



Public Transportation Consolidation Study

Final Report

Prepared for:



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Prepared By:



Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Previous Studies.....	1
Existing Conditions.....	2
Routes and Schedules	2
Operation and Performance Characteristics	5
Assets	7
Finances	8
Governance.....	9
Transit Propensity Index	9
Opportunities for Coordination and Efficiency.....	11
Internal Opportunities to Improve Efficiency	11
Opportunities to Improve Customer Service	12
Financial Opportunities and Risks.....	13
Public Input	14
Consolidation Concepts	16
Conclusions	17

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Introduction

The City of Corning Public Transportation Consolidation Study is sponsored by the City and Steuben County to explore potential consolidation of their respective public transit systems. The goal is to identify redundancies and inefficiencies in the operations and administration of the two systems and determine whether consolidation would address these while reallocating resources to improve service frequencies and better serve its customers. This report will allow local leaders and stakeholders to evaluate the benefits and costs associated with consolidating public transportation services objectively.

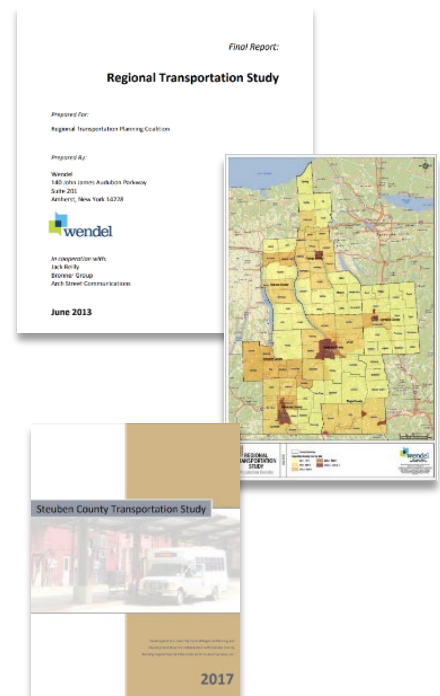
The City of Corning is a regional urban center that provides employment, services, and housing options for residents and visitors. Transit services are currently provided by the City which operates the Corning-Erwin Area Transit System (CEATS) as well as the County, which operates Steuben Transit. While each entity serves a distinct set of customers, there are several similarities between the two systems including funding sources and operating contracts. Recent studies have indicated that due to these similarities, there may be potential benefits to consolidating the two systems, with the goal of improving efficiencies, reducing overhead costs, and enhancing mobility options for residents and visitors within the City and surrounding region. Consolidating the systems may also allow for the allocation of dedicated personnel resources for better oversight and planning of transit operations.

This study will examine CEATS and Steuben Transit operations, assets, finances, and governance to inform the potential for consolidation. Based on the analysis, this study will provide the City and County with a roadmap to guide future steps towards consolidation.

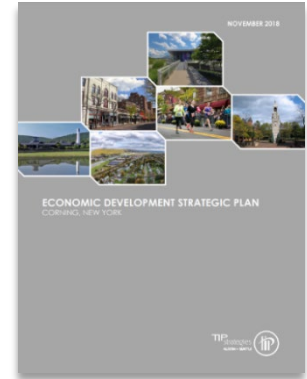
PREVIOUS STUDIES

There are three relevant studies conducted in the past ten years. In 2013, the *Regional Transportation Study* (RTS) developed by Wendel created a strategic plan to address transportation infrastructure, systems, and/or operational improvements and enhancements to accommodate projected needs. The RTS study area included the counties of Seneca, Cayuga, Cortland, Schuyler, Tompkins, Chemung, and Tioga and investigated the organizational management needed to seamlessly move between systems without creating a regional entity.

In 2017, the *Steuben County Transportation Study* identified concerns with aging in place and provided recommendations for improving transportation. The study administered an existing conditions assessment and led public input efforts. The recommendations yielded from the efforts included an additional study to account for ridership data, as well as improvements to the system itself including a streamlined payment system and designing a consolidated advertising and marketing strategy. This study also recommended evaluating various structural options for possible county-wide consolidation including seeing if Local Government Efficiency funds through New York State Department of State could help fund a feasibility study.



The City of Corning Economic Development Strategic Plan was completed in 2018 and serves as a roadmap for economic development for the next ten years. The study emphasized the importance of transportation and infrastructure for business growth and recommended working with Steuben and Chemung Counties to evaluate the potential to combine the City's municipal bus system with the two counties' public transportation systems to form a single, region-wide transit agency.



Existing Conditions

An existing conditions assessment was performed, the results of which provide a high-level overview of the CEATS and Steuben Transit systems in order to identify strengths and weaknesses of each operation. The assessment included a review of transit operating characteristics, route alignments and timetables, and ridership metrics for each transit system, as well as a countywide assessment of demographic and land use factors that impact transit operations and demand.

ROUTES AND SCHEDULES

In general, Steuben Transit and CEATS routes serve unique markets, with little overlap in route alignments. Transfers between systems are provided at the Corning Transportation Center, with both systems providing connections to additional transportation hubs in the area, such as the Corning Transit Center for regional bus services including Coach USA and Trailways, and the Chemung County Transportation Center in Elmira. The following section summarizes the existing routes and schedules for each system.

Steuben Transit provides fixed route weekday bus service to Steuben County with route deviation up to $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from a fixed route as shown in Figure 1.



FIGURE 1 – STEUBEN TRANSIT SYSTEM MAP

Bath-Corning Route 1 provides travel between the Village of Bath and City of Corning via NY Route 415. Route 1 generally operates on a 90 minute headway from 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. It is noted that there are two trips in the morning and two trips in the evening from and to (respectively) between Corning and the Chemung County Transit Center since buses are stored in a facility in Elmira.

Village of Bath Route 2 is a local circulator route in the Village of Bath. This route generally operates on a 120 minute headway from 7:15 a.m. to 6:10 p.m. It is noted that Route 2 operates on a 60 minute cycle and is interlined (operated with the same vehicle and Bus Operator) with Route 3.

Hammondsport Route 3 provides travel between the Village of Bath and the Village of Hammondsport via NY Route 54. This route operates on a 120 minute headway from 6:15 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. and is interlined with Route 2.

CEATS operates fixed route weekday bus service with route deviation up to $\frac{3}{4}$ mile within the Corning-Erwin area, including routes that connect the area to neighboring towns and villages, such as Painted Post and Gang Mills, as shown in Figure 2.

