

## OVERVIEW OF TRANSPORTATION DISCUSSION AT SELECT BOARD MEETING

11/29/22

**Outcome:** At the meeting's conclusion, the Chair stated that Select Board members were "all supportive" of the GoSudbury programs; however, they requested "fine tuning for greater efficiency." In other words, can programs provide more services with less burden on Town funding. Another term used often in this context was "sustainability."

Summaries of specific topics follow.

Taxi Cost and Use: Concern was voiced about taxi ride cost, number of residents actually served by taxis, and the difficulty of expanding the number users because of cost. The Transportation Committee was requested to explore cost reduction tactics such as:

- Vouchers (i.e., resident purchases a number of taxi rides for a set price/voucher, similar to Weston's policy),
- Copays (determine what percentage of cost might be covered by copay, possibly with sliding scale),
- Insurance-covered transportation (Medicaid),
- Further limits on use per unit time,
- Restriction of taxis only to times and geographies not covered by CoA vans, and
- Additional grants.

Travel Patterns: Board members requested the following:

- Within-Sudbury travel, and
- Outside Sudbury travel to frequent destination towns/cities.

Aggregate data on the above can be drawn from these files and provided to the Board for their review, at least for Uber and taxi. CoA van data may also be available at that level of aggregation. Members were interested in implications for fixed route transport within and beyond Sudbury, as well as shuttles to, for example, commuter rail and MBTA services nearby.

TIP and Stow: Board members mentioned a \$1.3M grant for microtransit, which included Stow. Members noted this as an example of one alternative to town (i.e., Sudbury) funding.

In fact, the initiative is a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) 3-year grant to the Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MART), to provide microtransit connections (using MART vans) for Bolton, Boxborough, Littleton and Stow. More specifically:

This project will establish an on-demand microtransit service for the towns of Bolton, Boxborough, Littleton, and Stow, to be operated by the Montachusett Regional Transit

Authority (MART). The primary goals of the project are to connect residents to employment centers and activity hubs in the region while providing a low-cost transportation alternative to single-occupancy vehicles. The service will utilize MART's existing vehicle fleet and will allow riders to book trips through a mobile app. This project is funded through the third round of grants available through the MPO's Community Connections Program.

Sustainability by Grants: The possibility that communities can fund transportation either entirely or primarily from grants was implied by a number of members. However, of the communities investigated by the Transportation Committee (e.g., Weston, Wayland, Acton, Lexington, Wellesley, Newton, etc.), this is not the case. What appear to support sustainable service in addition to grants are municipal tax levies (e.g., Acton, Newton, Lexington) and/or regional transit authority-funded initiatives (Wellesley) with Council on Aging van support (Weston, Wayland, etc.). As described above, Stow will benefit from MART's grant-funded microtransit support and also from support of taxi service under Sudbury's MassDevelopment grant.

The purpose of the MPO technical assistance is to determine what initiatives for "more efficient" transportation in Sudbury and neighboring communities can be provided with support from what grants. That is the objective of proof-of-concept projects to be identified with CTPS guidance.

Next Steps: Perhaps the most pressing task is to demonstrate how taxi costs can be reduced, so that more people can be served. The Transportation Committee can examine prior tactics for implementation and estimate their impact on how many more rides could be provided by MassDev funds. Time and process for implementing selected steps can be based on past experience. The next most practicable task is to calculate within-town rides (taxi and Uber) and outside-town rides and to what most frequent destinations. However, the latter cannot be taken as the necessary evidence for fixed route services until the CTPS is involved. The data will, of course, suggest options. Finally, compilation of how a set of neighboring communities funds transportation should be a third response for Board submission.