**Appendix B: Warm Hearth Village Map**



From <http://www.retire.org/pdfs/NEW%20village%20map%202010.pdf>

**Appendix C: Existing Transportation Services in and near Warm Hearth**

August 8, 2008 (edited and updated 10/30/10)

This document includes background information about Warm Hearth and the current transportation services offered to residents, Blacksburg Transit's current services nearby, and explains different types of services available.

**Warm Hearth Village**

Developed in the late 1970's, Warm Hearth Village is located just outside of the Town of Blacksburg limits. The Village includes a wooded campus with walking trails and numerous amenities. A continuum of living options is available from independent living to long-term nursing care. According to text from an online proposal requesting funds to replace their current van (Pepsi, <http://www.refresheverything.com/movingforward>, June 2010):

*Trolinger and New River House apartments serve a senior population with very low incomes. Opened in 1981, it offers safe and affordable housing to seniors and people requiring accessible apartments ... Transportation is vital for residents to get to doctor's appointments and shopping. Unfortunately, most of these residents no longer drive or do not have a car. In addition 54% of all independent living units at Warm Hearth Village are HUD subsidized apartments for low income elderly and disabled individuals, the Trolinger and New River House apartments. Residents living in these apartments have an average income of \$833 per month.*

*The average cost for a taxi to a doctor or shopping is \$30.00 round trip. Our bus service offers round trip transportation for \$5.00 making it imperative for most of our riders.*

**Residents**

As of 2006, the Village has over 500 residents (Pullin, 2006, p. 3) (600 as of 2010), and the majority of them would be eligible to ride regular transit service, if service was provided. The Kroontje Health Care Center houses 120 residents (Pullin, 2006, p. 2). Of the total number of residents, it is estimated that approximately 400 residents would be eligible to use paratransit services within the Village, assuming each person obtained the required approvals for such services.

**Employees**

Warm Hearth Village employs 213 full- and part-time employees. Warm Hearth Village was named 2006 Business of the Year by the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce (Blue Ridge Business Journal, 2006). Our understanding is that some employees have made requests to the County for transit services as well. Currently, no transportation services are provided for Warm Hearth Village employees. However the Village does provide incentive fuel cards (e.g., \$50) for some employees.

### *Current Warm Hearth Transportation Services*

Warm Hearth Village does provide transportation services to its residents. According Kevin Price, the Transportation Coordinator for Warm Hearth, approximately 150 trips are completed per month involving approximately 80 unique riders. The schedule is as follows:

Monday & Friday, 9 AM – 1 PM: Blacksburg shopping/personal trips with set pick-up times;

Tuesday & Thursday, 9 AM – 5 PM: Doctor's and Hospital trips (e.g., Radford & Montgomery Regional Hospital);

Wednesday & Saturday, 9 AM – 1 PM: Christiansburg shopping/personal trips with set pick-up times.

Residents make reservations or requests by calling the housing office before leaving Warm Hearth. For appointments with unknown end times (e.g., doctor's appointments), the resident then calls when he or she is ready to be picked back up.

### *Cost and Vehicles*

The cost per ride at Warm Hearth is \$5.00. The vehicle used is a 14-passenger BOC (body on chassis) van (a E450 Ford Van with lift), which allows for one wheel chair and includes a high ceiling so that passengers can easily stand upright while entering or exiting the vehicle.

### *Operational trips & Budget*

According to a recent email from Executive Director, Ferne Moschella (dated 10/29/10):

- The Warm Hearth bus makes 8 scheduled trips per week – 1 each on M-W-F-S and 2 each on T-Th.
- We have 40 hours of driver time per week.
- Special trips (dinners, etc.) are not counted in these numbers and are typically offered 2-4 times a month.
- We've had sponsors in the past that have assisted with vehicle replacement, but nothing on a regular basis.
- The transportation services Operating budget for FY2011 included:
  - Salaries and benefits - \$37,000
  - Vehicle-related exp - \$7,000
  - There is no capital budget

### **Blacksburg Transit Services**

Currently, Blacksburg Transit provides service to various locations in Montgomery County including services throughout Blacksburg and Virginia Tech. Example locations served in the county include additional Blacksburg locations such as the University Mall, the downtown area, the Corporate Research Center, the Blacksburg Square Shopping Center, the Industrial Park, and the Montgomery Regional Hospital. Blacksburg Transit provides several services including fixed route service, paratransit (access) service, and special services (e.g., for football or basketball games). Deviated-fixed route service is also discussed.

### *Fixed Route Service*

Fixed route service is characterized by transit vehicles, usually larger buses (e.g., 35 to 40 foot buses), which travel a specified route and stop at fixed locations on a specific fixed schedule (El Dorado County Transportation Commission, 2005). That is, fixed-route service is defined as transit services where vehicles run on regular, pre-determined, pre-scheduled routes, with no variation. Fixed-route services typically have printed schedules or timetables, and designated bus stops or shelters where passengers



board and get off the vehicle (Easter Seals, 1990). Riders utilize this service by simply traveling to a bus stop at the appointed time. No pre-arrangement or reservation is necessary.

