

Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan for Franklin County

March 2015



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TPO ENDORSEMENT

Franklin County Transportation Planning Organization Committee of Signatures
Endorsement of the 2015 Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services
Transportation Plan for Franklin County

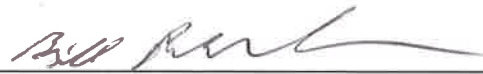
SIGNATORY CERTIFICATION


Stephanie Pollack, Secretary and CEO
MassDOT


3/12/15
Date

for 
Thomas Tinlin, Administrator
MassDOT Highway Division

3/12/15
Date


Bill Perlman, Chair
FRCOG Executive Committee


3/12/15
Date

for 
Lance Fritz, Chair
Franklin Regional Transit Authority

3/12/15
Date

for 
William Martin, Mayor
City of Greenfield

3/12/15
Date


John Paciorek
Regionally Elected Representative to the FRCOG
Executive Committee

3/12/15
Date


Robert Dean
West County Sub-Regional Appointment

3/12/15
Date

Jonathan Edwards
Central County Sub-Regional Appointment

Date

Vacant
East County Sub-Regional Appointment

Date

Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan for Franklin County

Introduction

The Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan (CHST) is a locally developed plan that assesses the transportation needs of persons with disabilities and seniors within Franklin County and is coordinated with other transportation service providers. This plan is updated every three to five years with input from, or representatives of, seniors and individuals with disabilities, and public, private and non-profit transportation and human service providers. The goal of the CHST is to identify strategies to improve the quality and availability of transportation services for the disabled and elder populations in the region.

The federal transit law, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), requires that a region have an updated CHST in order to be eligible to receive federal funding. Specifically, MAP-21 requires that beginning in October 2012, all projects selected for funding under the Section 5310: Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program must show that they are responding to the unmet needs as documented in the CHST. Attached in the Appendix are fact sheets about the Section 5310 funding program provided by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) and the Federal Transit Authority (FTA).

The Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) first prepared a CHST (then called a Locally Coordinated Plan) for the region in 2007. The FRCOG is the regional planning agency for Franklin County and also staffs the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the region. This latest update to the plan identifies any recent changes to the transit resources available in the region and the disabled or elder population in Franklin County. This update also brings the CHST into compliance with the newer MAP-21 federal requirements.

This CHST has identified many transit needs for the region. Many of these unmet needs can be addressed with Section 5310 funding. Eligible entities are encouraged to apply for funding to provide service to fill these unmet gaps. Evaluation criteria and priorities are outlined at the end of this CHST as to how projects will be selected for funding.

Public Input and Transportation Coordination

There are many different groups and agencies that organize, provide, or assist with transportation for populations such as the elders and disabled. To ensure the most effective and efficient use of resources, this CHST Plan seeks to coordinate the transportation services and needs within a region. To help with this issue, the state has formed Regional Coordinating Committees (RCCs), whose membership is composed of representatives or stakeholders of transportation services within a specific region. The Franklin County RCC was created in 2014 and recently merged with the Franklin County Transit Advisory Committee since many of the members served on both committees and their missions were very similar in scope. The RCC is a voluntary advisory board which provides a forum for open discussion, information exchange, and decision-making about regional transportation priorities. The RCC meets every other month and has just recently completed a detailed inventory of the transportation services that exist within the Franklin County region. The intention of the RCC is to distribute this inventory to social service providers, hospitals, courthouses, and other places where individuals may need access to transportation services. The inventory is also very helpful for this CHST as it identifies who is eligible for services and in what locations and, conversely, where there may be gaps in services.

The FRTA is currently conducting a Comprehensive Service Analysis examining its fixed route services. The FRCOG partnered with the FRTA to conduct the public outreach for this analysis. As part of the extensive outreach conducted in the Spring and Summer of 2014, the FRCOG and FRTA received a large amount of input regarding not just the fixed route services, but also information on the type of general transportation services needed in the region, current transit gaps, and priorities for transportation. A summary of this outreach can be found at <http://frcog.org/program-services/transportation-planning/>.

The FRCOG also updates the Regional Transportation Plan every four years. This plan is a comprehensive document examining all modes of transportation and provides the basis for future long-term transportation planning in the region. The FRCOG is currently in the process of updating this Plan and has been gathering public input on transportation priorities and conducting socio-demographic analysis to better understand the transportation needs of the region.

