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Happy Holidays!

This December issue of *MassMobility* covers news about community transportation, human service transportation coordination, and mobility management in Massachusetts. Read on to learn about new federal transportation legislation, upcoming funding opportunities, new local and regional services operating in Massachusetts, and more.

Do you have a resolution related to transportation coordination or mobility management for 2016? Please [share it with us](#) or tweet us @MassMobility.

This newsletter is compiled by the [MassMobility](#) team, an initiative of the [Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services](#) in partnership with [MassDOT](#).

President Obama signs FAST Act

On December 4, President Obama signed the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act into law, authorizing funding for highways and transit for the next five years. The FAST Act is the first long-term, federal funding legislation passed in a decade. An [analysis by the Community Transit Association of America](#) identifies changes to 5310, 5311, and other programs of interest.

Funding opportunities

MArtap's [Helping Hand Mini Grant](#) application opened on December 8. Applications are due February 2. Councils on Aging, private nonprofits, and Regional Transit Authorities can apply for up to \$1000 for equipment or projects designed to update or enhance transit services in rural and small urban areas.

The [Community Transit Grant Program](#) applications will open January 25. MassDOT is offering a [series of workshops on how to apply](#) in January.

CAT bus begins operating in Acton

Acton, a town that has been steadily increasing its [transportation options and coordination](#) over the last decade, added a fixed-route service to its inventory last month. Operated by TransAction Associates, the [Cross-Acton Transit](#) (CAT) is a project of [CrossTown Connect](#). Service began on November 2, and an official launch will be held in 2016.

"Fixed-route service for the general public has been an ultimate goal of the Town of Acton and the Transportation Advisory Council for

years," explains CrossTown Connect Director Scott Zadakis. "The vision is for a traditional public transit service that is supplemented with demand-response service to best meet the needs of all riders."

The CAT makes 10 loops around town daily between 8 AM and 6 PM, hitting key residential, commercial, and commuter spots. TransAction Associates used ridership data from Acton's other transportation service to help plan the route. They opted for a one-hour loop to make the schedule predictable.

To pay for the service, Acton is using both municipal and transit funding. Last year, the town voted to implement a local options meals tax to increase municipal revenue. Earlier this year, [residents voted to use town funds to pay for a fixed-route service](#). The town was also able to access assessment funds from the [Lowell Regional Transit Authority](#) to help fund CAT. Riders pay a \$1 fare, or \$30 for a monthly pass.

Initial ridership has been higher than predicted, and CrossTown Connect continues to do outreach. Staff members have reached out to riders on other local services, presented to the Council on Aging, and distributed flyers around town. They are also developing a poster, a video for local TV, and an insert for the next town mailing to all residents.

COA partners with police department to launch volunteer driver program

One of the smallest towns in Massachusetts now has a volunteer driver program. The town of Leyden - population around 700 - launched its [new program](#) on September 1. The Council on Aging developed the program after a survey found that many seniors in the area lack access to transportation.

Leyden's Police Chief found a 2003 Cadillac on a government surplus website for just \$150 and went to Washington DC to bring it back for the COA. Upon getting to DC, he found that the car did not have a key, but luckily was able to get one made. "Trying to find a vehicle is hard because they're so expensive, so being able to do what we did is amazing and saves the town a lot of money," explained COA Chair Gilda Galvis. "Some people don't like going in a big van, and using a smaller car gives more of a personal touch."

To publicize the program, the COA has sent out 100 flyers around town. COA volunteers and staff are serving as drivers, and they are using their COA newsletter to recruit additional volunteer drivers.

New intercity MAX service connects to local and long-distance transit

Since launching in September, the [MAX](#) bus has run twice daily - including weekends and holidays - through Central Massachusetts and the Pioneer Valley. Westbound service starts in Worcester, where it connects to local services from the [Worcester Regional Transit Authority](#), as well as the MBTA commuter rail, Peter Pan, and Amtrak. From there it heads up to Fitchburg, connects with local [Montachusett Regional Transit Authority](#) service, and drives west through the Quabbin Valley before turning south to connect with the [Pioneer Valley Transit Authority](#) in Amherst and Northampton.

Through this route, MAX seeks to connect underserved, rural towns

with nearby cities, as well as with intercity service to Boston and New York, with the ultimate goal of increasing regional economic development while also improving mobility and access for people with disabilities and lower-income riders. The motor coaches are accessible, and passengers with disabilities receive a 25 percent discount on fares, as do seniors and children. One-way fares range from \$4 to \$12.

Transit aficionado Stuart Spina has already ridden MAX four times. From his home near Boston, he rides the MBTA commuter rail to Fitchburg, where he picks up the MAX to visit friends in Amherst. He appreciates the fact that it bridges "small but inconvenient gaps" by providing weekend service and connecting Regional Transit Authority service areas. He also appreciates the scenery: "Rarely do you have a publicly funded transit route that goes through some of the most beautiful places, like riding through New Salem as the sun was setting over the Quabbin Valley."

