

# Charrette Summary Report

On Friday, January 31, 2020 the Manchester TOD Plan team hosted a public charrette from 2 to 7 pm. Over 35 people attended, and a demonstration shuttle project provided transit access to the venue from throughout the Millyard. Activities included Open House materials, a presentation by City Planning staff and the consultant team, and facilitated breakout groups, including a role-playing exercise. Feedback was gathered as part of all of these activities and is included in the attached appendix.

In addition to the charrette, there were 120 respondents to an online survey. A copy of the responses are included at the end of this report.

Key takeaways from the charrette and the survey include:

- A recognition of the need for near-term improvements, including more significant winter maintenance and more convenient bus service, balanced with concerns about the cost of providing those improvements.
- The Market Basket is one of the main reasons many people come downtown and is a key amenity for the TOD study area.
- Many folks who have looked for housing recently have tried to find housing walkable to downtown, but struggle with issues of cost and quality.
- Many people identified visiting family along the rail corridor or having them visit them as important, in addition to easing commuting trips. Others use existing inter-city bus service and would like to see increased frequency and service to the Seacoast.
- Meeting attendees and survey respondents commented that rail service could help them access additional job opportunities and improve their quality of life.
- The area around the hospital was a significant focus for future development.

## **Notable Survey Results**

Over 120 people answered an online survey that was up for two weeks following the charrette. The survey asked questions about respondents' experiences and priorities with transportation, housing, and other transit-oriented development amenities in Manchester. Many questions were open-ended to allow for a wide range of replies, and the specific observations and recommendations offered by survey takers will be invaluable in developing and evaluating development alternatives for the study area. Some common themes and observations in the survey responses include:

### **Regional connections are important to Manchester's future and individual's quality of life now, even before rail service may come.**

Many respondents cited taking inter-city bus service to Boston, Concord, and Nashua as important to their current job opportunities and family ties and were eager for more frequent service that would result in shorter waits and easier scheduling. Many respondents also take bus service to access Amtrak service and Boston Logan airport, and are eager for transit options to the Manchester airport. Others identified a need for inter-city bus service to the Seacoast region and White Mountains.

Relatedly, almost all respondents who envisioned themselves as using rail service in the future envisioned that others would use the rail to visit them in Manchester.

### **Respondents that are familiar with Manchester's existing bus service because they or a family member ride it, they know someone who does, or they would be interested in taking it are universally concerned with the frequency of and access to service.**

Universally, these respondents were concerned with the hours of service on evenings and weekends, limited routing, and infrequent scheduling. "Would rather walk or Uber" and "it is not available enough to count on its service" are examples of common comments by those interested in taking transit but concerned with levels of service.

### **Respondents are concerned about the cost of projects, particularly passenger rail service.**

Several respondents did not want to see public funding for transit services in Manchester, whether for rail service or other transportation strategies. Others were concerned that passenger rail prices will be too expensive for many residents to use.

### **Respondents value downtown as an entertainment destination and civic center beyond its role a job center.**

If they had looked for housing recently, many respondents emphasized their desire to live within walking distance of downtown. There were also many concerns about the affordability and quality of housing currently available in Manchester. The quality of the school system was also a frequently cited concern.

### **Respondents would like to see more retail and services in the downtown area.**

The Market Basket in the study area was an important destination for most respondents, and some identified a pharmacy as another downtown need. Others wanted to see a movie theater; while attracting a new theater may be difficult, there might be opportunities to expand entertainment programming to help meet this desire through outdoor movie nights or other venues.

**Selection of Photographs from the Charette**





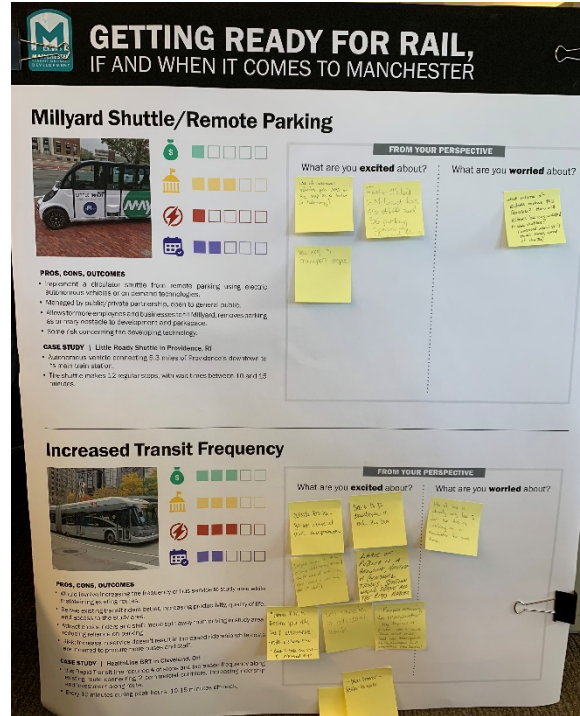
**What do you think is most important for transit-oriented development to achieve in Manchester?**