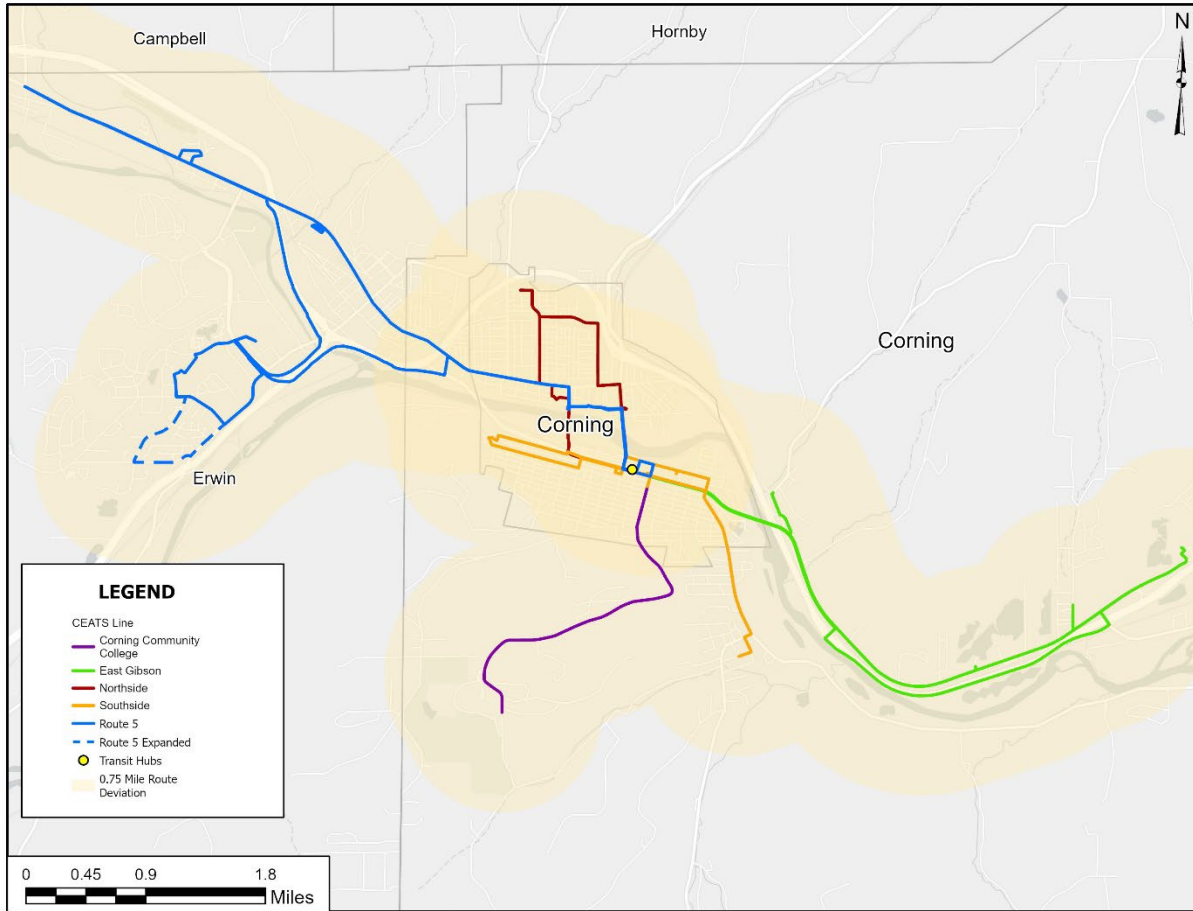


FIGURE 2 – CEATS SYSTEM MAP

Community College Route 1 provides service between the Corning Transit Center and Corning Community College via Chemung Street and Spencer Hills Road. This route generally operates on a 60 minute headway from 7:05 a.m. to 5:10 p.m. It is noted that Route 1 operates on a 25-minute cycle and is interlined with Route 2.

East Corning/Gibson Route 2 provides service between the Corning Transit Center and Guthrie Corning Hospital via Denison Parkway E. and E. Corning Road. This route generally operates on a 60 minute headway from 8:00 a.m. to 4:12 p.m. and operates on a 35-minute cycle to interline with Route 1.

Northside Route 3 operates a clockwise loop to provide service between the Corning Transit Center and areas north of the Chemung River. This route operates on a 70 minute headway from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. It is noted that Route 3 operates on a 35-minute cycle and is interlined with Route 4.

Southside Route 4 provides service between the Corning Transit Center and South Corning via Denison Parkway and Park Ave. This route operates on a 70 minute headway from 7:35 a.m. to 5:45 p.m. Route 4 also operates on a 35-minute cycle and is interlined with Route 3.

Cooper Plains/Gang Mills/Painted Post Route 5 provides service between Cooper Plains and the Corning Transit Center via Gang Mills and Painted Post. This route operates on a 60 minute headway from 6:35 a.m. to 6:40 p.m.

OPERATION AND PERFORMANCE CHARACTERISTICS

Data submitted to the National Transit Database (NTD) by Steuben Transit and CEATS was analyzed from 2019 through 2021 to assess performance trends prior to, during, and after the Covid-19 pandemic.

System Ridership

Figure 3 illustrates total annual ridership over the three year period on each system. The chart shows that CEATS ridership is greater than Steuben Transit ridership, with approximately twice as many rides in 2019. While both systems have seen a decrease in ridership since 2019, Steuben Transit ridership was relatively consistent between 2020 to 2021 as compared to CEATS ridership which experienced a 32% decrease over the same period.

