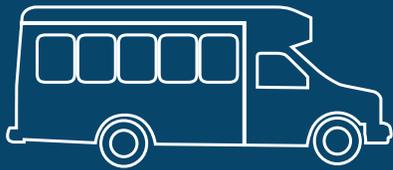


OPERATING A SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY SHUTTLE PROGRAM



A GUIDEBOOK

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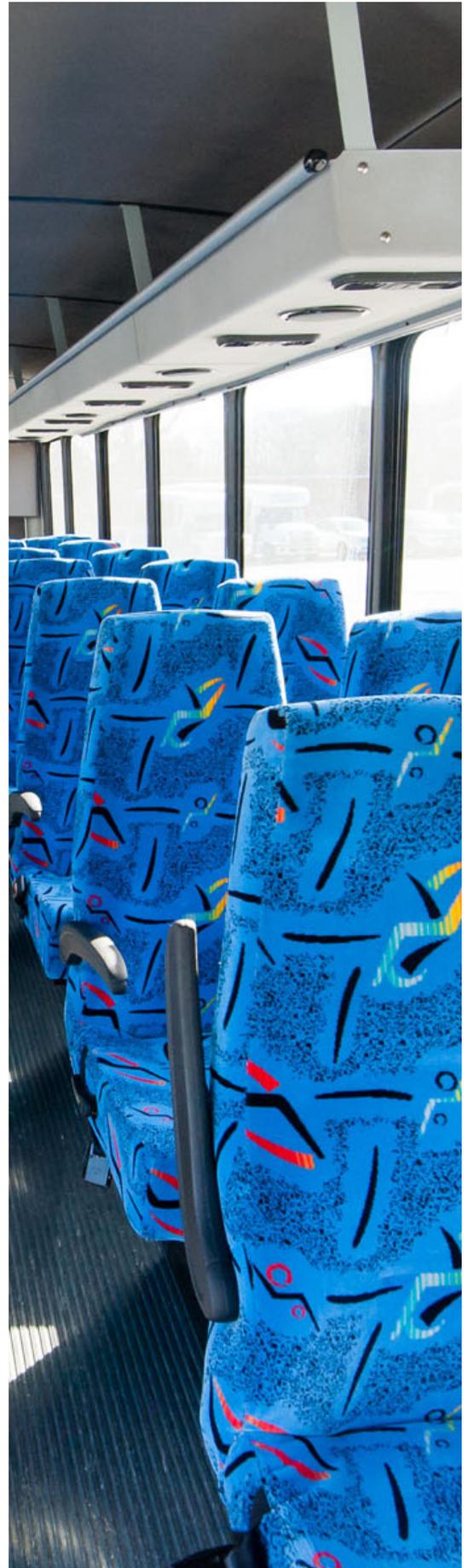
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ONE SECTION

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) conducted the Operating a Successful Community Shuttle Program study in response to feedback from municipalities and other stakeholders regarding a desire for information on how to develop and operate successful community shuttle programs, including programs that address first- and last-mile connections or workforce transportation solutions. The goal of the study was to assemble this guidebook to serve as a resource for agencies and organizations that are interested in learning more about developing and operating their own shuttle programs.



This guidebook is informed by the results of two efforts. The first is a literature review conducted by MPO staff of current nationwide best practices with regard to transit planning and operations, with a particular focus on the needs of small urban and suburban providers. Important takeaways from the literature review have been incorporated into this guidebook, including information on establishing goals and interacting with stakeholders, designing service, and measuring performance.

The second effort that informs this guidebook is a review of existing shuttle services in the region. This effort was undertaken in two tasks. The first was to establish a working definition of “community shuttle” to help focus the scope of our review. For this project, community shuttles are defined as services that

- have fixed or flexible routes but are not fully demand responsive;
- are open to the public but may prioritize or exclusively serve specific populations, such as seniors or people with disabilities;
- provide local circulation in municipalities with otherwise infrequent or limited fixed-route bus or rail transit service, or first- and last-mile connections to existing fixed-route bus or rail transit service; and
- may serve various trip purposes, including commuting, shopping, or traveling to a medical appointment.

