

# COORDINATED PUBLIC TRANSIT- HUMAN SERVICES TRANSPORTATION PLAN

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December 11, 2007



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# INTRODUCTION

In August 2005, the U.S. Congress passed the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) reauthorizing the Surface Transportation Act. SAFETEA-LU established the requirement that Metropolitan Planning Organizations must develop the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan as a prerequisite for receiving Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding under the Special Needs of Elderly Individuals, Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedom programs and Specialized Transportation funds. The intent of this provision is to improve the quality of transportation for the elderly, disabled persons, welfare recipients, low-income persons and people doing reverse commutes by assessing their transportation needs, minimizing the duplication of services and achieving cost efficiencies. In order for a project to be funded through the New Freedom or JARC programs, it must be included in the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan. Coordination is required during all stages, including planning, implementation and for the duration of the project.

In April 2007, the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission received direction from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works (EOTPW) to draft the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan. EOTPW will administer the funds for all three funding programs, but through this public participation process, is working with the regional planning commissions, such as MVPC, to seek public input into the gaps and needs in service in our region.

The goals of the plan include:

- Goal 1: Assess current available services and identify duplicative services;
- Goal 2: Assess needs and identify gaps in transportation services for the elderly, individuals with disabilities, low-income persons as well as people doing reverse commutes, and
- Goal 3: Propose strategies and activities to address gaps and achieve efficiencies in service delivery and create relative priorities for implementation.

## **New Freedom Program**

The New Freedom formula grant program aims to provide additional tools to overcome existing barriers facing Americans with disabilities seeking integration into the work force and full participation in society. Lack of adequate transportation is a primary barrier to work for individuals with disabilities. The 2000 Census showed that only 60% of people between ages of 16 and 64 with disabilities are employed. The New Freedom formula grant program seeks to expand the transportation mobility options available to persons with disabilities beyond the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

**Jobs Access and Reverse Commute (JARC)**

The goals of the JARC program are to improve access to transportation services to employment and employment related activities for welfare recipients and eligible low-income individuals and to transport residents of urbanized areas and nonurbanized areas to suburban employment opportunities. Emphasis is placed on projects that use mass transportation services. Job Access grants are intended to provide new transit service to assist welfare recipients and other low-income individuals in getting to jobs, training and child care. Reverse commute grants are designed to develop transit services to transport workers to suburban job sites.

**Special Needs of Elderly Individuals (Section 5310)**

The Section 5310 program was established in 1975, prior to the inception of ADA in 1990. At that time grants were given to private non-profit organizations to serve elderly/disabled persons where public transportation services were lacking. The goal of the program is to improve mobility for elderly and disabled individuals.

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# GOAL 1: ASSESS CURRENT TRANSPORTATION RESOURCES

A variety of transportation services are provided throughout the Merrimack Valley such as those provided by the Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority and other regional transit authorities as well as by private providers and volunteer programs.

## The Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority

The Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority (MVRTA) is the primary provider of public transportation in the Merrimack Valley region. The MVRTA was established on October 11, 1974 to provide local fixed route bus service within the greater Lawrence and Haverhill areas. Since its inception, the MVRTA has expanded its operations to include numerous local fixed bus routes, intercity bus service, commuter bus service, special employment shuttle services and demand response transportation services to the region's elderly and disabled populations (EZ Trans and Ring & Ride).

The MVRTA service district consists of the following fifteen towns and cities: Amesbury, Andover, Boxford, Georgetown, Groveland, Haverhill, Lawrence, Merrimac, Methuen, Newbury, Newburyport, North Andover, Rowley, Salisbury, and West Newbury. However, not all of the communities choose to receive services from the MVRTA. Two communities, Newbury and Rowley, do not receive any direct services from the MVRTA although Georgetown residents can use their Ring and Ride service to access Rowley Commuter Rail Station.

### Fixed Route Bus System

The MVRTA provides year-round local fixed route bus service to the communities of Amesbury, Andover, Haverhill, Lawrence, Merrimac, Methuen, Newburyport, and North Andover. Seasonal service to Salisbury Beach and Hampton Beach is provided during July and August. In addition, the MVRTA operates various intercity fixed routes in the region and one bus route (Route 41) beyond the region that operates between Lawrence and Lowell.



Washington Square Transportation Center, Haverhill, MA

The fixed route bus service operates on a Monday through Saturday schedule, with no service provided on Sundays or on holidays. The hours of operation vary by type of route and location. Lawrence-based routes typically begin operation at 5:00 AM on weekdays with service ending at 8:00 PM. Saturday bus service in Lawrence begins at 7:00 AM and operates until 7:00 PM. Haverhill-based routes begin operation at 5:30 AM on weekdays and shut down at 6:30 PM. Saturday Service in Haverhill begins at 8:00 AM and runs until 5:00. The frequency of service also varies by route, with all Lawrence-based routes operating every 25 minutes in peak hours on weekdays and every 45 minutes on Saturdays, and Haverhill-based routes operating every 60 minutes on weekdays and every 80 minutes on Saturdays. The shorter bus headways on Saturdays for Lawrence-based routes were initiated by the MVRTA on November 5, 2005 and weekday headways were changed on April 3, 2006 in response to requests from bus users. The following table shows the hours of operation and headways of the major fixed routes in the MVRTA system.