Piloted with funding from MassDOT's BusPlus program, MAX is a project of TrueNorth Transit Group LLC.

MassDOT offers technical assistance on complete streets, with funding to follow

This month and next month, MassDOT is offering its first round of [workshops on how to design and fund Complete Streets projects](#) at the municipal level. Due to high interest and enrollment, MassDOT is currently scheduling a second round of workshops and expects to hold further rounds until all interested municipalities are served.

The workshops stem from MassDOT's new [Complete Streets Funding Program](#), which was [announced by Secretary Pollack at last month's Moving Together Conference](#). Originally outlined in the 2014 transportation bond bill, the program was revised to make it accessible to more municipalities. The program has three tiers. First, MassDOT will provide technical assistance through workshops to help cities and towns develop Complete Streets policies. Second, up to \$50,000 in technical assistance funding will be made available to help municipalities develop prioritization plans. Third, MassDOT will accept applications for funding for complete streets projects from municipalities that have adopted policies and developed prioritization plans. MassDOT has allocated \$12.5 million for the first two years, and individual municipalities will be able to apply for up to \$400,000. MassDOT is currently developing the final program guidance documents as well as an online application system and expects to launch them in late January.

Luciano Rabito, Complete Streets Engineer at MassDOT, stressed the importance of equity. As stated in the original bond bill language, at least 33 percent of funding will go to cities and towns whose median household income is lower than the state average. In addition, MassDOT will collect data on how well the program is serving Gateway communities, Title VI communities, and environmental justice areas.

Transportation provider offers discounted, prepaid transit passes as holiday gifts

MassMobility thanks Tim O'Day, Executive Director of SCM Elderbus, for submitting this guest article. SCM Elderbus provides transportation services to seniors and people with disabilities in 21

communities in Central Massachusetts. If you would like to submit an article or have an idea for a topic, [please contact us](#).

It's a dilemma faced by many of us during the holiday season: trying to find that perfect gift that's both practical and affordable for a relative or friend - particularly when the recipient is a senior, aging parent, grandparent, or neighbor. To help both gift givers and recipients, [SCM Elderbus](#) sells prepaid transit fare passes at a discounted rate from Thanksgiving week through New Year's Eve.

The discounted prepaid transit pass - or "Punch Pass" - has been extremely popular. During the holiday season, SCM Elderbus offers the Punch Pass for \$10 instead of the usual \$12.50. We usually sell around 35 Punch Passes per month, but during the special holiday program, we sell approximately 400.

The program began nearly a decade ago when an individual stopped by the office to purchase 10 Punch Passes as a gift for their parent, a client of Elderbus. It was extremely unusual for someone to purchase so many passes at once, so Elderbus offered a discount. We formalized the discount and have offered it each subsequent year during the holiday season.

If your community provides transit services to seniors and people with disabilities, whether through the local senior center, Council on Aging, or any other organization, ask about any prepaid passes or discount programs. If such programs are not currently available, make a suggestion to implement one. As was the case with Elderbus, the action of a single individual can give rise to a program benefiting many.

Sports fan gets to job with help from travel training

MassMobility thanks Linda Shepard Salzer, Travel Trainer at Ways2Go, for submitting this guest article. Travel trainers help individuals with disabilities, seniors, and others learn to use public transportation independently to access their environment and community.

Ned R., currently of Newton, learned about [Ways2Go](#) through Specialized Housing, Inc. At the time, he already used the Green Line to get to one of his jobs. He wanted to learn to get to another of his jobs. Ned works as a greeter at Fenway Park for some of the Red Sox weekend home games. Through Ways2Go, he successfully learned to travel to Fenway Park on the Green Line at the times when it is most crowded.

In addition to holding down multiple jobs, Ned likes to attend sporting events as a spectator. In preparation for hockey season, he also learned the route to T.D. Garden.

Donated vehicles help people get to work

If the spirit of holiday giving or the allure of a tax break is tempting you to donate your car, consider an [organization that repurposes donated cars for low-income people and people with disabilities](#) who need transportation to employment. For people who can drive but cannot afford a car, these programs can provide the missing link to self-sufficiency.

MassMobility subscriber Sarah Langer donated her car last year. "I chose Good News Garage because instead of just selling the car,

they will actually give it to someone who can use it," she explained.

New reports

Two new reports - one on [shared-use mobility](#) and one on [technology-enabled transportation services](#) - each include a discussion on equity for transportation-disadvantaged groups.

Check out [Five Transportation Tips for Seniors, Veterans, and Individuals with Disabilities](#), a guest blog post by MassMobility on the mass.gov blog.

Coming up in January

The annual [TRB conference](#) takes place in Washington DC from January 10-14.

MassDOT's [Community Transit Grant Program](#) opens on January 25. Earlier in the month, MassDOT will hold a series of [workshops on how to apply](#).

Franklin County Home Care Corporation offers a training for volunteer drivers the afternoon of January 26 in Turners Falls. To learn more about the program or sign up, visit [Rides for Health](#).

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