

# EQUITY AND ACCESSIBILITY IMPLEMENTATION GRANT

*October, 2022*



**Newport County, RI**



**Age-Friendly**  
RHODE ISLAND





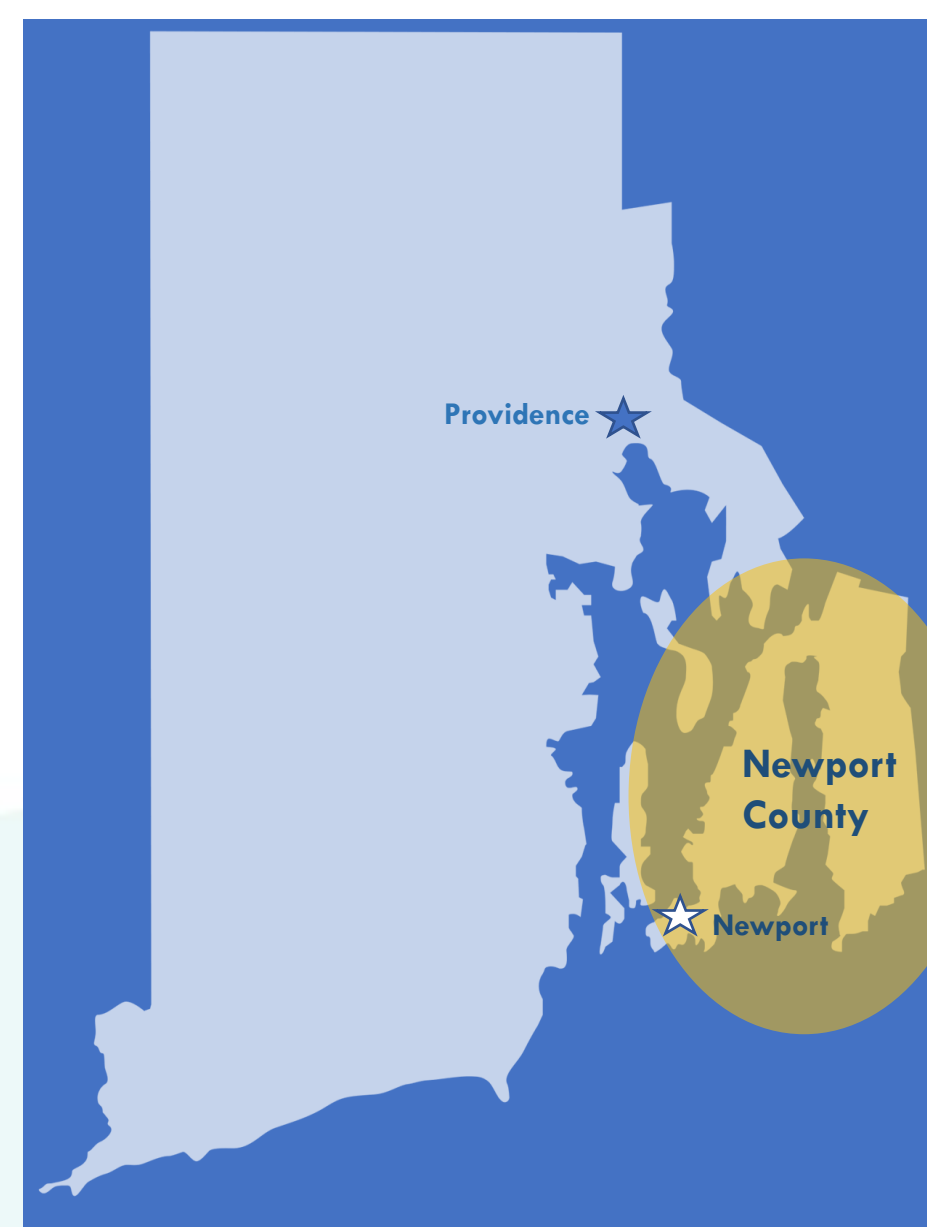
*This publication was developed with funds provided by the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC). The NADTC is administered by Easterseals, Inc. in partnership with USAgings, with funding from the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration and with guidance from the U.S. Administration on Community Living*

# Project Location

Implementation will focus on diverse and disadvantaged populations in **Newport County, RI**

