

# WESTBOROUGH, MASSACHUSETTS

## Senior Transportation Assessment



May 2017

Prepared for: Kristi Williams, Deputy Town Administrator

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## Westborough Senior Transportation Services

The Town of Westborough is conducting an assessment of its senior transportation programs to insure that opportunities exist for Westborough Seniors to age in place while still being able to access the activities that allow them to live full and fulfilling lives.

Currently senior transportation services have been offered primarily through the Westborough Council on Aging (COA) which is led by its Director Alma Demanche. Ms. Demanche is responsible for a wide variety of senior activities including operation of the COAs transportation services. There are, however, a number of other transportation options available to seniors that should be noted including:

- MBTA Commuter Rail Service
- Worcester Regional Transit Authority – Westborough Shuttle
- Taxi Services
- Uber and Lyft services

As part of the information gathering phase of this project, several meetings were held with Kristi Williams, Deputy Town Administrator to discuss the Town's purpose for conducting the study and to receive input and direction into the process. The assessment indicated that while the Town believes that the COA was serving many of the transportation needs of Westborough seniors, they wanted to further assess if additional actions could improve overall mobility for Westborough Seniors.

A meeting was held with Alma Demanche, Director of the Westborough COA to discuss current services and opportunities to partner with State and regional agencies for additional services. Additionally, the Worcester Regional Transit Authority and Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission were also consulted to discuss Westborough transportation options. A number of other Councils on Aging were also interviewed to learn about COA practices and operations and to determine if those programs could provide insight into other services which could be implemented in Westborough.

Following the work scope associated with this contract, four memos were prepared each addressing one of the scope items associated with the senior transportation contract:

- Recommendations to improve senior transportation currently being offered by the Town of Westborough
- Identification of training and educational opportunities for older drivers and their families
- Recommendations for supporting older drivers' transition to life without a license
- Recommendations to support transportation and access in areas of town densely populated by senior housing and destinations



A fifth memo was also prepared which provides additional information regarding several grant programs which I believe could be beneficial to the Town of Westborough's development of additional senior transportation services.

**Memo 1: Recommendations to improve the current senior transportation service currently being offered by the Town of Westborough.**

In December 2015, the Westborough Council on Aging completed an assessment of transportation services provided by the Westborough Council on Aging. Highlights of this study are as follows:

- The COA operates 2 buses which provide 57 hours of door to door service per week
- The COA has a large and dependable source of drivers with three part time drivers and a fourth budgeted, but at the time of the assessment, unfilled position. The agency also has 5 back up drivers.
- The agency provides demand response door to door service on most days with pre-planned group shopping trips on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
- Approximately 10% of Westborough seniors regularly use COA services
- The Westborough COA provided over 7,500 riders in 2015, a number which has remained stable over the past three years.

As part of their earlier study, the COA identified four goals:

1. Encourage the use of WRTA transportation for certain destinations
2. Increase and Expand the Senior Center Driver Volunteer program
3. Evaluate current schedules and identify opportunities for efficiencies
4. Expand transportation services

The Town of Westborough in evaluating the COA study sought additional input through the release of a subsequent study into senior transportation services and how to provide more effective transportation to seniors as they age. Twenty four percent of Westborough’s population is 60 or older, with 10% of those being 70 or older and demographic trends indicate that these numbers will grow.

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs provides statistics that indicate that the number of seniors throughout Massachusetts is growing at a fast rate. In fact, by 2020, the number of seniors in Massachusetts is projected to increase over those of 1990 levels by 51.0%. In Westborough, the population is growing at an even faster rate than the state as a whole, with projected growth a whopping 87.6% in the period of 1990 to 2020. As seniors age, their mobility needs change. Westborough, in conducting this evaluation is both identifying the issue as well as making progress to identifying the solutions that will work within the community.

**Massachusetts Elderly (60+) Growth 1990-2020**

	1990	2000	Change 1990- 2000	2010	Change 2000- 2010	2020	Change 1990- 2020
Massachusetts	1,080,881	1,096,567	1.5%	1,272,323	16.0%	1,632,168	51.0%
Westborough	2,443	2,619	7.2%	3,288	25.5%	4,584	87.6%

Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs

A variety of transportation options are available in Westborough to town residents including seniors. It should be recognized, however; that these services are fluid. Options can change over time and are largely dependent on funding and use. For example, in 2016, the Metrowest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA) ended a pilot program for service in Westborough which provided shuttle service between the commuter rail station and employers at Technology Drive and Research Drive. The service was initially slated as a connection to Worcester Regional Transit Authority fixed route services, but was terminated due to low ridership and lack of funding. Although this service was not tailored to the needs of seniors, it provided an excellent example of partnering to increase transportation and mobility choice. Connections such as this can offer opportunities for future connections to the region as a whole and in the case of MWRTA provide desirable connections along the Route 9 corridor as well as to other destinations.

The following table provides a number of options that could improve transportation options for seniors in Westborough. Some of the recommendations are simple reviews of existing service while others may require coordination with partners or individuals. Although it is not expected that Westborough will implement each of these recommendations they provide a variety of choices so that the town can choose what is best for the community.

### **Options for Increased Senior Transportation Services in Westborough**

Expand COA Driver Pool/Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train and recruit additional drivers for increased flexibility allowing use of State provided vehicles</li> </ul>
Worcester Regional Transit Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review Existing Services</li> <li>• Lobby for Additional Services (Westborough or grant funded)</li> </ul>
Metrowest Regional Transit Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine is connections to neighboring transit systems are beneficial.</li> </ul>
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leverage MBTA commuter rail to improve access to Boston based health care facilities</li> </ul>
Regional COA Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore benefits of a regional COA shuttle system with neighboring COAs</li> </ul>
Volunteer Transportation Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand highly successful volunteer driving program</li> </ul>
Taxi Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negotiate reduced rates for seniors</li> <li>• Implement a taxi voucher program</li> </ul>
Zip Car or other car sharing service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Install a car-sharing service to improve access to short term car rental opportunities</li> </ul>
Uber/Lyft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide training for seniors on ride-hailing services</li> </ul>
Walking promotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incentivize walking for seniors through promotions</li> <li>• Educate seniors regarding housing choices and walkability</li> </ul>

### COA Scheduling Flexibility and Expanded Driver Pool

Westborough COA provides 57 hours of transportation services each week providing seniors with options to meet their daily needs including health, shopping and socialization. The amount

of services, however, is limited by department funding. Should the COA be able to acquire a vehicle through the States Mobility Assistance Program, the COA might have additional funds through the Town or Friends organization to provide more service. The COA utilizes two vehicles one of which requires a commercial driver's license (CDL) to operate and a smaller van which does not require additional accreditation to operate. The Town of Westborough has identified a number of part time paid drivers who provide transportation for the COA using the agency's vans and each of these drivers are credentialed with a CDL. The COA should consider tapping an additional employee who is available during COA hours for those instances that a driver becomes unavailable through a vacancy, illness or other obligation. The driving component of the job would be incidental to the primary job purpose but would provide the COA with additional flexibility should a scheduled driver be unable to perform his or her duties.

