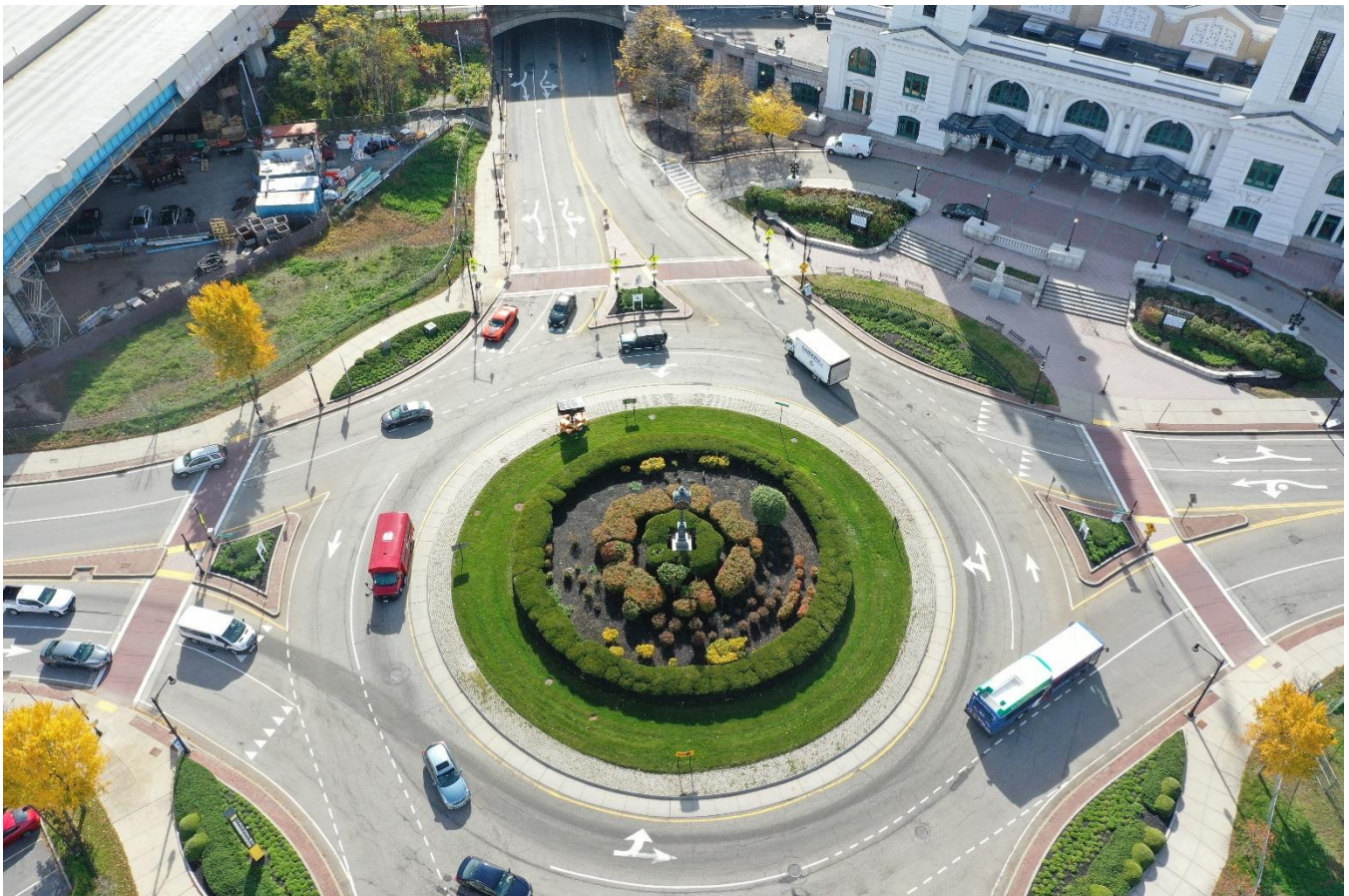
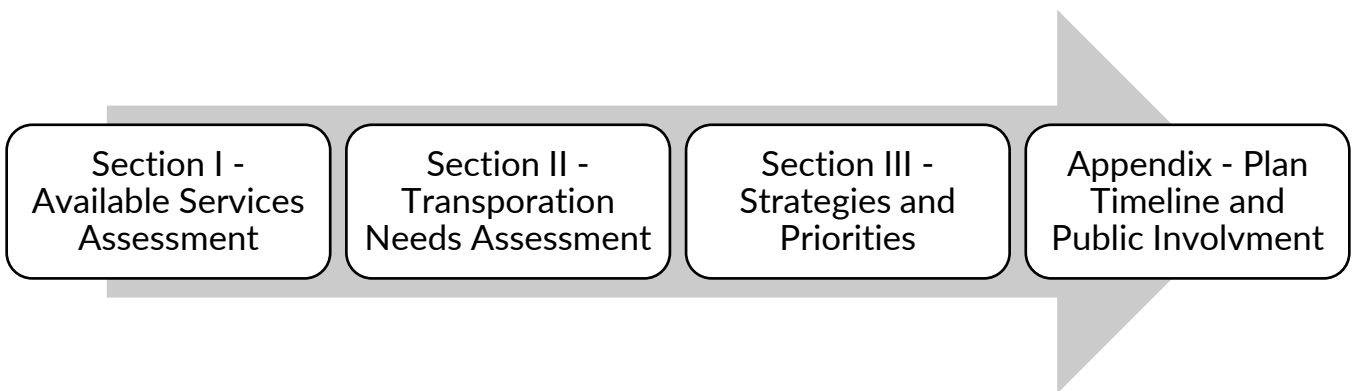


June 2024 Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan

Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization



CMMPO Endorsement

The Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMMPO) hereby endorses the 2024 Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation (HST) Plan. The CMMPO endorsed the 2024 HST Plan on June 20, 2024, at a meeting of the CMMPO.

June 20, 2024

Signature X *Daniela M. Nutt* for _____

Monica Tibbits-Nutt, Secretary and Chief Executive Officer
Massachusetts Department of Transportation
Chair, Central Massachusetts MPO

Document Prepared by: Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission
Staff of the Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization



For general inquiries, please call the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission at (508) 756-7717.

Plan Accessibility

Accessible Formats

SENSORY IMPAIRMENTS

Contact Mass Relay for hearing or speaking impairments: <https://www.mass.gov/massrelay>

TRANSLATION ASSISTANCE

Contact the Title VI Coordinator for translation assistance: titleviordinator@cmrpc.org

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The executive summary can be translated into languages other than Spanish upon request.

Translation

ENGLISH

If this information is needed in another language, please contact the CMRPC/CMMPO Title VI Coordinator at (508) 756-7717.

ESPAÑOL

Si necesita esta información en otro lenguaje, favor contactar al especialista de Título VI de CMRPC/CMMPO al (508) 756-7717.

FRANÇAISE

Si vous avez besoin d'obtenir une copie de la présente dans une autre langue, veuillez contacter le spécialiste du Titre VI de CMRPC/CMMPO en composant le (508) 756-7717.

PORTUGUÊS

Caso esta informação seja necessária em outro idioma, favor contatar o Especialista em Título VI do CMRPC/CMMPO pelo fone (508) 756-7717.

TIẾNG VIỆT

Nếu bạn cần thông tin bằng ngôn ngữ khác, xin vui lòng liên lạc với Tiêu đề VI Chuyên CMRPC/CMMPO tại (508) 756-7717.

中文（繁體）

如果用另一种语言需要的信息，请联系第六章专门 CMRPC/CMMPO (508) 756-7717.

AFRIKAANS

As jy inligting nodig het in 'n ander taal, kontak asseblief die Titel VI Spesialis CMRPC/CMMPO by (508) 756-7717.

Notice of Nondiscrimination

The Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization operates its programs, services, and activities in compliance with following legislation including related federal and state statutes and regulations.

Federal Statutes & Regulations

SECTION 504 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT (1963)

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a federal law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities by entities who receive federal funds or are conducted by federal agencies. It also requires positive actions to assist qualified individuals with disabilities in all programs, services and activities that fall under its scope. Section 504 was the first disability civil rights law to be enacted in the United States.

TITLE VI OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT (1964)

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, prohibits discrimination based upon race, color, and national origin. Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act states that: “No person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.”

THE CIVIL RIGHTS RESTORATION ACT “GROVE CITY BILL” (1987)

The Civil Rights Restoration Act, also referred to as the “Grove City Bill,” is a U.S. legislative act that specifies that entities receiving federal funds must comply with civil rights legislation in all their operations. Senator Edward Kennedy introduced the Act to overturn the U.S. Supreme Court decision in Grove City, which severely limited the application of coverage of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (1990)

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in everyday activities. As a civil rights law, the ADA ensures that individuals with disabilities have equal access and opportunities in various aspects of public life, including transportation.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 13166 (2000)

Executive Order 13166 is a federal order that aims to improve access to services and programs for people with limited English proficiency (LEP). President Clinton signed the order on August 11, 2000. It requires federal agencies to examine the services they provide, identify any need for services to LEP individuals, and develop and implement a plan to provide those services. It also requires federal agencies to provide guidance to their recipients on the Title VI obligation to provide meaningful access to LEP individuals.

State Statutes & Regulations

MASSACHUSETTS PUBLIC ACCOMMODATION LAW (2016)

The Massachusetts Public Accommodation Law ensures civil rights protections related to public accommodations through the Attorney General’s Office. The law prohibits making any distinction, discrimination, or restriction in admission to or treatment in a place of public accommodation.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 592 (2020)

Executive Order 592 “Advancing Workforce Diversity, Inclusion, Equal Opportunity, Non-Discrimination, and Affirmative Action” states that all programs, policies, activities, and services provided, performed, licensed, chartered, funded, regulated, or contracted for by the state shall be conducted without unlawful discrimination based on race, color, age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, genetics, pregnancy or pregnancy-related condition, religion, creed, ancestry, national origin, disability, veteran’s status or background.

Filing a Complaint

This notice is available in large print, on audio format, and in Braille upon request.

Notice Requirement

This notice is provided as required by Title II of the American with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Questions, complaints, or requests for additional information regarding ADA and Section 504 may be forwarded to:

Stephanie Toupin, Human Resources Manager

1 Mercantile Street, Suite 520

Worcester, MA 01608

Phone Number: (508) 756-7717

Email: stoupin@cmrpc.org

Nondiscrimination Complaints

Individuals who feel they have been discriminated against in violation of Title VI or related Federal nondiscrimination laws, must file a complaint within 180 days of the alleged discriminatory conduct to:

Stephanie Toupin, Human Resources Manager

1 Mercantile Street, Suite 520

Worcester, MA 01608

Phone Number: (508) 756-7717

Email: stoupin@cmrpc.org

Public Accommodation Complaints

To file a complaint alleging violation of the State's Public Accommodation Law, contact the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination within three hundred days of the alleged discriminatory conduct at:

Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD)

One Ashburton Place, sixth floor

Boston, MA 02109

(617) 994-6000

TTY: (617) 994-6196

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Executive Summary

Federal Requirements

ⁱ The Safe Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users required that projects funded under the Individuals with Disabilities, Job Access, and Reverse Commute Program, and New Freedom programs have a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation (HST) Plan in 2007.

The Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act included recommendations to increase participation by recipients of federal grants in locally developed, coordinated planning processes in 2015. Recipients of Section 5310 "Enhanced Mobility for Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities" formula funding must have a HST plan.

The Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMMPO) updates the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation (HST) Plan every 4 years to maintain Federal Transit Administration Section 5310 program "Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and People with Disabilities" funding eligibility and to guide fund priorities.

Plan Overview

INTRODUCTION

An overview of Metropolitan Planning, updates since 2019, community transit grants, and Section 5310 funding.

SECTION I - AVAILABLE SERVICE ASSESSMENT

An assessment of available services that identifies current transportation providers (public, private, and nonprofit).

SECTION II - TRANSPORTATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT

An assessment of transportation needs for people with disabilities and older adults based on the experiences and perceptions of the planning partners, or on more sophisticated data collection efforts, and gaps in service.

SECTION III - STRATEGIES AND PRIORITIES

Strategies, activities, and/or projects to address the identified gaps between current services and needs, as well as opportunities to achieve efficiencies in service delivery. Priorities for implementation are based on resources (from multiple program sources), time, and feasibility for implementing specific strategies and/or activities identified.

Plan Purpose

The purpose of the HST Plan is to improve regional transportation and address gaps in human services transportation for seniors and people with disabilities. The 2024 HST Plan will update the 2019 HST Plan and guide the use of federal Section 5310 funds awarded by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation as the primary recipient through the annual competitive Massachusetts Community Transit Grant Program. An auditor reviews the HST Plan and other CMMPO certification documents every 3 years to ensure that they meet federal requirements.

TARGETED POPULATIONS

The HST Plan addresses both regulatory and local community goals to meet the needs of diverse groups, such as people with disabilities, older adults over the age of sixty-five, people with limited English proficiency, and people with low incomes. CMMPO staff intend to track implementation progress and future goals on a regular basis and be viewed as a living document that can be used toward the goal of coordinating transportation with age and dementia friendly planning, public health equity, transportation planning, and human services access.

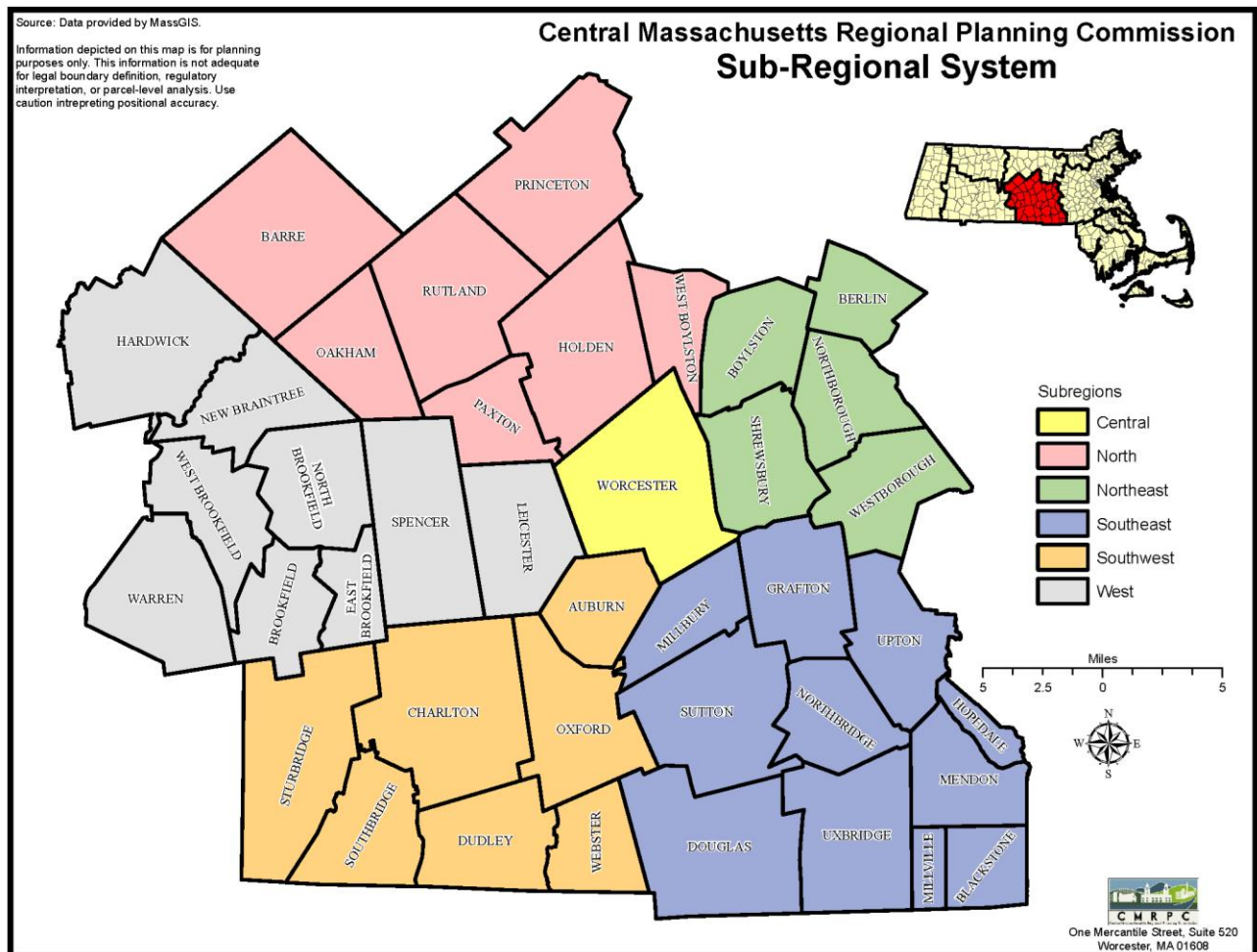
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

CMMPO staff develop HST plans through a meaningful public involvement process with all stakeholders from the public, private and nonprofit sectors that represent transportation and human service providers. The Federal Transit Administration suggests several public outreach strategies to garner full participation from all interested parties in an accessible and universally designed manner to meet a range of needs for a variety of community members.

Introduction

Metropolitan Planning, Plan Overview & Section 5310

Subregion	Communities
Central	Worcester
North	Barre, Princeton, Rutland, Oakham, Paxton, Holden, West Boylston
Northeast	Boylston, Shrewsbury, Berlin, Northborough, Westborough
Southeast	Grafton, Millbury, Sutton, Northbridge, Upton, Hopedale, Mendon, Blackstone, Millville, Douglas, Uxbridge
Southwest	Charlton, Auburn, Oxford, Webster, Dudley, Southbridge, Sturbridge
West	Hardwick, New Braintree, West Brookfield, Warren, Brookfield, East Brookfield, North Brookfield, Spencer, Leicester



Metropolitan Planning

Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization

A Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) makes transportation policy in urbanized areas for over 50,000 people within its planning region. The Central Massachusetts MPO (CMMPO) includes the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) Secretary of Transportation, MassDOT Highway Administrator, Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA), Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC), Worcester City Manager, and 6 selectpersons representing their part of the sub-regional system.

3C TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS

The state established the CMMPO in 1976 to undertake the 3C “comprehensive, continuing, and cooperative” transportation planning process required by the United States Department of Transportation. The CMMPO is responsible for updating the Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plan and Long-Range Transportation Plan every 4 years, and the Transportation Improvement Plan and Unified Planning Work Program annually.

