



Coordinated Human Services Transportation - Public Transportation Plan

January 2015



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*Cover Photo: Merrimack River in downtown
Haverhill, by Jeff Normandin*

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This Plan was prepared with funding provided in Contract MA-80-X008 between the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission and the Massachusetts Department of Transportation and with the cooperation of Federal Transit Administration and the Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority.

Introduction

The staff of the Merrimack Valley Regional Planning Commission (MVPC), as staff to the Merrimack Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MVMPO), has prepared this 2014 Coordinated Human Services Transportation – Public Transportation Plan. This Plan is an update of prior plans jointly prepared by the MVMPO staff and the Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority (MVRTA) - the 2007 Coordinated Human Service Public Transportation Plan; the subsequent Elderly and Disabled Transportation Plans, and the 2013 Transit Mobility Plan.

During the development of the above referenced plans, the public provided input into what transit services were working well, what gaps in transit services existed, and made recommendations for transit improvements. Then, the staff and the public established priorities for addressing service gaps. Afterward, the MVMPO staff worked with the MVRTA to implement specific actions designed to address identified service gaps as shown in Table 1 on the following page. These plans fulfilled federal requirements for obtaining New Freedom and Jobs Access Reverse Commute (JARC) funds.

Table 1: Recommendations from Previous Plans and Actions Taken	
Gap/Need Identified	Service Initiated
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extend services' geographic coverage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Medi-Ride, January 2011 ☑ NH-28, Salem, NH Employment Service (implemented February 2014) ☑ Rockingham Mall, Salem, NH (attempted) ☑ Salisbury Fixed Bus Route 54, June 2011 ☑ River Road Employment Route 76, September 2012
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expand service frequencies, spans and institute Sunday/Holiday service services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Local Routes: Sunday service on Lawrence-based routes, September 2014 and Haverhill-based routes, November 2014 ☑ Local Routes: Holiday service, Veterans' Day – implemented November 2014; MLK, Patriots' and Presidents' Days to be implemented in 2015 ☑ Boston Commuter Service: extra weekday outbound trip from Boston added @ 4:45 p.m., September 2014 ☑ Boston Commuter Service: Holiday service – Veterans' Day, implemented November 2014; MLK, Patriots and Presidents' Days to be implemented in 2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expand and improve communications about service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ MVRTA mobile communications upgrades ☑ New MVRTA System Map (2014) ☑ MVRTA website enhancements (ongoing)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Vehicle replacements and maintenance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Coordinated replacement vans for Councils on Aging ☑ Continued replacement of MVRTA buses and vans ☑ Installation of stored value Tap & Ride (Charlie Card) payment system

An Action Plan

This Comprehensive Plan, like the preceding plans referenced above, is an action plan for the MVMPO's transit planning and funding activities. Unlike the previous plans, this 2014 Plan also informs the collaborative work of the Merrimack Valley Regional Coordinating Council (MVRCC), a newly formed entity pursuant to Commonwealth Executive Order 530. The MVRCC's purpose is to increase coordination among all transit service providers, including the RTAs and human services agencies.

Transportation for Whom?

This Plan considers the needs of current and potential customers of transit - including elders, disabled, youth and commuters as well as those persons who might choose transit because they don't have access to cars, or because it is a more 'green' mode of transportation, or because it saves them money.

It is the MVMPO's priority to identify and support the public transportation services in its region. Accordingly, the MVMPO has prepared this Plan to advance the traveling public's use of existing fixed-route bus, commuter bus and commuter rail services in its region. This Plan is also intended to guide the public toward taking best advantage of the MVRTA's Ring and Ride services where offered; and making the most efficient use of its Special Services. The MVMPO also intends that this Plan's development, coterminous with the work of the MVRCC, will also benefit customers of other public transportation services operating in the region.

GreenDOT Policy

In June 2010 the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) adopted its new 'GreenDOT' policy, "a comprehensive environmental responsibility and sustainability initiative..." MassDOT's GreenDOT policy goals are to:

- reduce Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions;
 - promote healthy transportation options, i.e. walking, bicycling, and public transit, and
 - support Smart Growth development.
-

In October 2012, MassDOT set a goal of tripling transit, bicycling and walking mode shares of all trips statewide in order to achieve GHG reduction targets. This 2014 Coordinated Plan provides guidance on what can be done in the MVMPO region to support statewide GHG reduction goals. Please refer to MassDOT's [GreenDOT Implementation Plan](#) for more information.



Trends

Population

As shown in Figure 1 (top, right) the MVMPO region’s population rose by 5% between the 2000 and 2010 U.S. Census. Lawrence, the region’s largest community, grew by 6% during this period to 76,377 residents – exceeding projections. Looking ahead, the MVMPO staff projects that the region’s population will grow by 12% between 2010 and 2035.

Figure 2 (middle, right) illustrates the significance of the region’s projected elderly population growth. While the total population is projected to grow only by 12% by 2035, the region’s elderly population is expected to more than double by 2035. Likewise, in Figure 3 (bottom, right) the disabled population is expected to grow, with the most remarkable increases occurring within the 65+ age cohort. Increases in both the number of elders and the disabled will impact transit services the most, as both groups may curtail or cease driving while qualifying for elder or ADA transportation services. These transit services are more costly to provide and will have a greater impact on available resources. The MVRTA is

Figure 1: MVMPO Region Population Projections, 2010-2035

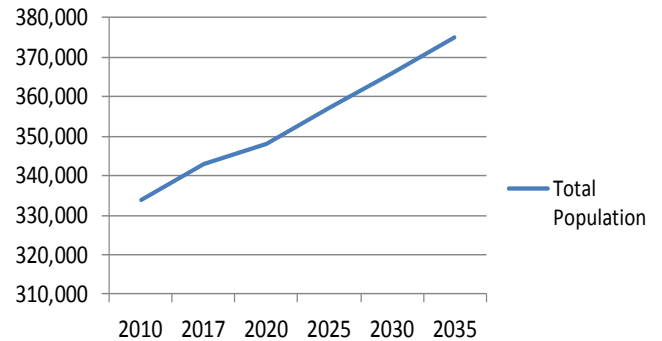


Figure 2: MVMPO Region Elderly Population Projections, 2010-2035

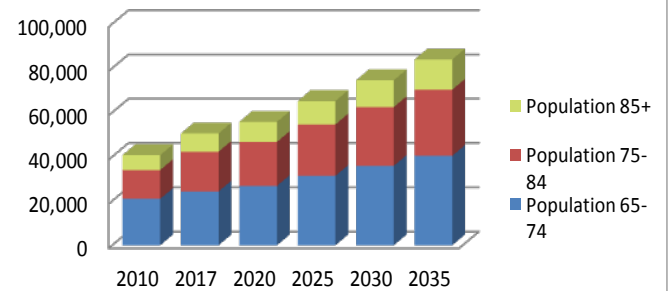
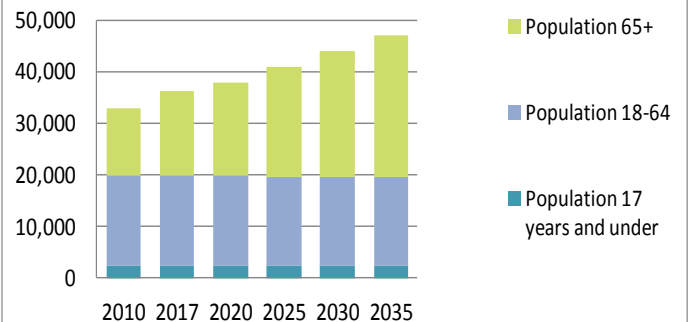


Figure 3: MVMPO Region Disabled Population by Age Group, 2010-2035



*2010 populations: U.S. Census. Projections: REMI

analyzing these potential impacts in its FY 2015 and 2016 planning efforts.

Low-Income and Minority Communities

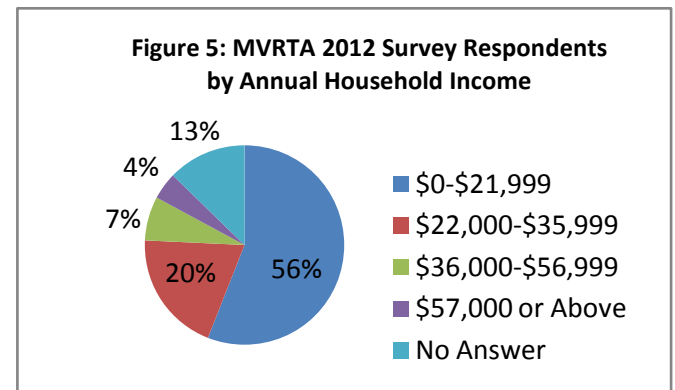
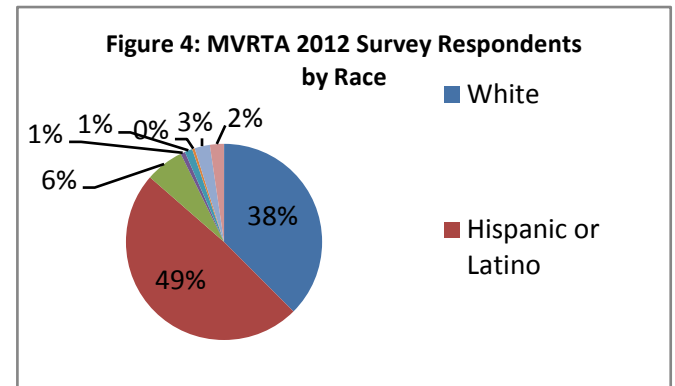
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 provides that “no person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.”

Both the MVMPO and the MVRTA work to ensure compliance with Title VI and all federal and Commonwealth nondiscrimination statutes in their policies, programs and projects.

MVMPO staff routinely obtains socioeconomic information from the decennial Census and the annual American Community Survey to identify those block groups in which the proportion of minority and/or low-income persons exceed the average percentage of such persons in the region overall. MVMPO region communities with block groups in which minority and/or low-income populations exceed the regional average include Haverhill, Methuen, North Andover and the City of Lawrence. This is important to know not only to prevent discrimination in allocating transportation resources, but also to ensure that transit-dependent populations receive a high level of service.

MVRTA Ridership Survey

In October 2012 the MVRTA distributed 1,000 surveys in English and Spanish to its customers, of which it collected 910 (91%) responses. Respondents’ self-reported race and annual household incomes are shown in Figures 4 and 5 below, respectively.



Note: Figures 4 and 5 above will be updated with MVRTA 2013 and 2014 survey data under separate cover.

