

**NORTHERN MIDDLESEX COUNCIL OF
GOVERNMENTS**

**COORDINATED PUBLIC TRANSIT-
HUMAN SERVICES
TRANSPORTATION PLAN**

FOR THE

**NORTHERN MIDDLESEX METROPOLITAN
PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

COORDINATED PUBLIC TRANSIT-HUMAN SERVICES TRANSPORTATION PLAN

NORTHERN MIDDLESEX METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

I. INTRODUCTION:

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

The Northern Middlesex Council of Governments, in cooperation with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works (EOTPW) has developed the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan for the NMMPO region. NMCOG will assist EOTPW in selecting projects on a competitive basis. EOTPW will administer the funds and contract with the selected recipients.

The goals of the plan include:

- Goal 1: Assessing current available services and identifying duplicative services;
- Goal 2: Assessing needs and identifying gaps in transportation services for the elderly, individuals with disabilities, low-income persons, and individuals doing reverse commutes, and

Goal 3: Proposing strategies and activities to address gaps and achieve efficiencies in service delivery and creating relative priorities for implementation in addressing identified needs.

New Freedom Program

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

Jobs Access and Reverse Commute (JARC)

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

Special Needs of Elderly Individuals (Section 5310)

The Section 5310 program was established in 1975, prior to the inception of ADA in 1990. At that time, grants were provided to private non-profit organizations that served elderly/disabled persons in areas where public transportation services were lacking. The program remains in operation, with a goal of improving mobility for elderly and disabled individuals. EOTPW administers the program in accordance with State Management Plans.

Nonurbanized Area Formula Program (Section 5311)

The Section 5311 program provides funding for public transportation in nonurbanized areas. FTA apportions funds for nonurbanized areas to the states according to a statutory formula based on each state's population in rural and small urban areas (under 50,000 population). EOTPW administers the program in accordance with State Management Plans. Eligible recipients include public bodies and private non-profit organizations. Participation by private for-profit enterprises under contract to an eligible recipient is encouraged.

II. Inventory of Current Transportation Resources:

Transportation services, within the Northern Middlesex Region, are available through a variety of public, non-profit and for-profit providers including the following;

A. Lowell Regional Transit Authority fixed route bus service:

As shown on Map 1, the LRTA operates fixed route bus service in six (6) communities within the Northern Middlesex region. The towns of Tyngsborough and Dracut are served by one connecting bus route operating Monday through Saturday. Tewksbury is served by two routes which operate Monday through Friday. Billerica is served by two bus routes that operate Monday through Saturday. Chelmsford is served by three routes, two of which operate Monday through Saturday, while the third operates Monday through Friday.

The City of Lowell is the center for the Lowell Regional Transit Authority bus route system, with ten bus routes exclusively serving the residents of Lowell. Additionally, all of the bus routes travel through the City, bringing the total number of bus routes for the overall system to nineteen.

