



**YOU CAN GET THERE FROM
HERE: INNOVATIONS IN
RURAL TRANSIT**



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**If you live or work rurally:
How many days per week, on average, do
you spend time in the car (as driver or
passenger)?**

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How much time per day, on average, do
you spend in the car (as driver or
passenger)?**

**If you live or work rurally:
How many days per week, on average, do
you spend time on public transit (e.g.
buses, trains, publicly-funded
microtransit)?**

“Transportation decisions affect everyone, by influencing where they live, how they can get to work and school, whether they can easily access health and other essential services, how they socialize with family members and friends, and ultimately if they can thrive in a physical environment that supports healthy outcomes.”

***From *Transportation: A Community Driver of Health*
(2021)***

Transportation is a critical social determinant of health

- Access to healthcare (primary care, emergency, specialty care, preventative care)
- Employment
- Education
- Housing
- Social isolation
- Domestic violence / intimate partner violence
- Walkability & chronic disease

Best 43 min 10 hr 2 hr 33

Florida, Massachusetts

Berkshire Medical Ctr, 725 North St, Pitts

Add destination

Leave now Options

Send directions to your phone

via MA-8 S **43 min**

 Fastest route now due to traffic conditions 28.2 miles

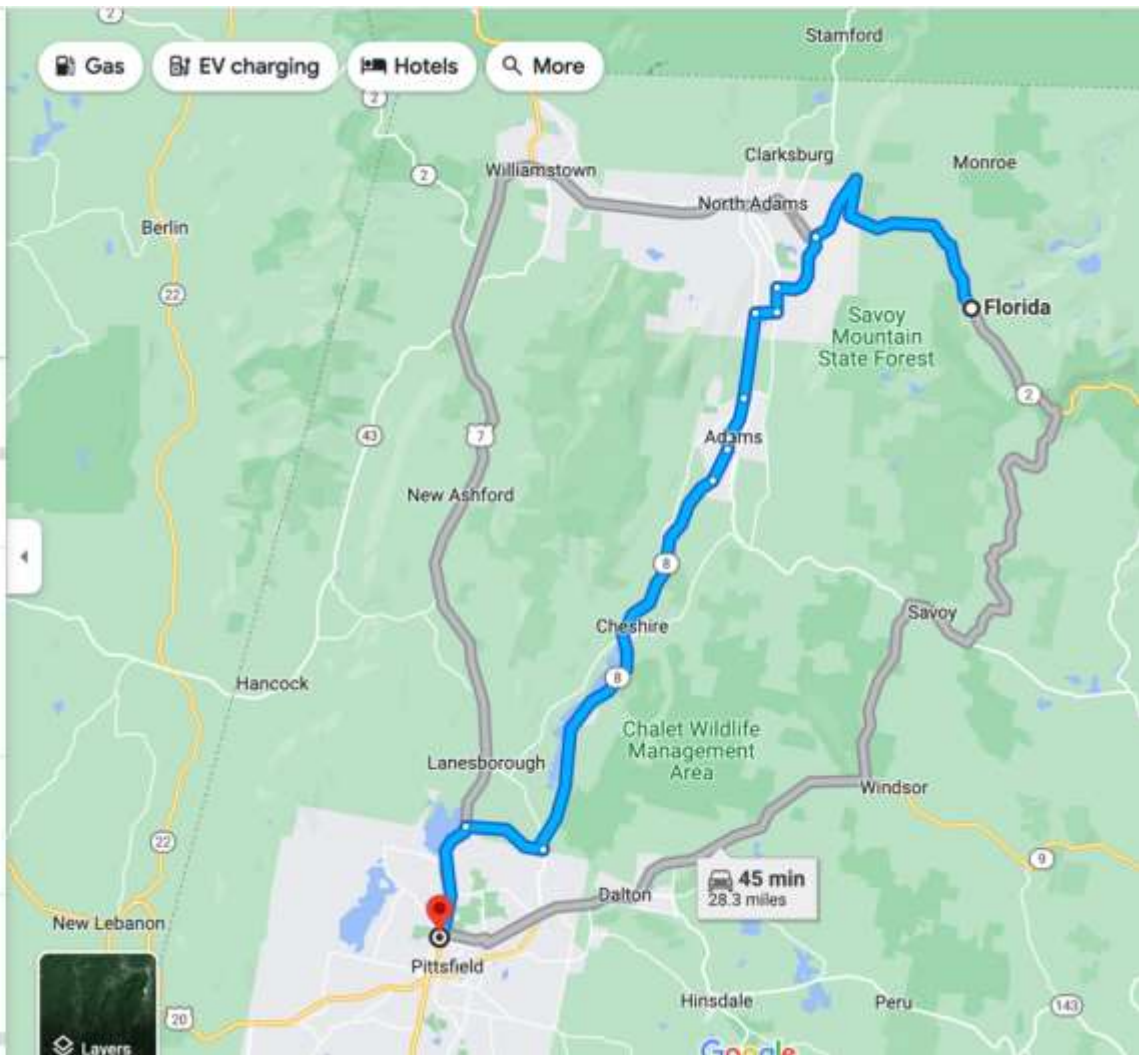
[Details](#)

