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Institute for Community Inclusion – UMass Boston

Massachusetts: Working to Solve the Transportation Challenge

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>> Good morning, this is DeBrittany Mitchell. Welcome to today's employment first webinar titled "Massachusetts: Working to Solve the Transportation Challenge". This webinar is run on the Zoom platform. I will give you a few tips about how to best use Zoom. In the upper right‑hand corner is a participants list. In the lower right‑hand corner is a chat box where you will type your questions or comments. Feel free to type throughout the presentation and we will have someone facilitate the question and answers.

If you have any technical difficulties throughout this webinar, please feel free to also type it into the chat box and we'll do our best to address those. This webinar is also being recorded and closed captioned. In order to see the closed captioning, please type ‑‑ please click the closed caption button at the bottom of your screens.

I'd like to hand it over to Lara.

>> LARA: Thank you, DeBrittany. Welcome, everyone. We're excited to have our guest speakers today. This webinar is being brought to you in collaboration with the Institute for Community Inclusion, the Massachusetts department of developmental services. It is being recorded. We will post the recorded webinar up on our website, employmentfirstMA.org after the webinar has finished. So you can go back and listen to anything you'd like again.

I will be monitoring the chat box, so you can go ahead and type your questions into the chat box. If they're general questions about the presentation, it would be great if you could make sure that the button that says "to" does not say all panelists but says everyone. Then everybody can see the question that you're typing which will help when we have our speakers answer the questions. Without further ado, I'm going to hand this over to David, Rachel and Jenna. Welcome, all of you.

>> DAVID HOFF: Thank you, Lara and good morning, everybody. This is David Hoff from the Institute for Community Inclusion UMass Boston. I am one of the panelists today.

>> RACHEL FICHTENBAUM: I am Rachel Fichtenbaum with MassMobility.

>> JENNA HENNING: And I'm Jenna Henning with MassMobility.

>> DAVID HOFF: We are really glad to have everybody here today to hear about transportation. We're going to do this as a tag team and discuss a little bit about ‑‑ start out with a little about who we are and what we're all about and then get into some ‑‑ hopefully some good practical ideas, suggestions, and thoughts about transportation and how it can assist individuals in terms of employment success and also just full inclusion in the community.

We welcome your questions as we go along. Please put them in the chat box. We welcome your thoughts and ideas and your creative solutions as well. We're going to ask for input from you as we go along here.

So I'll turn it over to Rachel and Jenna. They'll tell you a little bit about MassMobility.

>> Great, thank you, David. MassMobility. We are an initiative housed in the Massachusetts executive office of health and human services. But we also get some support from Mass DOT. That's because the two state agencies recognize that they have a shared mission around helping people with disabilities and older adults and others get access to the transportation that they need to get to jobs, medical appointments, social engagements, all those important places in ‑‑ in our communities that we all like to go to.

In order to try to improve mobility for everyone around the state, we do two main things. We try to share information about transportation services that are out there that already exist because sometimes someone is stuck at home not going where they want to go and there actually is a transportation option they could be using, they just don't know about it. Other times, there is no transportation service that can help fill that gap for somebody. So we also help organizations think creatively about ways to create some new transportation options for people. We work statewide throughout Massachusetts, and we ‑‑ we take a community transportation approach. We're interested in any type of transportation that can help someone get where they need to go.

>> DAVID HOFF: Thank you, Rachel. This is David. Let me tell you a little bit about the Institute for Community Inclusion. We are a training technical assistance research and direct service organization based at the University of Massachusetts Boston, also affiliated with children's hospital Boston. Our focus is on inclusion of people with disabilities in a mainstream society. Hence our name. A lot of focus on employment issues. I personally do a lot of work focused on employment and employment‑related issues. And also do work here in ICI and me myself personally do work here in Massachusetts as well as nationally. We have a very strong partnership with the department of developmental services who is sponsoring today's webinar assisting them as they move forward under employment first efforts and helping more individuals become successfully employed in the community.

Our interest ‑‑ interest in transportation stems from the fact that that is a key component of people with disabilities in society. And we've been involved with transportation for a number of years on a number of levels. I personally currently along with doing these kind of webinars here in Massachusetts and some other work, I also work on a national project on inclusion of people with disabilities and older adults in transit and transportation planning. You'll hear more about that. I also facilitate the regional coordinating council for Boston, and you'll hear more about what RCCs are, so stay tuned for that. Both of our websites are here on the page. Feel free to look us up. Our ‑‑ mass mobility is mass.gov/orgs/massmobility. Our main is communityinclusion.org. There's also a lot of information ‑‑ great information on both.

>> RACHEL FICHTENBAUM: Great. So that's a little bit about us. Now we'd love to learn a little bit about you. So we have a poll. If you could please tell us what your region or service area is.

>> DAVID HOFF: So the poll is on the page there. Just take a minute to reply. The choices are ‑‑ I'll read them off. Burke shire Franklin, northeast, southwest, cape and islands. Please don't be shy. DeBrittany, are we getting results?

>> Yes, we are. The results are on the screen.

>> DAVID HOFF: I don't see them yet. There we go. Great.

>> Looks like we had two people or 5% representing Berkshires, 22% or nine people representing Central Mass. Eight people, 20% representing greater Boston, six people 15% representing the northeast region, nine people, 22% representing southeast, and zero from the Cape.

>> Great, thank you. Welcome to everyone. We do recognize that some of you may cover ‑‑ cover multiple regions. So this gives us a sense, but we know that you ‑‑ you may cover some additional areas as well.

>> DAVID HOFF: It's an eclectic group dealing with transportation issues. Clearly, depending on your region and where you are, depending on the level of resources as well.

So we want to share a little bit of a framework for our discussion today which we feel will really help in terms of thinking about it. Transportation, transportation solutions. So often that we find is that people kind of feel like, well, if there's no mass transit that takes you directly where you want to go or no land service, there's no solution. What we recognize is that there's a lot of different approaches to transportation. A lot of different ways to address it. So it is critical that you think about transportation along a six‑pronged approach. There are going to be different ways and different solutions depending on their circumstances. And also depending whether you're looking at an individual issue and trying to figure out employment and transportation for yourself or for somebody else individually or more of a systems approach. We will certainly talk about both because both are very relevant.

So first part of this prong is taking existing resources and trying to use them differently. I want to mention these are in no particular order. That means ‑‑ we'll get into details of that, but basically what that means existing transportation resources that are out there, the community and, for example, a church might have a vehicle they use on the weekends, but it's available during the week and you might be able to cut a deal with them to use that vehicle during the week. There might be transportation that's going someplace but you don't currently have access to that for some reason and you can, again, negotiate, maybe add passengers to a vehicle that has empty spaces. So that's an example of that.

Next is developing relationships with transportation officials. One thing that I know about human service people, we generally are not experts on transportation. Sometimes we pretend we are. We have to recognize there are experts out there. Rachel and Jenna and people like that, but it's really important that we also connect with the experts and with the people who spend their lives on transportation. Working with other groups that are experiencing transportation challenges, people with disabilities are certainly not alone in that. There are people ‑‑ there are older adults, there are people who just don't have vehicles because of their economic circumstances and et cetera, et cetera. So if we can combine forces, that certainly can help.