Discussions with the COA Director indicate that complying with random drug and alcohol testing has been problematic for the agency in the past as drivers have been pulled from service without an available backup. If the agency had back up drivers available, such as a maintenance or administrative position, the COA may find van obligations less onerous.

The COA may want to reconsider its fleet makeup to determine if the larger CDL requirement vehicle is necessary for the agency's programming. If not, the COA may want to consider downsizing to a 12 passenger van which would provide flexibility in drivers and assist in recruiting new drivers in the future. Furthermore, Westborough could encourage additional drivers through the Town's tax work-off program. This option would provide a win-win situation for the agency and the Town.

### Worcester Regional Transit Authority

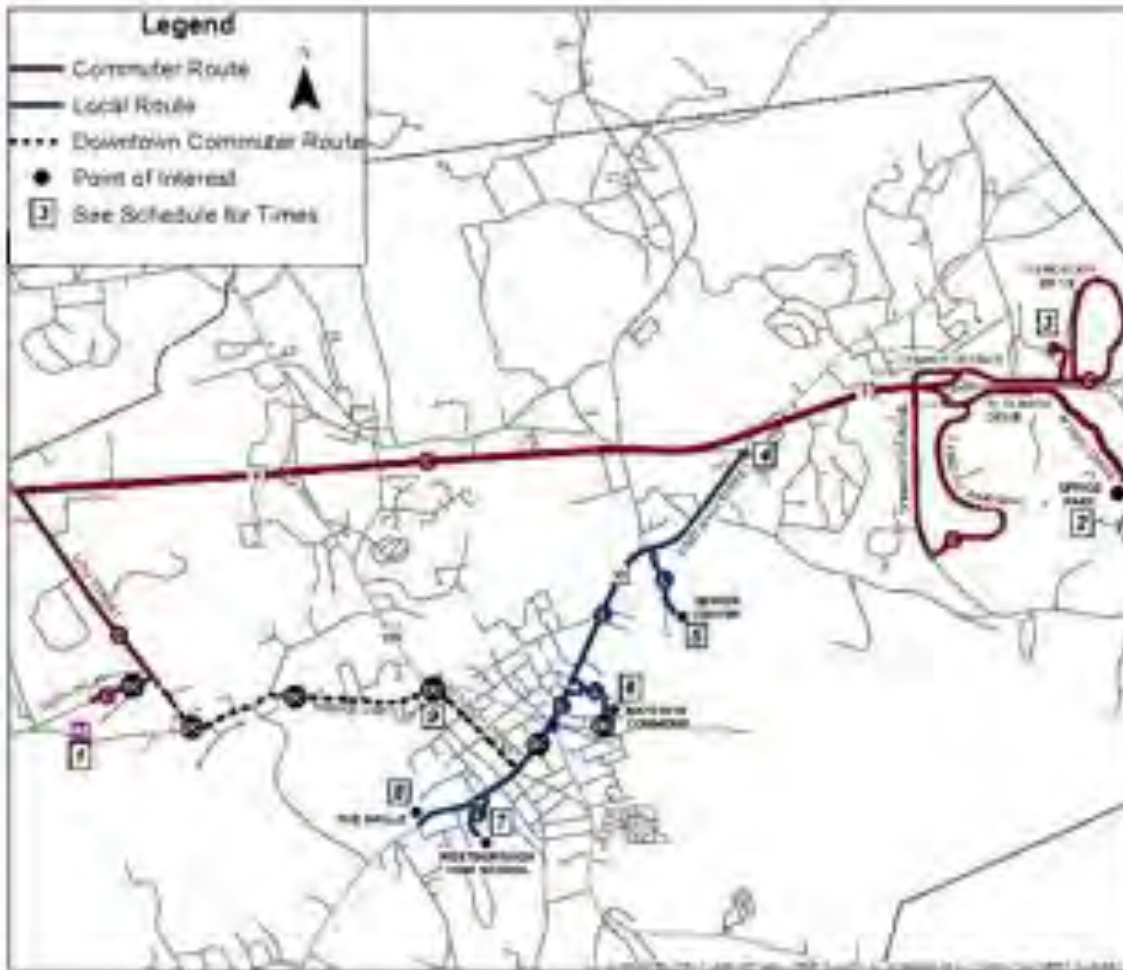
Westborough is a member of the Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) and as such sits on the agency's Advisory Board and contributes to its annual operating budget. In exchange, WRTA operates service within Westborough.



### *Westborough Shuttle*

The Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) operates a weekday only shuttle service that serves many of the primary commercial areas of Westborough. Full adult fare on the shuttle costs \$1.50 with a reduced fare of \$0.75 for seniors and people with disabilities with ID. The shuttle operates three distinct services: commuter service, downtown commuter service and the local route.

The *Commuter Route* provides direct, limited stop service from the Westborough commuter rail station to the Computer/Research Drive Office Park area using Otis Street and Route 9. Trips via this routing are provided with one morning trip, one midday trip and two evening trips. The bus stops at designated bus stops only and will not stop for flag down service.



The Downtown Commuter Route provides direct, limited stop service from Bay State Commons via East and West Main Streets, Church Street, and Fisher Street to the Westborough MBTA commuter rail station. Trips via this routing are provided with two morning trips and one evening trip. Passengers may board the shuttle during the morning and afternoon trips at Bay State Commons, the corner of West Main Street and Church Streets or the Westborough MBTA commuter rail station. The bus will only stop at designated stop locations.

