

## SUDBURY TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

Although the Covid-19 pandemic continued in 2021, the Sudbury Transportation Committee worked diligently to continue serving the neediest Sudbury residents. The Go Sudbury! Taxi Rides Program, started in 2020 with Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) grant money for those aged 50 or older, 18+ with a disability that limits driving, active-duty military, or military veterans, those with a financial need, or essential workers requiring transportation for work, continued in 2021. There were 211 rides provided in December 2020 and by mid-January over 140 but due to dwindling funding the Committee decided to limit rides to medical, dental, and therapy appointments as of February. The Committee reallocated \$5,000 from the upcoming Uber Rides Program to taxi rides and the Council on Aging offered another \$5,000 from the Meadow Walk mitigation funds for medical and vaccination related taxi rides. In addition, the Committee received \$5,000 in CARES Act funds from BayPath Elder Services.

In March the Committee had its first of two joint meetings with the Select Board to share lessons learned and challenges with transportation in Sudbury. They reported Sudbury was at a crucial stage; how to ensure a sustainable, effective, and efficient system of transportation for all residents? They reported that to date \$38,000 of MAPC grant money had been spent on the Go Sudbury! Taxi Rides Program, 82 people had registered, and 412 round trips had been provided including 43 in wheelchair accessible vans. 68% of rides were healthcare related, 22% for grocery shopping and 10% were for work and miscellaneous. The Committee also requested of the Select Board that plans be made to make transportation sustainable (i.e., not reliant on grant money) and that dedicated staff be considered as transportation services could not rely solely on grant money. A second round of MAPC funding totaling \$33,000 was granted and approved for usage, but not before the Committee had to temporarily pause the Taxi Rides Program. They were, however, able to launch the Go Sudbury! Uber Rides Program with a small number of pilot users. In March the Committee received this feedback from a rider of the Taxi program: "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. Everyone was wonderfully helpful, from Ana to Beth to all the drivers, including office dispatchers for the taxi companies. Thank you for this taxi service. It was a life saver in my case."

In May the second round of MAPC grant funds was allocated to Sudbury and three other partner towns, a dispatch service for the taxis was arranged through CrossTown Connect (CTC), and the Taxi Rides Program was restarted. The Uber Rides Program was also opened to a wider audience, after several months of beta testing with a small group of volunteer users. Communication of the programs was coordinated with the Senior Center, Town Social Worker, Commission on Disability, and Chamber of Commerce (a special thank you to Kay Bell from the Commission on Disability is in order for the summary document she created). Uber also began to offer free rides for vaccination appointments. Initial data for the Go Sudbury! Uber Rides Program was reviewed, and it showed that costs, at \$3 per mile, were significantly lower than the Taxi Rides Program and had an average wait time of 20-30

minutes. May and June Taxi rides totaled \$5,888 while Uber was \$2,211. The state of emergency in the Commonwealth was lifted in June and the MWRTA Dial-a-Ride paratransit service started back up.

In July, ridership for both the Taxi and Uber Rides Programs was strong. 129 Uber rides were provided, up from 93 in June. Taxi rides continued to average ~38 rides per month. Ridership patterns for Uber emerged and showed heavy usage up and down Route 20 between Marlborough, Sudbury, and Wayland. The Select Board also extended the Committee's Charter through the spring of 2022. State Representative Carmine Gentile met with the Committee in August to review possible transportation funding for Sudbury and the surrounding area. He described MA House #3903, a bill amending House #3852 for the purpose of financing improvements to municipal roads and bridges.

Analysis continued for both the Go Sudbury! Uber and Taxi Rides Programs in September. Data showed that approximately \$13,000 per month was being spent, most riders were aged 50+, and nearly 50% of riders had either temporary or permanent disabilities. Plans were made for a second presentation to the Select Board to take place on October 19<sup>th</sup>. At that meeting extensive program data was shared. Nearly 200 had registered for the Go Sudbury! Program, more than 2,000 rides to date had been provided, and approximately \$64,000 had been spent. Also reported was that the programs have borne out what was reported in the Town's 2019 Livable Sudbury Community Needs Assessment – that transportation options are crucial to Sudbury residents. The Select Board tasked the Committee to craft a transportation planning proposal for consideration by the Board, and what possible funding might look like.

November saw the Committee request from the Council on Aging another \$35,000 of Meadow Walk mitigation funding to continue the Go Sudbury! Programs. The Council graciously agreed, and the Select Board approved the usage of said funds. The Committee also sent a letter to the Select Board and Town Manager to request a portion of the \$5.8 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for transportation initiatives, including \$150,000 for a part-time Transportation Coordinator, \$100,000 for the Go Sudbury! Uber & Taxi Rides Programs and possible usage of a mobility transportation company for wheel-chair accessible vehicle service, and \$100,000 for Dial-A-Ride Extended hours and geographic coverage. And finally, in December, the Committee continued to work on their proposal for the Select Board and reanalyze the co-pay structure for Go Sudbury!. Members prepared and submitted necessary reports required for MAPC grant funding and investigated additional funding options. At year end the cumulative totals indicated the average Uber ride cost was \$18 and average taxi ride cost was \$71.

The Transportation Committee, composed of both volunteers as well as Town staff, is proud to see our work on behalf of residents show these results.

Respectfully submitted,

SUDBURY TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

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