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This October 2014 issue of *MassMobility* contains news about community transportation, human service transportation coordination, and 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.

Read on to learn about available funding opportunities, changes coming to Project ACTION, a new map that can help you find assistance planning a trip, an effort to bring seniors and teens together around transportation, and more community transportation and coordination updates.

Project ACTION loses federal funding, opens consulting practice

[Project ACTION](#), a federally-funded technical assistance center on transit accessibility, will lose its federal funding at the end of December. Over the years, Project ACTION's staff has provided valuable information, technical assistance, and training. Project ACTION's recent impact on Massachusetts includes offering a three-day introduction to travel training course in North Adams this past May and providing technical assistance on accessibility to [CrossTown Connect](#).

Currently, Project ACTION is developing new ways to continue working with stakeholders on accessibility. On October 14, they launched a fee-for-service consulting practice. You can visit their new website at www.projectaction.com or call (844) 227-3772. In addition, Project ACTION's Judy Shanley, who helped foster the Massachusetts Travel Instruction Network and supported our state's educators in incorporating travel training into their curricula, will continue to be involved in Massachusetts through her role as liaison to our area for the [National Center for Mobility Management](#).

Over the next two months, take advantage of Project ACTION's [remaining training opportunities](#), including webinars and an online course. [Download your favorite reports and toolkits](#) now, while the current website is still live and maintained. If you need hard copies of materials, Project ACTION can ship them to you.

During this transitional phase, please join us in thanking Project ACTION's staff for their valuable contributions.

Statewide transportation coordination meeting scheduled

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for May 5, 2015

Mark your calendars for Tuesday, May 5, 2015, for the next statewide community transportation coordination meeting. Members of all Regional Coordinating Councils, original transportation coordination teams, and others involved in community transportation coordination in Massachusetts are welcome. The meeting will be held in Marlborough. If you have suggestions for the agenda, please [contact us](#).

Funding opportunities available

[MArtap](#)'s annual Helping Hands mini-grants are open for application through November 30. Details at www.martap.org.

The [National Center on Senior Transportation](#) (NCST) released a call for proposals for projects [Connecting Seniors to Public Transportation](#). Applications are due November 7, and details are available from NCST.

Find more information about funding opportunities on our [funding webpage](#) and [transportation calendar](#).

MassMobility launches interactive map for help finding a ride

Need a ride in Massachusetts, but don't know where to start? The new [MassMobility interactive map](#) can help you find contact information for organizations in your city or town that can help you arrange a ride or connect with local transportation services.

Click on your city or town, and you will get websites and phone numbers for your [Council on Aging](#) and [transit authority](#) (if your town has one), as well as regional resources such as trip planners and lists of transportation options compiled by Elder Service organizations, municipal governments, or local human service agencies. You will also get contact information for three statewide resources: [211](#), [INDEX](#), and [1-800-AGE-INFO](#).

Although many community transportation services operate in Massachusetts, these services are decentralized. As a result, navigating the options to plan a trip can be challenging for riders and their families. Some regions have robust trip planners - such as [Ride Match](#) in Southeastern Massachusetts or [Mobility Links](#) on the North Shore - but it can be confusing for individuals, their families, or staff at human service agencies to find the right tools. The MassMobility interactive map is a great place to start. Use it to zero in on the best sources of information about transportation in your area.

Find the map [on our website](#) or go directly to www.tinyurl.com/MA-trip-help. MassMobility thanks [MassGIS](#) for developing and hosting the interactive map. If you know of a great source about transportation options that is not listed, [contact us](#), and we will add it.

Seniors and teens partner on pedestrian access

Seniors and teens in Brookline are partnering on pedestrian improvements, thanks to a program that [WalkBoston](#) is doing in collaboration with the [Brookline Senior Center](#), [Brookline High School](#)'s Students Helping Older People (SHOP) group, the [Brookline Community Aging Network](#), and the [Brookline Teen Center](#), with

funding from the [Tufts Health Plan Foundation](#).

[WalkBoston](#) is a nonprofit pedestrian advocacy organization active in over 100 cities and towns around Massachusetts (not just Boston, despite its name). Recognizing that both teens and seniors face age-related limitations to driving, the organization decided to pilot a program to bring these two populations together to work on pedestrian access. They partnered with a subgroup of the Brookline Community Aging Network that was already working on transportation access and a high school extracurricular group that was serving seniors.

The [pilot](#) began in spring 2014 and runs through the end of the calendar year. So far, the seniors and teens have audited vehicle speeds in Coolidge Corner and assessed the area sidewalks for barriers to safe travel. They analyzed their findings and submitted recommendations to the Town of Brookline. Future projects may include counting pedestrians and bicyclists in the area and doing a crash analysis.

