

# **DRAFT REPORT**

## **Public Transportation in Cold Spring**

Government Infrastructure & Public Services Working Group  
by Ellyn Rosenthal

Special Board  
Comprehensive Plan/Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan  
Village of Cold Spring

December 9, 2008

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*The Village of Cold Spring has received NY State Hudson River Valley Greenway and NY Department of State grants.*

## DRAFT REPORT

### Public Transportation in Cold Spring

Public transportation consists of services including buses, trolleys and light rail, commuter trains, streetcars, cable cars, van pool services, paratransit services for senior citizens and people with disabilities, ferries and water taxis, and monorails and tramways. Generally speaking, they offer the public the opportunity to travel by means other than a car. According to the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), in the year 2006 public transportation services logged the highest usage in the last 49 years across the US.

Advocates for the expansion and maintenance of public transportation argue that it is cheaper than private travel, it is a better choice for lower carbon production, air quality and fossil fuel consumption as well as creating infrastructure jobs and economic activity. For example, public transportation enhances local economic growth by increasing the local customer base for shopping, restaurants and medical facilities. Public transportation serves the elderly and disabled, providing access to necessities and recreation – ensuring their independence and quality of life. The APTA makes the case that “Public transportation revitalizes neighborhoods, increases social interaction and pedestrian activity, enhances safety, and helps create a sense of “place” that will help make a community unique and special.” (see <http://www.publictransportation.org>).

Research for the Infrastructure Working Group was initially conducted in November 2007 and was updated in May and December of 2008, and March 2010.

### Cold Spring 2007

**Bus service:** There is currently no public bus for service for general use in Cold Spring. The Putnam Area Rapid Transit (PART) system ran general service from Cold Spring to the Galleria Mall in Poughkeepsie three days per week until it was disbanded in January, 2007 for lack of ridership. The Putnam County Department of Transportation estimates that by the end, usage of the service had waned to about three people per week. Haldane School buses are publicly subsidized through the school budget, but are not for general service and are not currently made available for events.

**Paratransit services for seniors and disabled residents:** The “para” service is part of the Putnam Area Rapid Transit (PART) system and is administered by the County Department of Aging. PART Paratransit is a curb-to-curb transportation system for those Putnam residents who are unable to use the PART public transportation due to a physical or mental disability. PART Paratransit operates specially modified vans to transport riders with a range of disabilities, including those who use wheelchairs. Service is provided to riders within 3/4-mile of a PART fixed-route and who have a destination that is within 3/4-mile of a PART fixed-route. Service is complementary to the PART fixed-route. However, since there are no fixed-routes in this part of the Putnam County – the regular routes are in Putnam Lake, Brewster, Carmel, Mahopac, Jefferson Valley, Lake Carmel, Patterson and Kent – there is no regular general PARA service for Cold Spring.

There is a Department of Aging van that transports seniors to the Cold Spring Nutrition Center/ American Legion Hall on Cedar Street from Monday to Friday. To be considered for this service, riders must be over 60 years of age. The service is offered by appointment and application and picks seniors up from home and returns them after lunch. Seniors also have the option to ride the van to shop. Shopping on Tuesday alternates between Walmart and Shop Rite; Friday the van travels in Cold Spring to the FoodTown supermarket and to Drug World. The van generally carries 8 – 10 seniors per day. The fare is set at 75 cents per round trip.

Additional senior transportation is often arranged “privately” with volunteer services such as the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), the Demand Response Medical Transportation program and the Out-Of-County Medical Transportation program, run by the County Office for the Aging. Also, the County considers the trolley service (see below) to be in the PARA system. PARA service is available on the trolley by calling 845-878-RIDE (7433) or TDD 845-878-4039 between the hours of 9:00 AM and 5:00 PM on the day preceding service. This service is available only to eligible passengers who have applied for and received a Para Transit ID.

### **Trolley Service**

Trolley service began in Philipstown on June 3, 2006. In a June 7, 2006 front-page article on the ribbon cutting, the PCNR reported “With a clang of the old-fashioned-sounding bell in a state-of-the-art wheelchair accessible vehicle, the beautiful trolley moved off with a full load of passengers, “scooped the loop” and began its maiden voyage.”