### **MVRTA Fixed Route Operating Characteristics**

<b>Route</b>	<b>Weekday Hours</b>	<b>Weekday Frequency</b>	<b>Saturday Hours</b>	<b>Saturday Frequency</b>
Route 01	5:00 AM-8:00PM	25 Peak; 45 Off Peak*	7:00 AM-7:00 PM	45
Haverhill-Based	5:30 AM-6:30 PM	60	8:20 AM-5:00 PM	80
Lawrence-Based	5:00 AM-8:00 PM	25 Peak; 45 Off Peak	7:00 AM-7:00 PM	45
Route 41	5:00 AM-8:00PM	25 Peak; 45 Off Peak	7:00 AM-7:00 PM	45
Route 51	5:00 AM-7:48 PM	60	9:00 AM-7:28 PM	60
Route 72	5:50 AM Outbound; 3:25 PM Inbound	N/A	Not Operated	N/A
Route 73	5:40; 6:35 AM to 3:20; 4:10 PM From Lucent 5:55; 7:00 AM to 3:20; 4:20 PM from IRS Raytheon	N/A	Not Operated	N/A
Route 83	8:15; 10:45 AM to Hampton 1:50; 4:20 PM from Hampton	N/A	Same as Weekday	N/A

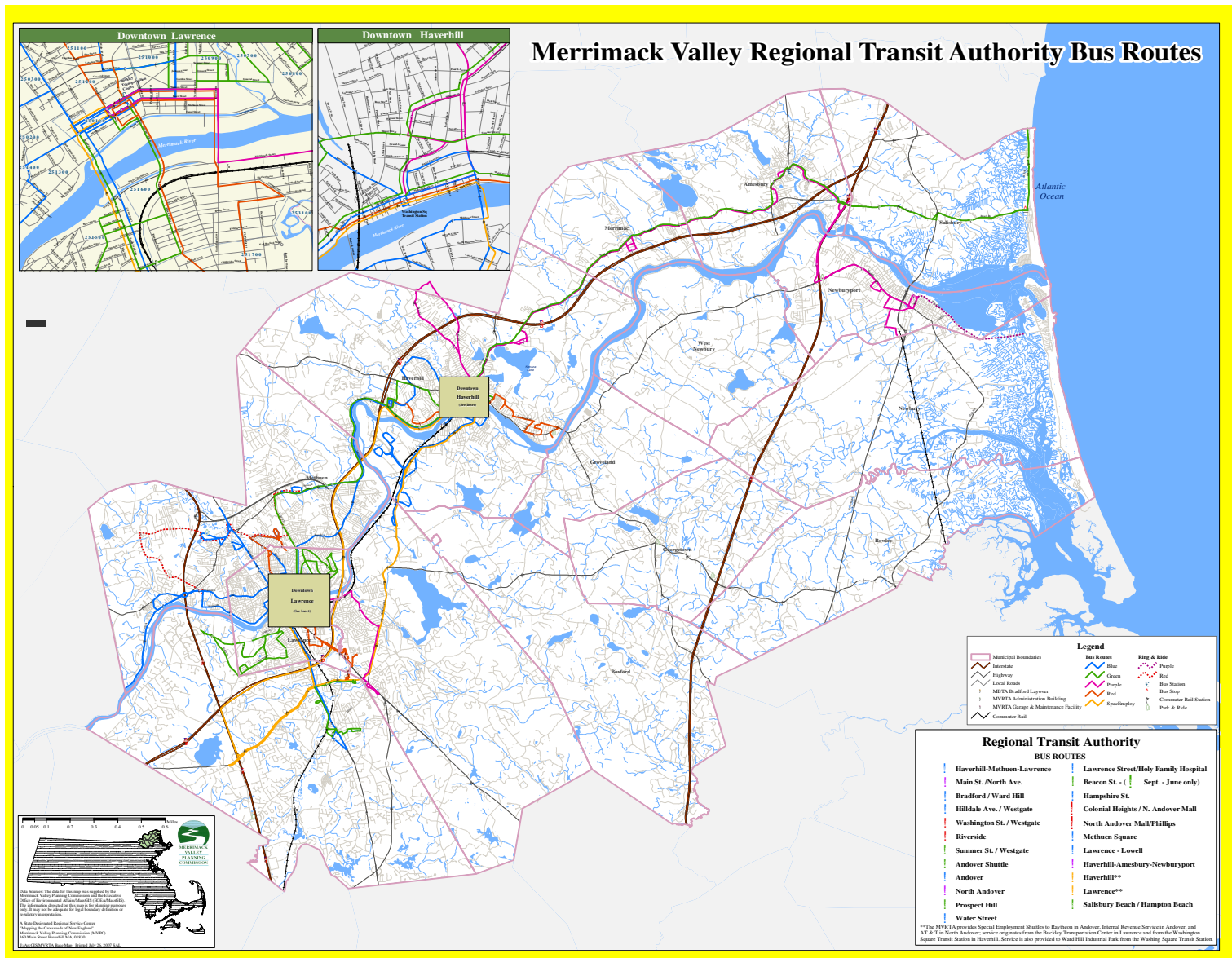
\*Peak Period: 5:00 AM – 9:00 AM; 2:00 PM – 6:00 PM  
Off Peak Period: 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM; 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

**Existing Service Areas**

The MVRTA operates the fixed route bus system in nine Merrimack Valley communities, however the system predominantly serves the region's two largest communities, Lawrence and Haverhill (see map).

