

FY24 Regional Transit Innovation Grant

Prepared by MassDOT Rail & Transit Division

<u>Please note:</u> All applications are due no later than 1.19.2024 and will be submitted by email. Please email your completed application package to <u>Thomas.Schiavone@dot.state.ma.us</u>. Please identify in the Subject Line of your email: *Name of Applicant*: FY24 Regional Transit Discretionary Grant Submission. Your package should include:

Application (Word or PDF)

7. Contact person phone number

Budget (Excel)

Applicant Overview

Legal name of your organization (for example, the Bridgewater Council on Aging is the Town of Bridgewater):
Town of Sudbury
Are you a registered vendor with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts?
⊠ Yes □ No
a. If yes, what enter your vendor code VC6000191996
UEI number if registered in sam.gov
Legal address of your organization including 9-digit zip code
278 Old Sudbury Road Sudbury MA 01776-1843
Contact person name
Alice M Sapienza
Contact person email
alicesapienza@verizon.net

	978 443 2878
8.	Unique name of your proposed project
	BOSTON HOSPITAL SHUTTLE AND EMERGENCY RIDE IN/FROM BOSTON
9.	Cities and towns/geography to be served by your proposed project
	Sudbury, Wayland, portions of MetroWest and Greater Boston
	Are you requesting funding for a new innovation, or continuing funding for an innovative project?
	☑ New innovation☐ Continuing funding for innovative project
11.	Which type of project are you applying for?
	a. 🗵 Enhancing and Expanding Transit Service
	b. Transit Electrification
	c. \square Other:
12.	Total amount of funding requested over 2 years
	MWRTA Boston Hospital Shuttle: \$117,000 (based on \$75 per hour at 10 hours per day, 3 days per week, for 52 weeks)
	Emergency Ride in/from Boston: \$10,000 (estimated ride, dispatch, and mobile phone costs)
	TOTAL: \$127,000

Project Narrative

1. Which of these categories does your project fit into? Check all that apply:

Question	Type an X if your project fits into this category
New and innovative service delivery models – pilot a new approach that may provide better or more cost-effective service for your riders and service area	
Expanded service hours or weekend service – expand service temporally to better serve rider needs	
Rural connectivity – provide transit in a rural area underserved by current options	
Connectivity improvements across regional transit authority service areas – expand options for riders looking to travel from one transit authority service area to another	
Expanding mobility for low-income individuals and any other transit dependent populations	\boxtimes
Transit electrification – small grants related to electrification of fleets, for expenses not covered by other funding streams	
Other (please specify) [?]	New service: public, accessible, affordable transportation for healthcare in Sudbury and Wayland

- 2. Please describe your proposed project:
 - Days and hours of service
 Boston Hospital Shuttle: Sudbury and Wayland residents; operating 3 days/week (Tues-Thurs); 8 AM-6 PM. Shuttle will operate 3 round trips/day to Boston area hospitals such as Newton-Wellesley, Longwood Medical Area, Mass. General.

EMERGENCY RIDE IN/FROM BOSTON: 3 days/week; extended hours to 8 PM (the last shuttle leaves Boston around 5:30 PM).