Priorities	Vote	Why?
Easier commutes	3 votes	Too many rush hours delays
Vibrant downtown/Millyard at the center of the region	5 votes	Vibrant Downtown serves more than just transit
Safe and convenient walking, biking, and scooting	3 votes	
Easy access to jobs, goods, and services	6 votes	
Recreating and lifestyle	4 votes	
Wide variety of housing choices	2 votes	Housing diversity leads to population diversity
Other	1 vote – all the above 1 vote – multimodal/pedestrian boardwalk on the river	Use the waterfront, its our most beautiful feature.

**What should near-term focus area for transit-oriented development and infrastructure improvements be?**

Priority Area	Vote	Why?
Willow Street Corridor	1 vote	
Gaslight District	1 vote	
Elm Street Corridor	5 votes	
Other	2 votes – Bridge 1 vote – West side 1 vote – Arms Parks / Riverfront 1 vote – Elm St to -	

# Board 3



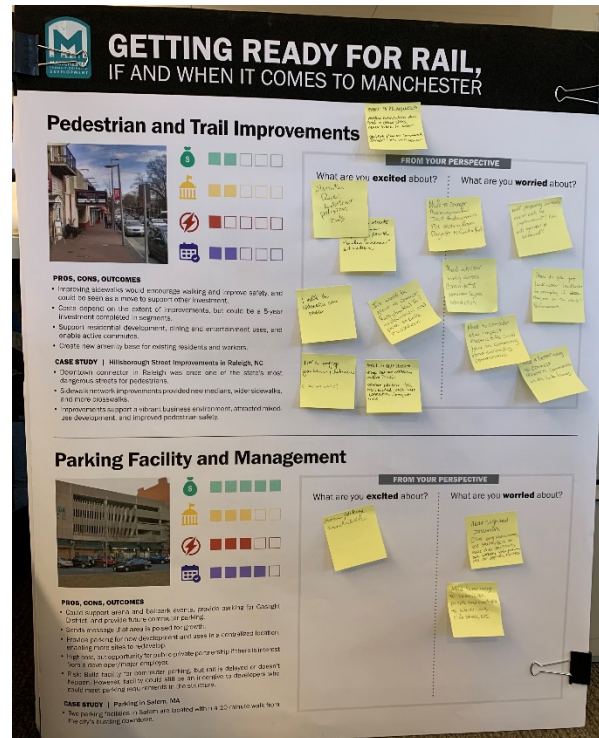
## Millyard Shuttle / Remote Parking

What are you excited about?	What are you worried about?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of autonomous vehicles puts MHT on the map as a leader in technology</li> <li>• Fuss &amp; O’Neil in Millyard has 45 staff and 36 parking spaces, we need this.</li> <li>• New way to transport people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What volume of riders makes this feasible? How will riders be encouraged to use shuttles? (worried about shift start times, speed of shuttle)</li> </ul>

## Increased Transit Frequency

What are you excited about?	What are you worried about?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outside Boston – go anywhere with public transportation</li> <li>• Have to go downtown to take the bus</li> <li>• Longer service time allows fulltime/ second shift use of bus line (last I looked it was only for 1<sup>st</sup> shift)</li> <li>• Lack of public is a growing, having a central trans. Station would serve all the city’s areas.</li> <li>• When I’m in Boston, you ride the T everywhere.</li> <li>• Less congestion of individual vehicles</li> <li>• People coming to Manchester by train or plane won’t have cars and will need bus transport to businesses and amenities (the carrier)</li> <li>• Takes forever – faster to walk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of bus is already very low. I don’t see this as catching on in Manchester for some time.</li> </ul>

# Board 4



## Pedestrian and Trail Improvements

What are you excited about?	What are you worried about?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Merrimack river waterfront pedestrian trails</li> <li>Walkable streets have less p..... for the "broken window" situation.</li> <li>I wish the sidewalks were better.</li> <li>It would be great to connect Rockingham Rail Trail to downtown and pave to Lake Massabesic</li> <li>Little popup gardens / libraries</li> <li>Work in this area, things that are walkable making it safe. Summer ride bike, bike to trail needed, east – west connections, complete trails.</li> <li>Need to connect Rockingham Rail Trail to downtown. Fix section from Page St to Cundia Rd</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will property owners resist call for improvements? How will eyesores be addresses?</li> <li>Need a better way across Granite St somehow bypass intersection.</li> <li>Need to consider the impact, electric bikes could have on commuting from surrounding communities.</li> <li>How do you get lack-luster landlords to comply if they are on the route. Enforcement.</li> <li>Need a better way to connect eastern communities with bike lanes.</li> </ul>

