

Transportation Gap Analysis

Ian Matthew Harrington in collaboration with The Nonprofit Alliance of Northeastern CT

Introduction

For the purposes of this gap analysis, “Transportation” as a term is used to express “Service Delivery.” Even the term “service” when considering the vast array of programs and resources administered by membership of The Nonprofit Alliance of Northeastern CT (“the membership” hereafter) comes in many shapes and shades, but we will use ‘service’ as a catch-all to describe ‘that which this member organization or that provides.’ “Meeting a need” is perhaps the term that best captures this process, but, for simplicity, “service” will stand as we confront the delivery thereof.

Whereas the principle model and method of service delivery involves having the service consumers in their many forms (students, patients, clients, etc.) (hereafter “the consumers”) come to a service center where their needs can be documented, processed, and met, on occasion other paradigms of bringing the service and the need together are already in use. Telemedicine, dispatch of shuttles and mobile dental offices, and construction of shelters all fit this alternative method of issuance of care, and so they too must be considered in assessing the current state and future of service delivery.

Part of looking at what is critical involves the faith that what has been developed for use as service delivery methodology leveraged best technology, practices, and thinking of the time when it was enacted. This exploration would be ill served to forget the wisdom of experience. The membership has a rich history of success both as a collective and considering the components, so that success may never be ignored when planning for the next level of fulfillment of the respective missions. It is the aspiration of this endeavor that additional methods of service delivery (new or hybrid) will be surfaced and developed to complement existing practices based on feasibility and ROI to improve output and effectiveness metrics.

All that said, there is much to investigate when looking to improve upon the good work done daily by the membership.

The purpose of this analysis will be to simply look at what exists for public transportation within the service area, and what geographies and populations likely could make significant use of the resources provided by the membership.

The questions asked in this analysis include:

- What is the current state of public transportation for consumers of the The Nonprofit Alliance of Northeastern CT?
 - What areas are served, not served well, and not served at all?
- What additional geographies of the residents of our service area are likely to be positively impacted by the programs offered by the constituent membership of the The

Nonprofit Alliance of Northeastern CT (specifically Eastconn and Access, since we have user data to map against the bus route)?

- How are we going to close the gap?

We start by considering those areas where residents may be experiencing a cost burden.

