

**EXCERPT FROM COMMUNITY TRANSIT GRANT PROJECT: CATCH CONNECT
SUDBURY SHUTTLE**

1-2 sentence summary of your proposed project	<i>GoSudbury Catch Connect shuttle</i> —same day, accessible, affordable transportation for older adults and residents with a disability. The shuttle service is specifically designed to help reduce social isolation, by providing non-driving residents with a means to be fully engaged in their community.
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How does your service meet the need? How does it expand mobility for older adults and people with disabilities?

Catch Connect, a microtransit pilot of the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA), will offer weekday shuttle service to residents in the age-restricted and accessible developments along Route 20 as well as to residents in similar developments within a selected zone. The MWRTA smartphone app shows the driver where passengers are to be picked up and displays for the rider what the wait time is likely to be and where the vehicle is currently located.

The staging area for the shuttle route will be the Coolidge development (two buildings), close to the Wayland town line. Pickup and drop-off locations will include but not be limited to additional residences, along with grocery and other shopping options, restaurants, hair salon, library, dental and medical offices. The Wayside Country Store provides riders with connection to MWRTA fixed route service 7C, and the shuttle continues to Target, in Marlborough.

Such service provides opportunities for residents at risk of social isolation to meet others in the community spontaneously; to socialize; to attend programs and events without planned, advance registration for transportation; to handle exigencies like an unexpected dental appointment the same day; and to engage with their community freely and with dignity.

The design of the proposed Catch Connect service is based on a former CoA van shuttle that operated on Tuesdays and Thursdays from April 2018 – March 2020. The route included stops at local housing developments as well as shopping and other sites noted above. The route was extended to Target after receiving feedback from riders (initially, the route ended at the Wayside Country Store near Hager Street on the Marlborough/Sudbury line).

Rider feedback was very positive; residents appreciated the freedom to decide that day to travel to social destinations (restaurants, library) as well as to accommodate same day necessities (prescriptions, medical care, etc.). Since then, there have been continued requests to Senior Center staff to bring back the shuttle, from residents of the local housing developments.

Sapienza, DBA
5.16.24

Hours of service will be weekdays from noon to 6 PM. Days and hours of service are based on the MPO's Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) analyses of the current GoSudbury Uber program. They are also similar to the earlier CoA shuttle service that ran from about 8:30 AM to 3:30 PM on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Based on other RTA experience with microtransit services, Sudbury and the MWRTA will offer Catch Connect services free for the first month, to attract users and showcase the new option. After that period, the cost per ride will be \$2. That is \$1 less than the in-town cost of subsidized Uber rides (\$3) and \$1 more than the 48-hour reservation CoA van and Dial-a-Ride for in-town trips. Always, the GoSudbury programs make accommodation for any rider who is financially unable to pay the fees.

In conjunction with Sudbury, the MWRTA will determine a service area to encompass developments described above. The service is focused on seniors and residents with a disability, but available seats can be used by other residents, visitors, and residents of other towns.

Qualified riders for Catch Connect as for the other GoSudbury programs are seniors, residents with a disability limiting driving, the financially vulnerable, and veterans. To be determined is the youngest age that can use the service without an accompanying adult (e.g., school-age youth).

All purposes for trips are allowed. The service is designed to provide numerous opportunities to reduce social isolation by including destinations described above. It is also designed to support residents' freely engaging with their community, and with dignity. Same day medical appointments will be included but not prioritized. The app should allow riders to determine the wait time versus an appointment (if relevant), so that they can arrive in time. For priority same day appointments, subsidized Uber service is available.

Based on the shuttle parameters, the focus of service is within Sudbury. However, riders going to the stop at the Wayside Country Store or Target can connect to MWRTA fixed route 7C to Marlborough. The MWRTA route map shows all the towns served by the MWRTA, including commuter rail and the MBTA at Woodland.

No other eligibility criteria/restrictions than have been described. We want to emphasize that we have a target population to serve but hope that the visibility and reliability of Catch Connect service will be attractive to all others in the area.

Explain why you chose the service design you are proposing. What other approaches did you consider? Why did you choose this one?

After examining a number of Catch Connect options, such as service to designated stops outside Sudbury, we realized an effective collaboration with the RTA would be on a limited shuttle whose attraction was already clear: the GoSudbury Catch Connect shuttle, now with "clearly

defined major activity centers” and with dense residential developments (and shelter for riders) as well. The Catch Connect van is an attractively designed vehicle with clear signage; the app is similar to what our target riders already use for Uber; and the goal of the service is appropriately focused and practicable (reduce social isolation/support engagement with community). The proposed service meets our proof-of-concept criteria and will provide additional information for the next initiatives.

Finally, in terms of environmental impact, with typically one passenger and use of conventional sedans, the TNCs cannot readily reduce congestion and emissions. The MWRTA received a grant for support of an electrified fleet. “The primary goal of this project is to provide the infrastructure to transition our demand response fleet to electric vehicles. This is accomplished by generating and storing renewable energy on-site, thereby continuing our mission of a cleaner energy transition, but doing so in a responsible way that bolsters the local electrical grid, rather than being a strain on it” (Jim Nee, Administrator). The proposed initiative, thus, has sizable future benefits—accessibility, as well as economic and environmental advantages—for the Town and all residents.

How will you implement your service? Include a timeline with key milestones.

Assuming we are notified in June and funds are awarded in July 2024, we expect to implement and manage Catch Connect service following the same *Plan/Do/Study/Act* quality improvement process by which we manage taxi and Uber programs. Below, although only 2 months are described, the process will continue through June 2025. Note that “municipality” indicates operational management by the Transportation Committee:

- **June 2024:**
 - Agreement between municipality and RTA on details for desired services (geographic zone, etc.); key milestone (timing dependent on legal and other reviews)
 - Begin online marketing of services by municipality and RTA
 - Begin training in use of app (online, in person at Senior Center, web-based, etc.)
 - Begin direct outreach by municipality
 - Senior center publication of services
 - Housing development publication of services
 - Online and social media announcements
 - Focus groups as desired

July:

- Inaugurate Catch Connect service by MWRTA; key milestone
- Continue marketing/communication

- Biweekly service statistics reports to RTA, Transportation Committee; key milestones
- Make changes as needed
- First rider feedback survey administered
- First driver feedback survey administered
- First stakeholder feedback survey administered

Given the goals of the project, the rider surveys will contain questions that provide additional indications of addressing social isolation (such as how many times a rider was able to meet friends) and community engagement (such as how many times a rider was able to attend a library presentation). Open-ended questions in the surveys, and the presence of riders at Committee meetings, will help to capture performance-to-goals: what is working, what can be improved, what is lacking, and so on. In our operation of the GoSudbury Uber program, we have made adjustments in the geofence, copays, and ride limits; we have also been able to communicate average wait times and provide recommendations for best times of travel. The Catch Connect program will benefit from that experience.

Wide involvement of a broad range of residents, riders, and stakeholders is a hallmark of the Transportation Committee process. The Town Social Worker, our State Representative, and representatives from the schools interact frequently with the Transportation Committee. Riders regularly provide comments, inquire about proposed initiatives, and help the Committee communicate effectively. With their enthusiastic input, we have been able to create and operate effective programs, and the Catch Connect pilot will be no different. The transportation programs are based on rider input to Transportation Committee meetings and to Senior Center staff, and frequent communication between Town stakeholders and the Transportation Committee. Involvement of riders and local organizations will continue to be a hallmark of all Sudbury livable transportation initiatives.