The third service provided by WRTA is the *Local Route* which operates between the Route 30 McDonalds and The Grille at the Westborough Country Club along East and West Main Streets. Other destinations along this routing include Bay State Commons, Westborough Senior Center, Westborough High School, Westborough Town Hall, the Westborough Library, and the Westborough Post Office. These trips are provided during the day when commuter trips are not provided. During this period, passengers may “flag down” the bus along any portion of the route that allows the bus to safely pull over for pick up or drop off.

Service of this route operates on weekdays only between 6:35 AM and 7:05 PM. Shuttle runs are coordinated with specific morning, midday and evening commuter rail trains.

Recommendation: Westborough is a member of the WRTA and therefore, has an opportunity to advise the transit agency on the community’s unmet transportation needs. Should the town feel

that the needs are greater than the services provided, the Town can increase its WRTA contribution and request additional service or can ask that the WRTA review the existing service to ensure it is being provided effectively. It is recognized that the Town's resources are limited, but nevertheless the town should initiate regular discussions with WRTA. The Town should also encourage WRTA to promote pilot programs in Westborough which could provide additional services for the community.

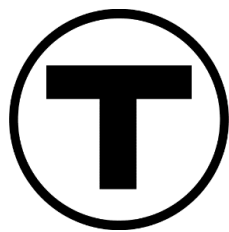
#### Metrowest Regional Transit Authority

The Metrowest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA) is a neighboring transit authority who as previously noted has in the past provided service in Westborough. By providing connections to the MWRTA system, Westborough seniors and other residents could access locations throughout the MWRTA's 15 community service area including: Ashland, Dover, Framingham, Holliston, Hopkinton, Hudson, Marlborough, Milford, Natick, Sherborn, Southborough, Sudbury, Wayland, Wellesley, and Weston.



Recommendation: Working in coordination with the WRTA, Westborough could consider options to make connections with MWRTA, which would allow residents to access activities in the Metrowest service area including Route 9 shopping activities like Shoppers World and the Natick Collection. Options could include timed transfers from COA vans or WRTA operated services to MWRTA vehicles. The Park and Ride lot in 1672 Worcester Road in Framingham is an existing transfer location for MWRTA vehicles. Implementing a recommendation like this is cost effective as the COA would provide only a limited trip length before passengers would transfer to the MWRTA system.

#### Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority Commuter Rail Service



The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) has a commuter rail stop in Westborough which provides quick and direct daily service to between Westborough and Worcester to the west and Boston to the east along with stops to locations in between. Service is provided seven days a week over a long span of service. Discussions with the COA indicated that it is challenging to find volunteers to provide transportation to medical appointments at Boston area hospitals. The COA could potentially use escorts for seniors to take commuter rail into Boston area hospitals rather than rely on personal automobiles.

Recommendation: Westborough should leverage the commuter rail system to provide access to destinations outside of Westborough including communities between Worcester and Boston. A commuter rail fund could be identified to pay for patients and escorts to use commuter rail for these trips.

#### Medical Transportation for MassHealth Members

The Westborough COA indicated a need for medical transportation to Boston area hospitals. If the patient is insured through MassHealth, they may be eligible for free medical transportation services. Patients should consult their doctors to determine if they are eligible for this service.



Recommendation: When patients request medical transportation from the COA, the scheduler should notify the patient regarding the MassHealth's PT1 program and if applicable should work with the patient to enroll. Additional information is available through Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Resources.

Regional COA Transportation/Northborough Senior Center Transportation

The Northborough Council on Aging provides service to Marlborough, Westborough, Shrewsbury, Worcester, Boylston, Northborough and Southborough on weekdays. In 2016, Northborough provided 209 trips to Westborough.

The FY16 monthly ridership attributable to Westborough is:

Jul 15	20
Aug 15	11
Sep 15	18
Oct 15	12
Nov 15	16
Dec 15	13
Jan 16	14
Feb 16	12
Mar 16	28
Apr 16	14
May 16	27
<u>Jun 16</u>	<u>24</u>
FY 16 Total	209

Recommendation: Neighboring COAs such as the Northborough COA provide regional service to their residents. Westborough could consider expansion of the boundaries of its existing system or could partner with other COAs to provide a regional network which would expand opportunities for all. Westborough COA should explore this option to determine if coordination or centralized dispatching of services between agencies makes sense.

Consolidation of Westborough Public and Private Transportation Services

In addition to publically funded transportation services, often times private businesses such as senior housing facilities, nursing homes and commercial locations operate shuttle services. Westborough should survey businesses to determine if shuttles exist in the community and if they do explore if consolidating with the COA operated services would increase the overall system efficiency. The COA could operate trips to private businesses and the businesses could pay the COA for the service.

Recommendation: The COA should meet with private shuttle operators to determine if services could be combined to operate more efficiently providing all users with more options.

## Volunteer Transportation Services

The Westborough Council on Aging utilizes a pool of volunteer drivers to provide predominantly medical transportation. The COA noted that with the exception of Boston area medical trips, they had a large and dependable group of volunteers. The Westborough COA could expand the use of volunteer drivers to include grocery shopping or other trips.

Recommendation: Westborough COA should review its volunteer roster to determine if there are enough volunteers to expand the program to provide additional services. If there are not enough volunteers to provide transportation for purposes beyond medical transportation, the COA should consider a volunteer recruitment drive through local churches, synagogues or charity organizations. If there is additional volunteer driver capacity with existing drivers, the COA should consider expanding the use of volunteer drivers.

## Taxi Services

Westborough has taxi services which can provide seniors with additional transportation options. As taxi service can be expensive, it is noted that some companies have a minimum are of as much as \$20, the COA could consider requesting a waiver of the minimum trip rate for seniors. The flexibility of using taxis is ideal for many seniors and could provide an option for those looking for door to door service and flexibility of hours of operation.



Recommendation: Westborough and the COA should convene a meeting with taxi companies serving the community to determine if the companies would be willing to provide a senior fare. The COA could further consider supplementing taxi fares through a voucher program funded through the Town or through the Friends fund-raising activities.