### *Paratransit Service*

Paratransit (short for “parallel transit”), or dial-a-ride service, is a curb-to-curb or door-to-door service comparable to taxi service, but often with a shared ride component. Paratransit service is designed to pick up and drop off people at the locations they request within the operating range of the system. Like taxis, rides must be pre-arranged and scheduled. Paratransit vehicles do not follow a fixed-route, but travel throughout the community transporting passengers according to their specific requests.

This service is sometimes also referred to as demand-response service. According to (Easter Seals, 1990), demand-response service is transit service that allows individual passengers to request transportation from a specific location to another specific location at a certain time.

Like buses, rides may be shared by many different people (El Dorado County Transportation Commission, 2005). Paratransit service is more flexible than fixed-route, but more structured than the use of private vehicles (Easter Seals, 1990). Paratransit most often refers to wheelchair-accessible, demand-response van service and includes the following services:

- Complimentary Paratransit: Paratransit service that is required as part of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to compliment, or serve in addition to, already available fixed-route transit service. ADA Complimentary paratransit services are only required in communities that offer fixed-route service and must meet a series of standards to ensure they are indeed comparable to fixed-route services. Keep in mind that paratransit in areas without fixed-route service is not ADA complimentary, and so not paratransit regulated by the ADA (Easter Seals, 1990).
- Curb-to-Curb Service: A common class of paratransit services in which the transit vehicle picks up and lets off passengers at the curb or driveway in front of their home or destination. In curb-to-curb service the driver does not assist the passenger along walks or steps to the door of the home or other destination.
- Door-to-Door Service: A form of paratransit service that includes passenger assistance between the vehicle and the door of the passenger's home or other destination. A higher level of service than curb-to-curb, yet not as specialized as "door-through-door" service (where the driver actually provides assistance into and out of the home or destination).

For paratransit, smaller transit vehicles, such as vans or body on chassis (BOC) vehicles are used. Body on chassis vehicles are available in various sizes, with seating capacities ranging from twelve to thirty passengers sometimes with dual rear wheels. They also offer more interior space, which is often necessary for lift equipment, and for wheelchair stations. Some BOC vehicles have transit-type folding doors and low steps for ease of entry (DOTPA, 1988). For the BT, Access Service is limited to those who qualify (i.e., an application with letter from a medical doctor is required), and only services areas within the Blacksburg town limits.

### *Special Services*

Blacksburg Transit also provides special services for Virginia Tech football games including with additional paratransit shuttle service, service for basketball games, etc., generally via subcontract. Throughout the year the BT also offers special service for:

- Wilderness Trail Festival (Christiansburg only) – fare free for local festival.
- Forth of July Shuttles – 4 shuttles provide service from Perry Street to Aquatic Center on Patrick Henry Drive

- Christmas Store Shuttles – One BOC van services the Christmas Store in downtown Christiansburg
- VT Orientation – 4-5 shuttles provide service from Lane Stadium to Squires for incoming freshmen and transfer students (24,955 passengers for July 2008)
- VT Football - 29 shuttles provide service from Tom’s Creek Road, Main Street, Hethwood, Blacksburg Middle School and Blacksburg High School (there are 6 to 7 games per year).

### *Deviated Fixed Route*

The following is not a service currently provided by the BT within the Town of Blacksburg. In November 2009, deviated fixed routes were launched in Christiansburg (The Shopper Express and the Explorer). Deviated fixed route transit service is a hybrid of fixed route and paratransit service. This type of service has a basic underlying route that includes a few specific points with specific arrival times, like a fixed route service. However, between those specific points, the bus can deviate off the route a limited distance (usually up to  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile) to pick up and drop off passengers at locations they request, like a dial-a-ride system. People may board the bus at the fixed stops without prior arrangement. If a pick-up is needed off-route, a request must be called in to the dispatcher. Most deviated fixed route services are operated in small communities or rural areas that seek to fulfill the needs of a variety of transit users within a single system (El Dorado County Transportation Commission, 2005).

According to Easter Seals (1990), deviated fixed-route is a mix of fixed-route and demand-response services. While a bus or van passes along fixed stops and keeps to a timetable, the bus or van can leave its course between two stops to go to a specific location on demand. Deviated fixed-route typically serves passengers with disabilities who cannot access the fixed-route stop.

### **Blacksburg Routes Near Warm Hearth**

There are three BT routes that currently service areas near Warm Hearth. The **Two Town Trolley Blacksburg** (TTT-B) loop provides year-round service from select Blacksburg locations on the Virginia Tech campus and along Prices Fork Road, to the Montgomery Regional Hospital, and to the New River Valley Mall in Christiansburg from 12:15 PM to 6 PM, Sunday through Thursday, with late night service on Friday and Saturday nights.

The **Morning Hospital Connector** provides service from VT's Burruss Hall arriving at the Hospital as follows: Monday, Wednesday, Friday at 7 AM, 9 AM, and 11:15 AM; Tuesday and Thursday at 7 AM, 9:30 AM, and 11:15 AM. The **CRC/Hospital** route provides hourly, weekday service to the hospital between 7:10 AM and 6:20 PM.

