Central Connecticut State University

2013 Transportation Plan

Prepared by the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency

Acknowledgements

This transportation demand management plan was prepared by the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency (CCRPA) for the Central Connecticut State University (CCSU). For information about CCRPA, see Appendix C. Production of this plan would not have been possible without the support of CCSU staff, faculty, and students. The President's Advisory Committee on Environmental Sustainability, the Student Government Association, Facilities Management, and Residence Life were instrumental to its production. Numerous student groups offered advice, feedback, and a forum for addressing CCSU students.

This plan was prepared in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Transportation (including its participating agencies) and the Connecticut Department of Transportation. The opinions, findings, and conclusions expressed in this publication are those of the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency, and do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of CCSU, the Connecticut Department of Transportation, or the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Contact Information

Project Manager	Timothy Malone, Senior Planner
Mailing address	225 North Main Street, Suite 304, Bristol, CT 06010-4993
Telephone/fax	(860) 589-7820 ext. 154
Internet	http://ccrpa.org

Executive Summary

With over 12,000 students and 1,700 staff and faculty members, Central Connecticut State University is a major destination in Connecticut, and a major traffic generator. With such a large volume of traffic going to one location, it is a significant contributor to congestion and related pollution generation. These same facts also make it an ideal location to implement traffic and pollution reduction strategies.

This document is a plan for managing transportation demand. The underlying goal of the plan is to shift demand for transportation services from single occupancy vehicles (SOVs) to other forms of transportation, such as biking, walking, carpooling, buses, and trains. These modes of transportation are more environmentally friendly and place fewer demands on the university's, and the state's, physical infrastructure (such as roads and parking). Improving the balance among transportation modes will lower the overall costs associated with transportation at CCSU.

Background

The high rate of automobile commuting by students, faculty, and staff has negative consequences not only for them personally, but also for the university, the City of New Britain, and the region as a whole. These impacts include:

- Higher transportation costs for students and indebtedness for graduates
- Inability of low-income, disabled, and elderly students to access the university
- Higher levels of traffic congestion and related stress, lost time, and lost productivity
- Unpredictable travel times leading to late arrivals
- Use of real estate for parking rather than teaching, research, housing, and recreation
- Use of funds for parking rather than education
- Diminished campus appeal and attractiveness of the university to prospective students
- Higher levels of local air pollution
- Higher levels of water pollution due to impervious ground cover and surface runoff
- Greater prevalence of diseases related to poor air quality and sedentary lifestyles

Purpose

In the spring of 2011, as part of its transportation planning mandate for the Central Connecticut region, the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency (CCRPA) offered to study CCSU's transportation system and prepare a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Plan for CCSU at no cost to the university. TDM comprises a variety of strategies, from physical improvements to marketing and promotion efforts that seek to decrease usage of single-occupancy vehicles. TDM can involve both shifting the mode of transportation (from single-occupancy vehicles to other modes such as walking, biking, transit, and carpools) and decreasing the total demand for transportation (by reducing the length or number of trips).

Process

The planning process began in earnest during the Summer and Fall semesters of 2012. CCRPA staff met with administration officials and the President's Advisory Committee on Environmental Sustainability to develop a scope of work. Data collection began soon after. Public involvement in the process began soon after that, with a series of workshops and focus groups.

Initiatives started or assisted by CCRPA
Annual transportation survey
Introduction of car sharing (Hertz 24/7)
Introduction of UPass, an unlimited bus pass for students
Replacement of costly shuttle service bus passes
Creation of transportation information website
Creation of transportation information brochure
Mapping of walking paths
Creation of transportation information kiosk on campus

Table 1. List of initiatives CCRPA assisted with during this process

A number of studies, detailed in the second volume of this plan, were undertaken in support of this plan. A detailed parking utilization study was completed in the Fall 2012 semester in which every parking spot on campus was monitored for a two week period using customized software developed by CCRPA. Following that, a study of shuttle and bus ridership was also completed. CCRPA staff counted every passenger for every run of each bus or shuttle serving CCSU for a two week period. Android tablets with custom-written software were used to provide exact location information for each bus stop (since the bus routes do not currently have fixed stops). This data was then given to CTTRANSIT along with suggestions for improving the routes.

Walking and driving studies of the university area were also completed. Staff walked throughout campus and the surrounding neighborhood, taking note of safety and usability issues. Staff also added every walking path on campus to Google Maps so that accurate walking directions can be given in the CCSU area. Traffic and speed data was collected on all the rounds surrounding campus.