In Lawrence, all MVRTA buses originate at the Buckley Transportation Center, which is centrally located in the downtown section of the city. Ten local fixed routes operate within the greater Lawrence area serving major shopping centers, hospitals and medical facilities, city government offices, schools, the McGovern Transportation Center and residential apartment complexes. Additionally, intercity routes operate between Lawrence and Haverhill (Route 01 with transfer to Route 51), Lawrence and Lowell (Route 41), and Lawrence and Salisbury Beach as well as Hampton Beach (Route 83) during the summer months.







In Haverhill, all MVRTA buses originate at the Washington Square Transit Station, which is located in the downtown section of the city. Six local fixed routes operate within the city of Haverhill serving MBTA commuter rail stations, shopping plazas, social service agencies, and the public library. Additionally, intercity routes operate between Haverhill and Lawrence (Route 01), Haverhill and Newburyport (Route 51), and Haverhill and Salisbury and Hampton Beaches (Route 83) during the summer months.



In addition to the extensive fixed route bus service provided to the greater Lawrence and Haverhill areas, the MVRTA operates special employment shuttle service (Routes 72 and 73), advance request transit service (Ring & Ride) in Andover (Route 22), Boxford, Georgetown, Groveland, Salisbury, West Methuen (Route 42), and West Newbury and special transportation services for the elderly and disabled (EZ Trans).

### **Commuter Bus Service**

On January 6, 2003, the MVTRA assumed operation of the Boston commuter bus route when Trombly Bus Lines decided to discontinue the daily service. This decision was made in recognition that a sizeable number of people use the service, potential exists to attract more riders and bus service, not focused on North Station, is needed along the congested Interstate Route 93 (I-93) corridor into Boston.

This weekday (Monday through Friday) service between Lawrence, Andover and Boston picks up passengers at seven stops in Methuen, Lawrence and Andover before traveling into the Boston metropolitan region. Inbound service begins at the Methuen Park and Ride Lot off Pelham Street with additional stops at the McGovern Transportation Center then to Bowdoin Street, Mt. Vernon Street, Shawsheen Square in Andover, the Andover Center Parking Lot, and the Faith Lutheran Church Park and Ride Lot. The service makes stops within the City of Boston including Government Center, Park Street MBTA, the State Transportation Building, Copley Square, and at the corner of Essex and Atlantic Avenue.

The bus service makes three daily inbound (toward Boston) trips with the first bus leaving the Pelham Street Park and Ride Lot in Methuen at 5:45 AM, the second bus departing at 6:15 AM and the final bus leaving at 6:45. The travel time for the entire route is approximately one hour and thirty-five minutes. Similarly, the bus service makes three daily outbound (toward Lawrence) trips with the first bus leaving Boston at 4:40 PM, the second bus departing at 5:10 PM and the final bus leaving at 5:40. The travel time for the entire route is approximately one hour and thirty minutes. The fare (one-way) is \$5.00, and \$4.50 for senior citizens. An additional 10-ride pass is sold for \$40.00.

### **Special Employment Shuttle Service (Routes 72 and 73)**

The MVRTA operates limited special employment fixed route service, providing employees of various companies with a shuttle service between the major transportation hubs in Haverhill and

Lawrence, and their places of employment. Every weekday morning and afternoon, shuttles operate between the Washington Square Transit Station in Haverhill (Route 72) and Raytheon and the Internal Revenue Service (Andover). Similarly, shuttles operate between the Buckley Transportation Center in Lawrence (Route 73) and 1600 Osgood Street, while another shuttle travels to Raytheon and the Internal Revenue Service. This shuttle service is very limited, with only one shuttle run in each direction during the peak traffic hours on Route 72, and two runs in each direction during the peak traffic hours on Route 73.

### **Advance Request Transit Service (Ring & Ride)**

Ring & Ride is a curb-to-curb public transit service provided, upon request, to residents in specified MVRTA service areas. Presently, the MVRTA provides Ring & Ride service to a number of areas in the region. These include Boxford, Georgetown, Groveland, Salisbury and West Newbury (Route 42), Downtown Andover (Route 22) and Newburyport (Former Route 51). The following table shows the eligibility, fare, days and hours of operation and destinations served for the Ring and Ride services. For all services, riders must call for reservations at least 24 hours in advance.