Two trolleys were purchased by Putnam County at a total cost of \$187,800 with 80% funding from the Federal Transportation Administration, 10% from NYS DOT, and 10% from Putnam County. The 18-seat trolleys are part of Putnam County’s bus fleet inventory and are staffed and maintained by the County’s transit contractor First Transit, Inc. The County pays annual maintenance, fuel and driver expenses and, according to John Lynch of the County Planning Department, the annual budget for running and maintaining the trolleys is between \$50 – \$60,000 a year. The county receives operating assistance from NYS DOT based on ridership and miles, as well as the 50-cent one-way fare (fares increased in May 2009 from 10 cents per ride in the first years of use). Seniors and Disabled with Office For the Aging ID Card, MTA (disabled) card, Medicare card, and/or half fare card issued by the Putnam County Planning Department are \$0.25. Infants ride free. According to the Planning Department figures, in 2006 the trolley took in \$546; revenue was \$622 from May through October of 2007. In the six months of 2007 tallied here, the trolley transported 7,473 one-way riders, 33% of whom were seniors. In six months of 2006, there were 6,235 one-way riders and 25% seniors. In evaluating these figures, remember that a rider who stays on the bus for only a short time before disembarking counts the same as one continuing on the entire route.

The trolley was funded by the government partners because it is expected that trolley service would support the village economy through tourism and access to local historic sites, benefitting both visitors and residents who can take advantage of riding on the route.

Trolley service runs Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from Memorial Day through the week before Christmas. The trolleys also run on other days if the following holidays do not fall on weekends: Memorial Day, July 4, Labor Day, Columbus Day, and Veteran's Day. The two trolleys make four runs per day starting at the Chamber of Commerce Visitor's Center at the foot of Main Street near the railroad tracks. The trolley loops from there making stops at the Cold Spring gazebo and dock, the Chapel Restoration, Foundry Dock Park, the Cold Spring train station, Main Street to the Drug World parking lot on Route 9D, the Foundry School Museum, Main Street in Nelsonville, Village Hall, the Cold Spring firehouse, Boscobel and it completes the trip at Garrison Landing and the Garrison Train Station where the trolley will turn around and trace its route back to the Visitor's Center. Many sites are visited several times during the same loop, and the above site information is not presented in order of visits. The round trip journey takes one hour and 45 minutes. The trolley runs from 11:00am through 6:45pm, with the last loop from the Visitor Center departing Cold Spring at 5:00pm. Passengers can also flag the trolley to stop at any point along its route, boarding or departing. Locations on the schedule are time and reference points only. No "bus stop" signs appear along the route, a matter of concern to some local merchants who have urged that signs be placed along Main Street to increase awareness and use of the trolley. Service Schedule information is available by calling 845-878-RIDE (7433) TDD: 845-878-4039.

The trolleys, maintained by the County as public transportation, must keep to a fixed route. Though requests have been made to use them for private events, such as weddings, Federal funding regulations prohibit use of the trolleys for "charter service." The Putnam County Planning Department determines the route with input from the Village. Informal requests to route the trolley to bring hikers to Breakneck trail heads have been turned down.

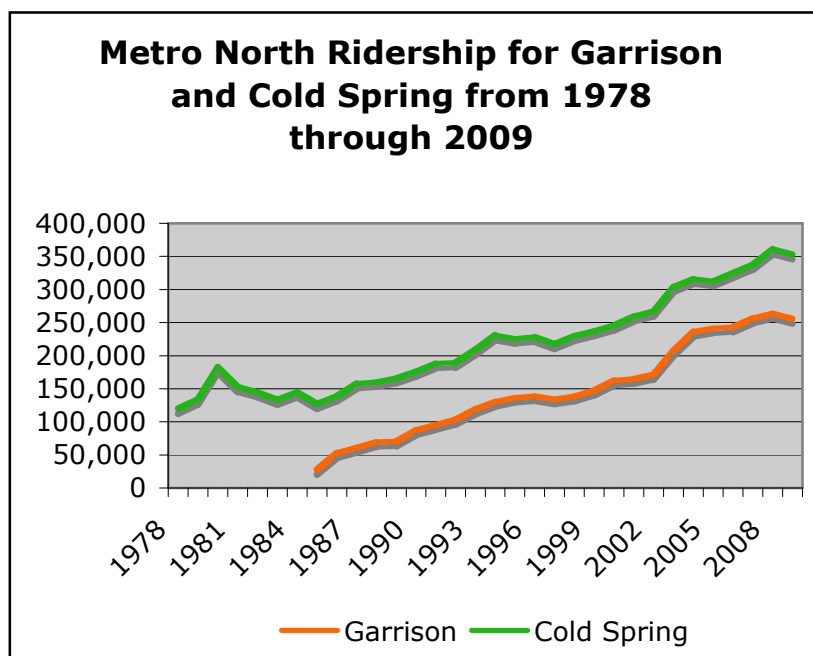
The useful life of the trolley vehicles is approximately seven years (ending in 2013) and there is no public process at this point for considering whether the vehicles would be replaced or how the economic development effectiveness of the trolleys will be measured.