via MA-8A S **45 min**

28.3 miles

via MA-2 W and US-7 S **50 min**

33.7 miles





Best 43 min 10 hr 2 hr 33

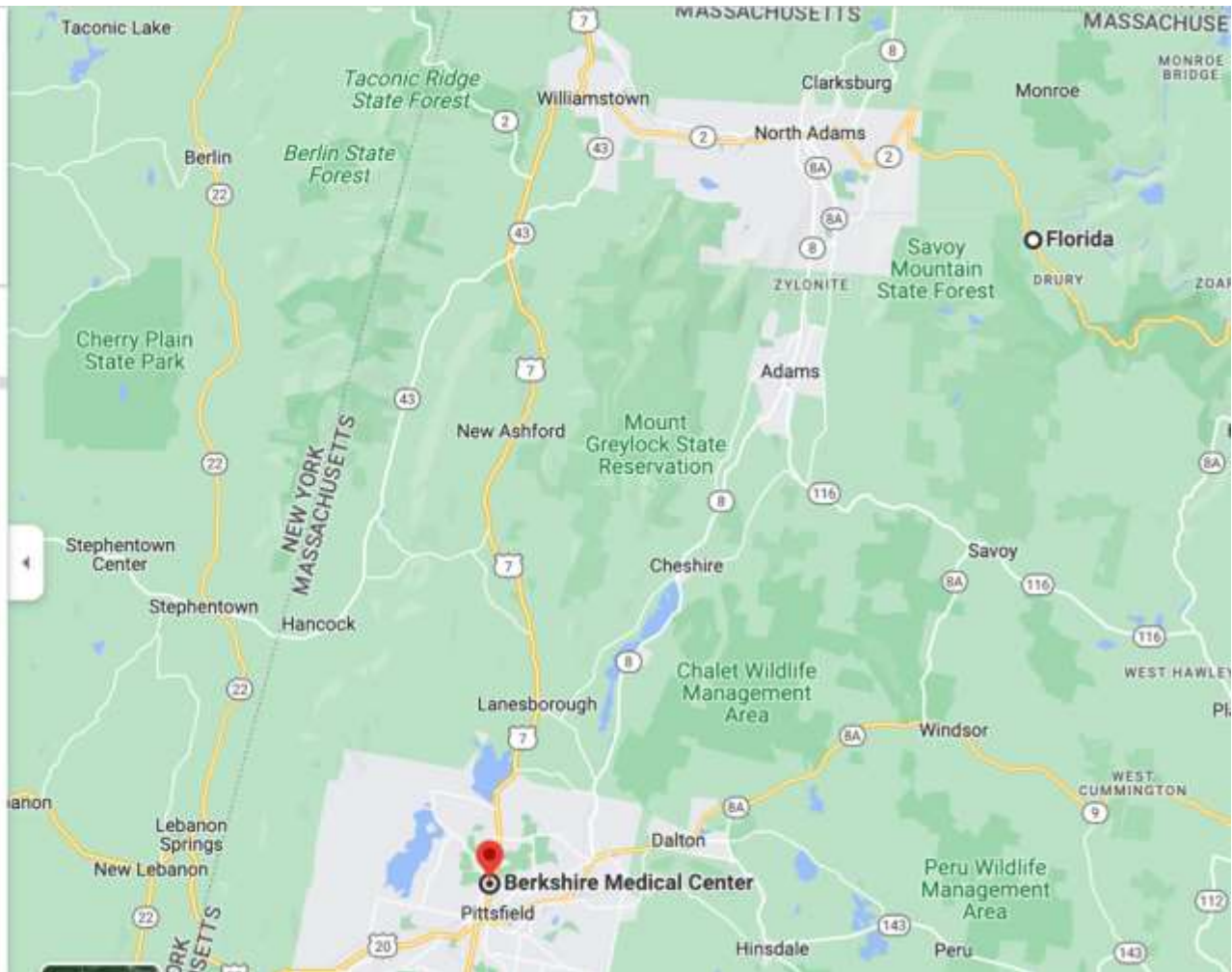
Florida, Massachusetts

Berkshire Medical Ctr, 725 North St, Pitts

Leave now

Options

Sorry, we could not calculate transit directions from "Florida, Massachusetts" to "Berkshire Medical Ctr, 725 North St, Pittsfield, MA 01201"