Also building your own competency in terms of transportation. Transportation is a discipline unto itself. It's certainly something I have learned over the years in terms of working on this issue. And so if we're going to assist people to ‑‑ with employment in the community and with community inclusion, it's important to have ‑‑ excuse me ‑‑ a working knowledge of transportation, resources, how to assist people with transportation needs and all of that. I think it's often ‑‑ I drive, I have a license, therefore I know everything about transportation. There's a lot more to learn than that. Or maybe you take the bus occasionally or something. There's still a lot more.

Another piece that's really important which we'll speak about, changing your mind‑set in terms of transportation among both individuals and among service providers. We'll speak more to that. Maybe this really just starts out with this, frankly, even though it's the last facet we're mentioning. Just be more aware of what's out there. I'm personally, when I talk to service providers and individuals and families about transportation, their lack of awareness about options, particularly solely reliant on driving their own vehicle and they're not aware of what the possibilities are and how to utilize those. So as we think about this ‑‑ again, we'll start to cover some of these in more detail and give you some examples.

>> So I'm just going to start expanding on what David was just talking about, becoming aware of existing options. Like Rachel said earlier, a lot of times there are transportation options that are available. It's important to know what they are. So Rachel again also, she mentioned the idea of community transportation which is just all of the transportation resources in a community that are available to help meet mobility needs. That's all of the private and public options available in a given area. We also have public transit. You have that map of Massachusetts there. And the MBTA and 15 regional transit authorities provide fixed route and para transit service in communities across the state. So fixed route are a designated route on a fixed schedule. And underneath you see the transportation access pass. People with disabilities can receive a reduced fare with ‑‑ it's called the TAP card. That's up to ‑‑ that's 50% off of the standard fare. And then paratransit as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act is just basically a transportation service for people unable to ride the fixed route. And it supplements by shadowing the fixed route at least three‑quarters of a mile. So it operates at the very at least three‑quarters of a mile along the parallel of a fixed route.

We've include the link at the bottom of the page if you're looking for more information about public transportation options in Massachusetts.

>> DAVID HOFF: And paratransit, for example, the ride in the Boston area is definitely ‑‑

>> That's paratransit, yeah. Sometimes we have travel training as an option. Sometimes people are interested in taking public transit, but they have no idea where to start. Travel training is the professional activity of teaching individuals with disabilities, older adults and others how to use fixed route public transportation both independently and safely. And so on the ‑‑ we see here that you can refer consumers to travel instructions. Travel training is available through the MBTA, regional transit authorities, human service agencies, and in many schools even offer travel instruction or transportation as part of their special education or transition curricula. And this list here is the transit authorities across Massachusetts who have travel instruction programs. Again, the link at the top of the page will connect you to the various programs across the state.

>> DAVID HOFF: I just want to, you know, really ‑‑ just mention really quickly, I think it's great that MassMobility has collected all this information about travel instruction and travel instruction is absolutely something that I've learned over the years, sometimes I think that we think, oh, yeah, a job coach can do travel instruction. It really is a discipline unto itself. People need to be trained on travel instruction and have it well‑documented. It's a really important thing to recognize. This is not something you fool around with.

>> RACHEL FICHTENBAUM: We'll talk more a bit later on resources to help you do that. I just wanted to follow up on a question that came through the chat box and clarify, travel training is a technical term that comes out of the disability rights movement. It specifically refers to teaching people with disabilities and older adults the skills and knowledge they need to ride the fixed route public transit independently. It does not cover the paratransit service. Certainly it can be useful to have mobility education or sort of a similar parallel service for paratransit, but travel training, when you talk about travel training, we're really talking about helping people learn what they need to know to be able to ride the fixed route. So the bus or if you're in the MBTA area, that could include the subway or commuter rail as well.

>> DAVID HOFF: Cliff is asking about the Berkshires on the map. If you go to the website, it's very much there. It is on the map. It was on the far left of that map.

>> RACHEL FICHTENBAUM: I think the color was just a little bit too light. Apologies for that confusion.

>> DAVID HOFF: We have a couple other questions here. Want to try to keep up with them. Can someone speak to the lack of availability across regional transit authorities. I think we'll talk about that. I assume you're talking about lack of availability of services and connections. If you want to clarify that ‑‑

>> JENNA HENNING: It looks like there's some questions about the different types of travel training out there. Sort of reiterating what Rachel said, travel training itself means something very specific when it comes to riding the fixed route service, but there are other types of like travel training programs out there, mobility ‑‑ there are different types of mobility training out there. So teaching older adults how to use Uber and Lyft. Different programs can teach the consumers they serve how to take various transportation options. But travel introduction is specifically for riding fixed route transportation.

>> RACHEL FICHTENBAUM: And not every transit authority currently has a formal travel training program. So the list you see on this slide includes some transit authorities, but not all of them. That's because at this point some transit authorities have a formal travel trainer who may be full time or part time on staff doing travel training and others do not. We will also later talk about how we can support any human service agency staff, any of you who would be interested or maybe partner agencies you know of in your area that might be interested in offering travel instruction. And the same with this mobility education or offering, you know, what Jenna was just talking about, parallel services, but not for the fixed route. There's less of a formal structure of that currently in the state, but we think it's a great idea. There's an example of council on aging in ‑‑ in Brookline where some older adult volunteers developed a program like that for teaching people how to use Uber and Lyft and they've shared that with the council on aging. If we all work together, we can help people get access to more of these types of services.

>> DAVID HOFF: And there's a couple of travel training curriculums. One from Gallaudet university that is certainly well done, applicable to a broad based population. Part of service delivery is offering travel instruction. But as I said, doing it in a way that's thoughtful and aligns with sort of best practices. So we will get to your question. When we talk later about advocacy, we'll try to address some of that. That is a real issue about people not being able to cross RTA lines with paratransit and things like that. So we will get to that.

>> RACHEL FICHTENBAUM: And just quickly for the north shore question, the greater senior services, their mobility options program includes some travel training. Any community covered by the MBTA which includes some of the north shore could use the MBTA travel trainers.

>> DAVID HOFF: I think a lot of you are doing community‑based day services, CBDS. Certainly travel instruction can be a key component of that. I think it's a great way to enhance people's independence and prepare them for employment.

>> JENNA HENNING: And so beyond the regional travel authorities and MBTA, there are other transportation options that might be available if your community or town or people you're serving. Municipal services ‑‑ some municipalities offer transportation services like buses or vans. Councils on ages which fall under municipal services, but oftentimes they operate vans and they're open to older adults. Many times, people with disabilities as well. And even if they don't operate a van service, they're pretty knowledgeable about local transportation options and can be a great resource. Councils on aging many times offer volunteer driver programs and other organizations or human services agencies might as well offer more service. Uber and Lyft can be another great resource. Right there, you see a link to basiccommute.com. It's a initiative of the department of transportation. The idea is to increase mobility by carpooling. There's an online tool where you put in where you're coming from, where you want to go, and it connects you to available carpool options. Having a bus varies from region to region across Massachusetts. That's another option for you.

Intercity bus services use coaches to carry passengers to different cities, towns. That could be another option if you're looking to get across the state. Then at the bottom of the page we have another great link for you. I'm looking for transportation. That will take you to the MassMobility web page. It can direct you to a variety of transportation options that are available to you.

>> DAVID HOFF: So next we want to speak a little bit about the mindset of transportation. So also start this portion out and define what you mean by that. And really, as I think particularly about disability services and people with disabilities, it's more than just the van. It's more than just a van showing up at the door and taking people everywhere or everybody shows up at the facility and climbs into the van and is taken wherever they need to go. And we need to start thinking about transportation in terms of mindset from a couple different perspectives. Number one, that we start with the generic options that are out there that everybody else uses. That should be our starting point. And that also ‑‑ teaching people about what those options might be. And also really both from a resource standpoint and also, frankly, from just part of community inclusion integration, the service provider should really be the option or specialized transportation should only be the option if nothing else is available.

For some individuals, particularly some individuals with intellectual development disabilities, their level of disability is such that they are not going to be able to take mass transit or other transportation options. But I feel sometimes we could stretch that farther than we actually do sometimes. Technology is certainly helping a lot in this day and age in terms of safety and security and directing people and things like that. So it's more than just a van. Also, when we think about day service transportation, this is the transportation system that DDS has funded and has been supported for many, many years. It's that hub and spoke system where people basically come in from wherever they live. They get into the middle, into the hub portion. And that's where they go. You have to recognize that that is not going to work in 2019 for employment transportation. And we need to get ‑‑ not think of this as a hub and spoke system.

I do know that there's providers out there where everybody shows up in the morning and then they go out to jobs or they go out to whatever they're doing in the community. If we can start to think differently about transportation ‑‑ I know that a lot of providers do that for convenience sake and it's parted of tradition. Why don't we think of a way that people, like everybody else, start their day at their home and goes directly to where they need to go. That's what I do in my job. I come directly from my home to work every day. That's a very typical routine. We need to start to think about this. This is also a very resource intensive approach, this hub and spoke system. Recognizing at the same time, it's simpler. Everybody comes in, everybody goes out. I think we would find we're also saving a lot of time and resources and logistical nightmares by moving away from this. It's also, as I said, the right thing for folks.

So what we need to do in terms of transportation ‑‑ and I feel this is just really important ‑‑ is a mindset in avoiding passive dependence and acceptance, somebody's going to take me where I want to go wherever I want to go there or I just have to put up with limited transportation options there already are. Some of this starts with transition hopefully at a relatively early age. Certainly transition from school to adult life is doing a much better job of addressing this than they used to. Even folks as adults, can we start to change their mindset about transportation if they're going to be more included, more independent. We have to recognize that transportation is really about that.

I went to ‑‑ I went to a really interesting presentation about a month ago on social connectedness. One of the things the speakers spoke about was the critical importance of access to transportation as part of social connectedness. She put it in a way that I had really not thought about. People have a right to transportation, I can very much sympathize with. It's not just about it's a privilege. We should have a society that does include everybody, and that transportation is a part of that. People also need to have the tools to use a range of transportation options. So they should learn about transportation options. They should learn how to plan for transportation. A great ‑‑ again, great activity to do with individuals if you're working with them is to say, okay, if you need to get to a job or if you want to do this volunteer activity in the community or go to recreation, let's work together on how would you get there if we're not going to take you in the van and really using that as a learning experience and going out and actually doing it. I think that's really important.

In fact, there was one provider I spoke to one time. One of the activities they would do, go walking out in the community. They'd drop them out somewhere with staff, okay, we're lost, how do we find our way back to where we need to go. It was, again, a great safety activity to do with individuals. I think incorporating this into the work you're doing with individuals. And then this last piece I think is that people ‑‑ transportation is connected with self‑management and self‑advocacy. Transportation should be part of that. And part of that should also be teaching people how to advocate their transportation needs on an individual level. But also we'll speak about this a little better ‑‑ sorry, a little later, and speak about, I think, getting individuals involved in transportation advocacy and speak later about a project focused on advocating and being part of transportation planning because that can be a wonderful experience for some individuals who really are into advocating, not just for their immediate needs, but for their longer term needs. Not just for themselves, but individuals with disabilities as a whole.

>> LARA: David, Susan had a question. She's asking how do you access taxis that can accommodate a rider in a wheelchair? Do you or your guest speakers there have any thoughts around accessibility of taxis for wheelchair users?

>> RACHEL FICHTENBAUM: Sure. A few different answers. This is Rachel. In just a little bit we're going to show a tool called ride match for anyone who's not already familiar with it which allows you to ‑‑ from wherever you want to go to wherever you're going, to ‑‑ to do a search for options. And you can say I ‑‑ you know, I use a wheelchair right on that search. In terms of finding accessible taxis that are already available, that would be a good tool. Sometimes there is a lack of wheelchair accessible taxis. About five years ago, we put together a report, MassMobility did, on different efforts to bring more wheelchair accessible taxis into communities focusing on Cambridge which had done a really good job of expanding access to that. These days we hear a lot more about Uber and Lyft and less about taxis, but the same challenge comes up where it can be difficult, if it's possible, to get a wheelchair accessible Uber or Lyft vehicle.

So I think this also goes back to David's point about advocacy and there's also an example that I think Jenna's going to highlight about ‑‑ oh, okay. I'll just do it now. Around 2012, I think, on the Cape, there were no wheelchair accessible taxis at all. This was a problem. It came up in lots and lots of community meetings that this was a need. So the Cape Cod regional transit authority knew they had access to some grant money, and they wanted to use that ‑‑ the funding that they could access to solve this problem. So they tried to partner with taxi companies, but they didn't find them to partner with and they are regulated at the municipal level. They would have had to partner differently in every town on the Cape.

Instead, they partnered with a nonprofit organization that provides transportation that was already running a taxi‑like service in Plymouth and they offered an accessible delivery program, the rates would be comparable to taxi rates. Through the Cape ‑‑ through the transit authority and their funding, the transportation provider was able to get access to wheelchair accessible vehicles as long as they promised to operate it similar to a taxi program. The only difference was you couldn't hail it from the street. You had to call. Other than that, it was comparable to a taxi and that still exists. If you're looking for a wheelchair accessible taxi on the Cape, we can get you that information. If you're looking for it in other communities, you can check ride match or it may be an opportunity for some advocacy.

At MassMobility, we also provide technical assistance. If at any point in this presentation or later when you're thinking about transportation, you have an idea about something you would like to pilot or explore whether you can bring it to your community, we would love to follow up with you and see if we ‑‑ if we can help you make that happen.

>> DAVID HOFF: There was a question about wheelchair accessible taxi in western Massachusetts. It depends on the town. I think you bring up a good point, correct me if I'm wrong from a legal perspective. Given taxis are private companies, there are no requirements for them to be fully accessible and universally accessible. At the same time, as they're regulated by whatever the local regulation are ‑‑ is, you pointed out the fact that can be challenging. So a town or a city, as part of the regulatory process, could potentially say to a taxi company or other transportation company as part of your service you need to have accessible vehicles available, is that correct? Or is that as I'm interpreting that?

>> RACHEL FICHTENBAUM: I believe so. I believe that Boston and Cambridge did have that, especially for large taxi companies. But so many taxi companies are very small with only a few vehicles. Even if it's a big taxi company, they split into lots and lots of little companies. I believe the Americans with Disabilities Act requires taxis to take people in wheelchairs if the wheelchair can be folded up and put into a regular‑size vehicle, but did not require ‑‑

>> DAVID HOFF: ‑‑ I don't believe they're required. Because if they're locally situated, it's not like interstate commerce or anything like that. It gets complicated from a legal perspective.

>> RACHEL FICHTENBAUM: [ Off Mic ].

