2.6. Intercity/Intra-Urban Passenger Service

2.6.1. Public Transportation Analysis Areas

The Study Area for the Intercity/Intra-Urban Passenger Service component of the study includes the Primary Study Area (Thruway Exit 21A to U.S/Canadian Border) and, where appropriate, portions of the Secondary Study Area (Exit 9 to Exit 21A on the Thruway, and from the U.S/Canadian border to Montreal). The principal focal points of these studies were existing intercity bus services along the corridor, and intra-city (local) bus service in the larger urban areas. As noted in the Introduction section of this report, the potential for high-speed passenger rail service in the New York-to-Montreal corridor is being analyzed under a separate portion of the I-87 Multimodal Corridor Study, and related aspects of the corridor's rail infrastructure and operations (see Section 2.4).

The initial phase of the Study's development and assessment process involved compilation and review of available reports, stakeholder interviews, border crossing data, and input from the Study Advisory Group. This review included existing bus services in the corridor -- intercity, urban commuter, and local -- and identified trends that could influence future capital and operational investment decisions.

2.6.2. Existing Services in the Study Area

Intercity Bus Services

The existing long distance, intercity bus services operating along part or all of the I-87 Corridor connect several “terminal area pairs”, i.e. New York City - Montreal, via Albany; New York City – Albany; Newburgh - Oneonta, via Albany; etc.

Most of the focus of this study was on long-distance travel in the New York City-Albany-Montreal corridor and associated terminal pairs. Two carriers provide intercity bus service between New York City and Montreal via Albany: Greyhound and Adirondack/Pine Hill Trailways. Terminals are the Port Authority Bus Terminal (PABT) in Manhattan, the Albany Bus Terminal, and the Central Bus Station in Montreal. All service between Albany and Montreal is provided by buses stopping en route between New York City and Montreal. The numbers of weekday scheduled departures are shown below, for Greyhound and for Trailways (total of both). The actual runs are “pooled”, i.e., some of the Greyhound schedule is operated by Trailways, and vice-versa. The carriers also have a working relationship at the Albany Bus Terminal, which is owned by Greyhound and operated by Trailways.

The total one-way departures (Greyhound and Trailways combined) from New York City to Montreal via Albany are as follows:

- Daily (Monday-Friday): six departures per day
The typical one-way fare from New York City to Montreal is $56.00 (US$). The typical daily passenger volumes, one-way, are about 45% of seated capacity, i.e., 138 (weekday), 207 (weekend). The typical one-way fare for the same trip on Amtrak is $55.00 (US$). The scheduled travel time of slightly over 10 hours from New York City to Montreal is approximately the same for both bus and train, with a similar potential for scheduling delays due to highway traffic, border crossing/Customs congestion and other factors.

**Urban Commuter/Local Transit Services**

Discussions with stakeholders conducted during the first phase of this study revealed a desire for transit alternatives, both in the Capital District where peak hour congestion is a problem, and in the other portions of the corridor where lower income workers need affordable means of accessing local jobs.

In the southern portion of the I-87 Corridor, a number of urban commuter services are operated from Rockland and Orange Counties into the Port Authority Bus Terminal (PABT) in midtown Manhattan. Some of these services also operate into the George Washington Bridge Bus Station (GWBBS) in upper Manhattan. Since the PABT is also the terminal for the New York City services to Albany and Montreal, it provides a convenient interface for travelers from this region to the northern sections of the I-87 Corridor. Two of the express bus carriers, Rockland and Short Line, operate along the southern section of the I-87 Corridor. Transit service in the remainder of the Secondary Study Area is relatively limited. The Ulster County Area Transit operations, for example, provide limited and fairly infrequent service connecting communities across the county.

In terms of commuter rail service, Metro-North Railroad and New Jersey Transit operate commuter rail service from Rockland, Orange, Westchester, Putnam and Dutchess Counties in the southern portion of the Secondary Study Area, extending as far north as Poughkeepsie in Dutchess County. Metro-North and the New York State Thruway Authority, as part of their Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 Corridor Study, are assessing the potential of new commuter rail, light rail or Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lines along I-87 from Suffern, NY in Rockland County to Westchester County and points east, and possible extensions of rail transit to Stewart Airport.

