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As spring turns into summer, mobility managers and transportation providers around Massachusetts have been busy. This June issue of *MassMobility* contains news about community transportation, human service transportation coordination, and mobility management in Massachusetts.

Read on to learn about a healthcare transportation initiative in Worcester, travel training successes, older driver safety, updates from Regional Coordinating Councils, and more community transportation news from around Massachusetts. We would also like to thank all the state employees who will be retiring at the end of June for their service, including MassMobility founder and director Tanja Ryden.

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](#).

Thank you to Tanja Ryden

MassMobility founder and director Tanja Ryden is leaving state service at the end of June. Please join us in thanking her for her leadership, insights, and hard work fostering coordination and improving mobility in Massachusetts.

Tanja's work in coordination started almost 20 years ago, when she led an effort by the Operational Services Division to encourage EOHHS state agencies to participate in joint procurement of transportation services for consumers. She started at the grassroots level, inviting each agency's transportation staff and leadership to meet regularly over bagels and coffee. Over time, these individuals developed relationships and began to work together. The initial idea blossomed into a fully developed initiative to coordinate transportation at all levels by creating the [Human Service Transportation Office](#) within EOHHS in 2001.

After a hiatus to spend time with her children, Ryden returned to state government, joining the HST Office in 2005 to assist with procurement and special projects. Tanja next shifted her attention to consumers not eligible for state funding for transportation. She partnered with Work Without Limits to support coordination efforts around Massachusetts, providing technical assistance to collaborative, regional teams and helping plan and run biannual statewide meetings. She also participated directly in the Southeastern Massachusetts Transportation Alliance, her local team.

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In 2010, Ryden submitted a grant proposal to MassDOT to take this work to the next level. She proposed creating a mobility management information network that would continue to support the transportation coordination teams, as well as providing research and technical assistance to other stakeholders interested in coordinating, and offering information about mobility options to consumers and the organizations working with them. MassDOT awarded the grant, and the project - which grew into [MassMobility](#) - launched in 2011.

In the last four years, MassMobility has realized Tanja's vision of an online information network with resources for [consumers](#), [human service agencies](#), and [transportation providers](#), including [best practice briefs](#) and an [interactive map](#) that allows users to select a town and get mobility management resources and inventories of services. Under her leadership, staff have conducted outreach and provided technical assistance to help organizations coordinate their transportation. In partnership with MassDOT, Ryden and the MassMobility team also re-energized the transportation coordination teams and formed new collaborations through the [Regional Coordinating Council](#) initiative that grew out of the Executive Order 530 process.

While we will miss Tanja greatly, we wish her the best in her next set of adventures. Please [join us](#) in thanking her for everything she has done for Massachusetts and wishing her well.

WRTA receives national healthcare transportation grant

The [Worcester Regional Transit Authority](#) (WRTA) received a national [Rides to Wellness](#) Grant from the Federal Transit Administration. The [National Center for Mobility Management](#) (NCMM) selected WRTA, along with 15 other grantees around the country, in a [competitive process](#). Grantees have six months to develop a solution to a healthcare challenge, with technical assistance and funding from NCMM.

The WRTA grant builds on the "Smart Transit for Healthcare" project developed by volunteers as part of the [Art of Science Learning](#) (ASOL) initiative. Worcester, along with Chicago and San Diego, were selected to participate in an initiative funded by the National Science Foundation. ASOL recruited students and professionals from a wide range of fields to develop creative solutions to community problems by bringing artistic approaches to science learning. In Worcester, [ASOL teams](#) tackled transportation barriers.

The Smart Transit for Healthcare team worked with the local [Family Health Center](#) to reduce the number of appointments missed due to transportation barriers, a huge problem at the health center. They learned that many patients who take the bus have to transfer at the WRTA hub and encounter long transfer times. The team developed a web-based app that interacts with the health center's scheduling software, patient's address, and WRTA timetables to schedule appointments at times that minimize the transit trip for a patient. An early version of the app was able to shorten a two and a half hour trip to 37 minutes by aligning the appointment time with the bus schedules.

The NCMM grant will allow the team, in partnership with WRTA and the [Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission](#), to fully develop the app. In addition, the team will analyze the feasibility of implementing the app, as well as a second option: setting up

demand-response shuttle routes that would bring patients directly to the health center, with set days of the week for certain neighborhoods. Based on the feasibility analysis, the team will implement the app or the shuttle routes in months three through six.

As nearly 19 percent of WRTA riders use the bus for medical purposes, healthcare transportation is a priority for WRTA. The goal is for the app to be replicable at other health centers in the WRTA area, and ultimately for other transit systems as well.

Massachusetts Community Transportation Coordination Conference materials available for download

On May 5, 136 people representing all regions of Massachusetts gathered in Marlborough for a [statewide community transportation conference](#). Summaries of the panels and workshops, as well as presentations, handouts, and photos, are now available online [on our conference website](#). If you have questions or suggestions for next year's conference, please [contact us](#).

Regional Coordinating Councils collaborate to improve mobility and access

[Regional Coordinating Councils](#) (RCC) draw human service agency staff, transportation providers, advocates, consumers, and others with a stake in community transportation together to collaborate on gaps in regional transportation networks. Each RCC is locally-led and reflects regional priorities. Following are highlights from some recent efforts by RCCs.

The Franklin County RCC, which meets in conjunction with the Franklin Regional Transit Authority's Transit Advisory Committee, published an [inventory of community transportation resources available in Greater Franklin County](#), modeled on the [Berkshire County transportation inventory](#) that the Berkshire County RCC published earlier this year. RCCs in the Pioneer Valley and Boston Core regions are also considering compiling inventories.

The [South East Regional Coordinating Council on Transportation](#) (SERCCOT) has continued planning an outreach initiative to increase awareness of existing transportation options and the [Ride Match](#) online database. This project grew out of recommendations from a healthcare transportation forum that SERCCOT hosted in November 2014. SERCCOT is planning a second forum for fall 2015, to focus on transportation to employment and educational opportunities. SERCCOT is also working with stakeholders in Wareham to explore opportunities to increase transportation coordination.

Many RCCs are exploring opportunities to promote transit services. The North Central RCC is exploring opportunities to foster [travel training](#) programs in the region, and both the North Central and Merrimack Valley RCCs are looking at options to develop a video about transit. Looking ahead to the fall, the Berkshire County RCC is brainstorming events to hold in conjunction with September's statewide [Clean Air Challenge](#).

For RCCs that formed recently, needs assessment surveys can help stakeholders identify priorities. The Boston North RCC is looking into conducting a needs assessment survey. The Neponset Valley RCC, which launched on June 17, conducted a survey prior to launching and shared the results at the first meeting.

FRTA celebrates Dump the Pump day with free fares

June 18 was [National Dump the Pump Day](#). To celebrate, the [Franklin Regional Transit Authority](#) (FRTA) continued its tradition of offering free bus fares to motivate people to try the bus. As a result, ridership increased about 1.5%. Overall, ridership is up about 10% compared to last year.

FRTA also offers free fares the Friday after Thanksgiving.

Ways2Go travel trainee uses new skills to help his family

MassMobility thanks Linda Shepard Salzer, Travel Trainer at Ways2Go, for submitting this guest article. If you would like to submit an article or have an idea for a topic, [please contact us](#).

Edmilson, of Dorchester, assists his extended family in many ways, particularly in helping care for younger siblings and cousins. As a result of having participated in [Ways2Go travel training](#), the ways he can help have increased, including running errands beyond his neighborhood. He learned the route to his school and to South Bay Mall where he will work this summer.

Learning the route to Downtown Boston also increases opportunities for Edmilson himself. He visited the State House for the first time during one travel training lesson. He finds articulated buses fascinating and marveled at the number of routes and geographic area served by the MBTA.

Edmilson demonstrated his increasing confidence in the use of public transportation in areas such as locating the correct stops and platforms, adding money to his T pass using the fare vending machine and farebox, and using maps. Edmilson's doctor referred him for travel training after having learned about Ways2Go at our information booth at [Abilities Expo](#).

230 discuss senior mobility at Older Driver Safety Summit

On June 16, 230 practitioners and students gathered at the [UMass Boston Gerontology Institute](#) for a day-long conference focusing on older driver safety. Participants attended workshops on how policy, infrastructure, and the medical community can improve safety, as well as services that provide alternatives to driving - including one workshop highlighting successful transportation programs from across the Commonwealth organized by MassMobility staff.

Joe Coughlin, Director of the [MIT AgeLab](#), and Ron Medford, Director of the [GoogleX Driverless Car](#), provided a lunchtime keynote on the future of safe mobility. Secretary of Transportation Stephanie Pollack closed the conference with a call to action. After the conference, participants had the opportunity to test-drive a self-parking vehicle.

The Summit was convened by the Older Drivers emphasis area committee of the Massachusetts Strategic Highway Safety Plan. The committee is compiling a five-year plan to reduce fatal and incapacitating injuries and will incorporate the ideas and topics addressed in the Summit into the plan.

To learn more, check out the [conference website](#).

Administration invites municipalities to partner with Commonwealth on transportation and other best practices

The Baker-Polito administration has invited Massachusetts cities and towns to apply for the [Community Compact](#) program. To participate, municipalities pledge to implement a best practice. Once approved for participation, the municipality has two years to implement the best practice. Participating cities and towns are eligible for technical assistance from the state and can receive priority for any state funds that should come available. Several of the [eligible best practices](#) relate to transportation, including complete streets, safe routes to schools, and older driver safety.

Hardwick transportation survey yields high response

MassMobility thanks Nick Burnham, Assistant Transportation Planner at the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, for submitting this guest article.

Through a joint effort between the Town of Hardwick and the [Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission](#) (CMRPC), a survey of transportation needs was conducted to collect resident feedback and ideas about public transportation in Hardwick. Isolated between Springfield and Worcester, Hardwick is on the outskirts of two regional transit authorities and a member of a third regional transit authority. Town officials were interested in assessing residents' interest for local and/or regional public transportation and to determine potential use, if service were to be provided.

The 17-question survey asked residents to provide information on their current mode of transportation, whether they were interested in and would use public transportation, potential days and times of service, communities and specific destinations that transportation is needed to, and demographic information. Per the recommendation of Town officials, the survey was distributed along with the Annual Town Census form, as previous attempts to collect information from Hardwick residents had proven successful through this method.

Of the 1,094 households in Hardwick (2010 Census), surveys were received from 474 households, a response rate of over 43%! CMRPC staff officially closed the survey at the beginning of the month and will compile all of the data before bringing the results to Town officials and deciding on the next steps.

Overall, the survey was a grand success and an example of how communities can work with their [Regional Planning Agencies](#) to fulfill a local need.

From the desk of the Statewide Mobility Manager

Aniko Laszlo, Statewide Mobility Manager at MassDOT, shares highlights from the Community Transportation Association of America's national [EXPO](#) conference in this month's [blog post](#).

Coming up in July

Letters of inquiry are due to the [Tufts Health Plan Foundation](#) July 20.

Happy birthday to the Americans with Disabilities Act, which turns 25 on July 26. Boston is hosting a [celebration](#) on July 22.

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

Follow us on Twitter

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

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

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