

## Response to MPO: Priorities for Technical Assistance

### Background

At the conclusion of the 9 August 2022 meeting between Transportation Committee, Sudbury, representatives<sup>1</sup> and CTPS staff,<sup>2</sup> Paul Christner requested input on priorities for technical assistance. He noted that their staff could, if agreed, start working by 1 October 2022 on small initiatives that help to build a foundation for the desired outcome: an effective regional transportation system. At the same time, staff could determine the feasibility of involving state DOT and, possibly, Federal staff in medium- to longer-term and larger efforts addressing identified challenges to such an effective regional transportation system.

Based on that request, the Transportation Committee is proposing the following:

- First, near-term (i.e., starting on 1 October) efforts involving CTPS technical assistance in proof-of-concept pilots to address livability, transportation equity, and economic vitality objectives.
- Second, a series of medium- to longer-term and larger efforts involving MPO/other technical assistance, focused on issues that have hampered regional transportation efforts to address the above objectives.

The desired outcome is an effective regional transportation system for all residents in a current “transportation desert” area of MAGIC. The original application to the MPO provides more detail. In addition, a recent survey conducted by *Nelson/Nygaard*<sup>3</sup> highlighted the precarity of residents regarding access to transportation. In a sample of 646 individuals (ages 18-85+ years), nearly one-fifth of those responding did not have access to a car. Approximately one-third of people needing transportation to healthcare or shopping relied on friends, family, taxi, etc.

### Technical Assistance Endeavors

Below, the proposed foci for technical assistance are summarized for consideration and discussion. Two appendices provide additional details.

***Near-Term (FY23-24): Proof-of-concept pilots in support of state, MPO, and RTA livability, transportation equity, and economic vitality objectives:***

1. For seniors, people living with a disability, and veterans: ensuring reliable transportation to healthcare and related vital resources (requires seamless transitions across RTA/MBTA boundaries). See Appendix A.

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<sup>1</sup> Dan Carty, Adam Duchesneau, and Alice Sapienza.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Christner and Jonathan Belcher.

<sup>3</sup> *Community Survey of Unmet Transportation Needs*, Nelson/Nygaard, May 2022.

2. For financially vulnerable youth and single heads of households: providing transportation to child care, education, training, employment, and other opportunities needed for household and regional economic vitality (requires seamless transitions across RTA/MBTA boundaries). See Appendix B.

***Medium- to Long-Term (FY24-FY29):*** *Larger initiatives addressing challenges involved in achieving regional transportation system goals:*

1. Implementing RTA collaborations (changing incentives, organizational structures, etc., in larger initiatives emerging from above proof-of-concept pilots; may involve changes to TMAs in region)
2. Negotiating Home Rule challenges (ensuring autonomy while facilitating intermunicipal collaboration in regional transportation initiatives)
3. Addressing town staffing challenges (regional/centralized assistance to ensure small town personnel resources are not overwhelmed by transportation efforts).

See also the Notes from the 6 June 2022 meeting with CTPS for further information on, especially, some of the identified barriers to an effective regional transportation system.

With regard to the near-term proposal, the appended material provides a brief overview of data applying to the MAGIC region and, where helpful, detailed Sudbury data as illustrative.

## APPENDIX A

### ***Proof-of-Concept Pilots for Seniors, People Living With a Disability, and Veterans***

This appendix provides information on seniors, people living with a disability, and veterans; the objective is a set of *proof-of-concept initiatives ensuring reliable transportation to healthcare and related vital resources (requires seamless transitions across RTA/ MBTA boundaries)*.

#### **Senior Residents**

In a summary of MAGIC's age-friendly (livable) priority objectives, a major recommendation was the provision of convenient and accessible transit services across the region, particularly one with "improved coordination between RTA and other transit provider schedules to... improve the overall connectivity between service areas."

Older adults are increasingly a larger part of MAGIC towns, a trend we are also seeing in the state and country. Currently 9-20% of residents are 65 years of age and older; in 2030 this range will jump to 14-36%. The unique needs of a growing older adult population will influence housing, transportation, and health care, among other services and systems. These facts compel the region to be proactive, to ensure that current efforts and planning address these issues...<sup>4</sup>

The increase in older adults results from both aging-in-place, whether in one's home or in an age-restricted development, as well as in-migration of adults to a town. Nearly all the towns in MAGIC have experienced both phenomena, and data on Sudbury illustrate these well. Below is a list of 55+ housing in Sudbury, followed by the proportion of older age groups in a number of them:

- The Coolidge
- Frost Farm
- Longfellow Glen
- Musketahquid
- Grouse Hill
- Northwoods
- Sudbury Housing Trust homes (detached units throughout town)
- Maple Meadows
- Mahoney Farms
- Springhouse Pond
- Tall Pines

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<sup>4</sup>Regional Age Friendly Housing and Transportation Assessment and Strategies Report of MAGIC, March 2020.

- Avalon (Meadow Walk development; 60 age-restricted apartments, also affordable apartments)
- Cold Brook Crossing (Quarry North Road development; 26 affordable apartments, 31 age-restricted)

Percentage of seniors 75+ years in current above residences:

- Grouse Hill (32 Old Framingham), 33%
- Maple Meadows (35 Maple Avenue), 32%
- Tall Pines (40 Tall Pine Rd), 50%
- Coolidge (189 Boston Post Rd), 53%
- Frost Farm (150 North Rd), 70%
- Longfellow Glen (655 Boston Post Rd), 58%
- Musketahquid (55 Hudson Rd), 63%

(Data on age are not yet available for Avalon and Cold Brook Crossing.)

A challenge for transportation is the fact that a number of towns in our region are classified as rural, with some suburban towns of lower population density than suburbs close to city centers. Thus, a benefit of age-restricted developments even in more sparsely populated towns is that they can serve as transportation hubs, accounting for a cluster of seniors and usually located on or very near a major route (e.g., Route 20, Route 117 in Sudbury). However, residents also age in their homes. In Sudbury, there are “naturally occurring retirement neighborhoods” comprising nearly 1,500 residents 55 years and over, who live in six definable neighborhoods. Approximately 4% of all town roads account for nearly 25% of 55+ residents. From a transportation perspective, these roads can be considered *spokes* to various potential *transportation hubs*. Of course, such roads are narrow, winding, and long.

### **Residents Living With a Disability**

With regard to the MAGIC region, the CDC reported:<sup>i</sup>

- Approximately one-third of individuals 18+ years report at least one basic actions difficulty or complex activity limitation
- 60% of adults 65 years and older report at least one basic action difficulty or complex activity limitation
- About 15% of adults report hearing trouble
- About 9% of adults report vision trouble
- Approximately 16% of adults experience cognitive disabilities.

A 2019 needs assessment for Sudbury found the following:

Specific self-reported types of disability captured through the ACS suggest that the most frequently occurring is ambulatory difficulty, defined as having serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs, reported by 2% of the all-age population and 20% of Sudbury residents age 75 and older. Independent living difficulty, defined as having difficulty doing errands alone (such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping) because of a physical, mental or emotional problem, is reported by 13% of Sudbury residents age 75 and older. Other types of disability reported among residents age 75 and older include hearing difficulty (11%), self-care difficulty (7%), vision difficulty (5%), and cognitive difficulty (4%).

Thus, not surprisingly nearly 44% of those residents who registered for subsidized Sudbury transportation pilots (taxi and Uber) identified as living with a disability. And, the majority of the latter were also 50 years of age or older.

### **Active Duty Military, Reserves, National Guard, and Veteran Residents**

Although accounting for a declining number of residents, we believe we have “a legal, civic, and moral obligation to care for and support those that served in [America's] defense.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, we include this group as part of the near-term priority target.

We do not have detailed information on this group by town in our region, but we do know the following state data:

- The total number of Massachusetts veterans will further decline from its current level of 287,000 to 120,000 in the next 24 years [over 157,000 of these veterans are 65 years or older].
- Minority veterans will increase from the current number of just under 31,000 to almost 42,000 by the year 2045.
- Women's share of the total state veteran population will double from the current 8.5 percent to almost 18 percent during the same period.
- Higher numbers of minority and women veterans... are more likely to experience barriers to receiving care, economic inequality, and health disparities. Thoughtful planning and analysis must be done to ensure that these veterans have safe and convenient access to critical services in a manner that better respects cultural and gender diversity.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://commonwealthmagazine.org/opinion/big-demographic-changes-pose-challenge-to-caring-for-veterans-needs/>

## APPENDIX B

### *Proof-of-Concept Pilots for the Financially Vulnerable*

This appendix provides information on the financially vulnerable, particularly youth and single heads of households; the objective is a set of *proof-of-concept initiatives ensuring transportation to child care, education, training, employment, and other opportunities needed for household and regional economic vitality (requires seamless transitions across RTA/MBTA boundaries)*.