Within the Albany region, CDTA (Capital District Transportation Authority) operates and/or sponsors a number of intra-urban commuter services. CDTA has recently sponsored initiation of enhanced service between Albany and Saratoga Springs, operated by the Upstate Transit Company, with the service targeted to State employees (the service does not run on State employee holidays).
CDTA is also the operator of the network of an extensive local bus services in the Albany region, including numerous routes within the city and well as routes to surrounding population and employment centers in the Greater Capital District. CDTA is looking to improve of services along often congested arterial routes. For its #55 service along Rt. 5/Central Avenue, for example, the agency is looking to introduce such Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) elements as bus priority at traffic signals and dedicated by-pass lanes. This is discussed further later in this section. CDTA also provides service to all major transportation terminals (including Shuttle Fly service to the Albany International Airport) and major employment or visitor locations (SUNY Albany, RPI, Crossgates Mall, etc.)

The Glens Falls and Saratoga County areas are served by Upstate Transit's commuter buses and Adirondack Trailways. Upstate Transit operates weekday scheduled commuter service from numerous points throughout Saratoga County to office complexes in Albany. Buses run during morning and afternoon peak periods, with both express and local service. Buses do not operate on State holidays.

As part of the on-going Pre-Feasibility Study of High-Speed Rail Service between New York and Montreal, the potential to use these same improved rail facilities to provide commuter rail service from, for example, Glens Falls and Saratoga Springs to Albany is also being examined. The study is also looking at the use of Diesel Multiple Unit (DMU) equipment to provide a low-cost and flexible public transit system for this portion of the corridor. This type of service would help address the increasing congestion on roadways in that area and help support the continued growth projected in the northern Capital District.

In the North Country, public transit options are few, as the low population and employment densities make it difficult to cost-effectively provide traditional transit services. The most active system is the Clinton Area Rural Transit (CART), which serves Clinton County and the City of Plattsburgh. In addition to operating several urban routes within Plattsburgh (Downtown Plattsburgh, the Plattsburgh Airbase Redevelopment Commission campus, Champlain Center North Mall, etc.), CART also operates several rural routes within the county. Residents who live within ¾ of a mile of one of those rural routes may request to have the CART bus deviate to their location.

Public transportation to recreation areas within the North Country is available on a very limited basis. For example, Adirondack Trailways offers routes into the Adirondack Park, but does not make a connection with the Amtrak train in Westport. Connections to the Amtrak Station in Westport are available on a limited, seasonal basis via an Amtrak-run shuttle that transports train passengers from the Westport Station into Lake Placid three times a week (once daily, Friday through Sunday) from May through October only. The Greater Glens Falls Transit (GGFT) system operates a successful trolley operation to Lake George. Demand for this service is robust enough that expansion may be needed to support additional service.
Other regularly scheduled transportation within the Glens Falls metro area is provided by GGFT, which runs daily from 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM, and 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM Saturday. No service is provided on Sundays or holidays except Lake George (#20), which also operates 7 days a week during the summer season. Service extends into South Glens Falls, in Warren County. Transit service for people with disabilities is available in areas where GGFT's regular route service is provided. FAME provides curb-to-curb transportation on an advanced reservation basis. FAME is available six days a week, and the fare for is twice the regular fixed route bus fare.

GGFT also offers the "AMTRAK Train - Catcher Service," a direct bus service connections to inbound and outbound AMTRAK passengers to and from the Fort Edward train station. The service is available 7 days a week and must be requested by phone at least 48 hours prior to arrival. Service goes as far as the Village of Lake George and costs $12.50.

2.6.3. Existing and Projected Ridership

**InterCity Bus Services**

Discussions with carrier staff indicate that passenger volume was growing before September 11, but has gone down since then. Usage went down even more during the SARS outbreak in Toronto. Volume has started to recover but not back to the pre-September 11 levels.

A relatively slow increase is projected for the future, about 2% a year for short and long-haul services.

