Transportation Coordination Meeting – Meeting Summary

April 17, 2014
Natick Senior Center

Thank you very much to the Natick Senior Center for hosting the ninth semi-annual Transportation Coordination meeting. If you are interested in hosting the Fall 2014 meeting, please contact Theadora at theadora.fisher@state.ma.us or 617 847 3744.

State Updates

Tanja Ryden welcomed the group and gave updates on the MassMobility project's activities since the October 2013 meeting. Some highlights include:

- RCC development & support – We have been doing outreach to help identify stakeholders, assigned staff to each RCC as a technical assistance liaison, and have been providing support through drafting surveys and analyzing the results, taking meeting notes, and sending meeting reminders.
- General Outreach & education
  - MassMobility staff has been participating in outreach to our fellow EOHHS agencies
  - In addition, our office co-hosted the Boston MPO's Transportation Equity Forum, held this past January, and Theadora Fisher also served as a panelist.
  - Participated in related workgroups (e.g., RMV's Older Driver Workgroup; Boston's Health Resilience Network for emergency preparedness)
- EO530 – MassMobility is leading the implementation effort on several of the recommendation topics, most notably on volunteer driver programs, travel instruction and the centralized repository of travel information.
- The next SCCCT meeting is on May 9th.
- The Travel Instruction Network has been very active since the last meeting

Aniko Laszlo gave some updates from MassDOT:

- MassDOT awarded $5.3M in 5310 funding this year and $3M in MAP funding, including awarding 148 MAP vehicles to RTAs and local organizations such as Councils on Aging
- EO530 updates:
  - MassDOT is conducting gap analysis
  - MassDOT is also working on streamlining ADA eligibility and facilitating paratransit transfers across RTAs
  - The MBTA will release an RFP for the accessible taxi subsidy program

RCC Formation Updates

The past six months have seen a number of Regional Coordinating Councils launch. RCCs that have held more than one meeting:

- Worcester
- Cape Cod
- Berkshires
- Merrimack Valley

RCCs that have had one meeting (as of 4/17):

- GATRA (Taunton area)
- Minuteman (Acton/Concord area)
- Pioneer Valley

- North Shore

In addition, the following areas are working on scheduling their first meeting:

- Franklin County
- Metrowest
- North Central (Fitchburg area)
- SRTA (New Bedford/Fall River area)
- BAT (Brockton area)

Finally, we are working on pulling together RCC groups in the Boston area. There are also some towns in the rural portions of Hampshire and Hampden counties that are not yet affiliated with an RCC. We hope to have the RCCs covering the whole state and fully launched by the end of 2014.

After the Berkshire RCC update, Jana Hunkler presented on a new coordination effort that a number of RCC members are participating in. On March 26, Northern Berkshire County received word that the North Adams Regional Hospital and its affiliated services would be closing down in two days. This closure meant the loss of the region's largest employer and only hospital. The next closest hospital was located over 20 miles away in Pittsfield, leaving people without transportation in the lurch. In response, Councils on Aging in Adams, North Adams, and Williamstown sketched out a partnership where each would send a van to Pittsfield once a week for seniors of any of the three towns to ride. They then called BerkshireRides for help developing and implementing this service. At the same time, Adams Community Bank approached BerkshireRides, offering to help fund transportation for area residents to healthcare services in Pittsfield. BerkshireRides reached out to the Elder Services of Berkshire County and the Berkshire Community Action Council (BCAC), both of which were also interested in joining the partnership.

BCAC was already transporting passengers daily from Pittsfield to North Adams, and its van was empty on the return trip from North Adams to Pittsfield. BCAC agreed to fill these empty seats with passengers from North Adams who need medical services in Pittsfield. In the afternoon, BCAC will take these riders back to North Adams on its way to pick up its passengers and bring them home to Pittsfield. The group decided on three stops for the BCAC van, and the three Councils on Aging agreed to do local demand-response feeder trips to get riders to those stops in the morning and back home in the afternoon. BerkshireRides will screen riders and offer mobility management services to help riders understand and use any other options they may have. For example, some riders may be able to use the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority fixed route bus. Others may need help updating their PT-1 form to qualify for MassHealth transportation to the new location. The group is starting with a six-month pilot. To reserve a space on the BCAC shuttle, call BerkshireRides at 413 664 0300, with at least two business days advance notice.

Keynote: Heather Wheeler, CTAI/I-way (see presentation)

Heather Wheeler presented a wealth of information about Idaho's mobility management program. The full presentation accompanies this summary, but here are some highlights:

- CTAI is the Community Transportation Association of Idaho. It is a statewide nonprofit membership organization that hosts several alternative transportation programs for the state of Idaho, including their mobility management program, their rideshare program, and their centralized travel information website, as well as doing advocacy around transportation issues to elected officials.
- Idaho has six districts, each with its own mobility manager. In addition to working on mobility solutions in their districts and bringing stakeholders together around transportation, the

mobility managers work with each district to gather information for the district's coordinated plan, which is an essential part of the funding process for federal dollars.