B. Lowell Regional Transit Authority Paratransit bus service: (Map 2)

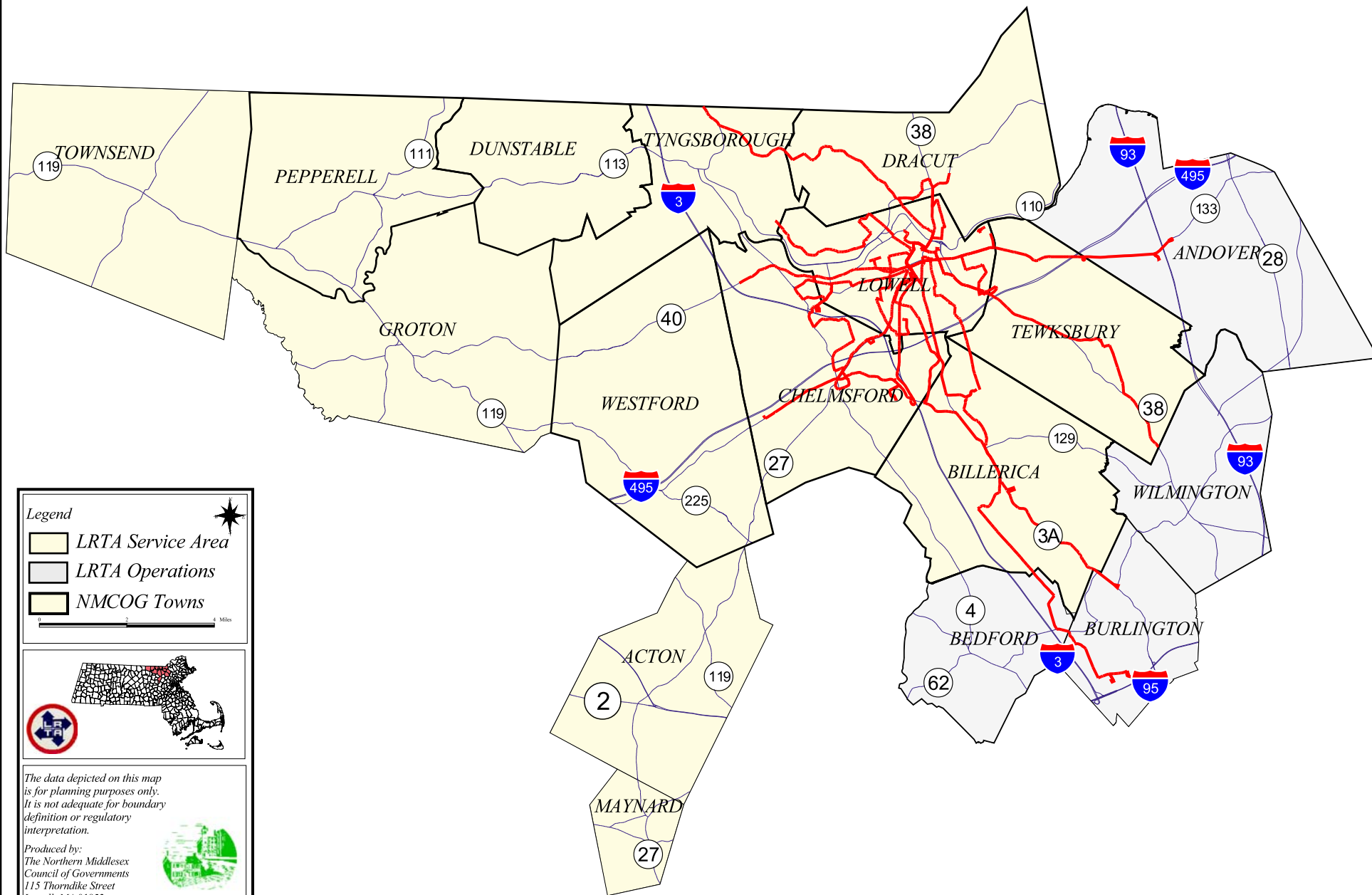
1. *Road Runner centralized paratransit transportation service:*

Through agreements with private transportation carriers, the LRTA currently provides paratransit services for the elderly and handicapped in ten communities. The LRTA furnishes demand responsive and prescheduled van service, known as “Road Runner”, to eligible clients in Acton, Billerica, Chelmsford, Dracut, Groton, Lowell, and Pepperell under a contract with Paratransit Management of Lowell, Inc. This contract also includes an extended service hours program funded by Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation and a special transportation service for area nursing homes. Additionally, the LRTA offers an expanded paratransit service as part of its Americans with Disabilities Act compliance program.

The LRTA has also entered into agreements with the Councils on Aging (CoA) in Acton, Chelmsford, Dracut, Maynard, Townsend, Tyngsborough and Westford to provide service for elderly and handicapped residents in these towns. All of the paratransit services offer dial-a-ride and prescheduled transportation on a 24 hour advanced call basis within specified hours of operation.