Despite the healthy median income statistics in the MAGIC region, there are residents whose financial vulnerability underscores the need for affordable accessibility to transportation (i.e., subsidies). Many towns have growing numbers of Chapter 40B housing units; also, a number of aging residents are housing-cost burdened—their (usually static) income is consumed by high property taxes and maintenance costs for older housing stock. In the MAGIC region, nearly 40% of households with a head of household 65 years of age or older are housing-cost burdened.

Although the material below relies on detailed information from the town of Sudbury, the information is deemed generalizable to the collaborating towns.

#### **Vulnerable Youths and Heads of Households**

There are about 2,900 households in Sudbury with children, including those at Longfellow Glen (Section 8 housing), which has 70 family apartments.<sup>ii</sup> Of the approximately 6,700 housing units in town, about 540 are renter occupied. A number of developments include apartments at affordable rates according to Chapter 40B of MGL, including Meadow Walk (63 units 40B designated) and Cold Creek (“friendly 40B”).<sup>iii</sup> Slightly more than 10% of Sudbury households qualify as “low to moderate” income (700)<sup>iv</sup> and 300 households qualify as “very low income,” based on income level plus housing cost burden. The total number of seniors in affordable facilities is approximately 680<sup>v</sup>.

With regard to financial vulnerability, the 2019 Livable Sudbury needs assessment found that:

- “Median household income of renters is... \$34,545.”
- 25% of renters are “cost-burdened,” spending at least 30% of their incomes on housing (rent and utilities).
- 25% of homeowners with, and 14% of homeowners without a mortgage, are “cost-burdened,” spending > 30% of income on housing
- “13% of households report incomes below \$50,000.”
- 25% of survey respondents were neutral or disagreed with the statement: “I have adequate resources to meet my needs.”
- “Cost of living was the #1 concern shaping respondents’ ability to continue living in Sudbury.”

Classified as “very poor” in Sudbury (with income less than 50% below the poverty level) is a small group of children, percentages shown below:<sup>6</sup>

- 3.8% Under 5 years
- 6.9% 5 years
- 6.2% 15 years

By race, percentages of those classified as poor are:

- 2.3% White
- 21.6% Black
- 35.5% Other race
- 24.5% 2+ races
- 11.9% Hispanic

The poverty rate among Sudbury residents who did not graduate high school and are not living in families is 45.2% (the state percentage 37.8%). And, of those families qualifying as poor, 64% are female-head of households.

Described as transportation-underserved areas, the town of Sudbury and others in the region provide none or only weak links to commuter rail and public transit (MBTA and/or RTAs). Also, in these communities, Chapter 40B requirements have resulted in substantial affordable developments, where those who need to work may have to rely on their own cars. Adding to residents who are financially vulnerable are retirees, whose pensions/Social Security may not be sufficient (e.g., the housing-cost burdened). Both classes of residents are actually or potentially transportation-underserved workers.

Operating in this region are transportation-underserved employers. Not only small, “in-town” retail businesses but also large corporations in rural/suburban areas have difficulty finding and keeping employees.<sup>7</sup> In Massachusetts, entry-level jobs in the healthcare sector are an example: personal care aides, homecare aides, nurses’ aides. Other entry-level jobs that are hard to fill/keep include support staff generally and workers in food preparation and service.

For financially vulnerable youth and single heads of households, providing transportation to child care, education, training, employment, and other opportunities is key. The goal is not simply to transport people to jobs but to assure that individual, household, and economic growth can occur, because transportation “nodes” include area resources that help workers not only keep jobs but gain skills.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.city-data.com/poverty/poverty-Sudbury-Massachusetts.html>

<sup>7</sup> *Transit Means Business*, Metropolitan Planning Council, Chicago, 2019.

## Potential Area Resources

Below is an example of potential resources for this population. The organizations providing them are accessible (with appropriate transportation) to financially vulnerable residents in the MAGIC region.