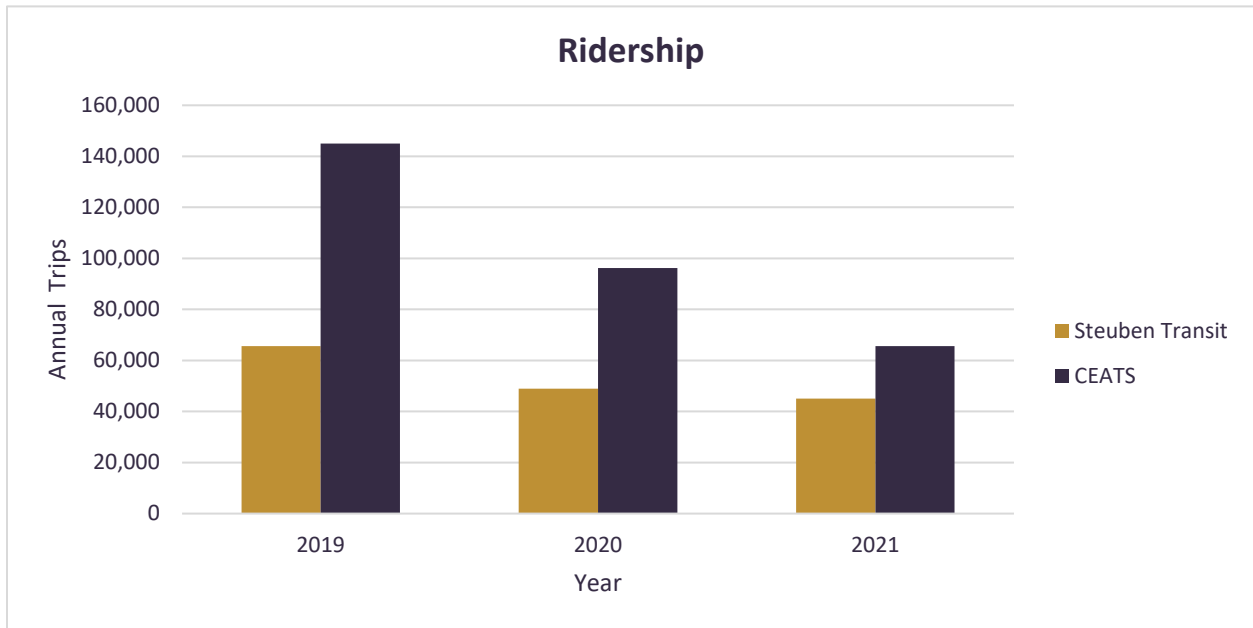


FIGURE 3 – RIDERSHIP COMPARISON

Vehicle Revenue

Figure 4 shows the amount of service provided by each system in terms of revenue miles while Figure 5 illustrates service provided in terms of revenue hours. The figures show that in 2020, Steuben Transit decreased the amount of service provided (both in terms of hours and miles) while CEATS maintained consistent service levels throughout the pandemic.

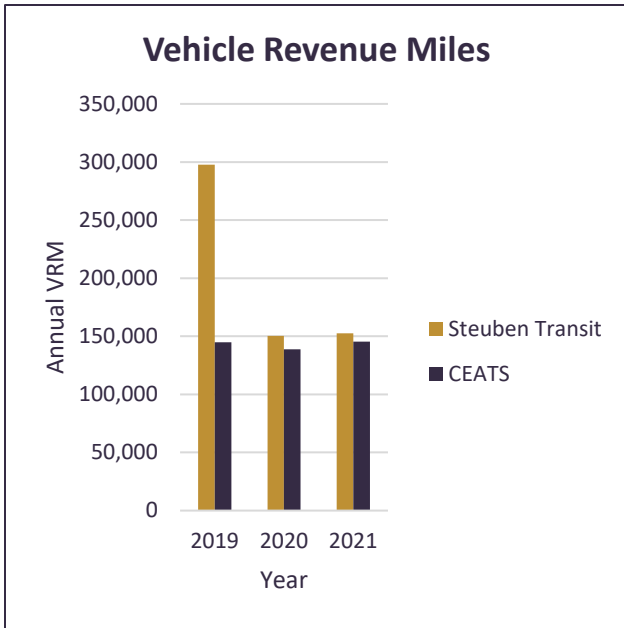


FIGURE4 – VEHICLE REVENUE MILES

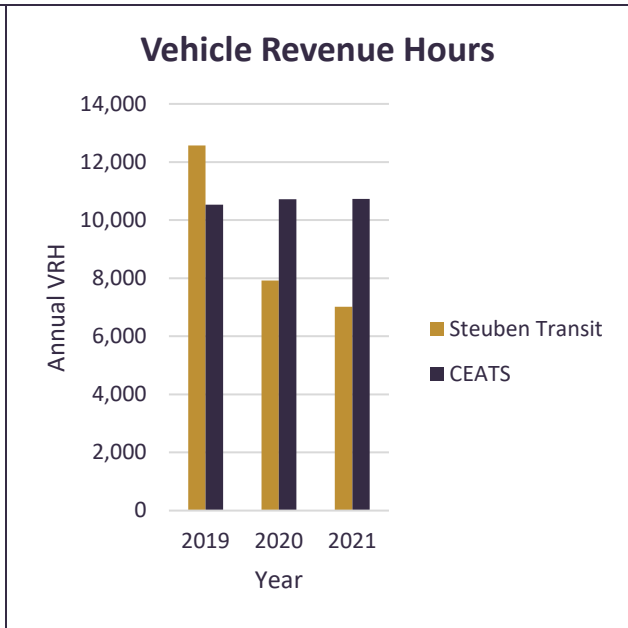


FIGURE 5 – VEHICLE REVENUE HOURS

The efficiency of transit service can be measured in cost per vehicle revenue mile as shown in Figure 6 and cost per vehicle revenue hour as shown in Figure 7.