>> DAVID HOFF: It's very much part of advocacy is really important with these kind of issues and those particular issues.

So what we want folks to do now ‑‑ you guys want to handle this? You want me to go ahead? Okay. What we'd like you to do now is share a creative transportation solution you've developed, anything that you think is different or just how you found transportation solutions. So please type in the chat box and don't be shy. We really want to hear your ideas. So we'll give you a second. I know there's creative ideas out there somewhere.

>> RACHEL FICHTENBAUM: We did a webinar like this about a year ago. Someone typed in they had helped someone use paratransit to get to the intercity bus. I think it was the local paratransit service through the transit authority, then to get on the PMB bus to get to their job site. I thought that that was a great combination.

>> DAVID HOFF: I'm curious whether anybody is using transportation together piece by piece. Has anybody used volunteer drivers? Anybody used carpooling? Please type in the box if you have ideas there. Those are a few of the things. Also, does anybody use social security work incentives. Either the plan for achieving self support or plan for work expense as a funding option. You guys are being awfully quiet out there.

>> We have one example of getting parents to work together, to carpool, instead of each family on their own having people work together from carpools. So that's great.

>> DAVID HOFF: Here we go. Great, thank you, folks. Let's see here. We'll go through ‑‑ we'll go through these. Sorry. There we go. So let's start ‑‑ okay. Thank you. Here we go. We talked about using parents as much as possible. Starting a carpool. Coaching around use of public transportation. That's not a bad ‑‑ I think that's a good solution.

>> That's great.

>> DAVID HOFF: You're at least identifying that as an option. That's great. You do agency with choice, using DDS budget and pay $15 per ride. So using funding creatively, that's great. Did you guys want to talk about volunteer drivers briefly?

>> JENNA HENNING: Yeah, I can touch on that. I'll start by saying right now MassMobility one of the things we're working on is engaging a statewide network of volunteer transportation programs around Massachusetts. And so if people are interested in learning more about volunteer driver programs and how they operate which is just basically an organization, has a pool of volunteers, and they match consumers with rides to where they need to go. A lot of times, these volunteer transportation programs only operate ‑‑ they operate with certain stipulations. So they only take riders to medical appointments or they only take riders on shopping trips. And the way that looks varies organization to organization.

But we have a whole website dedicated to volunteer transportation as well as some reports. Like Rachel said, we can provide technical assistance in anyone is interested in learning more about volunteer driver programs and how they operator what it takes to start your own in the different models that exist in Massachusetts and around the country.

>> DAVID HOFF: And I've looked at that information on the MassMobility site. It's really well done. It's a great service, again. You get into the details about liability and all those things that people always aren't sure about. I think it's a great resource for the volunteer driving. Let's see what else did people ask us here. Let me see. People get ‑‑

>> RACHEL FICHTENBAUM: That's great. That can ‑‑

>> DAVID HOFF: And be surprised ‑‑ again, there's a lot of great services out there that particularly people with challenges that can help them learn how to drive. Let's see. Another one. We haven't always been successful receiving transportation through dial ride. He's been able to call in his work schedule two weeks in advance. Great. Using that service, identifying a service, and then finding a solution there. Great. Carpooling with coworkers. Great. I think that's a ‑‑ what I often talk about is that there are solutions both that are formal, like transit and manned services and whatever, and paratransit, but social informal solutions. We need to think about both. Carpooling is a good example of that. As an informal solution. A matching grant to be using Lyft. Wonderful, Stephanie. Great. That's a great example of partnerships, bringing resources together.

What else do we have here? Let's see.

>> [ Off Mic ].

>> DAVID HOFF: Doing a lot of travel training and using paratransit. Limited options in the Berkshires. Yes. We used to have Berkshire rides. Curious about cross‑town correct central ride dispatch. Do you guys know anything about that?

>> JENNA HENNING: Yeah. Cross‑town connect is a great example of organizations coming together and being very creative about how to improve transportation in a region. They've been able to think about multiple populations at once. It's the Acton area. They have high‑tech companies that have worker's coming from the city. They can get most of the way, but not the last few miles to the employer. That was one problem to solve. They wanted to solve increasing opportunities for older adults and people with disabilities and others without access to cars in their ‑‑ in their area.

So they have gotten a number of different councils on aging from different towns to work together, even to the point where if a vehicle from one town is going to be driving through a neighboring town on its way to the hospital the next town over, the vehicle from one town is allowed to now pick up people in that neighboring town so that instead of each town having to send their vehicle to the hospital, only one vehicle goes to the hospital and the other vehicles stay local.

They've also started new services. They started a new demand response option that went around town and then based on where people were going and where the popular destinations were, they created a fixed route, a municipal fixed route. And they've also been able to use ‑‑ to combine some of the employment transportation and community transportation options so they had some ‑‑ a vehicle doing shuttle runs in the morning helping people get to and from the train, and then that same vehicle doing local runs during the day to help older adults and people with disabilities and so forth get ‑‑ get around town.

>> DAVID HOFF: And I think it's a good example ‑‑ first off, I remember when they came together as part of a initiative actually that was part of our Medicaid infrastructure grant. People formed these partnerships. Folks came together and said, we've got an issue and let's try to address this. It's a good example ‑‑ the question earlier, not being able to cross lines. That's a good example of where some of these issues you got to get people together and awareness among public officials about these issues.

A couple other ‑‑ want to keep moving here. Being aware of time.

>> This is a great one.

>> DAVID HOFF: Somebody ‑‑ making use of the connector on the southern ‑‑

>> The Quaboag connector, we love them. Somebody's consumer has become self‑employed driving others around, which is very exciting. Great model.

>> DAVID HOFF: And there is also ‑‑ there was a question ‑‑ there was ‑‑ somebody's mentioning through the DDS flex funding they can purchase transportation through [ Off Mic ] wheelchair transportation through respite and other non‑medical and PT1 medical type access. People using really creative ‑‑ there was a question about quoories and volunteer drivers.

>> JENNA HENNING: They operate differently and use different methods of vetting the drivers before they allow them to take passengers around. Many over them do utilize Quoory. Some of them go above and beyond that, too. That's a great place to start. Checking records is another way and personal references. There are different ways you can vet your drivers.

>> DAVID HOFF: You need to be very thoughtful about how you design a volunteer driver program. Checking backgrounds and references is very important.

>> JENNA HENNING: Yes.

>> DAVID HOFF: Particularly with people who are vulnerable.

>> RACHEL FICHTENBAUM: If anybody on the call is interested in doing that, that's something MassMobility would be happy to help with.

>> DAVID HOFF: Those are great ideas. Keep them coming. We'll try to compile them and get those out to folks afterwards.

So next we did want to talk a little bit about competency of service providers. I will start this and then turn it over to Rachel and Jenna. If you're a service provider and this I think goes for adult service providers, frankly schools as well, it starts with making sure that you yourselves are aware of the full range of transportation options and making sure that individuals themselves understand the range of options that might be out there. Doing a mapping of your area, using a lot of the resources that we discussed. Going on those websites, exploring the options. You might be pleasantly surprised what's out there. We've had great ideas today, creative ideas I had not heard of. Part of this is also really ‑‑ and we always talk in our field in general about person‑centered planning and self determination and transportation fits in right with that.

