



**METROPOLITAN AREA PLANNING COUNCIL ("MAPC")  
60 TEMPLE PLACE  
BOSTON, MA 02111**

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ("RFI")**

**DOCUMENT TITLE:  
MICROTRANSIT SERVICES**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Notice to Bidders

Respondents to this Request for Information (“RFI”) are requested to respond to all of the questions in this document. Responses to this RFI will assist MAPC in understanding the current state of the marketplace with regards to the solicited information. This RFI does not obligate MAPC to issue a solicitation or to include any of the RFI provisions or responses in any future solicitation. An RFI response is entirely voluntary, and will not affect MAPC’s consideration of any proposal submitted the event that it issues a subsequent procurement; nor will it serve as an advantage or disadvantage to the respondent in the course of any RFR, RFQ, or RFP that may be subsequently issued.

### 1.2 Purpose

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (“MAPC”) is issuing this “Request for Information” (“RFI”) to solicit submittals from interested parties on how MAPC may provide municipal and state government, as well as non-profits, with an objective evaluation of the various microtransit strategies that can best improve access to jobs, labor, healthcare, social services, and social activities. MAPC, a public sector organization, is the regional planning agency for Metropolitan Boston, serving a region of 3.1 million people by providing research, technical assistance, and direct services for municipalities. More information about MAPC and the region we serve can be found at [www.mapc.org](http://www.mapc.org).

MAPC seeks to acquire an understanding of what software, consulting services, and transportation operators are available to help regional transit providers, municipal governments, and public-private transportation management associations (“TMAs”) improve their transit services with microtransit. Many current transit services that provide demand response point-to-point trips require riders to contact a provider and book the trip in advance, with drivers given static manifests with minimal opportunity to revise routing to serve additional or revised trip destinations and origins. Some transit providers also operate fixed-route services with low ridership, where the trips types and land uses may be better served by more flexible and dynamic services. Some special transportation services through transit agencies, Councils on Aging, or non-profits, have used a combination of contracting with third party livery services, ride-hailing companies including, but not limited to taxis, transportation network companies, such as, but not limited to Uber, Lyft, and volunteer drivers. Relevant microtransit products should help transit agencies and others improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their point-to-point transit and fixed route transit services.

This RFI is being conducted by MAPC in coordination with the Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (“MAGIC”), an organization that consists of planning and select board representatives from 13 communities: Acton, Bedford, Bolton, Boxborough, Carlisle, Concord, Hudson, Lexington, Lincoln, Littleton, Maynard, Stow, and Sudbury. Several of the communities in the MAGIC subregion have been interested in learning about new and innovative ways to provide transportation services to the residents in their community, particularly in areas not served by current RTA or TMA routes, and during midday, nights, and weekends, when some or all transit services are unavailable.

The MAPC region is served by the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (“MBTA”), six Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs), and 15 TMAs, as well as by several municipal transit agencies providing local fixed-route services and senior transit services. In addition to these agencies, a variety of local and state programs provide rides, including MassHealth PT-1, MassRehab, Department of Developmental Services, and private housing and educational institutions. MAPC would like information on how microtransit can improve connectivity among these various providers. MAPC has also conducted various suburban mobility studies in the region, often looking to improve first/last mile connections that can be primarily funded and administered on the municipal or subregional level. As part of its mission, MAPC often works with



Department of Transportation (“MassDOT”) and the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization (“MPO”) to seek funding and evaluate opportunities to improve first/last mile connections, and fill any gaps in existing transit services. It is anticipated that the information learned from this RFI will inform all parties about future shared project opportunities. MAPC has also worked previously with municipalities to secure grant funding for pilot projects to test the feasibility of newer effective and efficient delivery of services; MAPC hopes that the information gathered in this RFI can help municipalities develop a test case and secure funding to implement one or more microtransit pilot projects in the MAPC region.

Release of this RFI presents an invitation for interested parties to offer MAPC information regarding microtransit tools and strategies for a range of applications. The primary goal of this RFI is to gather information from qualified parties to support and inform future planning initiatives. This RFI does not constitute a solicitation for bids or proposals and will not result in a contract award for the identified services.

This document contains MAPC business and technical considerations for respondents to review and respond to with information regarding strategies, software, consulting services, and operations that can improve access and mobility for greater Boston. Respondents are by no means constrained in providing information to this request and are encouraged to provide further information in support of the stated purpose that may be responsive, relevant, and considered noteworthy.

### **1.3 Definition of Terms**

Demand response: A non-fixed route public transportation service that requires advance scheduling by the customer/passenger.

Microtransit: Multi-passenger public transportation services that serve passengers using dynamically generated routes derived from advanced software, and which may expect passengers to make their way to and from common pick-up or drop-off points. Unlike demand response, microtransit does not require advance scheduling.

Ride-hailing: Use of online platforms to connect passengers with drivers and automate reservations, payments, and customer feedback. Riders can choose from a variety of service classes, including platforms matching riders to drivers who use personal, non-commercial, vehicles (such as Uber and Lyft); traditional taxicabs dispatched via the providers’ apps, and premium services with professional livery drivers and vehicles. (Transit Cooperative Research Program Research Report 188).