Employee shuttle opens to town residents

On September 8, the [128 Business Council's REV Bus](#) service expanded its scope. It is now serving residents of Lexington as well as its original target population, employees of the businesses in the Hartwell Avenue area. This service was originally funded through a JARC grant, but when that funding ran out, the Route 128 Business Council worked with the communities of Lexington and Bedford to secure enough funding to continue the service. As part of the agreement they reached, the bus serves residents of the town as well as employees, and residents qualify for the same discount as employees of partnering businesses.

The shuttle picks up reverse commuters at Alewife station and drops them off in the Hartwell Ave area before continuing on to Lexington center to pick up residents for the return trip to Alewife. The shuttle does three trips in the morning and three in the evening at peak rush hour times. Ridership has grown every month since the original service for employees was launched in September 2013.

The Hartwell Avenue area of Lexington is home to over one million square feet of commercial office space and dozens of companies, but has few public transportation options. Working with the Town of Lexington's Economic Development and Planning departments, as well as over a dozen local property owners, the 128 Business Council surveyed area employees and determined that a commuter shuttle from Alewife Station would be a good fit for the area. Local companies now use the REV as a recruitment tool when hiring new employees, and some small companies have identified the REV as a positive factor in their decision to lease office space in the Hartwell Avenue area. With the recent expansion of scope, residents of Lexington now have an alternate route to jobs downtown as well as to jobs in the Hartwell Ave area.

Westford veterans ride the COA van to learn about VA healthcare options

This past March, [Westford Veterans' Service Officer](#) (VSO) Terry Stader took a group of veterans to a healthcare orientation at the [Bedford VA Hospital](#). The excursion was a success, so he held another on October 15.

The goal was to recruit veterans who do not currently use VA healthcare services who might qualify for benefits. Stader worked with the Bedford VA's Outreach Coordinator to reserve space in the VA's October 15 session orienting people to the VA healthcare system. The [Westford Council on Aging](#) (COA) and Town Manager each publicized the opportunity in their newsletters. Eight veterans signed up, and Stader pre-registered them in the VA system prior to October 15.

To get to Bedford, the COA offered their van, and the COA's Transportation Manager Laura Mitchell filled in as the driver. Stader works closely with the COA, including meeting regularly with Mitchell to brainstorm solutions to local transportation challenges and share information about transportation options.

On October 15, the veterans gathered at 9 AM and rode together to the VA. At the VA, they participated in morning and afternoon orientation sessions, where they learned about the wide range of services the VA offers, including a "Healthcare in your Home" program where qualifying veterans can receive home visits from medical staff. Stader was able to treat the veterans to lunch with donated funds from area community groups. Before leaving the Bedford VA medical center, each veteran made a primary care and a lab work appointment. The van picked the veterans up promptly at 2:20 PM.

Learning a new healthcare system can be overwhelming or scary, but going together as a group fostered a supportive atmosphere for the Westford veterans - and transportation played an important role. The shared ride in the morning offered veterans a chance to bond, and on the ride home, veterans engaged in an informal debrief session. "The bus rides gave us the chance to interact with each other and bounce things off each other. You don't get this if you all drive separately," Stader noted.

Travel trainers and O&M Specialists discuss collaboration

Over 20 people attended the Massachusetts Travel Instruction Network meeting in Springfield on October 3. The meeting focused on potential for collaboration between travel trainers and Orientation & Mobility (O&M) Specialists to benefit travel trainers, O&M specialists, and consumers. [Travel trainers](#) teach seniors and people with disabilities skills to ride transit independently; [O&M Specialists](#) work with consumers with visual impairments or blindness to help them learn how to orient themselves and travel in their communities.

Carole Wilson, an O&M Specialist with the [Massachusetts Commission for the Blind](#) (MCB) in Springfield, demonstrated how she would orient a consumer to transit using an out of service bus donated by the [Pioneer Valley Transit Authority](#). Larry Haile of the [MBTA](#) shared the presentation he gave at the [Association of Travel Instruction](#)'s annual conference in August on collaboration between travel trainers and O&M Specialists.

The Massachusetts Travel Instruction Network is a peer network for travel trainers and anyone working on developing a travel training program in Massachusetts. Several O&M Specialists from MCB are active in the network. If you are interested in learning more about the network, please [contact us](#).

BerkshireRides offers and supports travel training in Berkshire County

MassMobility thanks Becky McAllister, Office Manager at BerkshireRides, for submitting this guest article. If you would like to submit an article or have an idea for a topic, [please contact us](#).