### **MVRTA Ring and Ride Service**

<b>Ring and Ride Service</b>	<b>Eligible Users</b>	<b>Hours of Operation*</b>	<b>Full Fare</b>	<b>Destination Served</b>
Ballardvale/ Andover (Route 22)	All residents	6AM-6PM M-F	\$2.00 each way	Various locations in Andover and downtown Ballardvale
Boxford	All residents	5AM-7PM M-F; 9AM-6PM Sat	\$2.00 each way	Boxford, North Andover, Haverhill, Georgetown, Holy Family Hospital, Anna Jacques Hospital in Newburyport, Lawrence General Hospital; Amesbury Dialysis Center
Georgetown	All residents	5AM-7PM M-F; 9AM-6PM Sat	\$2.00 each way	Georgetown, Haverhill, Rowley Commuter Rail Station; Anna Jacques Hospital in Newburyport, Lawrence General Hospital
Groveland	Residents 60 yrs of age or older	5AM-7PM M-F; 9AM-6PM Sat	\$2.00 each way	Groveland, Haverhill, Newburyport, Lawrence General Hospital; Amesbury Dialysis Center
West Methuen (Route 42)	All residents	6AM-6PM M-F; 9AM-6PM Sat	\$2.00 each way	Various locations in West Methuen; Service to the Loop
Newburyport (Rt. 51)	Residents of James Steam Mill Heritage House, Plum Island and Marlboro Street	5 AM-7PM M-F; 9AM-6PM Sat	\$1.00 each way	Travel along original Route 51 and connect with current Route 51 bus in Newburyport
Salisbury	All residents	5AM-7PM M-F; 9AM-6PM Sat	\$2.00 each way	Salisbury, Amesbury, Newburyport
West Newbury	All residents	5AM-7PM M-F; 9AM-6PM Sat	\$2.00 each way	West Newbury, Amesbury, Newburyport, Groveland, Haverhill, Holy Family Hospital in Methuen, Anna Jacques Hospital in Newburyport, Lawrence General Hospital; Amesbury Dialysis Center

## Special Transportation Services for the Elderly and Disabled (EZ Trans)

EZ Trans is a demand response service provided to the region's elderly and disabled populations. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 established a standard by which all public transit agencies that provide fixed route bus and rail service must also provide comparable paratransit or special transportation services to people with disabilities who are unable to utilize the existing conventional services. This complementary service must be provided within three-quarters of a mile (1.2 kilometers) on either side of a fixed rail or bus route.

The MVRTA provides EZ Trans as a curb-to-curb shared ride service to the region's elderly (age 60 or older) and disabled (ADA eligible) populations in the communities of Amesbury, Andover, Haverhill, Lawrence, Merrimac, Methuen, Newburyport, and North Andover. Riders must call for reservations at least 24 to 48 hours in advance, depending upon ADA eligibility. The ADA-eligible fare (one-way) is \$2.00, a 10-ride pass sold for \$20.00 and a 20-ride pass sold for \$40.00. The non-ADA eligible fare ranges from \$3.00 to \$9.00 depending upon origin and destination. The non-ADA fare schedule is as follows:

### MVRTA Non-ADA EZ Trans Fares

Origin	Destination							
	Haverhill	Lawrence	Methuen	Andover	North Andover	Amesbury	Newburyport	Merrimac
<b>Haverhill</b>	\$3.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	\$3.00
<b>Lawrence</b>	\$5.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$9.00	\$9.00	\$5.00
<b>Methuen</b>	\$5.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$9.00	\$9.00	\$9.00
<b>Andover</b>	\$5.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$9.00	\$9.00	\$5.00
<b>N. Andover</b>	\$5.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$9.00	\$9.00	\$5.00
<b>Amesbury</b>	\$5.00	\$9.00	\$9.00	\$9.00	\$9.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$5.00
<b>Newburyport</b>	\$5.00	\$9.00	\$9.00	\$9.00	\$9.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$5.00
<b>Merrimac</b>	\$5.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	\$3.00

Similar to the ADA eligible fare, 10-ride passes are sold for \$20.00 and 20-ride passes are sold for \$40.00.

Eligibility to use the EZ Trans service must be certified by the MVRTA Office of Special Services. Eligibility is strictly based on ADA criteria regarding physical or cognitive impairments that prevent access to fixed route rail and bus service. Additionally, elderly people, defined as persons who are 60 years of age or older, are eligible to utilize the EZ Trans service.

The EZ Trans service is administered by the MVRTA using its own fleet of lift-equipped vehicles. Additionally, the MVRTA contracts with Andover Livery, a private transportation service provider in the Merrimack Valley, who provides EZ Trans service in the event that MVRTA vehicles are unavailable. Over the past few years, the MVRTA has also partnered with Assist Medical Transportation to serve in this capacity.

In addition to EZ Trans and its contracted private transportation service providers, the transportation needs of the elderly and disabled populations are supplemented by services provided by local Councils on Aging, Northern Essex Elder Transport (NEET), and various private wheelchair ride transporters.

## Cape Ann Transportation Authority

The Cape Ann Transportation Authority (CATA) provides bus services in the Rockport/Gloucester areas. In addition, they contract with other transportation providers to provide human services transportation in the Merrimack Valley region. The following chart shows which carriers they contract with, for which state agency and finally the average number of monthly trips.

