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Greetings!

It was great to see so many of you at the Massachusetts Community Transportation Coordination Conference earlier this month. We beat all past records for attendance and had a great day of presentations, discussions, and networking around best practices in community transportation and innovative strategies for improving mobility. Thanks for making #MassMobility2015 a success!

Read on to learn more about the conference, as well as other news about community transportation in Massachusetts - such as a new municipal shuttle in Acton to be financed with a local meals tax, events encouraging seniors to bike in Cambridge, a new national report on transportation for people with disabilities, and more.

This newsletter is compiled by the [MassMobility](#) team, which is housed in the [Human Service Transportation \(HST\) Office](#) of the [Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services](#).

Acton residents vote for new shuttle funded by meals tax

The residents of Acton voted to implement a fixed-route shuttle to add to the town's transportation resources at the Town Meeting in April. The new shuttle will operate on a commuter-focused route in the morning and evening, connecting residential areas to the South Acton commuter rail station, Yankee bus to Boston, and local businesses. In the middle of the day, the shuttle will operate on a city circulator route which will stop at the town hall and library, the high school, and major businesses and apartment complexes.

The vote to implement the shuttle follows a vote last year to access the local meals tax option, which adds 0.75 percent to every restaurant meal in Acton. This tax goes into effect July 1, 2015, and the money will go into the transportation enterprise fund, which supports Acton's transportation services.

The Acton Board of Selectmen identified the need for a fixed route shuttle two years ago as part of their planning process, but until the meals tax passed there were no financial resources to support the service. The tax revenue will support the shuttle as well as an economic development officer.

The shuttle will be operated by [CrossTown Connect](#), which already coordinates transportation services in Acton and five surrounding towns. The shuttle is scheduled to launch sometime after Labor Day. The town will spend the summer doing outreach to residents to educate them about the new service as well as refining route and

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Attendance doubles at community transportation conference

On May 5, 136 people attended the [Massachusetts Community Transportation Coordination Conference](#) - doubling attendance from last year. [MassMobility](#) hosted the conference, in partnership with [MassDOT](#).

The high attendance indicates a growing interest in improving mobility and access for seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income individuals statewide, due in part to the growth of [Regional Coordinating Councils](#) (RCCs). Conference attendees included Regional Transit Authority staff, staff and consumers from the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission and other state agencies, Council on Aging staff, regional planners, transportation providers, and advocates. Many attendees are active participants in the RCCs, and all RCCs were represented.

Secretary of Transportation Stephanie Pollack delivered a mid-day keynote speech. Growing up with a brother with disabilities, she saw firsthand that transportation was always his biggest barrier. "People with different levels of abilities and disabilities, when we get transportation right, we make their lives easier; when we get transportation wrong, their lives are harder," she said. She called for a focus on community to be at the center of all transportation planning, not just community transportation, through the idea of connected communities. Communities should have strong connections at the local level, making it easy for community members to walk to amenities, but we also need transit that facilitates connections between communities.

The day's agenda included two panels and two breakout sessions. A funding strategies panel highlighted Noah Berger from the [Federal Transit Administration](#) and Aniko Laszlo from [MassDOT](#) discussing federal and state funding opportunities, while Anne Marie Boursiquot King from the [Tufts Health Plan Foundation](#) and Melissa Vanhorn from the [United Way of Greater Attleboro/Taunton](#) shared the private foundation perspective. Panelists emphasized that collaboration is important because it makes limited funds go further, improves the effectiveness of projects, and connects organizations with others doing complementary work.

An afternoon advocacy strategies panel featured Acton Selectman Mike Gowing discussing advocacy at the municipal level, [Mass Senior Action Council](#)'s Carolyn Villers discussing grassroots activism, and Josh Ostroff from [Transportation for Massachusetts](#) on building a statewide coalition. Panelists shared success stories, such as securing media attention by engaging in direct action and gathering contact information for supporters by conducting petitions. They emphasized the importance of persistence: keep pushing even when you hear no.

Breakout session topics covered a range of best practices and promising approaches to improving mobility and access for seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income commuters. Sessions included an introduction to [Regional Planning Agencies](#) and how they support transportation, three different approaches to providing [travel instruction](#), [older driver resources from the Registry of Motor Vehicles](#), [car donation and car loan programs](#) that can provide

affordable car ownership, [MassRIDES](#) and how it is partnering with RCCs, centralized dispatch for Council on Aging transportation, demand-response employment transportation services in rural and suburban communities, and strategies to connect [volunteer driver programs](#) with each other to share successful strategies and collaborate on solutions to shared challenges.

In addition to the scheduled sessions, conference attendees networked with each other and made connections with presenters. "This was a good opportunity for professionals from different disciplines to interact: i.e., transportation planners, operators, staff from Councils on Aging; reps from the disability community, feds and state staff, etc. This was a good opportunity for some interdisciplinary dialogue," noted a first-time attendee.