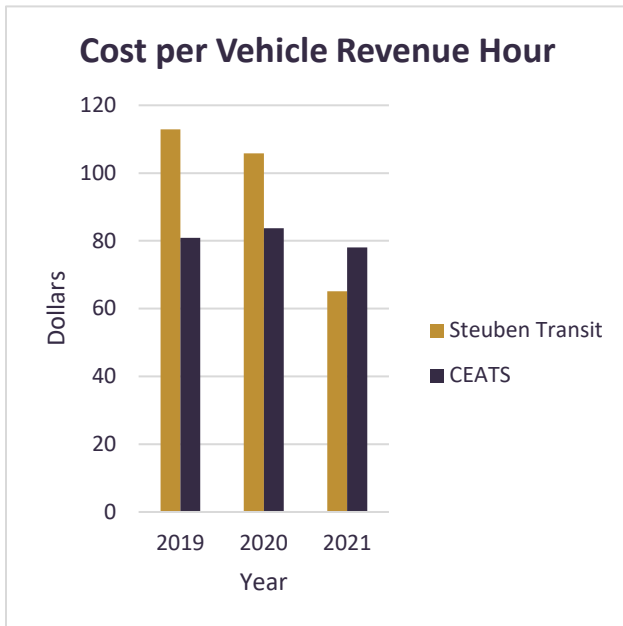


FIGURE 6 – COST PER VEHICLE REVENUE HOUR

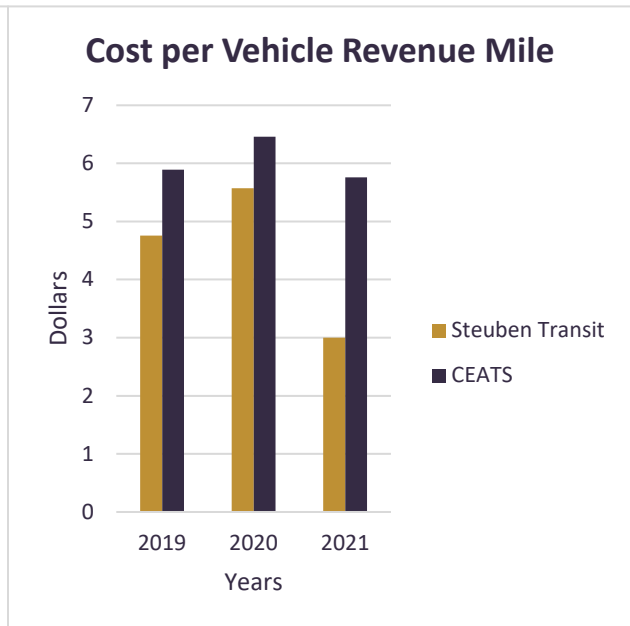


FIGURE 7 – COST PER VEHICLE REVENUE MILE

A review of operating cost data provided found that CEATS has a higher operating cost per mile than does Steuben Transit. This is typical of services operating in an urban environment that benefits from shorter travel distances and higher concentrations of customers over the course of a typical day. The data also shows that both systems experienced a decrease in efficiency on a per mile basis during 2020 due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. However, while CEATS efficiency returned to pre-pandemic conditions in 2021, Steuben Transit efficiency increased by approximately 25 percent compared to pre-pandemic conditions. This change was realized due to the reduction in overall revenue miles provided while ridership remained relatively stable. In terms of service hours, CEATS had a lower operating cost than Steuben Transit in 2019 and 2020, but the trend was reversed in 2021 where Steuben efficiency increased by nearly 50 percent of pre-pandemic conditions to surpass CEATS.

Service effectiveness measures overall system productivity in terms of trips per vehicle revenue mile as illustrated in Figure 8 and vehicle revenue hour as illustrated in Figure 9.

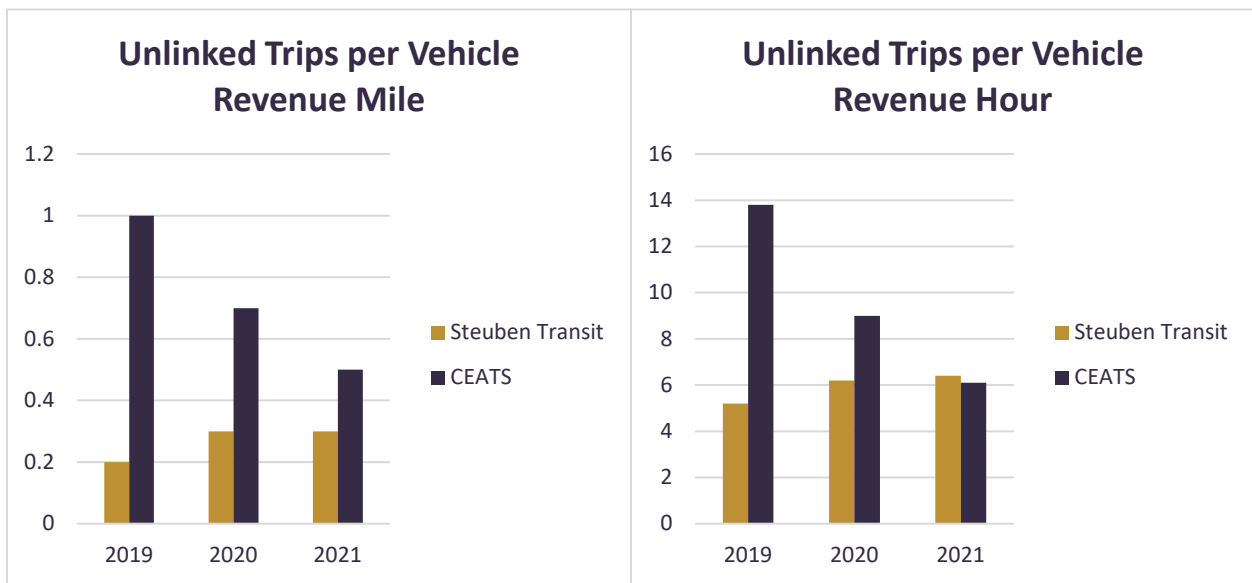


FIGURE 8 – TRIPS PER VEHICLE REVENUE MILE

FIGURE 9 – TRIPS PER VEHICLE REVENUE HOUR

The figures show that in general CEATS effectiveness has been declining since 2019 while Steuben Transit effectiveness has increased. In terms of distance, CEATS effectiveness surpasses Steuben Transit, due to the relatively short distances traveled within the City compared to countywide. Relative to service hours, Steuben Transit productivity surpassed CEATS productivity in 2021, likely due to the ability to transport the same number of customers while reducing service.

ASSETS

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) classifies transit assets into four categories: facilities, equipment, infrastructure, and rolling stock (i.e. vehicles). Of these categories, rolling stock is the primary group in which the City and County own assets. Specifically, the City owns five transit vehicles while the County owns three transit vehicles. Both the City and County lease these vehicles to First Transit for operation and maintenance. These vehicles are maintained and stored at a facility located in Elmira and owned by Chemung County. The buses are stored outdoors in a secure lot where they are fueled daily. Additionally, the City owns the Corning Transportation Center located on Denison Parkway which acts as a hub for CEATS, Steuben Transit, Chemung County Transit (C-Tran) and regional bus services including Coach USA/Shortline, Trailways, and OurBus.

FINANCES

Financial data provided by the City of Corning and Steuben County was assessed for the 2022 and 2023 fiscal years. The following tables summarize the overall operating budgets and revenue sources.

Table 1: Overall Agency Operating Budgets

Agency Operating Budget	2022	2023
CEATS	\$1,044,774	\$ 979,159
Steuben Transit	\$ 667,043	\$ 668,000

Table 2: CEATS Revenue Breakdown by Source

Revenue Source	2022 (In Dollars)	2023 (In Dollars)
STOA 18B	19,233	19,500
STOA Dedicated	245,039	246,000
Other Fed	128,000	16,246
Local Match	19,233	19,500
Fed 5311	111,000	113,500
Fares	32,153	33,849
Total Revenue	554,658	448,595

Table 3: Steuben Transit Revenue Breakdown by Source

Revenue Source	2022 (In Dollars)	2023 (In Dollars)
STOA 18B	17,042	17,200
STOA Dedicated	215,928	216,000
Other Fed	153,766	0
Local Match	0	135,492
Fed 5311	229,484	233,984
Fares	33,771	48,124
Total Revenue	649,991	650,800

One of the most important aspects of transit system management is understanding how to enable sustainable funding for programs. The funding programs listed for CEATS and Steuben County are

traditional and consistent based on how funding and resources are typically allocated in New York through the long term programs at the federal level. As communities grow, infrastructure is upgraded, and policies change, there are opportunities to partner and develop programs and services which can meet the changing needs of customers. Some of these opportunities are being initiated at the federal level where the current Surface Transportation Program IIJA has initiated several competitive funding and grant programs. Many options and alternatives and pilots can be developed through partnerships which are more local in nature and other opportunities such as competitive grants at the federal level.

As CEATS and Steuben consider program coordination, it will be important to understand if, or how, any changes to service funding might be considered.

