

November __, 2021

To: Sudbury Select Board, Town Manager Henry Hayes

From: Sudbury Transportation Committee

RE: Transportation Committee ARPA Funds Request

The Sudbury Transportation Committee (the “Committee”) membership includes Town Planning, Senior Center, Council on Aging, Board of Health Social Worker, and Commission on **Disabilities**, among other stakeholders. Because of the relevance of ARPA funds to individuals the latter members represent, we appreciate the Select Board’s interest in asking for our ideas about the town’s use of state allocated American Rescue Plan Act (“ARPA”) funds.

The Committee seeks resources for transportation services that address the top two goals of ARPA funding: (1) supporting public health, and (2) addressing COVID-19 economic impacts. Each is summarized below.

1. Supporting Public Health

Transportation to Healthcare Services. Transportation to healthcare services is a key factor in supporting public health. Data from the Town needs assessment revealed that more than a third of Sudbury residents with a disability “had missed, canceled, or rescheduled a medical appointment due to lack of transportation;” and, more than a third of residents who are not financially secure have trouble with access to physical and mental health resources.¹

Reducing Social Isolation. Transportation is also a key factor in reducing social isolation (a public health issue) related to the COVID pandemic. ARPA assistance is explicitly focused on “...prevention and mitigation activities related to COVID–19 focused on addressing extended social isolation among older individuals [and]... alleviating negative health effects of social isolation ...”

MAPC taxi grants to Sudbury over the past 12 months subsidized transportation for the most at-risk: older residents, of whom nearly half also had a permanent or temporary disability and financial need. Nearly three-quarters of all rides during the first grant were to healthcare appointments; all rides are to healthcare appointments during the second grant.

The Committee’s experience with these grants illustrated that helping older residents with transportation also helped reduce social isolation. As one rider commented: “I was very happy for the service. It was offered at a difficult time in my life when no one was around to help me out... Thank you for this taxi service. It was a life saver in my case.”

We are concerned that, when the second grant ends in December 2021, public health may be jeopardized, because of both difficulties of transportation to healthcare services and the prevalence of social isolation.

2. Addressing COVID-19 Economic Impacts

Access to transportation affects access to housing, employment, education/training, and child care, particularly for financially vulnerable residents. In Sudbury, COVID-19 economic impacts have been most severe for the following residents:

- 4.4%, 4.1%, and 2.8% of households are extremely low, very low, and low income, respectively (11.3 percent of all households qualify for federal and state affordable housing programs based on household income)
- 23 percent and 9.1 percent of households are cost burdened and severely cost burdened, respectively
- cost burden among elderly family households is 30%
- 20% of renters are cost burdened, as are 23% of owners.ⁱⁱ

For these residents, particularly, affordable transportation is vital.

Areas for Requested Funding

The Town now has a calendar year's experience with transportation pilots focused on four groups of Sudbury residents most at risk from effects of the pandemic: older individuals, those with a disability precluding driving, financially vulnerable individuals, and veterans. To date:

- Nearly 200 people registered for GoSudbury (9/20-9/21); of these (multiple categories apply):
 - 53% Age 50+
 - 47% taxi riders with disability
 - 29% Uber riders with disability
 - 25% financially vulnerable
- More than 2,000 rides provided by taxis and Uber
 - Healthcare/social services (dialysis, therapy, etc.)
 - Shopping (grocery, Rx, etc.)
 - Community resources (Town Meeting, etc.)
 - Work.

In order to bridge the gap between termination of soft funding (grants, mitigation money) and sustained provision of services by the Town, we seek the following ARPA funding:

- Dial-A-Ride Extension (do we need explanation of what this is?)
 - \$\$\$??
- Taxi Rides – WAV vehicles/medical rides
 - \$\$\$??
- Mobility Transportation Company (like Annex)
 - \$\$\$??
- GoSudbury! Uber Program – keep people working, Childcare
 - \$\$\$??

For those we desire to help, the Committee thanks the Select Board and the Town Manager for approving this request.

ⁱ *Livable Sudbury: A Community Needs Assessment*; Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging Gerontology Institute, John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy & Global Studies, University of Massachusetts, Boston, January 2019.

ⁱⁱ MAPC report: <http://www.housing.ma/sudbury/report>

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