### **1.4 Needs and Possible Use Cases**

MAPC understands that the vendors who provide microtransit services are engaged in rapidly evolving ventures. From MAPC’s research, the microtransit and on-demand transit marketplace includes the following general types of vendors:

- Vendors offering trip-making and dispatch assistance to transit/transportation providers to help make their services more efficient. These services are often called “microtransit” and include vendors who offer software, dispatching, and can include vendors who also offer “turn-key” services with drivers and vehicles as well as software.
- Ride-hailing software companies who match trip needs with third-party drivers/independent contractors, and who invoice the cost of the trips to the contracting transit authority, nonprofit or other agency. Examples of these include, but are not limited to taxi companies, Uber, and Lyft.

While these services are not typically called “microtransit”, they do share several of the same operating characteristics of providing on-demand, point-to-point trips with dynamic routing.

- Livery companies who employ drivers, have fleets of vehicles, and who contract locally to help operate fixed-route services with municipalities, TMAs, RTAs, etc. Typically these services are for a fixed-route, but the routing can be revised to meet changing origins and destinations, depending on the dispatching software used by the company and the contracting agency. Traditionally, these livery services have been provided by locally based companies, but some vendors now have a national and international presence.

The above list is not comprehensive, and some providers are merging, expanding, and forming partnerships to provide a greater menu of on-demand transportation services. Because of the varied and evolving marketplace, MAPC would like to have a transparent process to better understand the microtransit market and how these services can improve access and mobility in the greater Boston region.

MAPC has provided the following use cases to help interested parties in preparing responses to this request for information. We recognize that no one vendor or tool is likely to serve the needs of all these use cases.

**Use Case 1.** MAPC seeks to understand how microtransit could be used in a rural setting with limited transit and ride-hailing services. Under this case, the microtransit service would not replace existing fixed-route transit services, but would help fill the transit service coverage gaps, either by geography and/or time of day. Options for improving transit services in this case may include contracting with taxi, livery, and ride-hailing companies (third party transportation providers), using Council on Aging vehicles for senior, public transportation, as well as using with TMA and RTA vehicles. (In some cases, the TMA may use Council on Aging vehicles for employment/public transportation during peak commuter travel periods while the Council on Aging uses the vehicles for senior transportation during their usual service period which tends to be commuter off-peak travel times.) This scenario could also include microtransit vendors providing vehicles and drivers/operators. While a single agency may hold the contract with the microtransit vendor, multiple agencies may be part of a service agreement to provide transportation. The microtransit service may need to operate among different transportation service providers, as well as help collect clear data including who booked the trip, who provided transportation, trip origins and destinations, time of day, and trip costs to allow for multiple parties to track trips to determine which agencies will pay for the costs of the trip.

**Use Case 2:** MAPC seeks to understand how microtransit could help with the more efficient and effective operations of Council on Aging transportation. Most Councils on Aging in the MAPC region provide transportation to seniors primarily within their own municipality boundaries, with a limited availability for out of town trips. Some Councils on Aging have joined to create regional senior transportation operations, either through consolidation or through shared dispatching and shared trips across municipal boundaries. Under this scenario, microtransit could be used to develop a single dispatching system with shared trips across multiple Council on Aging vehicles. The hope is that microtransit may promote more shared trips (and thus lower per trip costs), shorter wait times, same day service, and more geographic coverage, as well as better data collection to determine trip costs and efficient invoicing among agencies.

**Use Case 3.** MAPC seeks to understand how microtransit could be used in rural, suburban and urban settings to connect people to existing commuter rail, fixed-route bus, or rapid transit services. The microtransit services could replace a bus route with low ridership, and/or could be a

new service that would help fill the gaps in transit service coverage, either by geography and/or time of day. The service would be operated by an RTA or a municipality, but could include using Council on Aging, school transportation, or other drivers and vehicles that are operated by a municipality or a third-party under contract to the municipality, and/or contracting with third-party transportation providers. A key component of this scenario is the possibility of microtransit having definitive arrival and departure times, to ensure passengers can connect with regional rail and bus public transportation services, resulting in decreased carbon emissions and road congestion.

**Use Case 4.** MAPC seeks to understand how microtransit could be used by Transportation Management Associations and other public-private partnership transportation services. Using a microtransit model, TMAs can provide more flexible and efficient routing to connect TMA members. Microtransit could be used to help with operating optimized fixed-route or flexible fixed-route services from designated points to pick up employees and connect to employers, and could provide on-demand employment trips during off-peak periods, including guaranteed ride home. Similar to Use Case 3, a key component of this scenario is the possibility of microtransit having definitive arrival and departure times, to ensure passengers can connect with regional rail and bus public transportation services. Ride-hailing may also be included in the mix of vehicles and service providers.

### **1.5 Respondent Submissions**

Interested parties should describe potentially applicable tools, methods, and services for any or all of the use cases referenced above, with an explanation of how the components of how microtransit may be applied. In addition, interested parties are requested to provide contact information of current customers (as relevant) for references. MAPC is also requesting information from interested parties that provide brief and concise expository responses to the following questions as they relate to the use cases referenced above.