## Zip Car



An alternative transportation option for the Westborough residents is implementation of a Zip Car pod. Zip Car is a car-sharing service in which members pay an annual fee for the ability to access to a fleet of cars. Zip car pods can be installed upon negotiation with Zip Car. Pods are typically no less than 2 cars and locations are negotiated based on a mutually beneficial site. Areas with high density and populations with limited access to cars are the areas that have the best success rate for Zip Car pods. Discussions with Zip Car representatives have stated that senior communities have been successful locations for Zip Cars as retiree households may reduce their number of cars or in some cases get rid of their car altogether. Innovative uses of Zip Cars, for example, as company fleets, can support the installation of a pod reducing the number of residents needed to support a pod. The Town of Westborough could consider using a Zip Cars for certain functions as opposed to city owned

vehicles or could partner with local businesses or the Chamber of Commerce to build usage and improve the likelihood of a successful implementation.

Recommendation: The Town of Westborough should contact Zip Car to determine if Westborough meets the organizations thresholds for implementing a new Zip Car pod. In areas of high usage, towns, such as Newton, have required Zip Car to pay for the use of a City owned parking space. In other lower demand locations, the spots have been provided at no charge. Westborough should identify areas with potential demand for car sharing services such as the office park or large retail or housing locations.

Contact information for setting up a Zip Cars service:



### Uber and Lyft

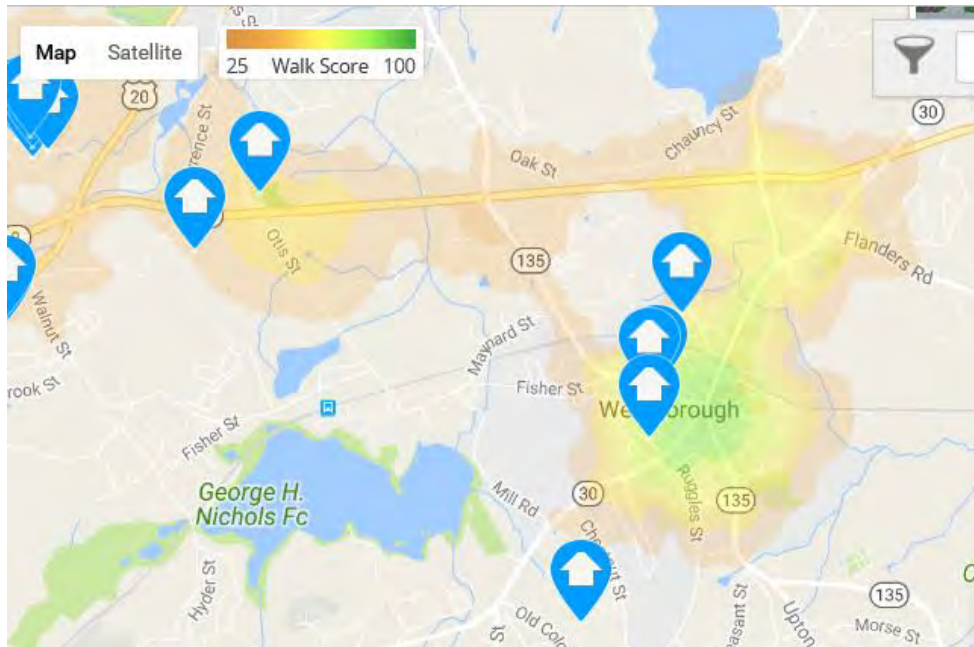
Uber and Lyft are two ride hailing services that provide door to door transportation. Drivers for these services are independent contractors who pass company security checks and use their own vehicles. Costs for these services are typically less expensive than taxi cabs and payment is through credit linked accounts so no cash is handled in the transaction. To utilize these services, people must set up an individual account on either the Uber or Lyft websites. It is possible to subsidize trips through organizations so if Westborough wanted to set up an account to defray expenses for seniors they could offer to pay for services or provide a coupon code. While both of these companies emphasize communication through phone apps, both agencies have options for users who do not have smart phones.

Recommendation: Ride hailing services could be a great opportunity to provide increased mobility for Westborough seniors. The COA could host classes for seniors regarding how to use ride hailing services. Both Uber and Lyft have in the past worked with agencies to provide a promotional credit for people who wish to try the service. Use of such an incentive takes can encourage people to try the service.

### Walking Promotion

One of the best ways for seniors to stay healthy is to remain physically active. The COA could introduce a healthy walking program. Promotional items such as pedometers, water bottles or tee shirts could be given to participants to incentivize seniors to walk. Drawings for prizes or a weight loss competition could be a part of the promotion. Seniors can also use programs like walkscore.com to identify areas in their community that have high walkability – the ability to walk to various locations to serve life needs such as grocery stores, entertainment centers and

other facilities. Tools such as this can be helpful if a senior no longer drives and is seeking a housing opportunity in which they can walk to various needs.



Recommendation: Walking provides independence for seniors who no longer drive. Depending on location, some areas of Westborough provide opportunities for seniors to meet their daily needs independently on foot. Other locations are more remote or lack good pedestrian infrastructure and require additional transportation options. The COA should educate seniors who are considering moving to or within Marlborough the advantages and walkability of various locations in town and the impact that can have on senior independence.

## Summary

Most of the proposals in this memo can be achieved with no or low cost to the Town. Additional town funding could become available if the COA shifts capital costs for vehicles to existing grant programs. In previous years, the Town has generously budgeted funds for the purchase of a new COA van. Should the COA participate in MassDOT's Mobility Assistance Program (MAP program), the COA may be able to receive a vehicle at no cost to the Town or agency if they apply through the Worcester Regional Transit Authority. If the Town would prefer to apply directly to MassDOT for the vehicle, the Town must provide 20% of the cost of the vehicle. As the Town and WRTA would be subject to the same federally prescribed oversight, there does not appear to be an advantage to the Town requesting the vehicle and it is recommended that Westborough request the vehicle through the Worcester Regional Transit Authority.

If the Town were to receive a COA van through this program, the funding designated for the purchase of a van could be used to provide for other transportation options including potential subsidies for taxis, Uber or Lyft. These services may augment existing services or may be used for services during periods in which service is not currently provide by the COA.