- b. Service area (geography)
 Shuttle service will be open to all residents in the MetroWest service region via a registration process with no exclusions. Shuttle will make door-to-door pickup and drop-off only in Sudbury and Wayland as well as to the specified hospitals in/near Greater Boston.
- c. Is the service open to the general public? If not, describe eligibility criteria The MWRTA Boston Hospital shuttle is open to all residents of MetroWest, with Sudbury and Wayland residents eligible for door-to-door pickups and dropoffs. The Emergency Ride in/from Boston program is restricted to eligible riders who are pre-qualified by Sudbury and Wayland on the basis of age, disability, financial vulnerability, and/or veteran status.
- d. Are there any restrictions on trip purpose? The Hospital Shuttle will have no restrictions on trip purpose. The Emergency Ride in/from Boston option is restricted to eligible Sudbury and Wayland riders (see above) who have arrived at their destination via the MWRTA Boston Hospital shuttle and subsequently face a potentially lengthy wait for continued shuttle service under the following circumstances: (1) medically-necessary travel beyond walking distance from the destination healthcare facility to another healthcare facility; (2) a missed "next" shuttle; or (3) a missed last shuttle. In case (2), TNC-taxi transportation will be provided to the next west bound shuttle, if a further stop is available; otherwise, as in case (3), TNC-taxi transportation will be provided to the rider's home in Sudbury or Wayland.
- e. Will you charge a fare or donation? If so, how much?
 The shuttle fare will be \$2 per trip, which is consistent with current MWRTA fare policy.
 For the Emergency Ride in/from Boston, riders will not be charged a fare but will be asked to provide a donation, if possible. No amount will be recommended because of the overall financial vulnerability of the towns' qualified riders.
- f. Estimated one-way trips per day
 Boston Hospital shuttle estimated trips per day are 5-10. For the **Emergency Ride in/from Boston** option, we are estimating one within-Boston trip (i.e., from one healthcare facility to another) and one trip from Boston to "home" (Sudbury/Wayland) per day of shuttle service.
- g. How will you serve riders who use wheelchairs? The MWRTA shuttle is fully accessible. For the Emergency Ride in/from Boston, in addition to the use of TNCs we are proposing the use of taxis for WAV vehicles, if needed.
- h. How will you serve riders who speak languages other than English?

 The MWRTA shuttle information is available in many languages, with printed materials created in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. MWRTA also retains a translation service provider for both spoken and printed materials, and on request can provide materials in any language. With regard to the **Emergency Ride** option, Sudbury has Chinese-American, Russian-speaking, and Hispanic/Latino residents, including individuals currently utilizing the Senior Center, who will be beneficiaries of the proposed initiative. This option will be advertised widely and communications translated into Mandarin (and other languages as

required). Special flyers, including those in translation, will be brought to housing developments that serve a diverse population of seniors, persons living with a disability, as well as those who are financially vulnerable. Other information in English and translations will be shared with the Goodnow Library and the Park and Recreation Department. About 20% of Wayland's population is Hispanic/Latino and Asian, and MWRTA materials in the appropriate language will be used to communicate the pilot. The Emergency Ride option will be translated into the appropriate languages (including Chinese, Russian) for Wayland residents with limited English proficiency.

3. Please describe the need. How do you know it is a need? Cite any needs assessments; surveys; plans such as Comprehensive Regional Transit Plans (CRTP), Long Range Transportation Plans (LRTP), or Coordinated Human Service Transportation (CHST) Plans; and anecdotal data that point to this being a need for riders and potential riders.

The need is composed of two parts: first, the need for accessible and affordable transportation to healthcare services for Transportation Equity riders with limited access to transportation; second, the need for a "safety net" for such riders who are dependent on this transportation for medical care.

MWRTA's Boston Hospital shuttle for Sudbury and Wayland is designed to meet the need for accessible and affordable transportation to healthcare services for Transportation Equity riders. It is modeled on a similar program operating in Framingham, Natick, and Wellesley. The following material provides more detail on this need and the consequences of lack of such transportation, beginning with town studies.

The Livable Needs Assessment of Sudbury found that "42% of residents with a participation limitation [disability limiting driving] "had missed, canceled, or rescheduled a medical appointment due to lack of transportation." Moreover, "residents with participation limitations and those who are not financially secure report lower levels of satisfaction with access to physical health services. It may be that these groups encounter access issues relating to insurance, cost, transportation, or other factors that contribute to their lower levels of satisfaction." For example, the Sudbury Social Worker reported that the market cost of a taxi or Uber/Lyft is often unmanageable for low income residents and seniors on a fixed income. People have to choose between a medically necessary appointment and another essential need such as food or utility bills. She was concerned at times that the *financial stressors related to transportation to medical appointments leads to exacerbation of physical and mental health symptoms* (emphasis added).

Not surprisingly, since inception of Sudbury's subsidized Uber program, one of the top week-day trips has been to Mass General Hospital (see Figure 1 provided by the Boston Region MPO's CTPS staff).