The **Corporate Research Center (CRC) Shuttle** provides service between the VT Drillfield and the CRC from 7:15 AM to 9:45 PM and does not service the hospital.

### **Christiansburg Routes Near Warm Hearth**

There are three BT routes that currently that service Christiansburg (besides the TTT-B): The **Explorer** serves Christiansburg’s Downtown Central Business District and surrounding neighborhoods Mon.-Fri. from 7:00 AM to 4:50 PM.

The **Shopper Express** serves the commercial areas near the intersection of Route 460 Business and Peppers Ferry Road Friday and Saturday from 11:45 AM to 6:15 PM.

The **Go Anywhere! Christiansburg** route is a call-ahead service and will provide service from any place in Christiansburg to any destination within Christiansburg. Same day reservations are accepted as space is available. Service is Mon.-Thurs, 7 AM to 6 PM, Friday, 7 AM to 10 PM, and Saturday 8 AM to 11 PM.

**BT Access Services**

Blacksburg Transit's Access service provides accessible paratransit service for persons who cannot use the Blacksburg fixed route bus system because of a temporary or permanent disability. This service only provides transportation to eligible passengers, whom may request trips to any location within the Blacksburg town limits.

To schedule a trip, participants call BT during business hours (8 am - 6 pm), Monday through Friday. Requests can be made 14 days in advance with as little as 1 day's notice. Participants are advised to allow extra time when planning a trip in case the van makes additional stops for other riders. To be eligible for paratransit service, the application must be completed and approved (by a medical doctor and BT) before riding paratransit. On an annual basis BT Access provides service to approximately 14,000 passengers.

*Limitations of the routes near Warm Hearth*

In all, BT offers 11 routes within the Town of Blacksburg. No BT routes currently serve areas outside the town limits of Blacksburg or Christiansburg, and no service is currently provided to other areas of Montgomery County. Limits of the routes also include:

- TTT-B
  - Provides services only once per hour
  - Most stops are limited to those surrounding the Virginia Tech campus
  - Weekday and Sunday hours are limited to 12 noon to 6:00 PM
  - Late night service is provided for Friday and Saturday only
- Morning Hospital Connector
  - No Weekend Service
  - No service during the summer or winter breaks
  - Service is limited to 3 trips per day
  - No service after 11:15 AM
- The CRC/Hospital route
  - Provides services only once per hour
  - No weekend service is provided
- The Explorer
  - No evening service.
  - No weekend service.
- The Shopper Express
  - No service Sunday to Thursday
  - No early morning service
- The Go Anywhere! Christiansburg service
  - No late night services on weeknights
- BT Access Services
  - Only provides service within the Blacksburg Town limits
  - Provided only for persons who cannot use the fixed route bus system because of a disability.

**Other concerns**

- Getting to a bus stop from Warm Hearth
- Transfers between Christiansburg and Blacksburg
- Deviations requests
- Denials (e.g., to hospital)

## References

Blue Ridge Business Journal (2006). Business digest. December 18, 2006. Available on-line at:  
<http://www.bizjournal.com/content/article.php?id=387>

DOTPA (1988). Handbook for Purchasing a Small Transit Vehicle. Department of Transportation, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Available at: <http://ntl.bts.gov/DOCS/STV.html>

Easter Seals (1990). Easter Seals Project ACTION. You Can Really Go Places - An Easter Seals Project ACTION Brochure. Washington, DC. Available online at  
<http://projectaction.easterseals.com/site/DocServer/02GI1.txt?docID=3195>

El Dorado County Transportation Commission (2005). 2025 Regional Transportation Plan – Chapter 7- Transit. Available on-line at [http://www.edctc.org/pdf/non%20agenda%20pdf/RTP/ch7\\_Transit.pdf](http://www.edctc.org/pdf/non%20agenda%20pdf/RTP/ch7_Transit.pdf) (or RTP page at [http://www.edctc.org/\\_rtp.htm](http://www.edctc.org/_rtp.htm))

PepsiCo, Inc. (June 2010). Provide handicap accessible transportation for lower income seniors: Trolinger and New River House Apartments. Application at  
<http://www.refresheverything.com/movingforward>.

Pullin, B. (2006). Embers – Warm Hearth Village newsletter. Summer 06 edition. Available at:  
<http://www.retire.org/pdfs/Summer%202006%20embers.pdf>

**Appendix D: Feasibility Study Request Letter from Montgomery County to MPO****OFFICE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATION  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY**

L. Carol Edmonds, Interim County Administrator

755 ROANOKE STREET, SUITE 2E, CHRISTIANSBURG, VIRGINIA 24073-3181

April 10, 2009

Dan Brugh, Executive Director  
Blacksburg/Christiansburg/Montgomery Area MPO  
755 Roanoke Street  
Christiansburg, VA 24073

Re: Warm Hearth Village Area Transit Services

Dear Dan:

This letter is to request the MPO to conduct a feasibility study regarding the provision of transit services to the Warm Hearth Village area.