The people should have options in terms of transportation. It should be ‑‑ transportation should be based on their individual needs. We start with where do you want to go, what are your preferences, how are we going to make that happen. And also teaching them how to, as we said earlier, understanding how to self‑manage their transportation is a key piece. And how to, you know, make the best use of the resources that are out there. It's really important that we think of this as part of, frankly, if you're doing person‑centered planning with somebody or an IEP or whatever that might be, that transportation is a part of that. And also that the person is very much engaged and involved in determining transportation options. It's not the staff or the teachers, figuring out here's where you're going, here's how you're getting there. They are part of that decision-making process. It's good practice and part of respecting people.

We spoke about travel instruction. That's a piece the service provider ‑‑ facilitating access to travel instruction or conducting it themselves. Any other part of the service provider role helping to facilitate and be part of good transportation partnerships on an individual level, on a systems level. One thing I say about transportation partnerships, those partnerships are key. They're key anyway, I believe, but really when you're out there really trying to develop solutions on your own, those partnerships are just absolutely critical.

>> RACHEL FICHTENBAUM: Great. So this ‑‑ this section we wanted to talk about transportation competency. There's a number different types of transportation competencies. We wanted to highlight tools that can help you, your colleagues, your staff as you're trying to help consumers get where they need to go.

>> DAVID HOFF: Keep going.

>> RACHEL FICHTENBAUM: So first some tools for helping people navigate the options. Jenna went through a whole bunch of community transportation services that may be available in your community or in your region at the beginning. And that can be overwhelming. In Massachusetts, everything is pretty much town by town, region by region. It can be hard to know what's out there. So some good tools. One is Google Transit. I know a lot of people use Google Maps for driving directions. I just wanted to highlight for anyone who isn't ‑‑ who didn't know this, that you can also use Google for public transit directions for the fixed route. When you go to Google Maps, instead of clicking on the car icon, there's a bus or train icon right next to it. That will give you public transit directions and all of the transit authorities in Massachusetts have their data in there. So that is a good tool if you're working with someone who is use using fixed route public transit.

For anyone using other services, paratransit or local ‑‑ local services, demand response services, that information is not in Google Transit. So this comes back to Ride Match that I mentioned earlier in response to that question about wheelchair accessible taxis. Ride Match was developed by the transit authority in the Taunton area. It's a tool to look at other options available in the community. Right from the front page, you can search for transportation options by town or you can ‑‑ you can do a search for a specific destination. So David, should we try to ‑‑

>> DAVID HOFF: Yes, we're going to show the website live. There it is. Okay. You should see the website now, I believe.

>> RACHEL FICHTENBAUM: Where it says transportation providers by city or town is a drop‑down list. If you just want a list of transportation options in your town, you can go there. If you are helping someone plan a specific trip, you can go to plan a trip. You can do Attleboro as the town ‑‑ to Taunton. Let's hit, I need to travel with a wheelchair. So one of the great things about Ride Match, it was developed specifically for people with disabilities and older adults. I think a lot of things are kind of not developed specifically for our audience. And then you have to make do. This was really developed specifically for ‑‑ for this group. So that's why right from the home page, you can click off those accommodations you might need in order for a transportation option to work.

So Ride Match will show the public transit options first. Great.

>> DAVID HOFF: There we go.

>> RACHEL FICHTENBAUM: It actually talks to Google Maps and brings that information up first. When you scroll down past the white box, you get additional public and private options. That's where you're going to see paratransit options, other services offered by the transit authority. In this case, there's a medical transportation option. And then private services. Taxis, livery and other services like that. This is a great place to narrow down those options to figure out what might be available and get contact information for ‑‑ for transportation providers. That's massridematch.org.

>> DAVID HOFF: [ Off Mic ] there it goes. There we go.

>> RACHEL FICHTENBAUM: And yes, Ride Match is available statewide. Different regions are entering their data, but the Berkshires, somebody asked a question. The Berkshires was one of the first regions to put their data into Ride Match.

>> DAVID HOFF: There was one other question here. Does MassMobility help parents identify resources in their local areas?

>> RACHEL FICHTENBAUM: Pretty much everything we do with our website, with the type of information we're sharing today, we're trying to help everyone ‑‑ parents and everyone else ‑‑ access information about their communities through tools like Ride Match, connecting with your transit authority. You'll get our contact information at the end of the presentation. We certainly invite you to reach out to us. Because there's only two of us statewide, we ‑‑ we don't always ‑‑

>> DAVID HOFF: Can't do everything.

>> RACHEL FICHTENBAUM: We do our best. Please do reach out. Okay. Another type of transportation competency is not just knowing what the options are and helping people find the options, but helping people try something new. This gets back to the questions we had earlier about travel training and what about if you don't want to just use the fixed route, but you need help with paratransit or Uber or Lyft. Easter seals Massachusetts recently put together a tool.

It's targeted to educators or special education classes. So students with disabilities under age 22. I think it has applicability for older ‑‑ older folks as well. And it's a list of different ‑‑ some of those key modes, public transit, paratransit, driving, Uber, Lyft, or other options. Some basic information about how to find out about ‑‑ if those options are in your area. Basic safety information and some tips on how to support someone in trying out that option. And even examples of how to embed that into someone's IEP if they are in the school system.

So another type of competency is actually offering some of these services or creating a new service. And as mentioned before, that is something MassMobility provides technical assistance onto organizations or staff. So we just wanted to highlight a few of the types of tools that we offer on our website. We have a web page specifically targeted to human service agencies and their staff who are helping ‑‑ helping consumers with this type of thing. We have web page on helping you identify grant opportunities or funding sources that might help launch a program or support transportation costs. Tools to help you coordinate with ‑‑ with partners. Information about how to offer travel instruction or how to develop a volunteer driver program. And so forth. So as an example, we wanted to go into a little more depth about the type of assistance we provide if you want to offer travel instruction.

On our website, we have some different reports. There's a report just on what are the different components of a travel instruction program, what are some different considerations for organizations thinking about starting this or expanding ‑‑ expanding what they do or formalizing if you do a little bit but it's kind of ad hoc. As well as what might some costs be, what assistance and resources are available from the state. We also offer professional development opportunities for new or experienced travel trainers. Or anyone who just does travel training as a little piece of their work. So I facilitate a peer network for anyone who does travel training in Massachusetts. We meet together in person every few months or so. Meetings are all optional and we move them around the state to try to keep it, you know, convenient at least at some point for everyone. Sometimes we bring in a guest speaker to talk about something that people have questions about, or sometimes we kind of have more of a show and tell where travel trainers share what they're doing that's working with others so that people can replicate it.

Our next meeting is coming up in May, and different travel trainers are going to be sharing tools that they have developed for specific consumers. So maybe for someone who needs help recognizing the landmarks to know when they should get off the bus, some travel trainers may show some ‑‑ like a book of pictures that they've developed so that the person can follow along while they're on the bus and know when to ‑‑ to get off. Also Mass DOT provides funding for expert travel trainers from Connecticut to come and do workshops periodically in Massachusetts. Introduction to travel training workshops. If anyone on this call or your colleagues are interested, the next one is coming up in June. I put the link here for how to register for that. They do a great job of really going through the different components and considerations of travel training and with am exercises and role playing.

And then we also offer technical assistance which means if you want to do travel training, you have some questions, not sure where to start, call us and we'll do everything we can to help you.