According to the MVRTA's October 2012 ridership survey, nearly 50% of riders identify themselves as Hispanic or Latino and 56% have an annual income of less than \$22,000 per year as shown in Figures 4 and 5 on the previous page. *The MVRTA updated this information in its 2013 ridership survey, and undertook a similar survey in December 2014: updates of the above information will be added to this document as it becomes available.*

A review of the MVRTA's network of fixed-route bus route miles shows that as of 2013, 56% of the MVRTA's fixed route bus miles directly served low-income neighborhoods and 36% directly served minority neighborhoods. In addition, the MVRTA operates four transit centers (including its largest bus transit center) in Lawrence. Also, as funding has become available the MVRTA has increased services to these neighborhoods as follows:

- new Route 85 fixed route bus, Lawrence on July 1, 2014;
- new Route 76 fixed route employment service, Lawrence-River Road (Andover);
- operation at higher frequencies:
 - 30 minute peak hour, 60 minute off-peak hour service (Lawrence-based bus routes, September 2005)
 - 30 minute weekday frequency, Routes 1 and 41 (September 2013) - which also serve low-income and minority populations in Methuen and North Andover;
- new Sunday services: Lawrence-based routes, effective September 2014 and Haverhill-based routes, November 2014
- new Holiday services: all local bus routes, Veterans' Day: implemented November 2014
- new Holiday services, all local bus routes: MLK/Patriots'/Presidents' Days – to be implemented in 2015

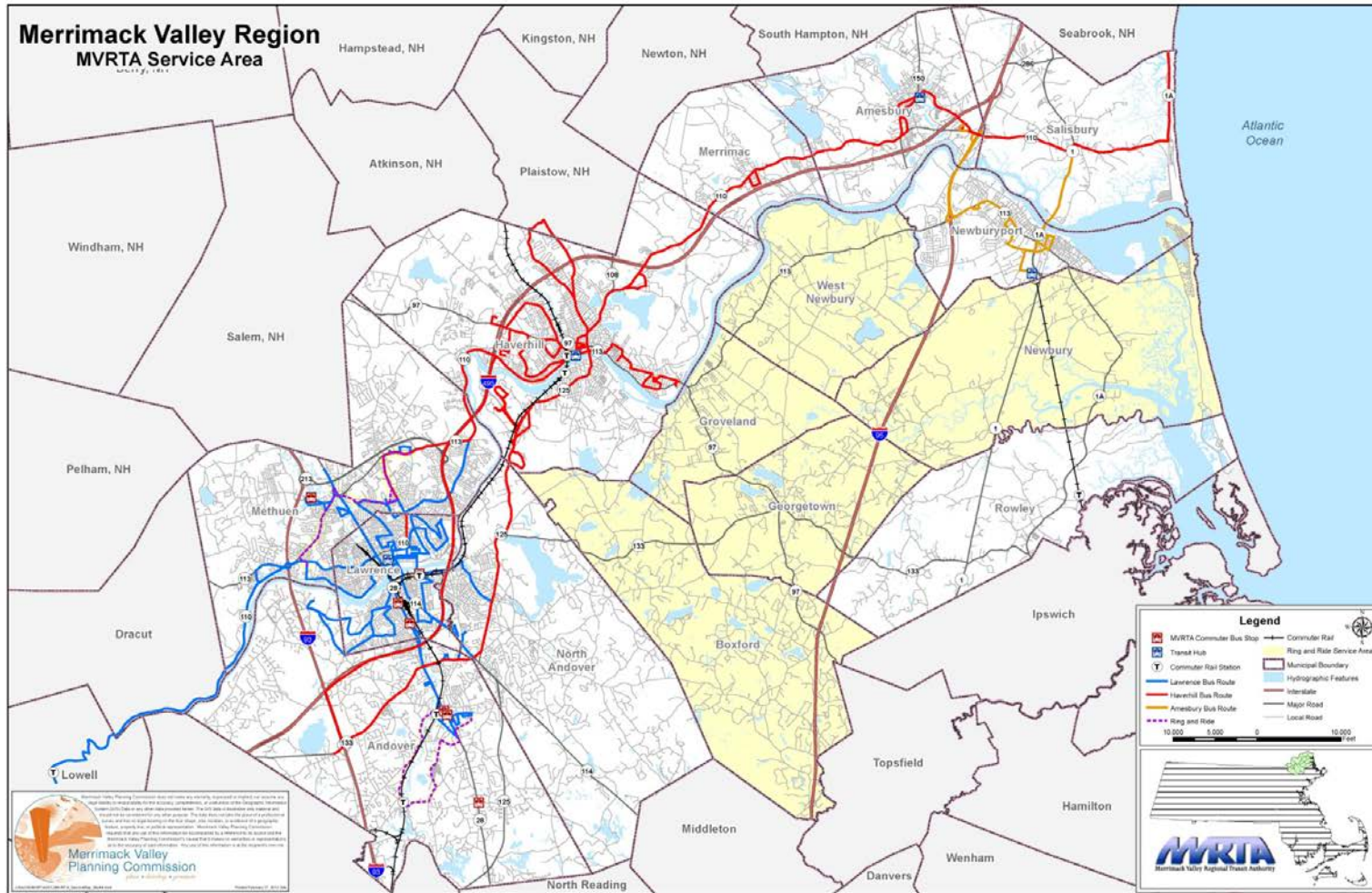
The MVRTA system map is shown in Figure 6 (next page).

The MVRTA is consistently engaged in eliminating barriers to the use of its services. Spanish is the second most frequently spoken language in the region, especially by those who speak English less than very well. Accordingly, the MVRTA ensures that its

services may be easily used by both English and Spanish speakers. For example, 43% of its bus operators as well as clerks and managers speak both languages. The MVRTA also provides transit information in English and Spanish in handouts, on its website, and in person. It also advertises notices in *Rumbo*, the MVMPO region's premier bilingual newspaper.

For more Title VI / Nondiscrimination Program information, please refer to Appendix A of this Plan for MVMPO, MVRTA or Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) staff contacts.

Figure 6: MVRTA System Map



Existing Transit Options

MVRTA

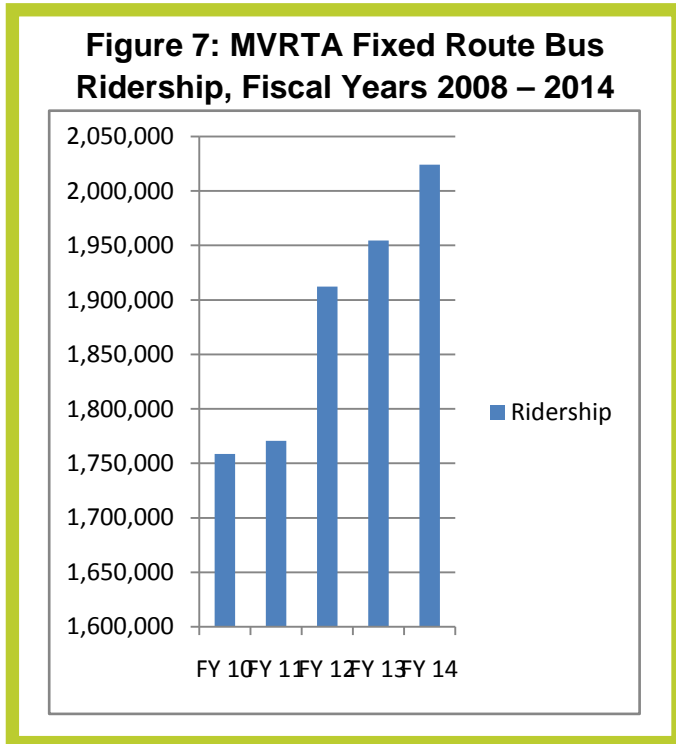
The MVRTA is the primary provider of organized public transit service in the MVMPO region. In FY 2014, MVRTA provided a total of 2,024,281 rides on its fixed-route services.

The MVRTA provides year-round local **fixed route bus service** to the communities of Amesbury, Andover, Haverhill, Lawrence, Merrimac, Methuen, Newburyport, North Andover and Salisbury. It also operates the Route 83 seasonal service to Salisbury Beach in Salisbury, MA and Hampton Beach, NH during July and August. Route 41 connects Lawrence with the Lowell Regional Transit Authority's bus network in City of Lowell, in the Northern Middlesex region.

All fixed route bus services operate on a Monday through Saturday schedule. In addition, in September 2014 Sunday service began on Lawrence-based routes, and service was also expanded to include certain holidays. 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. The five local Haverhill-based routes and Route 54 begin operation at 5:30 AM on weekdays and end at 6:30 PM. Saturday service in Haverhill begins at 8:00 AM and runs until 5:00 PM. Service frequencies also vary by route. All Lawrence-based routes operate every 30 minutes during peak hours (60 minutes non-peak) on weekdays and every 60 minutes on Saturdays. Haverhill-based routes operate every 90 minutes on weekdays and Saturdays.

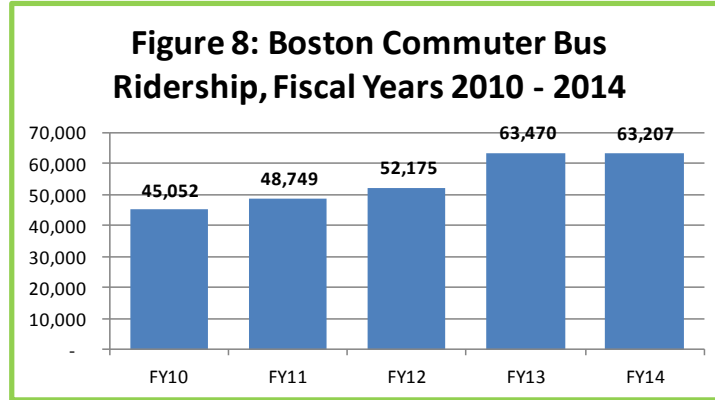
New in 2011, Fixed Route 54 connects the coastal communities of Amesbury, Newburyport and Salisbury. It replaced the popular Salisbury Ring & Ride service and combined it with part of the Route 51, which now ends in Amesbury. Route 54 has been very successful, providing 74,825 rides in FY 12, 88,047 rides in FY13, and 82,776 rides in FY14.

Figure 7 below shows ridership on the MVRTA’s fixed route bus network for Fiscal Years 2008 – 2014. During this five-year period, ridership increased from 1,758,689 to 2,024,281, or 15.1%.