I understand from Fern Moschella, President and CEO of Warm Hearth Village, that one of Warm Hearth's strategic initiatives is to expand transportation services to the Warm Hearth Village area. This effort is being coordinated with Rebecca Martin, Director of Blacksburg Transit. I also understand that funding is available for conducting the study and there is no cost to the County.

Thank you for your assistance. I look forward to receiving the results of this study.

Sincerely,



L. Carol Edmonds  
Interim County Administrator

LCE/jk

cc: Fern Moschella, President & CEO Warm Hearth Village  
Rebecca Martin, Director Blacksburg Transit

## Appendix E: Warm Hearth Survey Cover Letter



## M E M O

TO: All Warm Hearth Village Residents and Employees  
FROM: Ferne L. Moschella, President and CEO  
SUBJ: Blacksburg Transit Survey  
DATE: January 8, 2010

Many of you are aware that one of Warm Hearth Village's strategic goals is to enhance and expand resident and employee access to transportation services. Toward this end, we have been engaged in discussions with Blacksburg Transit and Montgomery County regarding the provision of public transportation services to our community.

An essential part of this process is gathering input from our stakeholders. In order to understand what you consider to be Warm Hearth's most pressing transportation needs, we ask that you to take a moment to complete the attached survey. The information that you provide will assist us in our efforts to develop a public transportation service that will be used regularly by the greatest number of residents and employees.

Please drop your completed survey in one of the collection boxes at Karr Activity Center, Showalter Center (front desk) and the Kroontje Center (front desk), by no later than **Friday, January 15, 2010**.

If you need assistance completing the survey, or if you have any questions, please feel free to attend an informational session with Blacksburg Transit representatives at Carson Library (New River House), on one of the two following dates:

- Tuesday January 12 at 2 p.m.
- Wednesday January 13 at 2 p.m.

Following completion of the surveys, Blacksburg Transit will continue their efforts to gather input by conducting two focus groups with stakeholders, as follows:

- Tuesday January 19 at 2 p.m.
- Wednesday January 20 at 2 p.m.

Both focus group sessions will be held at Carson Library (New River House). Interested individuals are encouraged to attend one of these sessions.

Thank you for your ongoing support of Warm Hearth Village, and for your input into the development of a public transportation service for our community. Please feel free to contact me at 443-3407, [fernem@warmhearth.org](mailto:fernem@warmhearth.org), if you have any questions.

**Appendix F: Warm Hearth Survey**



**WARM HEARTH TRANSPORTATION SURVEY**

Improve transportation to Blacksburg,  
Christiansburg, and Montgomery County



**PLEASE COMPLETE THIS TRANSIT SURVEY**

Blacksburg Transit (BT) is surveying Warm Hearth to understand needs, as part of a regional transportation plan. Please turn in surveys by January 15. All responses are confidential. For questions, contact Robbie Hickerson at 552-2419 or Erik Olsen (BT) at 443-7100, ext. 2601.

**1. Please indicate your status:**  (A) Resident or  (B) Staff

**2. Please indicate your age:**

- (A) 18-24     (B) 25-44     (C) 45-59     (D) 60-69
- (E) 70-79     (F) 80-89     (G) 90+

**3. What is your gender?**

- (A) Male     (B) Female

**4. Do you drive an automobile or other vehicle?**

- (A) Yes     (B) No

**5a. If a RESIDENT, please check the area indicating where you live:**

- (A) Krootje Health Care Center     (B) Showalter Center
- (C) Dogwood Circle     (D) Oakland Square     (E) Hollyhill Place
- (F) Woodside Terrace     (G) Hawthorne Ridge     (H) Woods Edge
- (I) New River House     (J) Trolinger House

**GO TO QUESTION 7**

**5b. If STAFF, please check the area indicating where you live:**

- (A) Blacksburg     (B) Christiansburg     (C) Dublin     (D) Elliston
- (E) Fairlawn     (F) Floyd     (G) Newport     (H) Radford
- (I) Riner     (J) Roanoke     (K) Salem
- (L) Other (write in: \_\_\_\_\_)

**6. IF STAFF, list the nearest major intersection to your home (e.g., Main St. & 4<sup>th</sup> Ave.)**

**7. What is your current primary mode of transportation to access work, school, shopping, medical appointments, and other life activities?**

- (A) Drive myself     (B) Ride with family or friend     (C) Bicycle
- (D) Walk     (E) Taxi     (F) Hired Driver
- (G) Warm Hearth Transportation services     (H) Blacksburg Transit
- (I) New River Valley Community Services (Community Transit)
- (J) Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**8. Potential transportation services may include service within the Village and/or to connect to other areas. Do you think there is a need a public transportation service for Warm Hearth residents and staff?**

- (A) Yes     (B) No    If no, why not? \_\_\_\_\_

**9. How often would you use this service if it was available and met your needs?**

- (A) Less than one time per Month     (B) 1-3 Times per Month     (C) 1-3 Times per Week     (D) 4-7 Times per Week

**(Please complete other side)**



**10. Please rate how important service to each location/area is for you:**

(A) Downtown Blacksburg Area

(1) Very Important    (2) Somewhat Important    (3) Not Really Important

(B) First and Main Area, Blacksburg

(1) Very Important    (2) Somewhat Important    (3) Not Really Important

(C) University Mall Area, Blacksburg

(1) Very Important    (2) Somewhat Important    (3) Not Really Important

(D) Montgomery Regional Hospital Area (and/or nearby medical offices)

(1) Very Important    (2) Somewhat Important    (3) Not Really Important

(E) Shopping area at Pepper’s Ferry (e.g., New River Valley Mall, Walmart etc.)