The second task of reviewing existing shuttle service in the region was to conduct a series of interviews with a sample of shuttle providers in the region. Based on our definition, staff identified 10 providers to interview. The purpose of these interviews was to understand the history and development of each program, any significant challenges they faced, and how those challenges were addressed. We also asked each provider for any advice they had for organizations interested in developing and operating their own shuttle program and what information would be helpful or desirable to include in the guidebook.



MPO staff also interviewed staff of MassMobility and the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) Rail and Transit Division to understand collaboration and funding options that are available to shuttle providers and the common challenges and opportunities that these two agencies see providers frequently encountering.

From these conversations, MPO staff pulled out the major themes concerning shuttle service in the region. These are discussed in the sections that follow and include the following themes:

- goal development
- service design
- performance measurement
- funding
- branding and marketing
- coordination

This guidebook is intended to serve as a resource for municipalities and other organizations that wish to learn more about best practices around the region and country, ways to make improvements to existing shuttle programs, or how to develop and operate a shuttle program of their own.



TWO SECTION

DEVELOPING GOALS

A critical element of a successful shuttle program is having clearly defined goals. Clear and measurable goals are key to frame success, to guide decision-making, and to ensure continued buy-in from stakeholders. At its core, the goal-setting process helps a shuttle provider outline its basic purpose, understand its role in the region's transportation system, and deliver its services effectively and efficiently.

For a shuttle provider to define its goals, its staff should consider the following questions:

What problem is the shuttle service trying to solve? Transit services are developed for a number of reasons, including to reduce congestion, to improve environmental outcomes, and to provide a transportation option for people who do not have access to or choose not to use a personal vehicle. Specifying the problems the shuttle service is trying to solve can help identify a purpose toward which the organization should continually work.



Many problems have already been identified in the Boston Region MPO's Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan, which documents unmet transportation needs for seniors and people with disabilities, strategies and actions to meet the unmet needs, and priorities for implementation.¹

What types of trips is the shuttle service trying to address? Different groups of people have different transportation needs. For example, commuters need access to their jobs, seniors need access to medical appointments and social opportunities, and students need access to school. Specifying the needs the shuttle service is trying to address can help identify the target markets that the organization should continually work to serve.

How is success defined? Because the problems different shuttle providers are trying to solve and the needs they are trying to address vary widely, it is important to understand what success looks like for the organization. For some organizations, success is a continuous increase in ridership; for others, success is financial independence to support system growth, or the provision of a reliable transportation option for people with no alternative. Defining success from the outset will establish appropriate expectations for the program's stakeholders and keep the organization focused on making progress.

Based on the interviews conducted by MPO staff, the following are example goals from shuttle providers in the Boston region.

- To provide a transportation option for people who do not have access to or choose not to use a personal vehicle
- To provide a transportation option where geography makes walking or biking difficult
- To provide workforce transportation
- To improve access for seniors to social activities and medical appointments
- To reduce congestion
- To enable car-free or "car-light" living

Goals should be realistic and relevant because public transit services often need to work within significant demographic, economic, and political constraints. Planning the specific elements and characteristics of a shuttle provider's service is discussed in greater detail in Section 3: Service Design.

Goals should also be clear, specific, and measurable so that shuttle providers can continuously monitor their progress. Monitoring progress is discussed in greater detail in Section 4: Performance Measurement.

¹ Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan. Boston Region MPO website. Accessed July 23, 2020. <https://www.ctps.org/cpt-hst>.

STAKEHOLDERS

Shuttle providers should identify their stakeholders and frequently involve them in decision-making. Include all stakeholders in the goal-setting process to understand opportunities, challenges, and expectations from the community, and to be able to incorporate stakeholder feedback in the early stages. Reaching a consensus on what goals are most important to the community will develop a strong base of support for the program to help ensure its continued success.