>> DAVID HOFF: So just want to mention really briefly that part of good ‑‑ excuse me. Come on, slides. There we go. Part of I think also building competency, also being aware of not only these wonderful resources here in Massachusetts, but also national resources. One organization which I do a lot of work with is community transportation association of America. Rachel has been very involved with them as well. On one of the technical expert panels. They are a great national resource focused on transportation. Also, the national aging and disability transportation center. There's the association of travel instruction which is a national association. These are just some examples of organizations that have resources available and ideas that can really assist you as well in this. It really should be part of your tool kit in terms of transportation options.

Someone ‑‑ let's see. So next we're going to discuss building relationships with local transportation officials. So let's start with ‑‑ I really just want to have a little discussion among the three of us, but certainly if you guys have ideas, is who first off do you think should folks be connecting with in terms of transportation? Which officials. When we say transportation officials, some are obvious, some maybe not so obvious.

>> RACHEL FICHTENBAUM: I definitely always suggest build a relationship with the transit authority in their area. Not every town is a member of a transit authority, but many are. Even if you don't have bus service, many towns do have a transit authority. Just getting to know them, what they offer, what their opportunities are for engagement. You know, public meetings or public ‑‑ public advice ‑‑ they may have transit advisory committee that you could get involved with or consumers could get involved with. Also councils on aging. Even ‑‑ even though you may think of them as more of a service for older adults, they do tend to be knowledgeable about these types of transportation options and can be a good partner.

>> DAVID HOFF: Cities and towns, the transit authorities, those are really good. Other organizations, the metropolitan planning organizations which people are not always aware of, I think can be useful. They are charged with doing transportation planning. And all these entities, they all often have public hearings, they have public processes that people can at least provide input and be part of. So that's ‑‑ that's one way to connect.

>> RACHEL FICHTENBAUM: And a good way to find your metropolitan planning organization is to look for your regional planning agency in your region.

>> DAVID HOFF: The other thing I would say about it in terms of ‑‑ so I think it's a variety of entities that you can connect with. Could also be local transportation companies that you want to talk to. What do you suggest is the best way to connect? Is it a matter of picking up the phone, attending a meeting, sending an e‑mail? Any thoughts about that?

>> RACHEL FICHTENBAUM: My thought would just be persistence. If the first outreach doesn't yield the results you want, you know, try something ‑‑ try something else. I know, I think it varies person by person. Some people always respond to their e‑mail.

>> DAVID HOFF: I tell people ‑‑ if you want me, call me on the phone. E‑mail gets ignored. Phone calls not so much so. I think persistence is a key piece of this. I think it's also a fact that ‑‑ I think in terms of any sort of relationship or any sort of partnership, if you have concerns or complaints, the best way is to start with sort of advocating in a positive way. And saying we have some issues, we're looking for resources, we'd like to talk to you about this and we'd like to share our story. I think also ‑‑ I did hear this the other day, as much as you can have individuals themselves advocate, whether it's a family member or an individual with disability themselves, that's going to have credibility. The service providers have credibility as well.

I also mentioned earlier about public hearings and public ‑‑ public meetings and opportunities for public input. A lot of these, because they're using public funds, are required to do these things. So being at that table and attending and making your presence known. Once you start going consistently, they're going to get to know you. As you attend more often, you'll get comfortable with the culture of them and see the opportunities for input.

>> RACHEL FICHTENBAUM: The other piece I would add is just an understanding that these things can take a long time. You know, I think it's ‑‑ it's totally worth it to build a relationship, but if ‑‑ you still may not be able to get the bus route to come to a different town in a short period of time. Maybe over time, working ‑‑ building relationship with the transit authority and other partners, you might be able to effect that change. And maybe in the meantime, you learn about some other services or other opportunities that may ‑‑ that may address the goal, but it can ‑‑ change can take a while.

>> DAVID HOFF: And cliff notes it helps to bring snacks. Absolutely. Food always helps. That's definitely an important part of partnership and development. So great. Great idea. So I think the final point here, I think it starts with finding out who your local transportation officials are, who your local entities are and starting to connect with them. It's really important, particularly struggling with transportation, who do we need to talk to and can we start to develop ‑‑ have some discussions and start developing some partnerships.

>> RACHEL FICHTENBAUM: Actually an opportunity right now is Mass ‑‑ the state has a regional transit authority task force that just released a draft report with recommendations for the vision for the future of regional transit authorities. They're taking public comment through March 29th. And there are three public meetings scheduled today, tomorrow, and Friday. So for anyone out in the outside of the MBTA area, that's a very current opportunity.

>> DAVID HOFF: There's actually two meetings coming up for that. There's one in Worcester, Hyannis ‑‑

>> RACHEL FICHTENBAUM: Amherst. Look on the Mass website and look for the RTA ‑‑ task force.

>> DAVID HOFF: Thank you. I found it the other day. Those public meetings I think are a great example of being there. A great opportunity to be part of the process. A couple of other things on this ‑‑ okay. Oops. I keep ‑‑ there we go. I've already spoke about this, but I want to mention again the critical importance that individuals themselves engage in transportation planning is important. Again, a good experience for them, but being there at the table. And so those ‑‑ coaching folks through. It can be also a great learning opportunity how to advocate for their needs. I did want to mention a little plug for the project that I work on, transit planning 4 all. It's a great project that's working across the country on this very issue. How do we engage people with disabilities and older adults in transit planning processes. And the ‑‑ and so I just wanted to show you, real quick if I can, their website which has a variety of resources and information. We're actually in the process of revamping this. It's ACLtoolkit is the website.

Bear with me for two seconds. There we go. There we go. So that is the main website. We are partnering with the CTA. The funding comes from the administration of community living and CTA, community transportation association of America hosts the funding. There is a series of partnerships. We are the disability partner. There is also the national association of areas on aging. They are at partner. I'm not going to go through this in detail, but there's quite a bit of information on this website. A lot of the focus is on entities that do planning, such as transit authorities, transit agencies, metropolitan planning organizations, et cetera, et cetera, those little cities and towns. There is a toolkit on inclusive planning. There's a lot of information here. Again, another resource to take a look at.

I would say that in terms of inclusive planning, what we find is there's two ways. One is getting individuals, you know, getting these entities to be more responsive to individuals with disabilities and older adults. For example, making sure that meetings are accessible. Making sure that information is clear. Holding them at places where people will be. Holding them hours that people can get there, et cetera, et cetera. So there's those kinds of internal processes. But sometimes also part of this is also working from the outside as advocates and having a very inclusive advocacy group that is ‑‑ that can be part of this. So did want to share ‑‑ hold on. There we go. I want to share just one local example. So this national project is funding projects around the country now to move forward on inclusive planning. One is out there in Worcester at Easter seal. The Worcester transportation advocacy coalition, they are coming together and advocating together. They have held a series of public meetings. They're pushing to get more representation on the local transit advisory boards. They've put together a Facebook page that's called waiting for the bus. It's a great way they're doing these on social media to share ideas and information.

I think it's a great example of where entities came together and said we have got to do something to work on advocacy. There's pictures here on the screen of their forum that they held a few months ago. And it was a great event. They organized it. They had public officials there. They had legislators there. They had advocates there. It was a great way of people connecting. I really felt like it was a great example of the kind of events that people should hold on a more regular basis, particularly when you have transportation issues. Hold a public event. Invite folks to discuss the issues. Rachel, I know you were there about this particular project.

