

EXPANDING THE ACCESS PROGRAM

A REGIONAL MICRO TRANSIT SERVICE



Franklin Regional
Council of Governments

NATDC Final Presentation

August 19, 2025



Location of Project:

Franklin County, Massachusetts

**The most rural region
in Massachusetts**

Includes 26 towns

**Average town
population of 1,700**

**Population profile is
growing older at a
high rate**







CHARLEMONT TOWN HALL

TOWN OFFICES

TYLER MEMORIAL LIBRARY

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPECIAL TOWN MEETING
OCT18 6PM HAWLEMONT

PARKING

Planet

UNLEADED DIESEL
352549

Project Details:

Objective and Scope of Work

Objective

The Access Program is a micro-transit service operated by the regional transit authority in 11 towns in Franklin County, MA. There are 15 other towns that are not currently served.

The objective of this project is to determine the needs and steps to **expand the Access Program** to service additional towns **and satisfy unmet transportation needs**.

Scope of Work

- Robust Engagement to **gather input**
- Assess future needs to **identify steps for growth** in the service
- **Identify next steps** and barriers

Project Details:

Public Engagement



2 Advisory Groups were engaged



8 Focus Groups were held



1 Survey (distributed on-line and through paper surveys)

Project Details:

Public Engagement

Advisory Groups

Called on two existing groups to provide input on project:

- Franklin Regional Transportation Planning Organization (FCTPO)
- FRTA Transportation Advisory Committee (FRTA TAC)

Focus Groups

Conducted 8 Focus Group sessions with assistance from Lifepath, Public Health Nurses, Regional Mass in Motion Age Friendly Program, and Senior Centers/Councils on Aging (COA) to engage participants.

- A total of 55 people attended

Survey

Distributed the survey on-line and paper via email list serves, newsletters, town public health nurses, Meals on Wheels deliveries, senior centers/councils on aging activities/outlets, and social media.

- 100 responses received



Advisory Groups



Focus Groups



Survey

Project Details:

Public Engagement



Needs and Gaps

- Rides to medical appointments outside of the county
- Rides on weekends
- Better dissemination of information on existing resources and eligibilities

Issues and Constraints to Expanding

- Fear of unfamiliarity and change
- Funding for rides across RTA borders
- Funding availability at the municipal level

Project Details: Findings



- There are **unmet needs** for transportation in the most rural towns in Franklin County.
- **Social connections** are important.
- People want to **age in their homes**.
- New **cross-collaborative partnerships were invaluable** (Regional Public Health Nurses, Meals on Wheels, Senior Centers and COAs).
- Important to use **online and paper surveys**.
- Code the hard copy surveys **before distribution!**

Project Details:

Next Steps



Two towns were identified as potential candidates for Access service expansion.

- Finalize the **preliminary cost data**.
- Develop a **marketing strategy to overcome fears**.
- Further develop **promotional campaign ideas**:
 - "Meet your driver".
 - "Local leader uses the Access Program".
- Conduct **travel training** with the Senior Centers/COAs.
- Need to "sell" Access Program to **Town Administrators and Town Meeting Voters**.

Thank you!

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