

MEETING NOTES of NVRCC Forum:

Improving Medical Transportation Coordination and Access for Consumers in the Neponset Valley

March 3, 2016, 9-11 AM, Dedham Town Hall, Lower Level

Participants

Cindy Curran, MA Commission for the Blind
Patricia Gavin, HESSCO
Kathie Medeiros, Sharon Adult Center
Roger Medeiros, American Cancer Society
Michele Dilley, American Cancer Society
Kim Kelley, Norwood Hospital
Scott Zadakis, Crosstown Connect
Aniko Laszlo, MassDOT
Lisa Cherbuliez, Needham Community Council

Laura Leventhal, Dedham COA
Mary Basilone, GATRA
Angie Azevedo, SRPEDD
Cathy Varnum, Foxboro COA
Senator James Timilty, MA State Senator
Jess Aptowitz, Office of Senator James Timilty
Anne-Marie Gagnon, HESSCO
Rachel Fichtenbaum, MassMobility

Introduction

- The Neponset Valley Regional Coordinating Council (RCC) is one of sixteen RCCs around Massachusetts, bringing human service agencies, Councils on Aging, transportation providers, advocates, consumers, and others together to build relationships and address regional challenges to mobility for seniors, people with disabilities, and lower-income commuters
- This RCC launched in June 2015 with a needs assessment. Since then we have held meetings around the needs identified in the survey. Today's meeting addresses medical transportation
- We did a follow-up survey in February 2016 to get more into depth on medical transportation needs in the region – [see forum powerpoint for details](#)

Ride Match

- www.massridematch.org
- Online, searchable database of transportation services – includes public and private
 - Simply input your origin and destination, time and day of travel, other specific information about your trip and click SUBMIT
 - After clicking on the Submit button, you are shown a complete list of providers including all public, private, and non-profit options. Public transit providers are listed first
 - For more detailed information, click on the provider name.
- Currently data is very robust in Southeastern Massachusetts and the Berkshires. The database was created by GATRA (public transit in the Attleboro/Taunton region). GATRA has received funding to expand the database statewide and is partnering with other Regional Transit Authorities to add the data
- [More information in the Ride Match powerpoint](#)
- **Possible next step:** the RCC could opt to compile an inventory of transportation services in the region (e.g. COA services, etc.) and then work with Mary Basilone at GATRA to populate the database so that our region would also be well represented in Ride Match

Open Discussion

- It is important to make the medical provider aware that a patient has transportation constraints while scheduling the next appointment, but patients rarely advocate for themselves. Seniors don't want to impose on doctor's offices. For example, it is impossible to transport someone from the Neponset Valley to Boston for a 6.30AM appointment when COA business hours start at 8AM. Doctors' offices would accommodate, if they knew about the patient's transportation problem.
- Needham Community Council is considering doing a pilot program to give seniors vouchers for cabs or Uber, but worries that the need/usage will exceed their allotted budget.

- ****New medical transportation service for out-of-town medical trips to Foxborough:** GATRA announced that they have received funding to take RIDE customers from Canton, Franklin, Norfolk, Sharon, Walpole, and Wrentham into Foxborough for medical appointments. Call Joanne LaFerrara at (508) 823-8828 x.275 for details. They may also be able to take customers from Norwood on a case-by-case basis.
- The American Cancer Society is exploring partnership with Zipcar and local colleges. During the day, college students who have time between classes would sign up to use the Zipcars on their campus to drive patients to medical appointments. These students would then be able to use Zipcar free of charge on weekends in exchange for driving patients during the week.
- How much should services charge? Not all organizations charge a fee for medical transportation. Some charge \$1-\$2, others charge nothing. For many elderly and people with disabilities affordability is an issue, especially if someone has to go to the hospital for test/treatment for several times a month.
- Volunteer drivers are hard to recruit. Mileage reimbursement is very low, although programs can opt to pay more than the federal rate.
- The American Cancer Society would like to put all services that are free of charge or deeply discounted into its statewide database.
- Caliber Patient Care's Massachusetts franchises have offered to donate a certain number of rides to the American Cancer Society. <https://www.caliberpatientcare.com>
- Another underserved group is younger people who are temporarily disabled due to illness. Most organizations have eligibility criteria benefitting seniors and people with disabilities but not others in need.
- Many riders need extra assistance, not just a ride. Jewish Family Services in Framingham has a patient navigator program where they recruit volunteers to accompany patients to appointments.
- HESSCO's "Transportation of Last Resort Title III Program" put a bid out for transportation services but the amount was too small to attract takers. COAs refer their clients to HESSCO, and HESSCO coordinates with a taxi company. Most of the rides go to Boston. While \$10,000 is not a lot of money, Angie suggested reaching out to Kiessling next time the contract is up for bid since Kiessling already goes into Boston and might be able to share rides and make the money can stretch farther.
- Many participants are interested in exploring new opportunities like Uber, but some worry about associating with Uber given some recent news stories.

Conference on May 3

Save the date – **Massachusetts Community Transportation Coordination Conference May 3!** The conference will feature a panel of healthcare organizations that are taking steps to address transportation barriers. In addition, Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito has agreed to give a keynote speech.

- Keep an eye out for an invitation to the conference
- The conference will be a full day and will be held in Worcester at Holy Cross
- Contact Rachel at rachel.fichtenbaum@state.ma.us for more information

Next Steps

- The RCC may organize a subcommittee to develop an inventory in order to compile information for Ride Match
- We'll plan another healthcare transportation meeting to continue the conversation
- Mark your calendars for the statewide conference May 3 in Worcester

Contact information

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The Neponset Valley Regional Coordinating Council is part of a statewide initiative to increase and support community and paratransit transportation services. This council serves Canton, Dedham, Dover, Foxborough, Medfield, Millis, Milton, Needham, Norfolk, Norwood, Plainville, Randolph, Sharon, Sherborn, Stoughton, Walpole, Westwood, and Wrentham. Representatives of human service agencies, transportation providers, advocates, employers, coordinators of transportation services, and others who want to increase communication and collaboration across organizations are invited to join.