GOVERNANCE

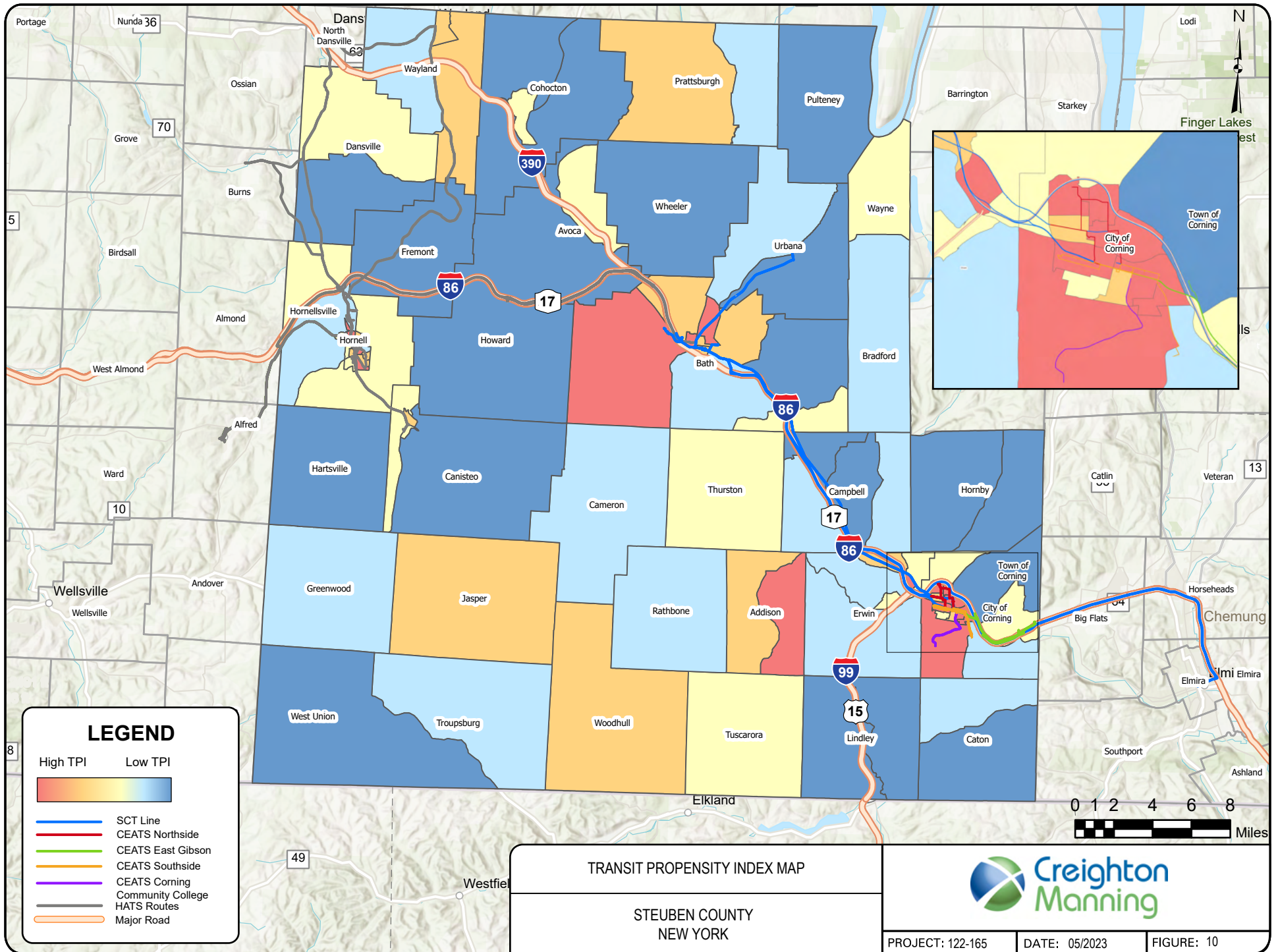
The City of Corning operates CEATS through an Operations & Maintenance (O&M) contract with First Transit. This contract is overseen by staff of the Planning Department in the City. The County of Steuben operates Steuben Public Transit also through a contract with First Transit. Planning staff of Steuben County oversee the operation of this contract. The route level planning and scheduling analysis is done by First Transit and decisions are made cooperatively.

The rules and regulations from a funding agency perspective are similar for each entity. On the federal side both entities are required to monitor and manage grant programs, projects, be in compliance with required federal clauses and reporting requirements. New York State Department of Transportation rules for grant recipients are also consistent for each entity.

Additionally, each entity coordinates regionally as part of the Steuben County Public Transit Human Services Coordinated Transportation Advisory Committee. As such, both Steuben Transit and CEATS likely have similar familiarity with transportation issues and opportunities in the region, including service and operations gaps affecting customers and communities. It is noted that Steuben County contracts for mobility management for the county through the Institute for Human Services which is a nonprofit organization that provides support and training to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and quality of transportation services offered in the Southern Tier.

TRANSIT PROPENSITY INDEX

Transit Propensity Index (TPI) is a measure of the likelihood that people in a given area will use public transit. The TPI determines ridership potential based on population density and additional demographic factors including race, income, age, density, and the availability of other transportation options. A TPI assessment was performed for Steuben County to identify areas with the greatest potential for public transit ridership in relation to the existing transit systems, and target investment in transit infrastructure and services accordingly. The TPI is illustrated on Figure X and shows that the highest levels of transit potential are in the City of Corning, Village of Bath, and City of Hornell. There are also pockets of density in Addison which could generate transit demand, although providing service to these outlying areas may be a challenge without having additional transit destinations on the way. It is noted that the analysis also indicates higher transit potential in the towns of Woodhull and Jasper, although this could be due to low vehicle ownership as a result of the local Amish population, which would likely not translate into transit ridership.

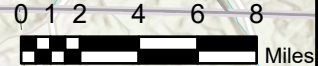


TRANSIT PROPENSITY INDEX MAP

STEUBEN COUNTY
NEW YORK



PROJECT: 122-165 DATE: 05/2023 FIGURE: 10



Opportunities for Coordination and Efficiency

Based on the assessment of existing conditions, consolidating CEATS and Steuben Transit operations, administration, governance, and finances is likely to result in opportunities to improve coordination, reduce overhead administration, and improve efficiency, as well as benefit existing and potential transit customers. The following sections explore opportunities from an internal perspective (i.e. those that would benefit the City and County) and an external viewpoint (i.e. those that would benefit the general public and transit customers).

INTERNAL OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY

Consolidating CEATS and Steuben Transit would likely provide opportunities to improve coordination and efficiency, resulting in benefits to the City and County (i.e. internal stakeholders). These include realization of improvements to operations and maintenance, reduction in overhead administration, and an increased potential for future facility consolidation and/or relocation.