Boston Commuter Bus

In 2004 MVRTA assumed operation of a Boston Commuter Bus service that had been previously operated by a locally based private carrier. Since the MVRTA took over provision of this service, it has continued to add ridership and expand service. The MVRTA began by offering two weekday daily inbound (Boston) and two outbound (Merrimack Valley) trips. In FYs 2006 and 2011, it added two additional trips (i.e. one inbound and one outbound). In FY 2014, it added an additional weekday afternoon departure from Boston, and instituted Holiday service on select holidays. In FY 2014, MVRTA provided 63,207 passenger trips. Figure 8 below shows ridership figures on the MVRTA’s Commuter Bus for FYs 2008 – 2014:



Special Services

The MVRTA provides three types of Special Services Transportation: EZTrans, non-ADA EZTrans, and Ring & Ride. MVRTA’s EZTrans is its special transportation service that can be used by elders and persons with disabilities. Special Transportation Services (STS), an operating company under First Transit, Inc. is the main provider of EZTrans service – STS is based at MVRTA’s facility and provides service through Assist Medical and Andover Livery, its subcontractors. EZTrans is available to persons with physical and/or cognitive disabilities who cannot use the fixed route bus system. Eligible customers’ disabilities must conform to the definition outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). All customers wishing to take advantage of this service must apply to the

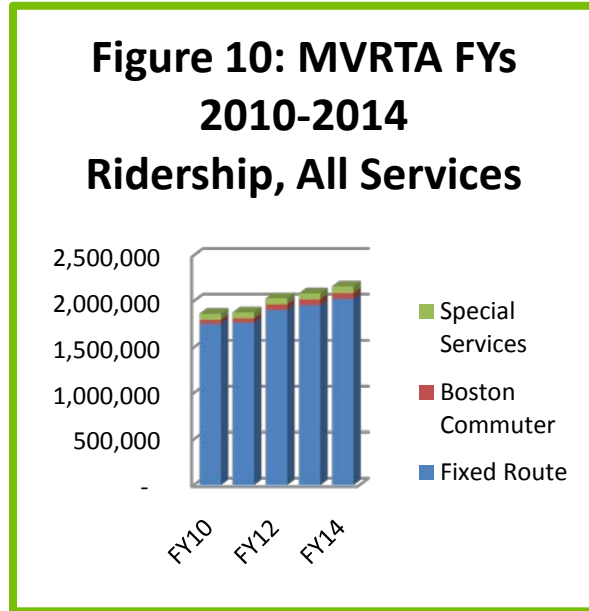
Services
 ADA-certified
 one-way fare is
 customers must
 reservations at
 (24) hours in

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
ADA	41,054	41,755	47,640	47,290	47,661
Non ADA	13,249	13,401	13,653	12,607	11,823
Ring & Ride	6,988	8,144	10,079	6,348	13,892

MVRTA Special Program to be prior to use. A \$2.00 and make their least twenty-four advance. The

service is provided within three-quarters of a mile from any fixed bus route and only available during the fixed bus route hours of operation. Table 2 above shows ridership for the ADA EZTrans service in FYs 2010-2014.

Figure 10 below shows the collective ridership of the MVRTA's fixed route, Boston Commuter Bus and Special Services.



Non-ADA EZTrans service beyond the eligible three-quarters of a mile restriction is also available to those customers who are certified as ADA and to those who are aged 60 years or older. Customers must make their trip reservations at least two days in advance. Service rates vary from \$3.00 to \$9.00 depending on the trip origin and destination points. This service is available Monday thru Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Table 2 (previous page) shows ridership for the non-ADA EZTrans Service for FYs 2010-2014.

Medi-Ride initiated in 2011, is the MVRTA's service for transporting customers to doctor appointments in Boston and Peabody. This service was the direct result of a need identified in the 2007 Coordinated Plan. Elderly and disabled customers may use Medi-Ride. A one-way trip is \$8. In FY14, 190 Medi-Ride trips were provided.



Ring & Ride is a shared ride, origin to destination or curb-to-curb service available primarily in those Merrimack Valley communities that do not receive fixed bus route service. To increase ridership, the MVRTA modified the service recently to simplify it and make it more convenient. For example, residents in Boxford, Georgetown, Groveland, West Newbury and Newbury may use Ring & Ride to travel anywhere in these communities. Rides are \$2.00 per ride, except for Georgetown residents who ride at no charge. Table 2 at right shows MVRTA Special Services Ridership for FYs 2010-2014.

MVRTA Multi-Modal Center Development

The MVRTA has contributed to improving sustainable transportation and promoting community economic development through the development of new intermodal centers. Completed projects include:

- McGovern Transportation Center, Lawrence;
- Costello Transportation Center, Amesbury;
- Gateway Surface Parking, Lawrence, and
- Haverhill Intermodal Parking Facility.

In addition to these projects, the MVRTA is working with the City of Haverhill to move the current Washington Square bus terminal closer to the MBTA train station. It is also working with the City of Newburyport to develop a downtown intermodal facility that will provide parking as well as bus operations for commuter and local bus service.

Other Providers

MBTA

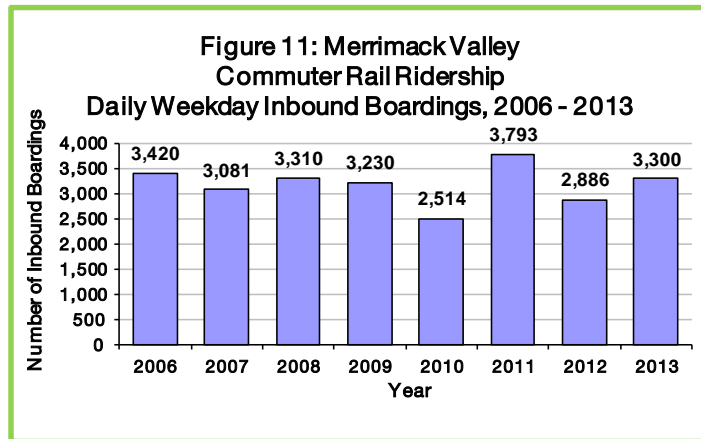
The MBTA provides commuter rail service from seven stations along two different rail lines within the MVMPO region. To the east, the 27.7-mile Newburyport Line originates at Boston's North Station and terminates at Newburyport, with stops in Rowley and Newburyport. Thirteen weekday departures from Newburyport begin at 5:22 a.m. and end at 10:45 p.m. Weekday arrivals at Newburyport begin at 7:29 a.m. and end at 12:10 p.m. On Saturday and Sundays, the MBTA operates six daily inbound and six

outbound trains with the first inbound departure at 8:48 pm and the last departure at 9:00 p.m. The first weekend outbound trip arrives at Newburyport at 10:31 a.m. and the last trip, at 11:16 p.m.

In the west, the 32.9-mile Haverhill Line runs originates at Boston’s North Station and terminates at downtown Haverhill. In the Merrimack Valley, two Haverhill Line stations are located in Andover (Ballardvale and Village Center), one in Lawrence and two in Haverhill (Bradford and downtown Haverhill).

The MBTA operates thirteen weekday daily trains between Haverhill and North Station between the hours of 5:05 a.m. (first departure from Haverhill) and 10:15 p.m. (last train to depart). Six inbound trains run on weekends between 7:15 a.m. and 10:15 p.m.

As would be expected, commuter rail ridership in the Merrimack Valley fluctuates, as do other modes. Fuel and fare/parking costs have tended to produce the most immediate ridership changes. Figure 1 (below) details MBTA Commuter Rail Ridership in the MVMPO region for FYs 2006-2013.



The MBTA is making several Haverhill Line infrastructure upgrades within the MVMPO region. It is completing the restoration of double track capacity between Lawrence and Andover, including new signals and drainage structures. It is also reconstructing the Haverhill Line’s Merrimack River Bridge, which is presently speed restricted. Combined,

these two projects will reduce travel times and create more capacity for scheduling Commuter Rail, Amtrak Downeaster, and PanAm freight trains. Accordingly, the MVMPO staff continues to work with MassDOT to increase mid-day Commuter Rail service, and to add stations in the region (i.e. Shawsheen Landing, Osgood Landing) in conjunction with potential skip-stop service.



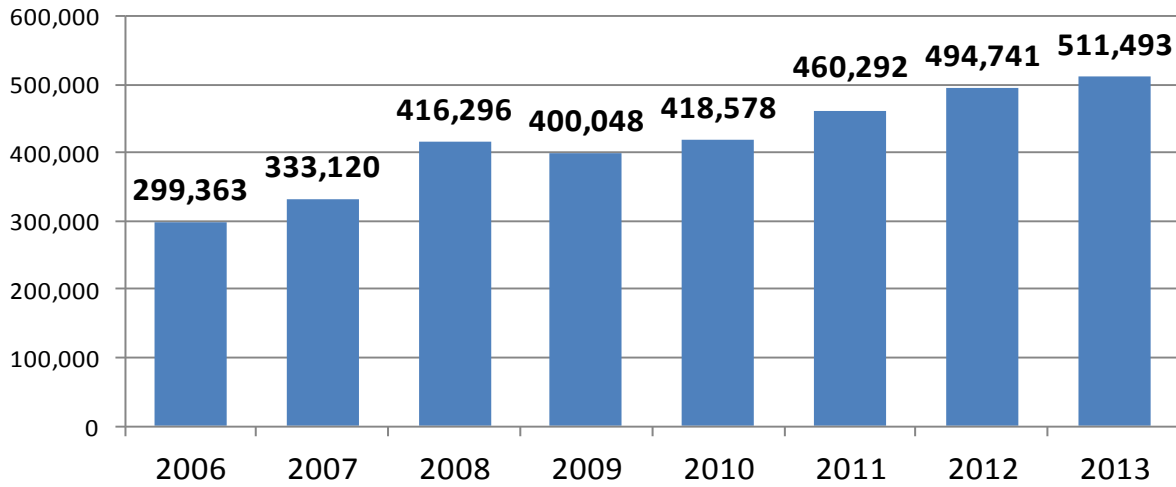
Figure 12: MBTA Commuter Rail Train at Lawrence Station

Amtrak Downeaster

Since its inception in 2001, the Amtrak Downeaster has provided direct service to/from the MBTA's downtown Haverhill station. Presently, the Downeaster has ten daily departures from Haverhill: five southbound between 7:00 a.m. and 8:29 p.m., and five northbound between 9:53 a.m. and 11:47 p.m. One-way fares range between \$6.00 - \$29.00. Monthly commuter passes, ten-ride, college student (6-TIX) and Corporate Share passes (can be used by several employees of a company) are available.

Figure 13 below shows that Downeaster ridership has grown steadily, from 299,363 in FY 2006 to 511,493 in FY 2013. The Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA), operator of the Amtrak Downeaster, is extending Downeaster service northward from its current northern terminus in Portland, ME to Brunswick. Also, the Downeaster will service the former B&MRR Kennebunk Station beginning in 2015 or 2016, which has not had passenger rail service since 1965.