Currently, service is provided for trips not only within each town but also to contiguous towns. The LRTA’s plans for paratransit expansion call for additional intercommunity trips. Most of the transportation from suburban communities includes trips to Lowell. Those towns that do not include Lowell in their service area (Acton, Groton and Townsend) are located in the western section of the LRTA district and

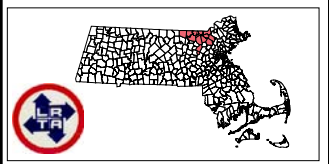
Lowell Regional Transit Authority Service Area



Legend

- LRTA Service Area
- LRTA Operations
- NMCOG Towns

0 2 4 Miles



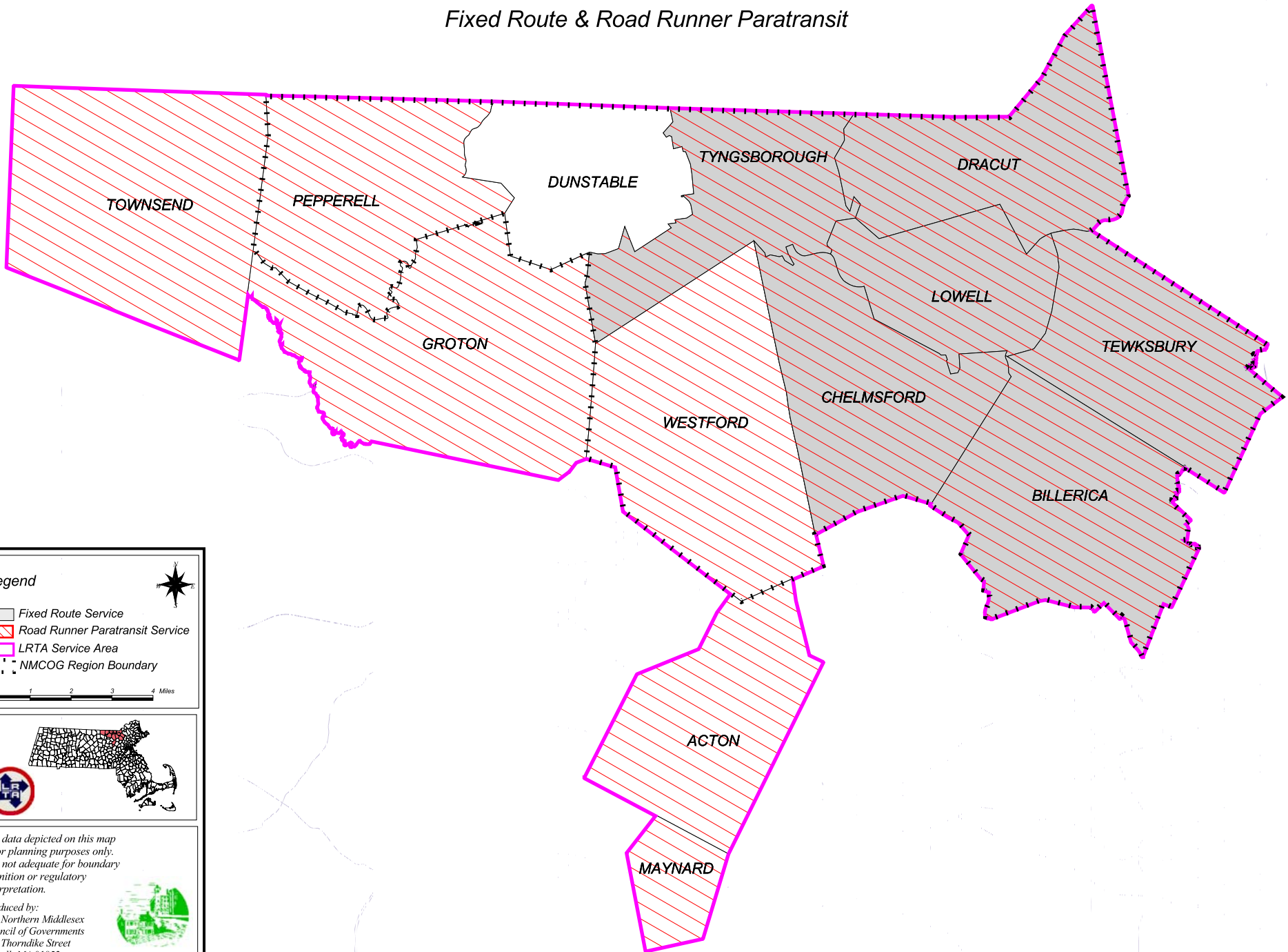
The data depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. It is not adequate for boundary definition or regulatory interpretation.