## Parking Facility and Management

What are you excited about?	What are you worried about?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More parking available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Near signage solution. Cities everywhere currently are shifting focus to make their</li> </ul>

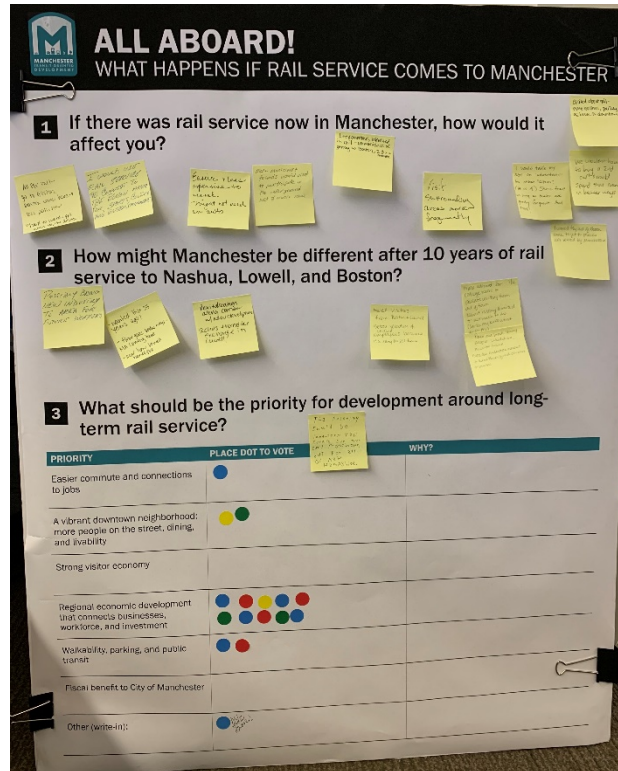
	<p>downtowns more walkable while promoting less car dependent lifestyles.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need better ways to incentivize people and employers to bike to work, ride share, etc</li> </ul>
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# All Aboard

## What happens if rail service comes to Manchester

### 1. If there was rail service now in Manchester, how would it affect you?

- All for rail – go to Boston, Boston comes here, less pollution. Hard to watch people when you’re driving.
- I would use rail service to connect to the Boston area for sports, culture and entertainment.
- Easier and less expensive to travel. Might not need an auto/
- More musicians + friends would visit to participate in the underground art & music scene.
- Live downtown invested in rail – convenience of getting to Boston, 2 – 3 for a month.
- Visit surrounding areas more frequently.
- I would take my son on “adventure” to other cities” (he is 4). Stress-free as long as trains are pretty frequent and fun.
- Excited about rail. More business, parking as issue in downtown.
- We wouldn’t have to buy a 2<sup>nd</sup> car & could spend that money in better ways.
- I would fly out of Boston more to get to places not served by Manchester.



### 2. How might Manchester be different after 10 year of rail service

- Possibly bring new industry to area for future workers.
- Wanted this 25 years ago! Flow goes both ways – MA coming here. See new Lowell benefits.
- Revitalization along corridor with new development. Thorndike exchange in Lowell.
- More visitors from Boston + Lowell. Better selection of skilled employees because its easy to get here.



- More vibrant for college kids + parents visiting from out of town. Now it is very limited +not much to do (both my kids went to St. A's). Bars with more young people would be nice to have. Broader entertainment + healthier food choices + music.

**3. What should be the priority for development around long-term rail service?**

- The priority should be long-term rail service for not only Manchester, but for all of New Hampshire.