TITLE VI PROGRAM

Through the Title VI Program and Public Participation Plan, the CMMPO conducts all its programs and activities to ensure that protected populations have equal access to the benefits of, and have meaningful opportunities to participate in, the CMMPO’s transportation planning process. Additional Transportation Planning works to create and maintain a safe, dependable, and environmentally sound transportation system that promotes livable communities and the efficient movement of people and good throughout the region.



Significant Changes Since 2019

The City of Worcester

The City of Worcester and its partners have undertaken numerous topic-specific planning efforts since its last comprehensive planning effort in 1987. Recent planning efforts include Worcester for Everyone: A Regional Housing & Economic Study Outlining Local Opportunity (2019), Worcester Strategic Plan (2020), Community Health Improvement Plan (2021), Mobility Action Plan (2024), and Vision Zero Safety Action Plan (2024).

WORCESTER DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY

The City of Worcester created The Department of Transportation & Mobility (DTM) in July 2022 to improve transportation for pedestrians, people with disabilities, transit riders and cyclists, separate from the Department of Public Works and Parks which historically focused on traffic congestion and parking. The DTM will help bridge initiatives across the city from the Department of Sustainability & Resiliency to plan, coordinate, design and implement transportation initiatives that promote safe, equitable, and sustainable mobility options.

Worcester Regional Transit Authority

The Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) Advisory Board hired a new administrator, Joshua Rickman, in June 2023 to replace former WRTA administrator Dennis Lipka who started July 2018 initially on an interim basis.

FARE EQUITY

The WRTA Regional has been using federal recovery funds from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act in 2020 and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) in 2021 to cover lost operating revenue from free fares. The Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) transit service has been free since March 2020. The WRTA Advisory Board voted to extend free fares until June 2025. The Zero Fare Coalition and the Worcester Regional Research Bureau "Resurging Regional Ridership" analysis report advocate for permanent fare free transit services.

Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission

The Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) recently completed its Long Range Transportation Plan – "2050 Connections" (2023), Southern Worcester County "Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy" (2023) "Central Massachusetts Age Friendly Action Plan" (2023), "Quabbin Regional Rural Transit Study" (2023), "Imagine 2050" (ongoing) and the "Greater Worcester Priority Climate Action Plan" (2024).

COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN

CMRPC contributed to the Greater Worcester Community Health Improvement Plan (2024) developed by the Coalition for Healthy Greater Worcester and the Central Massachusetts Regional Public Health Alliance.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

The Massachusetts FY 2024 budget increased Regional transit authority state contract assistance funding and included a Regional Transit Innovation Grant for discretionary operating and capital funding. There is advocacy for the 2021 bill "An Act to Increase Transit Accessibility in the Commonwealth" by the Regional Transit Authority Advocates Coalition through the Massachusetts Public Health Association to increase funding for regional transit.

MASSDOT TRANSIT FUNDING TASK FORCE

Governor Healey signed an executive order to create a new Transportation Funding Task Force alongside her FY 2025 budget. This Task Force will be composed of public and private-sector leaders, representing communities of all sizes across Massachusetts, which will spend the next 12 months examining the Commonwealth's transportation system and developing recommendations for a long-term, sustainable transportation finance plan that can safely and reliably support road, rail, and transit systems.

Massachusetts Community Transit Funding

Community Transit Grant Program

ⁱⁱ The Community Transit Grant Program is an annual, Massachusetts competitive grant program to expand mobility for older adults and people with disabilities. Transit authorities, municipalities, Councils on Aging, non-profit organizations, and private operators of public transit (shared-ride) services can apply for funds to operate transportation services, support mobility management initiatives, or receive wheelchair-accessible vehicles.

Projects initiated prior to 2012 were funded by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) New Freedom Program, which was repealed by the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) and merged into the FTA Section 5310 “Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities” program.

WRTA – READYBUS SERVICE (FY 2012 – 2024)

ReadyBus is an employment transportation service provided by SCM Elderbus in the communities of Southbridge, Spencer, Sturbridge, and Webster. While the primary population is for elders and people with disabilities, ReadyBus is an expanded service to include low-income individuals and transportation disadvantaged individuals – regardless of age or disability. This service operates Monday through Friday, as early as 6:00 AM and as late as 4:00 PM.

WRTA – MIDDAY SERVICE (FY 2015 – 2024)

SCM Elderbus operates a midday demand response service to bring passengers from 22 rural and suburban communities (as Paxton joined in April 2024) into Worcester during the midday hours. This service is offered to people with disabilities (regardless of age) and people aged 60 and over. This service allows passengers with morning medical appointments to not have to wait hours for a return trip home, and for passengers with afternoon medical appointments to not have to arrive at their destination well ahead of their appointment time.

WRTA – HOLDEN TO WORCESTER (FY 2015 – 2024)

The Holden to Worcester service is a demand response that operates in the early morning, and late afternoon hours after the Holden Council on Aging is not in operation. This service began after the WRTA eliminated a portion of a fixed route that went into Holden from Worcester and restores similar service to ADA paratransit.

TOWN OF SHREWSBURY – COUNCIL ON AGING (FY 2018 – 2024)

The Community Transit Grant funds provide out of town work and medical trips from Shrewsbury to Northborough and Westborough that are outside of the Worcester Regional Transit Authority fixed route paratransit service area.

TOWN OF RUTLAND – EXTENDED TRANSPORTATION (FY 2024)

The town of Rutland currently receives paratransit service from SCM Elderbus, a contractor of the Worcester Regional Transit Authority, acquired Community Transit Grant funds to launch a new Council on Aging transportation program to supplement existing options and fill gaps in the transportation network.

PVTA – QUABOAG CONNECTOR (FY 2018 – 2024)

The Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) operates the Quaboag Connector through a partnership between the town of Ware and the Quaboag Valley Community Development Corporation. This demand response service serves ten towns through an appointment-based system for \$2 fare per ride Monday – Saturday. The Connector has grown in popularity since its initial seven hundred rider projection to over 1,000 prior to the 2021 COVID-19 pandemic and down to seven hundred riders in 2024. The service provides reliable transportation for accessing healthcare, employment, and social resources between the PVTA and the towns of Brookfield, East Brookfield, Warren, and West Brookfield serviced by the Worcester Regional Transit Authority.

GATRA – MASSACHUSETTS RIDE MATCH (FY 2010 – 2024)

The state awarded the Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional Transit Authority (GATRA) a Mobility Management Community Transit Grant to develop an in-depth directory of transportation options that would enhance customer service by connecting people with the knowledge about transportation services and how to use them locally. All fifteen regional transit authorities and the MBTA participate in the program, making Ride Match an essential service for area agencies, medical centers and people searching for accessible transportation options in the state.

Section 5310 Funding

ⁱⁱⁱ Section 5310 “Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities” provides formula funding to states and designated recipients to meet the transportation needs of older adults and people with disabilities when the transportation service provided is unavailable, insufficient, or inappropriate to meeting these needs. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) apportions funds based on each state’s share of the population for these two groups.

FUND RECIPIENTS

The FTA apportions formula funds to direct recipients; for rural and small urban areas, this is the state Department of Transportation, while in large urban areas, the governor chooses a designated recipient. Direct recipients have flexibility in how they select subrecipient projects for funds but must clearly note their decision process in a state/program management plan. The selection process may be formula-based, competitive or discretionary, and subrecipients can include states or local government authorities, private non-profit organizations, and/or operators of public transportation.

PROGRAM PURPOSE

The program aims to improve mobility for older adults and people with disabilities by removing barriers to transportation service and expanding transportation mobility options. This program supports transportation services planned, designed, and conducted to meet the transportation needs of older adults and people with disabilities in large urbanized (over 200,000), small urbanized (50,000-200,000), and rural (under 50,000).

Project Types

Grant recipients can use for “traditional” or “nontraditional” projects. “Traditional” projects are capital projects as defined in 49 U.S.C. 5302(3). “Nontraditional” projects are capital and/or operating projects that go beyond the scope of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) complementary paratransit services or public transportation alternatives designed to assist older adults and people with disabilities.

TRADITIONAL CAPITAL PROJECTS

Buses and vans; Wheelchair lifts, ramps, and security devices; Transit-related information technology systems, including scheduling/routing/one-call systems; Mobility management programs; Acquisition of transportation services under a contract, lease, or other arrangement.

NONTRADITIONAL CAPITAL AND/OR OPERATING PROJECTS

Travel training; Volunteer driver programs; Construction of accessible paths to bus stops, including curb-cuts, sidewalks, accessible pedestrian signals or other accessible features; Improvements to signage, or way-finding technology; Incremental cost of providing same day service or door-to-door service; Purchase of vehicles to support new accessible taxi, rides sharing and/or vanpooling programs; Mobility management programs.

Mobility Assistance Program Vans

^{iv} The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) will use Section 5310 funds up to 80% of the cost of each vehicle while subrecipients pay the remaining 20% and will cover the local match for Regional Transit Authorities. The state encourages municipalities and nonprofits to partner, collaborate, or join a lease arrangement with Regional Transit Authorities under the guidance of the Rail and Transit Division.

LOCAL MATCH

MassDOT allows recipients to use the following categories as the 20% local match to qualify for 80% of the cost:

Local government appropriations, local dedicated tax revenues, private donations, net income generated from advertising and concessions, organization contracts such as human service program funds, state funds such as formula grants, and Non-DOT federal funds such as from the Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Labor, Department of Interior and Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Section 5310 Program History

The Section 5310 program was established in 1975 as a discretionary capital assistance program. In cases where public transit was unavailable, insufficient, or inappropriate, the program awarded grants to private nonprofit organizations to serve the transportation needs of seniors and people with disabilities.

Congress enacted The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) on July 6, 2012, and the law became effective on October 1, 2012. MAP-21 repealed the New Freedom program and merged the New Freedom program into the Section 5310 program.

The Federal Transit Administration, formerly named the Urban Mass Transportation Administration, apportioned the funds among the states by formula for distribution to local agencies made a statutory requirement by the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA).

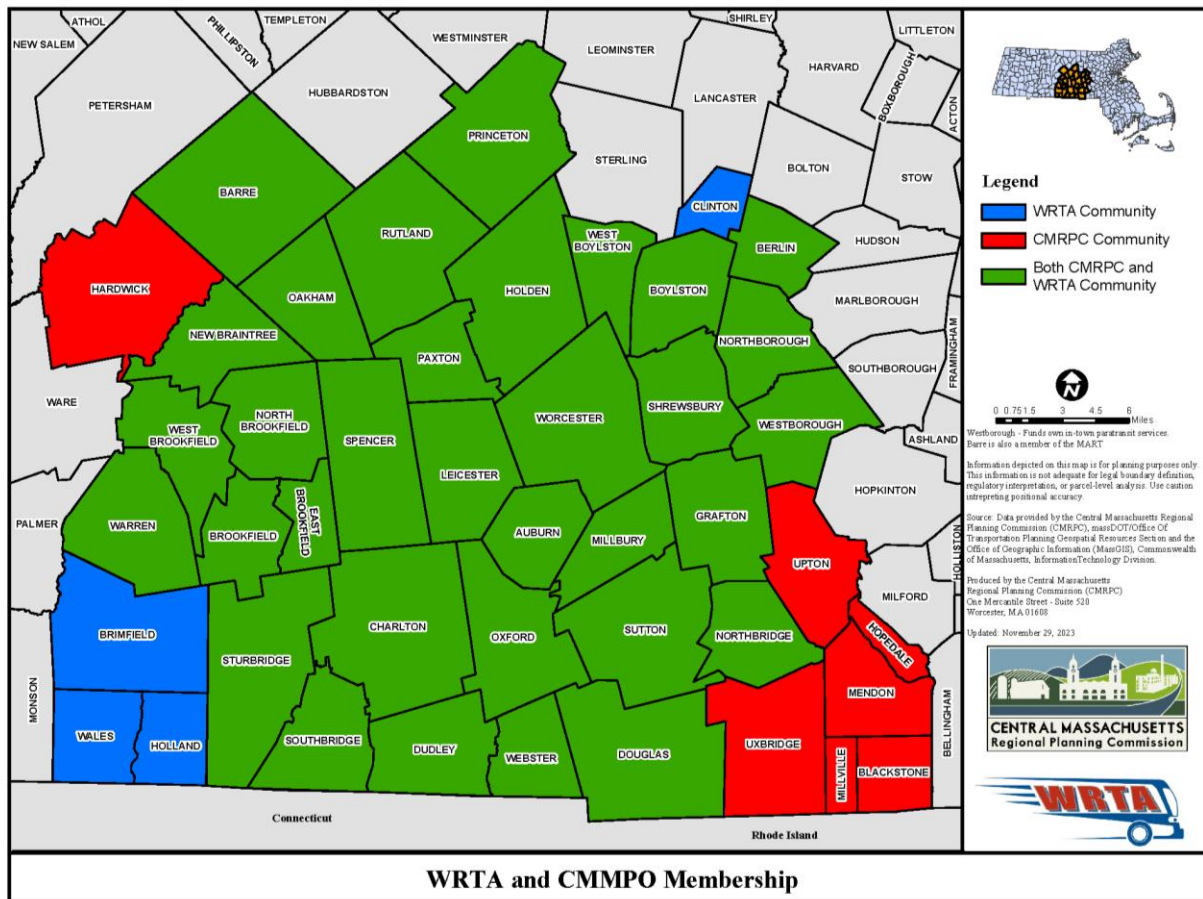
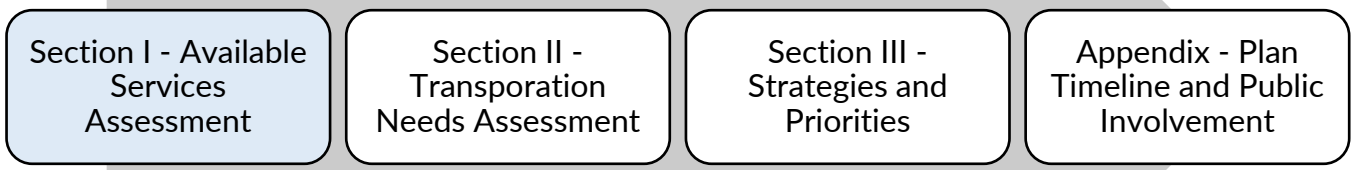
Congress enacted the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) in 2005. SAFETEA-LU introduced the requirement that Section 5310 projects be derived from a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human service transportation plan.

Many of the subrecipient nonprofit agencies used the vehicles primarily for transportation of their own clients. Funding for the formerly named Section 16 program ranged between \$20 million and \$35 million annually until the passage of ISTEA, when it increased to the \$50 million to \$60 million range.

The Section 16 program became the Section 5310 program in 1994. The 1998 Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) reauthorized the Section 5310 program. TEA-21 increased the authorized funding levels for the Section 5310 program but made no significant program changes.

Section I – Available Services Assessment

Fixed Route Bus, Paratransit and Community Transportation



Worcester Regional Transit Authority

^v Chapter 161B of Massachusetts General Laws established funding for regional transit authorities (RTA) in 1974 to provide a public transportation system under the control of municipalities. Each RTA member community pays a local assessment and uses an advisory board of the chief elected officials from those communities to govern. RTA hire private operating companies as required by law but are locally controlled and manage their own operations.

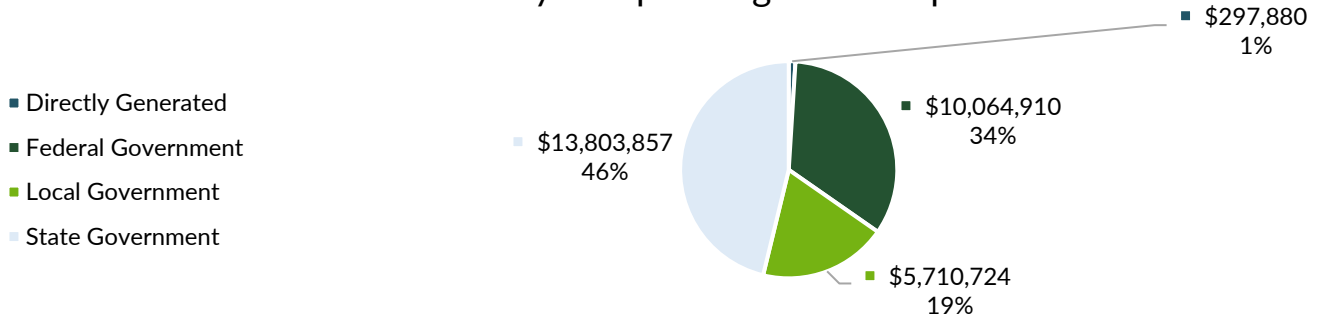
^{vi} The Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) service area is 866 square miles with 578,732 people in both the Worcester, MA-CT Primary Urbanized Area (UZA) of 260 square miles and 482,085 people and Massachusetts non-UZA areas. The WRTA contracts with Central Massachusetts Transit Management to operate fixed route bus service. The WRTA also contracts with ten local Councils on Aging, SCM Elderbus and Worcester Yellow Cab to provide paratransit services required by the American with Disabilities Act in Worcester and 37 communities.