**Urban Commuter/Local Transit Services**

For the New York-New Jersey Metropolitan area, ridership for the express and local bus services (including service from Orange and Rockland Counties) is expected to grow very little. Activity at the Port Authority Bus Terminal may increase by only 0.5% per year over the next five years for short and long-haul services. No growth is expected for the suburban services. The George Washington Bridge Bus Station bus services may grow at 0.3% per year in the next five years.

In the Albany area, the Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA) predicts that both intra-urban and local bus ridership will generally not rise appreciably over the next five years. Existing trends and projected ridership levels do not appear to warrant additional service. CDTA does, however, feel that with the introduction of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) features within the NYS Route 5 Corridor between Schenectady and Albany, there may be some ridership increases in this corridor. No other significant changes in ridership are projected elsewhere by the other smaller transit and paratransit systems in the smaller urban and rural areas in the corridor.

2.6.4. Planned Changes in Service

**InterCity Bus Services**

Passenger volume on these services is recovering and may experience some growth (about 2% per year). Changes in this market sector may primarily involve newer vehicles, with improved ride and air quality characteristics. Greyhound and Trailways presently “split” the New York City-Albany-Montreal markets and there may be further organizational changes ahead. New entrants into this market are not anticipated, as contrasted with the New York City-Boston corridor, where new low-fare carriers are competing for the larger market there. Overall, no
major changes in intercity bus services are planned, with maintaining existing services and market share as the operators’ main goal.

**Urban Commuter/Local Transit Services**

Changes to the Albany area bus system would include full development of the NYS Route 5 BRT program, with possible additional BRT-type improvements on other major routes in the Capital District. BRT has emerged as the most appropriate mode of high quality transit for the Capital District for the foreseeable future due to the combination of efficient service, flexibility in design, and cost effectiveness when compared with other public transit services. The NYS Route 5 Land Use and Transportation Study has recommended that the first example of BRT be in the NYS Route 5 corridor from Albany to Schenectady via Colonie. This is the corridor presently served by CDTA’s #55 route. Five municipalities, along with CDTA, the Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC), and NYSDOT are working on the implementation of some means of improved transit operations within the corridor.

Two key elements of BRT are already being implemented in the NYS Route 5 corridor: a new traffic signal system for NYS Route 5, which includes transit signal priority (TSP) at 35 of the 81 signalized intersections, and a new communications and dispatch system including automatic vehicle location (AVL). Both of these BRT components are expected to be completed by early 2004. If this service is successfully implemented, other capital projects related to BRT may be progressed as funding becomes available.

The preliminary plan is to implement service in two phases, each of which bundles a new set of capital improvements with a new service level that provides a positive improvement for riders and a high-quality image for transit:

- Phase I operating improvements can proceed as soon as the TSP and AVL projects are complete and will include a new limited stop route, new shelters, and upgraded vehicles.

- Phase II requires the construction of bus-only lanes and new transit centers at key locations and could also include proof-of-payment fare collection, purpose-built BRT vehicles, and more elaborate facilities at all stations.

The next task in the project is an implementation planning study that lays out the required improvements for the entire NYS Route 5 corridor. Operations modeling of the corridor to identify necessary transit priority features, fleet size, and operational issues will be included. The plan will also be used to secure funding from local, state, and federal sources. The planning study, underway as of September 2003, is slated for completion in May 2004.

**2.6.5. Summary of Existing Public Transportation Service Conditions and Operations**

**Intercity Bus Services**

Intercity bus passenger service in the I-87 Corridor is provided by Greyhound and Trailways on a “pooled” basis. New York City-Montreal, the longest of the approximately ten services operated in the corridor, now serves about 200 passengers per day in each direction. This represents a drop from pre-September 11 levels, but the usage is recovering and is expected to grow about 2% per year over the next five years.
Urban Commuter/Local Transit Services

The trans-Hudson express service into Manhattan from the lower Hudson Valley focuses on the Port Authority Bus Terminal and the George Washington Bridge Bus Station. Services into these terminals will grow modestly in the next five years, in the range of 0.3-0.5% per year.

In Albany, overall bus ridership is expected to remain level over the next five years, except for any specific routes where BRT may boost use.