(1) Very Important    (2) Somewhat Important    (3) Not Really Important

(F) Walmart (Christiansburg)

(1) Very Important    (2) Somewhat Important    (3) Not Really Important

(G) Downtown Christiansburg Area (Courthouse, doctor’s, etc.)

(1) Very Important    (2) Somewhat Important    (3) Not Really Important

(H) Other medical/municipality areas (Write-in: \_\_\_\_\_)

(1) Very Important    (2) Somewhat Important    (3) Not Really Important

(I) Other shopping centers/major stores (Write-in: \_\_\_\_\_)

(1) Very Important    (2) Somewhat Important    (3) Not Really Important

(J) Any other Location (Write-in: \_\_\_\_\_)

(1) Very Important    (2) Somewhat Important    (3) Not Really Important

**11. How likely is it that you would ride a public bus that services the Warm Hearth area?**

(A) Very likely    (B) Somewhat likely    (C) Somewhat unlikely    (D) Not Likely

**12. What days of the week should services operate? (Check all that apply)**

(A) Mon.    (B) Tues.    (C) Wed.    (D) Thurs.    (E) Fri.    (F) Sat.    (G) Sun.

**13. What time of day (e.g., 8:00 a.m.) should services operate to be convenient?**

**(Complete for only those days you would use public transit services)**

(A) Mon.   (B) Tues.   (C) Wed.   (D) Thurs.   (E) Fri.   (F) Sat.   (G) Sun.

Start (1) \_\_\_:\_\_\_ (1) \_\_\_:\_\_\_ (1) \_\_\_:\_\_\_ (1) \_\_\_:\_\_\_ (1) \_\_\_:\_\_\_ (1) \_\_\_:\_\_\_ (1) \_\_\_:\_\_\_

End (2) \_\_\_:\_\_\_ (2) \_\_\_:\_\_\_ (2) \_\_\_:\_\_\_ (2) \_\_\_:\_\_\_ (2) \_\_\_:\_\_\_ (2) \_\_\_:\_\_\_ (2) \_\_\_:\_\_\_

**14. Each week, where do you travel to the most? Indicate the location, nearest major intersection, and the town of your 3 most frequently visited places (e.g., Kroger, S. Main Street, Blacksburg).**