Source: <https://www.transit.dot.gov/ntd/transit-agency-profiles/worcester-regional-transit-authority>

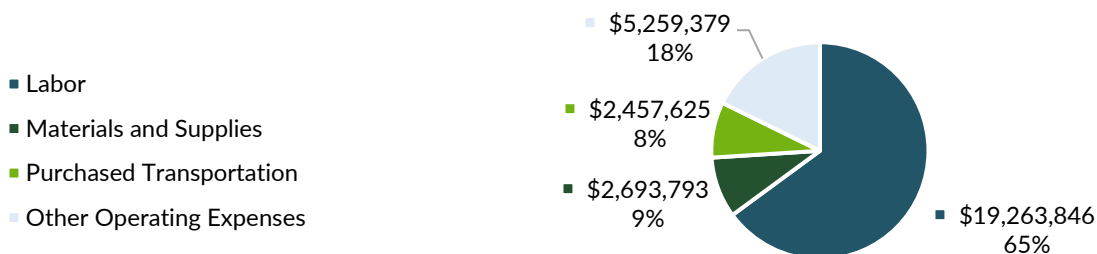
FY 2022 Sources of Capital Funds Expended



FY 2022 Summary of Operating Funds Expended

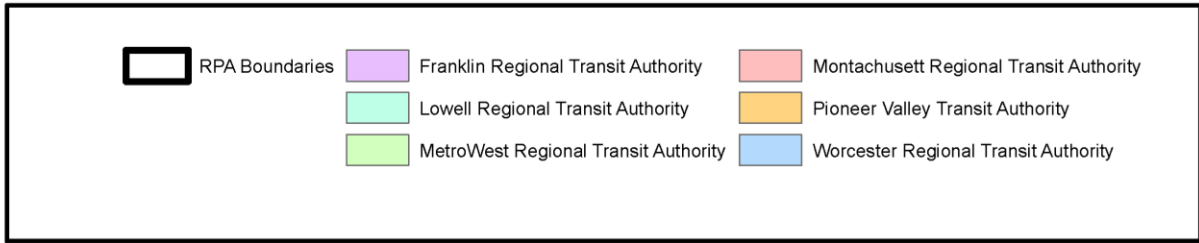
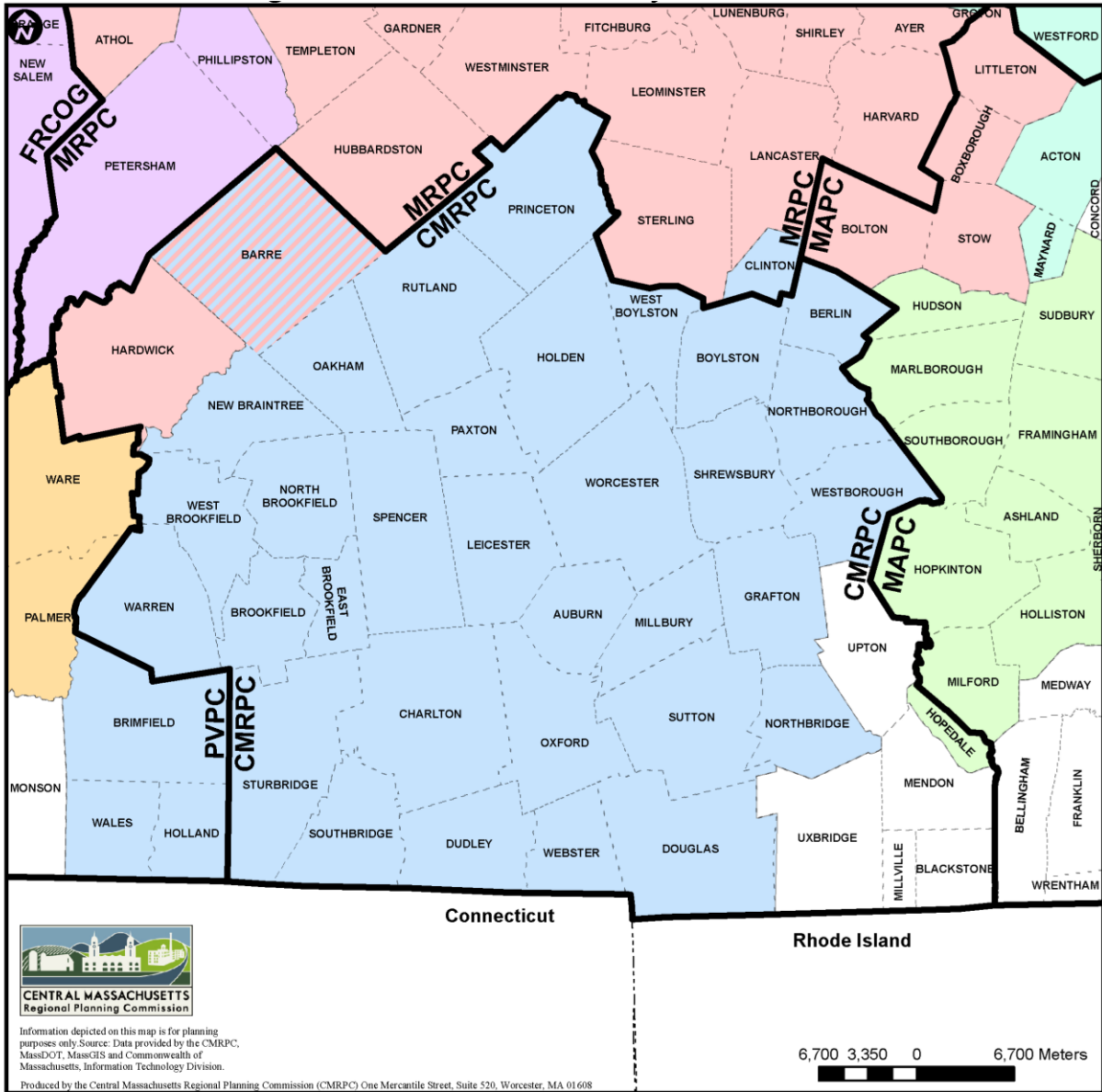


FY 2022 Summary of Operating Expenses



Regional Planning & Transit Authority Boundaries

The Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) services thirty-three communities within the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) boundary and four communities outside of it. The WRTA services Brimfield, Wales, Holland, and Clinton outside of the CMRPC boundary but other Regional Transit Authorities service Hopedale and Hardwick. Upton, Mendon, Uxbridge, Millville, and Blackstone lack transit.



Fixed Route Service

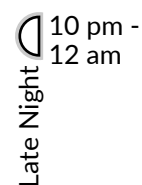
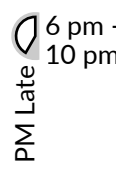
vii The Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) operates twenty-three fixed routes and three community shuttle services in sixteen of thirty-seven communities. Bus transfers are concentrated at the Union Station Hub.

Route	Category	Destinations	Communities
1	City	Walmart 146 via Providence & Granite St.	Worcester
2	City	Tatnuck Square via Pleasant St.	Worcester
3	City	Worcester State University via Highland St.	Worcester
4	City	The Shoppes at Blackstone Valley via Millbury St	Worcester, Millbury
5	City	Blithewood/Massasoit via Grafton St.	Worcester
6	City	West Tatnuck via Chandler St.	Worcester
7	City	Washington Heights Apts. via Mill St.	Worcester
825	City	Park Avenue Connector	Worcester
11	City	The Fair Plaza via Vernon Hill and Greenwood St.	Worcester
12	City	Edgemere Crossing and DTA/RMV via Grafton St.	Worcester, Shrewsbury
14	City	Market32 and QCC via Burncoat St.	Worcester
15	City	Shrewsbury Center via Shrewsbury St. & Route 9	Worcester, Shrewsbury
16	City	Lincoln Plaza via Hamilton St. and Lake Ave.	Worcester
19	City	Webster Square – Clark University via Main St.	Worcester, Leicester, Spencer
23	City	East Mountain St. via Lincoln St.	Worcester
24	City	UMass Medical Center via Belmont St.	Worcester
26	City	Great Brook Valley via Lincoln St.	Worcester
27	City	Auburn Mall via Main St.	Worcester, Auburn
29	Community	Southbridge – Charlton	Worcester, Auburn, Charlton, Southbridge
30	City	West Boylston Walmart via Grove St. & W. Boylston St.	Worcester, West Boylston
31	City	Lincoln Plaza via Elm St. & West Boylston St.	Worcester
33	Community	Leicester – Spencer – Brookfield via Route 9	Worcester, Leicester, Spencer, East Brookfield, Brookfield
42	Community	Auburn – Oxford – Webster via Southbridge St.	Worcester, Auburn, Oxford, Webster
A	Shuttle	Northbridge Walmart – Shoppes at Blackstone Valley via Grafton	Northbridge, Grafton, Millbury
B	Shuttle	Northbridge – Grafton Stop and Shop – Grafton MBTA Station	Northbridge, Grafton
SDW	Shuttle	Southbridge – Dudley – Webster	Southbridge, Dudley, Webster

Fixed Route Schedules

Route	Weekday	Saturday	Sunday
1	5:50 am - 9:20 pm	8:40 am - 4:35 pm	9:50 am - 5:20 pm
2	6:20 am - 9:25pm	10:00 am - 6:00 pm	10:00 am - 5:30 pm
3	5:05 am - 9:00 pm	9:30 am - 5:20 pm	No Service
4	6:20 am - 9:35 pm	6:00 am - 9:51 pm	11:30 am - 5:45 pm
5	5:05 am - 9:00 pm	6:00 am - 8:38 pm	10:00 am - 15:35 pm
6	5:50 am - 9:45 pm	7:00am - 7:52pm	No Service
7	5:15 am - 9:05 pm	5:55 am - 9:44 pm	9:35 am - 6:15 pm
825	6:15 am - 8:45 pm	No Service	No Service
11	5:05 am - 11:35 pm	6:05 am - 10:10 pm	8:30 am - 7:30 pm
12	6:10am - 9:25 pm	No Service	No Service
14	6:30 am - 9:25 pm	No Service	No Service
15	5:50 am - 9:10 pm	9:50 am - 5:50 pm	No Service
16	6:15 am - 9:35 pm	8:25 am - 4:25 pm	No Service
19	5:00 am - 11:20 pm	6:40 am - 10:25 pm	10:30 am - 6:30 pm
23	5:30 am - 9:05 pm	6:40 am - 9:25 pm	11:30 am - 7:05 pm
24	5:40 am - 9:03 pm	6:40 am - 9:40 pm	10:00 am - 7:05 pm
26	5:20 am - 11:45 pm	6:15 am - 9:15 pm	9:15 am - 4:55 pm
27	5:45 am - 9:46 pm	6:05 am - 8:41 pm	8:45 am - 4:31 pm
29	5:35 am - 7:35 pm	8:00 am - 8:00 pm	No Service
30	5:30 am - 11:15 pm	5:50 am - 9:35 pm	11:00 am - 6:30 pm
31	6:15 am - 10:15 pm	8:25 am - 5:05 pm	No Service
33	4:50 am - 8:45 pm	No Service	No Service
42	5:25 am - 8:20 pm	7:00 am - 8:15 pm	No Service
A	9:10 am - 4:45 pm	No Service	No Service
B	5:20 am - 7:35 pm	No Service	No Service
SDW	5:10 am - 7:10 am	No Service	No Service

Service Periods



Fixed Route Frequencies

Route	Weekday Frequency	Saturday Frequency	Sunday Frequency
1	25 – 60 mins.	25 – 60 mins.	50 mins
2	50 – 65 mins.	50 mins.	50 mins.
3	25 – 60 mins.	25 – 60 mins.	No Service
4	75 mins.	60 – 75 mins.	75 mins.
5	40 – 60 mins.	60 – 120 mins.	60 mins.
6	40 – 60 mins.	60 – 120 mins.	No Service
7	30 – 40 mins.	45 – 65 mins.	55 mins.
825	75 – 85 mins.	No Service	No Service
11	20 – 60 mins.	60 – 70 mins.	30 – 60 mins.
12	50 – 60 mins.	No Service	No Service
14	30 – 60 mins.	No Service	No Service
15	60 – 70 mins.	60 mins.	No Service
16	40 – 80 mins.	40 – 80 mins.	No Service
19	15 – 60 mins.	60 mins.	60 mins.
23	30 – 65 mins.	45 – 65 mins.	60 mins.
24	20 – 40 mins.	60 – 70 mins.	55 – 110 mins.
26	15 – 60 mins.	30 mins.	50 – 65 mins.
27	20 – 35 mins.	30 – 60 mins.	70 mins.
29	120 mins.	120 mins.	No Service
30	15 – 45 mins	55 – 65 mins.	60 mins.
31	40 – 80 mins.	40 – 80 mins.	No Service
33	60 – 100 mins.	No Service	No Service
42	80 – 130 mins.	120 mins.	No Service
A	60 – 100 mins.	No Service	No Service
B	60 – 120 mins.	No Service	No Service
SDW	45 – 85 mins.	No Service	No Service

Friday Service Reductions

In January 2023, the WRTA decided to temporarily suspend or reduce Friday service due to driver shortages.

- Suspension of Route 8/25 (in its entirety).
- Reduction of service on routes 11/24, 14, 19, 26, 27, and 30.

Transit Operations

Central Massachusetts Transit Management

First Transit, Inc. of Cincinnati, OH, acquired by Transdev, incorporated in Massachusetts as Central Massachusetts Transit Management (CMTM). Regional transit authorities (RTA) in Massachusetts, including the WRTA, which are locally controlled, manage their own operations but must hire private operating companies to provide their services in accordance with Chapter 161B of the Massachusetts General Laws. Fixed bus routes and schedules may change during June, August, and January service periods to accommodate CMTM operations. The WRTA Travel Training program is a free service open to riders at least 13 years old who would like to learn how to use the transit system.

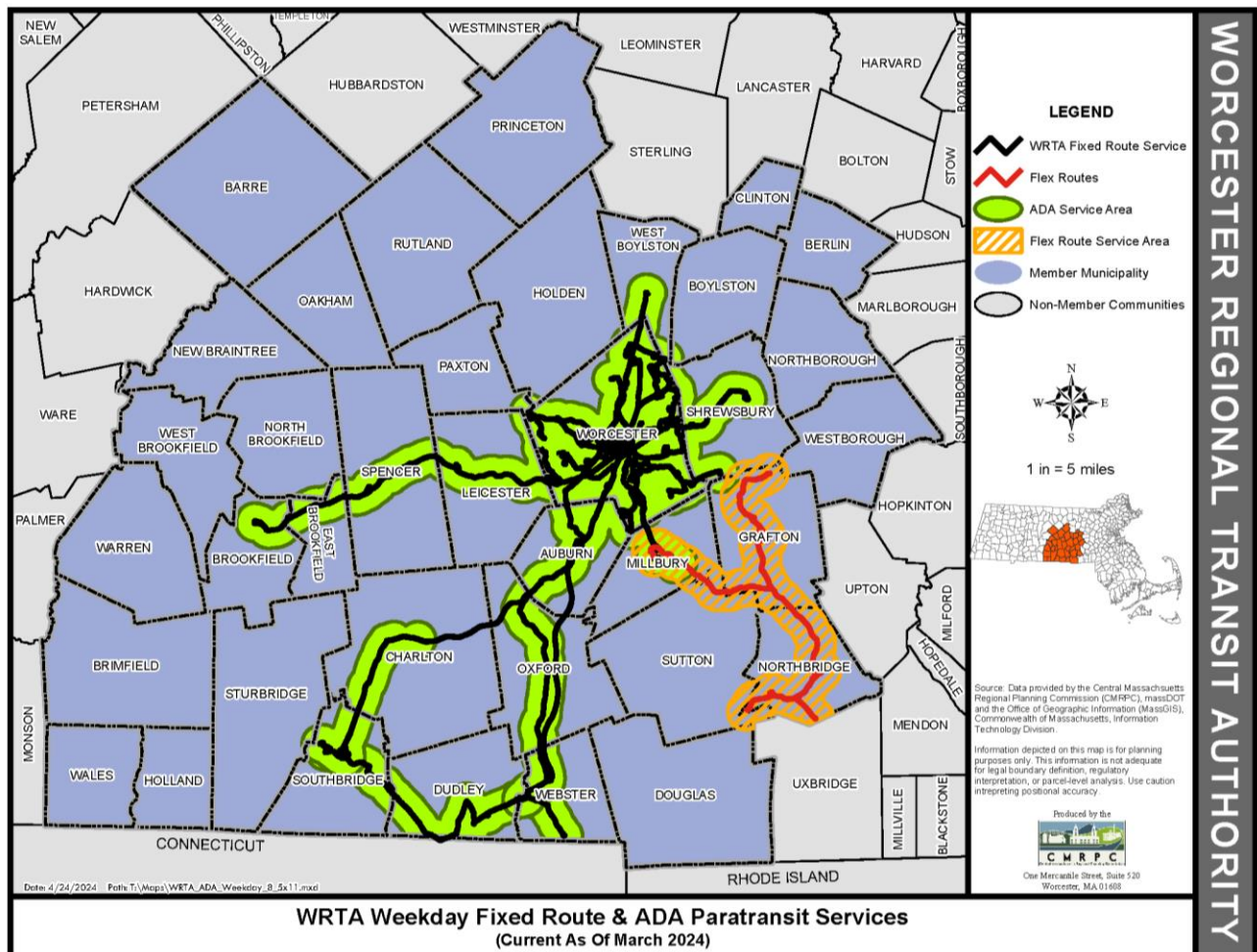
Outside of Worcester, bus drivers operate under a “flagging system”, which allows riders on the street to request the bus driver to pick them up along a route without a bus stop by waving at or “flagging” drivers for their attention.

FLEX SERVICE

Shuttle routes A and B provide flexible routing ¼ mile along its route if requested the day before called the FLEX service allowing riders to access more locations on a need basis while maintaining route efficiency.

WRTA ADVISORY BOARD

The Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) Advisory Board is responsible for the policy making decisions of the WRTA including decisions on service changes, and fares. The Advisory Board members are appointed by their respective community with each community having a weighted vote based on population and level of service. There are also two appointed board members representing frequent transit riders and the disability community.



WRTA Paratransit Service

ADA Complementary Paratransit Service

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination based on disability. The Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) only provides complementary ADA service in areas where fixed route buses operate and does not include Express Commute service, Intercity or Dial-A-Ride services.

