

Regional transit study under way, looks at insufficient service

By Jeanne Davant

Manitou Springs City Council heard a report Tuesday on a regional transit study, known as The Future of Regional Transit that aims to address transportation issues throughout the Pikes Peak region.

The city of Colorado Springs' Mountain Metropolitan Transit system has cut back service by 50 percent since 2008 because of a lack of stable and sufficient funding, said Craig Blewitt, Transit Services Division Manager. Metro Transit serves only about 75 percent of Colorado Springs, and service outside the city is lacking or insufficient.

A committee looking at sustainable funding for Colorado Springs "recognized that the current city governance of transit wasn't good," Blewitt said. "We're looking at some kind of regional authority."

The goals of the study are to determine what level of service people want and need and to recommend an action plan for a regional authority and funding.

Manitou Springs Mayor Marc Snyder chairs the steering committee that is conducting the survey.

The committee has recommended that transit service be provided to outlying communities and even to destinations like Denver and Pueblo. A majority of committee members thought the current level of ridership needs to at least triple.

Older people, those with lower incomes and people with disabilities have been greatly affected by the transit cutbacks.

Transit service "is truly a quality of life thing for so many people," Snyder said Tuesday. "If you don't have a transit option, you don't have any options."

The survey asks people for their opinions on why the region needs an improved public transit system, how much transit service citizens are willing to pay for and what type of governance structure would be appropriate, among other things.

While response has been good, "transit is not that sexy a topic," Snyder said. But "if gas prices go to \$4.50 by August, people will be very interested in transit."

The survey "is really a way to start a grassroots effort and get people to understand what an important part of our community fabric transportation is," Snyder said.

Survey responses will be collected at least through the end of February, Snyder said. For more information about the survey and to take it online, visit

www.springsgov.com/Page.aspx?NavID=3328.

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