Improvements of intra-urban bus services are anticipated in several areas, including:

- Enhanced service and capacity from the lower Hudson Valley, due to the “XBL II” program sponsored by the Port Authority of NY and NJ.
- Introduction of BRT route/service enhancements for Albany area bus services.

2.6.6. Public Transportation Improvement Concepts

Key improvement areas that emerged from the initial Study phase, based on reviews of available data and studies and discussions with transportation and economic development agencies and planners in the corridor, included the following:

- Planning for employment and population growth hubs, including expanded or new services to provide greater accessibility to new development centers like the Luther Forest project in Saratoga and Albany Nanotech.

- Transit connections to recreation and tourism, to provide better transit connections to these areas, which presently depend almost exclusively on private autos. These could include one-seat-ride dedicated bus access, and transit or paratransit links to Amtrak stations in the Adirondack areas.

- Improved multimodal connections (access to aviation services, Park-and-Ride, etc.), to provide alternatives to the private auto for access to airports, train stations, major shopping areas, etc.

- Potential for BRT/bus priority systems in the Capital Region to address general mobility needs and reduce dependence on the automobile in the congested Albany-Saratoga corridor.

- Possible commuter rail-type connections that would effectively expand the Capital District commuter shed further into Saratoga and Warren Counties without dependence on the already congested Northway. (This issue is being addressed as part of the Pre-Feasibility Study of High-Speed Rail Service between New York and Montreal.)

Exhibit 2.6-1 lists the candidate concepts within the Public Transportation category that are recommended for further consideration, and indicates the approximate location of each within the Primary and Secondary Study Areas. Brief write-ups of each concept are then provided.
### Exhibit 2.6-1: Intercity/Intra-Urban Passenger Service Improvement Concepts

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<td>BRT in Capital Region</td>
<td>Albany metro, NY</td>
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**Improvement Concept: IP-1**

**Concept/Location:**
Luther Forest Technology Campus (LFTC) Travel Demand Management (TDM), Malta, New York

**Purpose:**
Suggest strategies to minimize vehicular traffic demand on roadways leading to the LFTC site, and within the site itself.

**Problem:**
The LFTC proposal envisions up to four nanotechnology facilities and 2 million square feet of ancillary facilities on a 1,350-acre site east of the Exit 11 – Exit 12 section of I-87. The western and southern boundaries of the site run generally along Route 9 and Route 67 respectively. The development will generate significant numbers of new trips, typically in the SOV (single-occupant vehicle) mode.

**Description:**
This overview considered alternative spatial layout concepts and several TDM strategies. The proposed buildings are to be quite spread out, in keeping with the “campus” setting and the desire to provide buffer areas. Some potential ideas to reduce SOV travel are:

- Site layout should be examined to minimize distances from site drives to building entrances, making transit access as convenient as possible.
- Promote staggered work hours among the workers in the ancillary facilities. (Nanotechnology workers, with early-start and late-finish shifts, are already on “staggered” hours.)
- Examine ridesharing potential, primarily among workers in ancillary facilities.
- Given the location and size of the site, transit access would be most feasible via a “shuttle” looping through the site and connecting to regional transit nodes, for example, to (existing) Albany-Saratoga commuter buses (at Exit 11 or Exit 12 stops), or at a commuter rail station, if such service develops.

**Strategy:**
Promoting the suggested group of transit-friendly and TDM strategies fits well with the “smart growth” policies of NYSDOT and local communities.

**Benefit:**
Potential minimization of vehicular traffic demand, relative to the scope of the proposed development.

**Status:**
Saratoga Economic Development Corp. is considering these types of mitigation actions as part of its Environmental Impact Statement for the LFTC.
# Improvement Concept: IP-2

## Concept/Location:
Transit Connection at Westport/Lake Placid Amtrak Station, Westport, New York & other major recreation areas in Adirondack region.

## Purpose:
Connect existing train service to the Westport station with recreational opportunities in the Lake Placid region, and other possible bus-to-train connections to other recreation areas.

## Problem:
Currently, no year-round connection to mass transit exists for passengers arriving at Amtrak’s Westport station. Existing private bus lines serving Lake Placid and the Saranac Lake area do not stop at Westport Station. Amtrak runs a May-October shuttle on the weekends only. Other Adirondack recreational areas could also attract more visitors and be less auto-dependent if transit connectivity was improved.