Stakeholders of a shuttle program are likely to include the following groups:

- Expected riders of the service
- Organizations familiar with and that advocate for the needs of particular groups of riders, including seniors, students, and people with disabilities
- Staff of key municipal departments, including town administration, public works, planning, and economic development
- Elected municipal officials, including select board members, city councilors, and mayors
- Funding partners, including private corporations, chambers of commerce, and economic development groups
- Private vendors and service operators
- Organizations involved in data collection and reporting
- Organizations involved in grant approval and oversight

Managing stakeholders can be a significant challenge, with individuals coming from differing backgrounds and having differing priorities. Bringing stakeholders into the process as soon as possible will help identify and avoid potential future challenges, foster a sense of common purpose, and establish trust.

Service providers would do well to identify a champion individual. A good champion will advocate for progress and be committed to seeing that projects are completed. This individual may be an engaged member of the public or may be within the provider's organization, for example, a member of municipal staff.



THREE SECTION

SERVICE DESIGN

Once a shuttle provider has determined the goals for the service, staff can begin to design a service that will operate effectively and efficiently to meet those goals. This can be a complex and iterative process because it relies on demographic, economic, and political factors that vary between organizations. Furthermore, while many organizations strive for data-driven decision-making, the availability and quality of relevant data—and the staff resources required to interpret it—also vary between organizations. As such, a particular strategy that works well for one organization may not work well for another. Shuttle providers are encouraged to trial pilot projects. Pilot projects can be used to test service or aspects of service and can be delivered more quickly and less expensively than permanent solutions. A successful pilot can be incorporated into the service on a permanent basis.

3

One of the most important considerations of designing a shuttle service is having an understanding of resources available and costs required. Financial considerations are discussed in Section 5: Funding.

Understanding the service area

A critical first step in designing a shuttle service is defining the service area, which is the location or locations to be served. For municipal services, a shuttle's service area is usually the municipality that operates it, serving key origins and destinations throughout the town. The service area can be expanded to neighboring municipalities if there is a desire to serve significant regional destinations or to make connections to external transit services.

Some commuter services are operated by a transportation management association (TMA), which is a membership-based partnership between businesses, institutions, and municipalities that provides transportation options for commuters. TMA shuttles typically serve their members and connections to other transit services, such as commuter rail or rapid transit stations. Some TMAs provide their service to the public and employees of participating member employers, though nonmember riders are typically charged a fare.

In either case, shuttle providers should carefully consider the area in which they intend to serve and the resources required to do so. Providers are encouraged to start small and expand after a steady demand for the service has been proven. Service should initially target the areas with the highest expected ridership. Services can expand over time based on changing demands. Providers should be mindful of the funding, staffing, and other resource commitments that are required for expanding service. Providers should also carefully consider whether a planned expansion will help to advance the program's goal. For example, the expansion might provide new connections to additional transit service or help reduce congestion along a particular corridor.



Estimating demand

For new shuttle providers without historical ridership data, estimating the potential ridership of a service can be an imprecise endeavor. An important task at the outset is identifying the key origins and destinations that would be most likely to generate the highest numbers of riders. In time, with the collection of ridership data, a transit provider's ridership estimates can be refined.

To identify trip origins, a thorough understanding of the demographics of the service area can help target the areas where those most likely to use transit reside. Likely transit riders include seniors, low-income individuals, students, and members of households with fewer than two personal vehicles. The locations of senior housing facilities, low-income housing developments, or other high-density residential areas are typically important areas to serve.

To identify destinations, consider the locations where these populations are likely to desire to go. Major retail opportunities, municipal services and community centers, education facilities, healthcare centers, major employers, and connections to external transit services are typically important areas to serve.

Coverage and ridership systems

A fundamental challenge of providing shuttle service is balancing coverage and ridership. This challenge arises from the fact that transit providers have limited resources at their disposal.