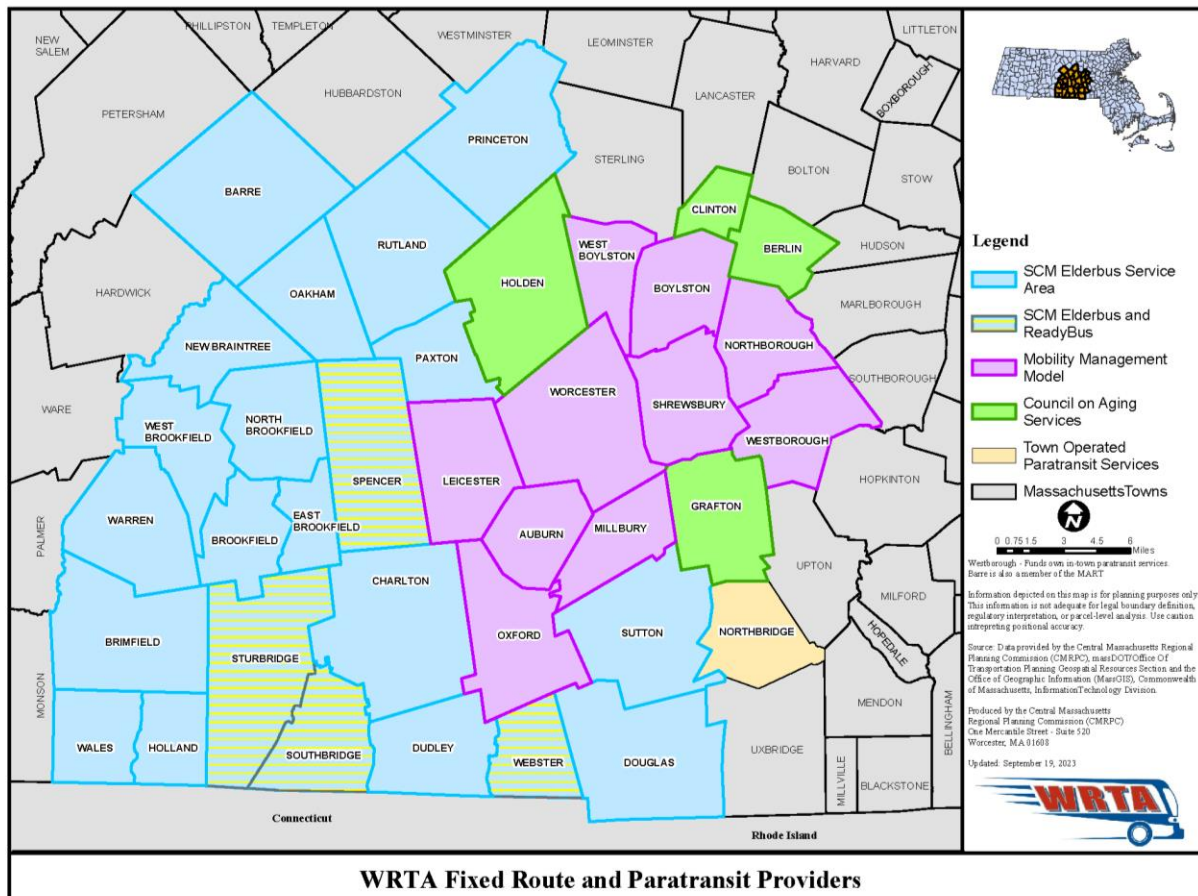
The WRTA only provides ADA paratransit during the hours and days that the fixed route bus or rail service is operating and when both the pickup and drop off are located within ¾ of a mile of a fixed route bus route. New paratransit riders should refer to the WRTA ADA Riders Guide on the WRTA website under the Paratransit menu.

ADA DEFINITION OF DISABILITY

Any person with a disability who is unable, because of a physical or mental impairment, and without the assistance of another individual (except the operator of a wheelchair lift), to board, ride, or disembark from any fixed route bus. Any person with a disability who has a specific impairment-related condition which prevents them from traveling to or from a bus stop on the fixed route bus system. Architectural and environmental barriers such as distance, terrain, or weather do not form a basis for eligibility alone. However, a person may be eligible if the interaction of disability and environmental barriers prevents travel to the stop.

Non-ADA paratransit

The WRTA provides paratransit service beyond ADA for thirty-seven member communities through local Councils on Aging and other private or nonprofit contractors. Older adults over sixty and people with a disability are eligible.



WRTA Fixed Route and Paratransit Providers

Document Path: T:\Map\WRTA Paratransit Providers 2024.mxd

Paratransit Providers & Other Services

Worcester Regional Transit Authority

^{viii} The Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) operates an origin-to-destination shared-ride paratransit service for seniors over sixty and people with disabilities regardless of age. The WRTA picks up riders with a lift-equipped van or Worcester Yellow Cab within a 20 minute time window. The paratransit vehicle may stop to pick up or drop off other riders and requires a trip reservation by 4:30 pm the day before. Riders may schedule trips up to a week in advance. Drivers receive regular training on the equipment they use and the people they serve. The WRTA provides weekend paratransit service outside of the Council on Aging and SCM Elderbus weekday hours.

WORCESTER YELLOW CAB

The Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) contracts with the privately owned 24/7 taxi company Worcester Yellow Cab to fill paratransit service coverage gaps when WRTA vans are unavailable or for scheduling convenience. Yellow Cab drivers operate three wheelchair accessible vehicles that riders with mobility impairments can request.

SOUTH-CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS ELDERBUS

The Worcester Regional Transit Authority contracts with South-Central Massachusetts (SCM) Elderbus, a private nonprofit paratransit service provider incorporated in 1974 and headquartered in Charlton, MA. SCM Elderbus provides in town transportation on weekdays from 8:30 am – 4 pm to requested destinations scheduled twenty-four hours in advance and out of town medical transportation three days per week depending on the town.

Mobility Management Model

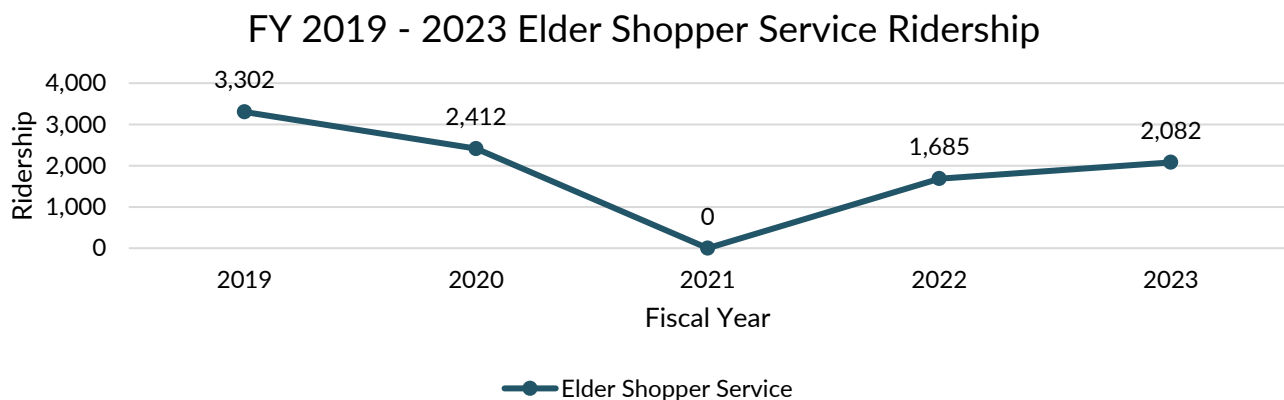
Towns and Councils on Aging manage and operate paratransit service through a contract with the Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA). Towns and Councils on Aging in the Mobility Management Model use Paratransit Brokerage Services Transit Management (PBSTM) services through the WRTA.

PARATRANSIT BROKERAGE SERVICES TRANSIT MANAGEMENT

First Transit, also incorporated in Massachusetts as Paratransit Brokerage Services Transit Management (PBSTM) manages the WRTA paratransit service to provide a centralized location for call-taking, reservations, scheduling, call backs and reporting for community transportation through the Mobility Management Model.

Elder Shopper Service

^{ix} The Elder Shopper Service (ESS) is a shuttle that provides trips for the public between apartment complexes and grocery stores in Worcester that are often affiliated with the Worcester Housing Authority or senior communities. The service operates on Tuesdays and Thursdays to provide older adults with one hour of independent shopping. The WRTA suspended ESS from the fourth quarter of FY 2020 until the beginning of FY 2022 due to COVID-19.



Community Profiles

Mobility Management Model

Auburn	Boylston	Leicester	Millbury	Northborough
Oxford	Shrewsbury	West Boylston	Westborough	Worcester

Fixed Route ¾ mile radius ADA Paratransit

Auburn	Brookfield	Charlton	Dudley	East Brookfield
Grafton	Leicester	Millbury	Northbridge	Oxford
Paxton	Shrewsbury	Southbridge	Spencer	Webster
West Boylston	Worcester			

Council on Aging Paratransit

Auburn	Berlin	Boylston	Clinton	Grafton
Holden	Leicester	Millbury	Northborough	Northbridge
Shrewsbury	West Boylston	Westborough		

SCM Elderbus Paratransit

Barre	Brimfield	Brookfield	Charlton	Douglas
Dudley	East Brookfield	Holland	New Braintree	New Brookfield
Oakham	Paxton	Princeton	Rutland	Southbridge
Spencer	Sturbridge	Sutton	Wales	Warren
Webster	West Brookfield			

Via-WRTA

Westborough	Shrewsbury
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Elder Shopper Service

Worcester

Community Transportation Services

Demand Response

VIA-WRTA

The Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) contracts VIA technology using state grant funding to operate an on-demand van service in Shrewsbury and Westborough on weekdays from 7 am – 7 pm through a mobile app or phone call. Via-WRTA service operates one wheelchair-accessible vehicle. The WRTA monitors and tries to balance Via-WRTA service to ensure the availability of accessible vehicles for people with sensory or mobility impairments.

WORCESTER VETERAN AFFAIRS CLINIC

^x Disabled American Veterans vans provide rides to independent ambulatory passengers. Other veteran transportation services including buses, shuttles, and wheelchair-accessible transport are also available.

WORCESTER HOUSING AUTHORITY

^{xi} The Worcester Housing Authority (WHA) offers wheel-chair accessible transportation for WHA residents to the Worcester Senior Center on weekdays from 12:30 – 3pm and to Walmart on Mondays from 8 – 11 am.

Intercity Buses & Shuttles

PVTA B79 AMHERST TO WORCESTER

The Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) operates the PVTA B79 from UMass Amherst to Worcester at 6:55 am, 11:55 am and 4:10 pm Monday – Sunday and with reduced fares for seniors and people with disabilities with accepted transfers within the PVTA service area. The Quaboag Connector co-operates with the PVTA B79.

MART SHUTTLE

The Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MART) provides shuttle services for the public to medical facilities in Worcester. The shuttle service departs from the Fitchburg Intermodal Transportation Center at 7:30 am, 11:30 am and 3:30 pm Monday – Friday for \$5 and reduced prices for older adults and veterans.

PETER PAN & GREYHOUND

The Peter Pan Bus Line and Greyhound Lines, Inc. are the two major intercity bus carriers providing service from Union Station in Worcester to Springfield, MA, Hartford, CT, New York City, NY, and Providence, RI.

OUR BUS

Our Bus is a private intercity bus service that provides trips from Union Station in Worcester to Albany, NY Ithaca, NY, Bridgeport, CT, White Plains, NY Methuen, MA Boston, MA, Everett, MA, Utica, NY, Lowell, MA and New York City, NY. They offer affordable bus tickets with comparable amenities to similar competitors.

Commuter & Regional Rail

MBTA FRAMINGHAM/WORCESTER LINE

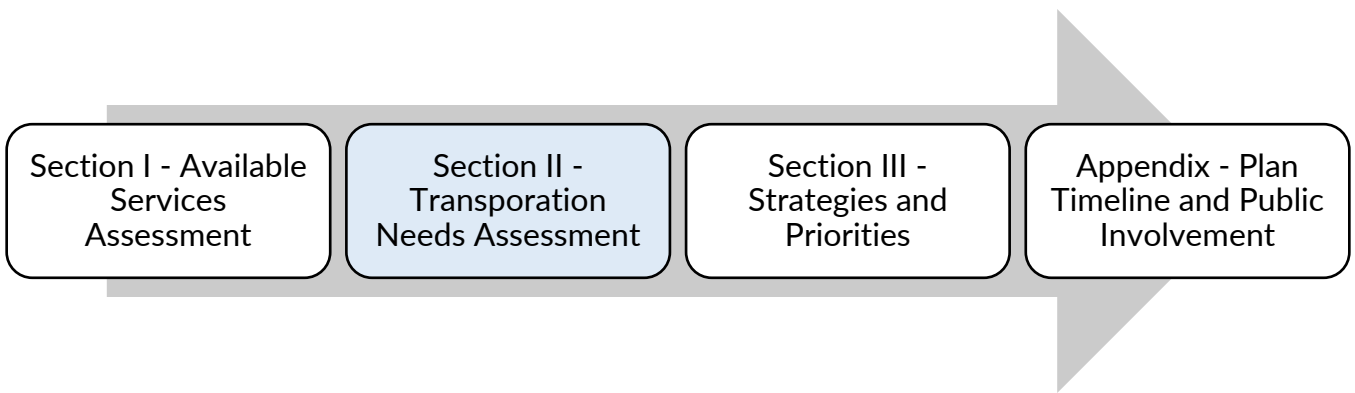
The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) operates the Framingham-Worcester Line that directly serves the Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) communities of Grafton, Westborough, and Worcester. The WRTA Community Shuttles function as local public transit connections to the MBTA stations.

AMTRAK LAKE SHORE LIMITED & THRUWAY BUSES

Lake Shore Limited provides regional rail connections between Boston and Chicago. The City of Worcester updated Union Station in 1999 to include accessible elevators and bathrooms and remains open from 5:30 am - 11:59 pm. Amtrak Thruway bus service links New Bedford and Worcester to Providence Station to access rail service.

Section II – Transportation Needs Assessment

Plan Coordination, Transit Trends & Transportation Equity



Access the Plan at the CMRPC website: <https://cmrpc.org/transportation/cmm-po-title-vi-program/coordinated-plan/>

Commonwealth Coordination

2024 Beyond Mobility Plan

^{xii} Federal and state regulations require the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) to prepare a Massachusetts long range transportation plan. The priorities and strategies established in “Beyond Mobility: The Massachusetts 2050 Transportation Plan” reflect the Healey-Driscoll Administration’s vision for enhancing transportation and economic development in Massachusetts beyond auto-centric transportation.

GOALS

- **Safety:** The ability of travelers to move throughout the transportation system free of physical or other harm.
- **Reliability:** The consistency of transportation network conditions.
- **Supporting Clean Transportation:** The transportation network’s ability to accommodate low emission and carbon-free travel modes.
- **Destination Connectivity:** The degree to which travelers of any mode can access opportunities and the places they need or want to go.
- **Resiliency:** The ability of the transportation network to anticipate, prepare for, and withstand the ongoing impacts of climate change.
- **Travel Experience:** The conditions faced by travelers throughout the transportation network, including level of comfort and state of good repair.

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

- **Social and Geographic Equity:** The Plan’s Public Engagement Plan prioritizes historically underserved communities, such as non-English speakers, lower-income residents, tribal organizations, and youth.
- **Financial and Staffing Resources:** Staff attraction and retention and the inflated cost of living pose are major challenges. The public sector will also need to adapt to emerging research, maintenance, and other needs around new transportation technologies including funding more public transportation.

2023 Regional Mobility Managers Study

^{xiii} “Would a System of Regional Mobility Managers Benefit Massachusetts?” investigated Mobility Management, its implementation in other states, and how it could address transportation needs across the Commonwealth.

Regional Coordinating Councils

^{xiv} The development of Regional Coordinating Councils (RCCs) in Massachusetts came from the “2012 Final Report of the Community, Social Service, and Paratransit Transportation Commission”. This Commission grew out of the 2011 Executive Order 530 which instructed state agencies to work together to identify ways to improve the quality and efficiency of paratransit and community transportation services. Commonwealth administration changes and shifting priorities reduced support for RCCs and led many to stop meeting.

SOUTH-CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS

The South-Central Massachusetts Regional Coordinating Council (SCMRCC) was active from 2014 – 2018. The SCMRCC identified distinct transportation gaps during their previous meetings including:

Increased employment transportation, transportation with additional support (door-to-door, escorts, etc.), services outside of Worcester especially in the edges of the region, and the need for more information dissemination.

Transit Initiatives

2018 Task Force on Regional Transit Authority Performance and Funding

^{xv} The Task Force on Regional Transit Authority (RTA) Performance and Funding investigated the challenges and opportunities facing transit service providers and produced a report “A Vision for the Future of Massachusetts Transit Agencies” on specifically how the RTA could best provide and improve transit services that meet identified community needs, conduct regular service planning to maximize ridership using available resources and ensure that fares, local contributions, and other revenues cover an appropriate share of costs.

2018 GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF TRANSPORTATION

The Commission explored anticipated changes in technology, climate, land use, and the economy through a 2-part report on transportation needs and challenges facing the Commonwealth between 2020 and 2040. Part 1 lays out key mobility challenges facing the Commonwealth and recommendations to best account for potential changes in transportation. Part 2 represents ten months of research, learning and input from a range of academic, industry, and advocacy sources on trends that will affect transportation in 2040.

2019 A VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF MA TRANSIT AGENCIES REPORT

The Task Force report includes twenty four recommendations broken down into five categories: Investment & Performance, Accountability, Service Decisions, Quality of Service, and Environmental Sustainability.

MassDOT Grants

VIA- WRTA (FY 2021)

The Worcester Regional Transit Authority launched a new on-demand commuter service in September 2020 for the towns of Westborough and Shrewsbury in partnership with Via technology, a provider of public mobility systems, using an award from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation to provide access to important destinations.

ONLINE ACCOUNT BASED PARATRANSIT RESERVATION SYSTEM (FY 2019)

The online account based paratransit trip reservation and fare collection systems improved operational efficiency and customer satisfaction by eliminating cash handling. Riders can use the online trip reservation system as an alternative to calling and the online fare collection system will be available when paratransit fares are reintroduced.

SCM ELDERBUS RESERVATION WINDOW REDUCTION (FY 2019)

SCM Elderbus was able to reduce trip reservation window for paratransit service from 48 to 24 hours in advance through system upgrades like 5G technology, mobile tablets, and Cloud database hosting.

WRTA SOLOMON POND FIXED ROUTE SERVICE EXPANSION (N/A)

The state did not award a discretionary grant for a regional transit connection project that expanded job access between the Metro West Regional Transit Authority and the Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) at the Solomon Pond Mall in Marlborough as recommended in the WRTA's 2015 Comprehensive Service Assessment.

2024 Standardized ADA Paratransit Application

^{xvi} The Greater Attleborough Regional Transit Authority (GATRA) is leading the standardization of the American with Disabilities Act Paratransit eligibility application to establish consistent requirements and facilitate eligibility transfers between regional transit authorities. The GATRA and the Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MART) brokers provide human service transportation for MassHealth, Department of Developmental Services, Department of Public Health Early Intervention, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, Massachusetts Commission for the Blind and the Department of Mental Health through the Human Services Transportation Office.

The MART services western, central and northeastern Massachusetts, and the metropolitan Boston area. The GATRA services southeastern Massachusetts, Cape Cod, and the Massachusetts islands.

Massachusetts Age Friendly Planning

2022 – 2025 State Plan on Aging

^{xvii} The goals, objectives, and strategies documented in the “Massachusetts State Plan on Aging” reflect the voices of communities, including older adults, their families, caregivers, and community-based organizations. The Plan also incorporates other strategic planning efforts and recommendations, including the Governor’s Council to Address Aging in Massachusetts blueprint, “ReiMAGine Aging: The Age-Friendly Massachusetts Action Plan”, and the “Massachusetts State Plan on Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Dementias”.