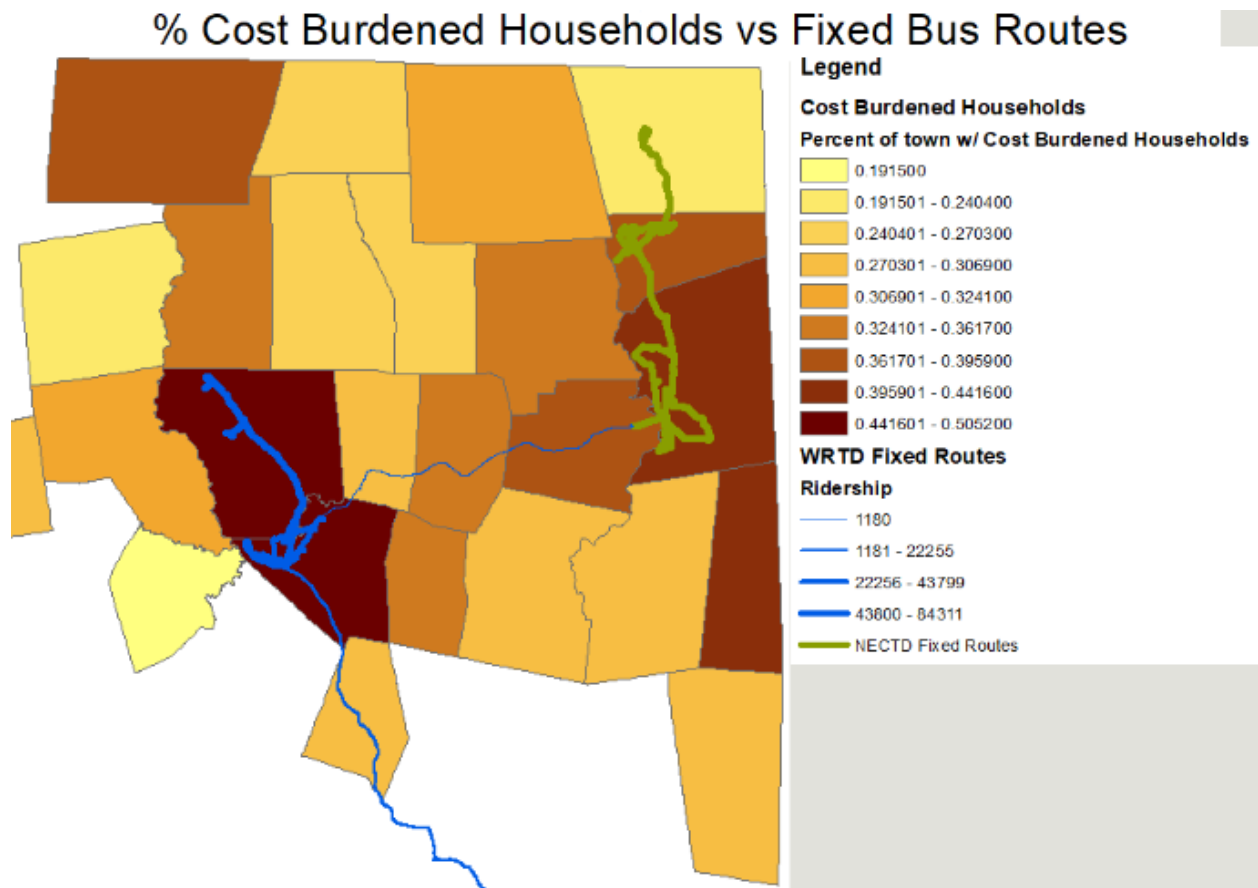


Figure 1.

The State of Care

As is plan looking at Figure 1, many towns in our service area are not even fortunate enough to have a WRTD route running through them. Sterling (the lowest right-most darkened area) is an area of decided need, but the bus does not touch it. Residents have shared that 'without a car you can't get to anything from here.' This perspective is unfortunate since statistics tell us that people living there are least likely to be able to purchase and maintain a vehicle due to the overall expense.

Similarly, Stafford (Upper, left-most) is marooned far from the bus routes of which a cost-burdened population might make strong use. The question of whether to develop a bus line

there is more than just a question of profitability for the transportation providers. The economic health of the area need be weighted into that algorithm, and perhaps some level of private-municipal partnership will get a solution up and running. Regardless of the origin, it is unlikely that the area's lot will improve if something is not done. And what does that cost us all?