Coverage systems attempt to serve as broad an area as possible so that as many people as possible can access service if they need it. These systems often lead to circuitous routes through low-density areas, but they ensure at least some minimum level of service for most of the population, which can be critical if a person has no alternative transportation options.

Ridership systems attempt to serve the origins, destinations, or corridors with the greatest number of people. These systems often focus on high-density corridors and major origins and destinations, which maximize the use of the system but can neglect people in low-density areas.

Based on the number of vehicles in their fleet, providers can dedicate different proportions of resources to these two strategies to find a balance that works for their organization and their riders.²

² For more information, see Jarrett Walker, *Human Transit* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2011).

Fixed-route, flexible-route, and demand-responsive systems

There are three major routing strategies that providers can leverage to customize their service to the needs of their region and riders. The simplest is running fixed routes. In a fixed-route system, routes run consistently on the same alignments and do not deviate. In a flexible-route system, riders can request a deviation from the main route. The maximum distance a vehicle will deviate depends on the shuttle program, but typically ranges from one-quarter to one-half mile. Finally, under a demand-responsive system, the vehicles adhere to no specific route at all and respond to requests on demand from riders from any location to any other location.³



Bedford Local Transit,

operated by the Town of Bedford, uses a deviated fixed-route service. The shuttle has a fixed route schedule but can deviate to pick up and drop off passengers on request. To board the fixed route portion of the route, riders wave the vehicle down from one of the scheduled stops.

To arrange a deviated pick-up or drop-off, riders can call in the morning of the day they wish to travel. To schedule trips to medical facilities, riders are asked to call three days in advance.

³ A comprehensive review of planning flexible-route transit service can be found in National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, *TCRP Report 140: A Guide for Planning and Operating Flexible Public Transportation Services* (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2010). <https://doi.org/10.17226/22943>.

Designing routes and schedules

Routes should be designed in a way that efficiently connects the identified areas with high numbers of potential riders, and service should be provided at times that are likely to be convenient to the potential riders. There are a number of factors providers should consider, such as

- the location of and travel time between major trip generators;
- prevailing traffic and congestion conditions; and
- the condition of infrastructure for people walking and biking.

Providers should design their schedules to provide service at times that fit riders' needs. For example, commuters will typically want to make connections to ongoing transit service during morning and evening peak periods, and seniors will want to be able to access midday shopping or medical appointments.

Another useful strategy is to schedule routes with clock-face headways, meaning that routes should be designed to be 30 minutes or an hour long if possible. Regular scheduling will help riders become familiar with and remember the service.

Service Operations

Shuttle providers have several options when it comes to service operation, including

- forming a partnership with the regional transit authority (RTA) if a municipality is in an RTA or eligible to join one;
- operating the service directly;
- contracting with a private vendor to operate the service and provide the vehicles; or
- contracting with a private vendor to operate the service with municipal-owned vehicles.

It is advantageous for municipalities who are RTA members to partner with their RTA and use their existing maintenance, dispatching, and marketing infrastructure, and they may be able to tap into their existing RTA assessments to fund the service. However, municipalities with Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) fixed-route bus service cannot join an RTA. Municipalities with MBTA demand-response service but no fixed-route service can join an RTA, but then the RTA would become responsible for providing the demand-response service.

Operating the service directly could be a good option for municipal shuttle providers with their own vehicles and staff looking to expand existing service. For shuttle providers that do not maintain their own equipment or staff resources, it might be more appropriate to contract with a private vendor.

The Scituate Loop, also known as SLOOP, is a municipal shuttle service in Scituate that is operated by the Greater Attleboro-Taunton Regional Transit Authority (GATRA). The arrangement allows municipal staff to focus on service design and changing ridership demands while the GATRA provides vehicles, staff, insurance, and everything else necessary to operate the service. By shifting the operational concerns, the municipality saves money, too.