Carrier	Dep. of Medical Assistance	Department of Mental Retardation	Department of Public Health
A&A Transportation	X		
American Training, Inc.		X	
Bellmore's	X		
Beauport	X		
Caring Choice	X		X
Central Van	X		
Class Inc.		X	
Dracut Transportation		X	
MassTrans		X	
Salter Transportation		X	
SP&R		X	
Transcare	X	X	
<b>Average Monthly Trips</b>	<b>7,000</b>	<b>5,500</b>	<b>100</b>

## Cooperative Alliance for Regional Transportation (CART), New Hampshire

The Cooperative Alliance for Regional Transportation (CART) is a curb-to-curb transportation system serving the towns of Chester, Danville, Derry, Hampstead, Londonderry, Plaistow, Salem, Sandown and Windham in New Hampshire. CART also provides rides to Merrimack Valley area medical facilities on the following days of the week:

**Mondays** - Pentucket Medical Center & Merrimack Valley Hospital in Haverhill

**Fridays** - Holy Family Hospital in Methuen; and Lawrence General Hospital in Lawrence

CART is designed to: 1) coordinate the efforts of a range of existing agencies providing van service to senior citizens, individuals with disabilities, and others in need of transportation in the region; and 2) expand the level of service available by accessing federal transit funds available to the region which have not been tapped previously. CART is structured as a regional brokerage system intended to improve the efficiency of existing transportation services by centralizing scheduling and dispatching of vehicles.

## Commuter Rail Service

The MBTA provides service from seven commuter rail stations along two different rail lines within the Merrimack Valley. The Newburyport Line operates on the Eastern Route, while the Haverhill Line runs on the Western Route.

The Newburyport Line is a 27.7-mile branch that operates between Boston's North Station and Newburyport. This branch has eleven stops, two of which are located within the Merrimack Valley. The Rowley and Newburyport stations are the northernmost stops on the line, with Newburyport as the terminus of the route.

Presently, there are no MVRTA fixed route buses that serve the Rowley station, although Georgetown residents can use their Ring and Ride service to access the station. Newburyport station is served by MVRTA Route 51.

The MBTA operates 13 weekday trains between Newburyport and Boston's North Station. The first inbound train (toward Boston) departs Newburyport at 5:27 AM, while the last inbound train departs at 8:41 PM. One additional train departs Newburyport Station at 10:45 PM and terminates at Beverly Depot where riders can catch the 11:20 PM inbound train for Boston. The first outbound train (toward Newburyport) departs Boston's North Station at 6:30 AM and arrives at 7:29 AM, while the last direct train departs at 9:30 PM. However, riders may take the 10:40 train from North Station to Beverly and then catch the 11:30 PM train from Beverly that arrives in Newburyport at 11:58 PM.



MBTA train at Rowley Station.

On Saturdays and Sundays, 12 trains travel between Newburyport and Boston. The first inbound train departs Newburyport at 8:48 AM and the last train departs at 9:00 PM. The first outbound train departs Boston's North Station at 9:30 AM and the last train departs at 10:15 PM. The travel time for the entire route is approximately one hour.

The Haverhill Line is a 32.9-mile segment of the old B&M Western Route that runs between Boston's North Station and Haverhill. This segment of the line has fourteen stops, five of which are located in the Merrimack Valley. There are two stations in Andover (Ballardvale and Andover), one in Lawrence, and two stops in Haverhill (Bradford and Haverhill), with Haverhill serving as the terminus of the line.

Presently, various MVRTA bus routes service the five commuter rail stations on the Haverhill Line. Ballardvale Station is served by the Andover Ring and Ride (Route 22), while Andover Station is served by routes 21 and 32. In Lawrence, the McGovern Transportation Center is serviced by Route 33. Finally, Bradford Station is served by Route 14, while Routes 01, 14 and 16 serve Haverhill.

Station, with the Route 83 Salisbury Beach/Hampton Beach bus stopping at the rail station during the summer months.

During weekdays, the MBTA operates 13 inbound trains between Haverhill and Boston's North Station, with one additional train running into Boston from Andover and Ballardvale stations. The first inbound train (toward Boston) departs Haverhill at 5:31 AM, while the last inbound train departs at 10:21 PM. The first outbound train (toward Haverhill) departs Boston's North Station at 7:19 AM, while the last train departs at 11:59 PM. As with the inbound service, twelve trains run outbound from North Station to Boston and there is one additional train that runs from Boston to Ballardvale and Andover stations.

On Saturdays and Sundays, 12 trains travel between Haverhill and Boston. The first inbound train departs Haverhill at 7:15 AM and the last train departs at 10:15 PM. The first outbound train departs Boston's North Station at 8:45 AM and the last train departs at 11:30 PM. The travel time for the entire route is approximately one hour.