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 Council of Governments
 115 Thorndike Street
 Lowell, MA 01852





05/23/2007_JCM

Lowell Regional Transit Authority Service Area

Fixed Route & Road Runner Paratransit



Legend

-  Fixed Route Service
 -  Road Runner Paratransit Service
 -  LRTA Service Area
 -  NMCOG Region Boundary
- 0 1 2 3 4 Miles



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Lowell, MA 01852



12/07/2007 JCM

gravitate, economically and socially, more to Fitchburg than Lowell. In addition to trips made in the area, the Lowell Road Runner provides transportation for residents of Lowell, Dracut, Chelmsford and Westford to medical sites in Boston.

Transportation is primarily available for those residents over 60 years of age or any handicapped person. Handicapped usually refers to those persons who have a mobility impairment. An exception to this is Groton where all residents are eligible for the Road Runner service regardless of age or handicap. All trip purposes are accommodated, including medical, nutritional, shopping, recreational, social, and others.

The LRTA service area population, according to the 2000 U.S. Census, was 320,301, of which 38,864 were elderly over the age of 60 years. Within the urbanized area, nearly 7,400 of those 65 or older reported a mobility or selfcare limitation to the Census Bureau. Additionally, nearly 11,000 individuals aged 16-64 reported a similar mobility and/or selfcare limitation. It is this client population that the LRTA seeks to serve by providing paratransit service to its member communities.

2. *Councils On Aging paratransit transportation service:*

As described above, the LRTA funds the origin to destination service operations of four Councils on Ageing within the Northern Middlesex region. The Westford COA operates all of the senior and disabled transportation within the Town, while Chelmsford, Dracut and Tyngsborough COA's operates most of the senior transportation and the LRTA Road Runner operates most of the complementary ADA service.

The following table identifies the LRTA Demand Response service by community:

Table 1. Summary of Van Service by Community

Community	Community-Based Road Runner Service	ADA Paratransit Fixed Rte Serv. Area (2-3 shared vans)	Boston Medical (1 shared van)	LRTA-Supported COA Service	Separate COA Service
Acton	1 van, Tues.-Thurs., 8 AM - 4 PM	NA	Wed., 8 AM - 4 PM	1 van, M-F, 7:45 AM - 3:45 PM	NA
Billerica	2 vans, M-F, 8 AM - 4 PM 1 van, Sat., 8 AM - 4 PM	M-F, 6 AM - 6 PM Sat., 7:30 AM - 6 PM	Wed., 8 AM - 4 PM	NA	NA
Chelmsford	1 van, M-F, 8 AM - 4 PM	M-F, 6 AM - 6 PM Sat., 7:30 AM - 6 PM	Wed., 8 AM - 4 PM	1 van, M-F, 8 AM - 4 PM	2 vans. One provides ADHC rides M-F, 7:30 AM - 4 PM. One is used as needed for special trips (driven by volunteers)
Dracut	1 van, Mon. & Fri., 8 AM - 5 PM	M-F, 6 AM - 6 PM Sat., 7:30 AM - 6 PM	Wed., 8 AM - 4 PM	1 van, M-F, 8 AM - 4 PM 1 van (medical), Mon & Fri 7:30 AM - 3:30 PM	1 van that provides medical trips 3 day a week (T, W, TH 7:30 AM - 3:30 PM)
Groton	1 van, M-F, 8 AM - 4 PM	NA	Wed., 8 AM - 4 PM	NA	NA
Lowell	3 vans, M-F, 8 AM - 4 PM	M-F, 6 AM - 6 PM Sat., 7:30 AM - 6 PM	Wed., 8 AM - 4 PM	NA	1 school bus, 2 minibuses and 1 station wagon that provide a variety of local services to Lowell residents. Hours are M-F 8 AM - 4 PM, Sat & Sun 8 AM - 1 PM
Maynard	NA	NA	Wed., 8 AM - 4 PM	1 van, M-W, 7:30 AM - 3:30 P	1 van, Thurs & Fri, 7:30 AM - 3:30 PM
Pepperell	1 van, M-F, 8 AM - 4 PM	NA	Wed., 8 AM - 4 PM	NA	NA
Tewksbury	2 vans, M-F, 8 AM - 4 PM 1 van, Sat., 8 AM - 4 PM	M-F, 6 AM - 6 PM Sat., 7:30 AM - 6 PM	Wed., 8 AM - 4 PM	NA	NA
Townsend	NA	NA	Wed., 8 AM - 4 PM	1 van, Mon 9 AM - 2 PM Tuesday 10 AM - 3:30 PM Wednesday 8 AM - 2 PM Thursday 8 AM - 3:30 PM Friday 8 AM - 1 PM	NA
Tyngsborough	NA	M-F, 6 AM - 6 PM Sat., 7:30 AM - 6 PM	Wed., 8 AM - 4 PM	1 van, Mon-Fri, 9 AM - 3:30 PM	NA
Westford	NA	NA	Wed., 8 AM - 4 PM	1 van, M-F 8 AM - 4 PM	2 vans Monday - Friday, 8 AM - 4 PM

C. Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority commuter rail service:

The MBTA operates 22 round trip commuter trains to Boston's North Station during the weekdays and 8 round trip trains on both Saturday and Sunday. All of the commuter trains pass through the North Billerica Train Station further increasing the availability for residents of the get to Boston.

The Gallagher Intermodal Center in Lowell is an MBTA Zone 6 location with a one-way fare of \$6.75. The North Billerica Train Station is a Zone 5, having a one-way fare of \$6.25.

D. Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority fixed route bus service:

The MVRTA operates one fixed bus route between Lawrence and Lowell, Monday through Saturday. There are 28 round trip buses on Monday through Friday and 16 on Saturday.

Passengers of the MVRTA #41 Lowell-Lawrence bus pay \$1.00. Free transfer is available onto the LRTA #18 Express Shuttle. All other transfers are required to pay the appropriate fare.

E. Peter Pan Bus Lines:

Regular intercity service between Lowell and Boston as well as interstate service between Lowell and Merrimack, New Hampshire is available several times daily.

F. Other Private Service Providers:

In addition to the public fixed route service the Lowell Regional Transit Authority provides in the Northern Middlesex Region, there are several private carriers operating charter, rental and other special bus services within the MPO area. The following is a list of these private carriers:

<u>Bus Line Providers</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Telephone</u>
Trombly Motor Coach	1480 Broadway Road, Dracut	937-3626
First Student Bus	Ward Way, North Chelmsford	251-4901
R.C. Herrmann Bus Co.	250 Littleton Road, Westford	692-3143
Tewksbury Transit, Inc.	555 Whipple Road, Tewksbury	851-9863
Vermont Transit	101 Thorndike Street, Lowell	459-7101
A&F Bus Company, Inc.	16 Wyman Road, Billerica	663-8145
Bedford Charter Service	11 Railroad Avenue, Bedford	257-9524
Fiore Bus Service	Plank Street, Billerica	667-1114
Dunbar Bus Company	33 Middlesex Road, Tyngsborough	649-7401
Plaza Transportation	410 Woburn Street, Tewksbury	459-9600
Buckingham Bus Company	40 Station Avenue, Groton	448-6057

Dee Bus Service, Inc.	30 Progress Avenue, Tyngsborough	649-1983
Dee Bus Service, Inc.	30 Town Farm Road, Westford	392-8639
Lessard Bus Company, Inc.	Nashua, NH	897-1244

Taxi Service:

Diamond Yellow Cab	50 Payne Street, Lowell	458-6861
Broadway Cab Company	50 Payne Street, Lowell	458-4769
City Cab Company	50 Payne Street, Lowell	454-7748
Wilmington Taxi	Wilmington	658-3859
Town Taxi	14 Perry Street, Lowell	970-0202
A&M Taxi	60 Andrews Street, Lowell	944-0674
High Class of Lowell	26 Howard Street, Lowell	934-0888
Lowell Cab Company	Lowell	446-7900
Acre Cab Company	50 Payne Street, Lowell	454-7748
A-1 Taxi	Lowell	970-2909
Dave's Taxi	Lowell	446-8787
Family Taxi	Lowell	453-0778
Hoey's Taxi and Delivery	17 Diamond Drive, Dracut	569-7883
J&N Taxi	Lowell	454-5661
Lowell Taxi	12 Bridge Street, Lowell	441-0011
Carib Tour Taxi	239 Lincoln Street, Lowell	458-1155
Checker Taxi	12 Bridge Street, Lowell	441-9700
First Class Taxi	115 Appleton Street, Lowell	459-6000
Billerica Taxi	Billerica	729-3302

Ambulance Service and Wheelchair Transport

American Medical Response	Lowell	458-6321
Guardian Ambulance	Lowell	323-0135
Patriot Ambulance	35 Maple Street, Lowell	975-1111
Trinity E.M.S.	1221 Westford Street, Lowell	441-9999

Not-For-Profit Organizations:

Community Team Work	167 Dutton Street,	Lowell	459-0551
Elder Services of the Merrimack Valley		Lawrence	
Cambodian Mutual Ast. Assoc		Lowell	
Coalition for a Better Acre		Lowell	

III. IDENTIFYING GAPS IN SERVICE

On December 4, 2007, the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments held a public meeting at the Lowell Regional Transit Authority facility on Hale Street in Lowell. The purpose of the meeting was to:

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

Invitations were mailed to individuals and organizations including human service providers, health care providers, transportation providers, employers and government agencies. Participants were mailed a survey and asked to bring their responses to the meeting or send the survey to NMCOG if they were not able to attend. The responses to the questions were then used to identify the regional priorities.

The questions and subsequent responses are displayed below:

1. Do you or your clients currently use the LRTA or other public transit services?
 - LRTA fixed route and Roadrunner service
 - Councils on Aging van service
 - Lowell Veterans Administration Shuttle

2. Where do people need to be able to go, such as major employment areas, training providers, childcare or health care? Try to be specific.
 - Hanscom Air force Base
 - Nashua N.H. / Nashua Transit System connection
 - U.P.S. Chelmsford
 - Clients are CAN's and work in Nursing Homes (Billerica & Tewksbury)
 - Saints Memorial Hospital
 - LGH, Dialysis center Clark Road & Holden Center
 - D'Youville Adult daycare
 - Harvard Vanguard in Chelmsford
 - Chelmsford (Village Square, Meeting House Square, Courthouse Square, Research Place)
 - V.A. Marshall Rd Lowell
 - V.A. Jamaica Plain
 - Walmart (prescription pickups)
 - Demoulas & Hannaford Markets
 - Market Basket Shopping Center Westford

- Health Care in Concord, Littleton, Bedford
 - Tynsborough Rte 3A (PLS Electronics employment)
 - Hudson N.H. Rte 3A (employment)
 - Tewksbury Rte 38 (employment)
3. What transportation services do they use to get there?
- LRTA fixed route buses
 - LRTA Roadrunner
 - Taxis
 - Councils on Aging van service
 - Volunteer drivers
 - LGH Cancer Center provided transportation
4. Is there any duplication of transportation services?
- None (number 1 response)
 - COA Friends vans versus LRTA funded COA van service
5. Are there any gaps that you can identify or new services that would be helpful in accessing the places mentioned above?
- Later service for LRTA fixed route and Roadrunner service
 - Sunday service and more frequency for LRTA fixed route
 - Later Roadrunner service/Weekend service
 - Door-to-door rather than curb-to-curb.
 - LRTA Bus route expansion.
 - Reduced headway/more frequent service.
 - Early Roadrunner service to get people to the Lowell V.A. prior to 8:30 am departure for Jamaica Plane V.A. connection.
 - LRTA Connection to Nashua N.H. Via Rte 3A / Middlesex Road
 - LRTA bus route extension to Westford & Littleton Via Rte 110
 - LRTA Connection to Bedford VA, Middlesex Community College, Hanscom AFB and MBTA Routes #62 & #76
 - LRTA Connection to business in Hudson N.H. Via Rte 3A
 - Reduced transit fares
 - Expand service to Billerica
 - Expand service to Tewksbury
6. What new transportation service or transportation alternatives are needed?
- Expanded hours for LRTA fixed route bus and Roadrunner.
 - Need door to door instead of curb to curb.
 - Possible outside / outsourced service.
 - Free transit vouchers for people on Public Assistance
 - Expanded V.A. service to Boston
 - LRTA / Community outreach for travel training.
 - LRTA Outreach to businesses that offer entry level jobs.