## Key Project Partners

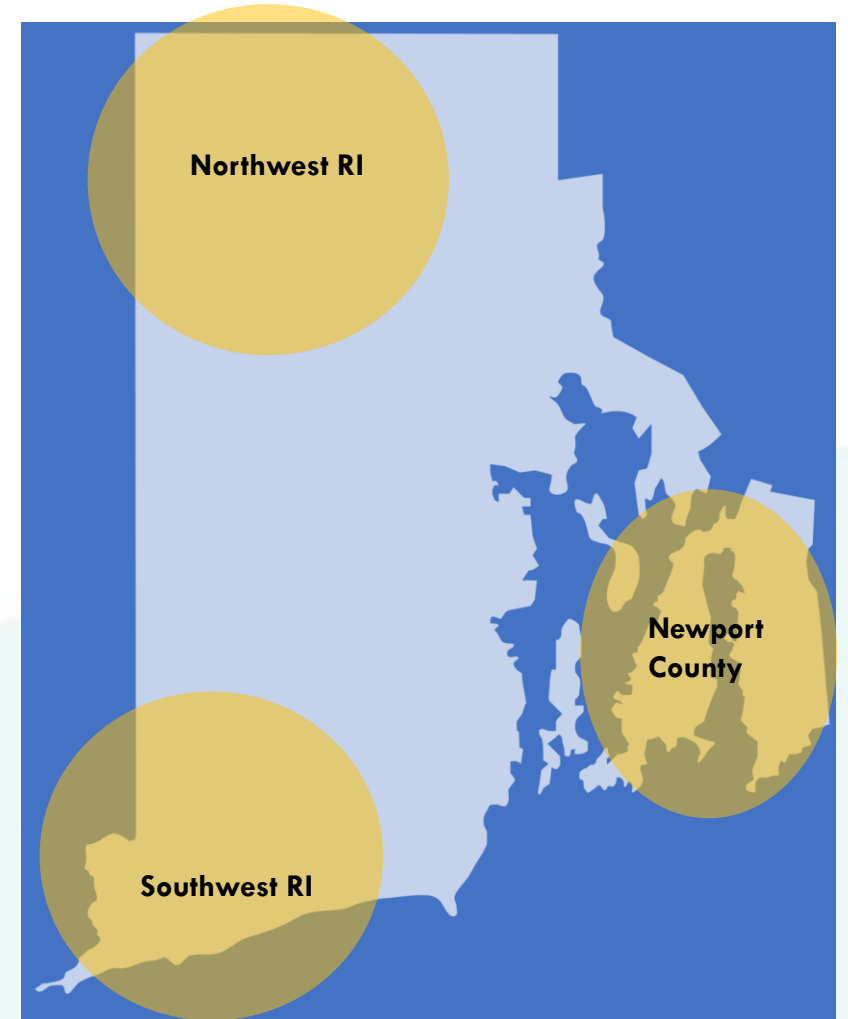
- **Age Friendly-RI (AFRI)** a coalition of public, non-profit and faith organizations focused on healthy aging
- **RI Public Transit Authority (RIPTA)** the statewide transit provider and designated Mobility Manager
- **Looking Upwards** a social service organization based in Newport County



# Planning Phase

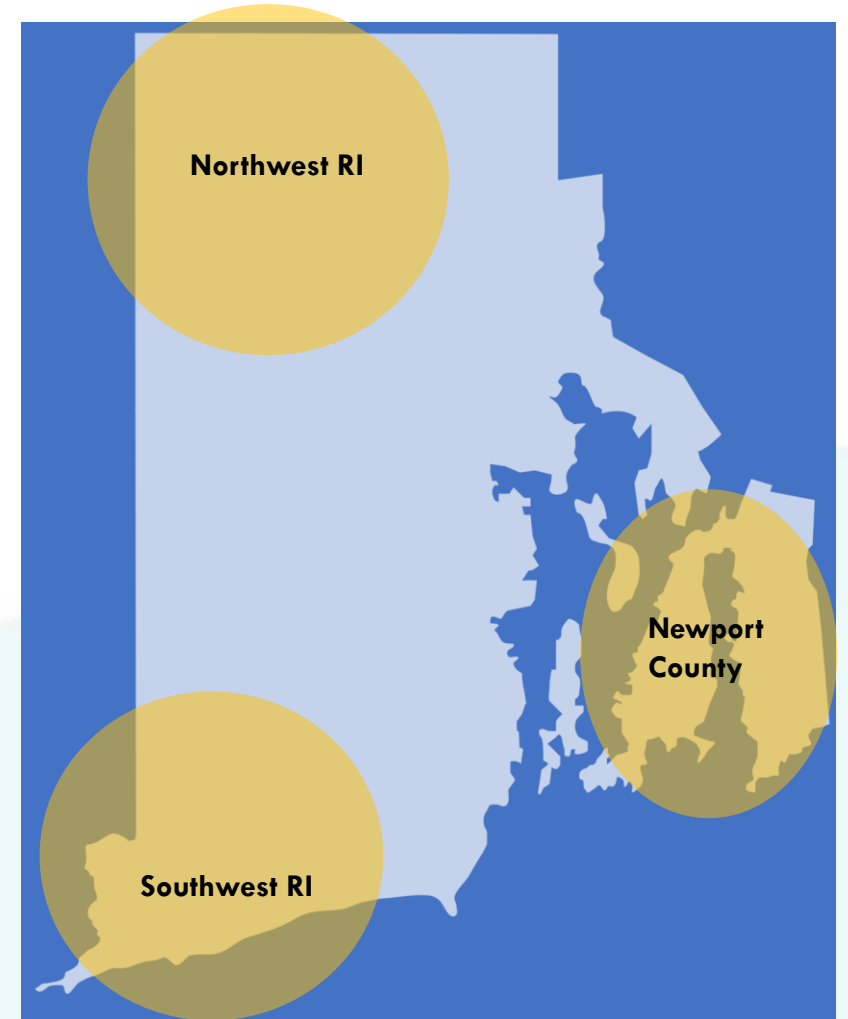
AFRI and RIPTA led planning and engagement from May to August 2022:

- Three **Planning Focus Groups** encompassing three distinct rural areas and 15 municipalities
- One **Implementation Focus Group** with participants from all three areas
- Participants included:
  - 100 plus total participants
  - 12 Municipal representatives
  - 2 state agency representatives



# Planning Phase Continued:

- A dozen non-profit organizations that represent older adults and individuals with disabilities
- 40 plus persons over the age of 60
- One-on-one interviews throughout New England and New York to understand best practices and potential transportation models Including: Maine Council on Aging, Tri-State Learning Collaborative's Aging Transportation Committee, and three Massachusetts based agencies that serve transportation needs: Quahog Connector, Berkshire County and Cross-Town Connect



# What Did We Hear?

- While some public transit and other services are available, they are *very limited* in these rural areas.
  - State, municipal, and non-profit providers cannot fulfill requests for all desired routes/trips, two of 3 regions had volunteer programs as well as transport provided by local hospital/clinics, *but not Newport County*
  - Only two of 5 Newport County municipalities provide local transportation
- There is a low level of coordination across public, non-profit and private programs
  - Many expressed interest in working together on Mobility Management in their distinct areas



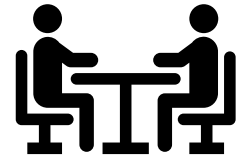
*“Many social service offices cannot be readily accessed from Newport using public transportation”*



# What Challenges were Identified?

## Liability/Legal Concerns

- Can municipalities or non-profits to transport clients from outside their communities?
- What might an inter-agency contract look like?



## Staffing

- Providers are finding it difficult to find/vet/hire/train drivers.
- Union rules may prevent municipalities from employing part-time drivers or sharing vehicles.
- Additional support for coordination/scheduling/dispatch is needed



## Costs/Cost Sharing

- Where will funding come from, who would be primary vehicle sharing sponsor (insurance, liability)?
- How would costs be shared (gas, insurance, maintenance, training, scheduling)?



# Implementation Plan

## Project Objective:

- Expand capacity to address unmet transportation needs with a focus on Newport's North End, an historically underserved, very diverse area where the marginalized in the county are concentrated in public housing.
- Implement service to meal sites, programs and services at senior centers in rural Newport County
- Support adult disabled workers and their caregivers by supplementing transportation to Federal job sites





# Implementation Plan Continued

## Project Description:

- Partners will leverage underutilized vans from Looking Upwards to meet local transportation needs and fills gaps in service
- Funds will support the expansion of existing Looking Upwards employee duties to provide mobility management, coordination, and scheduling.

*“My daughter... does not have transportation to any designation and has to rely on me for all her transportation needs...I am encouraged by the discussions during the focus groups..I look forward to continuing to work with all project partners”*

*Lori*

*Mom to a disabled adult worker*





# THANK YOU

Jim Connell

[JConnell@ric.edu](mailto:JConnell@ric.edu)

Joelle Kanter

[JKanter@ripta.com](mailto:JKanter@ripta.com)



Age-Friendly  
RHODE ISLAND



RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY