

# Promoting Healthy Aging through Mobility and Transportation

## Introduction

People of all ages need access to transportation options to get to medical appointments and to acquire medication and nutritious food, but also to facilitate meaningful interactions with friends and family and acquire opportunities to contribute through volunteering or work experiences. For these reasons and more, Age-Friendly Communities are paying attention to transportation and working to improve mobility.

Age-Friendly Communities work to support healthy aging and independence as well as interconnectedness – all of which rely on transportation access. For many older residents, getting to these destinations and activities can be

a challenge. Lack of transportation contributes to social isolation and other impacts detrimental to mental and physical health.

The Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative and MassMobility are partnering to help municipalities and organizations overcome transportation barriers – starting by recognizing the creative and effective work already underway in communities across the Commonwealth. Check out these examples of replicable and resourceful approaches underway in rural, suburban, and urban areas of Massachusetts, as well as tools and resources for enhancing local mobility and integrating dementia-friendly transportation into your community.

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## Creative Examples from around Massachusetts

### Volunteer Driver Programs

Host organizations – such as Councils on Aging, Villages, and others – recruit and train local residents who want to give back to their community by offering a ride.

- The Shutesbury Council on Aging's Med-Ride volunteer drivers provide free transportation for residents 55 years of age and older to medical and dental appointments in Franklin, Hampshire, and Hampden Counties, as well as to the Athol/Orange area.
- Mystic Valley Elder Services offers a twist on the traditional model: participants find a friend or neighbor to drive them, and receive mileage reimbursements for their drivers through the program.

Learn more: [www.mass.gov/info-details/develop-a-volunteer-driver-program](http://www.mass.gov/info-details/develop-a-volunteer-driver-program)

### Public Transit

Sixteen transit authorities offer fixed-route services, as well as paratransit rides for eligible individuals.

- The Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority offers free bus fares for seniors on Wednesdays. Find your transit authority: [www.mass.gov/info-details/public-transportation-in-massachusetts](http://www.mass.gov/info-details/public-transportation-in-massachusetts)
- The Vineyard Transit Authority runs a weekly medical shuttle for Islanders who have specialty appointments in Boston. Learn more: [www.mass.gov/service-details/health-care-transportation](http://www.mass.gov/service-details/health-care-transportation)
- Greater Lynn Senior Services offers travel training to help individuals learn the knowledge and skills they need to ride transit. They also integrate falls prevention and balance exercises into their travel training program to ensure that older adults have the strength they need to stay safe walking to the bus stop and boarding the bus. New to public transit? Find a travel trainer to help you get oriented and feel comfortable: [www.mass.gov/service-details/learn-to-ride-transit-with-travel-instruction](http://www.mass.gov/service-details/learn-to-ride-transit-with-travel-instruction)

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## Walkable Neighborhoods

Organizations and advocates can perform walk audits to identify opportunities to make neighborhoods more walkable for local seniors.

- AGE TRIAD – a partnership of law enforcement and Councils on Aging in Alford, Great Barrington, and Egremont – organized a “Be Seen Be Safe” campaign to increase pedestrian visibility following a pedestrian involved crash at a dangerous intersection in Southern Berkshire County. TRIAD partnered with the local Fairview Hospital to distribute neon safety vests and help residents put reflective tape on their wheeled mobility devices.
- WalkBoston trained a group of senior walking champions in Fall River on how to carry out a walk audit. The champions audited the streets and sidewalks around the City’s senior centers and secured new crosswalks and curb cuts, trimming of hedges, and sidewalk repairs through their advocacy.

Learn more: [www.walkboston.org](http://www.walkboston.org)

## Coordinated COA Transportation

Many Councils on Aging (COAs) run a van service that plays a key role in senior mobility. COAs can make limited resources go further by partnering with neighboring towns.

- The East Longmeadow COA manages senior transportation for its town and neighboring towns.
- In rural Hampshire County, the Hilltown Community Development Corporation operates a shared van on behalf of five COAs, through a partnership with the Franklin Regional Transit Authority.

Learn more: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/community-transportation-coordination>

## On-Demand Transportation

Some COAs are interested in subsidizing on-demand transportation options like Uber and Lyft to offer older adults an alternative to the COA van.

