

Draft Memorandum for the Record

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization

Transit Working Group Coffee Chat Summary: Human Services Transportation

March 10, 2022, Meeting

4:00 PM–5:00 PM, Zoom Video Conferencing Platform. Recording available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g05mJrCbB3Y>

Introductions

Sandy Johnston (Central Transportation Planning Staff) opened the meeting and attendees introduced themselves.

About the PT-1 Program

Vera Kirrane and Lisa Weber from the Executive Office of Health and Human Services' (EOHHS) Human Service Transportation (HST) Office discussed the PT-1 Program. L. Weber provided a brief overview of both the HST and PT-1 Program. The HST is a state agency that oversees coordinated transportation services across multiple agencies primarily for MassHealth-related trips. PT-1, or Provider Request for Transportation, is a service that provides transportation for MassHealth members to MassHealth services if they do not have access to or are unable to use public transportation. Eligibility, information about transportation providers, and common disclaimers were also discussed.

Related topics and resources were mentioned, and included the following:

1. MassMobility/RideMatch¹: Resources for individuals who are not eligible for PT-1 or other HST services
2. Non-Emergency Human Service Transportation Task Force: New program that oversees HST²
3. MassHealth personal reimbursement: A benefit for MassHealth-covered individuals who have access to public transportation but cannot afford to use it

¹ Ride Match link: <https://massridematch.org/>

² Task force link: <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/non-emergency-human-service-transportation-task-force>
Task force email address: HST-task-force@mass.gov

Discussion

S. Johnston further posed three questions to help frame the discussion:

1. How does the PT-1 Program fit into the landscape of other transportation options?
2. What can we do to enhance coordination between PT-1 and other ways of providing medical and human services transportation?
3. How can we make sure people needing access to transportation know which services they can use and when?

The following is a largely paraphrased summary of the main points that attendees contributed to the conversation.

Susan Barrett (Town of Lexington): We have many different transportation services that only serve certain groups, which leaves many gaps. It is important to break down barriers to improve access while not creating duplicate services. Is there a way to get other health insurers besides MassHealth to pay for trips to medical appointments? MassHealth personal reimbursement seems great but complicated; is there a way for HST to advocate for reduced fares for lower income individuals without making them apply for a reimbursement?

Vera Kirrane (HST): The reimbursement process has been simplified and MassHealth providers are familiar with the process, so all the individual has to do is get the provider to confirm that they were seen by them. HST cannot reimburse for less than \$5, but members can apply for up to 90 days of reimbursement value.

Sandy Johnston (CTPS): Do individuals need their doctors to verify requests for reimbursement, or can office administration verify requests?

Vera Kirrane (HST): Usually front office staff have the ability to verify requests.

Sandy Johnston (CTPS): What software do you use for route planning?

Lisa Weber (HST): The MassHealth customer service center through Maximus auto-adjudicates the PT-1s, and PT-1 requests are made through the customer web portal. HBSS software is used for trip assignments.

Vera Kirrane (HST): The provider lets HST know if individuals are unable to use public transportation.

Lisa Weber (HST): HST does not question whether an individual is said to be unable to use public transportation.

Susan Barrett (Town of Lexington): Other programs, such as Access Pittsburgh, pool different transportation programs into one pot and reimburse based on an individual's coverage status. What would it take for us to do something like this?

Lisa Weber (HST): Logistically and legally this might not be possible because PT-1 eligibility is very specific, and vendors are contracted in specific ways.

Susan Barrett (Town of Lexington): Is your task force open to discussing this?

Lisa Weber (HST): The task force is likely open to discussing it, but it might not be possible because of PT-1s specifications.

Vera Kirrane (HST): Only three of nine coverage types under MassHealth are eligible for transportation services. HST is working on ways to reduce overlap in services and is open to ideas on ways to expand services to non-MassHealth members.

Todd Kirrane (Town of Brookline): Does the agency have the capacity to take on extra transportation coordination of private insurance providers for a fee?

Susan Barrett (Town of Lexington): How do we know if PT-1 eligible people are not taking The Ride or paratransit, and could we use this information to better allocate funding?

Vera Kirrane (HST): We do have the capacity to add coordination, but we are unsure if private and public insurance can be combined. The transportation benefit is fundamentally a question of access, which MassHealth sees as a right for members; but, private insurers may not see this benefit as a right and may not allocate money for this service.

