
Regionalizing Council on Aging Transportation Services:

A Study of Six Towns in the SWAP and TRIC
Subregions of MAPC

Funding provided by the District Local Technical Assistance program,
Commonwealth of Massachusetts

December 2014

Prepared for:

The Towns of Bellingham, Foxborough, Franklin, Medway, Norfolk,
and Wrentham, and the Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional
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Acknowledgments

This report was produced by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council for the towns in the South West Advisory Planning Committee (SWAP) with funds from the District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) program administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development. MAPC wishes to thank the planners, Council on Aging Directors, and Town Administrators/Managers from each of the six participating towns for their assistance through this study process. We also wish to thank our colleagues at the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD) and at the Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional Transit Authority (GATRA) for their help gathering data, providing information, attending meetings, and assisting in the development of recommendations for this study.

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Executive Summary

The Southwest Advisory Planning Committee (SWAP), a subregion of the 101 cities and towns in the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) region, requested this study to explore the feasibility of regionalizing or sharing services across five municipal Council on Aging (COA) offices in the subregion and one municipality in the Three Rivers Interlocal Council (TRIC) subregion.

The main objectives of the study were to:

- Host a forum with Council on Aging Directors to discuss the benefits and challenges of the current service model and how regionalizing services could benefit riders.
- Collect data on the existing COA services and identify where overlap and/or inconsistency exist.
- Develop a set of recommendations for how the COAs could regionalize and share transportation assets and services.

The discussion forum with COA Directors revealed a number of benefits and challenges with COA transportation services such as:

- COA services are often the only transportation service available to seniors and disabled individuals. The service helps to reduce social isolation in these groups.
- Current COA dispatchers and drivers have local knowledge of clients, roadways, traffic patterns, etc. This could be lost initially by moving toward a shared-service model.
- Costs for providing the service are rising while funding remains level.
- Towns have difficulty making longer distance trips because it occupies their vehicle and driver for the entire day.

As part of the data collection effort, MAPC noted the following issues that could be addressed through a regional model as a benefit to COAs and their clients:

- Smaller groupings of municipalities could come together to work on sharing trips for longer distance medical trips.
- Smaller groupings of municipalities could come together to work on sharing trips to regional adult daycare facilities.
- Transportation services (both dispatching and driving) could be contracted through GATRA and provided by a third party contractor. This would free up COAs to focus additional time on programming and social services.

Recommendations

Through the data collection effort and meetings with COA Directors, and discussions with GATRA, MAPC identified several recommendations that could lead to improved services for these six municipalities.

1. Create a working group made up of the Directors from each of the six COAs to work on sharing transportation services. This would be an opportunity for coordination and discussion and identification of best practices.
2. Amend current municipal contracts with GATRA to specifically allow for the sharing of rides across municipalities.
3. Examine the feasibility of sharing rides for long distance medical trips and trips to adult daycare facilities.
4. Investigate the feasibility of moving long distance medical trips to a third party transportation provider through GATRA's existing long distance medical contract.
5. Investigate the feasibility of moving all transportation services to a third party contractor through GATRA's existing transportation contract.

The results of the forum and data collection effort are explained in more detail in the body of this report, as are the recommendations for improving transportation services across these municipalities.

Chapter 1: Introduction

In October 2013, the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) completed the SWAP Regional Public Transit Feasibility Study. That study looked at existing public transportation services in the ten towns that make up the SWAP subregion to recommend ways in which existing and new services could be adapted to provide improved transportation options for residents and businesses. The report primarily focused on fixed-route transit services and commuter shuttles as opportunities to increase service levels in the subregion. While these services are a critical component of improving travel options, they are not the only options available. The Feasibility Study also recommended exploring regionalization options for existing town services such as Council on Aging (COA) van and shuttle services. While a number of the short-term transit recommendations from the study have been, or are in the process of being implemented, it was determined that additional work should be done to investigate the feasibility of regionalizing aspects of the COA services.

The SWAP Council on Aging Regionalization Study provides background data and recommendations that outline ways in which aspects of these services could be shared among six communities in and around the SWAP subregion. For this study, the towns of Bellingham, Franklin, Medway, Norfolk, and Wrentham in SWAP and Foxborough in TRIC came together to share data and ideas about sharing services. MAPC determined it would be best to start with these six communities because they are all currently members of the Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional Transit Authority (GATRA) and any sharing of services could be facilitated through the transit authority. Over time, it may make sense to bring in other GATRA communities as well as communities served by the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA).

This feasibility study is tasked with exploring the feasibility of three specific items to try to gain additional efficiencies in service:

1. Pooling transportation services across communities, particularly for longer-distance trips.

2. Regionalizing dispatch services to make the scheduling and routing of the vans more timely and efficient, and assist in facilitating the sharing of services across municipal boundaries
3. Regionalizing all transportation services (dispatching, scheduling, and driving) under a third party contractor who could render services under a common contract with the communities or be administered through GATRA.

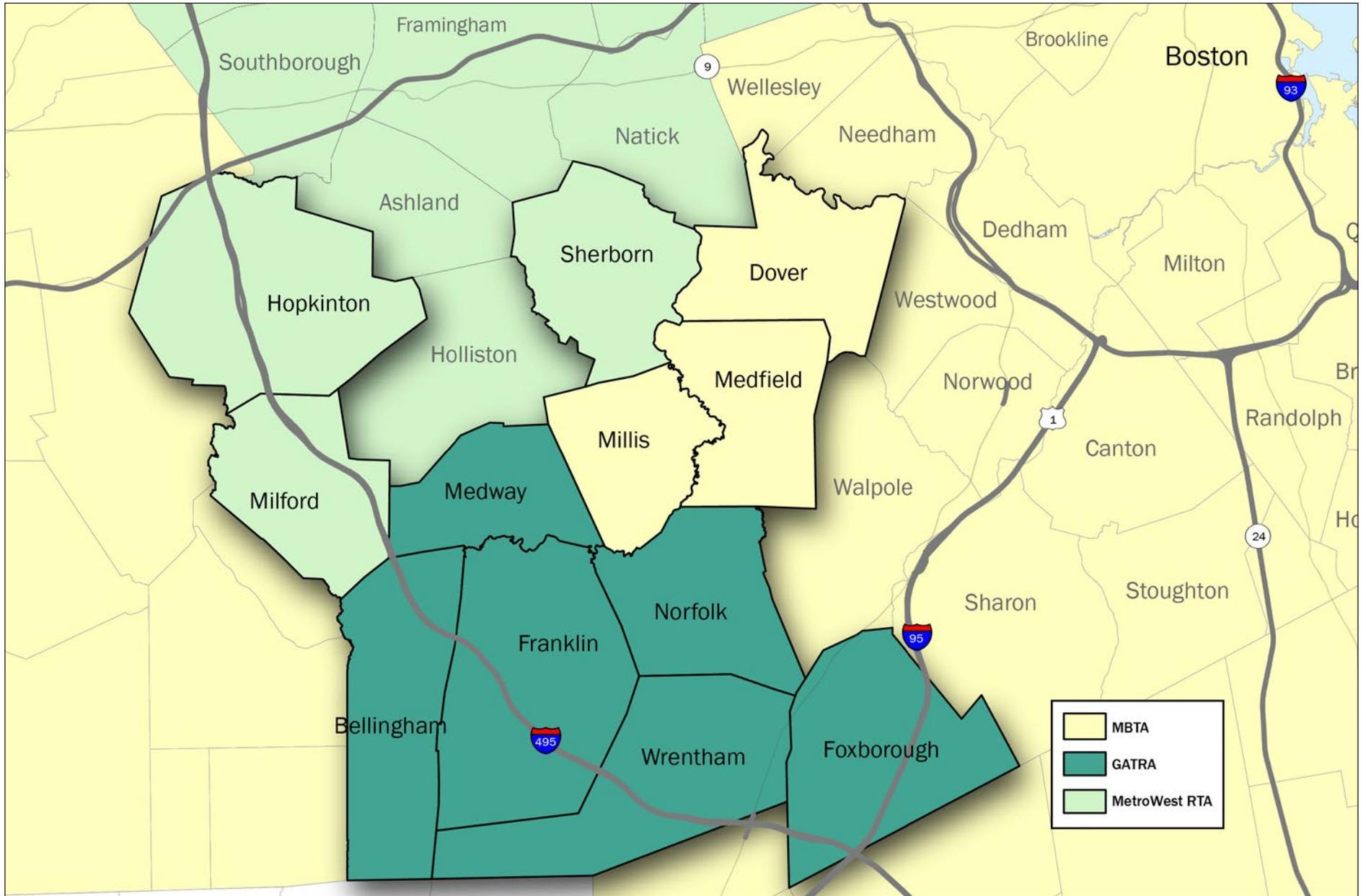
Study Participants

The SWAP subregion is located southwest of Boston between the I-495 corridor and the Route 1 corridor and is served by three Regional Transit Authorities (shown in Figure 1.1). Each municipality participated in this mobility study through a working group. While this study only specifically included six communities, the entire SWAP subregion (ten communities) served as the working group for the project. The Working Group included at least one municipal representative (i.e. town planner, town administrator) who provided a working knowledge of municipal transit services and needs. A list of municipalities and the corresponding representatives are shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Working Group Representatives

Municipality	Working Group Member	Title
Bellingham	Stacey Wetstein	Town Planner
Dover	Gino Carlucci	Town Planner
Franklin	Bryan Taberner	Planning Director
Hopkinton	Elaine Lazarus	Director of Land Use, Planning and Permitting
Medway	Susan Affleck-Childs	Planning & Economic Development Coordinator
Milford	Larry Dunkin	Town Planner
Millis	Charles Aspinwall	Town Administrator
Norfolk	Ray Goff	Town Planner
Sherborn	Gino Carlucci	Town Planner
Wrentham	Paige Duncan	Town Planner

Figure 1.1: Study Area Towns and Regional Transit Authority Affiliations



Chapter 2: Council on Aging Services

Council on Aging offices across SWAP communities provide critical transportation services to seniors and disabled residents, connecting them to medical facilities, shopping centers, and social engagements. Without this form of transportation, many seniors and persons with disabilities would be isolated and may not get the care and social interaction that is necessary to support a healthy and active lifestyle.

While the transportation services provided by the COAs is valued by both the service provider and the clients, the ways in which those services are rendered vary community by community. This can be the result of a number of factors which may include town budgets, the number of vehicles available, the number of staff, the hours of operation, and the destinations served. The creation of a shared-service model, where Council on Aging transportation services and resources are shared across multiple municipalities, could provide improved transportation services to the populations that most need it.

MAPC worked closely with Council on Aging (COA) Directors from five towns in SWAP (Bellingham, Franklin, Medway, Norfolk, and Wrentham) and one in TRIC (Foxborough) to identify opportunities and challenges with the current model of transportation services and look for ways the current model could be improved. MAPC also worked with COA Directors to compile a comprehensive set of data to inventory the current resources available to each COA, the costs, number of rides provided, and the destinations each COA serves.

The following sections of the report highlight key points noted by COA Directors regarding current and future service models, results of the data collection effort, and provide a potential series of next steps and decision points for improvements to the current service model.

Existing vs. Shared-Service Models

In November 2014, MAPC hosted a forum in Franklin, Massachusetts and invited the Council on Aging Directors from the participating

towns to share information about the benefits and challenges with existing service models for senior transportation compared to those of a shared-service model. Five COA Directors and/or staff attended the forum. Table 2.1 shows the study area municipalities and their COA Directors that MAPC worked with during the study.

Table 2.1: COA Directors by Town

Municipality	COA Director
Bellingham	Laura DeMattia
Franklin	Karen Alves
Foxborough	Vicky Lowe
Medway	Missy Dzikczek
Norfolk	Norma Shruhan
Wrentham	Janet Angelico

The current COA transportation service model revolves around the local COA office providing all services related to transportation which includes coordination, scheduling, dispatching, driving, maintenance, program development, etc. These tasks are occurring at varying degrees across the six municipalities and in some cases the level of service may vary depending on the size and budget of the COA. As town residents continue to strive to age in place, the need for quality transportation options grows and will continue to grow as baby boomers age and seek transportation services.

During our conversations with COA staff, a number of themes emerged and were categorized under four main discussion points.

Benefits of the Current COA Service Model

The first topic area of discussion was the benefits provided to riders under the current COA transportation service model. Several themes emerged as COA staff discussed the benefits of their systems:

- High-Quality Local Service - The current local service provides direct door-to-door access for seniors and the disabled which can be easier for them to navigate than other transportation services in the area. The current system is flexible to the user's needs and rides are kept short and direct for the user at a low cost.

- Social Service - Similar to what we have found in other communities, COA staff noted that transportation services are not only about mobility but also about wellness checks. COA staff who are used to the same riders and their schedules know if someone has not requested a ride at their usual day and time. That could be an indicator that something may be wrong with that resident and may prompt a staff member to do a wellness check.
- Easier Option for Seniors - COA staff noted that in some of their communities transportation options are available outside of the COA services. While some residents may have multiple transportation options, the COA services seem to work the best and are easiest to schedule and navigate.

Challenges of the Current COA Service Model

The second topic area of discussion was the challenge of providing senior transportation services. Several themes emerged as directors discussed these challenges:

- Costs and Funding - As was mentioned earlier in this chapter, the aging population is growing in many of our communities which creates a bigger pull on COA budgets to stretch further to serve more people. The growing demand for senior transportation services is a continuing challenge that will become increasingly more difficult in the future.

In addition to more people requesting transportation through the COAs, costs of providing the service are also rising. Fuel prices have, and will likely continue to increase over the long term. Other costs such as maintenance and insurance are not fixed and can vary depending on the vehicle and the needs of the fleet. These increased costs can take money from the COA budget that may be used for other line items. While costs and demand are increasing, town funding is often level and may not meet future demand.

- Longer Distance Trips - COA staff noted the difficulty in accommodating longer trips for medical appointments (Boston, Framingham, Worcester, etc) because it can reduce their ability to

make shorter in-town trips if the van is scheduled to make a long distance trip. Some COAs only have access to one large vehicle, and if that vehicle makes a longer trip to Boston it is not available for the shorter trips in-town or to surrounding towns.

Benefits of Changes to the Current Service Model

The third topic area focused on the potential benefits that could result from changes made to the current service model. Several themes emerged as directors discussed the potential benefits:

- Added Service - Changing the service model for COAs could assist in providing more trips for more residents in these communities. For example, if longer distance trips were provided by a third party contractor it could free up vehicles to provide local trips for users. If travel times were kept under 60 minutes, adjacent communities could share rides for longer distance trips to help with system efficiencies and costs.

If those trips were handled by a third party contractor, the COA staff could also hand over the dispatching of those trips as well. This could free up some staff time to work on other transportation-related services or other services provided by the COAs.

- Ability to Serve Other Destinations - It was mentioned during the meeting with COA staff that there is a growing demand for access to adult daycare facilities. Only certain communities have these facilities, and more and more requests are coming in for trips to these destinations. Under a new service model, there could be a sharing of rides among COAs that are taking residents to and from these facilities at the same times each day.

Challenges of a Shared-Service Model

The final topic area was a discussion of the potential challenges of making changes to the current model. The following challenges were discussed:

- Costs and Funding - It could be challenging to create an agreement among towns with respect to cost and revenue sharing. Towns with more service would not want to see a degradation in service at

the expense of increasing service for other towns. It could be a challenge balancing the needs of large and small towns.

- Service Changes - COA staff noted that giving up certain transportation services would be difficult because their residents are used to their staff and their system. Any changes in service would need to be implemented gradually with a strong marketing campaign.
- Staff Changes - It was also mentioned that current staff, particularly drivers, may feel threatened if they think their job is at risk. This issue could quickly derail any efforts to change the current service model if it is not addressed up front.

Overall, the discussion with COA staff resulted in an identification of some very important benefits and challenges with both types of transportation models. Staff noted the current and future challenges with providing both social and mobility services for a growing population on a limited budget, and at the same time recognized that potential benefits do exist if towns changed course and switched to a regional model for delivering this critical service.

Council on Aging Data Collection Effort

As a follow-on activity to the broader COA staff discussion, MAPC also undertook a data collection effort to better understand the variability of COA transportation services among the communities. Data was collected on the following topic areas:

- Vehicles
- Dispatching
- Drivers
- Ridership and Trip Information
- Costs for Service

One of the challenges to changing the current service model is creating agreements on levels of service, potential cost and revenue sharing, vehicle sharing and maintenance, etc. This data collection effort looked at the variety of policies, costs, and levels of service across the six COAs to try to better understand how diverse the differences are and where communities could benefit by implementing new service changes.

COA Vehicle Inventory

MAPC collected data from each COA on the number of vehicles available, the type of vehicle, mileage, fuel efficiency, and whether they were ADA accessible or not. At the time of the survey there were 14 vehicles available for service across the 6 towns. Most towns have access to one or two vehicles for transport, but some have access to three to four vehicles allowing for greater service delivery. The average age of the vehicles varied by town. The average mileage on the vehicles was 57,906. The current vehicles also average around 12 miles per gallon for fuel efficiency.

COA Directors were also asked a question in the data collection survey about the adequacy of their current vehicle fleet. Several Directors noted they wished they had access to a smaller vehicle, like a sedan, to take smaller groups or individuals to destinations that may not be as popular and do not require a larger van. The smaller vehicles are also easier to drive and are more fuel efficient.

COA Dispatching Inventory

Dispatchers serve two very important functions as part of the overall COA transportation service. First, dispatchers are at the front lines of communication with seniors and the disabled providing them with information about how the system works and how to go about scheduling a ride. Secondly, dispatchers are the ones who actually schedule the rides during the course of a day or a week and align trips to reduce redundancy and overlap as much as possible. Dispatchers also serve in a social role by interacting with clients and forming relationships which can be used as a way to check in on the health of clients.