Consolidating CEATS and Steuben Transit could result in operational efficiencies through changes to vehicle schedules and service. Specifically, while Steuben Transit Route 1 provides in service trips to and from Elmira (where the vehicles are stored) for the first and last trips of the day, CEATS vehicles destined to/from the storage facility are not in service. Regardless of consolidation, there is an opportunity to convert these deadhead trips to in service trips, providing additional service to/from Elmira. However, without consolidation, this change could result in duplicative service and would require additional coordination between the two agencies.

Consolidation would provide benefits to fleet resources by reducing the number of vehicles needed as spares. Specifically, CEATS currently owns five buses and operates three for daily service and Steuben Transit currently owns three buses and operates two for daily service, resulting in spare ratios of 40% and 33% for CEATS and Steuben Transit, respectively. By consolidating fleets, the same five buses operating daily would result in an overall spare ratio of 37%. The FTA recommends a spare ratio of 20% as best practice. The larger systems can support a smaller space ratio. Therefore, under a consolidated system, one additional bus could be used for service, or one fewer vehicle is needed to maintain an adequate spare ratio for a small fleet of approximately 25%.

A significant benefit of consolidation is reduced duplication of administrative efforts. Currently, City and County staff are performing similar functions including grant administration, system reporting, operations planning, and contract oversight for each individual system. Under a consolidated system, these functions could be performed once rather than twice, thus freeing staff resources for other tasks. Consolidation of personnel resources into a single department should also provide the opportunity to bring the responsibility for service planning and scheduling in-house by allocating dedicated staff resources to management of the consolidated system. While both the City and County Planning Departments currently lack expertise in transit planning and operations, a consolidated system with dedicated staff provides the opportunity to build these skills.

Another opportunity from consolidation is the potential to explore a transit maintenance and storage facility within Steuben County to serve both the County and City. Because both CEATS and Steuben Transit operate out of the same facility in Elmira, both systems are subject to longer non-revenue trips than would be incurred by a facility located within Steuben County. Further, under the current structure, it is unlikely that CEATS and Steuben Transit would receive federal funding for upgrades to the existing

facility that they do not own or for which they cannot demonstrate continuing control. As such, a transit facility could enable future service upgrades and expansions including fleet electrification. This facility could be a dedicated transit facility, or addition to an existing municipal owned site, although careful funding consideration would be required to ensure that transit funds serve transit funding. The need for this facility increases as additional services and connections are considered including potential consolidation with Hornell Area Transit or Corning Museum of Glass services or expansion to serve other large employers.

OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE CUSTOMER SERVICE

Consolidation of CEATS and Steuben Transit is also likely to result in benefits to existing and potential customers. These opportunities include improved bus service, a comprehensive countywide fare structure, elimination of non-free transfers, and a single point of customer information.

Relative to customer facing schedules, consolidating CEATS and Steuben Transit could result in increased service and reliability, as well as an opportunity to coordinate timed transfers at the Corning Transportation Center. Specifically, there is an opportunity to restructure service to eliminate overlap between CEATS Route 5 and Steuben Transit Route 1. This, combined with the potential to add one service vehicle by reducing the number of required spares, could result in increased frequency on existing routes, or the creation of a new route to increase coverage to the City and County. Additionally, consolidation could result in changes to the existing interlines to better balance running times and recovery times. Namely, the existing Steuben Transit routes currently operate with approximately 5% to 10% recovery, while CEATS routes operate with 20% to 30% recovery. Normally one would expect to see higher recovery ratios on longer routes, whereas the situation is reversed here. Therefore, consolidation could result in recoveries nearer 15% which is generally considered best practice for service reliability in locations without significant traffic congestion.

The above changes to frequency and recovery time resulting from consolidation would provide a particular benefit to CEATS Routes #3 and #4 which currently run on a 70-minute headway. Specifically, under a 70 minute headway, bus arrivals vary throughout the day, increasing by 10 minutes each hour. This in turn could create confusion for customers, as it requires detailed knowledge of the schedule. In contrast, under a consolidated system, there is the potential to operate these routes on a clock-face headway in which the bus arrives at the same time each hour, thus making the service more predictable and easier to ride.

In addition to service-related opportunities, customers could benefit from consolidation in terms of a comprehensive countywide fare structure and medium. Currently, customers of each system have the opportunity to purchase a cash fare or monthly pass. While cash fare customers are required to pay separate fares per boarding, monthly pass holders benefit by paying a flat rate regardless of frequency of use or transfer. Today, however, in order to transfer between CEATS and Steuben Transit, a customer would be required to have a monthly pass to each system. Under a consolidated system, these monthly pass holders would only need one pass, which could promote ridership. Further, consolidation provides the opportunity to explore new types of fare media including smart cards or app-based payment systems.

Another potential benefit of consolidation is the opportunity to develop a single point of customer facing information. Specifically, while CEATS and Steuben Transit currently have separate websites for

their service, both are maintained by First Transit and as such use a similar format and provide links to the corresponding site. Under a consolidated system, customer facing information such as schedules, maps, route detours, and other updates could be shared on a single site, eliminating the need for users of both systems to look for information in multiple locations.

FINANCIAL OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS

Consolidating two services, CEATS and Steuben Transit, to a single provider should offer economies of scale with regard to the administration and management of the services that would ultimately reduce the overhead costs associated with the service. An overall benefit might be to reduce funds and resources currently used for administration and management which might be able to be converted to operating dollars which benefit the public who are the customers of the services.

In addition, having a single provider also offers the opportunity to simplify other aspects such as fare and fare payment, simplified competing routes and route structure, consistent information with regard to brand and service identify, and a single point of access for information. Each of these customer related aspects will certainly add a significant amount of intrinsic value to the service and will ultimately provide the opportunity to gather new riders and access new markets.

The following list sets forth considerations for other financial related service impacts when considering such a change.

Staffing/personnel – There are staff related to both CEATS and Steuben Transit which might be impacted, including those with oversight and management responsibilities and any other departments or functions such as planning, payroll, taxes, finance, or DPW for example.

Capital assets related to transit service – Capital assets purchased with federal funding may require the development of a plan to dispose or transition any ownership. This would impact vehicles, any facility assets, or fareboxes.

Agreements with third parties entities – If other agreements, formal or informal, are in existence for CEATS or for Steuben Transit, these should be identified and any changes to service or other support should be communicated to these entities.

Outstanding FTA grant obligations – Any existing FTA grants will need to be evaluated for any contract change requirements.