Lisa Weber (HST): Since people take different services for different purposes, instead of pooling resources we should provide information on which services to use and when.

Vera Kirrane (HST): Some people choose The Ride over PT-1 because they do not know about it or do not like the PT-1 service. To clarify, reimbursement is for the cost of the fare.

Abby Swaine (Greater Boston Chapter of United Spinal Association): It is surprising about the extent to which people with spinal injuries have used The Ride over PT-1 for

all their medical needs and also surprising how few people know about Ride Match. How do we make these options more visible?

Vera Kirrane (HST): HST has been working on expanding the vendor pool for nursing homes.

Lisa Weber (HST): In addition to increasing information about Ride Match, we recommend community engagement and education on services.

Vera Kirrane (HST): MassHealth does not advertise a lot but does welcome social workers to talk about services and HST has tried to improve online resources.

Sandy Johnston (CTPS): CTPS is assisting the MBTA with exploring mobility integrations and the idea of Mobility as a Service (MAAS). Ideally, people would not bear as much of the burden of finding the service that applies to them. Who is advocating for universal access, and what are the pathways to make that happen?

Lisa Weber (HST): Certain municipalities may have their own services, and services may also be available based on age or disability status. So, making information more easily accessible is important to help people understand eligibility.

Lenard Diggins (Regional Transportation Advisory Council): In agreement with Sandy, he noted that people are operating in a stressful environment. Informing caretakers about services and bringing these issues to the attention of lawmakers may help with advocating for universal access.

Susan Barrett (Town of Lexington): Referrals and information on multiple services can be too much. How can we help simplify this? Would this group consider inviting legislators or having an event with legislators?

Sandy Johnston (CTPS): The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) does this, and this group can partner with MAPC or invite legislators to coffee chats or working group meetings. We will discuss this further.

Vera Kirrane (HST): Paratransit is not restricted to geographic areas and does not require too much justification. Paratransit can be a simpler option but is limited to MassHealth members.

Lenard Diggins (Regional Transportation Advisory Council): What discussions is CTPS having regarding the next Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)?

Sandy Johnston (CTPS): The LRTP is in development and will be endorsed next year. The Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan was last prepared in 2019 and focused on human services and elder/medical transportation.³ The LRTP's Needs Assessment will include discussions and objectives on topics such as human services transportation that come up through various conversations and meetings.

Betsy Harvey (CTPS): The coordinated plan is aligned with the LRTP and will include these topics.

Lenard Diggins (Regional Transportation Advisory Council): Will Mobility as a Service be included in the next LRTP?

Betsy Harvey (CTPS): That is up to the MPO and can be brought up in MPO meetings.

Sandy Johnston (CTPS): Mobility as a Service can be addressed by the MPO as it has been articulated as a need.

Conclusion and Upcoming Events

S. Johnston thanked everyone for their participation and mentioned upcoming Transit Working Group events, including a coffee chat on Confronting the Driver Recruitment Shortfall with the Transit Workforce Center on April 6, 2022.

³ Link to 2019 Coordinated Plan: <https://www.bostonmpo.org/cpt-hst>

Attendance

Attendee	Affiliation
Bill McNulty	Old Colony Planning Council (OCPC)
Todd Kirrane	Town of Brookline
Susan Barrett	Town of Lexington
Lisa Weber	Human Services Transportation Office (HST)
Vera Kirrane	Human Services Transportation Office (HST)
John Strauss	Town of Burlington
Shawn Bailey	Old Colony Planning Council (OCPC)
Travis Pollack	Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)
Maria Foster	Brookline Council on Aging
Shona Norman	Cape Ann Transportation Authority (CATA)
Andrew Jennings	Town of Billerica; Lowell Regional Transit Authority (LRTA)
Tyler Terassi	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA)
Howard Ostroff	Dedham Active Transportation Working Group
Abby Swaine	Greater Boston Chapter of United Spinal Association
Charles Kilmer	Old Colony Planning Council (OCPC)
Erin Stevens	Town of Concord
Freda Wiley	Human Rights City of Boston and Beyond; Amnesty International
Lenard Diggins	Regional Transportation Advisory Council
Jesse Gordon	Randolph Town Council
Christine Madore	Mass Housing Partnership
Abigail Adams	Brockton Area Transit (BAT)
Michael Lambert	Brockton Area Transit (BAT)

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Sandy Johnston
Matt Archer
Betsy Harvey
Jonathan Church

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