- In early 2019, the Carlisle COA launched a partnership with Lyft to subsidize rides for local seniors. The COA can book rides for seniors, or

older adults can receive a discount code to use to book their own rides.

Learn more: [www.mass.gov/service-details/partner-with-a-transportation-network-company-to-improve-community-mobility](http://www.mass.gov/service-details/partner-with-a-transportation-network-company-to-improve-community-mobility)

## Supportive Environment

Creating a supportive environment can help older adults feel comfortable trying a new option.

- TRIPPS, a program of the Brookline and Newton COAs, offers ice cream socials to get older adults to join in conversations and information sessions about transportation options. Peer mentors are available to help older adults try out new transportation options, including the bus or subway, paratransit, or Lyft or Uber. They even developed a series of workshops to help older adults learn to download and use Lyft and Uber through their smartphones.

Learn more: <https://trippsmass.org/toolkit/educate/tripps-programming-packages/>

## Advocacy and Involvement

- The Stoneham Transportation Advisory Committee began as an ad hoc group bringing together residents, town staff, and elected officials to discuss transportation needs and collaborate to make change. COA participation has helped elevate the needs of local seniors to town leadership. This group helped increase transit access and bring Complete Streets to town.
- Healthy Hampshire collaborated with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, the Williamsburg Council on Aging, and WalkBoston on a project that examined how healthy aging in Williamsburg is affected by the town’s community design. Healthy Hampshire continues to work with the Williamsburg COA Director and senior activists in Williamsburg to pursue and advocate for goals emerging from this work.

Learn more: [www.mass.gov/info-details/get-involved-in-transportation-planning-processes](http://www.mass.gov/info-details/get-involved-in-transportation-planning-processes)

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# Dementia-Friendly Transportation

As communities strive to become more age-friendly, many are also seeking to better support residents with dementia. People with dementia may need additional support in transitioning away from driving. They benefit from transportation services that offer additional assistance, such as trained volunteer drivers or escorts who not only assist with transportation but also accompany riders off the vehicle into their home or appointment.

To learn more, check out these resources:

- Transportation resources from the Massachusetts Toolkit on Integrating Dementia-Friendly Activity into Age-Friendly work: [www.mass.gov/info-details/integrate-dementia-friendly-activity-into-your-age-friendly-work#2.-transportation-](http://www.mass.gov/info-details/integrate-dementia-friendly-activity-into-your-age-friendly-work#2.-transportation-)

- Transportation toolkit for drivers and caregivers: [http://www.nadtc.org/wp-content/uploads/Dementia\\_Caregiving\\_and\\_Transportation.pdf](http://www.nadtc.org/wp-content/uploads/Dementia_Caregiving_and_Transportation.pdf)
- Connect with Dementia-Friendly Massachusetts by visiting <https://dfmassachusetts.org/> or contacting [patty@mcoaonline.com](mailto:patty@mcoaonline.com)
- Starting in August 2019, the Alzheimer's Association of Massachusetts will be offering a free, one-hour dementia-friendly training for transportation providers. Participants will learn practical strategies for communicating successfully with riders and working through symptoms that may be challenging.

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## Getting Started

### Tools

Here are six tools to help you get started expanding age-friendly mobility in your community:

1. Find a ride with Ride Match – online database of public and private transportation options in Massachusetts: [www.massridematch.org](http://www.massridematch.org)
2. Find funding to support your creative mobility idea: [www.mass.gov/info-details/funding-for-community-transportation](http://www.mass.gov/info-details/funding-for-community-transportation)
3. Encourage your city or town to join the Age and Dementia Friendly movement. For more information, check out the Massachusetts Age and Dementia Friendly Integration Toolkit:

<https://www.mass.gov/handbook/massachusetts-age-and-dementia-friendly-integration-toolkit>

4. Find low-cost steps to making your community more walkable at [www.walkboston.org](http://www.walkboston.org), or contact [age-friendly@walkboston.org](mailto:age-friendly@walkboston.org) to learn more
5. Connect with local Councils on Aging at [www.mcoaonline.com](http://www.mcoaonline.com)
6. Keep up to date with new developments in healthy aging transportation in Massachusetts by subscribing to the MassMobility newsletter: [www.mass.gov/massmobility-newsletter](http://www.mass.gov/massmobility-newsletter)

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