In addition to creating this plan, a number of initiatives were started, or given a final push during this process. They are listed in Table 1.

Goals

A series of focus groups and topic-specific meetings were held on campus during this planning process. Based on the concerns and desires expressed by participants, a series of goals was drafted to guide in the creation of policies and projects that are at the heart of this plan. From a larger set of goals, the list was consolidated to the following five goals:

1. Create an environment in and around CCSU that is safe for pedestrians and cyclists.
2. Encourage the use of public transportation and improve the reliability, usability, cost-effectiveness, and accessibility of public transit services.
3. Increase awareness of, and provide information on how to use, transportation options in and around campus.

Policies: list of actions
Assign or hire an individual to be the transportation coordinator
Survey students, faculty, and staff on an annual basis
Standardize class start times
Coordinate class schedules to better accommodate bus riders
Create and maintain a transportation information webpage
Assign a department to be in charge of the transportation information website
Update and distribute transportation brochure
Continue to promote the car share program

Table 2. Recommendations from the "Policies" section

4. Improve mobility and access to essential services for the resident campus population, especially those without automobiles.
5. Provide administrative support to policies and programs that encourage the efficient use of transportation resources and improve the campus transportation system (including parking).

Policies and Actions

This plan is designed to be easily implemented. It offers actions and policies that are divided into five sections: general policies, transit, parking, walking, and biking. These actions and policies have been carefully chosen for effect, cost, ease of implementation, and acceptance. They have also been designed so that they can be implemented by themselves, but will have greater impact when implemented as part of a broader strategy.

Policies

These general policies are designed to make all forms of transportation easier to use. They focus on providing information to students and employees, as well as ensuring that class schedules are conducive to a variety of transportation modes.

These policies lay the groundwork necessary for other, mode specific, policies and programs. They also provide support, in the form of staff time and data collection, to ensure that planning and implementation are continuous processes.

Highlighted projects

The largest change is to institutionalize transportation planning by creating a campus transportation coordinator position. This individual would be in charge of all transportation issues, including promotion of transit, biking, walking, and other alternatives to single occupancy vehicles. They would help maintain information displays and transportation websites. They would also seek out information on new initiatives and funding to implement them. The transportation coordinator would also be in charge of interfacing with students regarding transportation issues. They would be a single point of contact for students, faculty, and staff. They would play a crucial role in explaining, promoting, and getting buy-in for proposed transportation policies and programs.

After analyzing CCSU's needs, the administration may determine that a full-time transportation coordinator is overkill. In this case, a shared transportation coordinator should be hired in cooperation with one or more of the other CSUs. Significant efficiencies may result from this arrangement as policies can be replicated quickly across institutions and economies of scale may be realized in the procurement of goods and services. This should be done in consultation with the Board of Regents.

Transit

Transit is an important way for students, faculty, and staff to get to and from campus. Currently, it is an underutilized mode of transportation, though it shows great promise. The recommendations in this section provide steps that, if taken in parallel to the other recommendations in the plan, will result in greater transit use, and lower demands on automobile infrastructures such as roads and parking. Recommendations focus on lowering costs, increasing information, and installing supportive infrastructure.

Highlighted projects

The most important initiative related to transit is already underway: "fully fund the UPASS program". In the Spring of 2013, CCRPA facilitated a meeting between CCSU and CTTRANSIT. The result of the meeting was an agreement to implement the UPASS program at CCSU. This program provides interested students with an unlimited bus pass, good for travel on any of CTTRANSIT's regular, fixed-route, buses. The university will be charged $0.80 per ride (as opposed to the full fare price of $1.30), and students would pay a fixed fee per semester to obtain a swipe card. The maximum amount the university would be responsible for paying is $65,000 per year.

Transit: list of actions
Fully fund the UPASS program
Expand the UPASS program
Sell transit passes on campus
Continue to assess transit ridership
Install and maintain bus stop signs around campus
Install and maintain information displays at bus shelters
Install and maintain bus shelters around campus
Develop a drop-off point in front of the student center

Table 3. Recommendations from the "Transit" section

As of writing, the program is scheduled to begin in during the Fall 2013 semester, but funding arrangements are holding up implementation. The Student Government Association has expressed willingness to cover some of the cost, should the university be unwilling or unable to. The university should commit to funding it for at least five years so that students are able to count on it for the duration of their studies. The cost of funding it would pale in comparison to the cost of maintaining parking on campus. One structured parking spot costs between $20,000 and $30,000 to build; the cost of entire UPASS program is currently capped at $65,000 per year, or roughly two to three spots in a garage. Similarly, the cost of UPASS is much lower than if the university provided its own transit service. For example, CCSU was spending over

Parking: list of actions
Develop a revamped parking information website
Distribute parking information in orientation packets
Install walking information signs in parking garages
Create a visitor wayfinding system for parking lots/garages
Implement a two-tiered parking pass system
Increase parking enforcement with student labor
Charge visitors to park
Unbundle and make the parking fee optional

Table 4. Recommendations from the "Parking" section

$65,000 a year on one shuttle route that ran just four times a day; CTTRANSIT routes serve campus a combined 76 times a day.