Other legal or administrative processes which will need to be accommodated include:

- Existing or outstanding workers compensation
- Existing or outstanding Automobile and general liability claims
- Existing or outstanding environmental claims
- Any lease or agreement obligations

Public Input

While the above sections have taken a largely data-driven approach to assessing consolidation of transit services, it is equally important to consider input from the public regarding perceptions of the two systems and the potential benefits and drawbacks to consolidation. As such, a brief online survey was developed to gauge interest in potential consolidation. The survey was launched in February 2023 and remained open for an approximate two-month period during which over 90 responses were received. The following summarizes the results of the survey:

Of the survey respondents, about half are frequent transit riders (daily or weekly) with an additional 25 % riding occasionally and the remaining 25 % of respondents indicating that they are non-riders.

Shopping/Errands was cited as the most frequent trip purpose, followed by commuting to/from work and traveling to/from medical appointments.

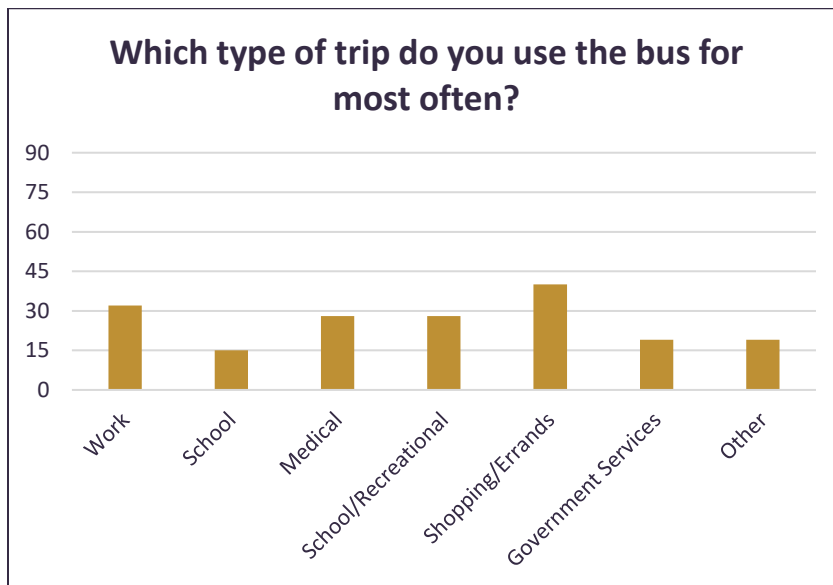


FIGURE 11 – SURVEY RESPONSES (TRIP PURPOSE)

The survey results indicated a high level of transfer activity by existing riders. Approximately 20 % of respondents indicate that they transfer between CEATS and Steuben Transit services. Likewise, 25 % indicate that they transfer to/from Elmira, while 20% transfer to/from Hornell. Other transfers include to/from Watkins Glen, Binghamton, Rochester, and Pennsylvania.

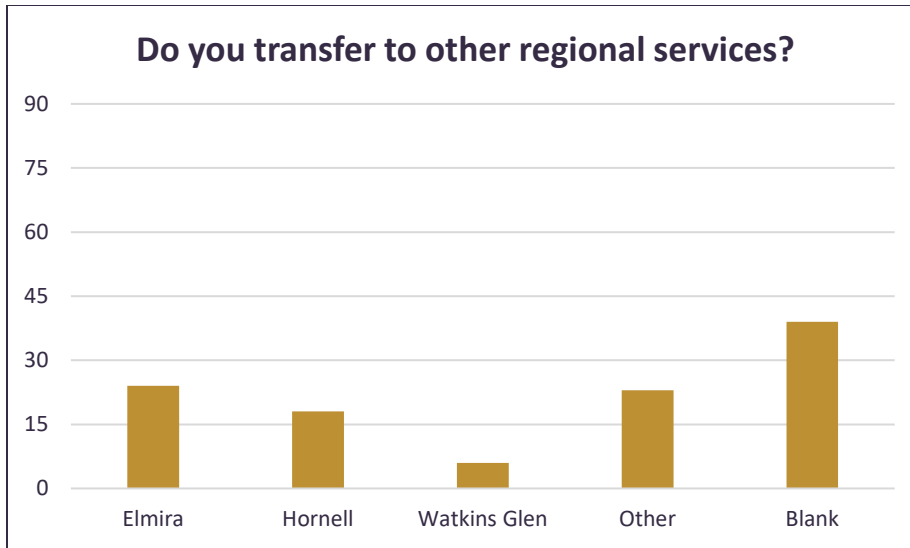


FIGURE 12 – SURVEY RESPONSES (TRANSFER OPPORTUNITIES)

Approximately 45 % of respondents indicated that consolidating CEATS and Steuben Transit would improve their transit experience, while 35 % indicated it would not and the remainder declined to answer this question. When asked how they came to this conclusion, respondents in favor of consolidation indicated that there would be benefits from a single pass/fare structure, reduced need for transfers, improved routes and frequency, and improved reliability and maintenance.

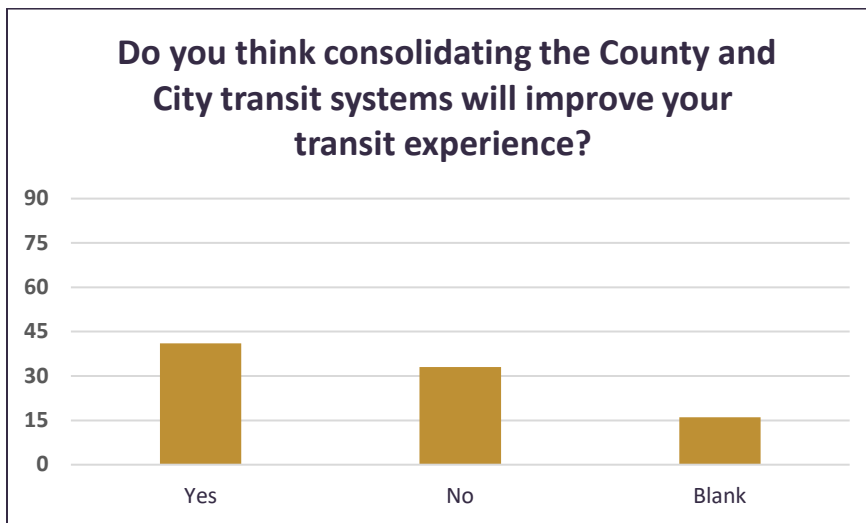


Figure 13 – Survey Responses (Perceived Benefits of Consolidation)

Approximately 45 % of respondents indicated that consolidating CEATS and Steuben Transit would result in drawbacks, while 35 % indicated that there would not be any drawbacks and the remainder declined to answer this question. When asked what drawbacks were foreseen, all of the responses focused on service related issues including fears over reduced service, eliminating routes, longer travel times, and the potential for increased delays. These sentiments were echoed by the Corning Community Food Pantry which indicated that future route planning efforts should ensure access to their sites.