Looking across the survey results for the six towns, dispatching hours are fairly uniform with how dispatching is handled and the policies for hours, pay rates, who actually does the dispatching, and the ride reservation policy. The staff who are doing the actual dispatching does vary a bit from town to town. In some cases the Director or Assistant Director assists with dispatching, and in some towns they employ a dispatcher position. Survey results indicated that the six towns handle dispatching in different ways.

In some cases, staff may wear different hats and everyone does dispatching service at some point during the week. In other cases, the COA may have a dedicated staff person who handles dispatch and that person(s) may be paid or a volunteer. As part of the survey, MAPC asked if dispatchers were paid or volunteer. Most COAs responded that their dispatchers were paid, but this is most likely indicative of current paid staff assisting with dispatching and not that each community has separate paid dispatching staff.

Hourly pay for COA dispatching was spread across a number of ranges. The survey indicated that three towns paid employees between \$10-\$15 an hour, and two towns paid between \$15-\$20 and hour. Some of the higher pay rates are linked to the person who is doing the dispatching. In cases where a director, assistant director, or administrative staff are dispatching, the pay rates tended to be higher. For the towns who used dedicated dispatch staff, hourly rates tended to be lower.

Our work with other COAs across the Boston region has revealed that requiring riders to schedule trips far in advance of their appointment can often be an impediment to ensuring residents are adequately served. Some COAs across the region can require a minimum of two or more days advanced notice to schedule a trip. This creates challenges for users of the system, especially those users who may need transportation for an appointment they couldn't schedule far in advance. The six municipal COAs that MAPC surveyed for this study had relatively quick turnaround times for scheduling trips, most requiring advanced notice of one day or less. During our discussions with COA Directors, many noted that they try to accommodate ride requests even if the client calls with shorter notice than what is required.

Dispatching hours varied very little across the six towns. Most COAs begin dispatching services at either 8AM or 9AM and operate until 3PM or 4PM. For the COAs that offer dispatching on Fridays, it is typically limited to a half day of service.

Figure 2.2: Vehicle Availability

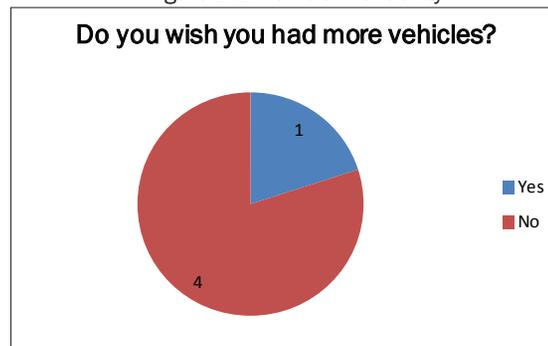


Figure 2.3: Dispatcher Information

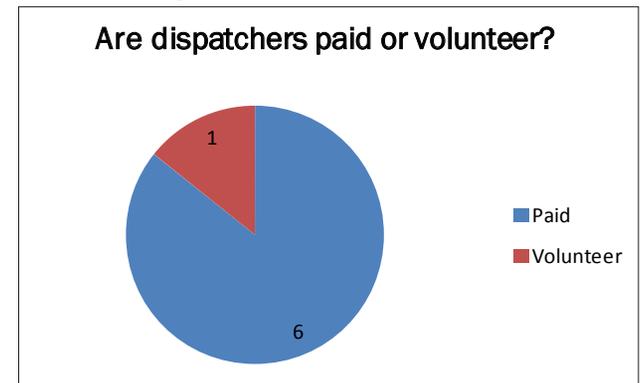


Figure 2.4: Dispatcher Pay Range

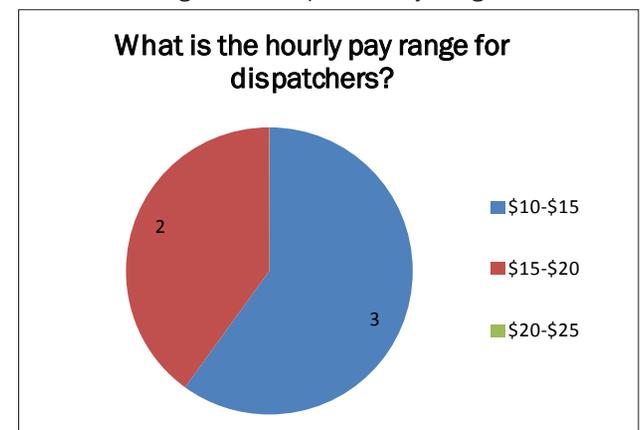
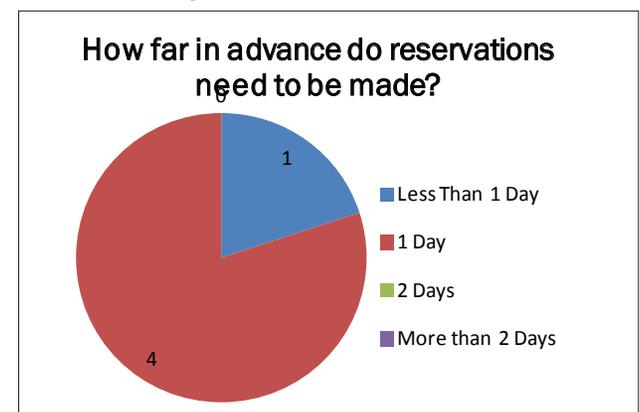


Figure 2.5: Advance Notice



COA Driver Inventory

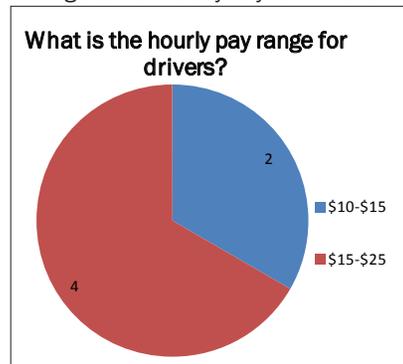
Similar to dispatchers, drivers also play a dual role for the COA services. Drivers are responsible for picking up and dropping off clients during operating hours, but also check in with clients during the ride and can report back to the COA Director if there are noticeable changes in health or faculties of clients. This can be an important, and often overlooked benefit of the COA transportation service especially for seniors who are isolated and not in close proximity to friends or family members.