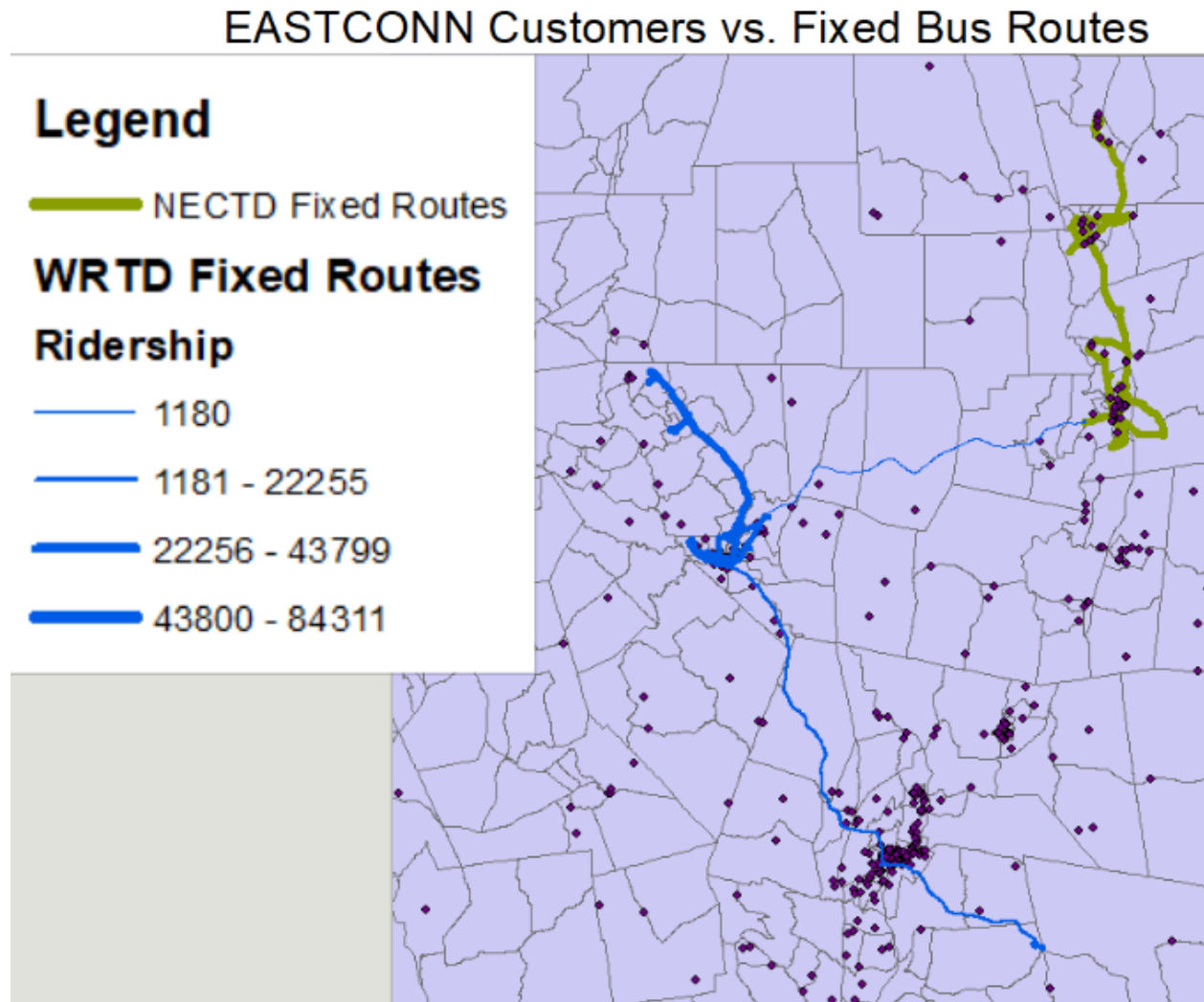


Figure 2.

Eastconn consumers are distributed across the region, a testament to the need for the services it provides. Notice the density shift as you move further from the bus lines. Surely, this is why the bus line runs in those areas: because expected ridership is higher. But it might also be true that those areas would provide lasting ridership if a line existed?

The Access Community Action Agency seems to have a very strong user base all along the WRTD routes, nearly without fail. Plainfield seems to be the one extreme exception, with upwards of 36 customers hailing from that town alone. It is outlandish to suggest that if more

people who would make use of Access's offerings (basic needs and energy assistance) could get an inexpensive and regular ride in, that they might also become ongoing customers?