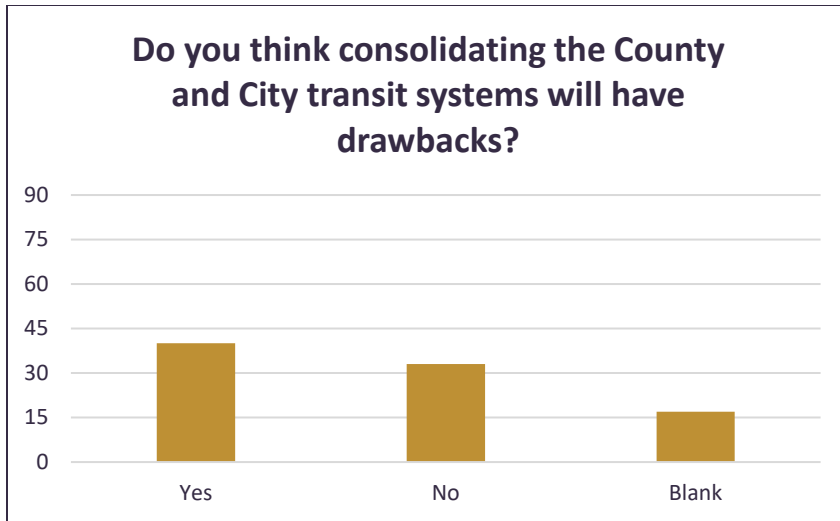


Figure 14 – Survey Responses (Perceived Drawbacks of Consolidation)

In addition to the overall responses on benefits and drawbacks, responses for these questions were isolated for respondents that indicated that they were frequent transit riders, since this group would likely be most impacted by consolidation, either positively or negatively. Review of the frequent rider responses indicates that existing riders are slightly more hesitant to support consolidation than the general public, with slightly more than half of these respondents identifying drawbacks.

Based on the results of the survey, public opinion on transit consolidation is generally evenly split. While existing riders may be hesitant to endorse consolidation, this hesitancy stems from potential service changes that would make travel more difficult for these users. Future steps towards consolidation should consider these riders and include additional outreach to address these concerns and identify how changes to service will impact existing riders.

Consolidation Concepts

The following consolidation concepts were developed based on the above assessment and public input. This section summarizes each of the concepts and provides a high level assessment of the potential benefits and drawbacks of each.

No Consolidation – Under this concept both CEATS and Steuben Transit would remain separate entities and continue to operate as they do currently. This option would maintain the status quo and provides little opportunity for improvement. As such, this option should only be considered if it is determined that there are significant drawbacks to consolidation and a partial or complete merger are deemed unfeasible.

Partial Consolidation – This concept proposes to consolidate the administrative functions currently provided by the City and County, while maintaining separate vehicle fleets, operations, and customer facing brands. Specifically, under this concept, it is envisioned that the County would assume the administrative role of managing the service contracts and grant funding, including changes to service plans. However, CEATS and Steuben Transit would remain separate entities in terms of operations, with each having their own contracts, funding sources, and reporting requirements. While this option would alleviate personnel burden on the City in terms of managing the local transit system, a partial consolidation lacks the efficiencies that could be achieved under a complete merger, such as eliminating the time-consuming duplicate efforts of contract management and reporting requirements.

Complete Merger – Under this concept CEATS and Steuben Transit would merge to form a single entity with the mission of providing public transit service to Steuben County. Since the City of Corning and Steuben County does not have the personnel resources to provide the attention need to a countywide service, it is anticipated that the merged service would be best managed by a regional organization, either existing or new, which would be supported by the City and Steuben County. Consolidating CEATS and Steuben Transit into a single entity would provide efficiencies by reducing duplicate contract management and grant administration, while providing the ability to pursue the service enhancements listed above.

Conclusions

A fundamental objective of this study was to evaluate the potential for consolidation of the CEATS and Steuben Transit systems and identify future steps towards implementation. Based on the above technical analyses, consolidation is likely to result in numerous benefits to internal operations and administration, as well as customer facing benefits in terms of consolidated fares and information as well as enhanced service. Therefore, it is recommended that the City and County work towards a complete merger of the two systems. The following outline provides a high-level implementation strategy to move towards consolidation:

Detailed Financial Assessment – The above assessment of existing finances and potential opportunities and risks of consolidation indicates that a complete merger of CEATS and Steuben Transit is likely feasible and will result in efficiencies to reduce cost and provide higher quality transit service. In order to further define these benefits, CEATS and Steuben Transit should explore a detailed financial assessment to quantify the potential savings or resources that would become available as a result of consolidation. Additionally, the financial assessment should explore methods of cost sharing between the City of Corning and Steuben County to ensure that the costs and benefits are distributed evenly.

FTA/NYS DOT Coordination – In order to merge the CEATS and Steuben Transit systems into a single entity, it will be important that the FTA and NYSDOT are included as key stakeholders. Consulting with these agencies early in the process can provide clarity on Federal and State requirements that will need to be addressed as consolidation progresses. Likewise, these agencies can serve as a resource to further guide consolidation and ensure success.

Transfer of Assets – A major part of the consolidation process will be to combine the existing CEATS and Steuben Transit assets into a single entity. This could be accomplished by transferring assets from CEATS directly to Steuben Transit, or creating an entirely new agency and transferring assets from both existing entities, and should be explored further in subsequent studies.

Service Plan Updates – As part of the consolidation process, new service plans should be developed to ensure that the consolidated system operates a comprehensive service and benefits from the efficiencies and cost savings identified above. This may include a complete system redesign based on operations and market analyses.

Title VI/Environmental Justice – Changes to the transit system must result in equitable outcomes. While the above assessment indicates that consolidation will result in higher levels of service and provide a net benefit to disadvantaged communities that rely on transit, a detailed Title VI assessment may be required to ensure that the benefits of consolidation are distributed equitably.

Continued Public Input – Based on the results of the public outreach conducted as part of this study, there is mixed opinion on transit consolidation. This indicates that additional public outreach may be required to educate the public about the benefits of consolidation, and identify and address any additional concerns and hesitations.

In addition to the above steps to progress a complete merger of the CEATS and Steuben Transit systems, it is also recommended that the City and County continue to explore the potential to create a regional transit agency that incorporates other providers currently operating service in the area. Specifically, this regional agency could result in improved service to/from and within Hornell that is currently operated by HATS as well as further consolidation with CTRAN that serves Elmira and Chemung County, or Schuyler County Transit that serves the villages of Montour Falls, Odessa, and Watkins Glenn, as well as regional connections to Ithaca and Tompkins County. Consolidation to a single regional agency could be modeled on other agencies within New York State including RTS (Regional Transit Service) that serves Monroe, Genesee, Livingston, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, and Wyoming Counties, or Centro that operates five divisions including Syracuse, Oswego, Auburn, Rome, and Utica.