- Support aging in community.
- Strengthen Massachusetts as an Age-and Dementia-Friendly State.
- Empower and support optimal aging.
- Prevent injury, violence, and exploitation of older adults.
- Optimize access to information and services for older adults and improve the consumer experience.
- Ensure quality, equity, and value in person-centered, community-based care.

2019 MASSACHUSETTS AGE-FRIENDLY ACTION PLAN

A 3-year progress report from 2022 highlights the urgency of addressing structural racism and prioritizing mental health support while recognizing the value of care work. Efforts in civic engagement focused on voting rights, while concerns persisted about digital equity, particularly for older adults facing barriers to technology access.

- Deepen and strengthen age-and dementia-friendly efforts to be inclusive of all communities and populations.
- Communicate information in an accessible and user-friendly manner to residents, organizations, and municipalities.
- Change the conversation about aging from a “challenge” to an “asset,” increase literacy about issues related to aging, and eliminate ageist images and expressions in language and across social, print, and other media.
- Encourage the adoption of age-friendly policies and practices in all sectors.
- Take specific actions to improve economic security for older adults and caregivers.
- Leverage existing structures to sustainably guide and support the work of Age Friendly Massachusetts and partner initiatives.

2021 PLAN ON ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATED DEMENTIAS

The Alzheimer’s Advisory Council identified priorities in the Plan on Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Dementias: Caregiver Support and Public Awareness; Diagnosis and Services Navigation; Equitable Access and Care; Physical Infrastructure; Public Health Infrastructure; Quality of Care; Research.

2023 REIMAGINE AGING PODCAST

The state released the ReiMAGine Aging podcast in place of the four year progress report by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services. The podcast highlights local efforts that make Massachusetts a suitable place to grow up and grow older together. Each episode takes listeners to different Massachusetts communities that are delivering unique and innovative age- and dementia-friendly programs.

2017 Governor’s Council to Address Aging in Massachusetts

The blueprint released by the Governor’s Council includes several strategies including improving economic security, ensuring access and affordability of health and supportive services necessary to maintain, maximum health and independence, promoting age friendly communities and facilitating connection and engagement.

Regional Aging & Disability Planning

Central Massachusetts Aging & Disability Resource Consortia

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs provides programs and services locally through the aging services network of 21 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), 25 Aging Services Access Points (ASAPs), 350 Councils on Aging (COAs) and senior centers, and 11 Aging and Disability Resource Consortia (ADRCs).

The Aging & Disability Resource Consortia reaches older adults with services that include home care, caregiver support, nutrition programs, protective services, health and wellness services, housing options, insurance counseling, dementia and behavioral health services, and a variety of other programs and services.

INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTERS

- Center for Living and Working: 18 Chestnut Street, Suite 540, Worcester, MA 01608

AREA AGENCIES ON AGING

- Central Massachusetts Agency on Aging: 330 Southwest Cutoff, Suite 203, Worcester, MA 01604

AGING SERVICES ACCESS POINTS

- Elder Services of Worcester Area: 67 Millbrook Street, Worcester, MA 01606
- Tri-Valley: 10 Mill Street, Dudley, MA 01570

Age-Friendly Central Massachusetts

^{xviii} Age-Friendly Central Massachusetts is an initiative by the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) in collaboration with the Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative to join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities in July 2022. AARP established this initiative in April 2012 as an independent affiliate of the World Health Organization Global Network for Age-Friendly Communities.

CMRPC AGE-FRIENDLY ACTION PLAN

^{xix} CMRPC used AARP's 8 Domains of Livability framework to prioritize the needs and potential actions to support aging in place and age-friendly environments for older adults and people of all ages.

- Expand transportation services in rural communities.
- Expand connectivity between Councils on Aging, senior housing, and the broader community/region.
- Invest in accessible, equitable, and connected multi-modal infrastructure.
- Support the financial sustainability and maintenance of localized and municipal older adult transportation services.
- Bolster community participation and recreational opportunities through transportation access.

MEMORY CAFES

^{xx} A memory café creates welcoming and supportive space for people with forgetfulness or memory changes to find and build community. Memory cafés can take place at coffeehouses, museums, or community organizations. All memory cafés share the same goal to help guests feel comfortable and to know that they are not alone.

IMAGINE 2050

The CMRPC Age Friendly initiative, which also includes dementia friendly community efforts, coincides with the Imagine 2050 long-range regional planning process. The work in Central Massachusetts follows a growing trend of communities working together as a region to support age and dementia friendly efforts.

Transportation Equity

Community Health

^{xxi} The Massachusetts Executive Office of Health & Human Services (EOHHS) established Community Health Network Areas (CHNA) in 1992. EOHHS Region 2 (Central) contains South County Connects (CHNA 5), Community Partners for Health (CHNA 6), Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester (CHNA 8) and Health Equity Partnership of North Central Massachusetts (CHNA9).

2021 – 2026 GREATER WORCESTER COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN

^{xxii} The 2021-2026 Greater Worcester Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) Plan has one overarching goal of health equity through a racial lens, twelve policy change campaigns, and six community action agendas necessary to enact structural changes toward improved health for all. The Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester and the Worcester Division of Public Health/Central Massachusetts Regional Department of Public Health implement, track, and evaluate the CHIP annually with the goal of comprehensive community health equity.

- Provide Free Accessible Public Transportation
- Implement Complete Streets Policy
- Receive Massachusetts Age-Friendly Designation
- Mobilize Community Health Services

Major Services Changes

^{xxiii} The Federal Transit Administration’s Circular 4702.1B “Title VI Requirements and Guidelines for Federal Transit Administration Recipients”, provides service and fare equity guidance to transit agencies with 50 or more fixed route vehicles in peak service in large, urbanized areas over 200,000 in population. For service changes, this requirement applies to "major service changes" only. The recipient should have established guidelines or thresholds for what constitutes a "major" service change. FTA guidelines encourage the Worcester Regional Transit Authority to consider the impact of fixed route service changes and fare increases on riders.

2024 WRTA TITLE VI PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

^{xxiv} The Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) uses its Public Participation Plan when considering fare changes, modifications to routes and schedules, and other transit planning projects. Specifically, this involves the establishment of a new route, elimination of an existing route, or a change of 25% or more of overall service hours or miles. The WRTA will publicly post minor service changes not rising to the 25% threshold.

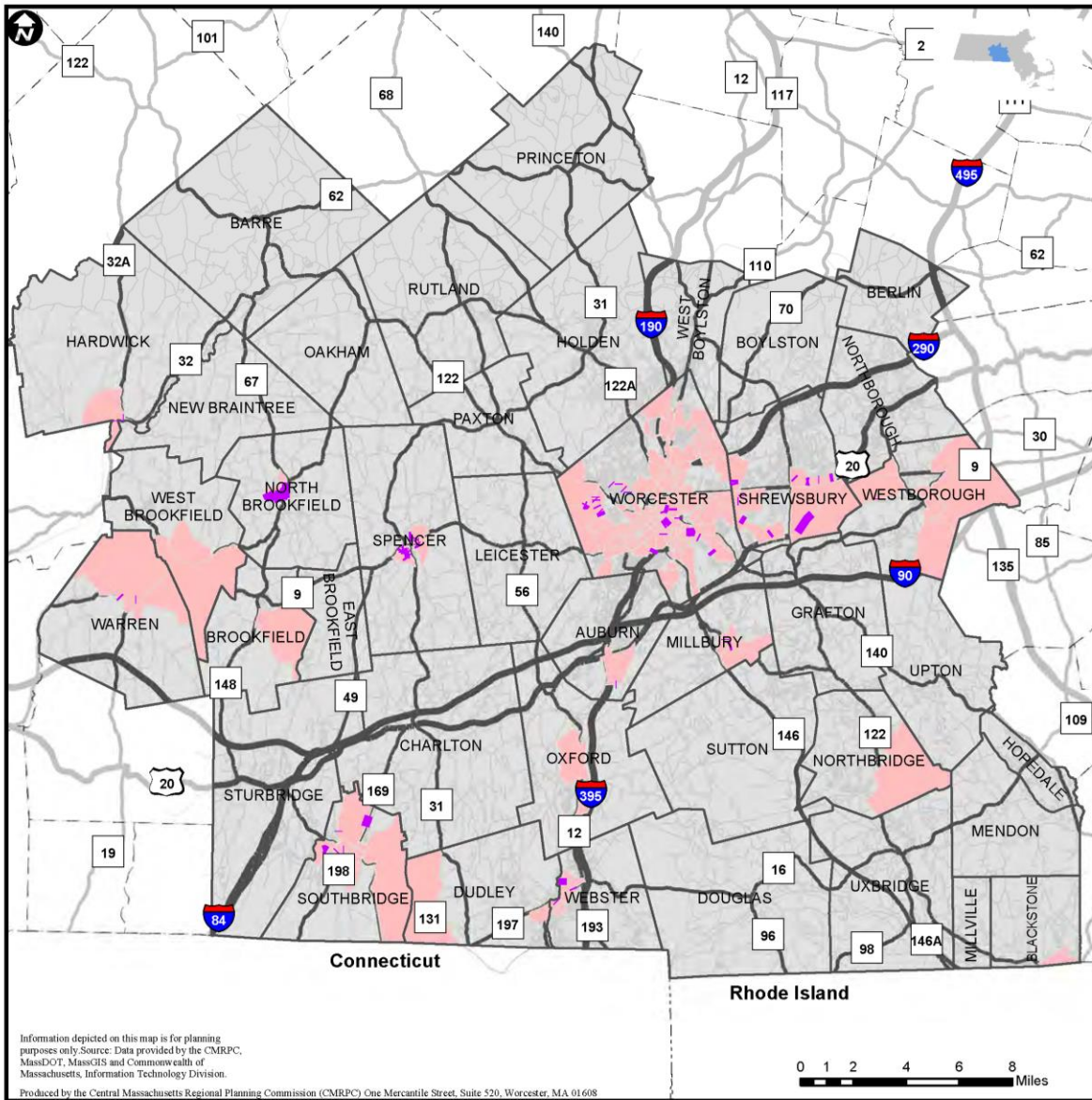
Regional Environmental Justice “Plus”


^{xxv} The state developed Regional Environmental Justice “Plus” (REJ+) thresholds for each Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to control the regional differences in socio-economic and demographic characteristics and to determine each MPO-specified threshold value within each EJ or “Plus” category. The state compared block group-level values for each characteristic to the CMMPO threshold to determine if the block group meets REJ+ criteria.

- **Income:** \$60,921 (Annual median household income < MPO 25th percentile)
- **Race & Ethnicity:** 41% (Percent of individuals that identify as non-White > MPO 75th percentile)
- **Limited English Proficiency:** 8% (Percent of households with LEP members > MPO 75th percentile)
- **Car Ownership:** 32% (Percent of households without an available vehicle > MPO 75th percentile)
- **Disability:** 32% (people with a disability > MPO 75th percentile)
- **Age:** 21% (Percentage of individuals aged sixty-five or older)

REJ+ Communities


The following communities contain one or more REJ+ block group: Auburn, Blackstone, Brookfield, Dudley, Hardwick, Millbury, North Brookfield, Northbridge, Oxford, Shrewsbury, Southbridge, Spencer, Warren, Webster, West Brookfield, Westborough, and Worcester. There is disproportionate distribution of REJ+ communities throughout the Central Massachusetts region; the North and Northeast subregions contain no REJ+ block groups while the Central and East subregions contain more census blocks that meet the criteria for REJ+ designation.





Pedestrian Access in REJ+ Communities

- Poor and Missing Sidewalks
- REJ+ Communities
- CMRPC Towns



Ridership Trends

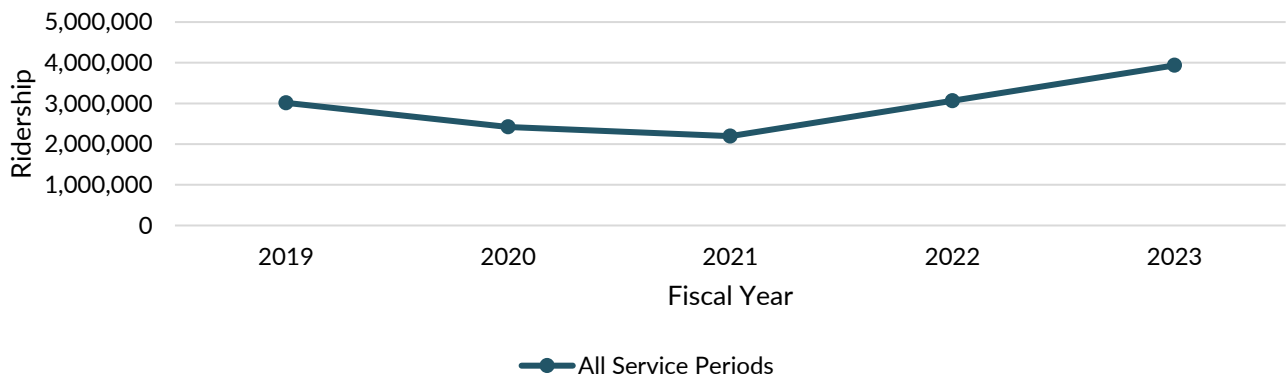
Fixed Route & Paratransit Ridership

Fixed route ridership decreased from fiscal year (FY) 2019 – FY 2021 aligned with the presidential declaration of a national emergency for the COVID-19 pandemic. Ridership increased from FY 2021 – FY 2023 as the public health conditions of the pandemic improved and the introduction of fare free service in March 2020 at the Worcester Regional Transit Authority through federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act funding.

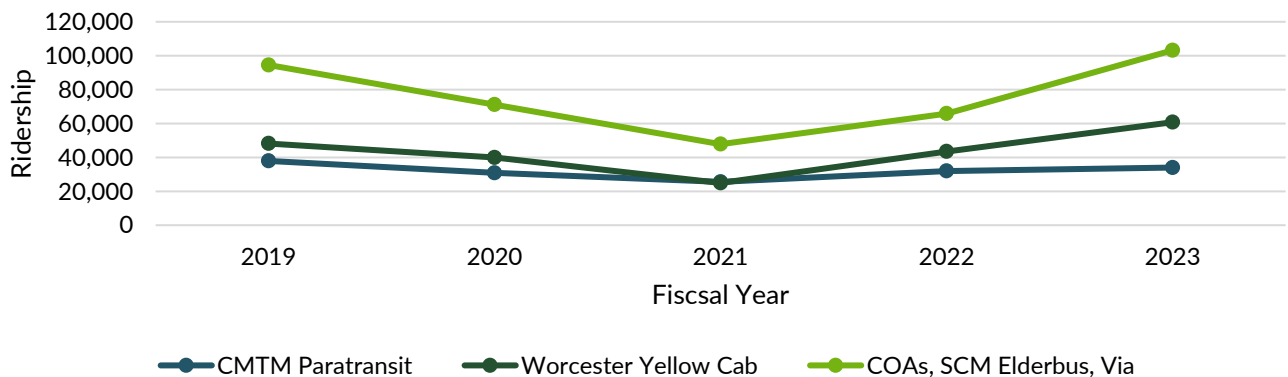
Paratransit ridership followed a similar trend to fixed route ridership. Worcester Yellow Cab ridership was higher than CMTM prior to FY 2021 when it was almost equivalent until FY 2022 when Worcester Yellow Cab increased.

Fiscal Year	Fixed Route	CMTM Paratransit	Worcester Yellow Cab Paratransit	COAs, SCM Elderbus, Via
2019	3,013,268	37,913	48,200	94,483
2020	2,421,591	30,887	39,933	71,131
2021	2,196,138	25,571	24,929	47,804
2022	3,064,750	31,952	43,494	65,827
2023	3,935,481	33,989	60,781	103,178

FY 2019 - 2023 Fixed Route Ridership



FY 2019 - 2023 Paratransit Ridership



Customer Experience

WRTA Code of Conduct

PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES

- Soliciting, begging, or distributing goods/services.
- Posting or distributing signs and literature.
- Storing personal property on WRTA property.
- Transporting animals (except service animals or small pets).
- Using recreational devices like skateboards or bikes.
- Consuming food or beverages (non-alcoholic allowed).
- Drinking alcohol or gambling.
- Blocking movement, sleeping, or camping on WRTA property.
- Carrying oversized personal items or extending objects out windows.
- Smoking, littering, or using loud devices.
- Being under the influence, creating unsanitary conditions, or carrying hazardous materials.
- Brandishing weapons, disturbing others, or vandalizing property.
- Fare evasion, misusing fare passes, or engaging in harassment.

CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATIONS

- Law enforcement involvement for criminal conduct.
- Civil and criminal penalties.
- Immediate denial and potential suspension of services.
- Possible restraining orders for safety threats.
- Appeals process for minor infractions.
- Permanent bans for major infractions, even on the first offense.

Customer Satisfaction

FEEDBACK FORM

The Worcester Regional Transit Authority requests that riders provide as much information as possible about injuries or incidents, particularly for a complaint, compliment, request, or suggestion. The date, time, route number and vehicle number of the incident is essential for following up with driver or service-related issues and complaints.

2024 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

Cambridge Systematics plans collected over 1000 WRTA customer satisfaction surveys. The Worcester Regional Transit Authority administrator will propose recommendations based on the survey results to the Advisory Board.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS

The information technology systems procurement aims to address various challenges from outdated software and inefficient route scheduling in low ridership towns. These challenges include complaints about insufficient driver time, resistance to mobility management, varied paratransit fare charging methods, difficulties in driver training coordination, retention issues, digital literacy gaps among riders, and concerns regarding transit worker safety.

Rural Transportation

2023 CMRPC Rural Transit Dialogue

The Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission coalesced Massachusetts partners, federal partners, regional planning agencies and town officials, and community organizations in August 2023 to discuss rural transportation needs, educate partners on current efforts, and coordinate solutions to regional challenges.