If you were not able to join us this year, or if you are curious about breakout sessions you did not attend, [visit our conference website!](#) All conference materials will be posted online by late May or early June.

Cambridge partners with seniors to make biking part of healthy aging

This spring, the City of Cambridge hosted twelve events on healthy aging and biking, including two in conjunction with [Bay State Bike Week](#). The events are funded in part by a grant from the [Massachusetts Association of Councils on Aging](#) to reduce barriers and increase access to biking for residents ages 50 and older.

The events have included focus groups where residents discuss the challenges they face and share their suggestions, bike maintenance workshops conducted by [MassBike](#), and outreach sessions where planners talk with the public about biking at community locations such as the mall, library, or senior picnic. Later this spring, the city will also conduct an online survey to get additional feedback.

Through the focus groups and outreach, many residents have expressed that they like to bike recreationally and would also like to start commuting by bike - if they can do so comfortably and safely. They have suggested that the city increase signage to remind drivers to watch for bikes and conduct an education campaign. The grant includes funding to implement one small project, and Cambridge plans to purchase gear such as vests, lights, bells, and reflective items to distribute to cyclists. Other suggestions will be incorporated into the city's transportation plans.

Last year, Cambridge received a similar grant to improve access to transit. In outreach sessions, seniors expressed that they wanted better information about when the bus is coming. The city used grant funds to purchase three screens with information about nearby buses, shuttles, and [Hubway](#) bikeshare stations and mounted the screens in the senior center, main library, and City Hall. These screens have proven popular, and City recently asked for funding in the town budget to purchase three additional screens. "Our hope is that by implementing things quickly, residents will see that we mean business," explains Sustainability Planner Jennifer Lawrence.

Lawrence recommends this approach to other communities interested in reducing barriers to transportation for seniors. Key strategies included using some of the grant funds to hire an intern to do the outreach, working closely with the Council on Aging and other city departments, partnering with local organizations, and coordinating

with pre-existing events.

Lexington celebrates third annual Bike Walk 'n Bus Week

In conjunction with [Bay State Bike Week](#), the Town of Lexington celebrated [Bike Walk 'n Bus Week](#) May 8-17. The week raises awareness of the many different transportation modes available in Lexington, including walking paths, biking facilities, the schoolbus, [Lexpress](#), and the Route 128 Business Council's [REV shuttle](#) into Cambridge. "Branding it as a special week draws attention to the transportation resources our community has in a really positive way that encourages people to use them," explains Lexington Transportation Manager Jeannette Rebecchi.

[Events](#), which targeted a wide variety of ages, included schoolbus enrollment, bike safety for fifth graders, a "Silver Sneaker" walk for seniors, and free fares on the Lexpress and REV shuttle. Town residents volunteered to help plan and run the events, in partnership with town staff. Donations from local businesses funded a commuter breakfast for people walking, biking, or taking transit to work or school.

The idea for Bike Walk 'n Bus Week originated three years ago in a meeting of the Lexington transportation forum - a group of staff from different town departments and committee members whose work is related to transportation. They meet quarterly to hear presentations, share updates, and coordinate across departments. Group members wanted to encourage town residents to use all the transportation resources available to them, and ultimately developed Bike Walk 'n Bus Week.

MassDOT recognized for high school video contest

The Association for Commuter Transportation's Regional Patriot Chapter awarded MassDOT an [Excellence in Transportation Demand Management Award](#) for the Safe Streets Smart Trips Statewide High School Video Contest that [MassRIDES](#) administered on behalf of MassDOT. MassRIDES invited high school students to submit one-minute videos promoting safe walking, biking, and driving. Winners received prizes and were recognized at the [Moving Together](#) Conference in October 2014.

Based on the success, MassDOT recently [launched this contest for a second time](#), and a number of Regional Coordinating Councils are exploring opportunities to use videos and contests to support outreach around transit and community transportation options.

Seniors ride half fare on the CapeFLYER

MassMobility thanks the Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority for submitting this guest article. If you would like to submit an article or have an idea for a topic, [please contact us](#).

The [CapeFLYER](#) commuter rail service between Boston and Hyannis opens for the season on May 22. The train runs Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays from South Station in Boston to Hyannis, with stops along the way in Braintree, Brockton, Middleborough/Lakeville, Wareham, and Buzzards Bay. After arrival at the Cape, riders can easily connect with [local transit service](#) or ferries to Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket.

We would like to extend a special welcome to seniors to try out the CapeFLYER this season. Seniors and people with disabilities who have a Senior CharlieCard or Transportation Access Pass get a 50 percent discount on the ticket price. Group discounts are also available. Take the train and spend a leisurely day or weekend enjoying the pleasures the Cape can offer: harbor cruises, lunch on the water at the docks in Hyannis, shopping, museums and art studios, trips to the islands, and of course good food. For more ideas, visit www.capeflyer.com.