1. How do you define microtransit? In your experiences, where can microtransit best assist in improving inclusive and equitable transit and where is it least effective?
2. Describe the software used for your microtransit services, as well as what hardware and other tools are needed to connect vehicles/operators and transit dispatch.
3. What is the proprietary status and licensing structure of any software needed for operating the microtransit services? Is a particular software platform required? Is this a SaaS (Software as a Service) product? Is it purchased by a license or a subscription?
4. Which components of microtransit services do you provide – software, consulting, vehicles, operators? If you have previously formed partnerships with other vendors to provide microtransit, please describe these. Similarly, if you have worked in areas with more than one microtransit provider was under contract, describe the arrangement.
5. Where have you formed partnerships with other private vendors such as ride-hailing (Uber, Lyft, taxis or livery companies) and/or with public agencies (transit, Council on Aging, municipalities)?
6. Describe the data sharing components of your microtransit projects.
7. What post-implementation technical support services do you provide?
8. Describe the data needed to help design and implement inclusive, equitable, and effective microtransit services.



9. What are key performance indicators for microtransit? How do you define the success of a pilot project?
10. What public infrastructure do you think would assist in making a successful microtransit system?
11. If you provide drivers and vehicles, or contract with others for drivers and vehicles, how would you help ensure a public transportation service includes wheelchair accessible vehicles and other services to ensure the contracting agency meet all of the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)?
12. Where has your microtransit tool been demonstrated, particularly in lower density settings that are similar to the use case scenarios described in Section 1.4? What geographic coverage do you consider most efficient for microtransit? Please identify specific cities, regions, or agencies, as well as contact information of customers for references.
13. What has been the range of implementation and operating costs for your projects?
14. Describe any cases where the capacity, needs, and financial support of businesses, organizations, and philanthropists have been used to help implement microtransit.
15. Is there a use case, question or other factor we should consider when looking at microtransit? What have we missed? Please provide any other information you think might be relevant.

### 1.6 Posting

Please note that this RFI is issued solely for the purpose of obtaining information. Nothing in this RFI shall be interpreted as a commitment on the part of MAPC to procure or enter into a contract with any Respondent.

Respondents are responsible for entering content suitable for public viewing, as all of the responses and questions are available to the public. Respondents must not include any information that could be considered personal, security sensitive, inflammatory, incorrect, collusive, or otherwise objectionable, including information about the Respondent's company or other companies.

### 1.7 Form of Respondent Submission

Respondents should submit one (1) electronic PDF response by the date and time set forth in the below schedule. Late responses may be disregarded.

All responses must include a cover page on formal letterhead with the official name, address, and contact information of the firm or entity submitting the response with both contact information and signature provided. Respondents are requested to respond to each use case and questions cited herein, as well as provide additional relevant information. A final conclusion page may be provided summarizing the overall response to the RFI. Please consecutively number all pages of the response.

## 2. ESTIMATED CALENDAR

Event	Date
RFI Release Date	December 24, 2018
Email Response to Travis Pollack, Senior Transportation Planner at MAPC at <a href="mailto:tpollack@mapc.org">tpollack@mapc.org</a>	January 17, 2019
Informational Sessions at MAPC	January 24, 2019 (Tentative)

Questions about this RFI should be directed to Marjorie Weinberger at [mweinberger@mapc.org](mailto:mweinberger@mapc.org).



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### **3. INFORMATIONAL SESSIONS**

In addition to written RFI responses, MAPC will invite any or none of the Respondents to make focused, in person demonstrations of services, experience, offerings, methodologies and expertise applicable to this RFI. Any such demonstrations must relate directly to the MAPC needs outlined in this RFI and Respondents must not use this time for standard marketing sales presentations. MAPC retains the right to conduct informational session(s) associated with this RFI and retains the right to request additional information from Respondents, including further explanation or clarification from any and all Respondents during the review process. MAPC may request onsite vendor visits. This informational session is scheduled for **January 24, 2019, at MAPC, 60 Temple Place, Boston, MA 02111** (date and place subject to change). More details on the informational sessions will be released after the RFI submission date.

### **4. REVIEW RIGHT, PUBLIC RECORDS, AND COST**

Responses to this RFI may be reviewed and evaluated by any person(s) at the discretion of MAPC, including independent consultants retained by MAPC now or in the future.

All responses to this RFI will be a public record under the Commonwealth's Public Records Law, Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 66 Section 10, regardless of confidentiality notices set forth on such writings to the contrary.

All responses and other documents submitted in response to the RFI become the property of MAPC. MAPC is under no obligation to return any documents submitted by a vendor. Further, MAPC retains the right to use any information obtained through this RFI in any future solicitation.

By submitting a response, Respondents agree that any cost incurred in responding to this RFI, or in support of activities associated with this RFI, shall be the sole responsibility of the Respondent. MAPC shall not be held responsible for any costs incurred by Respondents in preparing their respective responses to this RFI.