Parking

Parking availability was the number one student complaint in the transportation survey. To better understand the nature of these complaints CCRPA conducted a study of parking availability. The results show that the overall supply of parking is not a problem, but that certain parking areas experience crowding while others are underutilized. Programs and policies should, therefore, attempt to better distribute

Figure 1. Map of parking availability by parking area

parking use across facilities. The recommendations in the parking section of this plan focus on using information and price signals to better distribute parking utilization.

Highlighted project: Implement a two-tiered parking pass system

People consistently cited parking availability as an issue during focus groups at CCSU; when presented with data showing that, at any given

time, roughly 1,000 spots are available, most people amended their complaint and noted that parking was not available *near* their classes. Indeed, as shown in Figure 1, most of the available parking is in areas located farther away from classes than the more popular garages and lots. This suggests that people spend a lot of time "cruising for parking" (the phenomenon where drivers circle repeatedly looking for the perfect parking spot) and that this is a major contributor to traffic and congestion.

A two-tiered parking pass system would reduce parking congestion while maintaining parking choice. Students would be separated into two groups and given two different parking passes. One pass would be restricted to Copernicus and Kaiser while the other would be unrestricted. Students with the restricted passes would proceed directly to Copernicus garage or Kaiser lot, reducing traffic in the garages and on surrounding roads. This system would help even out utilization, cutting down on congestion and freeing up parking closer to academic buildings.

To ensure success, the policy should be rolled out gradually. As a pilot, the "up the hill" dorms should be issued restricted passes. Parking space utilization should be monitored to ensure no adverse outcomes occur. Following this pilot program, the rest of the on-campus students should be added to the program. The parking situation should be closely monitored and tweaks should be made as necessary.

on surrounding roads. It would also avoid the pitfalls of having assigned parking lots, which could lead to certain garages being over capacity and others being under capacity.

Walking

While the majority of students are commuters, at least 20% of the student body lives on campus and a significant number live within walking

Walking: list of actions
Create a pedestrian wayfinding system
Update and maintain wayfinding system
Connect the sidewalk in front of the public safety building with the state-owned sidewalk on Fenn Road
Work with regional partners to address safety concerns on Fenn Road
Work with local partners to ensure sidewalks surrounding CCSU are well maintained
Develop a tree planting plan to provide shade along walking paths
Work with regional and local partners to study the potential for a "road diet" on Ella Grasso Boulevard/Eddy Glover Boulevard
Explore speed reduction options on Stanley Street

Table 5. Recommendations from the "Walking" section

distance. For these students, the most efficient and sustainable method of getting to campus is walking. The recommendations in this section focus on giving students information about where they can walk, and how long it will take. Some improvements to physical infrastructure are also suggested.

Highlighted project: Create a pedestrian wayfinding system

Helping people find their way on foot can help get people out of their cars. Current on-campus signage is directed toward drivers and is placed where drivers can see it (along the roads bordering the campus). Internal signage for pedestrians would help direct people to popular locations without getting in their cars, reducing incidents of people driving between parking areas.

A wayfinding system that includes information on walk times may also help encourage drivers to park in less congested areas. If drivers know that walking from the Copernicus garage to anywhere else on campus takes less than ten minutes, they may be less inclined to waste time looking for convenient parking spot.

A good pedestrian wayfinding system will have:

- A distinct design
- Posted signs for both directions of traffic

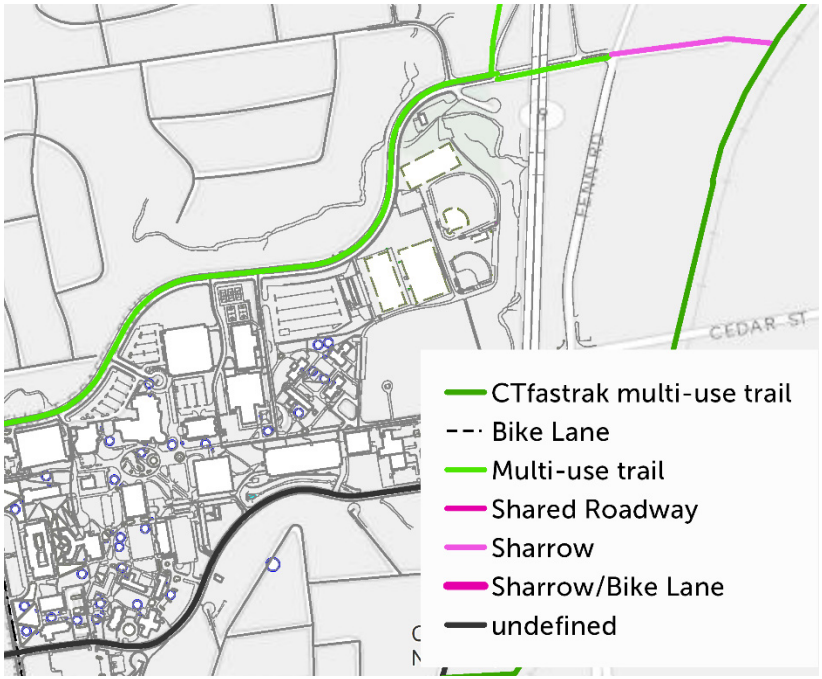

Figure 2 A possible redesign of Ella Grasso Blvd

- Distances defined by the time needed to reach a destination (walking time)
- A limited number of priority destinations

Guidance for creating pedestrian wayfinding systems is available from walksteps.org. Sample signs are included in Appendix B: Wayfinding.

Highlighted project: Work with regional and local partners to study the potential for a "road diet" on Ella Grasso Boulevard/Eddy Glover Boulevard

Ella Grasso Boulevard, which turns into Eddy Glover Boulevard west of Stanley Street, is both a major access route for drivers, and a major impediment for users of other modes of transportation. The road, while meant to carry local traffic, is designed like a highway (with two lanes in each direction, separated by a median). The design lacks pedestrian and cyclist amenities and, by providing for more capacity than is justified, encourages speeding. This design makes using non-automotive modes of transportation dangerous. Bus riders, who, until recently, were dropped off on the northern side of Ella Grasso Boulevard, had to run across four to five lanes of fast moving traffic to arrive safely on campus. Pedestrians wishing to visit Stanley Quarter Park, just a few hundred feet from campus, must cross this imposing road.

A road diet on Ella Grasso would alter this situation and considerably improve the campus environment. More details can be found in the *Further Information* section below, but the basic idea would be to reduce the number of lanes on Ella Grasso and Eddy Glover Boulevards, and install a multi-use path on the north side. This path would be separated from automobile traffic and would permit cyclists and walkers safe access to CCSU, Stanley Quarter Park, and the soon-to-open CTfastrak station/multi-use trail on Fenn Road.

Biking: list of actions
Install bike racks where necessary
Secure bike storage in residence halls
Provide secure bike parking at the student center
Coordinate with local and regional partners to install bike infrastructure around CCSU
Work with regional partners to install bicycle wayfinding signs
Start a pilot bike share program at RECentral
Information
Add bike parking to the official campus map

Table 6. Recommendations from the "Biking" section

Biking

A significant percentage of off-campus students live within a few miles of campus. Currently, significant barriers to cycling exist, causing many who may otherwise ride a bike, to drive to campus. This section suggests a number of policies that can encourage cycling, as well as physical infrastructure that will improve the cycling environment.

Highlighted project: Start a pilot bike share program at RECentral

Many participants of outreach meetings showed interest in having a bicycle sharing program at CCSU. Considerable care will necessary though, as bike share programs involve a number of logistical hurdles. Logistical issues include maintenance, inventory tracking, check-in and check-out procedures, and liability. These details must be considered before starting such a program. Supportive road infrastructure should also be present to provide participants with safe routes to ride on.

A pilot program administered by RECEntral would be a good starting point. A limited number of bikes could be made available to interested students during normal RECEntral business hours. These bikes would primarily be used for recreational purposes. Once the system is up and running, and logistical issues are successfully overcome, the system could be expanded to include more bikes at multiple locations.

Initial discussions have taken place at the regional level to start a large-scale bike share program. Representatives of CRCOG, ConnDOT, CTTRANSIT, and CCRPA have met to discuss starting a bike share program intended to support the forthcoming CTfastrak service. CCSU's close proximity to this service may allow it to take part in this initiative. CCSU staff should coordinate with regional partners to explore this option.