## Other Transportation Providers

### Elderly and Disabled Services

Northern Essex Elder Transport (NEET)	Amesbury, MA
Health-Tech Ambulance Service	Andover, MA
American Medical Response Company	Haverhill, MA
Central Wheelchair & Van	Haverhill, MA
Haverhill Human Services Department	Haverhill, MA
Haverhill Veterans Services	Haverhill, MA
Trinity Emergency and Healthcare Transport	Haverhill, MA
Valley East Ambulance Service	Haverhill, MA
American Medical Response Company	Lawrence, MA
Assist Incorporated	Lawrence, MA
Class Incorporated	Lawrence, MA
EMT Corporation	Lawrence, MA
Guardian Transportation	Lawrence, MA
American Medical Response Company	Newburyport, MA
ABC Bus Company	North Andover, MA
Laidlaw Education Services	North Andover, MA
Councils on Aging	Various cities and towns
Kimi Nichols Center (service to Haverhill, MA)	New Hampshire
Asian Center of Merrimack Valley	Lawrence, MA

### Taxicabs Community

### Number of Taxicab Companies

Amesbury	2
Andover	3
Haverhill	3
Lawrence	17
Methuen	3
Newburyport	1
Rowley	1
Salisbury	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>

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## GOAL 2: IDENTIFY GAPS IN SERVICE

On July 19, 2007, the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission held a public meeting at the Northern Essex Community College. The purpose of the meeting was to:

1. Review current transportation services;
2. Identify gaps in service and duplication;
3. Identify possible solutions, and
4. Prioritize needs and solutions.

MVPC prepared the inventory of current transportation services that begins on Page 5. Invitations were sent to 238 individuals and organizations including human service providers, health care, transportation, employers and government agencies. People were invited to attend the public meeting or, in lieu of attending, respond to a short questionnaire.

During the public meeting, participants were asked a series of six questions. The following is a list of the questions and the responses:

1. What do you like about the current services?
  - MVRTA is responsive to Methuen's transportation issues
  - Obtaining disability passes is easy
  - Service to Amesbury is good
  - More minority employees (EZTrans)
  - Bilingual on all services
  - Simplicity of application process
  - Good outreach to the community
  - The focus on urban transportation
  - Commuter bus
  - Beach bus
  - Good pricing
  - Two buses to Holy Family Hospital
  - South Lawrence 39A and 39B
  - Morning hours are good
  - Monthly passes are good and well priced for disabled
  - Drivers are very nice, courteous and helpful for the elderly
  - Cameras on bus
  - Raytheon bus

- Train station buses are accommodating, such as the in the morning they run every 25 minutes from Buckley
2. Where do people need to be able to go, such as major employment areas, training providers, childcare or health care? Try to be specific.
- Lahey Clinic
  - ESL classes - Lawrence immigrants go to ESL classes, but buses don't run after the classes end
  - Shopping centers: Shawsheen in Andover, Salem (Rockingham Mall) and Plaistow, NH, North Andover Stop & Shop and new shops on Rt. 114
  - Point After Club and other rehab centers
  - Adult Basic Education (ie. Asian Center)
  - Medical Centers in Boston and NH and VA hospital in Bedford, Jamaica Plain
  - Other Boston sites (John Hancock Building and other places for immigrant services)
  - Jobs at night (e.g. Loop)
  - River Road, Andover
  - Recreational activities evenings and weekends
  - Chestnut Green
  - West End of Methuen to Lawrence
  - Nursing homes (all services, Sutton Hill in N. Andover)
  - Day care centers – extended hours needed to get there
  - Elderly housing
  - Amesbury to Newburyport
  - Amesbury to Cambridge and Boston
  - Shuttle for Methuen like the old 42; need access to City Hall
  - Bus needs to go past Merrimack College to get to the Doctor's offices
  - Need more company buses, i.e. to UPS and industrial park off 93 past Chateau
  - Public service offices such as SSI, DTA, Welfare, Housing as well as medical appointments, Senior Citizen center and Boston for citizenship interviews
  - Ward Hill Industrial Park – Whittier Rehab is relocating there and people will need access
  - Manchester and Salem, NH
  - Burlington and Beverly
3. What transportation services currently exist that can get people to these places? How do they get there?
- They don't go if the transportation doesn't exist
  - Volunteer programs, limited service
  - Taxis
  - Bicycle to evening jobs
  - Carpools
  - Walk
  - Clubhouse provides transportation outside bus lines
  - Take bus to Methuen and then walk to Salem

- Andover housing will hire bus to take people to the mall periodically
  - Mary Immaculate has bus service for residents on a weekly basis
  - Planned activities but can't do individual services
  - UPS has its own shuttle service to its Dracut facility
4. Is there any duplication of transportation services?
- There are two IDs, one for MBTA and one for MVRTA It would be nice if MVRTA could just use the Charlie Card also so that people can easily go between services.
  - There are buses that go to some of the places named, but because of the language barrier and physical difficulty getting to the bus stations, Asian seniors do not use the bus system and rely on volunteers and family.
5. Are there any gaps that you can identify or new services that would be helpful in accessing the places mentioned above?
- Need to coordinate individual services
  - Coordinate transportation that is used for elderly during the day for people to use at night for evening and morning work/training opportunities.
  - Need to identify private resources
  - Information on existing services
  - Transportation is available, but it does not meet the needs. For example, a van will honk, but a hard of hearing person won't hear it and so won't know it has arrived. When they miss it, they lose the service for a month. Some people are frail and need additional assistance
  - "Last Mile Gap" - Need extension of service on some routes, such as River Road and Stop and Shop. Sometimes people don't have the ability to walk to get to the grocery store or the sidewalks are missing
  - Reduced headway/more frequent service
  - EZTrans – miss ride if you go to the bathroom or if Dr. Appointment goes over the time you may miss a ride and then can't get ride back. Need better coordination
  - Would be great if hospitals helped coordinate rides. For example, MassGeneral has a shuttle service to outlying areas
  - Need expansion of Ring & Ride service in Georgetown and other rural communities
  - Extended hours: Second shift needs to be served; daycare; late hour training opportunities
  - Expand service between Amesbury/Newburyport
  - Need service to medical centers outside the area
  - Expand commuter rail schedules
  - Transportation to elderly housing
  - Disability ramp at new train station is weak
  - More seating at Buckley
  - Would like Charlie Card used for MVRTA
  - Shuttle like the 42 for Methuen

- Later service/Sunday service. Haverhill buses have shorter hours than buses originating in Lawrence
- More afternoon bus routes on Route 40 for people who work at the Village Mall in Methuen
- Fixed transit route from Merrimack Valley region to Salem, NH.
- Employer shuttles

6. What new transportation service or transportation alternatives are needed that go beyond the ADA requirements?

- Can use if your home is within  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile, but then if your destination is outside the  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile service area, then you can't get a ride back.
- Need door to door instead of curb to curb.
- A voucher program.
- Accessible and affordable new taxi ridesharing and vanpooling programs.
- Simpler application that includes emergency contact for passengers
- Better connections to the MBTA's RIDE; extension of RIDE service into the Merrimack Valley
- Consider instituting a debit pay system similar to the RIDE
- On-line reservations and scheduling
- Use of call flag (cardboard flag for customers to make it easier for drivers to identify passengers in public areas)

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## **GOAL 3: PRIORITIZED STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING SERVICE GAPS**

During the July 19, 2007 public meeting, participants were asked to prioritize the strategies from the long list generated during the group exercise. They were then asked to vote for the top four that they felt were the highest priority. The following is a list of those priorities with examples that are meant to provide additional description, but not meant to limit potential projects.

### **Jobs Access and Reverse Commute (JARC)**

**1. Increase transit service beyond current limited hours of operation.**

Example gaps include but are not limited to:

- Extend evening and weekend bus hours to accommodate training and/or non-tradition employment schedules;
- Extend hours to accommodate daycare needs, and
- More frequent service.

**2. Increase geographic service area so that more areas are served or served more fully.**

Example gaps include but are not limited to:

- New fixed routes or expanded routes to employment and shopping areas inside/outside region and state;
- Fixed bus service to/from Salem, New Hampshire, and
- Service to more places in Boston for new immigrant needs.

**3. Broader/better communication about transit services.**

Example gaps include but are not limited to:

- Better promotion in multiple languages of available services and how to use the system and
- Universal signage so people of all languages and illiterate can use the system.

**4. Better coordination of current services; mobility management**

Example gap include but are not limited to:

- Coordination of private transportation services so that during hours that elderly are not using vans for transportation (evening and morning) the vans could be used for transporting individuals on welfare to work.

**5. Replacement of old vehicles, purchase of new vehicles and maintenance needs to provide services in the Merrimack Valley.**

# New Freedom

## 1. Broaden geographic service

Example solutions:

- Expansion of transit service to medical facilities and employment opportunities inside/outside of the region and state.

## 2. Enhanced assisted services

Example solutions:

- Door-to-door service;
- Information technology that allows service providers to know what the needs are of those requesting service, and
- Training for service providers to accommodate new service.

## 3. Better coordination of services (private and/or public); mobility management

Example solutions:

- Coordination of transportation services provided so that welfare recipients and low-income persons may be able to utilize vans normally used only during the day for the elderly.

## 4. Replacement of old vehicles, purchase of new vehicles and maintenance needs to provide services in the Merrimack Valley.

# Specialized Transportation (elderly and disabled)

## 1. Broaden geographic service

Example solutions:

- Expansion of transit service to medical facilities inside/outside of the region and state, and
- Transportation to/from nursing homes, senior centers, community centers.

## 2. Enhanced assisted services

Example solutions:

- Door-to-door service;
- Information technology that allows service providers to know what the needs are of those requesting service, and
- Training for service providers to accommodate new service.

## 3. Better coordination of services (private and/or public); mobility management

Example solutions:

- Coordination of transportation services provided so that welfare recipients and low-income persons may be able to utilize vans normally used only during the day for the elderly.

## 4. Replacement of old vehicles, purchase of new vehicles and maintenance needs to provide services in the Merrimack Valley.