The Town could also apply for a grant to provide funding for operations. There are a wide variety of programs for which the Town or COA could apply including Community Transportation Grant Programs sponsored by MassDOT, Metrowest Health Foundation and the Tufts Health Foundation. Each of these organizations have funded senior mobility initiatives in Massachusetts.

Mobility is central to the well-being of Westborough's seniors and results in improved quality of life. By providing additional transportation services, seniors will be able to more fully enjoy all of the benefits that Westborough offers.

## **Memo 2 - Identification of training and educational opportunities for older drivers and their families**

The Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) reveals that statistically crash rates for senior drivers are relatively low due to self-regulation. Seniors self-regulate driving by restricting driving to daylight hours, avoiding rush hour traffic, staying home during inclement weather and driving less overall. The Massachusetts RMV also requires in person renewals for individuals 75 years or older to ensure that the driver can pass a vision test.

In addition to physical well-being, training and educational opportunities can also prolong an individuals' ability to continue to operate an automobile safely. The Westborough Council on Aging currently maintains a unique and beneficial relationship with the Westborough Police Department. Police work in conjunction with COA staff to identify seniors who may be losing their driving skills. Police can test seniors to determine if they are still safe drivers.

In addition, to external evaluations, seniors can also conduct self-evaluations by answering questions regarding their driving skills.

Questions include:

- Do you have difficulty seeing clearly in the dusk and dark?
- Do headlights from other vehicles obstruct your sight?
- Are you easily intimidated by passing vehicles including trucks and motorcycles?
- Do you have difficulty reading road signs?
- Do you have difficulty following construction detours or seeing the police officer on detail near construction zones?
- Do you have difficulty seeing train crossing signals or hearing train whistles?
- Do you have difficulty keeping up with the posted speed limit?
- Do you get drowsy behind the wheel or have difficulty concentrating?
- Do you have difficulty hearing other vehicles?
- Do you often get lost on once familiar roads?
- Do you forgot the basics such as putting on your headlights and wearing a seatbelt?
- Are you unsure of your parking skills?
- Can you parallel park and park in a straight line?
- Are you unsure of your reflexes and reaction time?
- Is it difficult to react quickly in certain situations, e.g. braking to avoid a collision?
- Have family, friends or even police officers told you that you aren't a safe driver?

If a senior answers yes to several of these questions they should consider driving less or not at all. A copy of the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles Safe Driver Checklist is included in Appendix A of this report. This document would make an excellent handout for the COA or for inclusion in the COA's senior newsletter so that seniors can complete conduct a discrete self-examination of their driving abilities.

## Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles

The Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles offers free Mature Driver Training for Drivers 50 and older. The presentation is provided at no cost to the host or participants. The COA should consider holding the training during a popular time at the center to ensure the highest participation rates possible.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the COA schedule a mature driver presentation for drivers 50 and older by the RMV to provide this information to the membership. This provides a good opportunity to expand programming at the senior center while providing valuable health and safety information for participants.

In addition to State sponsored RMV programs, there are additional senior driver training programs throughout the state. Three programs are located within 15 miles of Westborough including:

### **American Automobile Association - AAA Senior Driving Program**

Information available at <http://seniordriving.aaa.com> or by contacting your local AAA

#### AAA Marlborough

RK Centre  
197 Boston Post Road  
Marlborough, MA 01752

508 303-2400

#### AAA Framingham

653 Worcester Road  
Framingham, MA 01701

508 875-2000

### **American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)**

The AARP offers both online and classroom based Smart Driver Courses. The Westborough COA regularly offers these classes with the next class being offered in May 2017. The course focuses on safety issues such as using turn signals and seatbelts as well as on the road issues such as dealing with roundabouts.

### **Drivers Education Options**

Another option for Westborough Seniors is to take a driver's education class. The Westborough COA could either maintain a listing of area driver's education courses without endorsing a specific course or could hire an educator to provide classroom or on-road expertise. Participants could be asked to pay a fee to cover the costs of training at the center.

## **Driver Evaluation Programs**

In addition to driver's education programs, there are also driver evaluation programs. There are two driver evaluation programs located within 30 miles of Westborough. These programs can assist a person in determining their safety as a driver and make recommendations about ways to improve driving or whether it is time for the individual to give up their license. Costs for the programs can be more than \$200 per person however can be a good way to evaluate a person's skill level in operating a car.

Two area evaluators are:

Fairlawn Rehabilitation Hospital  
189 May Street  
Worcester, MA 01602

508 791-6351

Newton Wellesley Hospital  
159 Wells Avenue  
Newton, MA 02459

617 243-6172

The Massachusetts RMV has staff available for responding to your questions regarding aging and driving. Contact information for his group is:

Massachusetts RMV Medical Affairs Bureau  
PO BOX 5589  
Boston, MA 02205-5889  
[www.massrmv.com](http://www.massrmv.com)  
857 368-8020

It should be noted that the recommendations in the following memo provide ideas for supporting the transition of drivers to life without a driver's license. These ideas should be incorporated prior to the loss of a license as the loss is much less traumatic to an individual if it occurs over a period of time allowing the individual time to develop solutions for his or her transportation needs. The abrupt loss of a license can cause unnecessary stress on a senior. To assist in the transition, the senior center should encourage aging drivers to participate in group trips and the use medical transportation services as well as other transportation opportunities to expose the individual and build comfort with alternative modes while driving oneself is still an option. As the driver becomes more secure with alternative transportation mode they may rely on them to a greater extent even if they still retain a driver's license.



## **Memo 3 - Recommendations for supporting older drivers' transition to life without a license**

One of the goals of the Westborough Senior Transportation Study is to provide recommendations to assist seniors transitioning to life without a driver's license. The following recommendations create additional resources for seniors who are seeking alternatives to driving themselves while still remaining independent and not relying on volunteer assistance. Best of all, each of these recommendations are low cost and can be implemented with existing staff and resources.

- Identifying and Training a Transitional Transportation Agent
- Implementing a travel training program
- Creating Transportation Go Kits
- Conducting Car Free Living Programming

### **Transitional Transportation Agent**

The COA should designate a Transitional Transportation Agent (TTA) to assist individuals losing their licenses in reviewing options available to them. The TTA would provide one on one discussions with individuals to formulate a network of transportation options.