Figure 12: Amtrak Downeaster Ridership, 2006-2013



Private Commuter Bus Carriers

C&J Bus Lines' New Hampshire-based service operates on an hourly schedule both weekdays and weekends through Newburyport's Park and Ride Lot on Storey Avenue (see Figure 12 at right). C&J routes most of this service to Boston's South Station via Logan Airport. The first and last Newburyport departures are at 3:30 a.m. and 11:30 p.m., and the first and last Newburyport arrivals are at 6:10 a.m. and 2:10 a.m., respectively. A ten-ride commuter pass costs \$88.

The Coach Company operates two commuter bus services in the MVMPO region, offering nine a.m. departures to Boston from various locations in the region and nine Boston departures from St. James Avenue and Haymarket to the region. Services sort as shown in Table 2 below:

Stop Location	Stops served, (# of a.m. departures):	Stops served, (# of p.m. arrivals):
Boxford Town Center	3	3
Groveland, Tea Garden Restaurant	2	3
Georgetown Park & Ride Lot	2	3
Haverhill, Rivers Edge Plaza	2	3
Newburyport Custom House	3	4
Newburyport High School	3	4
Newburyport Park & Ride Lot	6	6

A one-way ride is \$13 and a ten-ride commuter pass is \$82, and 2) from Haverhill's

Rivers Edge Plaza with stops at the Tea Garden Restaurant (Groveland), Georgetown Park & Ride, and Boxford Center. This route operates using two buses. The cost is \$11 one-way and \$79 for a ten-ride pass.



Figure 12: Park and Ride Facility at Storey Avenue, Newburyport

Councils on Aging

Every community in the MVMPO region has a senior center and/or Council on Aging. The transportation services provided by these agencies vary from community to community. Most communities provide rides to medical appointments as well as grocery shopping and limited recreational activities. Table 3 below outlines the services provided by each Council on Aging that responded to an MVMPO staff request for information in 2012.

Northern Essex Elder Transport (NEET)

NEET provides elder transportation by utilizing volunteer drivers, who are often elders themselves. The program is designed for elders and may have some crossover in providing transportation to people with disabilities, however NEET does not breakdown the number of trips by customer ability (i.e. cane, walker, vision impaired). In general, their customers must be somewhat mobile in order to participate in the program.

Table 3: MVMPO Region Councils on Aging Transportation Services, FY 2012

	Average Rides/ Month	Total Rides/ Year	Days/ Week Van in Use	Home Meal Delivery Trips/ Month	Number of Vehicles
Andover	276	Unavailable	5	1,750	2 cars; 1 bus; 1 van
Newbury	56	72	1	680	1
North Andover	326	3,912	5		2
Georgetown	60	720	2		1 shared
Salisbury	208	2,496	3	740*	1 shared
Groveland	173	2,076	4	0	1
Newburyport	64	768	2		1 shared
Rowley	425	5,100	3 to 5		1**
Merrimac	44	Unavailable	2	0	1 shared

*Meals on Wheels are delivered by volunteers with their own vehicles.

**Rowley shared a van with Newbury July 2011-April 2012.

As shown in Table 4 on the following page, NEET provided 1,702 trips in our region in FY 2012.

**Table 4: Northern Essex Elder Transport, Inc.
FY 2012 Trip Summary**

<u>Town</u>	<u>Total Round Trips</u>	<u>Medical</u>	<u>Shopping</u>	<u>Hair</u>	<u>COA</u>	<u>Other</u>
Amesbury	86	86				
Boxford	69	69				
Georgetown	100	100				
Groveland	114	114				
Haverhill	52	44				8
Lawrence	45	45				
Merrimac	203	174	1	2	26	
Methuen	154	154				
Newbury	186	185	1			
Newburyport	223	223				
North Andover	339	339				
Rowley	94	94				
Salisbury	16	16				
West Newbury	21	21				
2012 Total Trips	1,702	1,664	2	2	26	8

Service Gaps and Improvements

Public comments on service gaps and potential improvements were collected at several different times during 2014. First, the MVRTA staff conducted surveys of its riders as part of the development of its own Regional Transit Plan (RTP) – several months prior to the development of this Coordinated Plan. Second, the Commonwealth's Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) solicited public comments on service gaps and suggested improvements in a transit survey it conducted in August 2014. Third, the MVMPO staff (with MVRTA staff support) held three public listening sessions to solicit comments, at: 1) the Lawrence Public Library on September 30; 2) Phoenix Row Apartments in Haverhill on October 2, and at 3) the Amesbury Council on Aging on October 7. Finally, the MVMPO solicited public comments at two public hearings on December 17, 2014.

Importantly, the MVRTA staff is utilizing the comments received during the development of this Plan to prepare its RTP, which is to be completed in 2015.

During the 2014 public listening sessions, MVMPO staff delivered a PowerPoint presentation (Attachment A) summarizing transit information collected during development of prior plans, as well as the newer transit information collected by EOHHS – which covered transit stakeholders in the service areas covered by the MVRTA and the Lowell Regional Transit Authority (LRTA). Session participants were asked to comment on what transit services worked well for them; what services needed improvement, and what recommendations they would suggest.

The EOHHS survey highlighted the importance of the transportation 'safety net' for transit riders, who reported that they rely upon friends, family, volunteer drivers (NEET customers) or must make several bus transfers to reach key destinations, i.e. Lahey Burlington via Lowell. The EOHHS survey also revealed how participants believed the public learned of transit services:

- Word of mouth
-

- Councils on Aging/Elder Services
- Web site
- Seeing bus
- Newspaper/Cable TV

Many of the EOHHS survey participants reported the following opinions: 1) the public is generally unaware that transit exists, and 2) many of those persons who are aware of the existence of transit do not know how to ride transit.

General Transit Service Gaps and Recommendations

Bus Stops and Flag System

A few riders have commented over time that in their opinion the bus flag system caused buses to stop more frequently, and therefore, to run behind schedule. Also, a few commenters requested **more bus stops**.

Response: MVRTA customers have generally agreed that the flag (wave) stop system provided convenience for most riders waiting to board buses – particularly where routes traverse both urban and suburban areas. Further, the locations of individual bus stops are a local city or town decision.

Commuting to Boston

Add an additional MVRTA Commuter Bus in the morning and afternoon.

Response: an additional outbound departure from Boston at 4:45 p.m. was added in September 2014. In addition, a new service with one a.m. peak trip from North Andover to Boston and a return trip from Boston to North Andover is being implemented in 2015.

Establish a dedicated I-93 Bus-on-Shoulder or HOV lane to improve carpooling/van pooling/commuter bus efficiency, and/or extend the I-93 HOV lane from Somerville to Montvale Avenue interchange in Stoneham.

Response: the MVMPO staff completed its I-93 BoS/HOV Lane Feasibility Study in 2014 and is continuing to discuss potential I-93 corridor improvements with MassDOT, NHDOT and other parties.

Operate the MVRTA Boston Commuter bus on select holidays including MLK, President's Day, Columbus Day and Veterans Day

Response: Holiday service on Veterans' Day was implemented in November 2014; Holiday service on MLK/Patriots'/Presidents' Days was approved in 2014 and will be implemented in 2015.

Fare media

The combination Tap-and-Ride / Charlie Card should be integrated for use on the MBTA Commuter Rail system and on other transit services/facilities that MVRTA customers use (including MVRTA parking facilities). Multiple fare policies and media are a source of confusion, and a travel deterrent for some – especially for persons with disabilities.

Response: fare interoperability among these modes was considered during the development of the current fare media; however, technical issues prevented implementation. The MVMPO staff, in conjunction with the MVRTA and the MBTA, will monitor possibilities for expanding the use of the combination Tap-and-Ride / Charlie Card in the future.

Fare Increases

An Amesbury session attendee commented by email his concern that: 1) ride fares continued to increase in Amesbury, and 2) the City discontinued (“without much notice”) providing rides to doctors' visits and other medical transportation rides to Newburyport.

Response: the MVMPO staff believes that this comment pertains to the City of Amesbury's transportation services offered through its Council on Aging. The MVMPO staff will forward this comment to the Amesbury Council on Aging.

Freight Rail Services

Freight rail service to Newburyport should be restored, to reduce truck traffic on local roads – particularly to/from 'Lord Timothy Dexter Green' (Newburyport Industrial Park). Trucks bound for the Park and other local destinations use Scotland Rd. in Newbury, which impacts residents.

Response: the MVMPO staff will share this recommendation with the MBTA and with the City of Newburyport.

Locations not easily, or not at all, served by public transportation - Communities

Andover

- provide a commuter rush hours shuttle service between Ballardvale and P&G/Pfizer (Lowell Junction), and service between Ballardvale Street and North Wilmington to benefit ITT Technical Institute students and employees at Charles River Laboratories and other Ballardvale Street employers

Lawrence

- provide more direct transit service for South Lawrence points to/from the Senior Center Newburyport
- Provide service to doctor's offices at Towle Building (260 Merrimac Street)
- Provide service to the James Steam Mill Apartments (1 Charles Street). Staff received three emails on this as well as several attendees at the Amesbury public listening session.

Response: service to these locations require the implementation of an intra-community circulator bus route, which is a local decision.

- Later evening service to train station to pick up passengers coming from Boston
 - provide direct transit service between Amesbury and the Lord Timothy Dexter Green (Newburyport Industrial Park)
-

North Andover

- Turnpike Street for Chestnut Green, doctors' offices and Stop & Shop
- Past 200 Sutton Street, Andover

Response: service to this area was discontinued in 2001 due to a lack of ridership

Locations not well or at all served by public transit – recreational areas

Tattersall Farm, Maudslay State Park, and Plum Island

Locations not well or at all served by public transit – adjoining regions

- a) Southern New Hampshire: neither the MVRTA nor MassHealth has been able to transport riders to/from southern New Hampshire. In general, commenters continue to advocate for service to Salem, NH (Rockingham Mall and to the plazas on NH-28); Walmart and Kmart in NH-125 in Plaistow, and US-1 in Seabrook;
- b) Greater Boston educational institutions (Salem State College) and employment sites (Peabody, Burlington, Manchester NH) can be a challenge – especially for students (comment from a Lawrence-based high school with a substantial work-study program);
- c) Medical Centers (add to Medi-Ride Service)
 - Lahey Clinic in Burlington
 - Beverly Hospital
 - Mass General Hospital in Danvers
 - Portsmouth Hospital
 - North Shore Cancer Center
 - Peabody

Response: Lahey Clinic in Peabody is presently served. There are presently no plans to add other locations as this would require additions to the van fleet.

Marketing Recommendations

- Utilize e-mail and social media
 - More posters, maps and brochures should be available at more locations
 - Increase training and outreach efforts to new customers, especially in the Spanish-speaking community
-

- Use designated stops
- Provide more public transit information in newspapers
- More surveys and public hearings
- Use more pamphlets and the electric signs on buses
- Post information at city and town offices and where people shop
- Make schedules available at hospitals, shopping centers and other places where potential customers congregate
- Print, television, radio, web, telephone applications
- More outreach at senior centers, schools, etc.
- Educate social workers, Elder Services of Merrimack Valley case managers, medical office managers
- Within five years, most people will be using smart phones. Children will want to use their phones to make reservations for their parents

Response: the human services organizations operating in the MVMPO region have advised in MVRCC discussions that they educate their clients about their transit options. The MVRTA is presently on Facebook and Twitter (Twitter is used to post service alerts), distributes posters, maps and other service information, and interacts directly with constituents on an ongoing basis. Accordingly, the MVMPO and MVRTA staffs have increased their efforts in this area each year, and are always available to offer its information to additional individuals and groups.

MBTA Commuter Rail Services

Commenters also advocated for **more frequent MBTA Commuter Rail service.**

Response: the MVPC has been working with the MBTA to improve all of its services to the region. For example, in 2014 the MVPC requested that the MBTA consider increasing Haverhill Line service frequencies and additional stops once the restoration of two-track capacity is complete. There has always been regional interest in increasing mid-day service on both the MBTA Haverhill and Newburyport Lines as well. The MVMPO staff will share this recommendation with the MBTA. MVRTA Special Services (ADA and non-ADA trips)

The trip scheduling process and locations for pick-ups and drop-offs should be less rigid, particularly for a) deadlines for scheduling trips, and when b) customers' ability to access specific origins and destinations require more flexibility. The MVRTA administrators, bus and van drivers, and trip schedulers should know where the printed bus stops are located. Passengers should not be required to know exact street addresses for landmarks such as hospitals, city and town halls, commuter train stations, stops at MVRTA stations, and shopping malls when booking trips.

Response: the operating procedures that are in place for MVRTA Special Services are to a large extent governed by the ADA implementing regulations, which provide for more standardization of operating procedures as requested by disability advocates when the ADA was formulated in 1991 – when it can, the MVRTA's Office of Special Services does try to provide some flexibility within these operating procedures.

Passenger facility improvements

Comments (Amesbury session) involved the MBTA Newburyport Commuter Rail Station: a) improve station design and make it usable; b) improve access to/from station, to reduce distance patrons must walk, bike, or travel and to make pedestrian/wheelchair access more inviting. Site fence and high-level platforms were cited as access barriers. At the Haverhill session, a commenter suggested that the downtown bus facility be upgraded.

Response: The MBTA has been working with its Commuter Rail operator, with MassDOT Planning, and with the City of Newburyport to create new transit-oriented development around Newburyport Station. There may be opportunities to upgrade the station as part of that development. However, site fencing and high-level platforms are required for maintaining railroad operations safety and ADA compliance, respectively. With respect to the Haverhill MVRTA Bus Station, the MVRTA provides service to this City-owned property. The MVRTA and the City have been working with MassDOT to design and fund a new bus passenger facility in closer proximity to the new MVRTA parking garage and the MBTA's Haverhill Commuter Rail Station. In the event that a new downtown Haverhill bus station is implemented, the MVRTA will continue to work with the City to identify the best option(s) for

continuing service to/from the current downtown Haverhill bus station, which may include physical upgrades.

Passenger rail service to New Hampshire

A commenter at the Amesbury session requested that passenger rail service north of Newburyport, MA should be restored.

Response: presently, there are no active plans to restore passenger rail service on the former Boston & Maine Railroad Eastern Division route north of Newburyport Station. However, the right-of-way is generally intact and in sections it has been converted for shared-use paths. Reactivation of passenger rail service could be considered if future travel conditions warrant. The MVMPO will share this recommendation with MassDOT's Rail and Transit Division.

Ride Buddy or Companion Program

(Lawrence session): a pool of volunteers or transit staff could a) instruct/demonstrate how to ride the system for prospective customers; b) accompany customers on trips to various destinations around the region, including trips to some of the region's open space and recreational facilities. Such programs are active in other parts of the U.S. and could do a lot to increase ridership and awareness of transportation options.

Response: the MVRTA presently has two route supervisors who have been trained as travel trainers and they are available to assist social service agencies in providing this training upon request.

Roadway and sidewalk conditions

Staff received comments on this topic during the 2014 Amesbury and Lawrence sessions. Passengers (and bus operators) frequently encounter problems in the field with snow removal, missing or degraded pathways, and balancing safe vehicle operations in traffic while picking up passengers as close as possible to their trip origins/ destinations. Further, for persons who travel to/from New Hampshire, there are few sidewalks to key origins and

destinations, i.e. NH-28 in Salem. A Newburyport resident recommended that the new rail trails (which serve transit customers) should have handicapped access where needed and a minimum of street crossings where there is a lot of traffic. Finally, at the Haverhill session a participant advised that sidewalks on Merrimack Street in that city were in poor condition and needed repairs.

During previous public comment periods, participants reported that pedestrian facilities were lacking on MA-114 in North Andover, and on Railroad Avenue connecting to the MBTA Rowley train station.

Response: in North Andover, the MVMPO staff is working with MassDOT to advance the MA-114 Corridor Project that includes construction and/or reconstruction of sidewalks. In Methuen, MassDOT is reconstructing the I-93/MA-110/MA-113 Rotary, which includes extensive sidewalk and crosswalk work. In Rowley, MVMPO staff will consult with the MBTA, MassDOT and the Town of Rowley to review pedestrian conditions at the Rowley MBTA Commuter Rail station and identify improvements that can be made.

Route Suggestions – General and Specific

More frequent midday service, especially on heavily traveled routes, i.e. MVRTA Route 1 has been requested in the past. In addition, commenters also advocated for the MVRTA to **extend its weekday daily service hours**, i.e. to provide service to 9:00 or 10:00 p.m. Later hours would permit more MBTA Commuter Rail passengers to make connections to local service. It may also help second- and third-shift workers.

Route Suggestions - Specific

Route 01: a) provide Saturday service using the weekday service schedule, and b) provide more service from the Best Western Motel area (River and Lowell Streets, Haverhill) to Downtown Haverhill and Merrimack Valley Hospital.

Route 14: the bus route within Ward Hill Business Park was changed at some time, which subsequently has made it difficult for some MVRTA customers to walk to/from destinations in more elevated sections of the Park.

Route 15: Extend service further west on Broadway (MA-97).

Route 33 (carryover from 2013 Plan): extend route to access the doctors' offices at Chestnut Green on Turnpike Street (MA-114) and the Stop & Shop in North Andover. MA-114 is a high-volume and higher speed road with no sidewalks and no lights, making it a very dangerous place for people to access. Currently, only those who qualify for EZTrans can access those doctors' offices with public transit.

Route 38: reinstitute; Park Street residents must walk from Hampshire to Lawrence Streets to take other MVRTA routes to reach certain destinations, i.e. Holy Family Hospital, which is difficult for seniors.

Route 39 A&B: increase bus frequencies at the end of the school day - can't get on bus sometimes.

Route 40: change schedule to provide service the Village Mall all day, every day. Further, provide a direct connection to City Hall. Some customers have a difficult time walking to/from Methuen Square. Also, extend the route west (or reinstitute former Route 42).

Route 42: Reactivate to serve Pelham Street residents and businesses west of the Park-and-Ride, as an option to extending Route 40 west.

Route 51: a) adjust schedule to allow for convenient transfers to the Route 1 bus in Haverhill, and b) operate on the same schedule on Saturdays and Sundays.

Response: the MVRTA is reviewing potential implementation of a 60-minute service on Route 51, and is reviewing the overall route schedule during the development of its Regional Transit Plan, which should be complete in 2015.

Route 54: a) extend route coverage on Water Street to serve the James Steam Mill Apartments and to directly serve other senior/disabled residential complexes in the City; b) restore service along High Street that has been provided in the past, and c) provide bus service in Summer months to North Point Beach and the Parker River parking lot.

Route 83: have the MVRTA Route 83 stop on Elm Street during summer months.

Route 85: extend service northward to Whitman Street to better serve Arlington neighborhood residents.

Responses: the MVRTA will be addressing the above general and route-specific recommendations made for improved frequencies, span of service and route changes as part of its Regional Transit Plan (in preparation, 2015), subject to available funds in FYs 2016 and 2017. Note that in the case of the service recommendations for: a) Route 15 extension west along Broadway, extending service further up Broadway is a local decision; b) Andover at Ballardvale/Lowell Junction, such a service was tried between 2000 and 2005 in conjunction with the Junction TMO: at that time, a lack of ridership, coordination with changing commuter rail schedules, and a lack of vans prevented the service from growing – as a result, the service was subsequently discontinued, and c) Route 83 has been stopping on Elm Street since the Summer 2013 season.

Sunday MVRTA service

Long requested by transit riders and advocates in the region, Sunday MVRTA service was in the process of being implemented during the development of this Plan. Accordingly, commenters during the September and October 2014 listening sessions expressed gratitude for the newly initiated Sunday services – and strongly advocated for extension of Sunday service on the MVRTA's Haverhill-based routes. The MVRTA began operating Sunday service on its Lawrence-based routes in September 2014 and on its Haverhill-based routes in November 2014.

Transit service reductions

Protect public transportation services from reductions, as seniors and other persons on fixed incomes are particularly vulnerable when services are reduced or eliminated.

Response: as a publicly funded agency, the MVRTA is subject to fluctuations in the availability of public funds (Federal, Commonwealth and local) – not only to maintain present services but to improve these services over time. The MVRTA’s services are at local option and require the involvement of local elected officials to not only identify service needs, but also to approve changes in service.

Travel Information

a) provide real-time information displays at MVRTA stations for arriving buses; b) install signs at locations where the MVRTA buses stop regularly; c) correct instances when the fixed-route buses operate with the incorrect route information displayed above the windshield and to the left of the front door of the bus, and d) provide route detour information as much in advance as possible.

Responses:

a) the MVRTA is in the process of replacing its present bus/van communication system. The new system will have the capability to implement real-time travel information. Once this new system is installed (early 2015), efforts to acquire any added equipment and then implement real-time information will proceed through 2015.

b) the MVRTA, with the assistance of the MVMPO staff, is in the process of identifying locations for bus route marker signs. The installation of actual bus stops is under the jurisdiction of individual member cities and towns.

c) the instances of incorrect signing is handled by route supervisors and maintenance as soon as the problem occurs. If a sign cannot be corrected in the field, it is corrected by the MVRTA’s fleet maintenance staff at the end of the service day.

d) the MVRTA is presently on Twitter where route detours are posted as they occur.

Travel Training and Trip Planning Assistance (Lawrence session)

Some of the region's schools and non-profit organizations want to help their students/clients travel to and from home, a main campus, and a number of work sites within and outside the region. Many times, trip destinations are similar to those served by the Medi-Ride program. Some destinations may be accessible using existing MVRTA, MBTA or other RTA services. These organizations are requesting MVRTA travel training and trip planning assistance.

Response: the MVRTA staff travel trainers have been provided with information requests collected during the 2014 listening sessions and welcome additional requests from any such organizations going forward.

Volunteer Drivers

Volunteer drivers for Councils on Aging: some drivers may need better trip navigation aids.

In conclusion, several participants at the sessions complimented the MVRTA and Council on Aging services generally - and in particular, the courtesy and helpfulness of its vehicle operators.

Note: the MVRTA Regional Transit Plan (in development) will include recommendations to address frequency, span of service and route addition changes, depending upon funds available.

Prioritization of Gaps and Needs

Any new service requires new or expanded funding. As shown on Table 5 on the following pages, the MVMPO staff asked participants in the 2013 Transit Mobility Plan public sessions to prioritize the service gaps and needs that they identified, and to rank these gaps and needs in terms of high, medium and low priority. The purpose of this prioritization was to guide transit officials in making choices about what improvements to address first. As noted in the comments on the previous pages, the MVRTA has addressed many of the recommendations that pertain to its services.

Table 5: MVMPO 2013 Transit Mobility Plan and 2014 Coordinated Human Services Transportation – Public Transportation Plan Project Recommendations, Priorities and Status – November 2014		
<i>Description</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Status</i>
<i>General</i>		
Vehicle State of Good Repair / Replacement	High	Ongoing
<i>Fixed Route and Special Services</i>		
Increase service frequency on Lawrence and Haverhill Routes	High	a) Routes 1 & 41, 60 min. Increased to 30 min; b) NECC Shuttle increased from 2 to 6 trips c) Lawrence: restore 2 hours' peak service removed in 2010, extend weekday service span to 9:00 p.m. (FY16) d) Haverhill: expand span of service / reduce frequency. 60 min. service weekdays and Saturdays (FY16)
Add Holiday Services on MLK, Presidents', Veterans' and Patriot Days	High	Veterans' Day service added 11/11/13 Services on other holidays added, 9/14
Add Sunday Service	High	Added on Lawrence based routes, 9/14 Added on Haverhill based routes, 11/14
<i>Commuter Services to/from Boston</i>		
Increase MBTA Commuter Rail trip frequencies	High	Subject to available funds. Haverhill Line improvements to be completed, 2015. MVMPO advocating at MassDOT
Increase MVRTA Commuter Bus Service	High	Additional PM outbound trip added, 9/14. New North Andover – Boston service in development, 11/14
Add Holiday Services on Columbus, MLK, Presidents' and Veterans' Days	High	Services added, 9/14
Implement I-93 Bus on Shoulder or HOV lane	High	Study completed, 10/14. MVMPO advocating at MassDOT to implement

MVMPO 2013 Transit Mobility Plan and 2014 Coordinated Human Services Transportation – Public Transportation Plan Project Recommendations, Priorities and Status – November 2014 (Continued)		
<i>Description</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Status</i>
<i>Disabled and Elder Transportation</i>		
Determine additional future service demand	High	Ongoing
<i>Other Transit Priorities</i>		
Planning to coordinate transit services with bicycle accommodations on bus routes and at stations	Medium	Ongoing
Review locations for potential bus stops and route marker signs	Medium	Ongoing
Increase capacity to promote MVRTA transit services	High	Ongoing
<i>New Requests to be reviewed for need and/or prioritization</i>		
Expand Medi-Ride destinations outside of region		As needed
Expand bus service on MA-114 in North Andover		In review
Provide service to NH-28/Rockingham Mall Area		NH-28 implemented February 2014; Rockingham Mall attempted
Provide service to Plaistow and Seabrook Areas		In review, MVRTA RTP
Provide service to Towle Building, Newburyport		Requires intra-community circulator; local option
Methuen: run Route 40 to Village Mall all day and reinstitute Route 42		In review, MVRTA RTP
Salisbury: add Route 83 stop on Elm Street		implemented, 2013
Provide Ring and Ride Service in Rowley		Local option
Provide transit service on Ballardvale St., Andover		2000-2005 in conjunction with TMO – not successful
Make sidewalk improvements in Methuen, North Andover and Rowley for better transit access		MVMPO work with communities; status varies by community

Appendix A: MVMPO PowerPoint Presentation for 2014 Listening Sessions





Merrimack Valley Transportation Conversations

**Merrimack Valley Regional Transportation Coordinating
Council**

September – October 2014

**Presented by the Merrimack Valley Planning
Commission (MVPC)**

Merrimack Valley Transportation Conversations

- Purpose
- Regional Overview
- Transportation Trends
- Travel in the Merrimack Valley
- How do you travel
- What works, what needs are unmet
- Recommendations

Purpose

- Commonwealth Executive Order 530 mandate for cooperation in identifying unmet transportation needs
- Ongoing regional need for planning, funding and monitoring transportation facilities and services
- Opportunity to contribute to several active public transportation planning efforts
 - MVMPO Regional Transportation Plan
 - MVMPO Coordinated Human Services Transportation – Public Transportation Plan
 - MVRTA Regional Transit Plan
- MA RPAs are hosting public discussions on this topic

Purpose: Increased Coordination

MassDOT Statewide Mobility Management Resource and Technical Assistance Center (new, 2014)

- Purpose: creating and supporting a coordinated transit service network regardless of ownership/operation - public or private
- Services: advice, technical assistance, research, and project management

Partnering Agencies

- Regional Transit Authorities and the MBTA on questions related to fixed-route, demand-response and ADA paratransit operations
- New England regional bus network
- Massachusetts Rural Transit Assistance Program
- MassRIDES - worksite-based demand management programs, vanpooling, statewide ridesharing, and biking services
- Community Transit Grant Program –state and federal funding
- Executive Office of Health and Human Services on human service transportation

Regional Overview - Population

- MVPC: fifteen communities
- 2010 population: 333,748, up 4.8% from 318,556 in 2000
- Rapid growth prior to 2000; modest growth projected to 2020 and beyond
- Aging population, similar to many regions

Regional Overview - Households

- Households are re-concentrating in some of the region's traditionally urbanized areas
- Increased # of smaller households, re-aggregated (multi-generation) households, and non-traditional households (unrelated persons)
- Increased % of minorities, low-income households, and households in which languages other than English are spoken
- Changing lifestyles - increased trip distances and mobility requires more transportation

Who provides transportation in the region?

Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority (MVRTA)

- Twenty-five fixed routes, including Lawrence and Haverhill employment services (IRS, Raytheon, River Road)
- Ring and Ride: curb-to-curb transportation service for the residents of Boxford, Georgetown, Groveland, Newbury/Byfield and West Newbury
- EZ Trans (ADA): available to persons certified by MVRTA to use service; operates within a three-quarter mile corridor on each side of an MVRTA fixed bus route
- Medi-Ride: available to persons registered as a MVRTA Special Services customer, whether ADA-qualified or non-ADA (i.e., a Senior Citizen)

MVRTA System Ridership, FYs 2012-2014

State FY	Local Bus Routes	Change from prior year	Boston Bus	Change from prior year	Ring and Ride	Change From Prior Year	EZ Trans	Change from prior year
2014 (est.)	2,005,309	50,642 (2.6%)	62,611	-859 (-1.4%)	6,875	127 (1.9%)	58,437	-1,450 (-2.4%)
2013	1,954,667	42,374 (2.2%)	63,470	11,295 (21.6%)	6,748	752 (13.4%)	59,887	-1,402 (-2.2%)
2012	1,912,293		52,175		5,596		61,299	

Source: MVRTA FY 2015 budget

Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)

Commuter Rail

- Haverhill and Newburyport Lines - 13 inbound/13 outbound trips daily weekdays
- Estimated Annual Average Passengers, FY 13
 - Haverhill Line: 48,380 weekly boardings (includes all stations, Haverhill – Boston)
 - Newburyport Line: 51,138 weekly boardings (includes all stations, Newburyport – Boston)

Other Important transportation providers

Private carriers

- The Coach Company
 - Boston Commuter Service from Boxford, Georgetown, Groveland, Haverhill and Newburyport
- C&J Transportation
 - Boston Commuter Service from Newburyport P&R
- Airport livery, taxi services

Organizations including schools, medical institutions, residences and social service agencies

Councils on Aging

- Vehicles funded through MassDOT/MVRTA
- CoAs deliver service in various ways
- Some services are operated on a limited schedule, 1-3 days a week
- Some CoAs have cooperated to share vehicles, to increase efficiency and conserve costs
- Services are constrained by available funds

Transportation Resources

- Merrimack Valley Transportation Management Association (MVTMA) – commuter options programs serving Andover, Haverhill, Lawrence, Methuen and North Andover.
- Junction TMO – commuter options program started by Pfizer Biotech (formerly Wyeth) and P&G/Gillette (formerly The Gillette Company) in concert with other local businesses, property owners, and public officials. Serves employers in the Ballardvale St./Lowell Junction area of Andover and Wilmington and nearby areas.

How is public transportation funded?

- Federal Transit Administration
- Legislature
- Cities and Towns
- MVRTA
- Commonwealth agencies' line-item budgets
- Donations
- Non-profit and for-profit organizations

Transportation Trends

- Vehicle ownership and operation costs, plus lifestyle trends are expected to generate some additional transit demand. Household car use is declining for 'millennials' (under age 35) and elders (65+)
- Encouraging and reinforcing use of fixed route transit services needs greater effort to contain specialized transit service demand growth and costs
- Continued growth in alternate work schedules, telework, mid-day trip generation **and** relatively sustained suburb to Boston travel

Transportation Trends

- Increased emphasis upon maintenance and rehabilitation of existing assets
- Transportation planning more mode-neutral, greater emphasis upon performance measures (time, cost, # intermodal connections, fare interoperability)
- Road Diets and Complete Streets concepts will continue to reshape how our region plans for and delivers transportation
- Addressing suburb-to-suburb trips and working to recentralize trips to better serve with transit is a priority

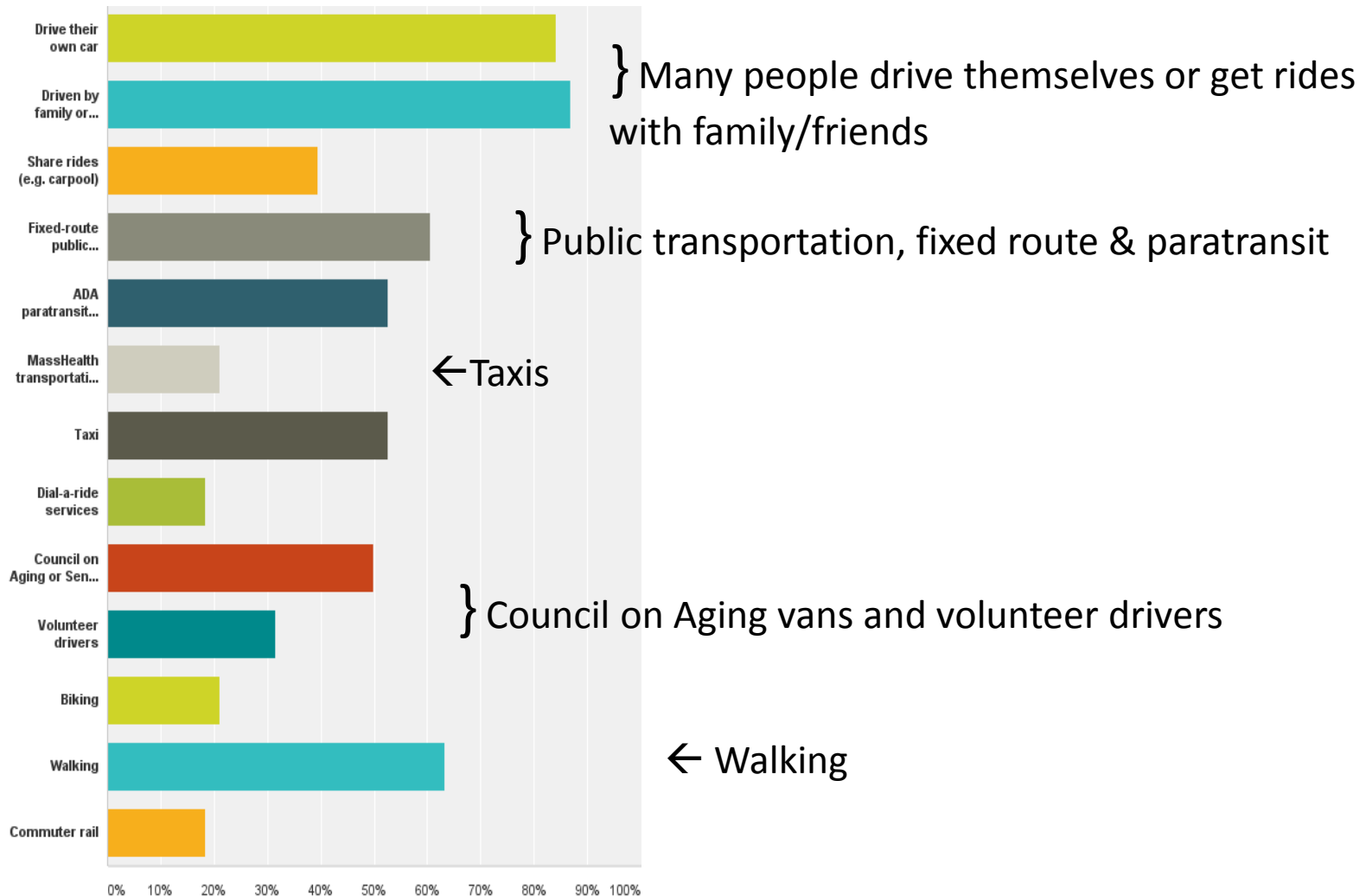
Transportation Trends

- Possible acceptance of new technologies, (i.e. HOV, HOT, express lanes) could aid expansion of transit networks – i.e. I-93
- Increased reliance on electronics, increased demand for ‘real-time’ information and GPS technologies

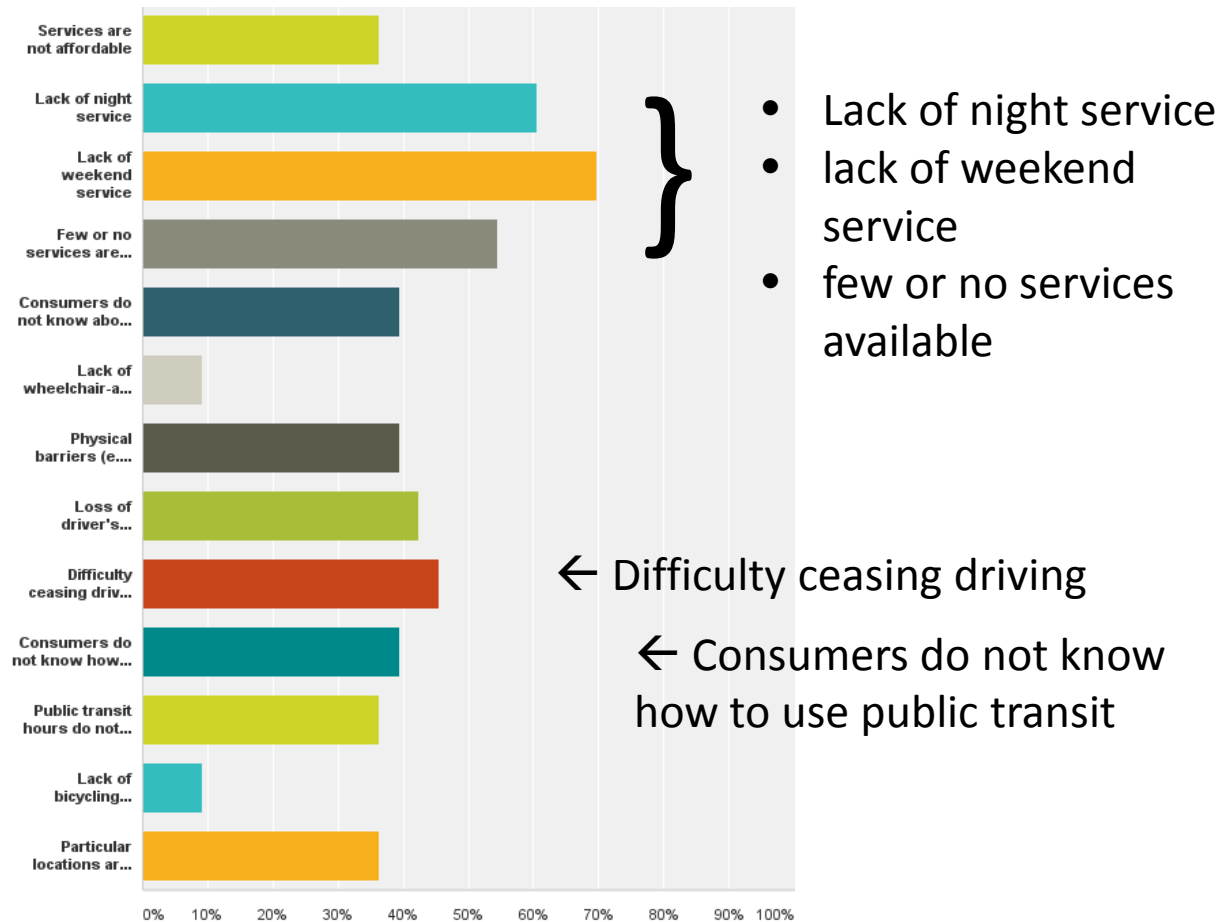
Travel in the Merrimack Valley

- MVPC, MVRTA – ongoing data collection and reporting
 - To MassDOT, USDOT (National Transit Database)
 - Bus passenger ridership counts and surveys
 - Regional Transportation Plan and Transit Plan
- MA Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) – August 2014 statewide survey through the MVRCC

RCC survey on Transportation Modes Used (EOHHS, 2014)

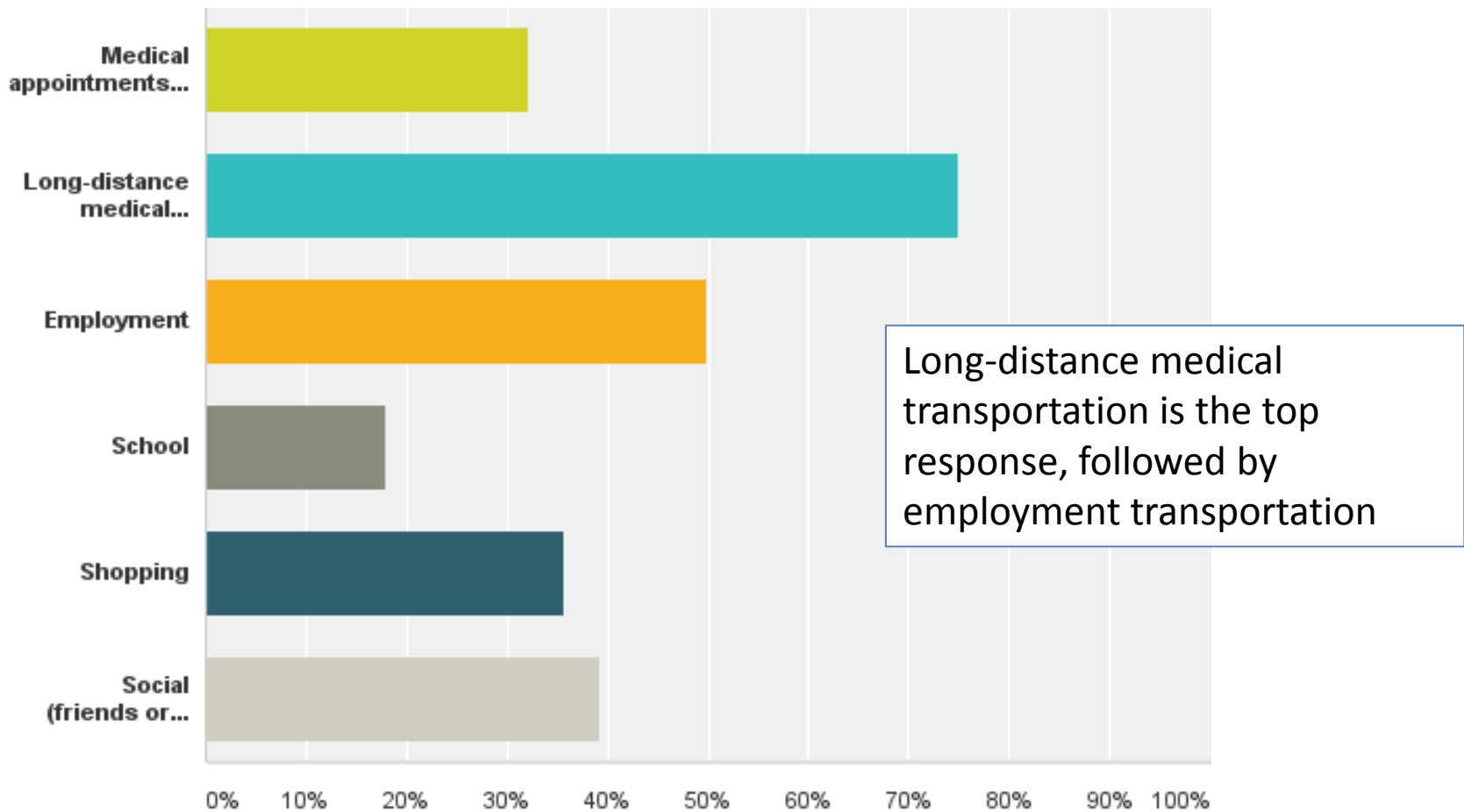


What are your consumers' transportation challenges?