Among the six municipalities there are 23 drivers available to be scheduled for COA transportation services. In the case of Bellingham and Medway, these drivers also cover the in-town and commuter rail shuttles. In most towns, there are one or two full-time permanent drivers who handle most of the hours during a typical work week. In the event the normal drivers are sick or on vacation, each town has back up part-time paid or volunteer drivers that can step in to fill the void in the schedule. All six towns have at least one paid driver on staff.

Pay ranges for drivers across the towns are similar to dispatcher pay ranges. Two towns noted they pay drivers at an hourly rate of between \$10 and \$15 dollars/hour and four towns noted they pay drivers between \$15 and \$25 dollars/hour.

Operating hours for drivers are similar to dispatching hours in most towns. Many towns begin their routes between 8AM and 9AM and conclude their final rides of the day between 2:30PM and 4:00PM. In Medway and Bellingham, driver hours vary a bit more because of the early morning and evening routes driven as part of their in-town and commuter rail shuttle services.

Figure 2.6: Hourly Pay for Drivers



MAPC also asked two follow-up questions about driver/dispatcher communication. The first question asked specifically how drivers were communicated with during the day to receive information about ride scheduling and pick-up/drop-off locations. All six towns responded that they communicate with drivers through cell phones, one town also used a two-way radio.

MAPC asked COAs if a GPS unit in their vehicles would be helpful for drivers? Most COAs answered no to this question and noted that many already use GPS technology to assist drivers. The one COA that answered yes noted a GPS would be very useful for both new drivers and drivers who are making longer distance medical trips.

COA Ridership

MAPC requested ridership data and asked the COA Directors about the busiest times of service during a typical weekday. Five of the six towns provided us with ridership data. Across the five towns with data, there are approximately 2,400 single trips provided each month. In addition to these trips, the Medway and Bellingham COAs also provide transportation services for in-town shuttle routes and commuter rail shuttles. Even though these trips are not specific to seniors and riders with disabilities, these two COAs are providing around 1,600 additional trips a month.

COA Directors also noted in the survey the busiest times of the day for trips by their riders. Most noted that the hours of 9AM - 11AM are busiest, followed by 7AM - 9AM and 11AM - 1PM. These results correspond with trips occurring at the beginning of the COA service hours and are consistent with travel times to medical appointments, shopping, and the start of programming at senior centers in the towns.

MAPC also asked about travel restrictions on COA vehicles. Policies for who can ride these vehicles were consistent across the COAs and matched with GATRA's eligibility requirements of residents over the age of 60 or those with a disability. Riders who have a disability are required to be certified by GATRA through an application process.

Trip Origins and Travel Destinations

Working closely with our regional planning colleagues at the Southeastern Regional Planning & Economic Development District (SRPEDD) and the Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional Transit Authority (GATRA), MAPC was able to obtain trip manifests for a two week period in the Spring of 2014. The manifests are a written record of every trip the COAs made during that two week period. Using the trip manifests, MAPC entered each trip origin and destination into a database which was then mapped in GIS to create a visual representation of all trip origins and destinations. The purpose of mapping the origins and destinations was to see if there were patterns among the five COAs surveyed which may indicate common destinations that could serve as candidate locations for sharing rides.

Figure 2.10 is a map showing the most popular destinations that the five COAs made trips to during the two week survey period. The red dots indicate the trip destination. The larger the red dot, the more trips that destination experienced during that two week period. As you can see, there are several large and medium-sized red dots across the map. Many of these dots represent the various senior centers in each town, major shopping plazas and grocery stores, and medical facilities and rehabilitation facilities. While it is important to understand and visualize trip distribution across these destinations, it is arguably more important to see where there is overlap among the five COAs and their most common destinations.

Figure 2.11 is a map showing trip destinations where more than one COA made a trip to over that two week period. The pie chart circles on the map indicate which COAs made trips to that destination, and the size of the circle indicates the number of trips. The larger the circle, the more trips were made. One example of this is the Milford Hospital campus where Franklin, Bellingham, and Medway all made trips there during the two week period. It is not surprising to see this pattern considering that medical complex serves many of the towns in SWAP and MetroWest, but seeing the data mapped shows how many COAs have overlapping trips to that destination. Other common destinations include Downtown Franklin, the Bellingham shopping plaza on Route 126 and Hartford Avenue, and the Franklin Village Shopping Center.

This data was shared with the COA Directors and other study representatives who confirmed that these destinations are some of the ones with likely overlap. The map should serve as a guide in identifying potential locations where shared rides could be beneficial.