>> RACHEL FICHTENBAUM: One of the things this group that has been thinking about is advocating for a partnership between the local transit authority and Uber and Lyft. One of the questions we got before starting this webinar that someone was definitely interested in hearing about was whether there are examples outside of Boston of transit authorities partnering with Uber and Lyft. That's one of the projects this group has been thinking about.

>> DAVID HOFF: I think the other thing is, they went after money to help support them, which has been great. They got money from our transit planning for all project. When those opportunities come up, it's really great that people go after them and apply for them.

>> RACHEL FICHTENBAUM: Going back to a point you made earlier, David, about allies across sectors or other groups, they've been working on bringing together paratransit advocates with advocates for the fixed route system to not ‑‑ to support each other. So if, you know, one group has something they're looking for, bringing other people to ‑‑ to also ‑‑ to also advocate it to make that ‑‑ that voice even stronger.

>> DAVID HOFF: So a few things in the chat box we wanted to point out. Cliff noted about working with the transit companies. They've had folks that changed where they live several times trying to set up transportation to new jobs instead of being transported here to their community‑based day service. What I was speaking about earlier, direct transportation, that's great. Let's see. That pretty much covers that. And I think that's ‑‑ I think that ‑‑ the doors are more open than you might realize sometimes. I think a lot of transportation companies and transit authorities struggle with resources. Why does the T get the majority of resources. I hear about that all of the time in other parts of the country ‑‑ other parts of the country. Other parts of state. I hear a lot about it in Massachusetts. There are limited resources, but those are public resources. Making voices known and making entities aware of needs, that certainly can be helpful.

Oops. So next I'll turn it over to Jenna and Rachel. Speaking about working with other groups experiencing transportation challenges, a bit of which we touched on already.

>> JENNA HENNING: Thank you. Yeah, so we kind of have been talking about this throughout. Excuse me. I wanted to go back to that, I guess. Is how to work with other groups who are also experiencing transportation challenges and learning ways that you can combine resources to make for a beneficial solution to transportation challenges. So we have some more polls for you guys. And it's up on the screen now. Have you worked with partner organizations to address a transportation challenge. If so, check all that apply and please provide details in the chat. So I'll read them, too. Another disability service provider, non‑disability human service organization, community action agency, workforce development, advocacy group, or other. Please list in the chat box.

>> DAVID HOFF: We'd like to not only check the boxes, any details that would be great. Ann, good to have you on, Ann. Noted that representative John Ziotnick is interested in working on a transportation project. It's a great example of speaking to your public representative and connecting with your legislators. That's really critical. Connecting with those public officials is really important.

>> RACHEL FICHTENBAUM: All the regional transit authorities are governed by boards made up of the cities and towns that they serve. If your town is a member of a transit authority, someone in your town sits on the board of that transit authority and that can be an opportunity for it, for building a relationship.

>> DAVID HOFF: So DeBrittany, how are results coming in? Are we getting any?

>> Yes, we are. I can launch the results now.

>> DAVID HOFF: Okay. Let's see what we got here.

>> JENNA HENNING: It looks like a lot of you have partnered with another disability service provider. I'm so sorry. My vision isn't great. Non‑disability human service organizations, about 20% workforce development, 10%, advocacy and other also ten.

>> DAVID HOFF: There's a few people. I think that one thing I'm taking away, nobody said community action. You may not be aware of your agency, but every region has one. They work on poverty issues. That would be a great organization to connect with.

>> JENNA HENNING: And I see right there in the chat box someone brought up the NVRCC, the valley regional coordinating council. That goes into the next question, which is asking if anyone is a member of a regional coordinating council on transportation.

>> DAVID HOFF: Can you put that poll up there, DeBrittany?

>> Yes.

>> DAVID HOFF: Let me close this one. There we go. I closed it. We just want to know real quick. What you're saying about community action is very expensive, I'm not quite following that. Are you pulling that poll up, DeBrittany.

>> Yes, I'm putting it up now. Sorry about that. Okay. So the question is: Are you active in transportation regional coordinating councils? The options are yes or no. Give it one more minute for people to respond to that. All right. And the results are in. It looks like 10% said yes and 90% said no.

>> JENNA HENNING: That looks like a small number of you are involved in your regional coordinating council on transportation. I'm just going to jump ahead to a slide or two and talk about that quickly because ‑‑ I'm sure some of you said no and are also wondering what that is. So there are 16 regional coordinating councils in Massachusetts. And this graphic on the screen here sort of covers loosely what the areas of all 16 of them are. Basically what they do, they're groups of local stakeholders who address transportation challenges in each region. And there are partnerships between Mass DOT, MassMobility and those local stakeholders. They're there to address service gaps and barriers impeding transportation for all folks in an area. And they build on existing partnerships. So partnering, again, is really important. Those cross‑sector allies. They identify transportation priorities and try to come up with solutions to those unmet needs.

And because, you know, Massachusetts is very ‑‑ you know, very town by town, different towns and organizations can join different regional coordinating councils allowing to best reflect those local priorities. Sorry, we're having some technical ‑‑

>> DAVID HOFF: Sorry. I think I ‑‑ we'll get back to that slide.

>> JENNA HENNING: It's okay. I can ‑‑

>> DAVID HOFF: Here we go. Oops. There we go. There we go.

>> JENNA HENNING: Thank you. Thank you. So there's a link there at the bottom of the page. If anyone is interested in joining one of these regional coordinating councils, you can see who the contact person is. Again, you know ‑‑ how active they are varies region to region. If you have questions, please feel free to reach out to us. I also want to touch again on partnering to improve mobility. To give you guys examples of best practices that are out there of how organizations have worked with one another to create these really wonderful resources. Rachel talked about the Cape Cod accessible delivery. I won't go into that again. Another example is the Needham van share. It serves all residents of the town. And they operate a transportation program. They use volunteers and they have ‑‑ they realize that, you know, they weren't filling enough of these needs. There is some transportation during the day that volunteers weren't able to meet.

The executive director reached out to the Charles River YMCA who have operated their own van. They came up with an arrangement between the two of them to share this single van. Because the YMCA transports children, that insurance and liability issue wasn't as much of a concern. They already had a pretty broad insurance policies. So they shared this van between the two organizations depend ‑‑ the YMCA uses it during certain times of the day and year. Then the Needham community council is able to access it during other times. Someone talked about the Quaboag connector. I won't go into too much detail. The Quaboag sits between the Worcester regional transit authority and the valley authority. Eight towns got together and came up with a way to share their council on aging vans. They also have another van they received through other means. And they work together between the councils on aging, the towns, education providers. They have support through local hospitals. You know, it's a great community initiative that has created this transportation service to serve all eight towns including older adults and people with disabilities for various ‑‑ for various trips.

>> DAVID HOFF: So I just wanted ‑‑ two quick things here. Actually, I mentioned earlier, I'm facilitating the Boston RCC. I think one thing we're finding about the RCCs, at least in our case, we're trying to use it as an information sharing opportunity. And for people to start to figure out how to better coordinate the resources that we have, as Jenna mentioned, each one is a little different in its approach. If you are getting involved with them, it's also an opportunity to also influence what they're doing and what they're focusing on. We meet on a quarterly basis. We just revived it recently. We've got about 40 people who are members. Also, we have set up a system where people can share information online between meetings which will really help as part of that.

