

## **MAGIC Communities' On-Demand Transportation Pilot – *Making the Connections***

### **Executive Summary**

The state's Community Compact Cabinet recently awarded \$80,000 to the towns of Acton, Bolton, Boxborough, Carlisle, Stow, and Sudbury, acting as lead municipality, for an on-demand transportation pilot. Targeted residents include seniors, people with disabilities, financially vulnerable residents, and veterans. The objective is to provide transportation services to health and community resources as well as economic opportunities, thus meeting age- and dementia-friendly best practices. (In April 2018, all MAGIC towns were admitted to the AARP Age and Dementia Friendly Network and committed to focus initially on housing and transportation initiatives.)

By partnering with vehicle providers that utilize appropriate dispatch and operational software, the collaborating communities seek to quantify such data as ride numbers, destinations, points of origin, time, etc. At the end of the pilot, we expect to identify potential hubs and fixed route services that regional transit authorities could serve economically. At the same time, by means of on-demand services, we will increase equity and inclusiveness as features of age and dementia friendly communities.

A request for proposals will be sent to transportation and technology providers, to populate the pilot program. The procurement process will include a requirement for one or more of the vendors to provide wheelchair accessible vehicles, ensuring that persons with disabilities have service. The procurement process will also require the provision of multiple modes of requesting services (e.g., smart device app, internet, telephone, walk-up), including possible concierge service, in which a local organization takes care of securing rides for individuals who require that level of assistance.

One important feature of this pilot program is marketing/outreach (funded by the grant). Towns will hire individuals who know and understand riders and can provide help as needed to serve as community advocates. Some advocates may live in affordable developments in the towns; others may be retired seniors active in their communities. They can help book trips, coordinate with the vendors, and help compile customer input. A second feature is help with subsidies for rides. The towns involved in the pilot are expected to seek their own subsidies in the form of donations, mitigation funds, Community Health Needs Assessment funds, etc., but additional funds are available through this grant.

In many of the collaborating towns, lack of access to transportation is a significant barrier to seniors and especially to the most vulnerable (including seniors), who experience limited access to food pantries and grocery stores; to employment opportunities; to medical services; and to social opportunities. The pilot program intends to address these urgent needs.