

Event Summary:

Making the Connections Program Information Session

July 23, 2019

Lower Town Hall, Town of Sudbury, 322 Concord Road, Sudbury, MA

Purpose of Event

The purpose of this event was to inform participants of the “Making the Connections” initiative, determine the parameters for pilots and interest in participation in the program, and lay out next steps.

Making the Connections will create pilot projects to provide subsidized taxi and ride-hailing rides and other innovative on-demand transportation options for seniors, people with disabilities, financially vulnerable residents, and veterans, with the objective of providing them with transportation services to health and community resources as well as economic opportunities.

This event was sponsored by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), and the Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (MAGIC). The meeting was hosted by the Town of Sudbury.

A [video](#) of the full meeting is available on the Sudbury Town website.

The following handouts were provided to the meeting participants:

- Slides from event
- Making the Connection’s Frequently Asked Questions
- Community Compact Cabinet Best Practices Grant Application
- Draft of Part-Time Contract Program Manager Position
- Examples of Rider Registration and Ride Stipulation Options from other ride-hail and on-demand transit programs in Massachusetts
- Practice Briefing on Partnering with Transportation Network Companies from the MA Mobility Center (April 2019)

Introductions and Identification of Transportation Challenges

Town Manager Melissa Murphy-Rodrigues and Director of Planning and Community Development Adam Duchesneau welcomed everyone to Sudbury.

During introductions (see the list of attendees at the end of this summary), each attendee was asked to identify the biggest transportation challenge seen in their community today, which were as follows:

- Rising demand for affordable transportation services coupled with decreasing resources to provide them
- Gaps in connectivity, resources, service hours (e.g., only weekday hours)
- Providing long-distance medical transportation, employment transportation, first/last mile services
- Emerson Hospital Community Health Needs Assessment confirms transportation is a priority topic re: health needs of the area
- Reliable options to connect to Commuter Rail
- Complete Streets — how to provide flexibility for rural communities
- Transportation for food needs

- Demographic changes — longer lifespan can result in drivers on the road beyond what is prudent given their age/abilities
- Student transportation, especially to/from after-school activities
- Paratransit sometimes not meeting needs of riders
- Availability of wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAV)
- Effective and efficient utilization of on-demand services
- Lack of regional transit authority services consistently throughout MAGIC communities
- Designing transportation infrastructure to facilitate active transportation (walking, biking)
- Providing assistive transportation
- Effective communication of services to residents
- Reducing isolation of residents by means of transportation
- Ensuring transportation services meet the physical, mental, other limitations of riders
- Reducing the number of canceled, no-show, rescheduled medical appointments by providing efficient transportation

Overview and Discussion of Making the Connections Program

Overview of Making the Connections (Travis Pollack, MAPC; Alice Sapienza, DBA)

Travis and Alice provided an overview of the Making the Connections Program.

Making the Connections focuses on seniors, people with disabilities, financially vulnerable residents, and veterans, with the objective of providing on-demand transportation services to health and community resources as well as economic opportunities.

While each community offers some variety of on-demand paratransit, and some offer general public vans or commuter shuttles, there are times when this service does not cover all needs for transportation. It is these unmet needs that pilot service through Making the Connections will attempt to meet.

Data from community pilots will be used to (1) explore the future applicability of shared microtransit platforms (optimizing transit programs and regional cooperation in the larger MAGIC subregion of the MAPC), and (2) ensure the sustainability and continuous improvement of regional transportation, particularly to our most needy residents.

The Program is the result of several efforts since 2017, including various needs assessments, MAGIC communities becoming age and dementia friendly, and the evaluation of microtransit pilots. In 2019, Sudbury was awarded an \$80,000 community compact grant to start pilots, and MAGIC committed \$10,000 to help fund the program as well. A copy of the grant application was distributed.

The program is divided into four tasks, as outlined in the grant application.

TASK 1: COORDINATION

- Municipalities enter into Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for duration of pilot
- Steering Committee established; committee outlines basic parameters, including common data needs
- Program Manager hired (see draft position job description handout)
- Municipalities define riders/eligibility and processes for registration, etc. (see handout)
- Clarify Plan-Do-Study-Act continuous quality improvement approach to pilots

TASK 2: PROCUREMENT/VENDORS

- Vendors identified (ride-hailing, taxi, etc.)

- Contracts entered with vendors
- Marketing, outreach established

TASK 3: IMPLEMENT AND MONITOR

- Launch pilots across region
- Collect minimum consistent data set
- PLAN/DO/STUDY/ACT
- Steering Committee and Program Manager meet regularly (virtual, F2F, individually, collectively)

TASK 4: ASSESS PERFORMANCE AND ID FUTURE OPTIONS

- What are strategies for sustainable transportation?
- What are best practices for region?
- Prepare report for CCC

Overview of Carlisle pilot with Lyft (Dave Klein, Carlisle Council on Aging)

Dave Klein discussed the pilot with Lyft in Carlisle, which has been functioning for about 6 months.

The Lyft program started only with people with smart phones who could access the Lyft app. Carlisle then expanded to a concierge model in which the transportation coordinator can book rides for people without access to a smart phone. Carlisle subsidizes \$10 per ride up to 4 rides per month for anyone who registers. It is open to residents age 50+ or persons with disabilities or transportation limitations. The pilot with Lyft is offered 24/hours a day, 7 days/week, but the Town set a geofence limit of 55 miles out from the center of Carlisle.

Riders pay the first \$2 of each ride. Carlisle Transportation Committee sends a list of registered riders to Lyft twice a month to allow people access within a 2-week period. Use of service has increased in the first few months. Only 1 ride in February, 6 in March, 12 in April (when concierge rides started). Concierge rides are completely subsidized, because there was not a mechanism to split the cost.

“Bike Rack” Issues and Concerns

During the meeting, issues or questions that could not be resolved were written on a flip chart called the “bike rack” to be addressed later, as noted below.

- Availability, when needed, of sufficient wheelchair accessible vehicles
 - TNCs do not always have ready access to WAV (usually a 3rd-party provider)
 - Wait time for WAV may be protracted (call to reserve?)
 - Would it be possible to make use of CoA vehicles, if free, for WAV services (and could these vehicles be regionalized)?
- Tracking unmet needs during a pilot transportation service
 - Surveys do not always account for unmet needs
 - General data (e.g., CHNA, etc.) provide only estimates
 - Privacy and stigma may account for underreporting of needs
 - Calculating numbers of “unable to serve” rides provides proxy for unmet needs
- If demand increases, is there a way to provide backup?
 - Group of volunteers who agree to be available (cf/ FISH, Neighbor Brigade)?
 - Contract with UZURV? (3rd party reservation system allows rider to reserve in advance, specify driver from separate app; business area = medical appointments, assisted

service) “a technology platform where organizations book rides for their communities in advance or on-demand.” See <https://uzury.com/company/>

- For individuals unable to use smartphone, is GoGoGrandparent an option?
 - “Concierge” service: call company to order on-demand ride from specified vendor
 - Company ensures vehicle/driver meet pre-set specs (e.g., use of walker, help needed lifting packages, etc.)
 - Trip can be tracked and info sent to monitoring agent
 - Cost of service = \$0.27/minute from start of ride *plus* vendor fare, charged to credit card on file (<https://gogograndparent.com/faq>)
- How will grant subsidy amount be distributed?
 - Reminder that grant subsidy is supplemental to community funds
 - Small amounts for subsidies can be distributed to communities for new initiatives (e.g., addition of newly designated riders) and/or expansion of existing services (e.g., specific weekend services to financially vulnerable residents; weekend services to faith communities for older residents)

Small Group Exercise

Participants were asked to divide into four smaller groups to discuss four outstanding issues that arose during the meeting that were either listed on the “bike rack” or on the list of “biggest transportation challenges”. The groups discussed the challenges and either developed some ideas to address them. The flip-chart notes from those four break-out groups are listed below.

Break-out Report on Communication/Marketing/Outreach

- Personal communication about services = via referrals and word of mouth
 - Meals on Wheels
 - Home Health Aides
 - Organizational staff (I&R specialists, etc.)
 - Volunteers to home bound, to people with disability (e.g., accompany on transit providers), etc.
- General communication via
 - Social media
 - Direct mail
 - Public access TV
 - Listserves
 - Newspapers
- Presentations (e.g., at Senior Centers, CoA, housing developments, AAA, community workshops, etc.)
- Flyers, bulletin board notices at
 - Housing (senior, affordable, assisted, etc.)
 - Health departments
 - Social service organizations
 - Medical facilities
 - Faith communities
 - Veterans organizations
 - Transit hubs
 - Food pantries
 - Supermarkets

- Hair dressers, barber shops

Still to be addressed: messaging; accessibility (braille, audio, culturally competent language), branding. Ensure that messages are tested before disseminating.

Break-out Report on Program Manager

- Part-time position
 - Could/should it be “fill-in” for currently part-time employed Town staff?
 - Opportunity for doctoral and master’s level students?
- Provides “10,000-ft view”
- Reports to and works closely with the Steering Committee
- Resides at multiple communities (not a Town employee; contract and paid by grant), in order to support pilot initiatives
- Vendor oversight part of role?
- Ensures consistent minimum data set from each pilot
- See “accessibility” (driver preparation for special populations?)
- Involved in but not solely responsible for final report
- Tracks regular Plan/Do/Study/Act reports of each pilot must have program/project management skills; transportation issues can be learned on the job

Break-out Report on Financial Sustainability of Transportation Services

- Seek funding partners who benefit from specific transportation services
 - Employers
 - Medical offices, rehab facilities, hospitals, health insurers
 - Retail (restaurants, supermarkets, affordable stores [WalMart, Target, etc.]
 - Social service agencies
- Provide opportunities for people to help support by
 - Gift certificates
 - Vouchers
 - Bequests
 - Named donations
 - Faith communities supporting transportation to services
- Vote in favor of Town tax levy (e.g., dollars per household) for ongoing transportation support
- Employ/assign mitigation funds for transportation services
- Request developers to provide transportation as part of development, or partially fund transportation to/from the development
- Apply for community/regional/national foundation support
 - Tufts Health Plan Foundation momentum funds
 - Robert Wood Johnson
 - Kellogg Foundation
 - MetroWest Regional Health Foundation
 - Cummings Foundation
 - Banks
- Use Community Preservation Funds to leverage transportation funding?
- Advocate to integrate on-demand transit with state and federal funded “mass transit”

Break-out Report on Accessibility

- “Accessible” is more than physical infrastructure modifications
 - Language
 - Cultural competence (e.g., eye contact, greeting, assistance permitted, etc.)
 - Inclusive of cognitive/emotional differences
 - Sensitive to unspoken need and invisible limitations
 - Consistent with financial ability (e.g., no tipping)
- Make sure drivers are educated/trained for special populations (incorporate into role of Program Manager?)
- WAV availability (see Bike Rack)
- Ensure that ride copay is financially “accessible” (sliding scale?)
- See “tracking unmet needs” and ensure accessibility needs can be met (e.g., driver assist door to door, etc.)

.Wrap Up, Next Steps/Next Meeting

- The next information session will be held on September 9, 2019, in the Silva Room of the Flynn Building in the Town of Sudbury at 278 Old Sudbury Road, and via WebEx for those who cannot attend in-person. More information on this next event will be sent out later.
- The goal is to have interested municipalities begin pilots this fall, with a Program Manager hired in September or October to assist with setting up the pilots.

Attendees (based upon the sign-in sheets at the meeting):

Anita Albright, AARP	Valerie Oorthuys, Town of Stow Assistant Planner
Susan Barrett, Town of Lexington	Franny Osman, Town of Acton, CrossTown Connect
Kay Bell, Town of Sudbury Commission on Disability	Travis Pollack, MAPC
Betsy Bohling, Town of Lincoln Transp. Advisory Comm.	Alyssa Sandoval, Town of Bedford
Jennifer Burney, Town of Lincoln Director of Planning	Alice Sapienza, Sudbury Grant Contract Manager
Alison Cservenschi, Bedford Council on Aging	Heidi Stucker, MAPC
Austin Cyganiewicz, Town of Acton Director of Intergovernmental Affairs	Erica Uriarte, Town of Bolton Town Planner
Adam Duchesneau, Town of Sudbury Dir. of Planning	Antron Watson, AARP
Doug Frey, Town of Sudbury Commission on Disability	Scott Zadakis, CrossTown Connect
David Klein, Town of Carlisle Council on Aging	Elaine Zhang, MAPC
Aniko Lazlo, MassDOT/MBTA	
Kelsey Magnuson, Emerson Hospital	

Updated August 9, 2019

Please email Travis Pollack (tpollack@mapc.org) for changes or corrections to this document.