Routing and Scheduling: Additional Considerations

- For shuttle services with only one vehicle, the overall length of the route affects service frequency. For example, if a route takes an hour to complete, shuttle service can only be provided once every hour, which may not be convenient to riders. Providers should think carefully about the tradeoffs between serving more locations less frequently versus serving fewer places more frequently. Additionally, as suburban areas undergo increased development, adding new stops to a shuttle service without adding additional vehicles can stretch service thin and result in lower frequencies.
- Good route design can be an iterative process. With time and experience, providers will gain a better understanding of what conditions can be problematic for shuttle service. As an example, making a left turn against heavy traffic can cause delay. The more left turns a shuttle vehicle has to make, the more time is added to a route. As another example, there may be some roadways where the geometry is not sufficient for a shuttle vehicle, especially if the program uses 40-foot buses. When designing routes, providers should understand the real-world conditions under which the shuttle vehicles will operate. Staff should perform field testing of their routes to ensure they can be operated smoothly and reliably.
- Safe access plays a major role in determining the location of bus stops. In many suburban conditions, roadways are not designed to support safe and comfortable access for people walking, biking, or using mobility devices. This may require, for example, that shuttles exit busy roadways and pick up or drop-off at suburban sites such as shopping centers. Providers should position bus stops only in areas that can be safely and comfortably accessed; however, they should be mindful of the additional trip time this can require.
- In many cases, shuttle providers in the Boston region have designed their services to connect with additional transit service, either to other shuttle services or to the region's rapid transit or commuter rail network. When connecting at a commuter rail station, it is important to consider the train's schedule and to develop a service in a way that will facilitate convenient transfers.

Land Use

Transportation planning and land use planning are closely linked. Land use that promotes density and mixed-use development typically leads to areas with a stronger ability to support transit. Shuttle providers have minimal agency to affect land use decisions in the short term. Suburban locations are challenging places to provide transit service. Shuttle providers should communicate with municipal administrators and elected officials, planners, and developers about the conditions that can lead to successful transit service, and they should demonstrate the important goals of their shuttle programs that increased density would help to support.



SECTION FOUR

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

To ensure that a program is being successful and meeting its goals, the provider needs to continually assess its performance. An important outcome of measuring performance is communicating the results of the program. To do this effectively, it is important to collect the right information so it can be presented to various potential audiences. There are three broad audiences to whom performance metrics can be tailored.





The riders. Performance metrics most relevant to riders address where they can go, when they can go, and how convenient and reliable the service is for them. Examples of performance metrics relevant to riders include the following metrics:

- *Frequency*, which is how often transit service is provided at a particular location
- *Span of service*, which is the number of hours service is provided at a particular location
- *Travel time*, which is the amount of time for a passenger to travel from one location to another
- *Reliability*, which is how well the service adheres to its published schedule

The community. Performance metrics most relevant to the community at large address the benefits the service brings to the community—for both riders and non-riders—and the resources required to sustain the service, such as funding and cost-benefit analyses. Examples of performance metrics relevant to the community include the following metrics:

- *Ridership, number of trips, employment impact*, or other metrics that show the needs of the community being met
- *Subsidy per passenger*, which is the amount of public funding required per passenger
- *Average fleet fuel efficiency* or other measures of environmental impacts
- *Reduction in vehicle trips, reduction in vehicle-miles traveled, changes in parking demand*, or other measures of impacts on congestion

Service administration. Performance measures that are especially relevant to service administration (including municipal or TMA staff, contracted vendors, or private funders or the public agencies providing grants) address operational efficiency and effectiveness, funding, and organizational performance. Examples of performance measures relevant to service administration include the following metrics:



- *Cost per passenger*, which is the total costs required to run the service divided by the total number of passengers
- *Farebox recovery ratio*, which is the total amount of revenue generated from passenger fares divided by total expenses
- *Equipment reliability*, which includes mean vehicle age or other measures of reliability
- *Missed trips*, which is how many scheduled trips did not operate due to mechanical problems, driver absence, or other causes
- *Customer satisfaction*, which can be measured by surveying passengers

Another useful method to help monitor the program’s progress towards its goals is to provide an avenue to solicit feedback directly from riders. One way to do this is to survey riders by asking where they need to go and when, what they like or dislike about the service, or how the program could better meet their needs.