Location Name	Major Intersection	Town/City

**15. What comments do you have about public transportation for or near Warm Hearth?**

---

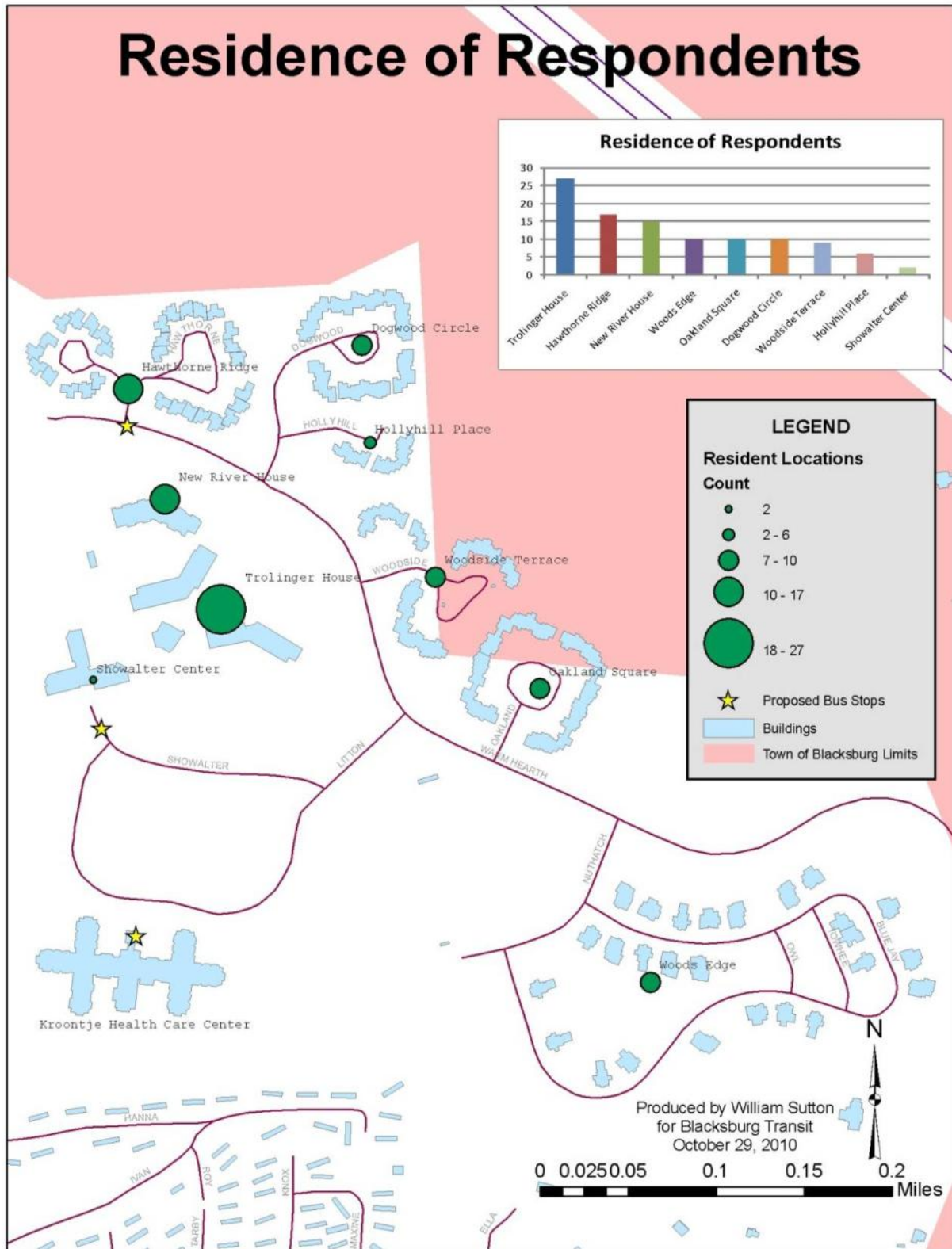


---



---

Appendix G: Warm Hearth Survey Respondents - Counts for Resident Locations



**Appendix H: Resident and Staff Open-Ended Comments from Survey**

## Warm Hearth Survey Open-Ended Comments regarding BT service

Very necessary
We need it
Very necessary, especially for residents that can't drive
Using would depend on how I feel about not driving all the time
Residents of Warm Hearth have needed public transit for a long time, and are looking forward to the independence it will bring
Christiansburg
Public transportation is greatly needed
I still drive
Very much needed – for residents and the environment
I think it will be a great service that will help our residents
I have been wondering why this hasn't been here before. I would use this bus service often. \$0.50 a ride is a real bargain
I may not need it as much as others – I think it's a very good idea
Better times – Better fares
Where driving is an issue. For older folks, freedom to “get places” restores dignity and greatly increases quality of life.
Preferably shop. Also some kind of schedule which could movies on afternoon schedule in downtown Christiansburg (No mention has been made to entertainment – and dining spots in close location
Schedule on every hour, on every ½ hour at a stop for pick up? How long til' we get this? Will it pickup at our doors?
21 Townhouse residents are residents of the Town of Blacksburg. Clarify eligibility for BT ACCESS (Handicapped)
I do not need public transportation at the present time but can foresee the need in 3-5 years.
Very much needed for residents and staff that don't have the option to drive
It is an important need for those who do not drive or have access to an automobile
Not needed by us at the present time
Be nice when you need to go
To go off premises
At this time, I do not need it. However, many do, I have been trying to help – e.g. carry residents to Blacksburg Library
In the future (Q11)
It would be very nice to have
I can assume increase in use in the future (Q09)
Not likely as long as I drive (Q11)
No special preference – perhaps one evening should we go to a movie at NRV or Lyric (Q13)
I hope the needs of those without adequate transportation will have the solution to their needs met
Life overall
I think this is a good idea for the residents that do not drive. There will come a time when I will not be able to drive
It would be a blessing if we have the BT. I would go out more and attend more activities.

It would be a great benefit to the people here at Warm Hearth
Even though we don't need this service now, when we get older and can't drive ourselves, we would use the service to go to doctors, shopping, etc.
A necessity
It was needed years ago, vital for non-drivers
As I get older and will not be able to drive myself I will need more transportation to shop, go to doctors office, dentist, as well as the library
We need it badly
A great asset
I think it is a great idea. I personally would be thankful for public transportation – BT
I would definitely use it when I can no longer drive myself
I am sure it could be beneficial to quite a number of people
There is a great need for it!
I believe that service to the village is extremely important. Especially para-transit. Many families would like to have their loved ones who are wheelchair transport come to church, home, or go shopping. This service is vital to the quality of life throughout the village, especially Kroontje Healthcare Center.
Are currently unavailable
I live too far away
It might help people to give up driving, while still allowing some independence
I believe that BT would be very much appreciated and used in the Warm Hearth Village area
Would like to be able to ride from downtown Blacksburg to visit my father at Showalter at least 2 days a week
I believe there is a need for it at Warm Hearth. I don't need it at this time but may in the future
Shop or browse! Thank you for this survey!
I can't walk without assistance of my Rollator. It would give us more freedom and sense of independence
As of right now I'm still driving, but who knows what the future might bring. If there will be a need I would take the bus
It would be extremely important for those without cars to get to shopping centers etc.
I don't need it now but I am sure it will be important for me in the future
Flexible (Q13)
I think it's important for everyone
Would be helpful for older drivers not comfortable driving longer distances from Warm Hearth
Some would like Sunday transportation to church
Have husband to take me
None as long as my husband is here (Q09)
Would have to be in Warm Hearth – Couldn't walk to adjacent areas for transportation
I'm sure I will need it someday, not needed by me at this time
Probably would be an increase in quality of residents life
It would be real plus and give residents a more feeling of independence
No way for me to know – At this time – What my needs for days or times would be. (Q13)
Have my own car – No personal need, but fine if enough want or need it. I am 81, needs may change!
As fuel prices increase and driving skills decrease it becomes important