Recently, at the conclusion of the Urgent Taxi/Livery/Hackney programs, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC, 2022) stated: "The top destinations for Sudbury residents are medical facilities, most of which are outside the Town's borders. These destinations may be difficult (or impossible) to get to without a vehicle or may be places that residents need a

door-to-door service to access... The Town of Sudbury is a rural community with no access to public transportation within its borders... None of the trips [supported by the grants] would be possible to take on existing transit routes." Figure 2 illustrates the latter destinations.

A 2023 survey of Wayland residents revealed that 20% were not driving themselves, and those who were still driving stated their concern about losing that ability. About one-third of seniors noted that they needed assistance getting to medical appointments, specifically to Boston hospitals for ongoing treatment (chemotherapy, dialysis).

Regionally, the Boston Region MPO Human Services Transportation Plan (2019) identified the greatest unmet need as *transportation improvements* ("forty-two percent of the comments relate to transportation service improvements, the most common topic"). One specific unmet need is: *Access to medical facilities in nearby communities. Due to limited transit service across municipal boundaries, accessing medical facilities in other towns is challenging.*

The Transportation Equity population for the Boston Hospital shuttle program in Sudbury, based on those residents qualified for currently subsidized services (Uber, taxi), includes people with disabilities (30%), people 75 years of age or older (25%), and people who are members of low-income households or transit-dependent households (about 40%). Veterans make up the remainder of this Transportation Equity population. Figure 3, from the MAPC taxi program, illustrates the top origins for medical rides. These are primarily affordable as well as Section 8 and age-restricted housing developments.

Wayland's Transportation Equity population includes older adults (those 60+ years constitute 29% of total population); individuals with physical, cognitive, and/or psychological limitations; residents with low income; and veterans.

https://www.ctps.org/data/pdf/plans/LRTP/destination/Destination-2040-Needs-Assessment.pdf#page=277

The MWRTA shuttle is designed to meet the above overall need for access to medical care. The **Emergency Ride in/from Boston**, its complement, is designed to meet the second need—both for a physical safety net (see below) and for reassurance by eliminating *financial stress-ors related to transportation."*

One concern about public medical transportation is the lengthy wait that can be experienced by riders, including for transportation home. This has been noted as a barrier to widespread use of more public (less costly, fewer SOVs, reduced congestion, etc.) transportation services. "Each year, 3.6 million people in the United States do not obtain medical care due to transportation issues. Transportation issues include lack of vehicle access, inadequate infrastructure, long distances and lengthy times to reach needed services, transportation costs and adverse policies that affect travel [emphasis added]." https://www.aha.org/ahahret-guides/2017-11-15-social-determinants-health-series

For the MWRTA Boston Hospital shuttle that runs three cycles/day, there are potentially lengthy waits if one misses (say) the second shuttle home or to another facility, and the only option is the third cycle of this shuttle; or one misses the last shuttle of the day.

The **Emergency Ride in/from Boston** program is not meant to eliminate waiting time before or after an appointment. Rather, it provides reassurance for vulnerable residents facing a protracted wait for medical transportation within Boston and/or home from Boston.

Sudbury requests feedback on a regular basis from residents using the *GoSudbury Taxi and Uber Programs*. A recent (August 2023) survey provides insights into medical transportation wait times. It should be noted that the ability to make an advance reservation with the MWRTA hospital shuttle is a very appreciated feature. However, an advance reservation requirement also brings the challenge of knowing post-appointment pickup time. Comments from riders referred to this challenge: "It would be beneficial to do round trips [to medical appointments] with Uber." "It would be great if the Uber scheduling feature [i.e., on-demand] would work for [medical transportation]."

Similarly, Wayland residents have frequently requested help for transportation to medical appointments, because Boston traffic intimidates most drivers. The proposed fixed route Boston Hospital shuttle, with home pickup and dropoff, would reduce residents' anxiety and provide alternatives to their current arrangements. Having access to a safety net in case of shuttle delays and medical appointment uncertainties (the Emergency Ride) will provide further reassurance.