Another way for shuttle staff to collect on-the-ground information is to ride the service. Riding the service—as a means of transportation or simply as a way to monitor operations—gives an opportunity to identify potential issues and talk with riders and drivers about their experiences.

Naturally, there can be significant overlap between which metrics will be of interest to which audiences. The key takeaway is that data collection efforts should feed into a performance measurement process that demonstrates and communicates the value of the service and that reflects the goals of the program.⁴

4 A comprehensive review of developing a performance measurement process is provided in National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, *TCRP Report 88: A Guidebook for Developing a Transit Performance-Measurement System* (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2003). http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/tcrp/tcrp_report_88/guidebook.pdf.



FIVE SECTION

5

FUNDING

One of the greatest challenges in providing transit service—and the ultimate determinant of its ability to continue operation—is securing adequate and stable funding. Different shuttle providers will have different approaches to securing funding, depending largely on the structure of the organization.

Municipal shuttles are typically funded to varying extents through the municipal budget. To ensure continued funding, staff will need to continuously make the case for the service and demonstrate its success and value, both to municipal administrators and to the tax-paying public. A well-established performance measurement process can help make this task systematic and manageable.



Acton started a new shuttle service using funds generated by the Town-owned commuter rail parking lot. This required working with the legislature through the local delegation to make a change in state law to allow for the generated parking revenues to be used for programs and projects beyond maintenance for the station and parking lot. The change allowed Acton to develop the MinuteVan, an on-demand dial-a-ride service for Acton residents, and the Acton Rail Shuttle, which serves the South Acton commuter rail station and two satellite parking lots. Both of these services are now operated by CrossTown Connect.

TMA shuttles are typically funded through private partners. TMA partners are most commonly employers that, through TMA membership, can offer the shuttle service to their employees as a benefit. The service is typically covered through employers' TMA membership fees and often includes other benefits such as a guaranteed ride home program. TMA shuttle operators often choose to allow members of the general public to ride as well, though they often charge a fare for nonmember riders.

Both municipal-operated and TMA-operated shuttles can be partially funded through fares, though TMA-operated shuttles typically only collect fares from nonmember riders. In both cases, total revenue from the farebox is typically a minimal part of a program's overall revenue. As such, fares are often nominally priced for convenience—for example, one dollar per ride or 50 cents for discounted riders. When pricing fares, providers are urged to consider their goals. If providing an essential service was valued more than maintaining a high farebox recovery ratio, fares should be set and communicated accordingly.

Both municipal-operated and TMA-operated shuttles can also be funded through grants. Most commonly, grants are awarded to providers of new services as start-up funding. The grant funding is typically provided for a limited period of time (for example, number of years), after which it is the hope that the program has achieved financial stability from other sources. In some cases, providers have seen success in leveraging short-term public funding to secure longer-term private funding—especially TMA-operated shuttle programs. For example, with a three-year grant from a public source, providers could work to attract five-year commitments from private sources. TMA partners may be amenable to such an arrangement if the shuttle provider can demonstrate significant value over the long term. For municipal-operated services, providers should continue to engage and provide support to stakeholders to keep the shuttle program a priority in the municipal budget.

When pursuing any grant funding opportunity, shuttle providers are encouraged to demonstrate on their applications a plan for sustainable long-term funding. This might mean securing commitments from private funding partners or showing a financial plan to leverage long-term private funding commitments against shorter-term public funding.

For applicants from municipalities with existing MBTA service, when applying for a grant, it may be necessary to show that the proposed service will not overlap with the existing MBTA service. If it does, applicants may need to clearly demonstrate why the existing service is inadequate.

