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This August 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](#).

Workshop for travel training practitioners accepts applications

[MassDOT](#) has awarded funding to the [Kennedy Center](#), a Connecticut-based organization serving people with disabilities, to offer a series of workshops on travel training for travel training practitioners in Massachusetts. The Kennedy Center provides travel training services for the state of Connecticut.

Travel training is an intensive, individualized, one-on-one process to help someone gain the knowledge and skills they need to use transit independently and safely. Travel training is one type of [travel instruction](#).

Both new and experienced travel trainers are encouraged to enroll. The first workshop is scheduled for October 21-23 in Raynham. Additional sessions will be scheduled if this one fills up. To sign up, please [contact us for the enrollment form](#).

Regional forum for volunteer driver programs coming up in September

Anyone who runs a volunteer driver program, is thinking about starting a volunteer driver program, or volunteers as a driver is invited to the first in a series of Volunteer Driver Forums that [MassMobility](#) is hosting around the state. These forums are an opportunity for people involved in volunteer driver programs to meet each other, share successful strategies, and brainstorm with peers about shared challenges such as volunteer recruitment or liability concerns.

The first forum is scheduled for September 18 from 1 to 4 PM at the Pittsfield Council on Aging. [Contact us](#) to register, learn more, or help organize one for your region.

Community Innovation Challenge Grant accepting applications

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The Patrick administration developed the [Community Innovation Challenge Grants](#) to help municipalities partner together to create regional solutions to local problems. Since the first round in 2012, some transportation projects have received funding, including [CrossTown Connect](#) and the [Two-Town Trolley](#). For more information about past projects, take a look at the project summaries for [2012](#), [2013](#), and [2014](#) grant recipients.

Applications for funding are due by October 10, 2014. Information sessions are scheduled for [August 21 in Worcester and Boston](#) and [August 26 in Springfield](#).

Billboards recruit new volunteer drivers in Berkshire County

If you were in the Berkshires in June or August, you may have noticed billboards asking "got an hour?" Recognizing that their programming for seniors would be stronger if they had more volunteers, [Elder Services of Berkshire County](#) decided to see if billboards would help them reach a new audience. They used grant funding to create and pay for the billboards, and developed the messaging based on a [national campaign to recruit volunteers to work with seniors](#).

The first billboards went up in June, and brought in 20 new active volunteers. Many of the new volunteers signed up to be volunteer drivers, helping seniors get to medical appointments, grocery stores, or other errands. Others deliver meals, participate in meal sites, or help out with other programming. Elder Services was so pleased with this success that they launched a second round of billboards in August.

The new volunteers are diverse: an even split of men and women, ranging in age from young parents to retired people. All were excited to give back to the area's seniors but had not been aware of the volunteer opportunities before they saw the billboards.

Lynn Penna, Home and Community Based Programs Supervisor at Elder Services of Berkshire County, says the billboards were easy to do and money well spent. She recommends it to other organizations looking to recruit more volunteers. To learn more, check out the national "got an hour?" campaign's [webinars and sample materials](#), which are available for organizations to use and adapt.

Penna will also be speaking about the billboards at an upcoming forum for volunteer driver programs scheduled for September 18 in Pittsfield. To learn more about the forums, please [contact us](#).

For more information on starting or running a volunteer driver program, or to find a volunteer driver program near you, check out the [MassMobility volunteer driver webpage](#). In addition, the [National Volunteer Transportation Center](#) recently launched its website.

Regional Coordinating Councils address mobility needs

Around Massachusetts, stakeholders interested in community transportation 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. Around the state, RCCs have continued to make progress in recent weeks:

- RCCs in the Pioneer Valley, Merrimack Valley, and Metrowest areas each sent out needs assessment surveys to stakeholders in their regions.
- The North Shore RCC met on August 5. Based on the priorities the group identified in its first meeting, the RCC split into working groups to address some of the region's transportation needs. Working group topics include safety of older drivers, falls prevention, and employment transportation. [Learn more](#)
- The Central Massachusetts RCC met on August 7 and reviewed the information and tools available on the [WRTA website](#). [Learn more](#)
- The Cape & Islands RCC met on August 11 to review the results of their rider and consumer survey. Nearly 250 individuals filled out this survey. Lack of sidewalks emerged as a barrier to mobility, and negative perceptions of transit also prevent people from accessing transportation services.
- The North Central RCC launched on August 15. Participants decided to begin assessing needs and mapping assets by gathering recent transportation studies of the region and reviewing their findings.