The advantage of designating an individual to the role of TTA is that they will become experts in the services available to Westborough Seniors and will be able to work with seniors in a trusted environment to assess the best match for the individual taking into consideration those aspects that may have contributed to the license being taken away - for example mental or physical limitations.

### **Travel Training Program**

Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) offers a no-cost program to assist seniors in navigating public transit services. Savvy travelers may be able to use multiple modes to reach their destinations expanding the locations they can go exponentially. For example, a traveler could use the Westborough shuttle to access the MBTA commuter rail to travel to Boston area locations. WRTA staff will work with the COA to provide group or one on one training. If physical or mental constraints restrict a passenger from using fixed route bus services, the WRTA staff will assist the individual in becoming ADA certified which if the person meets eligibility standards will provide door to door transportation services.

### **Go Kits**

The Westborough Council on Aging should prepare Go Kits for individuals losing their licenses. These kits could be prepared and distributed in partnership with the Registry of Motor Vehicles, the Town of Westborough, the Worcester Regional Transit Authority and other trusted partners. The Go Kits would provide the recipient with information regarding transportation options available to them and could include items such as the following:

- Information regarding WRTA's travel training program which provides no-cost one on one training for individuals as to how to ride public transportation
- Voucher for taxi/Lyft or Uber service - this voucher would incentivize individuals who may be unfamiliar with taxi/Lyft/Uber services offered in Westboro. Providing a free voucher can incentivize a user to become familiar with the service.
- Volunteer match information – The Westborough COA can connect individuals losing a license with a volunteer to drive the person for specific needs such as grocery shopping or medical transportation.
- Support materials and guidance on the use of Westborough senior center shuttle
- Bus schedules for local bus services and commuter rail service into Boston.
- Eligibility information regarding Worcester Ride Service.

Funding for the Go Kits could be provided through the Town, the Friends group or through local sponsorship.

### **Car Free Living Class**

If an individual has access to a computer, there are any things that a person can do without leaving their home. The Westborough COA could offer a class for seniors on things that you can do without a car. Topics covered could include information on:

- on-line banking services including paying bills,
- ordering home delivery of postage through the United States Postal Service,
- grocery shopping through services like Peapod,
- on-line shopping,
- Skype and other social media outlets.

One of the benefits of the COA hosting a Car Free Living Class is the ability to discuss consumer fraud and scams with seniors. This forum provides a unique opportunity to discuss ways that seniors can protect themselves from internet scams and fraud while providing flexibility and acknowledgement that not every trip requires leaving your home.

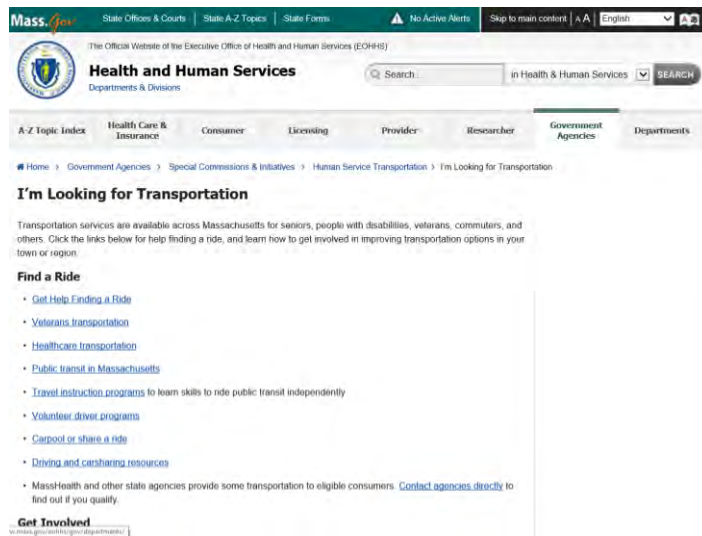
Seniors should also be encouraged to discover transportation options on their own. Additional information regarding transportation options for seniors should be provided so that seniors can review the options and make decisions for themselves which best fit their needs. A few outlets for senior transportation information include:

[www.800ageinfo.com](http://www.800ageinfo.com)

The website is maintained by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs and while the agency does not endorse any of the services included on the site, it does provide information for consumers trying to understand the environment of elder services.

Similarly the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Resources sponsors the MassMobility resource list at [www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/commissions-and-initiatives/hst/for-consumers.html](http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/commissions-and-initiatives/hst/for-consumers.html). The website assists consumers in finding transportation and provides a curated list of links to help people with various needs.

A screenshot of the website is shown below:



Veterans can find additional options at: [www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/commissions-and-initiatives/hst/for-veterans.html](http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/commissions-and-initiatives/hst/for-veterans.html).

Finding the optimal transportation solution for each individual requires the COA to work with the senior to determine their level of comfort while still allowing the senior to make decisions for themselves. It is the goal of this document to provide options while ultimately leaving the senior in charge of their own transportation decisions.

## **Memo 4 Provide recommendations to support transportation and access in areas of town densely populated by senior housing and destinations**

While the Town of Westborough has a number of transportation options currently available, there is still a desire to support better linkages between dense residential communities and areas with high commercial activity such as downtown Westborough, Westborough Shopping Center and Bay Sate Commons. The following memo provides a variety of ways in which the Town and COA can expand transportation to dense development and future dense development by a review existing programs as well as outreach to businesses and organizations and finally through the development regulatory process.

### **Existing/Expanded Worcester Regional Transit Authority**

The Town of Westborough is a member community of the Worcester Regional Transit Authority. As such, the Town can lobby WRTA for the provision of additional services including shuttle or fixed route services. Often times, if a Town requests a new service they are assessed a portion of the cost of the service with the remaining balance coming from state or federal sources. If a Town is interested in a new service they can also apply for an operating grant which if successful can cover the initial cost of service for a period of up to three years. This can give the community a chance to try out the service to see if it meets the Towns' and RTA's expectations. MassDOT's Community Transportation Grant Program is one source of funding that could be tapped to fund a new service.