The CapeFLYER is a project of the [Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority](#), in partnership with MassDOT and the MBTA.

TranspoCamp returns to New England

On April 11, transit enthusiasts and technology buffs flocked to Cambridge to attend the second annual [TranspoCamp New England](#) "unconference." After a keynote speech from former Transportation Secretary and current CEO of Boston 2024 Rich Davey, participants proposed workshop topics they would like to lead. Schedulers used those ideas to build the day's agenda, and the resulting workshops ranged from advocacy for better transit to suburban solutions to zero emissions. [Ways2Go](#) travel trainers Linda Shepard Salzer and Yasi Abdolmohammadi presented on transit accessibility, including describing their travel instruction program and the orientation they offer to the accessibility features of MBTA buses and subways.

Transportation for Massachusetts hosts Summit

MassMobility thanks Acton Selectwoman Franny Osman for submitting this guest article.

I attended the [First Annual Massachusetts Transportation Summit](#) May 1, 2015 in the DCU Center in Worcester, organized by [Transportation for Massachusetts](#).

Keynote Robin Chase, founder of [Zipcar](#), described the power of collaboration among individuals and corporations using technology to leverage excess capacity in our transportation system. Did you know that 25 percent of all trucks on the road are empty? Companies such as [uShip PRO](#) are filling them, in the same way as Waze, Uber, NextBus, Bridj, and Boston Hubway put information, vehicles, and people together.

In her [keynote](#), Secretary of Transportation Stephanie Pollack said we have to plan for the future environment, not for today, as it takes at least 20 years to carry out projects (she'll figure out why!). She says we should look at connecting people to their destinations rather than build infrastructure project by project.

Kirstie Pecci of [MASSPIRG](#) led a set of mostly (but not all!) young thinkers on the next generation of solutions. Monica Tibbits-Nutt of the [128 Business Council](#) dreams of a "passkey," or a universal, unlimited fare. Aniko Laszlo, Statewide Mobility Manager, spoke of unemployment among people with disabilities. Matt George of Bridj said that 70 percent of jobs in the Boston area are not accessible without a car.

A dozen or so people, including me, braved the stage for the "lightning round," where we shared our own ideas. My ideas, you ask? I suggested 1) that MassDOT has a revenue goldmine in the

poll and research data available through the Registry of Motor Vehicles; and 2) legislating incentives for bus connections between Regional Transit Authorities statewide.

National Council on Disability releases transportation report

In May, the National Council on Disability (NCD) released [Transportation Update: Where We've Gone and What We've Learned](#). Ten years ago, NCD published [The Current State of Transportation for People with Disabilities in the United States](#). The [new report](#) provides updates on developments that have occurred in the last decade and describes ongoing challenges across many modes including fixed route, paratransit, Amtrak and intercity bus, taxis, and app-based services such as Uber and Lyft. The report also discusses rural transportation, mobility management, and transportation coordination and offers recommendations for transportation providers, federal agencies, Congress, local public works departments, and riders.

National organizations highlight best practices from Massachusetts

[Greater Lynn Senior Services](#) shared how they integrate falls prevention into their travel training and mobility management programs on a [National Center for Senior Transportation webinar](#) on May 6.

[April's Mobility Management News](#) from the [National Center for Mobility Management](#) highlighted [Cooley Dickinson Health Care's efforts to reduce transportation barriers](#) that prevent patients from accessing care.

From the desk of the Statewide Mobility Manager

Aniko Laszlo, Statewide Mobility Manager at MassDOT, discusses the Massachusetts Community Transportation Coordination Conference in her most recent [blog post](#).

Helping children and their families access meal and food programs

The [National Center for Mobility Management](#) (NCMM), Federal Transit Administration, and the US Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service are interested in learning about the work of mobility managers and transit to support the [Summer Food Service Program](#) and other programs to assure that children have healthy meals. If you provide transportation for or partner with these programs, please [contact Judy Shanley](#) at NCMM to describe your work.

Coming up in June

The [Community Transportation Association of America](#) hosts their annual [EXPO](#) conference this year in Tampa, May 30 through June 5.

The [Older Driver Safety Summit](#) is coming up June 16 at UMass Boston. Join with key thought leaders as we review research, practice, and innovations in order to develop a comprehensive blueprint to reduce crashes involving older drivers across the Commonwealth. This summit is a call to action and will address a

variety of issues surrounding older driver mobility including infrastructure improvements, vehicle design innovations, education for older road users and the public, transportation options for older adults, insurance and liability concerns, medically impaired drivers, and loss of mobility.

For more upcoming events related to community transportation and coordination, check out our [calendar](#).

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Are you on Twitter? If so, 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/.

We want to know your stories

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