

2017 Massachusetts Community Transportation Coordination Conference Employment Transportation

Presenters

- Scott Zadakis, CrossTown Connect
- Tim O'Day, SCM Elderbus
- Gail Farnsworth French, Quaboag Valley CDC

Facilitator

- Aniko Laszlo, MBTA/MassDOT

Quaboag Connector

- New service started 2 months ago
- Towns are located on fringe of 2 RTAs
- The Quaboag Connector provides transportation for employment and education.
- Started with used vehicles from PVRTA – priority trips are employment and education, then medical and other appointments
- Connects with stops on way to drop children off a daycare – removing huge barrier for people to work
- Allow youth ages 12-18 to ride alone with permission form
- Helping to remove barriers to employment. Working people without transportation are able to connect with other transit seniors without Councils on Aging. Access to education, workforce training, retail centers, hospital and medical providers.
- Stats:
 - 2017 Ridership:
 - February - 74 rides
 - March - 229 rides
 - April - 362 rides, growing rapidly
- Suggested improvements:
 - Looking at route optimizing software
 - Currently only 2 vehicles (1 Ambulatory Vehicle, 1 Wheel Chair vehicle)
- Reliable transportation would be impossible without the system of critical stakeholders, businesses, and town government of Ware, hospital, town planners, advocates, social service providers, and volunteers, MassDOT and Mobility Management Aniko and Rachel.
- Learned a lot from Crosstown Connect. Received help from the central Massachusetts Regional Coordinating Council, local and state Department of Transportation and local grants.
- Challenge is to make sustainable.
- Successful because we're addressing consumer needs. Surveyed users to find out what services they need and when they need them. From the responses a mid-day runs were added to schedule. Be flexible – curb to curb to start, 48 hr. advance notice. Shopping is allowed once priority trips are secured.
- One person used the service when their car needed repair and tried to continue because it was cheaper (not what it's for).
- Receiving requests from courts to help probationers get to appointments.
- Demographics:

- Ages: 19-59 (119); 60+ (67)
 - Note: the senior center van broke down for a time and riders were using the Quaboag Connector

Readybus

- Readybus is for seniors and people with disabilities.
- Serves 22 communities, 575 miles, 46,000 trips annually
 - 31% health related, 12% work related and 17% for shopping and other.
- Resources:
 - 23 vehicles
 - Fully trained drivers
 - Schedulers/dispatcher and customer service
- Currently have excess capacity and cost is not an issue
 - Only additional cost is fuel, which is minimal
- Services are offered in conjunction with core mission, to in-town employment without age or disability restrictions. Target retail and community operations (restaurants, grocery).
- Outreach
 - Worked with social service agencies around job opportunities, prepared video for cable, marketing materials to local retailers to get the word out.
- Popular and cost effective – minimal expense: 275 trips/month, 7% of total trips, hours 6 AM to 4 PM.
- Advice?
 - Partner with others to create synergy
 - Identify and define market – don't overextend
 - Core mission intact, seniors and people with disabilities are our priority

Crosstown Connect

- Started because on edge of RTA service areas with no public transit
- Partnerships between community and business – large employers I-495 and Route 2
- Variety of options to link communities and people
- Centralized dispatch, not at each RTA.
- Open 8 hours, one phone number to contact dispatch
- Less no shows for appointments
- Work with businesses and communities to fulfill daily needs trips (grocery, hospital, employment.)
- Travel within towns and from suburb to suburb
- Work with Lowell Regional Transit Authority and Montachusett Regional Transit Authority to cross regional lines
- Traditional and reverse commuting to the city of Boston via Fitchburg line (commuter rail)
- MassDOT grant funds the use of COA shuttle outside of regular services hours.
- Only significant cost is driver salary and gas
- Hours of operation:
 - 6am-8:45am – 4 routes to and from train station
 - 4:45pm-7:45pm – 3 routes to and from train station
 - Demand exists for additional route to West Concord loop through South Acton for residents
- Ridership for Quarter 1:

- 200-300 trips a week at 25% capacity
- \$2 one way trip
 - Was free at first, addition of a fee did not change service. In fact, ridership is up
- Goals:
 - Increase ridership
 - Develop sustainable business model after grant ends
 - Costs base and scalability
 - Add routes to housing and business.

Q&A

- From WRTA - Collaborate with RTAs, do the communities use their MBTA assessment to fund? Do they report ridership to RTAs?
 - Most use part of the assessment for the services – to start a new service – one route not started yet working with RTA to find ways to finance. Ridership is reported to RTAs as it helps them with additional federal funding. Drivers have tablets on vehicles to mark ridership, all automated.
- Define Senior by age?
 - 60 years old
- How did you get the word out about the service so people know it is there?
 - Always looking for opportunities to sell the service. Go to Councils on Aging. Create direct mailing campaigns, advertise programs on local cable channels, bring brochures to town halls and speak directly to residents. Seniors are not aware of the program and we need to get better at marketing it to them.
- Work Inc. – employers on board contribute to longevity?
 - Get on board – looking for ongoing funding to sustain. Some fund their shuttles outright to allow their employees access. Work to create van pools, some share shuttles.
- Limit to expand geography – can you if given opportunity?
 - **Readybus** – approached some towns and offices and they did not opt in – some towns not interest in service (maybe cannot afford to buy in).
 - **Quaboag** – started in 8 communities, some constraints due to financial and long drive times.
 - **Crosstown** – speaking with MART and towns to create depot for vehicles to reduce costs of deadhead. Carlisle, Concord, Stow, expand slowly with opportunity for towns to buy in.