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# CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION AND PRIORITIES

On behalf of the Merrimack Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization, the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission will request proposals for the JARC and New Freedom Programs. Those projects rated as priorities for the region will then be forwarded to the EOTPW where they will then compete in a selection process with the larger Boston Urbanized Area.

## **Merrimack Valley Planning Commission Evaluation Criteria**

MVPC Evaluation Criteria is listed briefly below, but is described in more detail in the application:

- Project goals and objectives, including number and type of customers, service area and correlation with the prioritized strategies listed in this document;
- Implementation plan, including frequency and routes, implementation steps, milestones and timelines and how the service exceeds the ADA requirements;
- Operations;
- Customer demand for new service;
- Coordination with other transportation and human service programs and marketing plan;
- Financial viability and sustainability, and
- Program effectiveness and performance indicators.

## **Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works Evaluation Criteria**

EOTPW will rate project proposals based on the following criteria:

- Number of passengers served
- Cost per passenger

The EOTPW will prioritize projects based upon:

- Funding operations over capital projects
- Provision of connections to other transit services

## **Statutory References**

49 U.S.C. Sections 5302, 5303, 5310, 5311, 5214, 5316 and 5317; SAFETEA-LU Section 3046

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# COMMENTS

The Draft Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan was released for public review and comment on November 8, 2007 for the 30-day period ending December 10, 2007. Listed below are the comments on that document that were submitted to the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission during the period. Also shown are the responses to the comments by MPO staff.

## **Written Comments**

From the Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority:

- Provided changes to the MVRTA Fixed Route Operating Characteristics chart, commuter bus service and the Ring and Ride Service chart. Also provided changes to the section on Cooperative Alliance for Regional Transportation (CART) service.

*Response:* Included all updated information and expanded the section on CART to better reflect services.

## **Public Meetings**

Summarized below are the comments and questions regarding the Coordinated Plan received during the two Public Meetings that were held on November 27, 2007. Questions revolved around the types of applications that would be eligible for specific organizations that were interested in applying for the grants.

- In the transportation inventory, should the transit demand be quantified for current bus routes?

*Response:* It was not necessary to quantify the number of customers using the current bus system since the grants would be for projects that added service through, for example, expansion of the geographic area currently served, by increasing the hours of operation or providing service beyond the ADA requirements. Through this process, we were examining what transportation services need to be provided, which are currently not being provided.


- Improvements in EZTrans service including extended hours, holidays and weekends; simpler application (an include emergency contact information for customers); on-line scheduling; door-to-door service; larger geographic coverage, and better connections to the RIDE transit service run by the MBTA. Haverhill buses currently have shorter hours of service than buses originating in Lawrence. MVRTA should consider a debit pay system similar to the RIDE. Use of a call flag where customers are given a cardboard “flag” to make it easy for bus drivers to identify the customer in public places. Ability for customers to call within an hour of a pick up at a Dr. appointment to reschedule if the appointment is going longer than expected. The RIDE provides more services and would be interested in seeing that service extended into this region.
- People would also like to get to Burlington and Beverly; however, there is a greater need to get to Boston.


*Response:* The Coordinated Plan does list the need for a larger geographic area, extended hours of service and enhanced services, such as door-to-door as priorities for this region. Other suggestions were added to the section ‘Identify Gaps in Service.’

## **Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan for the Merrimack Valley**

Pursuant to 49 U.S.C. Sections 5316 and 5317, the Merrimack Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization hereby endorses the **Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan for the Merrimack Valley.**

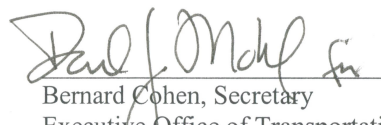
**EXECUTED on the 11th day of December 2007.**

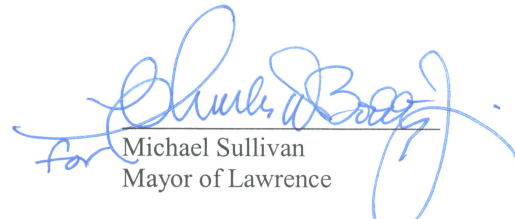
  
for Robert Lavoie, Chairman  
Merrimack Valley Planning Commission

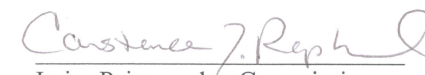
  
for Thatcher Kezer  
Mayor of Amesbury

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Karen Sawyer, Vice Chairman  
MVRTA Advisory Board

  
for James Forentini  
Mayor of Haverhill

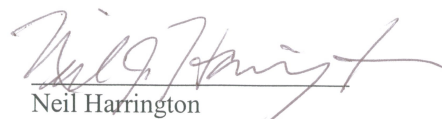
  
Bernard Cohen, Secretary  
Executive Office of Transportation  
and Public Works

  
for Michael Sullivan  
Mayor of Lawrence

  
for Luisa Paiewonsky, Commissioner  
Massachusetts Highway Department

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Robert Snow  
Town of Rowley

  
Curt Bellavance  
Town of North Andover

  
Neil Harrington  
Salisbury Town Manager