**Ferries:** At this point there is no public ferry service to Cold Spring. Among other obstacles to ferry service, such as the one between Newburgh and Beacon, there is currently no place for large boats to tie up. According to Phil Heffernan, a member of the GIPS working group and a member of the Cold Spring Boat Club, there was deep water docking at the Dockside property that might still be deep enough for ferries to dock, and New York State owns the rights. Ferry service would require the development of pilings and a bulkhead and year round dock access. The Village is working out a stewardship agreement for the park from the State Department of Parks and Recreation.

Access to Cold Spring by river is limited for both transportation and recreation purposes. The Cold Spring dock was closed in 1988, when the new dock was built, with installation of rip rap and enclosed by a steel fence barrier.

**MetroNorth Train:** Cold Spring has a Metro-North Railroad station that serves the residents of Cold Spring via the Hudson Line. Trains leave for New York City every hour on weekdays, and about every 25 minutes during peak hours. It is 52.5 miles (85 km) from Grand Central Terminal and travel time to Grand Central is approximately one hour and 21 minutes. As of March 2010, monthly commutation fares to Grand Central are \$330. A ten-trip off-peak ticket from Cold Spring to the City costs \$95.75 and a ten-trip peak ticket is \$150.

Ridership for Cold Spring and Garrison from 1978 through 2009 is presented in the chart below, showing a five fold increase in ridership from the area, from 120,000 riders from Cold Spring in 1978 to 609,000 from the combined stations (Garrison was added in 1985) in 2009:

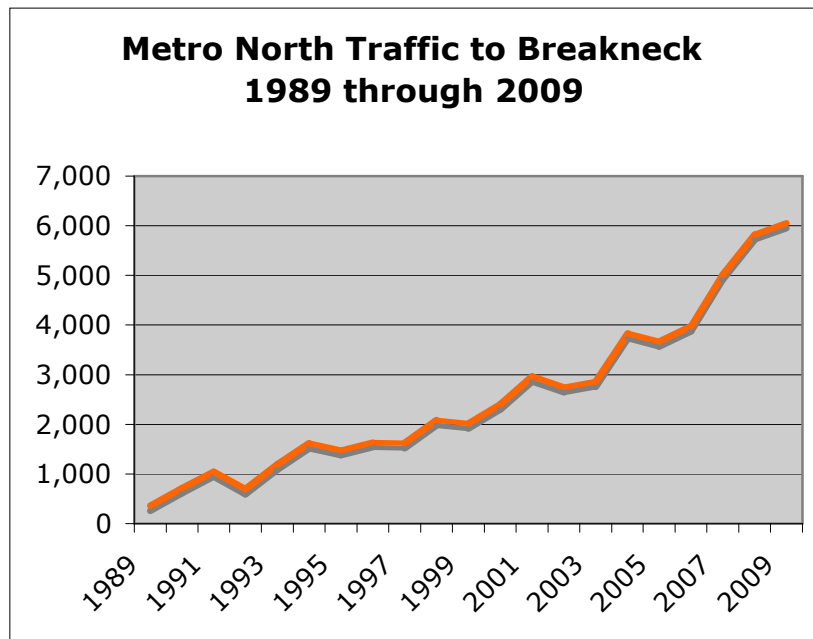


The MTA reports the following detailed breakout for ridership in Cold Spring in 2007 and 2008:

	Wkday AM Peak	Wkday Off-Peak	Sat	Sun	Wkly Avg
2007	307	121	418	376	6,488
2008	367	174	381	411	6,942

The original station is still standing at the foot of Cold Spring's Main Street. It is now a local restaurant, The Depot. The current Cold Spring station is located about 200 yards south of the old one. Walkways on both sides of the tracks connect the new station with Main Street and the Cold Spring Historic District. The walkways receive significant use not only from local residents taking the train but from city residents visiting the village. Hikers can often be seen around the station on warmer weekends, headed to or from the nearby peaks of the Hudson Highlands, since service here is regular while the more

convenient Breakneck Ridge is only a flag stop. The number of hikers getting off at Breakneck has risen significantly in the past few years, to approximately 6,000 annually, as shown in the chart below.