TRANSIT PLANNING NEEDS

- Blackstone, Upton, Uxbridge, Mendon, and Millville are not members of any regional transit authority
- The Long Range Transportation Plan identified elder transportation and on-demand transit needs
- Community Master Plans transit options
- Veteran Affairs transportation
- WRTA communities limited to Council on Aging transportation
- Large developers access to employees

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

- Statewide economic development public outreach mentioned the need for increased transit access.
- Continuing efforts to improve transit access in region and statewide through Mobility Plans.
- Financial sustainability and cross-organizational collaboration for unique rural transit solutions.
- Transit needs to travel in both directions to access health services outside of town or region.
- Councils on Aging have the potential to manage more transit requests with increased capacity.
- Possibility of piloting a region-specific software to connect riders to services given proper funding.
- Rural towns are often situated on the border of regional transit authority service areas.
- Rural towns may be situated outside of core transit services and only travel in one direction.
- Density and trip distance differences in rural areas need alternative metrics to measure success.
- Lack of promotional services, limited outreach to isolated populations, and unfamiliarity with transit.
- Transportation solutions should include large employers, chambers of commerce and senior centers.

Community Surveys

2023 CHNA 9 RURAL TRANSIT STUDY

^{xxvi} The Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) developed the “Quabbin Region Rural Transit Study Report” with the Health Equity Partnership of North Central Massachusetts (CHNA 9) and the Montachusett Regional Planning for five communities of the rural East Quabbin region – Barre, Hardwick, Hubbardston, New Braintree, and Oakham – all are served by CMRPC except for Hubbardston.

2024 NORTHBOROUGH TRANSPORTATION NEEDS SURVEY

Northborough surveyed 265 respondents (98% of respondents were residents) on transportation needs.

2024 BLACKSTONE VALLEY SURVEY

The Valley Chamber of Commerce and the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission collaborated to conduct a survey on public transportation needs with a total of 148 recorded responses.

2050 Connections

^{xxvii} 2050 Connections is the regional Long-Range Transportation Plan developed every 4 years by the Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization to address transportation needs over the next 25 years.

Performance Management

IMPROVE TRANSPORTATION ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL MODES THROUGH ROADWAY IMPROVEMENTS.

- Reduce mileage of sidewalks in poor condition by 10% over ten years.
- Increase the number of ADA compliant ramps in the region by one hundred per year for a total of 2,975 compliant ramps in ten years.

EXPAND THE BICYCLE, PEDESTRIAN, AND TRANSIT NETWORK IN THE REGION.

- Add two hundred miles of bicycle and pedestrian facilities by 2040.
- Continue the downward trend of the reduction of drive alone commute modes.

ACHIEVE GEOGRAPHIC AND POPULATION EQUITY ACROSS THE REGION.

- Maintain or increase the percentage of EJ population that intersects WRTA bus routes.

Transit Support Prioritizations

WRTA FIXED ROUTE PROJECTS

- Update and improve transit bus stop signs and surroundings.
- Implementation of Transit Signal Priority in Worcester.

PLANNING STUDIES

- Southbridge/Sturbridge local transit service.
- Regionwide same day on-demand transit service in rural communities; Transportation for older adults.

INITIATIVES

- Continue the downward trend of the reduction of drive alone commute modes.
- Provide bike-sharing stations at the WRTA Hub facility in Worcester.
- East-West Rail, Updated bus transit information, MBTA Intermodal Travel Information Systems

PRIORITIES

- Implementing recommendations of the Comprehensive Service Analysis.
- Identifying State Contract Assistance for WRTA to provide more late night and weekend service.
- Determining viability of fixed route service along US Route 9.
- Implementing recommendations discovered from CHNA9 study.
- Identifying sustainable funding source for rural transit.
- Identifying viable options for communities not served by a regional transit authority.
- Promoting funding options for micro-project applications.

Southern Worcester County CEDS

^{xxviii} The 2023-2028 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) completed by Southern Worcester County Economic Development Organization synthesizes input from communities, regional and local data, best planning practices, and state and federal law. It is the product of community engagement through a public survey, a visioning workshop, and expertise of committee and subject matter experts.

Limited mobility and social isolation are common among the region's older adults. While access to public transportation can help alleviate such issues, community engagement has revealed that many older adults do not take advantage of public transportation opportunities due to these services' lack of convenience, accessibility, timeliness, and information and communication materials.

Older adults who cannot or do not feel comfortable driving use walking as a key mode of transportation, yet poor sidewalk conditions and ADA compliance issues often made walking more difficult in some locales. Additionally, many older adults depend on call-to-service shuttles to get to medical appointments and other essential services; however, these shuttles are not readily available to all older adults in the region.

Transportation Summary

- The region is automobile-centric and difficult to navigate without access to a personal vehicle.
- WRTA services are not sufficient to support students, lower-income people and new immigrants who struggle to get to work, school and RMV locations.
- Improve transportation systems through additional first and last mile connections which allow workers from smaller communities to get to emerging employment opportunities.
- Ownership configuration of current freight rail poses barriers to new passenger rail services.
- Transportation infrastructure requirements for grocery stores are an obstacle to reducing food deserts.
- Paratransit services for medical appointments are insufficient for rural residents in health care deserts (more than five miles from an acute care facility) who have difficulty traveling long distances.
- Strongly support fixing insufficient infrastructure, increasing transit options, and making town centers more walkable which will bolster economic development opportunities.
- There is an unsatisfied demand for walkability, especially with younger generations like Gen Z.

ACTION ITEMS

Facilitate age-friendly policies with the central Massachusetts age-friendly action plan:

- **Action Item 3.6.1:** Coordinate with local businesses and grocery stores to expand elderly shopping hours to accommodate transportation needs, per the Central Massachusetts Age Friendly Plan (2022).
- **Action Item 3.6.2:** Promote organizations or agencies that provide eligible seniors with at-home services, per the Central Massachusetts Age Friendly Plan (2022).
- **Action Item 3.6.3:** Promote the importance of towns, businesses, organizations, and other institutions attaining age-friendly credentials through the Age-Friendly University (AFU) Global Network and the Age and Dementia-Friendly Massachusetts designation per the Central Massachusetts Age Friendly Plan (2022).
- **Action Item 3.6.4:** Encourage employers to maintain an age-friendly workplace and to commit to age-friendly hiring practices for older adults seeking employment, per the Central Massachusetts Age Friendly Plan (2022).

WRTA Riders Forum

The WRTA held a Rider Forum at the Union Station Hub on Thursday, October 12, 2023 between 11 am and 2 pm. Worcester Regional Transit Authority and the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission staff collected rider comments verbally through note taking, written responses and online surveys.

Feedback Themes

INFORMATION SHARING

- Implement a reliable bus tracking app for real-time transit updates.
- Enhance website functionality to provide live information sharing.
- Install displays for arrival and departure times, especially for complex routes.

COMMUNICATION

- Enhance communication channels for bus delays, cancellations, and fare policy changes.
- Provide alternatives to digital payments for those without phones including reduced or free fares.
- Improve signage for visually impaired, hard of hearing, and LEP riders.

ACCESSIBILITY

- Develop travel training programs for immigrants with assisting agencies.
- Provide printed system maps and ensure language inclusivity.
- Train drivers to accommodate passengers with disabilities.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

- Hire staff to handle customer service complaints in real-time.
- Ensure clarity on bus driver qualification requirements and application process.
- Improve communication regarding refunds on fare accounts.

HUB CONDITIONS

- Address cleanliness concerns and ensure regular maintenance.
- Enhance signage and amenities at transit hubs for improved customer experience.
- Consider adding facilities like Wi-Fi access and a coffee shop.

SAFETY AND CLEANLINESS

- Address cleanliness issues on buses and at stops.
- Ensure safety measures for drivers and passengers, including intoxicated individuals and security.
- Enhance human resources management, including driver recruitment and retention.

SERVICE EXPANSION

- Expand service to key locations based on demand and community needs.
- Coordinate with other transit authorities for better regional connectivity.
- Adjust routes, frequencies, and amenities to address crowding and accessibility needs.

WRTA Technology Inventory

- Website with translation options, customer service, route maps, alerts, trip planner and rider information.
- Mobile bus tracker application and audio and text bus arrival times.
- Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) system through GPS technology.
- On-board bus Automatic Passenger Counters (APCs).
- General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) Feed.
- Scannable QR codes with route information on some bus stop signage.
- Hub bus arrival announcements, Hub digital arrival time displays.
- Interior and exterior bus stop announcements, wheelchair ramps and bus kneeler.
- Masabi Modular payment systems on buses.
- Online account based paratransit payment system.
- Ridecheck by Clever Devices.
- Adept by Stratagen.
- HASTUS by GIRO Inc.

Accessibility Requests

- Add an automated text reminder for paratransit appointments, trip cancellations and late arrivals.
- Create a paratransit vehicle tracking application in partnership with local universities or businesses.
- Make WRTA service standards and code of conduct more accessible on the buses and the website.
- Modify the WRTA code of conduct to allow riders to bring on more bags and bring service animals.
- WRTA snow routes, public notices and missed trips reported on cable news and other media modes.
- Provide more direct paratransit trips through different scheduling strategies or more van operators.
- Reduce the 24 hours in advance paratransit reservation window to allow for on demand service.
- Increased amount of pilot programs to improve transit accessibility working with advocacy groups.
- Create designated bus bays to reduce the confusion of finding buses for people with disabilities.
- Difficulty locating transit vehicles without audio announcements for people with visual impairments.
- Ensure that ADA announcements are consistent on buses for people with hearing difficulties.
- Add signage outside of buses or at bus stops to remind riders of priority wheelchair boarding.
- Improve the mobile use experience of the bus tracker, system wide route map and bus schedules.
- Improve customer service responsiveness, especially outside of PBSTM hours when CMTM answers.
- Promote transit at senior centers, cable TV, local churches, and social media for younger people.
- Provide transit service between senior centers regardless of where the rider's residency status is.
- Mail paratransit Riders Guide to paratransit providers especially for service outside of Worcester.
- Install displays for arrival and departure times at bus stops especially for routes with many transfers.

Public Involvement

Transportation Planning Advisory Group

The Zero Fare Coalition advocacy efforts during the pandemic led to the suspension of fares in March 2020. The coalition leveraged broad support into securing two extensions from the WRTA Advisory Board – one into the Spring of 2023 and a subsequent additional year extension. As a result of the Worcester area communities and key stakeholders organizing and advocacy, the Worcester Regional Transit Authority is fare free through June 2025, marking it as one of the longest running fare free regional transit systems nationally.

Transportation Advocacy Coalition

The Transportation Advocacy Coalition (TAC) is a grass-roots organization formed in 2018 that advocates for responsive improvements to the transportation needs of greater Worcester. TAC focuses on transit dependent low-income residents. TAC received a grant from the Community Transportation Association of America through Easter Seals Massachusetts to develop public capacity to engage in participatory planning.

RIDERS ACTION COUNCIL

The Riders Action Coalition (RAC) is the working group of the Transportation Advocacy Coalition. Its purpose is to ensure that Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) riders can advocate for affordable and accessible transportation. A rider representative is on the WRTA Advisory Board because of RAC advocacy.

Zero Fare Coalition

The advocacy efforts of the Zero Fare Coalition during the pandemic led to the suspension of bus fares in March 2020, resulting in increased ridership and improved access to resources for diverse groups including seniors, families, and low-income individuals. The success of the fare-free policy is evident in economic benefits, positive effects on climate and public health, and inspiration for similar programs elsewhere.

Worcester Food Policy Council

Worcester Food Policy Council collaborates with multiple local stakeholders to foster a vibrant, healthy, abundant, and equitable food system in Worcester since 2006. The Worcester County Food Bank coalesced the Central Massachusetts SNAP Coalition and the Worcester Task Force on Food Security to form the Center on Food Equity.

Aging and Disability Resource Consortia

COALITION FOR HEALTHY GREATER WORCESTER

The Worcester Division of Public Health (WDPH) and Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester collaborate to manage the Greater Worcester Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) development and implementation across the Central Massachusetts Regional Public Health Alliance (CMRPHA). The Coalition has several subcommittees and partner organizations for people to get involved in improving public health.

WORCESTER COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL

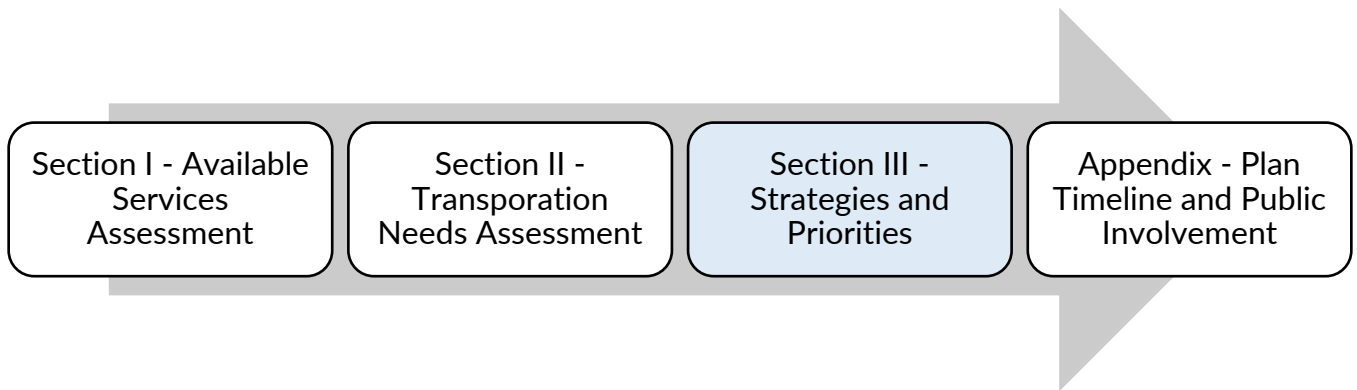
The state founded the Worcester Community Action Council (WCAC) in 1965 as part of the War on Poverty to address nationwide disparities. Embedded values of advancing equitable access, elevating all voices, and partnering with people is the role they play as the federally designated anti-poverty agency for Central and South-Central Massachusetts. WCAC embodies service to the community through their mission – helping people move to economic self-sufficiency through programs, partnerships, and advocacy.

CENTER FOR LIVING & WORKING

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission's (MRC) Community Living Services support the operation and staffing of 11 Independent Living Centers (ILC) with federal and state ILC funding. MRC staff monitor and evaluate the performance of Independent Living Centers and fund a variety of services delivered by a center. The Center for Living & Working provides consumer directed independent living services.

Section III – Strategies and Priorities

Transportation Equity, Process Integration and Partnerships



Strategies & Priorities

Service Changes

SERVICE EXPANSION, CRISIS RESPONSE, PARATRANSIT SCHEDULING, DESTINATION CONNECTIVITY

- 1.1 Expand late night bus service beyond routes 11, 19, 26 and 30 and restore all Friday service trips.
- 1.2 Increase weekend and early morning fixed route service to meet diverse needs and work schedules.
- 1.3 Explore opportunities for crisis response teams through human service transportation collaboration.
- 1.4 Update paratransit scheduling procedures to reduce travel times and trip length for optimal service.
- 1.5 Improve connectivity between senior centers, libraries, grocery stores, hospitals, and senior housing.

Customer Experience

MOBILITY SUPPORT, DRIVER TRAINING, MARKETING TOOLS, PERFORMANCE GOALS, TRAVEL TRAINING

- 2.1 Provide additional mobility support to paratransit riders when pedestrian infrastructure is insufficient.
- 2.2 Accommodate more local in-person driver training on sensory impairments and mobility challenges.
- 2.3 Adjust fixed route headways to improve on time performance metrics and bus utilization efficiencies.
- 2.4 Diversify transit promotion and outreach tools and locations for people with sensory impairments.
- 2.5 Pair Travel Training with health professionals to facilitate human services and transportation access.

Information Access

ITS SYSTEMS, PRIORITIZATIONS UPDATE, TRANSPARENCY, PROGRESS TRACKING, ITERATIVE FEEDBACK

- 3.1 Upgrade WRTA Information Technology Systems to streamline public information dissemination.
- 3.2 Update the Plan in 2028 with prioritizations ranked by time, feasibility, and available funding.
- 3.3 Track the progress of Community Transit Grant Program recipients through annual reporting.
- 3.4 Continue to build a regional transportation services database complementary to Ride Match.
- 3.5 Solicit and incorporate rider feedback through an iterative process both in-person and virtually.

Transit Planning

BUS INFRASTRUCTURE MANAGEMENT, ALTERNATIVE DESIGNS, TRANSIT NETWORK, ELECTRIFICATION

- 4.1 Work with municipalities on a bus shelter ownership consolidation plan for maintenance efficiency.
- 4.2 Conduct a bus stop and bus shelter infrastructure inventory in coordination with signage rebranding.
- 4.3 Investigate alternative bus stop and transit network designs to improve functionality and accessibility.
- 4.4 Involve riders with disabilities, older ages and fixed incomes in transit planning and decision making.
- 4.5 Support WRTA Transit Asset Management “state of good repair” goals and vehicle decarbonization.

Fare and Service Change Equity

TRANSIT BENEFITS, EDUCATION AND PARTICIPATION, SERVICE RELIABILITY, MOBILE TECHNOLOGY

- 5.1 Engage with the Zero Fare Coalition understand the community impact of free or reduced fares.
- 5.2 Educate stakeholders on the economic, health, and environmental benefits of fare free transit.
- 5.3 Use the WRTA Title VI program to guide public participation for fare and route equity analyses.
- 5.4 Improve CMTM driver retention to reduce frequent missed trips and enhance service reliability.
- 5.5 Investigate the use of mobile technology to understand rider demographics and travel patterns.

Transportation Linkages

HOUSING PLAN, SAFETY COORDINATION, RURAL TRANSIT, EQUITY IMPROVEMENTS, MIGRANT NEEDS

- 6.1 Develop a Housing Coordination Plan with emphasis on Transit Oriented Development per the BIL.
- 6.2 Coordinate safety efforts between transit operators, security officers and police, and social workers.
- 6.3 Explore the feasibility of Microtransit and on-demand transit as solutions for rural community needs.
- 6.4 Utilize the Greater Worcester CHIP for health and digital equity improvements for REJ+ populations.
- 6.5 Address the changing transportation needs of migrant families with WRTA services and state funding.

Transit Partnerships

LOCAL BUSINESSES, PUBLIC HEALTH, DRIVER RECRUITMENT, FOOD ACCESS & HUMAN SERVICES

- 7.1 Collaborate with businesses for snow removal, signage, wayfinding, and employment transportation.
- 7.2 Support the efforts of the CMRPHA and the Worcester State University Latino Education Institute.
- 7.3 Use the Ascentria Care Alliance and WRTA partnership as a model for future bus driver recruitment.
- 7.4 Work with the Worcester Food Policy Council and the City of Worcester on reducing food insecurity.
- 7.5 Coordinate with the WRTA, Worcester Housing Authority, and VA Clinic to reduce redundant transit.

Integrated Processes

MOBILITY CONNECTIONS, DECISION FRAMEWORKS, SCHEDULE ALIGNMENT, LEADERSHIP SUPPORT

- 8.1 Coordinate sidewalk, bike, and trail networks, and Microtransit for first and last mile connections.
- 8.2 Integrate municipal mobility, safety and resiliency planning into transportation planning processes.
- 8.3 Incorporate age friendly and public health frameworks into organizational and municipal decisions.
- 8.4 Align schedules for transit agencies, commuter rail, shuttles, and intercity buses for easier transfers.
- 8.5 Engage leaders to address accessibility improvement needs through mobility exercise participation.

Funding Sources

Federal Funding

- Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES)
- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)
- Congestion Mitigation Air and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program
- FTA Section 5307, 5310, 5311, 5337, and 5339 Formula Funding
- FTA Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility Grants (ICAM)
- CCAM Federal Fund Braiding
- FHWA Flexible Funding for Transit Access
- Toll Development Credits (TDC)
- Rural Transportation Assistance Program (RTAP)
- Surface Transportation Block grant (STBG)
- Transportation Alternatives Funding (TAP)
- Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Discretionary Grants
- HUD Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)

Massachusetts Funding

- State Contract Assistance
- Complete Streets Program
- Community Transit Grant & Mobility Assistance Program
- Massachusetts Community Health & Healthy Aging Funds
- Massachusetts Broadband Institute
- “Fair Share” Amendment Regional Transit Innovation Grant
- MArTAP Helping Hand Mini-Grant and community transportation driver training

Other Funding

- Administration for Community Living
- Community Transportation of America Grants
- MBTA and WRTA Transit Assessments
- Transit Advertisements
- AARP Community Challenge Grant
- T-Mobile Hometown Grant
- Point 32 Health Foundation Grants
- Health Foundation of Central MA

Supplemental Information

Memory Café Locations

Memory Café Name	Memory Café Location
Making Connections Memory Café	Worcester Senior Center, 128 Providence Street, Worcester
Hacer Conexiones Cafe de la Memoria	Christian Community Church, 108 Beacon Street, Worcester
Coffee Talk Memory Café	Jewish Healthcare Center Auditorium, 629 Salisbury St., Worcester
Sunflower Memory Café	Spencer Senior Center, 68 Maple Street, Spencer
Good Day Memory Café	609 Main Street, Shrewsbury
Memory Lane Café	Shrewsbury Senior Center, 98 Maple Ave., Shrewsbury
Millbury Memory Café	Millbury Council on Aging, 1 River Street, Millbury
Common Ground Memory Café	Dudley Municipal Building/ Senior Center, 71 W. Main Street, Dudley
Charlton Memory Café	88 Masonic Home Rd., Charlton
Here and Now Memory Café	Pakachoag Church, 203 Pakachoag St., Auburn
In the Moment Memory Café	S. Worcester County Elks Lodge #2118, 754 Southbridge St., Auburn
Sunshine Memory Café	Westborough Senior Center, 4 Rogers Road, Westborough

SCM Elderbus Out of Town Transportation

Days of Service	Communities
Monday, Tuesday, Thursday	Brookfield, East Brookfield, West Brookfield
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday	Paxton, Princeton, Rutland
Monday, Wednesday, Thursday	Charlton
Monday, Wednesday, Friday	North Brookfield, Southbridge, Spencer, Sturbridge, Sutton, Warren
Tuesday, Thursday, Friday	Barre, Brimfield, Holland, New Braintree, Oakham, Wales
Wednesday, Thursday, Friday	Douglas, Dudley, Webster

Coordinating Council on Access & Mobility

^{xxix} The CCAM is a federal interagency council that focuses on people with disabilities, older adults, and individuals of low income to achieve mobility for all. The Transportation Technical Assistance Coordination Library includes:

- National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC)
- National Center for Applied Transit Technology (N-CATT)
- National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM)
- National Rural Transit Assistance Program (National RTAP)
- Shared-Use Mobility Center (SUMC)
- Transit Workforce Development Technical Assistance Center (TWC)

Human Service Resources

Massachusetts

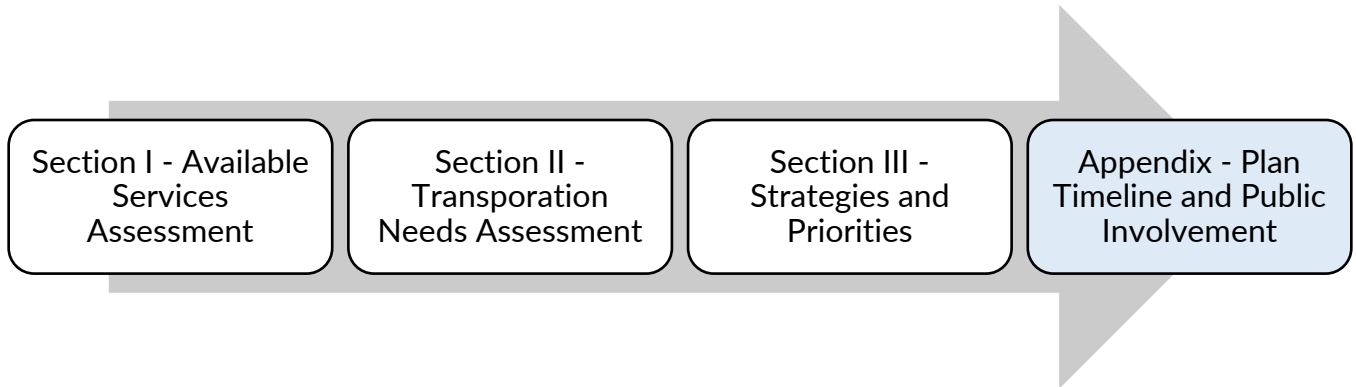
- Mass Mobility
- Mass Options, SHINE Counseling
- Mass Hire
- Mass Office of Emergency Medical Services
- Mass Office of Health Equity
- Mass Office for Immigrants & Refugees
- Mass Office of Community Services
- Mass Home Care Assistance Program
- Mass Department of Transitional Assistance
- Human Service Transportation Office Brokerage
 - o Mass Health
 - o Department of Development Services
 - o Department of Public Health Early Intervention Program
 - o Mass Rehabilitation Commission
 - o Commission for the Blind
 - o Department of Mental Health
- Care Coordinate
- Mass Equipment Distribution Program (MassEDP)
- Rental Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT)
- Long Term Care Ombudsman Program
- Meals on Wheels Nutrition Services
- Jewish Family & Children Services

Greater Worcester

- Worcester Open Sky Community Services
- Worcester Housing Authority
- Worcester Veteran Affairs Clinic
- Local Libraries, Neighborhood Centers, Councils on Aging, and Senior Centers
- Central MA Agency on Aging, Elder Services of Worcester Area, Center for Living and Working
- YMCA of Central Massachusetts, YWCA of Central Massachusetts
- Worcester Community Action Council
- YOU, Inc. Seven Hills Foundation, Community Connections Coalitions

Appendix

Plan Timeline, Committees and Public Involvement Minutes



Plan Timeline

Committees

CMRPC GOVERNING COMMITTEES

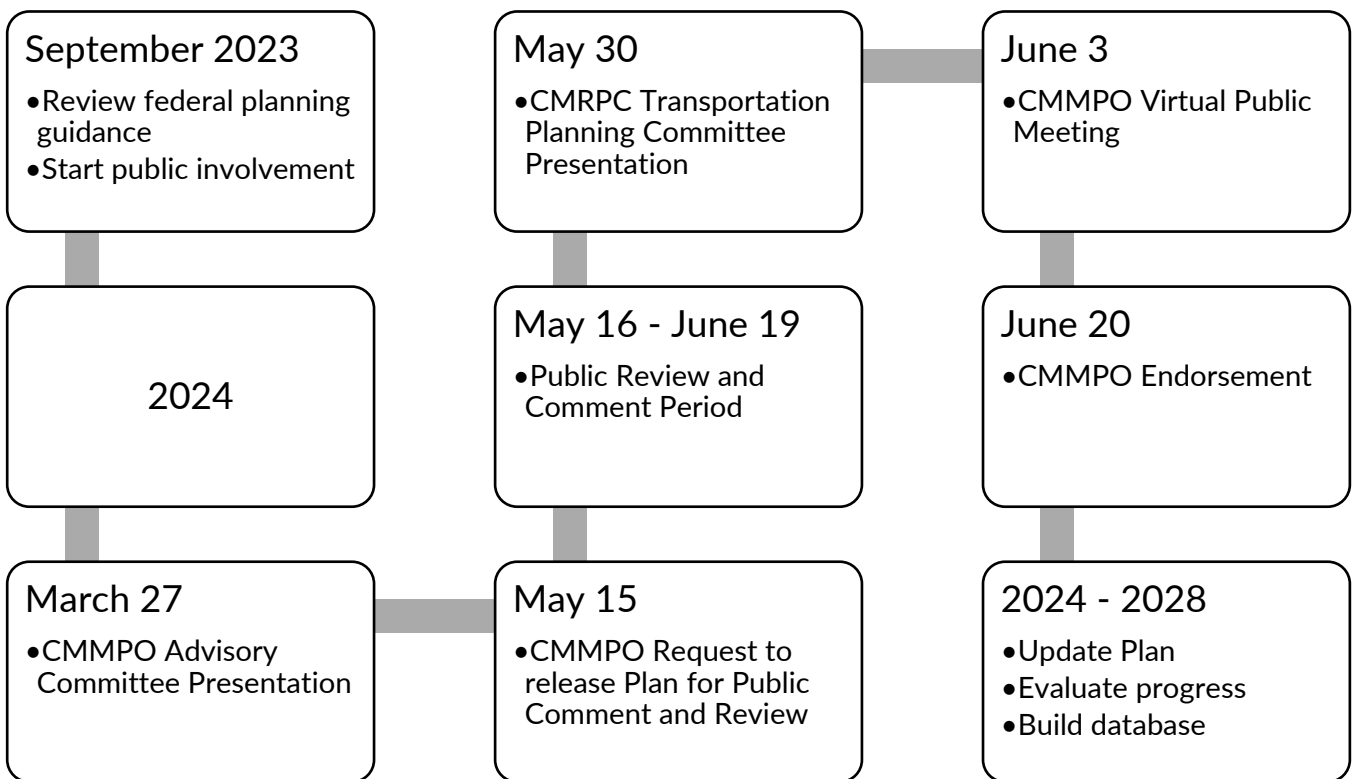
CMRPC Executive Committee, Legislative Affairs Committee, Physical Development Committee, Transportation Planning Committee

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEES

CMMPO Committee, CMMPO Advisory Committee, Transportation Planning Advisory Group

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES

Southern Worcester County Economic Development Organization



Public Involvement Minutes

Transportation Advocacy Coalition

JANUARY 18, 2024 – VIRTUAL

- Track paratransit live on phones.
- Bus stop snow removal issues with Worcester DPW.
- Driver shortages.
- Bus shelters are not adequate in the city.
- Bus stop signs are not accessible.
- Hub is not user friendly – does not announce bus numbers, hard to hear. No restroom access.

Transportation Planning Advisory Group

JANUARY 24, 2024 – VIRTUAL

- Development of WPI paratransit tracking app development for July 2025.
- Phone call delays due to driver shortage, calls go out in order of trip time.
- Complaints about inefficient short distance trips taking several hours on shared rides.
- Customer service is not responsive to requests.
- Difficulty finding bus without audio announcements for visually impaired.
- Incidents of dropping off across the street of destination without pedestrian accommodation.
- Wrapping paratransit vans to subsidize fares for riders if fares come back.

FEBRUARY 28, 2024 – VIRTUAL

- Lack of public transportation outside of Worcester, nonexistent.
- Douglas into Worcester, van with limited hours going into Milford.
- Lack of affordable housing in Worcester to access better transit.
- Local Senior Centers or cable access TV to promote paratransit service, flyers in local churches.
- Older adults are not using social media, would be good for young people with disabilities.
- Connector between regions. corridor or linkage to access other areas.
- Paratransit gap to senior centers in Rutland. Cannot go between Worcester to Rutland.
- Establishing access to all senior centers, instead of being exclusive to residency.
- A need for paper communication to explain the process of using Elderbus paratransit services.
- Customer service is not willing to explain the process of why SCM Elderbus requires reservations.
- Develop an "outside of Worcester" section for ADA information packet/Riders Guide.
- Actively promote towns to become a WRTA community and to use paratransit services.
- More state funding for paratransit. Lobby for more money from the state. Higher local assessments.

Center for Living and Working

OCTOBER 2, 2023 – WORCESTER LIBRARY

- There is often a missed reminder call for morning appointments scheduled on the night before.
- There is often miscommunication between WRTA vans and yellow cabs during transfers.
- Efficient scheduling has created indirect routes for riders across Worcester.
- The drivers are unappreciated – yelling, bathroom breaks, weak labor contracts.
- Administration should be using transit to understand rider experience better.
- Riders need service complaints addressed in a timely manner.
- Service standards should be more formalized and evaluated to increase public awareness.
- WRTA is behind in technological accessibility (Paratransit tracking systems).
- Create more partnerships with local organizations: colleges with large student populations.
- TPAG is willing to pilot different programs to assess accessibility (look to other RTAs for ideas).
- Points of interest like malls and senior centers are not accessible through current ¼ mile ADA area.
- There is confusion around bus arrival and departure and bay locations – would like announcements.
- Not all buses have an operational stop announcement system – bus drivers could announce.
- Massachusetts Alliance for the blind has a volunteer driver program in Worcester.
- Add signage for priority wheelchair loading.
- WRTA Advisory Board meetings should also be in an online seminar format for public participation.
- Implement text Reminders for paratransit.

Coalition for Healthy Greater Worcester

MARCH 21, 2024 – 18 CHESTNUT ST., WORCESTER

- 2023 CHIP annual evaluation report is based on 2018 Community Health Assessment (CHA).
- Tracking the implementation of public health goals by other nonprofits or government departments.
- US DHHS Healthy People 2030 Social Determinants of Health framework.
- Governance structure includes several subcommittees.
- 2 SNAP accessible restaurants in Worcester, SNAP access study.
- Abnormally high crash rate in Worcester compared to the state average.
- Trauma informed training (TRRETI).
- REC Mobile Market Food Access.
- Community Conversations program.
- Worcester State University Health Initiatives Team.
- Reports financially under Worcester Community Action Council.
- Public health benefits of free WRTA transit.
- Public health framework for reducing health disparities – Bay Area Health Initiative.

Worcester Food Policy Council – Transportation Working Group

MARCH 22, 2024 – VIRTUAL

- Expand access to Travel Training.
- Food access is a barrier to transportation.
- Lack of personal vehicle ownership, on-demand service.
- Locate transportation and housing closer to businesses.
- Ambiguity around the number of grocery bags allowed on the buses.
- Identify routes that provide access to grocery stores, engage in route planning and promotion.
- Webster square walk audit from senior towers and Jeremiah Inn.
- The flagging system outside of Worcester is unclear and needs more business wayfinding.
- Businesses could help with signage and marking stops outside of Worcester without signs.
- Coordinate Elder Shopper Service with Worcester Housing Authority Residential Services shuttle.
- Community food assessment and community data dashboards are in development.
- A rider spent 6 hours in total grocery shopping due to time consuming transfers at the Hub.
- Community Voices Program.
- Community Food access survey.

APRIL 26, 2024 – VIRTUAL

- Transportation highlights from the upcoming Community Food Assessment once released.
- Bus routes and scheduling coordination with food resources.
- Bus policies and practices to support.
- Infrastructure improvements.
- Draft City of Worcester Mobility Action Plan comment period in May 2024.
- Public comment period for Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan in May.
- WRTA Community and Route profiles are available on the website for member communities.
- Best to speak directly with WRTA on routes and scheduling. Request WRTA staff to attend meeting.
- What does community input look like for route changes?
- Share information with residents on WRTA Elder Shopper and Worcester Housing Authority shuttle.

WRTA Riders' Form

ACCESSIBILITY

- Real time transit tracking via the Transit App or a better bus tracking app.
- Better utilization of the website as a resource for live information sharing.
- A display for arrival and departure times, especially for confusing interline buses.
- Improved communication for bus delays or canceled routes.
- Alternatives to mobile fare systems for those without phones (if fares resume).
- Printed system maps are available to take home.
- Improved signage to accommodate visually impaired, hard of hearing
- LEP scope should include riders who speak Haitian Creole, Twi, and Diwali languages.
- Develop a pipeline with agencies that assist immigrants for travel training.
- Training for drivers in accommodating passengers with disabilities.
- Hiring staff to answer customer service complaints in real time.
- Clarity on bus driver qualification requirements and application process.
- Better communication about refunds on Charlie Card and paratransit accounts.
- On-bus route map signage for new riders/people unfamiliar with the routes.
- Ensure every bus stop sign has a QR code to a bus tracker and the WRTA website.
- Ensure that every bus stop has updated signage indicating route numbers.
- Paint the bus stops on the ground instead of pole signage.
- Equip every bus with a functional bus tracker.
- Bus stop access concerns riders in wheelchairs when there is snow.
- Provide a map with all E&D Services and walking trails.
- Track veteran ridership, make rides VHA eligible, EOVS veterans services.
- Introduce a flagging system for riders to offboard more conveniently.

WRTA HUB CONDITIONS

- Removal of electric buses from the Hub.
- Preference for previous City Hall location over the Hub.
- Opening of a customer service area on the platform.
- Improvement of signage for routes, schedules, and bus locations.
- Opening of the Hub lobby while buses are operating.
- Opening of Hub bathrooms while buses are operating.
- Hold a hiring event at Hub.
- Replacing the Hub lobby with a security office.
- More seating inside of the Hub lobby.
- Allow people to perform at the Hub.
- The inadequacy of lobby space compared to WRTA staff building.

- Changing the security company due to dereliction of duties.
- Add chargers to the Hub for electronics.
- Add an ATM in the Hub.
- Add Wi-Fi access to the Hub.
- Add a coffee shop in the Hub, such as the previous Dunkin Donuts.
- Police do not show up when they riders call.
- Drivers harass riders about having too many bags on a bench.
- Difficulty hearing bus arrival announcements due to the noisy environment.
- The announcements can be loud and disruptive or “annoying”.
- Add Trash cans to the Hub to improve cleanliness.
- Unhoused persons disproportionately contribute to trash receptacles.
- Closely monitor personal parked vehicles at the Hub and tow them if necessary.