Several grant programs are available to provide funding for transit providers, depending on the program's needs. One opportunity is administered by the Boston Region MPO:

- **Community Connections** (originally known as the Community Transportation Program) is “the MPO’s funding program for first- and last-mile solutions, community transportation, and other small, nontraditional transportation projects such as updating transit technology and improving bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The program is one of the investment programs included in the MPO’s current Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and is funded at a level of \$2 million per year in the federal fiscal years 2020–24 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).”⁵

Two grant programs are overseen by the MassDOT Rail and Transit Division:

- The **Community Transit Grant Program** is “an annual competitive grant program to meet the mobility needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities [that] provides funds for the purchase of vehicles, mobility management activities, and operating costs. ... The annual competitive program distributes Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5310: Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities funds and State Mobility Assistance Program (MAP) funds.”⁶
- The **Workforce Transportation Program** is “a new program that will provide funding for projects aimed at meeting workforce transportation needs around the Commonwealth. In February 2020, MassDOT awarded \$4.2 million in Federal and State funds to projects that will provide workforce transportation service. Awardees included employers, TMAs, municipalities, and non-profit organizations.”⁷

Another program that has been available in past years is the **Efficiency & Regionalization Grant Program**. The Community Compact Cabinet administers this program, and it “provides financial support for entities interested in implementing regionalization and other efficiency initiatives. The purpose of the ... program was to provide financial support for governmental entities interested in implementing regionalization and other efficiency initiatives that allow for long-term sustainability. These grants provided funds for one-time or transition costs for municipalities, regional school districts, school districts considering forming a regional school district or regionalizing services, regional planning agencies and councils of governments interested in such projects.”⁸

5 For more information, see <https://ctps.org/community-connections>.

6 For more information, see <https://www.mass.gov/community-transit-grant-program>.

7 For more information, see <https://www.mass.gov/workforce-transportation-program>.

8 For more information, see <https://www.mass.gov/efficiency-regionalization-grant-program>.





SIX SECTION

BRANDING AND MARKETING

To increase the visibility of the shuttle program and attract new riders, shuttle providers should develop a branding and marketing strategy. Depending on financial and staff resources, many techniques can be used.



Develop a brand with consistent colors, fonts, and graphics.

Consistent colors, fonts, and graphics will help make the shuttle program more recognizable and familiar. The established branding should be used across any visual communication, including maps, schedules, and the website.

“Wrap” the bus.

The shuttle vehicle itself can be a rolling advertisement for the service. An eye-catching design—consistent with the program’s branding—will generate interest and familiarize the public with the vehicle and give a glimpse into its route. During MPO staff’s interviews, one shuttle provider said that wrapping the vehicle had been the most effective publicity strategy that they had employed.

Maintain signage, maps, and schedules at bus stops.

Shuttle providers should provide amenities at bus stops to keep passengers informed. These materials should also be designed in accordance with the shuttle program’s brand.

Maintain a website and social media presence.

A website and active social media presence are important ways to engage with the community and communicate with riders to notify them of delays or changes.



Real-time Location and Static Schedule Data

Shuttle providers should consider making schedule and real-time shuttle location data available to smartphone applications, such as the Transit app, and to Google and Apple maps. The Transit app is the MBTA's endorsed trip planning app, so it can be particularly useful to riders connecting to or from the MBTA. If real-time shuttle location data are not readily available, static schedule information may still help increase the visibility of the service to the general public. One shuttle provider that has made its schedule and real-time data available reports that first-time riders often see the shuttle service through app searches. Shuttle services operated by RTAs may be able make use of the RTA's existing data feed to provide schedule and real-time location information.

According to staff with the North Shore TMA, wrapping the vehicle is one of the most effective marketing tools. Staff researched several vehicle wrapping services and ultimately found a local option. The wrapping company worked directly with TMA staff and the shuttle's operator to custom design a wrap based on the North Shore Wave's logo. Staff say the design exceeded their expectations and was reasonably priced at \$4,000.