### [Credential to Career Coaching https://www.onefamilyinc.org/c2c](https://www.onefamilyinc.org/c2c)

This program assists low-income parents in pursuing a higher education and achieving career goals.

- Three-month program
- Participants will identify a career that aligns with the skill sets and will allow them to support their families.
- Participants will create a detailed plan to assist them in meeting their occupational goals.
- Must be the parent or guardian of a child under the age of 26.
- Must have a household income [below 200% of the Federal Poverty Line\[FG1\]](#)
- Email [c2c@onefamilyinc.org](mailto:c2c@onefamilyinc.org) to enroll

### [One Family Scholarship Program https://www.onefamilyinc.org/](https://www.onefamilyinc.org/)

Aims to assist heads of household in securing higher education and/or higher paying careers, thereby breaking the cycle of poverty.

- Recipients of this scholarship receive an integrated network of services, support, and case management through the non-profit organization, One Family, Inc.
- Scholarships may be awarded to cover tuition and fees and related living expenses during the period of enrollment.

### [Budget Buddies https://womensmoneymatters.org/](https://womensmoneymatters.org/)

- Free online financial literacy programs for women.
- Combines online classes with 1-1 coaching to work towards personal financial goals.

### [MCDC http://strongcommunity.org/financial-fitness/](http://strongcommunity.org/financial-fitness/)

Metro Community Development Corporation 40 Mechanic St #300, Marlborough, MA 01752

- Financial Fitness Center – tax preparation advice, financial coaching, financial education



- Financial coaching to create budgets, increase financial skills, improve credit scores, and pursue higher paying jobs.
- VITA Tax preparation is free tax returns for families and individuals with incomes less than \$60,000. Can also help people who are in this income bracket and have tax-related questions. Email [vita@strongcommunity.org](mailto:vita@strongcommunity.org) for information or to make an appointment.
- Well & Wise is a 5-part workshop for 55+ to plan for self-sufficiency.
- Contact [info@strongcommunity.org](mailto:info@strongcommunity.org) or 508-658-0880 to request services; 508-658-2880 for assistance with taxes.

**Education:** *MassBay Community College is the most affordable higher education option in MetroWest Boston, offering a robust portfolio of courses and more than 70 associate degree and certificate programs with flexible day, evening, and weekend classes in Ashland, Framingham, Wellesley Hills, and online. MassBay students receive an unmatched educational value by earning stackable credits that transfer to bachelor's degree programs, and workforce-ready skills necessary to advance careers in high-demand fields such as health and life sciences, automotive technology, engineering, business, cybersecurity, and the humanities. MassBay's Associate Degree in Nursing (RN) and Practical Nursing (LPN) programs were both ranked as the #1 Nursing Program in Massachusetts in 2020-2021 by national nursing advocacy organizations RegisteredNursing.org, and PracticalNursing.org.*

**Child Care:** The Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) helps to meet the child care and transportation needs of low-income families so that children can get a safe start and parents can get where they need to go. **SNAP Clients:** DTA provides child care to parents and caregivers who receive SNAP and participate in a SNAP Path to Work program.

**Early Education and Care:** EEC works with local Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs) to help make sure that early education and care programs are accessible to families in need. You and your family must meet income and activity requirements to be eligible for EEC financial assistance. You may be placed on a waiting list for financial assistance if funding isn't immediately available.

<https://www.mass.gov/early-education-and-care-financial-assistance-for-families>

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/hus/contents2016.htm#042>.

<sup>ii</sup> [www.point2homes.com/US/Neighborhood/MA/Sudbury-Demographics.html](http://www.point2homes.com/US/Neighborhood/MA/Sudbury-Demographics.html)

<sup>iii</sup> “Sudbury has seven 40B housing developments including Longfellow Glen, Avalon at Meadow Walk and Highcrest at Meadow Walk, Coolidge, Landham Crossing, Carriage Lane, Orchard Hill and Villages at Old County Road all in South Sudbury. Musketaquid Village and Fairbank Circle are in Central Sudbury. The most recent 40B development [contains] 250-unit Avalon and 60 unit Highcrest TownHomes at Meadow Walk” (<https://sudbury.ma.us/boardofselectmen/2018/09/21/faq-melone-redevelopment-quarry-north/>).

<sup>iv</sup> Same assumption as above.

<sup>v</sup> For households, the assumption is 1.5 “individuals” per household.