FARES

- Free fares have been helpful for unhoused people.
- Riders want free fares to remain indefinitely.
- Free fares have been a cost saving with the current prohibitive cost of living and inflation.
- Some passengers want the fares to resume.
- Riders were unaware when the fares would come back.
- Riders wanted to know if they could still use cash to pay bus fares.
- Free fares help women with young children.
- Operators need more support with rider disturbances on the 27/29 after 4PM.
- Free fares have created onboard issues with drunkenness and vulgar language.
- Most riders would continue riding the bus if fares were to resume.
- Fares could be free for seniors or people with disabilities.
- There should be no extra cost for toddlers in strollers.

CLEANLINESS

- The buses smell of urine and body odor from unhoused persons.
- Unhoused persons living at the Walmart bus stop in unsanitary conditions.
- Update bus seats should to non-fabric material.
- Bus needs trash cans to keep seats and floors clean of litter.
- Concerns about a driver braiding hair while operating the bus.
- Increase the frequency of the bus cleaning schedule or add more trash cans.

SAFETY

- Intoxicated individuals on bus benches in the morning.
- Drivers work too hard and need 20-minute breaks every 4 hours like in Europe.
- Deny bus service to persons under the influence to avoid on board conflicts.

- Potential toxicity of bus cleaning spray making riders sick upon exposure.
- An unhoused individual is living in the shelter at Fair Plaza
- Higher ridership and crowding due to free fares have increased on board conflict.
- It is difficult for riders to stay behind the yellow line on crowded buses.
- Concerns around switching from security company to Worcester Police department.
- Add a larger screen or barrier to ensure the safety of bus drivers.
- Display photos of banned riders to ensure the wellbeing of other riders.
- Unhoused persons are asking for drugs and money when security is not present.
- Drivers cannot ensure the safety of passengers if their own safety is at risk.
- Remove the requirement of folding up strollers while riding the bus.
- The bus goes too fast to accommodate children or infants in strollers.
- Drivers that are not braking smoothly can increase the risk of a fall.
- Drivers need to securely fasten and ensure all riders sit down before accelerating.

HUMAN RESOURCES

- Lack of communication on the status of driver applications even with a reference.
- Retain current drivers and recruit at least 6 more drivers.
- Hire more paratransit staff to be able to call riders the night before instead of in the morning.
- Expand the search nationwide to recruit drivers.
- WRTA should pay for CDL renewal for drivers.

RIDER EXPERIENCE

- A driver refused to stop for a person in a wheelchair or driving past riders at stops.
- Riders must wait for the next bus due to overcrowding from free fares.
- The drivers could assist riders by getting strollers or carts on the bus.
- Late paratransit trips are causing missed appointments and tardiness at work.
- Monitor bus drivers at Union Station less.
- Paratransit wait times are not consistent among able bodied and disabled people.
- There is a lack of coordination between bus transfers when there are delays.
- A desire for longer wait times for boarding the bus so riders do not miss a run.
- Drivers should be more aware of potential riders approaching the bus to board.
- Riders would like to have less missed trips and a more reliable schedule.
- Drivers can be unpleasant, particularly towards those with disabilities or seniors.
- The driver needs to stop closer to the curb and lower the ramp when necessary.
- The driver should monitor or limit noise disturbances from music.
- Confusion around interlining buses changing routes outside of the Hub.
- Provide items like toys to entertain children on the bus.
- Provide amenities like Wi-Fi or electronic charging on the bus for riders.

- Develop alternatives to Yellow Cab paratransit such as Uber or Lyft.
- Add more drivers for paratransit to avoid van crowding and tight schedules.
- Service after 10pm (Late Night Service) would be useful for some riders.
- There is a desire for larger buses (40'+) to accommodate bus crowding.
- Provide rides to voting polls in March, September & November.
- Allowing EVs on buses would be more convenient for riders/micro mobility.
- Cars often block the space for buses to approach sidewalks in the morning.
- Adjust the bus schedules to operate earlier in the morning.
- Decrease bus stop spacing and make them visually stand out more.
- Increase service to points of interest for colleges, universities, and adjacent towns.
- Decrease headways to reduce wait times at bus stops.

SERVICE EXPANSION

- Solomon Pond Mall.
- Expand weekend service to the level of the weekday service.
- There is a desire for the restoration of Friday service.
- Work with MART to coordinate service between regions.
- Main St. more frequently to avoid bus crowding.
- Library downtown and in front of City Hall.
- Hub loop for downtown.
- Main St. from Clark University.
- The entire length of Cambridge Street.
- Greendale YMCA more frequently.
- Wegmans in Northborough.
- Assumption college more frequently.
- Ecotarium on weekdays and weekends from 10am to 5pm.
- Auburn Mall as an express route.
- Quinsigamond Community College.
- Northbridge fixed route.
- South High School more frequently.

Information Technology System Procurement

FEBRUARY 6, 2024 – VIRTUAL WRTA PARATRANSIT ROUNDTABLE

- Procurement of 6-9 months, July 2025 implementation goal. Budget approval March/April 2024.
- Outdated software from 2009/2010 when they started using Clever it was innovative.
- Route match scheduling is not efficient to use for low ridership towns, easier to do manually.
- The routes can be inefficient, and towns must redirect phone call complaints to van operations.
- Resistance to mobility management because of coordinating complexity losing autonomy of services.
- Drivers need more than 5 minutes to assist riders at the curb. Rushing increases accidents.
- Recommendation of 10 minute allocation to assist riders to curb. Drivers need more break time.
- Desire for a platform to access live paratransit information instead of redirecting calls.
- Some riders lack the digital literacy to use how to use modern technology systems.
- There is no consensus on how each town charges paratransit fares.
- Frequent calls about missed trips. Preference for WRTA vans over Yellow cab customer service.
- Driver training is too far away for drivers to attend, and they also dislike virtual training.
- Coordinate town driver training with CMTM training required by Section 5310.
- Desire for improved customer experience when riding paratransit.
- Difficulty to retain drivers in small towns with lower pay competing with larger employers.
- Concerns about transit worker safety, either physical or emotional abuse.

WRTA Administrator Meetings

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2023 – COMMUNITY VISITS WITH CMRPC STAFF

During October and November 2023, the new WRTA Administrator spoke to each paratransit provider and visited most in person to assess the current condition of the paratransit service and listened to any concerns and thoughts for improvement. The Administrator held meetings with the council on aging directors and their staff and the town manager as available.

Overall, each paratransit provider was pleased with the vehicle and maintenance provided by WRTA. All discussed the importance of the driver to the service and most expressed some level of difficulty in finding drivers when needed. Recognizing that drivers are the face of the service makes their role critical to the success of the service. To one degree or another, the availability of required driver training has been a barrier to getting drivers on the road as quickly as possible.

Communities in the WRTA's Mobility Management Model appreciated the support through the PBSTM office and had high praise for the help they provided. They also noted that it's sometimes difficult to answer rider's questions about their trip status since there the only way to find out about a trip is to contact the paratransit office. Having another way to get the info would be helpful.

Communities not in the WRTA's MMM said that they have been successful with their current system (mostly pen and paper) and have been able to provide service as needed. CMRPC staff notes that (by coincidence) the COAs not in the MMM are also not in the ADA service area, which allows for more flexibility with rides.

SCM Elderbus is now counting the number of ADA trips after many years of including them with non-ADA trips. Communication between Elderbus and PBSTM has improved after a re-education of the ADA policies.

Northborough Transportation Needs Survey

Northborough surveyed 265 respondents (98% of respondents were residents) on transportation needs.

TRIP DESTINATION

Westborough, Northborough, and Marlborough have the highest percentage of trip destinations by Northborough residents. Worcester and Shrewsbury attract a moderate number of Northborough residents.

TRANSPORTATION MODE

About 90% of respondents use personal vehicles and about 13% of riders get riders from family or friends. Less than 10% of respondents said they engage in active transportation, use paratransit or a private ride share service.

TRANSIT PERCEPTION

Sixty-two percent feel the need to have public transportation and around 58% are willing to use public transportation.

TRANSIT TYPE

About 61% of respondents would like a fixed route bus service. About 75% of respondents would like access to demand response and app based Microtransit services. About 20% of respondents chose other recommendations and would like to see an increased effort to upgrade bike infrastructure and sidewalks.

TRANSIT FREQUENCY

About 25% of respondents said they would be willing to utilize transit service weekly, about 22% occasionally, 6% once a month, and 14% daily. About 34% of respondents would not use transit services.

SERVICE PERIODS

About 55% of respondents would use public transportation on weekdays and about 28% on the weekends.

TRIP TYPE

About 68% of respondents would use public transportation for shopping, about 38% for medical trips and about 34% for employment transportation. School, education, and social services trips totaled about 50%.

DEMOGRAPHICS

- Most respondents were over 35 years with a substantial population of older adults in the mix.
- On average most of the respondents have 2 cars per household.
- Ninety-nine percent of the respondents have access to a computer.
- Sixty-one percent of respondents are employed. A sizeable number of retired residents (25%) also responded.
- Seventy-two percent of respondents have an annual household income of more than \$75,000.

Blackstone Valley Transportation Needs Survey

TRIP ORIGIN & DESTINATION

Most respondents indicate they begin their trips in Northbridge, Douglas, and Uxbridge. Northbridge, Worcester, and Millbury are the towns where most of the respondents travel to.

TRANSPORTATION MODE

Over 70% of respondents drive alone to get to their destination.

WRTA ROUTE A AND B SHUTTLE SERVICE

Sixty-four percent of the respondents have never used the WRTA Route A or Route B shuttle services.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION OPINION

Among the respondents, 84.83% feel there is a need for public transportation in Blackstone Valley. Most of the respondents do not feel limited by lack of public transportation.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION USE

Respondents indicate they would use the service for shopping and medical trips.

KEY DESTINATIONS

Respondents want more travel options to locations

- Blackstone Valley Shoppes
- Northbridge Walmart
- Milford Regional Medical Center
- Senior Centers
- Tri-River Family Health Center
- Franklin MBTA Station
- The survey results showed less of an interest in Blackstone Valley Tech High School and Blackstone Valley Education Hub

TRANSPORTATION FREQUENCY

Over 60% of respondents said they would use public transportation at least monthly if it was available. 55.65% of respondents would want to use public transportation on weekdays. 18.55% would want to use it on weekends.

DEMOGRAPHICS

- More than 75% of respondents are aged thirty-five or older.
- Most of the respondents have two cars per household.
- 54.42% of respondents are employed. A sizeable number of retired people (32.65%) also responded.
- Over 60% of respondents have an annual household income of more than \$75,000.
- About 40% reported below \$75,000.
- More than 50% of respondents do not work in the Blackstone Valley region.
- Of those working in the region, the majority indicated they work in Northbridge.

Draft 2024 HST Plan Public Comment

JUNE 3, 2024 – VIRTUAL

Tyler Distefano reviewed this agenda item with the attendees. Mr. Distefano began by providing a brief presentation about the Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan which consisted of an overview, changes since the last update in 2019, an overview of each section, and Plan recommendations. The Plan considers several recommendations related to transportation and coordination, including service changes, information access, improved transit planning, fare and service equity, transit partnerships, and more. Lastly, CMRPC staff expect the CMMPO to endorse the HST Plan at their June 20th meeting.

Joe Bellil from Easter Seals provided a few comments. The comments include:

- On demand transportation is important, especially for people with disabilities that cannot use fixed routes.
- There is a desire to reduce the 24 hour advanced scheduling reservation window for paratransit requests.
- It would be beneficial for planners to include the perspectives of riders with disabilities in decision-making.
- Fare free transit is important for people on fixed incomes, especially older adults, or people with disabilities.

ADJOURNMENT

Before Mr. Krasnecky closed the public meeting, he mentioned the draft documents are on the CMRPC website and the deadline for public comment is 4:30 pm on Wednesday, June 5th. With no additional comments or questions, the Draft FFY 2025 UPWP and the 2024 Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan virtual public meeting closed at 5:31 pm.

Worcester Regional Transit Authority Comments

- Cover Photo; the buses pictured have been out of service for many years. The WRTA can provide updated photos of the Hub Terminal.
- Page 14: Request including the name of the new Administrator, Joshua Rickman. Administrator Rickman was hired in June 2023. Former Administrator Dennis Lipka was hired in July 2018, initially on an interim basis.
- Page 15: ReadyBus is an employment transportation service provided by SCM Elderbus in the communities of Southbridge, Spencer, Sturbridge, and Webster. While the primary population is for elders and people with disabilities, ReadyBus is an expanded service to include low-income individuals and transportation disadvantaged individuals – regardless of age or disability. This service operates Monday through Friday, as early as 6:00 AM and as late as 4:00 PM.
- Page 15: SCM Elderbus - Midday Service is a demand response service to bring passengers from 22 rural and suburban communities (as Paxton joined in April 2024) into Worcester during the midday hours. This service is offered to people with disabilities (regardless of age) and people aged 60 and over. This service allows passengers with morning medical appointments to not have to wait hours for a return trip home, and for passengers with afternoon medical appointments to not have to arrive at their destination well ahead of their appointment time.
- Page 15: The Holden to Worcester service is a demand response that operates in the early morning, and late afternoon hours after the Holden Council on Aging is not in operation. This service began after the WRTA eliminated a portion of a fixed-route that went into Holden from Worcester, and restores similar service to ADA paratransit.
- Page 15: Under the information about Rutland, SCM Elderbus is a Contractor to the WRTA vs. Subcontractor.
- Page 20 (map): The Town of Barre is served both by the WRTA, and Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MART).
- Page 21: The WRTA operates 23 fixed-routes, and 3 community shuttle services in 16 of its 37 communities.
- Page 21 (table): Some of the route destination names appear dated; the WRTA updated a few of its route names and are available on the dropdown menu of the WRTA website (see 'Routes and Schedules').
- Page 24: Request insertion of a reference to MGL 161B, as the WRTA must contract out service operations and has procured the services of Transdev.
- Page 26: Request editing 'curb-to-curb' to 'origin-to-destination' in the first sentence.
- Page 26: Worcester Yellow Cab vehicles available for WRTA service are not accessible vehicles.
- Page 26: Please include a reference to the Elder Shopper graph that service was suspended for the fourth quarter in FY 2020, and the entirety of FY 2021 due to COVID-19. Service was restored in the beginning of FY 2022.
- Page 28: Please note that Via only operates one wheelchair-accessible vehicle (WAV) for Via-WRTA service. The WRTA monitors Via-WRTA service to ensure there is equivalent service between accessible, and non-accessible vehicles.

- Page 31: Regarding the reference to WRTA service expansion to MWRTA and the Solomon Pond Mall in Marlborough, this service did not come to fruition and the project was not awarded as part of the 2019 MassDOT Discretionary Grant Program.
- Page 36: The WRTA requests updates to both fixed-route and paratransit ridership numbers included in the report;

Fiscal Year	Fixed-Route	CMTM Paratransit	Yellow Cab Paratransit	COAs, SCM Elderbus, Via
2019	3,013,268	37,913	48,200	94,483
2020	2,421,591	30,887	39,933	71,131
2021	2,196,138	25,571	24,929	47,804
2022	3,064,750	31,952	43,494	65,827
2023	3,935,481	33,989	60,781	103,178

- Page 37: The section regarding 'WRTA Service Standards' does not discuss the document and refers to other activities not related to the agencies service standards. The text under the header of '2023 WRTA Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan' is unrelated to the PTASP document.
- Page 44: Service Expansion 1B – this initiative would benefit all transit users, not distinctly for 'discretionary transit use'.
- Page 44: Service Expansion 1D – reducing the frequency of shared-rides on demand response with a goal of shorter travel times is not mutually exclusive, and is counterproductive for optimal service delivery.
- Page 47: The WRTA has not purchased the services of Remix. Hastus is a software produced by GIRO Inc.

References

- ⁱ <https://www.nadtc.org/resources-publications/resource/writing-a-coordinated-public-transit-human-services-transportation-plan/>
- ⁱⁱ <https://www.mass.gov/community-transit-grant-program>
- ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grants/enhanced-mobility-seniors-individuals-disabilities-section-5310>
- ^{iv} <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/community-transit-grant-program-details-and-eligibility>
- ^v <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/overview-of-the-worcester-regional-transit-authority>
- ^{vi} <https://www.transit.dot.gov/ntd/transit-agency-profiles/worcester-regional-transit-authority>
- ^{vii} <https://therta.com/route-profiles/>
- ^{viii} <https://therta.com/paratransit/ada-paratransit-eligibility/>
- ^{ix} <https://therta.com/routes-schedules/eldershopper/>
- ^x <https://www.va.gov/central-western-massachusetts-health-care/locations/worcester-va-clinic/>
- ^{xi} https://worcesterha.org/frs_otherprograms.html
- ^{xii} <https://www.mass.gov/beyond-mobility>
- ^{xiii} <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/mobility-management>
- ^{xiv} <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/regional-coordinating-councils-for-community-transportation>
- ^{xv} <https://www.mass.gov/lists/rail-transit-studies-and-reports>
- ^{xvi} <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/providing-rides-through-the-hst-brokerage>
- ^{xvii} <https://www.mass.gov/doc/massachusetts-state-plan-on-aging-2021-2025>
- ^{xviii} <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/>
- ^{xix} <https://www.cmrpcregionalservices.org/age-friendly>
- ^{xx} <https://www.jfcsboston.org/our-services/services-for-older-adults/home-community-supports/alzheimers-related-dementias-family-support/memorycafedirectory>
- ^{xxi} <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/community-health-network-areas-chna-configuration>
- ^{xxii} <https://www.worcesterma.gov/building-a-healthy-community>
- ^{xxiii} <https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-guidance/civil-rights-ada/ensuring-equity-service-and-fare-changes>
- ^{xxiv} <https://therta.com/about-us/title-vi/>
- ^{xxv} <https://cmrpc.org/transportation/cmmpo-title-vi-program/cmmpo-ej-thresholds/>
- ^{xxvi} <https://www.chna9.org/204/Data-and-Reports>
- ^{xxvii} <https://cmrpc.org/transportation/core-plans/lrtp/>
- ^{xxviii} <https://www.cmrpcregionalservices.org/ceds>
- ^{xxix} <https://www.transit.dot.gov/coordinating-council-access-and-mobility>