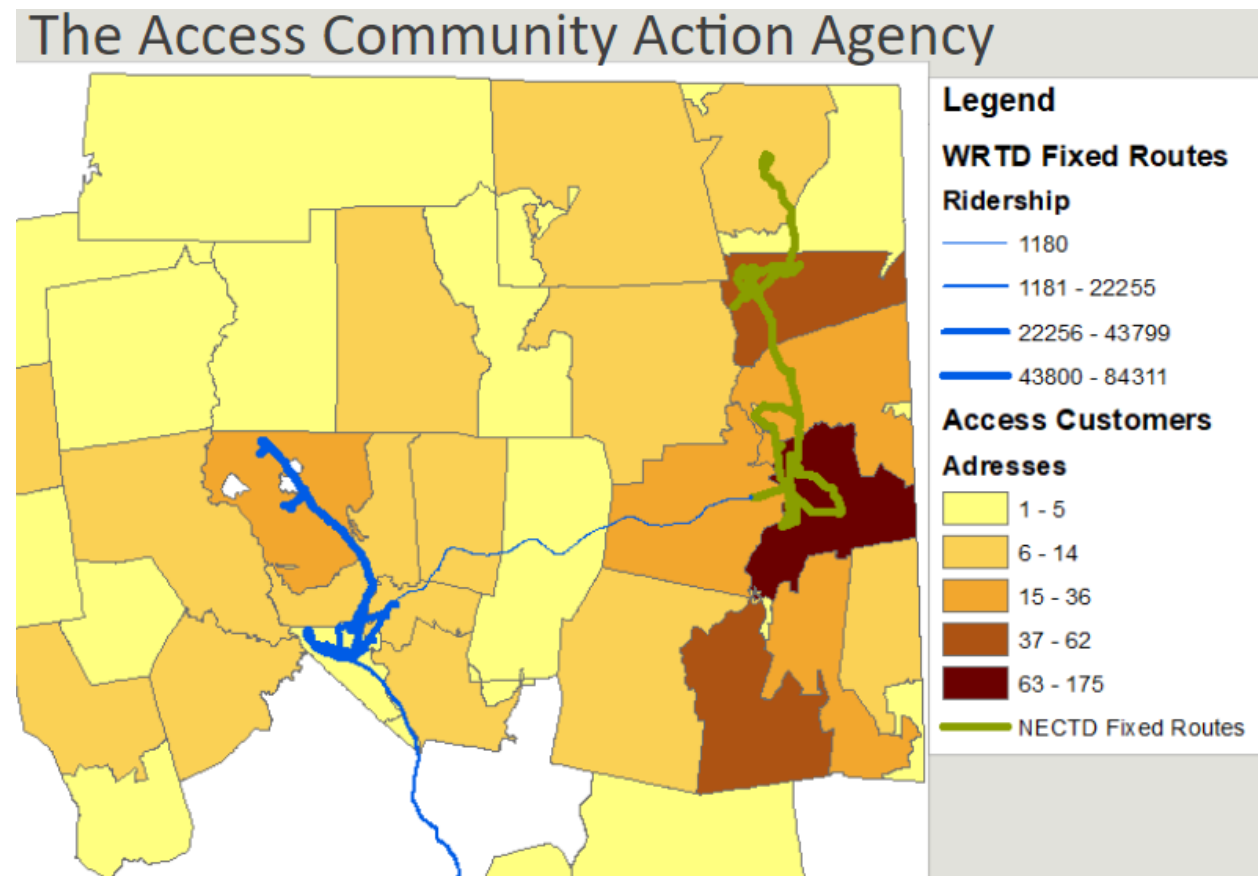


Figure 3.

Closing the Gap

It is all well to use anonymized and aggregated data to make bold statements about how to improve things, but there would only be an improvement if the population suddenly better able to access the service had an actual appetite for it, and would avail itself of all that is on offer.

The first, second, and third steps would have to involve customer discovery. What is the actually existing need in the area for what the membership has to give, or is there some other significant reason that can be found to entice town officials to sit with transportation providers and the membership to concoct a solution that is an impactful win-win-win for all stakeholders? Knowing where is but the first step in understanding whether and to what degree the membership can truly impact a new community in a way that the residents will enjoy for years to come.

Maybe developing a bus line to an area is the right move, but only engaging consumers will help the membership understand if some other variety of care would instead be optimal.