## Description:
Provide a year-round mass transit (bus/shuttle) connection for passengers arriving at Westport Station via Amtrak’s Adirondack service. Similar bus/shuttle connections to other major recreation area (e.g., Gore Mountain via link to Fort Edward-Glens Falls station) would also be investigated and developed as warranted.

## Strategy:
Expand Amtrak’s existing shuttle service to a year-round service. Work with bus operators currently traveling from New York, Albany, and Montreal to Lake Placid and Saranac Lake to incorporate a passenger stop at the Westport Station. Identify other ways to enhance rail-transit connection to other major recreation areas in Adirondack portion of the corridor.

## Benefit:
This project would make the Adirondack train a more effective participant in the National Park Service’s “Trails and Rails” Partnership Program. Providing year-round access to Lake Placid, Saranac Lake, and surrounding communities would support the crucial tourism industry. Providing alternatives to passenger vehicle travel would reduce congestion and wear on Route 73. Similar benefits would accrue if services were enhanced to other recreational areas.

## Status:
Opportunity identification.
### Improvement Concepts: IP-3

#### Name and Location:
Stewart Airport Access Study, New Windsor, Orange County

#### Purpose:
Provide convenient public transit access to Stewart International Airport, particularly from New York City and surrounding areas in both New York and New Jersey.

#### Problem:
Stewart Airport presently has limited scheduled passenger service and is looking to expand on a number of fronts. Most people in the Lower Hudson Valley use the larger and highly congested airports in the NY/NJ area (Newark, LaGuardia, etc.). Providing better transit connections to Stewart, especially by linking into the Metro-North/NJ Transit networks to the south, could link it to the major population centers and provide the support to expand service at this location.

#### Description:
The concept, which is being considered by the New York State Thruway Authority (NYSTA) and the Metro-North Railroad (MNR) as part of the Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 Corridor studies, includes extensions or branches of the Port Jervis commuter rail line onto the airport, to provide airport access as well as expanding overall commuter rail service to this rapidly growing area. A variety of rail alignment options, as well as BRT and other alternatives are being reviewed.

#### Strategy:
The NYSTA, in cooperation with Metro-North Railroad and other interested agencies, will continue to assess the viability of extending various public transit services onto the airport, and where warranted move forward into the planning, design and implementation of those services.

#### Benefit:
This concept would support the development of another important full-service commercial airport, reduce congestion at existing airports, and support economic growth in this vital portion of the overall corridor.

#### Status:
Metro-North Railroad, in consultation with NYSDOT, is completing the Stewart Airport Access Study, which will provide a basis for public decision-making on this important issue.
### Improvement Concept: IP-4

**Concept/Location:**
Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), along I-87 corridor in Capital District

**Purpose:**
Provide high-quality transit service between Albany and Saratoga, utilizing proposed HOT lane facility (see ITS-10).

**Problem:**
The I-87 Corridor between Saratoga and Albany is severely congested during peak hours. There currently is minimal public transit service along this corridor. Upstate Transit makes numerous runs in this region, though it has minimal impact on corridor congestion. Adding traditional commuter bus service in the corridor, with buses operating in general-purpose lanes, would subject that service to the same congestion and delays faced by motorists.

**Description:**
Provide BRT service utilizing the proposed HOT lane facility (ITS-10) between Saratoga and Albany. Three to four stops would be provided either at park-and-ride lots adjacent to major interchanges or at median stations with pedestrian overpasses to adjacent park-and-ride lots.

**Strategy:**
Further studying both the HOT lane and BRT concepts, and as warranted moving forward with the planning, design and implementation of these facilities.

**Benefit:**
This project would provide high-quality, rail-like transit service to commuters in the corridor in a cost-effective, flexible manner. Using the free-flowing HOT lanes, the faster BRT travel times would make it more cost-effective than making the same trip by automobile in the general-purpose lanes. Service could begin with existing buses and a limited number of park-and-ride lots, but could be expanded to include special buses and median stations.

**Status:**
Opportunity identification.