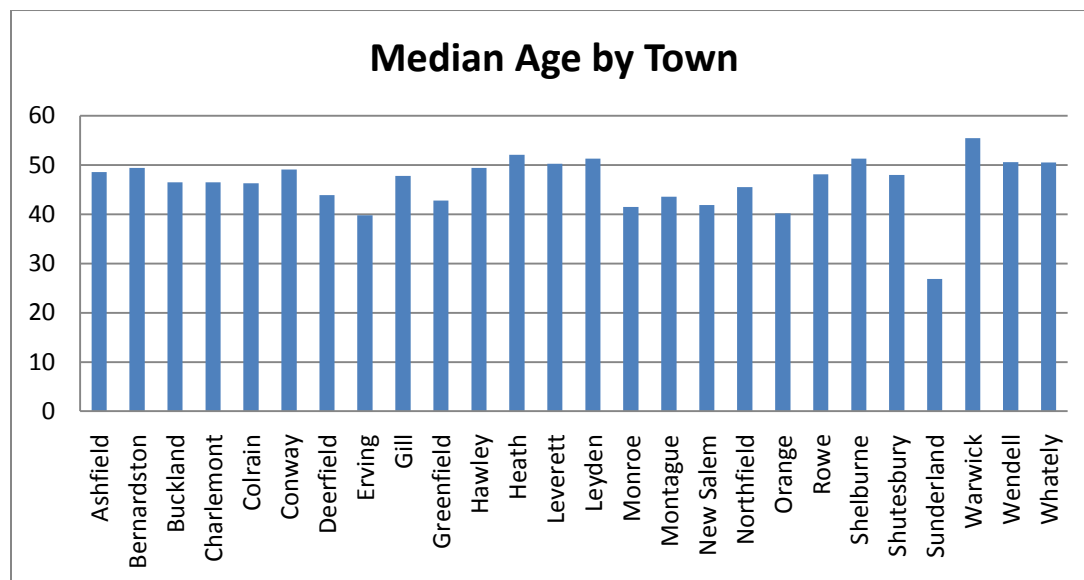
Population Overview

Franklin County is the most rural county in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. It has a total population of 71,408 people spread over twenty-six municipalities. There are several

large employment and population centers within Franklin County. They are: Greenfield (pop. 17,526), Montague (pop. 8,422), Orange (pop. 7,819), and Deerfield (pop. 5,115).¹

Like much of the nation, Franklin County’s population is getting older as the “Baby Boomer” population ages. Currently, almost half (49%) of the population is aged 45 years and older and 16% (11,404) is aged 65 years and older. Figure 1 below shows that the median age for many communities in Franklin County are around 50 years old. On average, the largest population centers have younger median ages as compared to the more rural towns in the region such as Heath, Leyden, and Warwick, which are older.

Figure 1. Median Age by Town in Franklin County for 2013.