Priority	Vote	Why?
Easier commute and connections to jobs	1 vote	
A vibrant downtown neighborhood: more people on the street, dining, and livability	2 votes	
Strong visitor economy		
Regional economic development that connects business, workforce, and investment	10 votes	
Walkability, parking, and public transit	2 votes	
Fiscal benefit to city of Manchester		
Other	1 vote - all of the above	

# Role-Playing Activity

## Pros/Cons of Round 1 Transportation Investments for all Groups:

### Millyard Shuttle/Remote Parking

Pros: Less parking would allow more development, great asset for nightlife to be able to get to more destinations, possibility for branding that would help promote Millyard as tech workplace, could connect to school or job, feels safer than biking, frequency is important, good for people with limited mobility, expand existing shuttle, example of Nashville shuttle precedent that works well

Cons: Similar to Green Dash, depends on route to be valuable (to/from Millyard), route could miss many people that need transit, limited capacity, currently has little visibility, not as useful unless employee of Millyard or on daily activity route

### Increased Transit Frequency

Pros: Economy booster, if rail exists the bus is more appealing, the bus is how young people get around the city, bus is part of larger transit system, better for multiple schedules, good for inclement weather, no need to find parking, could have more increased frequency of commuter buses to Nashua and Concord

Cons: Frequency overlaps with shuttle proposal, stigma of bus for young people, stigma exists in Northeast, concerns that people may not ride it, requires planning to ride it particularly when multiple trips with kids, need to provide east-west connections, need to prove this is worthwhile and attract ridership in order to get the next investment

### Pedestrian and Trail Improvements:

Pros: Activity in the street, vibrant, Important to attract residents, “Neighborhood amenity”, Bike share could help, but also not an amenity as currently designed, can get where need to go, no schedules/bus needed, good connections, link to transit hub, would attract more use if comfortable to use, this would be good for business of bike shop

Cons: Existing infrastructure is in terrible condition, need to design to get bicyclists off of sidewalks, wintertime maintenance essential to making it work, snow and ice clearance, cold and dark make this a hurdle for others

### Parking facility and management:

Pros: Good if street activity, retail on first floor, great combined with shuttle, shops would create vibrancy, if reduces surface parking might allow other uses, could build housing above

Cons: Cost to manage space to build, dead space, more people driving in, cost of parking structure expensive for family with one car, very last century, not our parking problem, don’t want to build parking at the expense of green space, hard to find space for it, feels short-sighted

## Hospital worker

Most important is wider variety of housing choices because they need affordable housing choices nearby (still have student loans), and safe and convenient walking, biking, and scooting

Development should be prioritized in the Elm Street corridor to extend downtown South to the Hospital. First priority is trails and pedestrian improvements because have to make it easy to walk to work, and then want trails for lifestyle amenities. Being able to walk to work is benefit to housing development, but building Millyard shuttle helps her get to downtown and those amenities even while working at the hospital. Shuttle could also function as her bad weather option versus walking. Winter maintenance of sidewalks and bicycle facilities is essential and is a public safety issue.

Other group's evaluation: Frequency of the shuttle could help family if in right location. Safety and location of trails is important.

### Round 2:

In future, their character would want a river view, walkability, and the ability to travel. Might be interested in quitting a car as a household, if there is walkability. Might be downsizing to avoid dealing with a yard. Rail is significant because it adds to collaborative potential: entice people for conferences and visitorship. While not an example from the character, one of the group members works for a



company with an office in Boston and believes the Manchester offices are in jeopardy versus Boston. Having rail might continue to enable satellite locations of offices with a major Boston presence. This attendee also recently didn't pursue a job opportunity in Boston because they wanted him there in person 4 times a week – and he currently could only do once a week without significant impact on his family and quality of life. The rail might make two to three times a week possible, which he knows many Millyard workers already have to do. The residential neighborhoods on the east side of the river should be considered part of the opportunity to build housing.

The group wanted the rail station on the WMUR site because Granite Street is a gateway to downtown and then rail passengers could easily walk to the Convention Center and Arena, helping support business and visitorship. The

group would be okay with a site on Elm Street that might help avoid the backup of traffic on the offramp to Granite Street, but it would be important that mixed-use development occur and make Elm Street part of downtown. The Market Basket is an important asset to retain as a transit-accessible grocery store. “Anywhere a train station goes, it will be great”. Additional written comments on the map included: the Riverwalk should connect to the hospital, the hospital needs more amenities and connections to downtown, regular patrols needed of the Riverwalk to make it feel more safe and attract more users

## Young professionals

Most important is vibrant downtown/Millyard at center of the region and wider variety of housing choices

Fully invest in Millyard shuttle to create a new lifestyle choice – shuttle is great branding opportunity. Implement pedestrian and trail improvements, use remaining resources to support parking facilities and management, bank on developers building the political capital to achieve goals.

Other groups evaluation: None of these choices help a remote worker/intercity bus commuter. Pedestrian and trail improvements might be tangential. All the investments may help in the long-term if he is able to get a job in town, to help get more of what he needs locally, or get easier access to get out of town. Support more options!