[BerkshireRides](#), a nonprofit transportation provider and mobility management organization in Northern Berkshire County, recently launched an expanded Travel Training Program. Through this program, we provide one-on-one and group training to people with disabilities and older adults, giving them the confidence and skills to travel independently on public transit. Training is available on any bus in the [Berkshire Regional Transit Authority](#) (BRTA) system.

The travel training program is a continuation of our work to help seniors, youth, and people with disabilities access the region's transit system. Our mission is to provide members of the community the information and training they will need to safely and independently navigate public transportation. This will enhance their ability to live more independent and spontaneous lives within our community.

On October 29, we will offer an information session at the [Adams Council on Aging](#) for human service agencies and Councils on Aging in Berkshire County to learn more about this program. BerkshireRides staff are available to help agencies learn how to travel train their consumers, and to help with the direct travel training when agency staff need support.

If you are interested in finding out more information about our program or would like to schedule an orientation or training, please contact BerkshireRides at (413) 664-0300.

Thanks to Larry Haile

While much attention has been given to the [departure of Secretary Davey](#) at the end of October, the [MBTA](#) lost another valuable staff person on October 17. MassMobility wishes Larry Haile success in his future endeavors as he leaves Massachusetts for new adventures in Washington DC.

As [System-Wide Accessibility Coordinator](#) for the MBTA, Haile founded and ran the system-wide orientation that introduces riders to the accessibility features of MBTA buses and subways. He was instrumental in creating the [Ways2Go Travel Training](#) program and provided valuable contributions to the Massachusetts Travel Instruction Network, including working with the [Association of Travel Instruction](#) to bring their national conference to Boston in 2015. Haile also tested an [electronic wayfinding system](#) for the [MBTA subway network](#) that could help people with visual impairments or developmental disabilities if implemented.

Please join us in thanking him and wishing him well.

Councils on Aging discuss transportation

At the 2014 annual [Massachusetts Councils on Aging](#) conference, [MassMobility](#) co-presented two presentations. In the morning, we teamed up with Erica Girgenti, Director of the [Adams Council on Aging](#) (COA) and co-chair of the Berkshire County Regional Coordinating Council (RCC) to discuss how transportation

coordination can benefit COAs. We described RCCs and the opportunities they provide, using the Berkshire RCC as an example. In the afternoon, we co-presented with Michele Ellicks, [Community Outreach Coordinator at the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles](#), on older driver safety and easing the transition from driving to using other modes.

Both sessions included time for discussion, and attendees compared notes on the types of transportation service offered by different COAs and shared their own transportation challenges and strategies. For copies of the presentations or for more information, please [contact us](#).

Regional Coordinating Councils address local community transportation gaps

Around Massachusetts, organizations are coming together and forming [Regional Coordinating Councils](#) (RCCs) to improve mobility for seniors, people with disabilities, veterans, and low-income commuters in their regions. Over the past year, RCCs have formed in most parts of the state, and more will launch this winter. Each council is locally-led and reflects regional priorities. Highlights from the past few weeks include the following:

- Many Councils on Aging joined the Berkshire County RCC on September 29 to hear a presentation from [MassDOT](#) on funding opportunities through the [Community Transit Grant Program](#)
- Stakeholders in the Brockton Area reviewed the results of a needs assessment survey and heard updates on transit authority projects
- Members of the [South East RCC](#) sent out a survey on transportation needs to area medical facilities and worked on the agenda and logistics for a medical transportation forum scheduled for early November
- Organizations in Central Massachusetts heard a presentation about the [READYBUS](#) employment transportation service and decided to survey area employers on their transportation needs

To learn more about RCCs, visit our webpage on [RCC accomplishments](#). To get involved with your local RCC, [contact us](#).

Coming up in October and November

On October 24, the [Statewide Coordinating Council on Community Transportation](#) meets in Boston to review their annual report and discuss policy issues. The meeting is open to the public. Time and location details are available on the [MassDOT calendar](#).

The [Moving Together](#) pedestrian, biking, and transit annual conference is coming up on October 30 in Boston. [MassMobility](#) will be exhibiting - come say hi!

On November 4, voters will choose the next governor and decide whether to continue indexing the state's gas tax to inflation. Don't forget to vote!

More upcoming events are listed on our [calendar](#).

From the desk of the Statewide Mobility Manager

Aniko Laszlo, Statewide Mobility Manager at MassDOT, discusses generational trends in transportation patterns in this month's [blog post](#).

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We want to know your stories

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