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Happy summer!

This July 2014 issue of the *MassMobility* newsletter contains news of interest to anyone who is interested in community transportation, human service transportation coordination, or mobility management in Massachusetts.

This newsletter is compiled by the [Human Service Transportation \(HST\) Office](#) of the [Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services](#) (EOHHS), as part of our [MassMobility initiative](#).

Please join us in wishing a happy birthday to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which turned 24 on July 26.

Regional Coordinating Councils find many ways to improve mobility

Around Massachusetts, representatives of transit authorities, human service agencies, community-based organizations, employers, advocacy organizations, consumers, and others with a stake in the community transportation system are coming together as part of Regional Coordinating Councils (RCCs). The councils stem from the implementation of the [Executive Order 530](#) report, seeking to increase the quality and efficiency of paratransit and community transportation across the Commonwealth.

Although all RCCs share a goal of improved mobility, each council reflects the needs and opportunities of its own region. As a result, RCCs are engaging in a wide variety of projects:

- The Cape and Islands RCC is conducting a consumer survey to find out what residents and visitors say about transportation needs.
- Central Massachusetts RCC members are educating each other about transportation services available in the region and sharing resources with information about transportation options.
- The Merrimack Valley RCC is helping the [Merrimack Valley Planning Commission](#) and [Northern Middlesex Council on Governments](#) update the unmet needs information in their [Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plans](#).
- The Minuteman RCC is researching legal barriers to coordination and investigating options for facilitating trips across transit authority service areas.
- The [South East RCC](#) (in the [GATRA](#) service area) is planning to survey medical facilities and then convene a forum on addressing healthcare transportation needs through coordination.

To learn more, check out [MassDOT's RCC webpage](#) or [contact us](#) to connect with the RCC in your region.

New bus connects key destinations in three towns

On July 7, the [Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional Transit Authority](#) (GATRA) launched the [Tri-Town Connector](#) in Foxborough, Norfolk, and Wrentham. The aptly-named Connector connects riders with many key destinations, such as taking shoppers to Patriot Place in Foxborough, patients to the medical facility at Patriot Place, employees and visitors to MCI-Norfolk, and commuters from the Wrentham Commuter Lot to the Norfolk MBTA commuter rail station. In addition, riders can connect to GATRA's [Franklin Area Bus](#) (FAB) at the Big Y in Franklin. Mid-day, the bus makes a special trip to take seniors from the Norfolk and Wrentham Councils on Aging to Patriot Place for lunch and shopping.

Want to go to one of these many destinations, or somewhere else along the way? The Tri-Town Connector is [free through July 31](#). The bus runs weekdays from 6:00 AM to 7:00 PM and Saturdays from 7:30 AM to 6:00 PM.

READYBUS expands hours

On June 30, [READYBUS](#) began providing transportation in Southbridge and Webster at 6 in the morning. Run by [SCM Elderbus](#) in Central Massachusetts, READYBUS provides employment transportation for people who do not qualify for the organization's core services for seniors and people with disabilities. Previously, service began at 8:30. The expanded hours will benefit riders who work early morning shifts or who need to return home after working an overnight shift.

Tim O'Day, Director of SCM Elderbus, has been an active participant in the Central Massachusetts Regional Coordinating Council (RCC) since its inception. Through participating on the council, O'Day has spread the word about READYBUS to human service agencies, state agencies, and social service organizations, which can now refer their consumers to this transportation option. Connections through the RCC also enabled SCM Elderbus to partner with the [Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission](#) to apply for and receive funding from MassDOT's [Community Transit Grant Program](#) for the expanded hours.

Riders can call (800) 321-0243 to make a reservation.

RRI shifts its transportation program from paper and pencil to software

[Rehabilitative Resources, Inc.](#) (RRI) is a Sturbridge-based human service provider serving people with developmental disabilities. RRI has 43 residential sites and two day habilitation programs and also manages over 90 vehicles that transport nearly 300 individuals daily. Until recently, the organization managed its transportation program by pen and paper.

In January, RRI received a New Freedom grant to upgrade to transportation software. RRI staff worked with HB Software Solutions to develop software that would automate their paper forms. Transportation staff and the organization's 57 drivers are currently

testing and finalizing the system and plan to fully switch over in September.

Change can be difficult, so RRI planned a transition process to switch gradually from pen and paper to the automated system. While pursuing the software, transportation staff kept strong communication with drivers so that there would be no surprises. When it came time to train drivers on the new system, they divided the 57 drivers into eight groups to ensure that drivers would get individual attention and did a train-the-trainer with eight of the drivers so they could help answer their peers' questions. Within the small groups, they paired tech-savvy drivers with drivers who were less familiar with technology.

Holly Bonilla, Transportation Manager at RRI, explains that the organization pursued the software in order to expand its transportation capacity. Vehicles currently sit idle from late morning to early afternoon, as well as in the evenings and on weekends. RRI hopes that the software will help them put their vehicles to use during these times. Since the organization serves many rural communities west of Worcester that have few transportation options, this expanded capacity will increase mobility for those in need. RRI is a member of the Central Massachusetts Regional Coordinating Council, a partnership of area stakeholders working to improve mobility in the region.

THE RIDE takes steps to reduce transfers

[THE MBTA's RIDE](#) program provides door-to-door ADA paratransit service in and around Boston and is available to eligible people who cannot use the fixed route system (bus, train, or trolley) due to a disability. THE RIDE covers 60 cities and towns, divided into three subregions: North, West, and South. Each subregion is served by a different transportation company, and all companies serve the core of downtown Boston.

As of July 1, Brookline, Cambridge, and Somerville are also part of the core. Riders traveling among these communities or from any community to one of these core communities will no longer need to transfer from one company's vehicle to another. Additionally, Wilmington shifted from the West service area to the North area in order to improve access to Lahey Clinic. Officials expect these changes to greatly reduce transfers.

Regional Planning Agencies update Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plans

[MassDOT](#) has asked each Regional Planning Agency in Massachusetts to update its [Coordinated Human Service Transportation \(CHST\) Plan](#). Required by federal law, the CHST plans lay out unmet needs and identify priorities for transportation for seniors and people with disabilities in the region. MassDOT has asked the planning agencies to partner with Regional Coordinating Councils on this process.

To learn more or to get involved, contact your [Regional Planning Agency](#).

From the desk of the Statewide Mobility Manager

Aniko Laszlo, Statewide Mobility Manager at MassDOT, blogs

monthly on topics related to community transportation in Massachusetts. This month, she discusses the role that vanpools play in the Massachusetts transportation system. Check out Aniko's [current posting](#) and [archives](#) to learn about ongoing efforts around the state.

Follow us on Twitter

Follow us @MassMobility for links to community transportation resources relevant to organizations and agencies here in Massachusetts. If you aren't on Twitter, you can still see our posts online at twitter.com/MassMobility.

Coming up in August

Do you provide travel training, or are you thinking about offering travel instruction? Join us on August 5 for the next in-person meeting of the Massachusetts Travel Instruction Network. [Contact us](#) to learn more.

Are you in the Greater Fitchburg area, or do you work with someone in that region? The North Central Regional Coordinating Council will be launching on August 15. [Contact us](#) for details.

For more upcoming events, check out our [calendar](#).

We want to know your stories

If you have suggestions for news items or topics to cover in future newsletters, please [contact us](#). Comments, questions, and feedback are also welcome.

Please share this newsletter

We'd love it if you would forward this newsletter to others who are interested in mobility management, community transportation, or related topics and encourage them to [subscribe](#) to receive future newsletters and publications. You can also read [archive editions of all MassMobility newsletters](#).