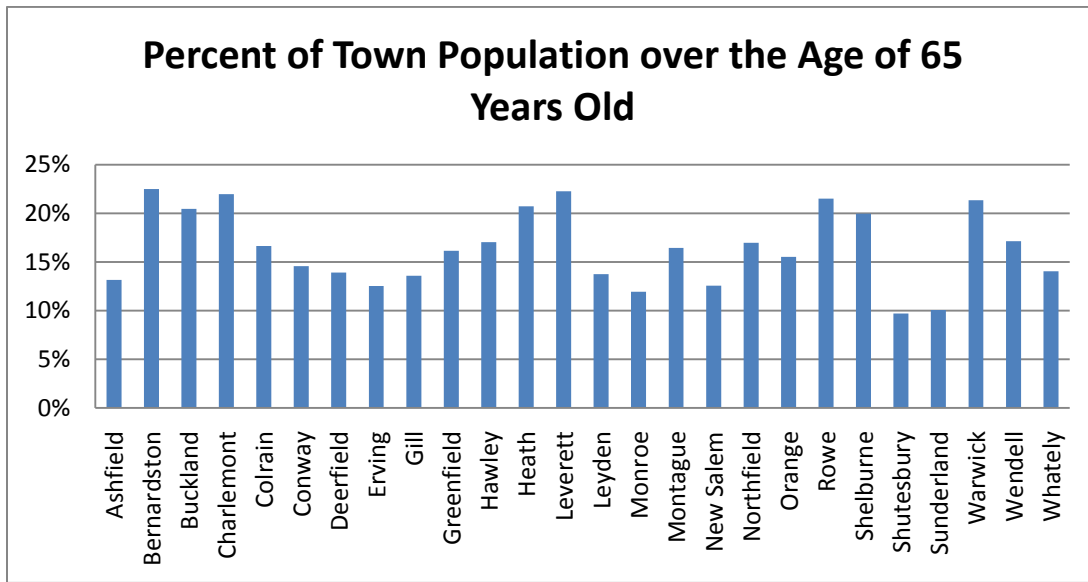


The size of the population aged 65 years and older is expected to increase dramatically in the future. Projections show that by 2035, it will have increased by 77% while the rest of the population will only increase by roughly 7%.² Those aged 65 years and older will make up a quarter of the Franklin County population. Figure 2 shows that the towns located farthest away from the Franklin County population and employment centers have the highest shares of elders. Providing transportation services to these geographically distant and spread out populations can be challenging and expensive. Currently, the FRTA owns vehicles which are operated by many of the municipal Councils on Aging. Often, these vehicles are the only transportation option for many towns and they are operating at capacity.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all socio-economic demographic data is from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2009-2013 Five-Year Estimates.

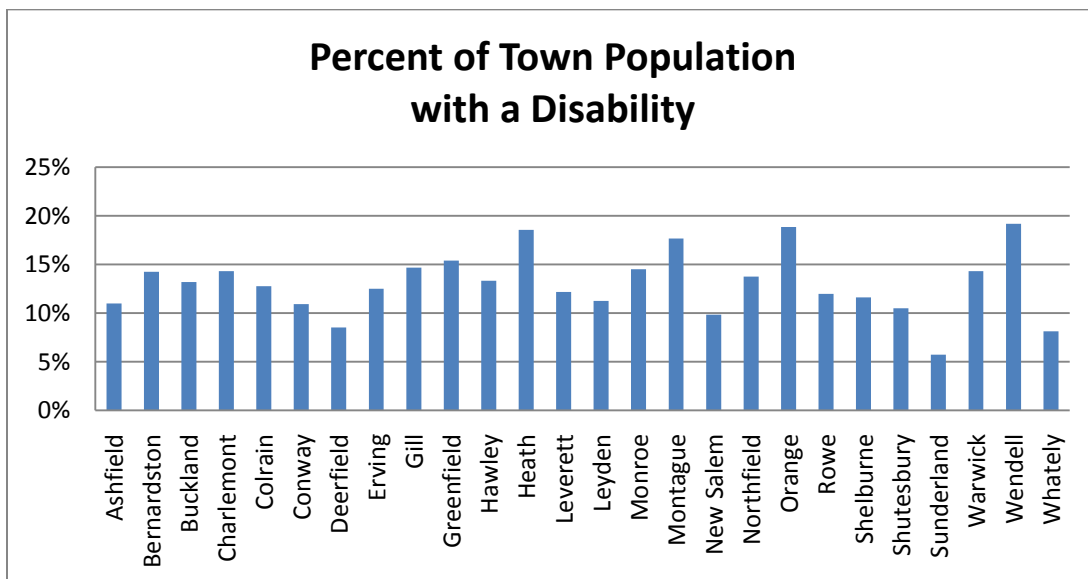
² MassDOT Projections, in collaboration with FRCOG, 2011.

Figure 2. Percent of Town Population that is over the Age of 65 Years Old in 2013.



The disabled population in Franklin County is composed of all age groups. In 2013, there was a total of 9,975 persons with disabilities in the County or 14% of the total population. The U.S. Census classifies disabilities in the following categories: hearing difficulty, vision difficulty, cognitive difficulty, ambulatory difficulty, and self-care difficulty. The most common disability in Franklin County is an ambulatory difficulty at 26% of the disabled population. This is closely followed by those with a cognitive difficulty at 20% of the disabled population. As might be expected, the population aged 65 years and older has the highest percentage of disabilities in comparison to the younger populations.

Figure 3. Percent of Town Population that Has a Disability in 2013.



Transportation Resources

Due to the rural nature of Franklin County and its small population, residents are largely dependent on private vehicles for transportation. According to the U.S. Census, only 7% of Franklin County households do not have vehicles compared to a much higher proportion of 13% of Massachusetts households. The FRTA provides the majority of public transit within the region. Listed below is a brief summary of the different types of transportation services available within Franklin County. The Franklin County Regional Coordinating Council just recently completed a detailed inventory of all transportation services within the region. This inventory can also be seen below and includes information on passenger eligibility, service areas, days and hours of operation, cost, and contact information.

Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA)

The FRTA is the primary transit authority serving Franklin County. The FRTA has the largest service area of any transit authority in the Commonwealth and serves 41 towns in Franklin, Hampshire, Hampden, and Worcester Counties. Twenty-three of the twenty-six communities within Franklin County are members of the FRTA (all except Leverett, Monroe, and Sunderland). The FRTA also provides fixed route services to two PVTA-member towns – Amherst and Northampton.

Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA)

The PVTA is a second transit authority operating in the Franklin County region. The PVTA is based in Springfield and principally serves communities in Hampshire and Hampden Counties. The PVTA has two member towns in Franklin County: Leverett and Sunderland. It also provides fixed route services to Deerfield, an FRTA member town.

The FRTA provides the following services:

Fixed Route Services

Ten of the 26 communities within Franklin County have some level of fixed route service for their communities. Almost all of the fixed route service is only available on weekdays during the daytime. The exception is the PVTA service to Sunderland (Route 31), which runs on Saturday and Sundays and in the evenings.

Med-Ride Program

This program is sponsored by Franklin County Home Care Corporation and FRTA and provides transportation to seniors for medical appointments using private automobiles. This program uses volunteer drivers who receive a mileage stipend.

Demand Response Service

Demand response transportation is a curb to curb service offered to elders 60 years or older, eligible Franklin County Home Care Corporation consumers, nursing home residents,

or Veterans with a disability rating of 70% or greater. Days, hours of operations, fares, and service varies depending on the town.

ADA Paratransit Services

The ADA Paratransit Services are for disabled individuals who are located within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of a fixed route service. This can be a curb to curb service or door to door service, depending on the nature of the disability. The cost for ADA service is twice the fare of the regular fixed route fare. The PVRTA also provides this service for PVRTA member towns within Franklin County. Its offers door to door service.

Other transportation services available within the region include:

Peter Pan Bus Lines

Peter Pan Bus Lines and Greyhound Lines jointly operate service to Franklin County with two trips to Greenfield and Deerfield each day. The Greenfield station is located at the John W. Olver Transit Center and the Deerfield stop is located at Savage Market on Route 5/10.

Amtrak

Amtrak has just recently rerouted its Vermonter service and added several new stations, including Greenfield. The passenger train now stops in Greenfield at the John W. Olver Transit Center twice a day (once in each direction). Passengers can take the train either north to St. Alban's, VT or south to Washington, DC.

Taxis

Taxi service in Franklin County is very limited. About Town Taxi is located in Greenfield and serves the whole county and charges fares based on distance from Greenfield. The second cab company is Ace Cab, which is also located in Greenfield.

Other Private Services

There are several limousine, van, and charter bus services based in Franklin County. The limousine services are:

- East Coast Limousine, Montague
- F.M. Kuzmeskus, Gill
- Murphy Sedan Service, Shutesbury
- Poupon Limousine, Gill
- Wrisley Limousine Service, South Deerfield

Van and charter bus services are:

- Baker Transportation, Montague
- Carl B. Liebenow, Inc., Shelburne
- Chapin and Sadler Buses, Montague

- F.M. Kuzmeskus Inc., Gill
- Morgan Coachline, Inc., South Deerfield
- Peter Pan Trailways, Greenfield

Franklin County Regional Transportation Inventory*

Program	Rider Eligibility	Trip Type	Service Area	Days & Hours of Service	Wheelchair-Accessible	Cost	Phone	Website
Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA) fixed route	general public	all	connecting Greenfield to Amherst, Orange, Charlemont, Montague, and Northampton & towns along the way	M-F	yes	\$1-\$3 each way; discounts for seniors, people with disabilities, & veterans	(413) 774-2262	www.frta.org
Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) fixed route	general public	all	Hampden and Hampshire Counties, plus Sunderland, Leverett, Deerfield in Franklin County	7 days a week	yes	\$1.25 each way; discounts for seniors, disabled, & children	(413) 781-7882	www.pvta.org
Athol/Orange area Dial-a-Ride (formerly CTS)	general public	employment & medical trips get priority	Athol & Orange	M-F 6am-6pm	yes	\$1.50 each way or \$10 for 10 rides	978.575.9966	
About Town Taxi	general public	all	all	Sun-Thurs 6am-midnight; Fri&Sat 6am-1am	no		(413) 774-4000	
GAAMHA, Inc.	general public	all	anywhere in MA; out of state sometimes	24/7	yes	\$1.25 per mile and \$15 per hour wait time	(978) 632-0934	www.gaamha.org
FRTA demand-response	seniors age 60+, Franklin County Home Care Corporation consumers, nursing home residents, veterans with rating 70% or higher	varies by town	FRTA service area	varies by town	yes	varies by town	(413) 774-2262	www.frta.org
FRTA Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) paratransit service	people with disabilities who apply and are found eligible	all	within 3/4 mile of a fixed route bus	same as fixed route	yes	twice the fixed route fare	(413) 774-2262	www.frta.org
FRTA MedRides volunteer driver program	seniors age 60+	medical, out of county	from Franklin County to out of county locations	M-F	no		(413) 774-2262	www.frta.org