4. Please explain how your proposed project meets the need you described in #1.

The Boston Hospital shuttle and/or associated Emergency Ride in/from Boston option provides: (1) a new approach for better service for riders and service areas (shuttle); (2) temporarily expanded service hours to better serve riders (Emergency Ride in/from Boston); and (3) expanded mobility for low-income and transit-dependent populations (shuttle plus Emergency Ride in/from Boston).

- (1) The new approach in Sudbury and Wayland is provision of public transportation to Boston area medical facilities. As noted in the MAPC final report (above): None of the trips [supported by the taxi grants to Sudbury] would be possible to take on existing transit routes. "For example, to go from Hudson Road to Massachusetts General Hospital, a person would need to drive (or be driven) to a nearby commuter rail stop, and then take the commuter rail into Boston. The drive to the Lincoln Commuter rail stop would take 13 minutes to go six miles, and the commuter rail trip would take nearly an hour (p 25)."
- (2) The **Emergency Ride in/from Boston** provides temporarily expanded service hours. More than the "emergency ride home" option offered by some employers, this initiative addresses the systemic uncertainties of medical appointments as well as the accompanying stress on patients who rely on public transportation. With *temporarily expanded service hours to 8 PM*, after the Boston Hospital shuttle ceases operation (around 5:30 PM), riders have the reassurance of not being stuck waiting for an alternative way to get home.
- (3) Given the financial vulnerability and overall transit-dependence of the priority riders, a public shuttle and voluntary-donation-based TNC-taxi backup *expands mobility for low-income and transit-dependent populations*.

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5.	Please describe the innovative aspects of your proposed project.
	Emergency Ride in/from Boston is novel in that it provides both a safety-net and reassurance for transit-dependent residents, in circumstances in which they are likely to be anxious about their health and mobility. No person will be left struggling to avoid a stressful and lengthy wait between shuttles.
	Because the Boston medical area is sizable, this program is also novel in that it takes into account the possibility that travel within the area—between or within appointments—could be necessary and that shuttle schedules may not be able to accommodate it.
	Finally, the voluntary, donation-based "fee" for the TNC-taxi backup supports residents who may not be able to pay for a TNC or taxi.
6.	Is your proposal for a new idea or continued funding for an innovative project?
	 New idea ☐ Continued funding a. If you are applying for continued funding, please briefly describe the history and progress to date.
7.	Please describe your implementation plan and a projected timeline for key steps and deliverables.
	MWRTA implementation and timeline for Boston Hospital shuttle: Upon Notice of Award, MWRTA will hire 1.25 FTE driver to accommodate the additional operating hours to run the Boston Hospital Shuttle. MWRTA will use existing rolling stock to operate the shuttle. After the shuttle has begun operations, MWRTA will track all key metrics to help determine long term viability of the program, and will routinely report that data to project partners. Regular updates to MassDOT (quarterly) will be provided based on these metrics. At the start of Q3 FY25, MWRTA will work with project partners to determine whether or not the program should continue past the end of the pilot, with a final determination by the start of Q4 FY25.
	Sudbury and Wayland expect to implement and manage the <i>Emergency Ride in/from Boston</i> program following the same <i>Plan/Do/Study/Act</i> quality improvement process by which the Sudbury Transportation Committee manages the GoSudbury programs. Below, 3 representative months (with biweekly meetings) are described. Note that "municipality" indicates operational management by an <i>Emergency Ride in/from Boston</i> task force composed of representatives from Sudbury and Wayland:
	• Month 1:

- Agreement among municipalities and vendors on details for desired services; key milestone (timing dependent on legal and other reviews)
- Begin online marketing of services
- Begin direct outreach by municipality
 - Senior center publication of services
 - Housing development publication of services
 - Online and social media announcements
 - Focus groups as desired

Month 2:

- o Inaugurate service by MWRTA and TNC (other vendors as needed); key milestone
- Continue marketing/communication
- o Biweekly service statistics reports to RTA, task force; key milestones
- o Make changes as needed
- o First rider feedback survey administered
- o First driver feedback survey administered
- o First stakeholder feedback survey administered

Month 3:

- Continue marketing, training (app)
- Biweekly service statistics reports to RTA, task force
- Report first survey feedback (three surveys); key milestone
- o Make changes as needed by RTA, municipality, other; key milestone
- 8. What metrics will you track to evaluate your progress and any need for revisions? How will you use those metrics?