It's time we had it
Three of my neighbors have had to stop driving. Each year, more Warm Hearth residents will have to stop driving. Taxis Stink!
Important for mobile people
Would eventually use but not at present
I think it would benefit residents greatly
Depending on routes and schedule (Q09)
There should be parking at Warm Hearth for bus riders
Convenient to many people
With Limits (Q04)
Wheelchair friendly. Would there be a need to transfer? How often would bus run? Would pickup be at each building?
Hope it works out!
For people with canes or walkers getting to the K Center is difficult. Getting to the village center when completed will be very hard for us.
Should cut need for Warm Hearth bus service.
Public transit is always an asset, hard to say when we will need it. It should be available. Cost is an issue
Would be limited use to residents of townhomes but more useful for those who are less independent
Compared to the cost of riding the bus
Worth evaluating need for services
But I limit the miles I drive (Q04)
May increase with time (Q11)
Noon with return in afternoon (Q13)
This area is entirely too populated not to have public transit.

**Appendix I: Resident Focus Groups Results Warm Hearth Survey (with summary table)**

**Warm Hearth Resident Focus Group – April 28, 2010**  
**Questions and Responses**

- 1. What are the reasons for transit at Warm Hearth?**
  - i. Unable to drive. ●●●
  - ii. Limitations of current service – more flexibility. ●●●
  - iii. Getting to church on Sunday. ●
  - iv. Knowledge that the current BT service is valuable. ●●●
  - v. Reluctance to drive.
  - vi. People often put off moving to WH because of lack of transit access.
  - vii. BT Access – Great service – Access in WH? ●●
- 2. What would it take to switch to transit while you're still driving?**
  - i. High gas prices.
  - ii. New BT service to WH on a regular basis. ●●
  - iii. Many currently use WH service – only means of transportation – some use 2, 3, 4 times/week.
  - iv. Ability to not worry about parking. ●●
  - v. Independence
- 3. How would you improve or expand upon the current Warm Hearth service?**

**Complaints?**

  - i. Destinations.
  - ii. Hours.
  - iii. Sunday service. ●
  - iv. Grew up with bus service.
  - v. Evenings/Afternoons. ●●●
  - vi. Need for scheduled bus service – ability to plan day around schedule. ●●●
- 4. Willingness to switch your grocery store?**
  - i. Need to change buying habits, but yes. ●
  - ii. Need for door to door service – accessibility (deviations)
  - iii. Walker storage on fixed route?
- 5. Need for service to special events? Which ones?**
  - i. VT – music, sports, concerts, retiree's luncheon. ●●●●●●
  - ii. Sports club – daytime.
  - iii. AARP Meetings
  - iv. The Lyric ●●
  - v. Inn at VT
- 6. Is Friday the day you desire service the most? If not, when? If you had one other day, which one?**
  - i. No preference.
  - ii. Tuesday – Senior discounts. ●●●●
- 7. How important is a bus shelter to you?**
  - i. Pick up at buildings important – if not, shelters (for individual living)  
●●●●
  - ii. Very important at WH. ●



**8. What services or equipment do you desire in a bus service?**

- i. Wheelchair accessibility.
- ii. Transfers – not a problem as long as timed well and covered shelter. ●●●
- iii. Wheelchairs on WH bus – not enough to use for transfers – policy issue of wheelchair spots/cancellations. ●●●
- iv. Training/tours.

**9. How long would you want to be away from home on a transit trip?**

- i. 3-4 hours for an event (Football game) ●
- ii. Trip time must be factored in.
- iii. 5-6 hours fine (movie, lunch, shop)
- iv. Regular Schedule ●

**10. What is the maximum one-way fare you would accept?**

- i. \$5 is what is currently paid for WH service.
- ii. \$0.50 for fixed route ●
- iii. \$5 is too high ●●●●●
- iv. \$2-3 for round trip ●●

**11. How important would a pre-paid trip be to you (e.g. bus pass)? ●**

**Comments: Shuttle to Hospital to connect to fixed routes?**

● Each dot indicated a “vote” from each focus group participant. Each person received 8 stickers (dots). Participants were instructed to place them on those issues they thought were of highest priority. This exercise was completed after each of the questions was discussed during the focus group.

