

Research Summary

Environmental Scan of Community Transit Needs in Massachusetts

Research Need

This project addresses the need for a comprehensive statewide synthesis of community transportation needs by integrating findings from transportation-related reports and needs assessments conducted across Massachusetts to identify shared challenges, system-level barriers, and opportunities to improve mobility for residents throughout the Commonwealth—particularly older adults, people with disabilities.

Goals/Objectives

Provide a comprehensive statewide synthesis of community transportation needs documented across Massachusetts.

Examine resident-level transportation needs and disparities using existing survey data from communities across the Commonwealth.

Develop practical evaluation tools that enable community transportation providers to measure service impact and support data-informed planning and continuous improvement.

Distribution of transportation concerns by theme

12 Themes	#
Types of trips	144
Availability	115
Other	103
Access TO services	100
Transportation-no detail	83
Acceptability-satisfaction	68
Information/Communication	65
Affordability	61
Accessibility OF services	51
Adaptability/Flexibility	51
Utilization	31
Acceptability-stigma	8
Total	880

Methodology

This project aimed to provide actionable recommendations for improving transit options and enhancing the quality of life for Massachusetts' residents. It included three components:

A comprehensive environmental scan of 216 reports of transportation need across Massachusetts;

A secondary-data analysis of individual-level data from residents in selected cities and towns (UMass Boston Community Needs Assessments, the 2023 Massachusetts Community Health Equity Survey, the Massachusetts Healthy Aging Data Report, and the American Community Survey, and

Review of existing transportation evaluation tools.

Key Findings

Transportation barriers operate at multiple interconnected levels

The built environment is a critical determinant of transportation usability

Transportation systems are fragmented and poorly aligned with real-world travel needs

Limited Disability-Specific Data and Inconsistent Data Collection Constrain Statewide Assessment and Planning of

Use of Findings

- Inform statewide transit grant programs through a comprehensive synthesis of community-identified transportation needs.
- Provide a framework for agencies to use to better understand transportation barriers faced by their customers and consumers.
- Improve evaluation and accountability by equipping community transportation providers with standardized, easy-to-use measures of service impact.

Project Information

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Principal Investigators:

Caitlin Coyle, Ceara Somerville, Yan Lin

Performing Organization:

University of Massachusetts Boston

Project Champion:

Rachel Fichtenbaum

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Research and Technology Transfer Section
MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning
Planning.Research@dot.state.ma.us