Residents and visitors have commented on the poor signage on the platforms, which makes it difficult for passengers disembarking to orient themselves to the village business district and riverfront. The train station platforms at Cold Spring are handicap accessible with elevators and ramps and are well lighted at night with schedules posted on kiosks. The elevators carry passengers over the tracks via a covered and heated pedestrian overpass, and provide the only means in the village for wheelchair-bound pedestrians to access the riverfront from the east side of the tracks. Wheelchair access from the station to the riverfront is, however, at best a challenge: there are no ramps on the underpass at Main Street, and no ramp on the north end of the west platform, so reaching the riverfront requires a dangerous and unmarked pedestrian crossing at Lunn Terrace and Market Street.

The platforms are well maintained by Metro North Railroad during the winter season. There is no staffed ticket office at this station though ticket machines have been installed on the southbound platform (in the direction of NY City) that accept cash, credit cards and debit cards.

The bridge over Lunn Terrace, which was built in 1930, provides car and pedestrian access to the station. (This bridge also provides the only access in the village for emergency vehicles and heavy trucks to get across the railroad to the west side of the tracks.) The bridge itself has maintenance and administrative challenges. Responsibility for the bridge is shared by Metro North (concrete structure, frame and abutment), the village of Cold Spring (asphalt) and NYS DOT (steel structure). MNR does a visual inspection of the bridge annually. NYSDOT does a structural analysis in their Biennial

Inspection, which is much more rigorous and MNR then addresses inspection flags as they are reported. According to Terrence McCauley, government liaison at MNR, they have been knocking down loose concrete over the tracks and the station platforms.

As reported in an inspection of the bridge made by MNR on June 20, 2007, there is evidence of at least fifteen cases of crumbling and spalling concrete as well as rusting of bearings and superstructure. Of these, eight rated a “4.” There was one “5” and the rest were “3’s.” In an email reply, when asked about many of the conditions in the last inspection that were rated a 4, McCauley stated that “ratings that require fixing will depend on the element being rated, but usually a 3 to 2 rating requires fixing.” For example, while the bearings are rusting, he states that they are rusted on the outside – suggesting that this is not a structural risk. McCauley reports that there are no plans to fix the bridge as of December 2008.

The underground passage at the intersection of Main Street and the railroad that connects the waterfront, dock, and bandstand with upper Main Street is maintained and administered by the Village of Cold Spring. The underpass was upgraded in 2005, using a grant, but is prone to flooding in heavy rains.

There are two sets of tracks maintained by Metro North, which help prevent delays, with the track on the riverside normally being the inbound, or NYC bound trains. For arrivals at Cold Spring, riders exit the train and proceed forward, or north, 120 yards to Main Street and the heart of the Village. The train tracks are owned by AmTrak and maintained by Metro North.

Parking at the Metro North Station is run by a sub-contractor operator, Allright Corporation (888-682-PARK). The capacity of the commuter parking lot is currently 223 spots. As of December 2008, there was a waiting list for monthly permits of 29 people, with number one on the list as of April 2008. Parking is offered by daily meter and monthly pass. On a daily basis, commuters pay at the meter for up to 16 hours at \$2.75 fee and 24 hours at \$4.75. Effective 11/1/2008, permit parking costs for residents and non-residents are:

<u>12 Month</u>	<u>6 Month</u>	<u>3 Month</u>	<u>Monthly</u>
\$328.38	\$192.91	\$104.04	\$39.02

Unlike MetroNorth stations where there is high rider volume, there is no regular taxi service from the Cold Spring station. Few taxis serve the station. One, Highland Taxi (265-TAXI) needs about 24 hour notice to pick up a passenger and stops driving at around 9pm. Thus, unless your local destination can be reached on foot or you drive to the station, MetroNorth service can be hard to access.