Figure 2.7: Driver Communication

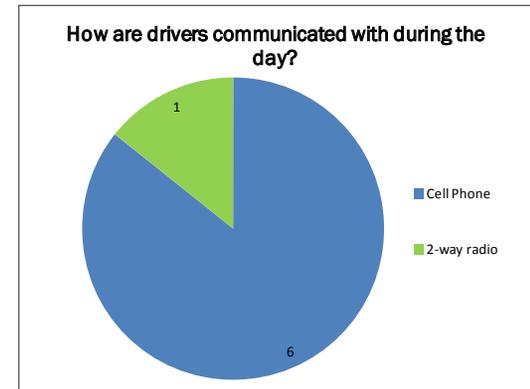


Figure 2.8: GPS Information

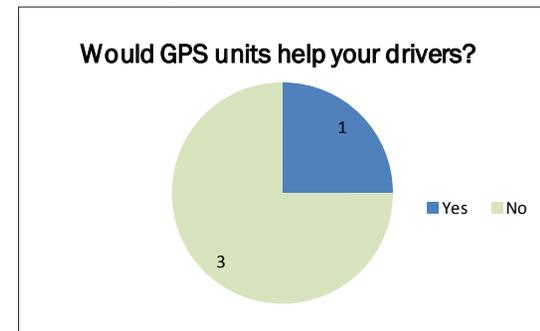


Figure 2.9: Busy Times

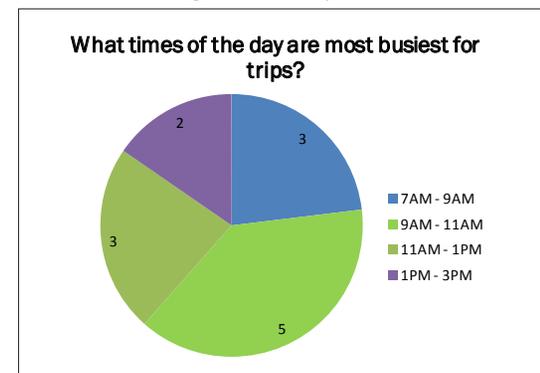


Figure 2.10: Popular Destinations Served by Five COAs Surveyed

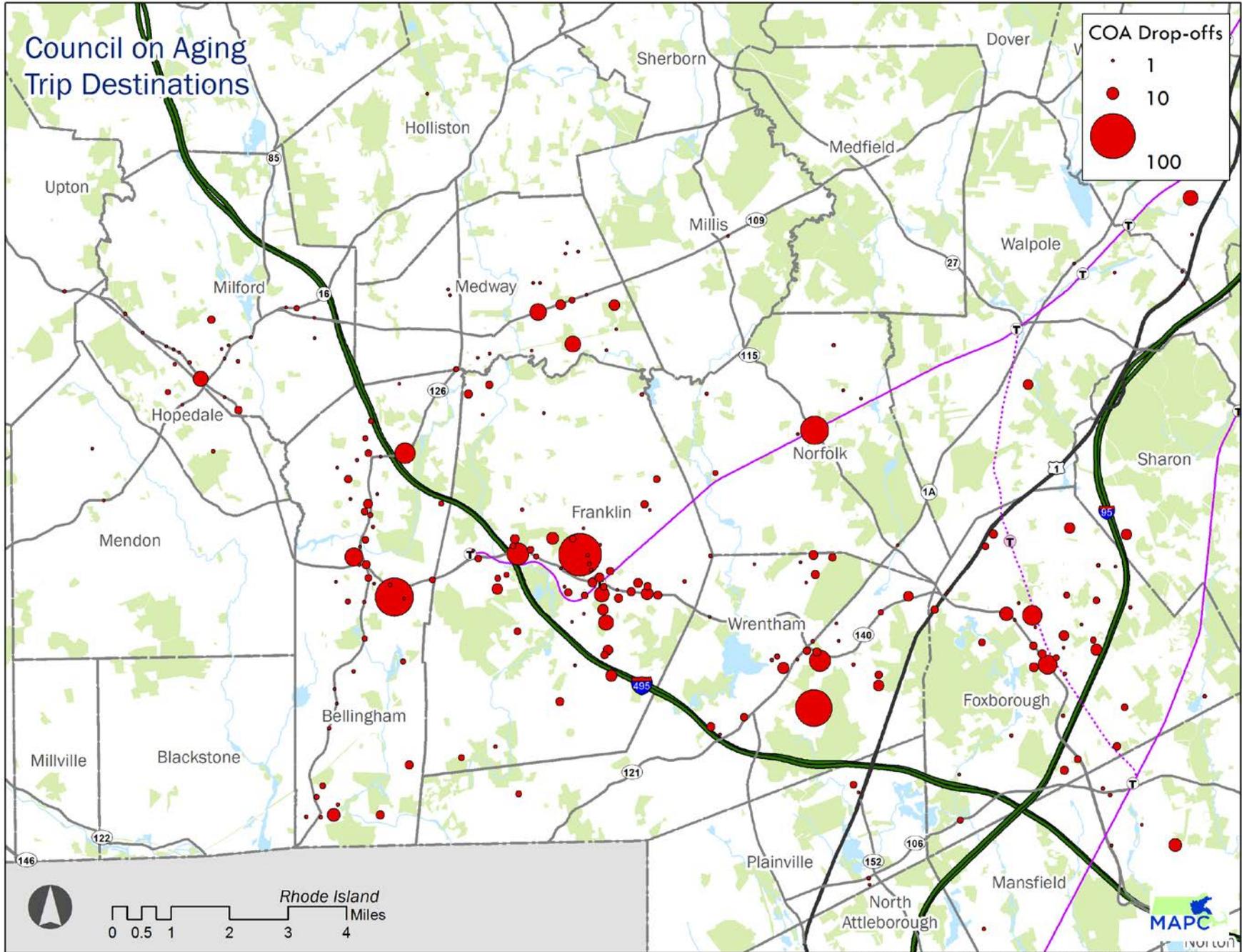
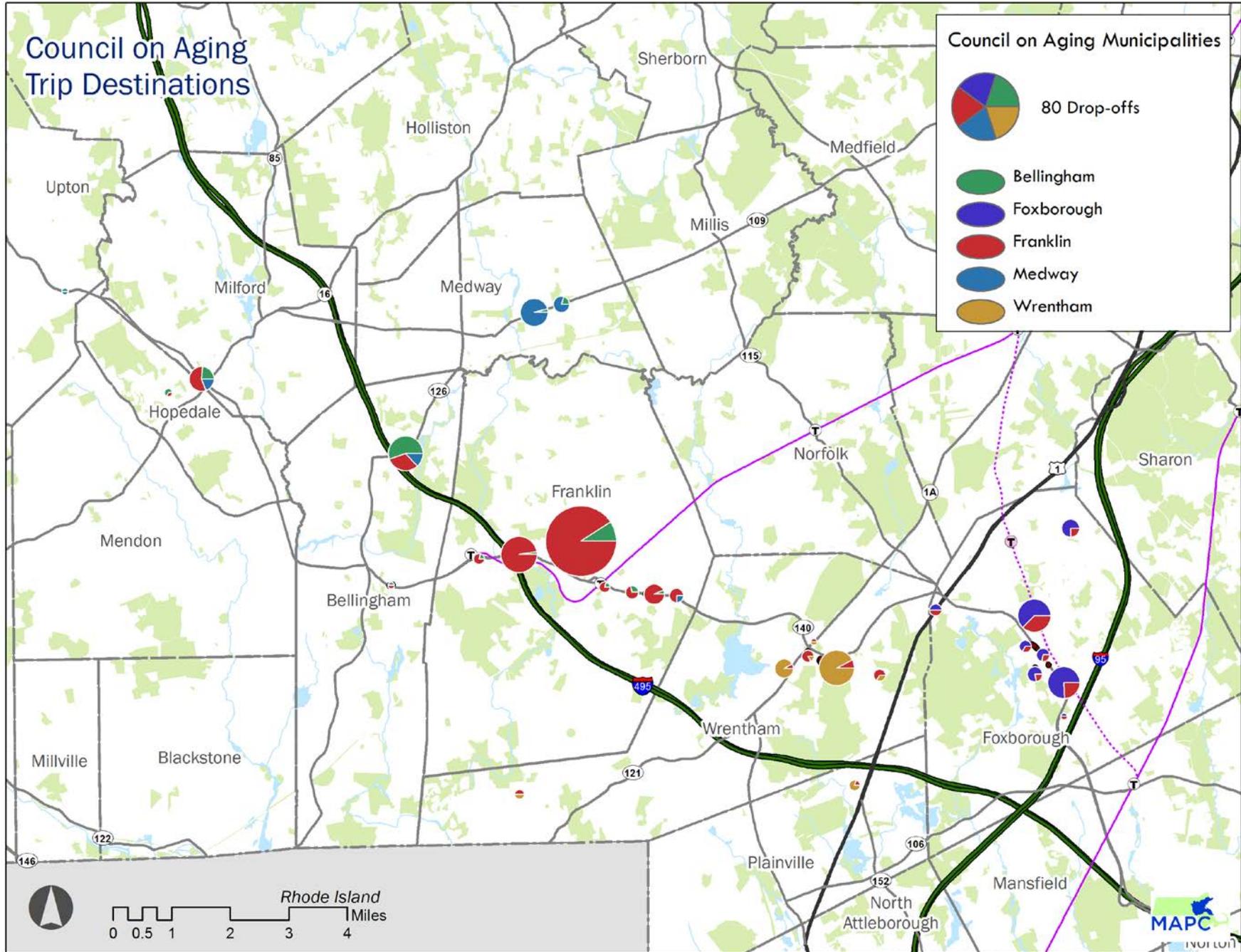


Figure 2.11: Destinations with Overlap between the Five COAs Surveyed



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Chapter 3: Recommendations

In addition to the data collection effort, MAPC was asked to develop a set of recommendations that outline specific action steps, time frames, and responsible parties to move toward a more regionalized system for COA transportation. These six communities have a unique opportunity to make changes to their service model and have a willing partner in GATRA who has already worked to set up outside transportation contractors for municipalities (the Town of Franklin uses a contractor through GATRA to handle their transportation services).

Short-Term: Recommendation 1 - Modify Existing Contracts

One of the simplest and quickest steps that could be undertaken to formally allow and encourage the sharing of rides is to modify the existing contracts between GATRA and the municipalities to authorize the municipalities to enter into ride sharing agreements with each other. **Existing contracts do not explicitly prohibit the municipalities from doing this**, but there is not language in the contracts that specifically allows the sharing of rides. If contracts are amended, the municipalities should work with GATRA to define the language changes. Municipalities should also insert language that allows them to enter into Intermunicipal Agreements (IMAs) with other municipalities that would be part of a ride sharing agreement. This recommendation could be implemented in the next six months.

Implementation Steps	Responsible Party				
	Town Manager/ Administrator	COA Director	Board of Selectmen	GATRA	Transportation Contractor
1. Contact GATRA Administrator to indicate willingness to amend current contract.	X	X			
2. Ensure contract language includes provisions that allow municipalities to enter into Intermunicipal Agreements (IMAs) with other communities for ride sharing purposes.	X			X	
2a. Language should include an authorization for use of vehicles in municipalities that enter into an IMA or MOU with another municipality.					
2b. Language should state notification or a copy of any IMA be sent to GATRA.					
2c. Language should include a defined scope of services that municipalities can enter into an IMA for.					
3. Formalize language change in the current contract. <i>(GATRA could do this unilaterally to the contract with Kiessling, or with approval of the Boards of Selectmen in each municipality where the contract is directly with GATRA)</i>	X	X	X	X	
4. In the case of contracts between GATRA and the municipality, the Board of Selectmen would need to vote to approve the contract amendments. This should occur prior to the end of the current contract, which is June 30, 2015 .			X		

Short-Term: Recommendation 2 - Create a Working Group

In order to increase communication across the six COAs, MAPC recommends a working group be created for the purposes of discussing common transportation challenges and opportunities to coordinate rides and services. Currently the six COAs are in separate regional coordinating groups, which is where these discussions often take place. Creating an opportunity for the COAs to get together every few months could be beneficial if sharing rides and services is the preferred outcome. This working group could be easily organized within the next six months.

Implementation Steps	Responsible Party				
	Town Manager/ Administrator	COA Director	Board of Selectmen	GATRA	Transportation Contractor
1. COA Directors agree that a working group with SWAP and TRIC municipalities would be beneficial.		X			
2. Group formalizes and meets quarterly to discuss transportation opportunities and challenges, as well as other COA related items.		X			

Short-Term: Recommendation 3 - Sharing Long Distance Trips

A challenge faced by several of the COAs is how to effectively manage long distance medical trips for their residents. As noted earlier in the report, a van can be taken out of local service all day when long distance medical trips are requested. Some COAs have transferred long distance medical trips over to GATRA's third party contractor (Kiessling) to handle these long distance trips. While that may be a longer term solution for some COAs, in the short-term they could decide to share rides to common destinations as a way to free up van service for the local trips. For example, if two COAs are making separate trips to Milford or Worcester on the same day, COA Directors could decide to share that ride using only one van if it makes sense. This would require that language changes be adopted by the Board of Selectmen to allow for municipalities to enter into IMAs with other municipalities to share rides (as noted in Recommendation 1). This discussion and adoption of an IMA could occur within six months to a year.

Implementation Steps	Responsible Party				
	Town Manager/ Administrator	COA Director	Board of Selectmen	GATRA	Transportation Contractor
1. Formalize language in existing COA contracts that would allow for ride sharing to occur (as noted in Recommendation 1).	X	X	X	X	
2. Use the COA working group (Recommendation 2) as the forum to discuss which COAs could potentially share long distance trips, and potential dates, times, and destinations.		X			
3. Develop and execute an IMA that details the scope and protocols of the agreement for ride sharing.	X	X			

Short-Term: Recommendation 4 - Adult Day Care Ride Share

During our discussions with COA Directors, they discussed a particular opportunity for sharing rides across municipalities that could act as a catalyst for a regional approach. Many COAs are making trips to adult daycare facilities in the area. These daycare facilities act as regional destinations with set schedules and set pick up and drop off times. COA Directors noted that they are making trips to these facilities several times a week, and travel through adjacent municipalities to get there. Therefore, this could serve as an opportunity for ride sharing and as a way to serve more seniors with fewer vehicles. This recommendation could be achieved in the next six months to a year if contracts are amended to allow for IMAs and the COA Directors are able to identify ride sharing opportunities across municipalities for day care pick up and drop off.

Implementation Steps	Responsible Party				
	Town Manager/ Administrator	COA Director	Board of Selectmen	GATRA	Transportation Contractor
1. Formalize language in existing COA contracts that would allow for ride sharing to occur (as noted in Recommendation 1).	X	X	X	X	
2. Use the COA working group (Recommendation 2) as the forum to discuss which COAs could potentially share long distance trips, and potential dates, times, and destinations.		X			
3. Develop and execute an IMA that details the scope and protocols of the agreement for ride sharing.	X	X			

Mid-Term: Recommendation 1 - Shift Long Distance Medical Trips

If COA Directors and their respective Boards determined that moving long distance medical trips over to a third party transportation contractor would be easier and more efficient, municipalities contract GATRA to see if they could join the current contract with Kiessling. The benefits of getting on the Kiessling contract through GATRA include no longer having to handle the dispatching and driving for long distance medical trips, not having to take their own vehicles out of service for the day to make the trips, and being able to spend more time scheduling and making local trips for users. This recommendation could be implemented in the next year.

Implementation Steps	Responsible Party				
	Town Manager/ Administrator	COA Director	Board of Selectmen	GATRA	Transportation Contractor
1. COA Director and Board agree to move all long distance medical trips to a third party contractor.		X			
2. Town Manager/Administrator and COA Director work with GATRA and third party contractor to draft a contract for services (or amend existing contract with Kiessling if possible).	X	X		X	X
3. Board of Selectmen vote to authorize GATRA to enter into a contract with the third party contractor on behalf of the town.			X		
4. COA and GATRA aggressively market the new service and implement some form of travel training to ease the transition for users.		X		X	

Long-Term: Recommendation 1 - Shift All Transportation Services

Over the longer term, it may make sense for some or all of the COAs to move away from providing transportation services and focus on social services and programming. This may become particularly important if the number of seniors in each municipality continues to grow, placing added demand on already constrained services. A third party contractor may be able to provide the level of service needed to sustain the growth of the aging population in these municipalities more effectively than a COA. If a decision was made at the municipal level to move transportation services over to a contractor, the existing model employed in Franklin could be one to work from. Franklin has a contract with GATRA for all COA transportation services to be provided through a third party contractor. It is possible that other municipalities could be included on that contract, and if not, a separate contract could be drafted between GATRA and the municipality. The COAs we spoke to, with the exception of Franklin, seemed reluctant at this time to give up the transportation services in full. Therefore, we have categorized this recommendation as a longer-term goal to work toward. This recommendation has the potential to bring the most benefits to the COAs by allowing them to focus on other types of programming and services and leave the transportation aspects to an outside party. This recommendation is achievable in a one to two year time frame, but given the reluctance of many COAs at this time, it will likely be longer than that.

Implementation Steps	Responsible Party				
	Town Manager/ Administrator	COA Director	Board of Selectmen	GATRA	Transportation Contractor
1. Municipality would need to make the choice to move all COA transportation services over to a third party contractor, likely solidified by a vote of the COA Board and the Board of Selectmen.	X	X	X		
2. Town Manager/Administrator and COA Director work with GATRA and third party contractor to draft a contract for services (or amend existing contract with Kiessling if possible).	X	X		X	X
3. COA would relinquish dispatching and driving to the contractor. New transportation contractor may continue to use existing town drivers as staff to handle additional service and trips.		X			X
4. COA and GATRA would aggressively market new service to riders to ease the transition.		X		X	

Inter-Municipal Agreement Sample

A number of the recommendations in this report may require an agreement among municipalities for changes in service, sharing service and vehicles, and sharing costs. MAPC developed a sample inter-municipal agreement (IMA) that could be customized for different types of agreements between municipalities. This IMA can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.

Conclusion

The results of both the Council on Aging Director's forum and MAPC's data collection effort show preliminarily that there are clear opportunities for sharing rides and regionalizing some aspects of the COA transportation services. There are steps that could be taken in the short and mid-term that could have a positive impact on riders at little to no cost to the municipality. Small changes in service delivery could result in the ability of a COA to serve more people and possibly free up vehicles for added local service capacity.

The sharing of these transportation services will not come about without addressing some of the key challenges such as costs and revenue sharing, hours of operation, vehicle sharing, and changes to existing contracts. These issues should not be seen as major deterrents. Instead, these issues can be addressed by coordination among municipal staff, COA staff, and GATRA to discuss the best way to make changes that will benefit the users of the system.

The Council on Aging offices across these towns provide a very important social service to seniors and disabled individuals. In many cases, the COA transportation service is the only service available to these populations to get to medical appointments, social gatherings and shopping centers. Many people rely on this service and finding ways to improve the service and open it up to a growing population cohort will improve the quality of life of the people who live in these towns.

Appendix 1: Sample IMA