IV. IDENTIFYING STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING SERVICE GAPS AND DEVELOPING PRIORITIES

Based on the December 4, 2007 public meeting and the results of the surveys collected from participants, as well as those received through the mail, the following priorities were identified. A list of participants at the December 4, 2007 session is appended to this document. These priorities have been categorized by the applicable funding category.

A. Jobs Access and Reverse Commute (JARC)

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

Example solutions:

- Extend evening and weekend bus hours to accommodate training and/or non-tradition employment schedules; and
- Provide more frequent service / reduced headways.

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

Example solutions:

- New fixed routes or expanded routes to employment and shopping areas inside/outside region and state.

3. Broader/better communication about transit services.

Example solutions:

- Better promotion / Community outreach identifying available services and providing information and guidance on how to use the system; and
- Better promotion / Business outreach identifying available transportation services.

4. Better coordination of current services; mobility management.

Example solutions:

- Coordination of private transportation services with the public transportation system.

B. New Freedom

1. *Broaden Geographic Service*

Example solutions:

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

2. *Enhanced assisted services*

Example solutions:

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

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

Example solutions:

- Coordination of private and non-profit transportation services with the public transportation system.

C. Specialized Transportation (elderly and disabled)

1. *Broaden Geographic Service*

Example solutions:

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

2. *Enhanced assisted services*

Example solutions:

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

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

Example solutions:

- Coordination of private and non-profit transportation services with the public transportation system.

V. Criteria for Evaluation and Established Priorities

The Northern Middlesex Council of Governments is requesting proposals for the JARC and New Freedom Programs. All projects will be rated according to the regional priorities identified and will be forwarded to the EOTPW, where the projects will then compete in a selection process for the Boston Urbanized Area.

Northern Middlesex Council of Governments Evaluation Criteria

Proposals to address service gaps should have affirmative answers to the following questions in order to receive consideration for funding:

- Does the proposed project address gaps in current service provision as defined in the Coordinated Plan?
- Can the proposal be achieved with the given technical capacities of the project sponsor?
- Does the proposal serve a population and geographic area of need?
- Does the proposal outline the operating, capital, and administrative costs?
- Does the proposal outline the source of matching funds and provide documentation that such funds are available?
- Is the project sustainable beyond the funding period? Applicants should identify potential sources for sustaining the service.

Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works Evaluation Criteria

EOTPW will rate project proposals based on the following criteria:

- Number of passengers served
- Cost per passenger

EOTPW will prioritize projects based upon:

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

APPENDIX

**PUBLIC MEETING ATTENDANCE LIST
DECEMBER 4, 2007**

Brian Yates
Marilyn Graham
Linda Bloomgren
Tina Degree
David Bradley
Will Reiter
Bill Norris
Elizabeth Quinn
David Hedison
Connie Donahue
Joanne Sheehan
Elaine Walker
Elliot Schmiedl
Rita Claypoole
Ryan McDonnell
Diana Ryder
Joyce Shadon
Alma Reeves
Clare Hamilton
Chris Curry
Beverly Woods

Community Teamwork Inc.
Community Teamwork Inc.
Community Teamwork Inc.
Community Teamwork Inc.
Lowell Regional Transit Authority
Elder Services of Merrimack Valley
Lowell Career Center
UMASS CRFC
Chelmsford Housing Authority
Chelmsford Housing Authority
Westford Council on Aging
Lowell Renaissance Club
MassRides
Lowell Francis Gatehouse
International Institute of Lowell
Chelmsford Council on Aging
Dracut Council on Aging
Dracut Council on Aging
Lowell Regional Transit Authority
Northern Middlesex Council of Governments
Northern Middlesex Council of Governments