

Age-Friendly Bus Stops: Creating Bus Stops for People of All Ages

The purpose of this document is to act as a resource to equip communities with information and ideas to transform bus stops to be age-friendly.

Why Do Age-Friendly Bus Stops Matter?

- The Commonwealth of Massachusetts joined the Age-Friendly movement as an Age-Friendly State in 2019. The Age-Friendly movement was founded by the World Health Organization and strives to create spaces that benefit people of all ages and abilities.
- Almost a quarter of cities and towns in Massachusetts are designated Age-Friendly by AARP and numerous others are engaged in Age-Friendly initiatives. Communities are recognizing the importance of creating Age-Friendly physical environments, which includes transportation options. Furthermore, many communities have also signed the Dementia Friendly Pledge, demonstrating their commitment to making their community a welcoming place for people living with Alzheimer's or dementia and their caregivers.
- **Why bus stops?** While transportation infrastructure and services investments are being made broadly across the Commonwealth, bus stops are an easy place for a local community to start and make an incredible impact on residents. A study by the University of Utah¹ found that bus stops that were equipped with a shelter, bench, and adjacent sidewalks dramatically increased ridership. Accessible bus stop design encourages use of the bus service – but it also creates public spaces for respite and social connection, provides weather protection, improves walkability for pedestrians of all backgrounds and abilities, and with artistic design can enhance the neighborhood aesthetic.

What is an Age-Friendly Bus Stop?

Things to consider when creating an Age-Friendly bus stop:

- ☑ **Bench and shelter:** Is there a place for people to sit? Is there a covering to protect people from the weather? Benches can be a deciding factor in taking the bus for older adults, so adding non-segmented benches at and between bus stops can increase ridership.
- ☑ **Accessibility:** Is the bus stop accessible? Does it accommodate someone with a wheelchair, stroller, or grocery cart? Does it accommodate people with a range of cognitive abilities, including people living with Alzheimer's or dementia? Is there sufficient lighting to allow for use during evening hours or inclement weather?
- ☑ **Maintenance:** Are crosswalks leading to bus stops properly maintained? Is there snow removal around the bus stop? Are there trash cans provided at the bus stop?
- ☑ **Walkability:** Are there crosswalks and traffic lights nearby? Is there an accessible sidewalk connecting the bus stop to surrounding neighborhoods? Are the road and sidewalk clearly marked to provide safe street crossings that protect residents who may be traveling to the bus stop?

¹ IMPACTS OF BUS STOP IMPROVEMENTS, Department of City & Metropolitan Planning, March 2018

<http://mrc.cap.utah.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2015/12/UT-18.04-Impacts-of-Bus-Stop-Improvements.pdf>

- ☑ **Signage:** Is the bus stop clearly marked? Are there wayfinding signs indicating distances to nearby destinations and landmarks? Are bus routes and schedules posted in large print?
- ☑ **Art and other community features:** Is there a creative way to heighten awareness and celebrate the bus stop to increase foot traffic? Are there local partnerships (e.g., artists, businesses, schools, or service organizations) that may contribute work?

How Do I Create an Age-Friendly Bus Stop?

- **Plan and Learn.** If you do not already know which bus stops require improvement, do a bus stop assessment (or audit). An audit is a great way to get community members involved in determining where and how to start.
- **Once you choose a bus stop to upgrade, identify who owns the bus stop.** Is it the transit authority? The municipality? A combination? Meet with them early in the process to determine if they already have plans to upgrade the bus stop, if there are ways you can partner with them, or what needs to happen to make the upgrades.
- **Identify potential partners.** Bus stops impact all of us, and there are many partners to tap for assistance and support. Examples include:
 - Transportation service providers (e.g., MBTA or Regional Transit Authority)
 - Municipal government (e.g., Town Manager/Mayor, Department of Public Works, Council on Aging)
 - Regional planners
 - MassDOT for bus stops located on state roads
 - Local businesses and artists, service organizations, faith-based communities, schools and universities, and other organizations that may be willing to provide volunteer hours, pro-bono support, or expertise
- **Engage the community.** Actively seek input and participation from community members representing diverse voices and perspectives. Age-Friendly bus stops mean design that benefits people of all ages and abilities!
- **Budget and Financing.** Create a budget for upgrades to the bus stop, and work with partners to apply for grants and plan creative financing strategies.
- **Communicate.** Make sure to share regular updates with the community.
- **Celebrate.** When you complete upgrades, celebrate your success with a community celebration, press release, etc. to raise awareness and thank your partners and funders.

Potentially Helpful Resources:

Please visit this [resource page](#) to access more information, resources, and examples to help further your community's Age-Friendly bus stop efforts.

If you have questions or want to speak to someone about how to get started in your community, or are interested in the Age-Friendly movement generally, please reach out to James Fuccione, Senior Director at the Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative: James.Fuccione@mahealthyaging.org