Small group workshops:

Needs Assessment: Using Trip Planner Data from Ride Match

- Mary Basilone, Mobility Manager at the Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional Transit Authority (GATRA), presented on how GATRA has been analyzing the backend data from its online trip planning tool Ride Match to see what they can learn about people's transportation needs.
- Online at www.massridematch.org, Ride Match allows users to enter the town where they are starting their trip and the town they want to travel to. Users can opt to enter information about time, day, and mobility needs. Then Ride Match provides a list of public and private transportation services that can offer that trip.
- Many of the trips people search for are served by GATRA, but others are not available by public transportation. For example, Mary showed that Ride Match has registered 25 searches for transportation from Attleboro to Providence. GATRA used to offer this route but discontinued it. Ride Match registered 78 searches from Attleboro to Taunton, which is a route that GATRA does serve.
- GATRA has also used Google Analytics to map where people are using the Ride Match tool from. Taunton and Boston are common locations, as are Attleboro, Brockton, Fall River, New Bedford, and Plymouth.
- Mary then compared the findings from the Ride Match analysis with the findings from a survey that GATRA did in partnership with the Brockton Area Transit Authority and Southeastern Regional Transit Authority to inform development of Regional Coordinating Councils in Southeastern Massachusetts.
- Mary stressed that while the findings from these analyses do not provide comprehensive information, they are a great starting point for the RCC and for GATRA to help determine their priorities for next steps.
- See attached powerpoint presentation for more information

READYBUS: Providing More Rides Through Commingling

Tim O'Day, Executive Director of South Central Massachusetts Elderbus, presented on their pilot program called "ReadyBus" to serve employment transportation needs. The program began in September 2012 to provide in-town work related transportation to resident, without any age/disability restriction. They targeted four communities with an established base of retail and commercial operations and received support and additional funding to cover additional fuel costs (estimated at $6-8K/year) through Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA). To commit to the pilot Tim had to ensure they could operate with no expansion of the staffing or vehicles that were already being deployed for the contract with WRTA to provide paratransit services for elders and persons with disabilities. By tapping into excess capacity ReadyBus could serve individuals needing work related transportation during their paratransit operating hours of 8 am to 4 pm. They have seen a gradual increase in monthly ridership during the pilot program and identified a significant need for early morning service. With the help of the Regional planning Agency, ReadyBus recently received a grant to expand their hours to 6 AM starting in July 2014. The program demonstrates that you can successfully commingle different populations on the same vehicle, as long as you have sufficient capacity to ensure your primary target population continues to be well served. Tim's advice:

- Partner with others to create synergy
- Identify and define specific target market

- Don't overextend resources
- Make sure your core mission remains intact

There were numerous questions from participants about the funding and operational details and even whether he would be willing to expand his model to other communities. Several representatives from other community transportation providers were interested in pursuing some follow on discussions to compare their operations and share ideas and strategies to support service coordination.

- See attached powerpoint presentation for more information

Brainstorming Session on Publicity and Marketing:

How do transportation providers approach marketing? What strategies do you use?

- For a travel training service, know your audience. Who can use the service?
- Educate staff that interacts with your consumers
- Provide an incentive to use the service or give feedback
- Word of mouth – get referrals from satisfied consumers
- Outreach
  - Table at job fairs and community events
  - Develop relationships with the chamber of commerce, employment centers, HR departments → educate the employers in the region
- One organization reads the job ads in the newspaper, then reaches out to those employers to tell them about the transportation services available
- Develop relationships with organizations that serve potential riders
  - One example: transit provider provided transportation to the Boys & Girls club; those young people get exposure to the bus and are more likely to ride in the future
- Workshop attendees liked the idea that Heather Wheeler brought from Idaho about distributing a scoresheet to each community outlining the transportation services and routes in their town, ridership numbers, hours of operation, etc. These could be very effective outreach tools.
- Host a transportation party! One organization held transportation potlucks – they provide the food, but attendees bring ideas or challenges about transportation to share and discuss with the group.
  - Could also ask attendees to bring guests – expand networks
- When distributing flyers, target sites where likely riders will congregate

Use technology:

- Videos are effective tools for marketing as well as teaching people how to ride transportation services.
  - Have a youtube channel
  - Ask local vocational or technical high school to help with producing
  - Show actual people riding the service
- Social media
  - Facebook: the consensus of the group is it can be hard to monitor. One organization limits posts on their page so they don't have to worry as much about long rants
  - Twitter: not everyone is on twitter, but one organization says it is easier to monitor and the 140 character limit helps with angry people.
    - However the most important thing about social media is to be responsive! When you get a complaint, follow up with the person.
- A good website is your best marketing tool!
  - It should be accessible to people with disabilities
  - It should be posted everywhere – on buses, in bus shelters, on publicity materials

- Bus shelters should have schedules and phone numbers as well as the website
    - You could also post a QR code for smartphones that leads to the "where's my bus" app
- Public campaigns:
    - Mayor declared "public transit day"
        - held a festival in a city park
        - transit authority brought swag to give away
    - Press releases on earth day, dump-the-pump day, etc. as well as important milestones – ridership milestones, anniversaries, grant awards, etc.
    - Post messages on electronic boards by the side of the road
    - Messages can also go on banners crossing major town roads
    - Public access TV! Get interviewed – sometimes elected officials have their own shows, get some time on those
- Newspapers – send them press releases. Could also try paid advertising.
- What's needed?
- Resources!
- An in-house staff person to work on marketing projects
- More collaboration
- Ongoing efforts to get the word out – not enough to have a one-time press release about a new service
- Maybe interns could help with marketing
- Words of wisdom:
- "Never cut your marketing budget!"
- Don't start something bigger than staff can handle; need to be responsive to your consumers.

Afternoon presentation: Stacy Hart, New England ADA Center/IHCD (see presentation)

- Stacy Hart discussed accessibility issues and how to provide accommodations for individuals with disabilities, including site visits. She also answered questions that were provided by attendees in advance and went through some examples and scenarios of requests that might come up in the course of planning a public meeting or event. She also mentioned www.adachecklist.org as a good resource for accessibility issues.