Best 43 min 10 hr 2 hr 33

Florida, Massachusetts

Berkshire Medical Ctr, 725 North St, Pitts

Add destination

Options

Send directions to your phone

via MA-8A S 9 hr 36 min

26.4 miles

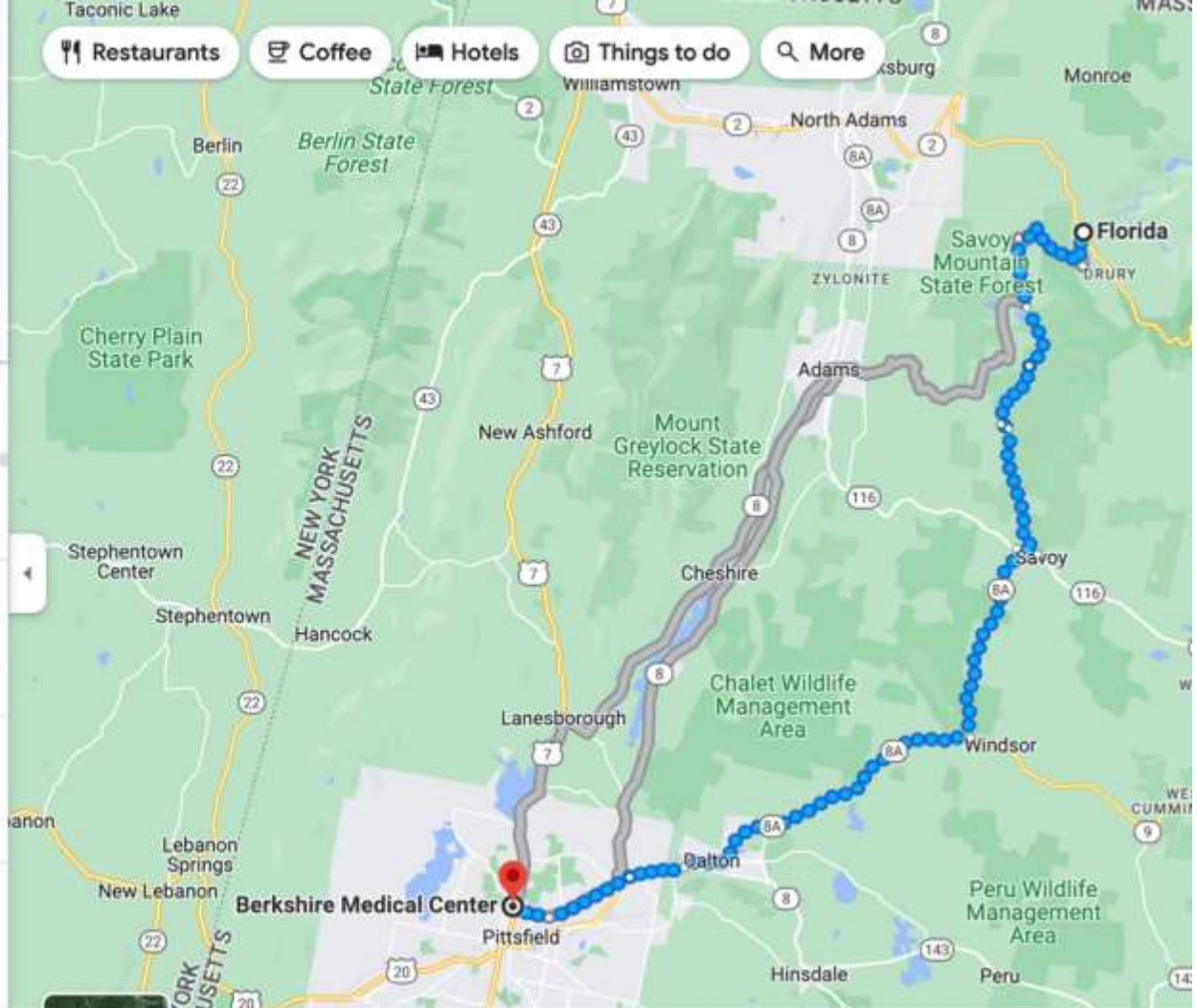
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via US-7 N 9 hr 38 min

25.8 miles

via Ashuwillticook Rail Trail 9 hr 41 min

26.1 miles



Core Challenges

- Customer Desirability
- Operational Feasibility
- Organizational Capacity
- Financial Viability

*Adapted from Rural Transit Dialogues facilitated by Central MA Regional Planning Commission



What is (Rural) Microtransit?

September 25, 2024

What is microtransit?

Microtransit is **on-demand** public transportation that uses technology to create dynamically routed mobility.

Like other traditional transit modes...