The MWRTA will track ridership, on-time performance, cost per revenue-hour, and cost per passenger trip closely. MWRTA will also closely track trips not operated due to no reservations. This particular data point will be helpful in determining the variable cost savings of this service model as opposed to a strict Fixed Route structure. Based on these data, changes will be made and monitored for effectiveness, and as needed the service may be redesigned.

The Emergency Ride in/from Boston task force will evaluate progress and track metrics similar to the CQI (continuous quality improvement) process used by Sudbury's Transportation Committee. The Committee meets bimonthly to review data, to discuss feedback received, to seek feedback as needed, to engage with stakeholders, and so on. Guests at these meetings include riders, particularly riders with a disability, and other stakeholders (e.g., representatives from schools). Members do not hesitate to discuss and evaluate changes that the data/feedback suggest and to run "beta tests" of changes with selected riders before any final modification is selected, communicated, and then implemented. The Senior Center staff work closely with residents and their concerns, so the Committee is often considering adjustments before the data display problematic outcomes. In addition to usual and customary transportation data (number of rides, riders, wait times, fares, etc.), the Committee prepares and administers surveys on qualitative aspects such as rider opinions by means of forced choice as well as open ended questions. The results are shared with the Committee, with riders, and with transit providers.

9. What other services are addressing similar needs in your region? Describe how you have researched whether there is already a program serving this need. How is your program different from other programs? For applicants who are not transit authorities, have you talked to your transit authority about your project?

The MWRTA Boston Hospital shuttle is currently in operation in Framingham, Natick, and Wellesley for door-to-door pickups and drop-offs. For all other residents of MetroWest, a key location for accessing the shuttle is provided, such as the Framingham hub. Although that shuttle is available to Sudbury and Wayland currently, ridership data indicate that the hospital shuttle is primarily used by residents who are eligible for the door-to-door pickup option. By creating a northern branch of this shuttle, residents of Sudbury and Wayland will be provided equitable access to a similar shuttle.

Emergency Ride in/from Boston: We have investigated "emergency ride home" programs offered by employers. In Massachusetts, a number of Transportation Management Associations (TMAs) also offer a similar option. For example, the Charles River TMA notes: "If you use public transportation, bike, walk, or carpool to work, you are eligible to register for Emergency Ride Home. In the case of a personal emergency* or unexpected overtime, simply use any ridesharing app or cab company to get home - we'll reimburse your ride! Check if you are eligible to register on our Members page. View our full program and policy information here. Limit 4 rides per year."

Unlike these programs, our proposed **Emergency Ride in/from Boston** is focused on a specific (Transportation Equity) population, for a particular purpose (reducing stress associated with uncertainty about available transportation services), without ride limits. We have found no other service like this.

The **Emergency Ride in/from Boston** program is a complement to the MWRTA Boston Hospital shuttle for Sudbury and Wayland. Jim Nee, the MWRTA Administrator, has been in discussions with the towns regarding this initiative since August.

10. Are you partnering with other organizations on this specific program? Describe the partnership. What will your organization do, and what will the other organization do?

In addition to the towns' relationship with the MWRTA (see above text), Sudbury and Wayland will be equal partners designing and managing the Emergency Ride initiative. The towns will use TNCs (the Sudbury Emergency Ride will be part of the GoSudbury Uber program), and with selected taxis providing WAV service.

11. What steps are you taking to make sure your program can endure over time? For example, describe any other funding sources you are leveraging or exploring, and your work to build community support for your program.

With regard to the MWRTA shuttle, a key factor in assuring its long-term success will be the registration process and pre-scheduling of riders on the shuttle. By registering the trips in advance, should a particular trip have no registered riders, it will not need to operate, thereby

reducing wasted resources and funds. This methodology has proven effective in the Framingham, Natick, and Wellesley Hospital shuttle, which continues to run at minimal costs to the participating towns.

With regard to the **Emergency Ride** option, Sudbury's Transportation Committee has worked closely with town departments and communicated frequently to residents and stakeholders about its efforts. Thus, the committee has built strong support for its work. We continue to explore grant opportunities as well as possible partnerships with organizations that benefit from transportation services (e.g, businesses and healthcare). Members of the committee have served on a local hospital Community Health Needs Assessment for several years, for example. Sudbury is also now benefiting from collaborative efforts with the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (on a Community Transit grant and this Transit Innovation application) and looks forward to continued partnership with the RTA in support of vital public transit.

Wayland has worked closely with the MWRTA since its inception, to educate older adults about the shared ride transportation service. Wayland Council on Aging (CoA) has received several grants allowing us to better serve the needs of seniors accessing transportation for medical appointments. Grant funding has also enabled us to provide companions for residents who suffer from anxiety over medical procedures and for those who need a companion ride after an outpatient procedure involving sedation. We communicate transportation options in our monthly newsletter mailed to homes, as well as our weekly eBlast to seniors—and we have a strong presence on social media, to ensure community awareness.

12. Describe your organization's past experience and demonstrated ability to deliver projects.

The MWRTA has partnered with COAs in the MetroWest region to help and provide Dial-A-Ride services, as well as currently providing a shuttle of similar design. These longstanding municipal partnerships and experience will allow for ease of implementation.

In terms of Sudbury's experience, in addition to the CoA van service:

Grant projects completed since 2019 include

- Community Compact Cabinet grant ("Making the Connections")
- MAPC first taxi grant (2 vendors)
- MAPC second taxi grant (2 vendors)
- Mass. Development taxi grant (3 vendors)

<u>Town transportation programs</u> since 2019 (not including Council on Aging van service):

GoSudbury Uber (5,000+ rides) and GoSudbury Taxi (2,100+ rides)

Recently funded: Community Transit grant for MWRTA Route 20 Sudbury shuttle

<u>Technical assistance</u> provided: MPO analyses of GoSudbury Uber and taxi programs (see Figure 1).

In terms of Wayland's experience, in addition to CoA van service:

- MAPC first taxi grant (2 vendors)
- MAPC second taxi grant (2 vendors)

- Mass. Development taxi grant (2 vendors)
- BayPath Elder Services (2 taxi vendors and 1 homecare vendor for companion rides)
- Mass. CoA (3 vendors)
- 13. Please describe any other funding sources you have secured or plan to use to support this project.

Should the funds be awarded for this pilot, the MWRTA will work with the towns to determine the long-term viability of using transportation Local Assessment and State Funding to continue the program long term.

14. You have described how this project would benefit your region. Please also describe the benefit to the state as a whole if this proposed project receives funding.

The fact that a Boston Hospital shuttle has been serving Framingham, Natick, and Wellesley and is proposed for Sudbury and Wayland implies a need for transportation to healthcare services from, especially, transportation-underserved communities. That need was also demonstrated by the state's Boston Region MPO Human Services Transportation Plan (2019) and the MAPC's final report on the taxi, livery, and hackney grant program (2022).

One very successful transportation service in Massachusetts is that serving Logan Airport, which includes buses from surrounding communities as well as within-airport terminal shuttles. We envision a similar innovation for healthcare, beginning with the Longwood Medical area and subsequently incorporating other important healthcare "hubs."

Our transit innovation provides a model: the MWRTA provides buses to the area, and the towns' **Emergency Ride** provides service analogous to the airport terminal shuttle—that is, service for patients already in the Longwood area and needing transportation between facilities. If this model were expanded, with other RTAs operating buses to the area and vendor(s) providing within-area transport like the terminal shuttles, the difficult problems of vehicle parking, traffic, and associated environmental impacts could be markedly ameliorated.

We contend that the innovation proposed in this application is an important pilot for a truly innovative approach to meeting the goal of congestion mitigation and air quality, while addressing a vital and unmet need of residents. It is, in fact, more than a benefit to the state—it has national applicability.

FIGURE 1. Uber trip destinations (MPO's CTPS staff analysis)

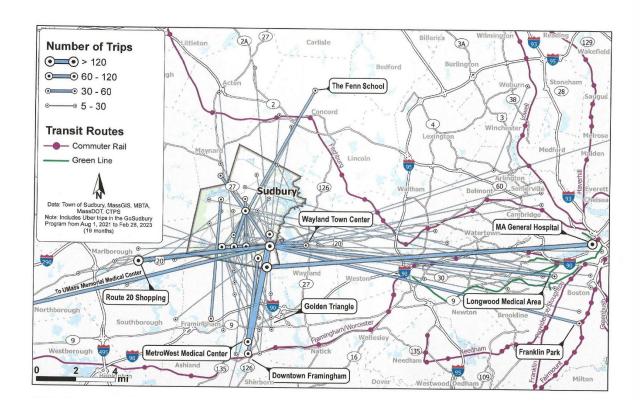


FIGURE 2. Taxi destinations (MAPC analyses)

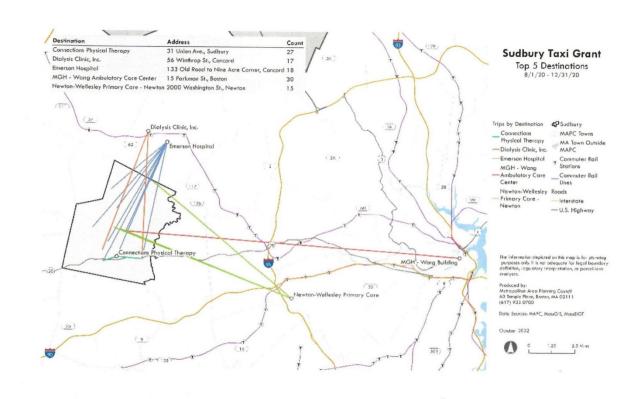
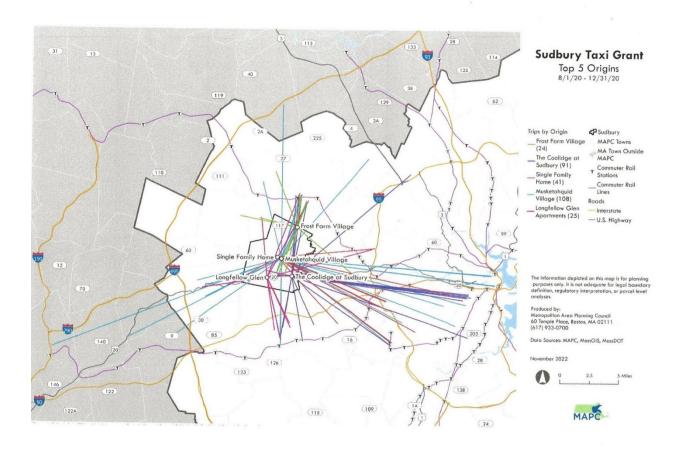


FIGURE 3. Taxi origins (MAPC analyses)





FIG

Scoring – 50 points total

- **Need.** The stated need is compelling and well documented from multiple sources, responding to local, regional, and/or statewide goals 10 points
- **Service plan.** Project design responds to the need; implementation and evaluation plans are robust 15 points
- **Coordination.** Proposal shows a high level of collaboration and coordination among partner organizations 5 points
- **Innovation.** Project represents an innovative approach or continuation of an innovation project that has demonstrated effectiveness and rider satisfaction 5 points
- **Endurance.** Applicant is working to foster community support and exploring a diversity of funding streams 5 points
- Benefit to the state The project will benefit the state as a whole in addition to the region served, such as by piloting a new approach that is of interest to other regions as well or filling a gap in service connecting multiple regions together – 10 points

Fill out the Budget spreadsheet in the Budget Document.