SECTION

COORDINATION

Very little that occurs in the transportation arena occurs in isolation. Coordination between different agencies is often necessary to advance solutions and solve problems, and that is also true of providing transit. Ultimately, coordination opens up opportunities to use resources more efficiently. The opportunities that arise will vary between transit providers based on different resources, priorities, and circumstances. To identify possible avenues for coordination, shuttle providers should think about the agencies and organizations with which they routinely interact. The following are a few examples of coordination among shuttle providers in the Boston region.

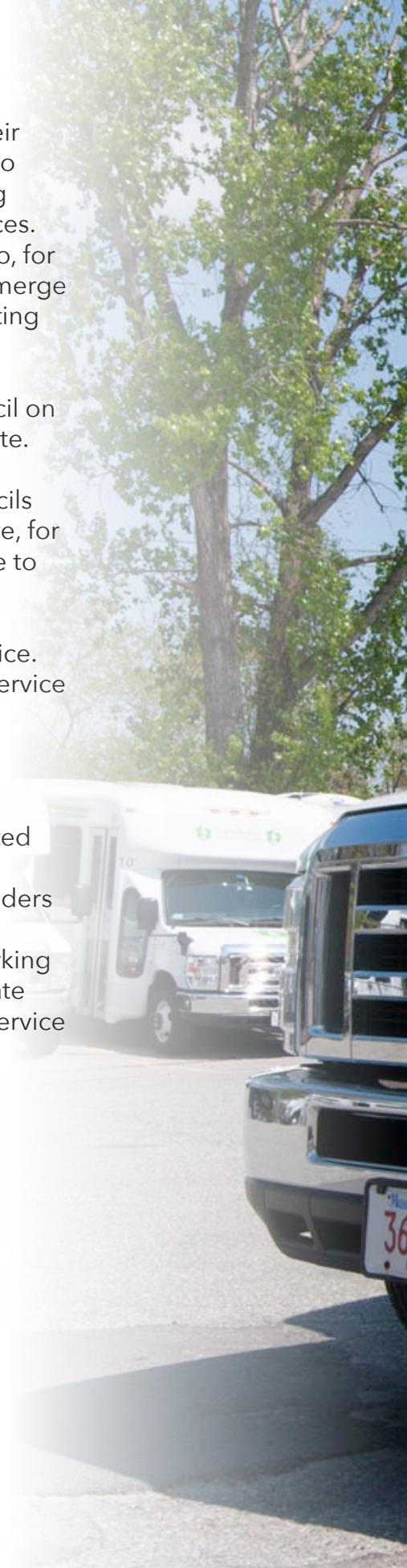


Some municipalities might find opportunities to coordinate with their neighbors. Shuttle services will often need to cross municipal lines to service significant regional destinations, such as hospitals, shopping centers, major employers, or connections to additional transit services. Where these municipal services connect, municipalities can agree to, for example, free transfers, or municipalities might find it beneficial to merge their programs completely. In the Boston region, regional coordinating councils provide a venue for these conversations to take place.

Throughout Massachusetts and the Boston region, municipal Council on Aging services have taken advantage of an opportunity to coordinate. Recognizing that multiple services were often serving the same destinations but running with inefficient passenger loads, the Councils on Aging restructured their programs so that one shuttle could serve, for example, a major hospital, while other vehicles were made available to serve local destinations.

In one example, a municipality engaged an RTA to operate the service. Under this arrangement, the municipality maintained control over service design decisions and was able to tap into the existing dispatching, maintenance, and operations infrastructure of the RTA.

The Boston Region MPO plays a role in the coordination of transit services in the region. The primary purpose of the MPO's Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan is to improve coordination among transit agencies and other transportation providers to better serve the transportation needs of seniors and people with disabilities. Also, a recently formed Boston Region MPO Transit Working Group will convene periodically as a venue for shuttle providers, state agencies, and advocates to discuss important issues facing transit service in the region.





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MESSAGE SECTION

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