Source: EOHHS 2014 Survey

What are the most difficult trips to arrange? (EOHHS, 2014)



Previously Identified Transit Service Gaps

- Need for increased transit geographic coverage in region and between regions;
- Lack of frequent mid-day transit service on some routes
- Crowding on certain routes with high ridership, i.e. MVRTA Route 1
- Need for increased transit service hours to serve 2nd and 3rd shift workers

Previously Identified Transit Gaps – Specific Trip Types

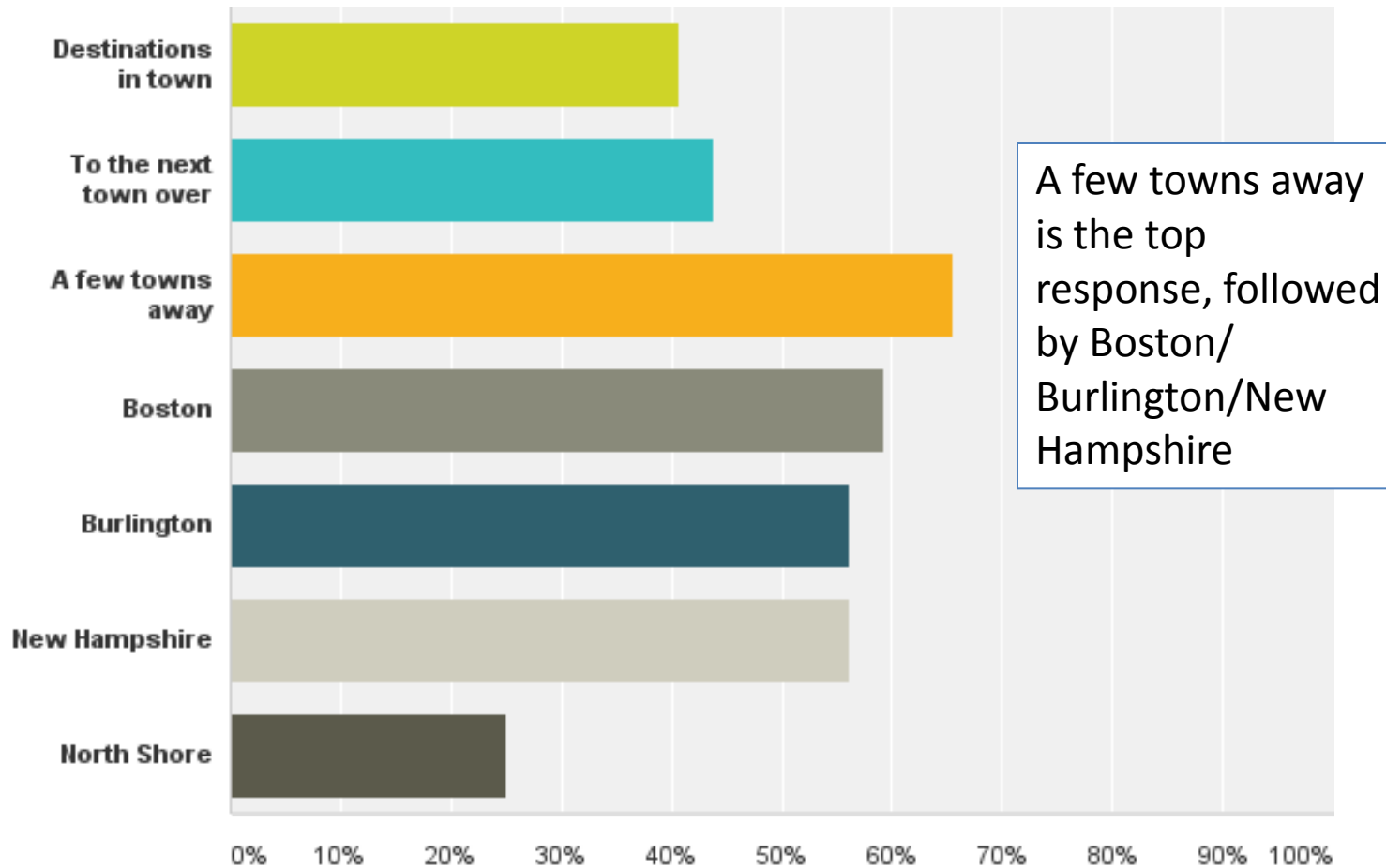
- Commuting – suburb-to-suburb, Boston and NH
- Medical Facilities
 - Lahey Clinic, Burlington
 - Beverly Hospital
 - Massachusetts General Hospital, Danvers
 - Portsmouth Hospital
 - North Shore Cancer Center
 - Peabody
- Social Services

Source: MVRTA 2013 Transit Mobility Plan

Commuting to Boston

- MBTA Commuter Rail mid-day and reverse-commute services are limited
- MVRTA Commuter Bus weekday service expansion needed
- MVRTA fixed-route local services do not operate on certain holidays (MLK, Presidents', Columbus, Veterans' Days)
- MVRTA Commuter Buses (and all other commuter buses) need I-93 Bus on Shoulder and/or High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane

What areas are difficult for your consumers/employees to get to/from?



Source: MA EOHHS, 2014

What are the top unmet transportation needs within the Merrimack Valley?

MVRTA's Transit Mobility Plan and the EOHHS Survey have identified transportation needs for the following communities:

Amesbury*

Andover*

Georgetown*

Haverhill

Methuen*

Newburyport*

North Andover* Rowley

Salisbury

Gaps by Community

- Andover
 - Commuter rush hours shuttle service to, Ballardvale and P&G/Pfizer (Lowell Junction); Ballardvale Street, and North Wilmington (ITT Technical Institute)
- Haverhill
 - Broadway (west of Forest Street)
 - Route 51 / Route 1 coordination
 - Route 51 runs on different schedule on weekends

Source: MVRTA 2013 Transit Mobility Plan

Gaps by Community

- Methuen
 - Restore Route #42 Ring and Ride (Holy Family Hospital, the Loop, Methuen Plaza, Methuen Square, Merrimack Plaza)
 - Operate Route #40 (Buckley-Mystic Street) to Village Mall all day
 - Improve sidewalks, various locations
- North Andover
 - Transit to MA-114 (doctors' offices, Chestnut Green, Stop & Shop) sidewalks along MA-114
 - Transit service to 200 Sutton Street

Gaps by Community

- Newburyport
 - Towle Building Doctors' Offices
 - Later evening transit service to/from MBTA Newburyport Station
- Salisbury
 - Elm Street

Source: MVRTA 2013 Transit Mobility Plan

Regional Strategy

- Work with MVRTA and other transportation providers cooperatively to make service improvements in the near-term
- Implement long-range comprehensive plans for the region that strengthen demand for public transportation – and continue advocating for resources to improve public transportation services

Planning Efforts that Support Transit

- MVPC Priority Growth Strategy
 - 57 growth areas = 13 State Priority Development Areas
 - Evaluated based upon land use, infrastructure, transportation access, environmental impact, potential for concentrated development, public input
 - PDAs selected based upon downtown/village center; TOD potential, revitalization of developed area, and potential for multi-family housing
- Transportation Planning: a) prioritize projects that provide multi-modal transportation benefits, and b) employ performance criteria

Projects Implemented Since 2011

- Increased geographic areas of services
 - Medi-Ride, January 2011
 - Salisbury Fixed-Route Bus #54, June 2011
 - Lawrence-Andover (River Road) #76 Employment Service, September 2012
- Marketing services
 - West Newbury Ring-and-Ride (available to all residents)
- Vehicle and Equipment Replacements
 - Councils on Aging (ongoing)
 - MVRTA buses and vans (ongoing)
 - Tap and Ride (Charlie Card) Payment System (2012)

Projects in Implementation, 2014

- Education and Training (new NECC shuttle service)
- New MVRTA Holiday Service, Local and Boston Commuter buses: Presidents' Day, MLK Day, Patriots' Day
- Route 85 (Lawrence Downtown Shuttle): begun July 1, 2014
- Sunday Service began September 7, 2014: all Lawrence-based routes, plus Routes 51 and 54
- Boston Commuter Bus: one new outbound bus at 4:45 p.m. from Bedford St., Boston

Active Projects

- MVRTA Time Point Additions and Adjustments, fixed-route services (see handout)
- MBTA Haverhill Line Double-Track Restoration Project; MVPC request for increased Commuter Rail service
- MVPC/MVRTA I-93 HOV Lane/Bus-on-Shoulder Feasibility Study completion

Planning Efforts

- Communication
 - Increased social media, electronic communication, more posters at more locations, and more outreach, especially in Spanish-speaking communities
- Outreach
 - Expanded contact with ethnic, faith-based; elder, disability, human service organizations
 - Participation in these organizations' activities

How do you travel?

- Personal vehicle
- Public transportation (bus, van, train)
- Private (bus, taxi, other)
- Bicycle
- Walk
- Internet
- Forego Travel

**What public transportation services
work well?**

What types of transit services do not work well for you?

**What are your recommendations
for improving transit?**

For Travel Information and Training Resources

- See the Merrimack Valley Region Public Transportation Resource List (handout) for additional information
- Contact the agencies listed in the Resource List
- Speak with an MVPC or MVRTA staff person at this meeting to convey your questions and or suggestions

Thank you for your participation!

- For more information or to further discuss public transportation, contact Todd Fontanella at MVPC by phone: (978) 374-0519, extension 29, or by email: tfontanella@mvpc.org