Other thing I wanted to mention real quick, earlier we talked about partnerships. Starting to push the workforce development system and the Mass hire career centers and the Mass hire workforce boards. Some of them have been involved in transportation. We're hoping to have some influence in making that a little more universal. We hear this all the time, when I worked with them, they have the same issue. We can't get people to work. We're in the business of finding jobs, anybody who needs a job to find a job. There's commonality there. That's something I've been pushing with projects I'm working on in that. Is there anything to add here? Onto the next? Okay.

>> JENNA HENNING: So I think building partnerships is all about pooling resources together. Any one organization may not be able to solve a transportation challenge on ‑‑ on your own, but working with others, pooling all those resources together can make it more possible and also can make it more ‑‑ can make a funder more interested in giving you ‑‑ giving you a grant.

>> RACHEL FICHTENBAUM: Another approach is to think about using existing resources differently. We have a couple examples of how that has led to additional mobility. One is an example of finding empty seats and putting people in those seats. So SCN elder pus is a transportation company serving older adults and people with disabilities in 21 cities and towns west of Worcester. The director was going to communicate meetings, listening to needs, and kept hearing about needs for employment transportation for people in his region who didn't qualify as seniors, didn't have disabilities, but still didn't have access to a car and needed transportation to work. So he looked at his data and saw in four of those 21 towns, he always had a vehicle on the road driving around with empty seats. He thought, I'm already paying for the driver, I'm already insuring these vehicles and doing the maintenance. It would not cost very much to open these seats up to these people that need rides in these four towns.

So he got permission from the main funder to pilot that. It was very successful. It didn't solve everybody's problems because it was still limited hours and just those four towns, but it was a big help. He was very to do it at very little incremental cost because he saw that capacity he already had and used it creatively.

Another example from the north shore community college. They have one of their campuses was not near public transit. It's about 5 miles from the closest bus station. So students were having trouble accessing the campus. They did have a shuttle, but students were still having trouble or not taking classes at that campus. So they wanted to try something else. They identified some funding and they decided to use it to pilot subsidizing Uber rides for students if they were at the close by bus station or at the closest train station and students signed up were if the program, when they opened their Uber app, they would get an option for a subsidized Uber ride to campus. They could get a subsidized ride to the bus or train station. Anywhere else, it wouldn't show up. They piloted this and found it was successful. Even found it was more cost effective than the shuttle they were running.

After piloting it for a couple of years, they institutionalized it. Instead of using the shuttle, they switched the funding to this pilot instead. So just an example of ‑‑ of being creative and finding a solution that ‑‑ that worked better for them.

>> DAVID HOFF: Always hear the joke about, people talk about transportation, the issue is not that nobody's ‑‑ people aren't going the right direction. It's that everybody's going ‑‑ plenty of seats if you're going I‑93 on a daily basis. Plenty of seat there is. Always a great ‑‑

>> RACHEL FICHTENBAUM: Yeah, absolutely. That's why it's great to see that so many of you have been working with carpools. Often, the easiest way to get someone is to find a seat going that direction.

>> DAVID HOFF: Exactly. I'm sorry, it's ‑‑ we keep ‑‑ there we go. That's pretty much our formal presentation. If you have additional questions, and we have a few resources we want to share. I did want to come back to the question that was asked earlier. It was a question comes up a lot about paratransit not willing to go over the line. I know that is an ongoing policy issue. I don't know how you best address that. But your takes on that.

>> RACHEL FICHTENBAUM: Absolutely. Just the fact that we have 16 different transit authorities in Massachusetts, each one is sovereign does lead to some jurisdictional issues or challenges if you're on the border. As Jenna mentioned, the transit authorities are required to provide paratransit within three‑quarters of a mile of anywhere they have a fixed route bus or subway service to anyone whose disability prevents them from riding the fixed bus. That means, two transit authorities ‑‑ if two transit authorities have fixed route bus that connects, then they also have to have paratransit transit that connects. The Americans with Disabilities Act, you have a right to complementary ‑‑ everyone has a right to be able to use the fixed route, even if your disability prevents you from accessing the fixed route. If their fixed route buses do not connect, then they do not have to ‑‑ to provide connecting paratransit.

And so I think, you know, one approach to the ‑‑ to thinking about paratransit connections is to just think generally about transit service and transit connections as well. And this goes back to the ‑‑ the point about allying across sectors and building relationships with transit authorities. The other is to ‑‑ to think about supplementary services. This is what the Quaboag connector has done so successfully. Okay, we have a gap in service, we're between two transit authorities, we'll work with the pioneer valley transit authority and the regional planning agency in central Mass, but we really need another service to meet this need and by getting so many partners together, they've been able to ‑‑ to launch that and get public and private funding to do so.

So it is definitely a need across the state and there's some different ways to ‑‑ to approach it.

>> DAVID HOFF: So we do want to share real quick, just to point out the MassMobility website which has great resources. Show ‑‑ I'll do ‑‑ I can do a quick tour. You can share as I'm navigating here. If you go down ‑‑ I don't know what you want to point out on the bottom. Here's all the different things that are available on there.

>> RACHEL FICHTENBAUM: We want to finish up soon. But there's resources on looking for transportation. If you're a consumer or a family, I would start there. Human service agencies and community transportation, that's some of the resources we mentioned earlier for if a ‑‑ if staff of human service agencies want to implement some of ‑‑ some of the approaches we've been talking about. There's some ‑‑ some ‑‑ also resources targeted to transportation providers. We have a monthly newsletter where we share information about new services that we hear about or grant opportunities. And there's also an annual conference which is actually coming up April ‑‑ April 9th and 10th. If you want to continue the conversation, we would love to see you ‑‑ see you there.

>> DAVID HOFF: Okay.

>> LARA: Could you tell us what the website is for that ‑‑ that you just showed us?

>> RACHEL FICHTENBAUM: Just go to the end of the PowerPoint.

>> DAVID HOFF: Here we go.

>> RACHEL FICHTENBAUM: We're going to bring up the last slide.

>> LARA: Thank you.

>> DAVID HOFF: There's a quick plug on this slide for the transportation conference.

[ Off Mic ].

>> LARA: So the website is mass.gov/massmobility?

>> JENNA HENNING: Slash org.

>> LARA: Thank you.

>> DAVID HOFF: The slides will be made available on the ‑‑ all these slides will be available to folks so you can click through the links and look at all the different information. Any last ‑‑ last quick question?

I know we need to wrap up here. Anything else? So feel free to reach out to us. Anytime to any of us. Our contact information is here on the screen. I personally want to thank Jenna and Rachel for this. It was great information. Really also thank you to the audience for all of your questions. Really well done. There was a few questions about logistical things. I'll surgeon it over to DeBrittany and Lara. A few things about certificates of attendance and things like that. Take it from here.

>> Thank you. Thank you to our presenters, David, Lara, Jenna and Rachel for a great presentation with a wealth of resources. A few things. The first is that the evaluation for this webinar, the link I just posted it in the chat box. It is required for anyone requesting a certificate of attendance or a CRC credit. The second thing is that this PowerPoint has a lot of resources shared in it. I will be sending it out via e‑mail to everyone who registered for ‑‑ for this webinar. The third thing, as a reminder, I got some questions in the chat box, this webinar is recorded and archived link of this webinar will be posted on the employment first website. So that is employmentfirstMA.org. Thank you, again, for joining. We hope that you'll revisit the employment first website to sign up for our upcoming webinars and trainings. I hope you have a great day. And thanks again.

[ Webinar concluded at 11:28 a.m. ET ]