### **Existing/Expanded COA Transportation**

An additional method of accomplishing the goal of increased transportation services is through expansion of the COA's existing shuttle and driver. Costs associated with this service would be limited as the COA would use existing vehicles, limited to hours in which the vehicle are not currently in use with the only additional costs being fuel and hourly wages for the driver. This could be an opportunity to tap participants in Westborough's tax abatement program to accommodate other COA staffing needs and transition some paid COA positions into including driving as a function of the job. Due to existing staffing, this may be something that is transitioned over time as employees leave and are filled with new employees.

The COA could also revise its existing hours of operation to cut transportation from existing lightly attended programs and instead provide service directly from senior housing areas to commercial properties or other high demand locations.

### **Charitable Organizations**

If the Town would like to expand the budget for the senior transportation but does not have the financial ability to expand the agency's budget, they could solicit local charitable groups to take on senior transportation services as a mission. Local organizations including churches, synagogues and community groups could be approached to consider supporting this community based initiative.

## **Partnering with Senior Housing or Commercial Facilities**

Westborough could work with senior housing facilities and commercial areas to offer transportation services to residents or customers. This is typically a hard solicitation unless the housing facility currently has a transportation service budget. If a facility does have a transportation program, there may be opportunities to partner to build a more robust system. Some businesses, such as Target, Walmart, Roche Brothers and Market Basket, have charitable foundations which could be used to fund services projects in the community. Traditionally these programs are limited in terms of what they fund and the level of financial support.

The COA could also have a business sponsor the senior transportation program through selling interior or exterior advertising on the bus or through ads placed in the COA newsletter.

## **Impact Fees**

Westborough could consider assessing an impact fee to new businesses and housing developments to support transportation. This is not a short term suggestion, but rather a big picture, long term decision about who should pay for services in Westborough. Westborough should consider the best ways to balance growth and quality of life within the community. Impact fees could be a one-time expenditure for something like a bus shelter or could be an annual assessment for operating funds. While this may not be the ultimate decision that Town planners choose, it should be a consideration as the Town weighs its funding options.

## **Memo 5 – Senior Transportation Funding opportunities**

The Town of Westborough has many competing needs and so for this reason should explore opportunities to deploy existing resources in a strategic way which will leverage the most return for the community as well as pursuing alternative funding sources which have not yet been tapped. The following are suggestions for leveraging additional transportation funding for the community through grant programs currently untapped by the Westborough.

### Metrowest Community Health Foundation Grant Program

The Metrowest Community Health Foundation (MCHF) is a private non-profit foundation with a mission to improve the health status of the community its individuals, and families through informed and innovative leadership. The Foundation supports community driven programs to encourage and foster leadership on key health care issues. The Foundation offers a semiannual grant program in the spring and fall of each year. Since its inception in 1999, the Foundation has given out more than \$50 Million in health related grants in the Metrowest area and presently awards approximately \$5 million annually. Twenty-five cities and towns eligible for the funding including:

Ashland, Bellingham, Dover, Framingham, Franklin, Hollis, Hopedale, Hopkinton, Hudson, Marlborough, Medfield, Medway, Mendon, Milford, Millis, Natick, Needham, Norfolk, Northborough, Sherborn, Southborough, Sudbury, Wayland, Wellesley and Westborough.

In the fall 2016, Westborough applied for funding through this grant to offset the cost of repairs for the Towns Senior Van however the project was not selected for funding. MCHF has other specific types of projects that are ineligible for funding such as:

- direct grants to individuals,
- endowments,
- fundraising drives/events,
- retirement of debt, operating deficits,
- projects which influence legislation,
- political activities or candidates for public office,
- programs customarily operated by hospitals,
- projects with no related health benefit to the 25 member communities of the Foundation,
- grants to organizations that are not tax exempt or instruments of state or local government.

The size of the grants recently awarded through the MCHF vary from a high of \$261,891 to the Natick Visiting Nurses Association to provide prescription assistance to the uninsured/underinsured to \$1750 to train RIA House staff in intervention techniques. Grants are awarded in the following priority areas:

- Adolescence Health
- Access to Care

- Healthy Aging
- Opioid Response Grants
- Responsive Grants
- Advocacy

While Westborough could request funding under several of these priority areas, senior transportation is easily linked to the healthy aging priority which supports projects which reduce social isolation, falls and the impact of chronic disease as well as caregiver support. According to the Metrowest Commission on Healthy Aging Report, the number of residents in the Metrowest region age 65 and older is expected to increase by 50 percent over the next 20 years so the need for these types of projects will continue to grow.

Westborough should identify a need that is eligible for these funds and pursue an application with the spring funding session. The process for applying for the grant includes typically includes attending a bidder's conference to discuss the process, optional attendance at a grant writing class, review of proposal guidelines, development of a concept paper. If recommended, applicants can complete a grant application. A copy of the grant guidelines are included as an appendices to this document.

<http://www.mwhealth.org/What-We-Do/Grants-Scholarships>

#### Tufts Health Plan Foundation

Tufts Health Plan Foundation operates with a focus on building age friendly communities. The Foundation believes that age friendly communities are essential if “society is to remain relevant and responsive to this growing population.” Since 2008, the Tufts Health Plan Foundation has given more than \$21 million to Massachusetts and Rhode Island nonprofits to improve healthy living with an emphasis on older adults.

Tufts Health Plan Foundation accepts proposals twice a year. The process for “Systems and Best Practices” applications begins in January of each year and “Policy and Advocacy” applications begin in July of each year. A third type of grant - the “President’s Leadership Fund” may be applied for during either the January or July timeframe.

<http://www.tuftshealthplanfoundation.org/>

#### Community Transportation Grant Program

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation holds an annual grant program which in comprised of a number of programs including the Mobility Assistance Program (MAP) which provides transit vehicles to agencies for the provision of transportation services to the elderly and people with disabilities. (See Below). In addition to the vehicle program, MassDOT also funds other capital and operating projects. One type of project that MassDOT has funded in previous rounds of funding is medical transportation to areas outside the applicant’s service area.

Discussions with the Westborough COA Director indicate that one of the agency’s unmet needs is long distance transportation specifically for medical appointments in the Boston area. The

COA could apply for funding through the Community Transportation Program to provide these services. Funding could be used for regularly scheduled trips - i.e. Monday, Wednesday and Friday or for door to door service through a voucher program.

Other items that could be applied through include computers, printing and marketing materials, training programs and funding for various other needs.