Program	Rider Eligibility	Trip Type	Service Area	Days & Hours of Service	Wheelchair-Accessible	Cost	Phone	Website
Franklin County Home Care Corporation	home care consumers	medical & grocery	Franklin County & North Quabbin				(413) 773-5555	www.fchcc.org
Highland Valley Elder Services	home care consumers	medical & grocery	24 towns in Hampshire and Hampden County				(413) 586-2000	www.highlandvalley.org
Rides for Health volunteer driver program	home care consumers	medical	Franklin County & North Quabbin	7 days a week	not guaranteed	donations accepted	(413) 775-5555	www.fchcc.org/services/services-for-elders/rides-for-health
MassHealth transportation	eligible MassHealth consumers	medical	statewide & participating healthcare providers out of state	24/7	yes	free	(800) 841-2900	
Road to Recovery - American Cancer Society	cancer patients	medical	Massachusetts		no	free	(800) 227-2345	www.cancer.org/treatment/supportprograms/services/road-to-recovery
Bay State Franklin - shuttle to Springfield	radiation patients	medical	Bay State Greenfield to Bay State Springfield	leaves at 8:30 AM, returns at 11:30 AM			(413) 773-2251	http://tinyurl.com/BayState-shuttle

*Transportation services are color-coded based on passenger eligibility. Inventory as of January 2015.

Assessment of Transportation Needs

The FRCOG and the FRTA have recently conducted several analyses and plans that examine the transportation system in the region and, in particular, looked at the public transit system. These studies and planning processes include:

- 2015 Franklin County Regional Transportation Plan (currently being drafted, public outreach in process)
- 2015 Franklin Regional Comprehensive Assessment (currently being drafted, public outreach complete)
- Regional Coordinating Council Transportation Inventory (2015)
- 2011 Franklin County Regional Transportation Plan
- Survey of Select Populations Regarding Transit Service, 2014
- Needs Assessment of Franklin County Councils on Aging, 2012
- North County Transit Study, 2011
- Transit Services and Needs in Western Franklin County, 2008

Through this planning work and the input gathered from public outreach, the following service gaps and needs have been identified:

- Additional fixed transit routes to allow access to employment, education, and services;
- More frequent fixed route service to accommodate passengers' needs to move between employment, childcare, and services in a timely manner;
- More evening transit service to allow access to employment, education, and services;
- Begin weekend transit service to allow access to employment, education, and services;
- Improved connectivity between transportation providers serving Franklin County so that users can more easily transfer and move from Point A to Point B as efficiently as possible;
- Better links between transportation modes;
- Provision of transportation services to residents located in the more rural areas of Franklin County far from fixed transit routes;
- Marketing of existing transportation services;
- Continuing the maintenance of vehicles at or above a state of good repair; and
- Acquisition of modern accessible service equipment and technical applications.

Evaluation Criteria

Projects submitted for consideration of Section 5310 funding will be evaluated and ranked based on the following criteria:

- Number of passengers served;
- Degree of provision of access to employment, education, or services; and
- Degree to which Environmental Justice populations are served.

Priorities for Implementation

Priority for projects will go towards those that:

- Provide connections to other transit services;
- Provide access to employment, education, and services; and
- Provide service to address barriers for seniors and disabled communities.

Conclusion

Access to affordable, timely, reliable, and safe transportation is an essential component of a functioning and thriving region. The coordination of existing services and expanding services is important to ensuring that all populations, but particularly the elders and disabled, are able to participate fully in the community. Franklin County is dedicated this goal and will continue to work towards helping meet the transportation service needs identified in this CHST.