To learn more, read up on [RCC accomplishments](#). [Contact us](#) to connect with the RCC in your region, or visit [MassDOT's RCC webpage](#).

Travel training programs expand

Massachusetts residents want to learn how to ride transit! Around the state, travel training programs are expanding to meet this demand. [GATRA](#) and [Ways2Go](#) recently brought on additional staff, and new programs are launching in MetroWest and the Berkshires.

The [MetroWest Regional Transit Authority](#) (MWRTA) launched a travel training program called Transitions on June 1. This comprehensive travel training program is designed to teach seniors or individuals with disabilities how to travel safely and efficiently on the MWRTA fixed route bus service. The main goal of this program is to transition individuals from the MWRTA paratransit and demand response services to the fixed route service. This program was specifically designed for seniors and individuals with disabilities who are at least 13 years old who have the desire and motivation to become more transit independent. However, Transitions also offers classroom and group training, as well as train the trainer training. Since the launch of this program, the MWRTA has worked with many senior centers, local school districts, and local housing authorities, as well as referrals from the MWRTA Call Center.

In September, [BerkshireRides](#) will begin working with area organizations to teach them how to travel train their consumers. BerkshireRides will work closely with these agencies and assist with any consumers for whom agency staff request help.

To find a travel training program near you, check out our [interactive map](#) and [program list](#) of travel instruction programs around Massachusetts.

And don't forget to say thank you! GATRA staff received [special thank you cards](#) from students who participated in a travel training expedition earlier this summer.

Greater Lynn Senior Services presents on transportation at national conference

MassMobility thanks Liz Bulkley, Mobility Links Project Coordinator at Greater Lynn Senior Services, for this guest article. If you would like to submit an article or suggest a topic, please [contact us](#).

Transportation was at the fore in Dallas last month during the annual [National Association of Area Agencies on Aging](#) (n4a) conference. At the [National Center on Senior Transportation](#) (NCST) Senior Mobility Fair, [Greater Lynn Senior Services](#) (GLSS) moderated two distinct roundtable discussions. One was titled "Ways to Obtain and Utilize Federal, State, Local, and Private Funds," and the other was "Challenges and Solutions in Providing Transportation to Older Adults with Chronic Mobility Impairments." In the first roundtable, a focus on transportation emerged as it related to securing funding at all levels, and in the second roundtable, a lively discussion developed around the challenges and differences between providing transportation in rural versus urban areas.

GLSS was also one of many poster presenters at the NCST Senior Mobility Fair. The poster featured the [Kiosk for Living Well](#) and created a good opportunity to highlight mobility as well as health and wellness throughout the North Shore of Massachusetts.

Travel trainers share tools

On August 5, over 20 travel trainers and Orientation and Mobility Specialists convened in Worcester for a meeting of the Massachusetts Travel Instruction Network. [Travel instruction](#) is the professional activity of teaching individuals with disabilities, seniors, and others how to use public transportation independently to access their environment and community. The network is an opportunity for travel trainers and people starting a new travel training program to meet each other, share successful strategies, and brainstorm together to find solutions to shared challenges.

Attendees were invited to bring tools or aids they use while travel training to show each other:

- Travel trainers from [GATRA](#) shared photos they are using to help a trainee learn how to cross the street at a difficult intersection.
- [PVTA](#) travel training staff showed the wristwatches and reflective armbands they give to trainees to help them get to the bus stop on time and stay safe after dark.
- [Ways2Go](#) travel trainer Linda Shepard Salzer showed the tactile system map she made for the [MBTA](#) system, as well as transit safety bingo and travel training memory games.
- [Orientation & Mobility](#) Specialists shared textbooks that cover key topics related to travel training and street crossing for people with visual impairments.

In the meeting, network members suggested that they develop a "lending library" of books related to travel training and also develop a list of experienced travel trainers around the state who are willing to

have new travel trainers shadow them.

If you are a travel trainer in Massachusetts or are interested in developing a travel training program, please [contact us](#) to join the Massachusetts Travel Instruction Network.

Federal transportation funding extended through May

On July 31, Congress passed a temporary funding measure to keep the Highway Trust Fund from going bankrupt. On August 8, President Obama signed this measure into law. Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx had warned that without legislation, federal payments to states would be affected. This law provides enough funding to keep the Highway Trust Fund solvent for ten months, through May 2015.

Coming up in September

To learn about upcoming events, including a [Community Transportation Forum](#) from Boston's Regional Transportation Advisory Council, check out our [calendar](#).

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. 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.

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

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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](#).