### The Mobility Assistance Program (MAP)

The MAP program is a process by which MassDOT distributes federal funding to transit authorities and non-profits for the purpose of purchasing vehicles for use in the transportation of the elderly and people with disabilities. The funding is derived from a combination of federal and state funding sources. The federal funding comes from the federal Section 5310 funding and is required to be matched at an 80 federal to 20 local ratio.

Many Councils of Aging use this program to acquire vehicles for their communities. Most of the COAs apply for the vehicles through their local regional transit authority as that process allows the COA to receive matching funds through the RTA resulting in no cost to the COA.

The constraints of the vehicles program are:

- The COA is restricted to the models available through the program although limited customization is available at the agency's expense.
- The COA is required to abide by regulations associated with receipt of the federally funded vehicles which include:
  - Drug testing of personnel in safety sensitive positions. The purpose of this regulation is to ensure safety for the passengers.
  - Monthly reporting of vehicle use - Reporting of the vehicle use is used by the Federal Government to determine the level of funding which will be provided to the region.
- Receipt of a vehicle through the mobility assistance program can take as long as 18 months. The application is submitted in January/February with funding notification by July 1. Vehicles are ordered and received by June 30<sup>th</sup> of the following year.

Advantages:

- Limited customization can occur if the COA is willing to pay for the changes.
- Strengthens the relationship between the COA and RTA.
- Depending on RTA districts, RTA can provide "loaner" vans during periods in which active vehicle is not in use - such as during maintenance and repairs.
- Some RTAs can provide assistance with maintenance or operating costs.
- Vehicles received through the program have an estimated value of \$50K to \$90K depending on the model and fuel choice.

<http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/transit/CommunityTransitGrantProgram.aspx>



### Transportation Training Opportunities

It should be noted that a wide variety of training for COAs transportation programs are available through the Rural Transportation Assistance Program (RTAP) at no cost to the provider. COAs can monitor upcoming training for themselves or can receive notices of training by registering with RTAP or MassDOT.

### MARTAP Helping Hands Mini Grant Program

The Helping Hands Mini Grant program provides an annual funding opportunity for small grants to COAs not to exceed \$1000. The funding is limited to a number of specific uses but several relevant uses outlined in this document would be eligible for this funding source including developing marketing materials including senior Go Kits which provide information on a variety of transportation options. Additional information may be found at:

<http://www.martap.org/helping-hand-mini-grant.html>

In addition to the grant program, MARTAP provides training opportunities as well as scholarships for individuals to attend conferences and training sessions.

### Senior and Veterans Property Tax Work Program

The Town of Westborough could expand its transportation offerings by promoting its Senior and Veterans Property Tax Work Program which allows seniors over the age of 60 and Veterans of any age to receive a credit on their tax bills of \$1000 by volunteering 125 hours in the community. The Town could direct volunteers to serve in transportation related activities including driving the COA's vehicles to provide additional hours of operations or acting as escorts for individuals including to medical appointments in the Boston area. While the volunteer property tax work program results in a small loss in revenue to the town, it could potentially provide an economical way to boost services transportation for seniors in Westborough.










[http://www.town.westborough.ma.us/Public\\_Documents/WestboroughMA\\_BComm/taxaid](http://www.town.westborough.ma.us/Public_Documents/WestboroughMA_BComm/taxaid)

## **Appendix A – Massachusetts RMV Safe Driver Checklist**

# Safe Driver Checklist

Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles  
PO Box 55889, Boston MA 02205-5889  
857-368-8000  
[www.massrmv.com](http://www.massrmv.com)



-  Do you have difficulty seeing clearly in the dusk and dark?
-  Do headlights from other vehicles obstruct your sight?
-  Are you easily intimidated by passing vehicles including trucks and motorcycles?
-  Do you have difficulty reading road signs?
-  Do you have difficulty following construction detours or seeing the police officer on detail near construction zones?
-  Do you have difficulty seeing train crossing signals or hearing train whistles?
-  Do you have difficulty keeping up with the posted speed limit?
-  Do you get drowsy behind the wheel or have difficulty concentrating?
-  Do you have difficulty hearing other vehicles?






*(-over-)*

This is a portion of the RMV's Safe Driving for Elders program,  
a free one-hour presentation for drivers 50 and older.

# Safe Driver Checklist

(continued)



-  Do you often get lost on once familiar roads?
-  Do you forget the basics, such as putting on your headlights and wearing a seat belt?
-  Are you unsure of your parking skills? Can you parallel park and park in a straight line?
-  Are you unsure of your reflexes and reaction time? Is it difficult to react quickly in certain situations, e.g. braking to avoid a collision?
-  Have your family, friends, or even police officers told you that you aren't a safe driver?

*If you find yourself answering yes to many of these questions, you may want to consider driving less, or not driving at all. Drivers who voluntarily surrender their licenses are eligible for a free Massachusetts I.D. For more information, contact the Registry of Motor Vehicles at 857-368-8000 or 800-858-3926*

For More Information...  
visit <http://www.massrmv.com/rmv/medical>  
for details on the physical qualifications of operating  
a motor vehicle safely.



**Appendix B – Sample Grant Program Applications**

## **Appendix C – Mobility Assistance Program Accessible Vehicle Guide**

The following document provides an overview of the types of vehicles available through the MassDOT sponsored grant program. Funding for the program is provided by the Federal Transit Administration's Section 5310 Elderly and People with Disabilities program which seeks to provide resources, both operating or capital, for the transportation needs of the elderly and disabled. When applied for through a regional transit authority, the funding is eligible for state matching funds through the "Mobility Assistance Program" which can result in a project which is paid for 100% by grant funds. The combined Federal and State funding program is generally referred to as the Mobility Assistance Program (MAP).

The types of vehicles offered through the MAP program have changed over the years to reflect requests from applicants. Available vehicles include wheel-chair accessible mini-vans which are economical to operate and nimble to navigate on city streets and in parking lots, as well as larger vehicles some of which require drivers to have a Commercial Driver's License (CDL). While the COA currently has vehicles which require drivers to have CDL certification, the agency should consider future that if they had vehicles which did not require specialized licensing they would be able to recruit drivers more easily. Discussions with the COA Director indicate that recruiting drivers is not a problem for the COA.