Summary Table of Issues Voted upon by **Resident** Focus Group Participants

<b>Top Issues - Residents</b>	<b># Votes</b>
Need service for special events - VT, music events, concerts, retiree's luncheon	6
One-way fare of \$5 is too high	5
Besides Friday, what is next service day desired? Tuesday senior discounts	4
Bus stops - need to be at buildings	4
Reasons for transit - unable to drive	3
Reasons for transit - limits of current service	3
Reasons for transit - value of BT services	3
Improvements for current Warm Hearth transportation - evenings/afternoons	3
Improvements for current Warm Hearth transportation - need regular schedule	3
Bus stop transfers - not a problem if well timed and covered	3
Need more wheelchair spots & new policy for reservations	3
Need service for special events - The Lyric	2
Reasons for transit - Access/paratransit	2
Reasons for drivers to switch to transit - new, regular service	2
Reasons for drivers to switch to transit - no need to park	2
One-way fare should be \$2 to 3	2
Reasons for transit - getting to church	1
Improvements for current Warm Hearth transportation - Sunday service	1
Willing to change grocery store	1
Bus stops - bus shelters	1
Would travel 3-4 hours away from home (e.g., football game)	1
Want a regular transit bus schedule	1
One-way fare should be \$0.50	1
Bus pass/pre-paid would be important	1

## **Appendix J: Staff Focus Group Results**

**Warm Hearth Staff Focus Group – July 29, 2010**  
**Questions and Responses**

- 1. What are some reasons for staff to have transit at Warm Hearth?**
  - i. Way to get to and from work ••
  - ii. Save gas •••••••• (10)
  - iii. Inter-building travel
- 2. What do you know about our current system?**
  - a. **Would you like to receive training?**
    - i. Para-transit
    - ii. Schedules •••
    - iii. Weather announcements ••••
    - iv. Christiansburg •••
- 3. For those of you who live in Blacksburg or Christiansburg, what would it take to switch to transit now?**
  - i. Costs •••••
  - ii. Time •••••
  - iii. Location of stop ••
  - iv. Connection to Warm Hearth
- 4. What is the maximum one-way fare you would pay?**
  - i. The current \$2.50 •
  - ii. Interest in monthly pass ••••
- 5. How important would it be to have a Warm Hearth vehicle for staff to use if they take a bus to work?**
  - i. Mini van for staff
    1. Concerns about being sent home early or working overtime
- 6. When are most of the staff shifts starting/ending?**
  - i. 1 at 6 am
  - ii. 5 at 7 am
  - iii. 1 at 8 am
- 7. Is there a need for staff to have transportation between buildings? (e.g. , if we had a service)**
  - i. Inter-building shuttle
- 8. Do you use or are you aware of Ride Solutions (car pooling service)? Would you like to receive more information about this?**
  - i. Yes •
- 9. What have you heard from residents about how best to improve the current Warm Hearth service?**
  - a. **What complaints or problems?**
    - i. Current van has only one wheelchair slot
    - ii. Shopping
    - iii. Appointments
    - iv. Independent Activity
    - v. More choices (Time and day)
    - vi. Other transportation options
    - vii. Transportation to the hospital ••••

viii. All of the above ..... (13)

**10. They survey indicated Friday was the most important day for bus service for residents. If there was an additional day of service, what day would you pick for residents?**

- i. Tuesday (discounts) .....
- ii. Around the first of the month (Social Security Checks)
- iii. Weekends (Events in Bburg or Cburg)
- iv. End of the month (Newsletter arrives)
- v. All of the above •

**11. What services or equipment are important for residents on the bus (wheelchair accessibility, etc.)?**

- i. Oxygen •
- ii. Pets •
- iii. Boarding/Bag help .....
- iv. All of the above ••

• Each dot indicated a “vote” from each focus group participant. Each person received 8 stickers (dots). Participants were instructed to place them on those issues they thought were of highest priority. This exercise was completed after each of the questions was discussed during the focus group.

Summary Table of Issues Voted upon by Staff Focus Group Participants

Top Issues - Staff	Votes
Complaints re. current Warm Hearth services (for residents) - numerous reasons	13
Reasons for staff to have transit - save gas money	10
For Blacksburg/Christiansburg residents - reasons to ride transit now - costs	6
For Blacksburg/Christiansburg residents - reasons to ride transit now - time	5
Second most popular day for bus service - Tuesdays	5
Need training on BT bus system - weather announcements	4
Interest in monthly pass	4
Complaints re. current Warm Hearth services (for residents) - getting to hospitals	4
Services/equipment needed for residents - Boarding/help with bags	4
Need training on BT bus system - schedules	3
Need training on BT bus system - Chrstiansburg service	3
Reasons for staff to have transit - get to and from work	2
For Blacksburg/Christiansburg residents - reasons to ride transit now - stop location	2
Services/equipment needed for residents - numerous reasons	2
Max one-way fare willing to pay - \$2.50	1
Want info re. car pooling/Ride Solutions	1
Second most popular day for bus service - numerous reasons	1
Services/equipment needed for residents - Oxygen	1
Services/equipment needed for residents - Pets	1