### Round 2:



The group placed the station in the southern portion of the study area, and concentrated development near there. Office development occurred near the Hospital, while housing was spread along a range of sites on Elm Street and the Willow Street corridor.

## Family with One Car

Most important is a wider variety of housing choices and easier commute. Envision development on the Elm Street corridor near higher-frequency transit (whether shuttle or bus) as helpful. Development on the Willow Street corridor could help in the future and Gaslight District could be fun, but not as important to this character.

Chose transit frequency as top priority because it presented an option to access more places – school, jobs, work, goods, services across the City. A shuttle could be a part of this larger picture. Frequency (and location) of shuttle (stop and route needs to be convenient to their home) would benefit the family. If not (close to home and destinations like work and school), not helpful.

Trails would benefit as a safe alternative if the mindset is there (i.e. perceiving bikes as a transportation option, not just recreational amenity). Safe access and location of trails is also important. (If access from home to trail isn't safe, it doesn't benefit them, especially the kids.) Access to affordable housing is most important, so trails could also help for access, particularly if allow safe ways to get to housing further from the center.

### Round 2:

In 20 years, kids will be grown but may be living at home. Need options that will allow them to evolve throughout life, including education and job opportunities. Possibility that rail may allow them to move to more affordable housing but still commute and not require a car. In and outbound travel are important for regional economic development.



Their final scenario includes two stations: one by the hospital and one by downtown. It supports a larger downtown and additional employment near the hospital.

## Empty Nesters

Most important is a vibrant downtown/Millyard at the center of the region and easy access to jobs, goods, and services. Least important is an easier commute. Think development should be prioritized in the Elm Street corridor, then Gaslight District.

Chose pedestrian and trail improvements and Millyard shuttle as investments, with the idea that if they are successful, it will be easier to achieve increased transit frequency.

Other group evaluation: Similar investments because believe there will be good bang for the buck. If the area is super-successful, eventually we'll build a parking garage.

### Round 2:

Since the character will be part of an older population in the future, the rail might help with accessibility. Rail would help making Manchester more livable and workable, and also make Manchester more accessible for their grandkids who live in Cambridge to come visit them!



The station location is adjacent to development opportunity in the southern portion of the study area. They envision mixed use housing development in the Willow Street and Elm Street corridors, with office located near the Hospital. There is very little intervention near downtown.

## Property Owner in the Millyard

Most important is vibrant downtown at the center of the region and recreation and lifestyle. Better city schools and wider variety of housing choices also important. Development important in Gaslight District because of its visibility and proximity to the Millyard.

Businesses do benefit from riverfront amenity because they're competing with Boston and Cambridge for tech workers. Make the river more visible, such as Lowell has done.

### Round 2:

Very glad to have rail since it has gained importance for business recruitment. The younger workforce is less interested in driving and more concerned about climate impact.



There are two stations: one near the Millyard/Downtown and one near the hospital. They envision more intensive redevelopment of the Gaslight District as well as other development on vacant sites in the southern portion of the study area.

The group placed an additional rail crossing near Gas Street bend and Market Basket – helps make the grocery store more accessible.



## Remote Worker/Intercity Commuter

Top priorities are an easier commute and easy access to jobs, goods, and services, including between towns like Boston, Nashua, and Concord. Least important are recreation and lifestyle and wider variety of housing choices. Access to opportunities throughout region is key. Development is most important in the Elm Street Corridor, but arts-based project in the Willow Street corridor could be relevant and exciting.

The parking shuttle is not helpful for him to get to Nashua and the parking garage does not solve his problem. We are assuming he does not have a car and walks/transfers to the intercity bus. Thus, he prioritizes increased transit frequency that would give him more options for traveling to work and school.

### Round 2

If rail service comes, he likely will still use the inter-city commuter bus to travel if the schedule matches, since it is cheaper. He may take the rail to go Boston for art shows or other cultural events more easily. Wants it to inspire a more exciting downtown that would potentially create opportunities for arts activities in the Gaslight District. His priorities include a vibrant downtown neighborhood with more people on the street, dining, and livability and fiscal benefit to the City of Manchester.



The group chose to place the rail station and development close to the downtown bus hub and downtown core to make easier connections between them. Compared to Round 1, parking was more important because of development, but bike/ped access improvements were an even bigger priority to making development a success.

Additional notes on the map included: close off streets in Gaslight District and make it a pedestrianized area; promote arts and art galleries in Gaslight District; more roads and access instead of funneling it all to Commercial Street; take advantage of riverfront as an attraction; crossing Queen City Avenue on foot is difficult and intersections need to be safer; centrally-located station to walk to many places.