- Rides are generally shared
- Accessible for all types of riders
- Dedicated fleet of branded vehicles
- FTA compliant drivers
- Low / subsidized fares



Rider experience: book and track trips through a variety of methods



Smartphone App

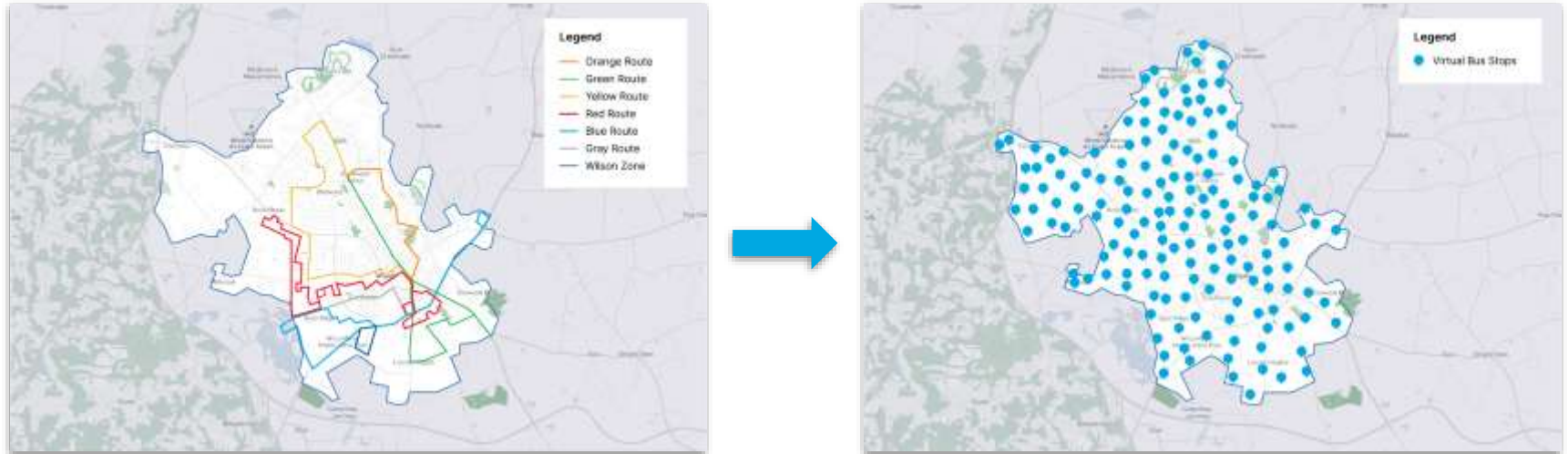


Web Application



Call-in Bookings

Microtransit utilizes a dense network of virtual bus stops to complement or replace traditional bus systems



Two types of Microtransit: On-Demand and Pre-Booked

On Demand

Book a ride when you need it
(10 - 30 minutes before you travel)

Track vehicle on app and receive updated ETAs

Vehicle arrives and picks up passenger

Pre-Booked

Book a ride in advance
(generally day before ride)

Get a confirmed time within a booking window

Receive confirmation message that ride is
booked with time window for pickup

Track vehicle on app and receive updated ETAs

Vehicle arrives and picks up passenger

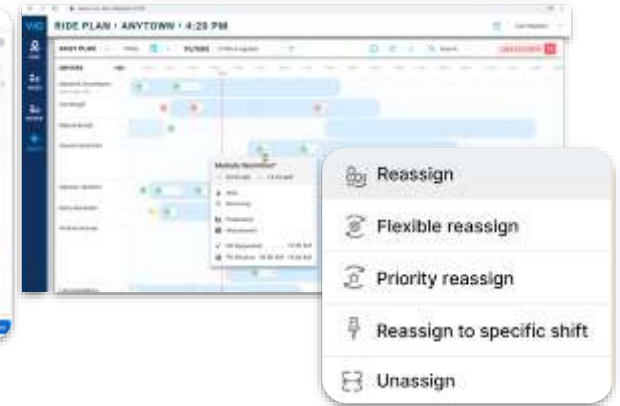
Operational tools to make managing your system easy



Custom mapping layers with up-to-date traffic information



AI-generated supply plan recommendations



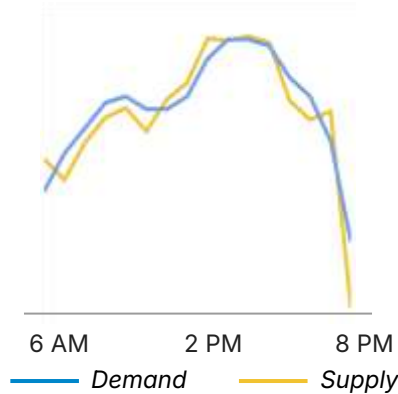
Automated scheduling balanced with manual intervention options

Smaller vehicles, sophisticated driver supply management, and centralized operations to increase cost efficiency

Minivans are cost-effective without limiting service capacity



Via's shift planning enables optimal supply management



Centralized, tech enabled operations honed from data across dozens of services



We are deeply familiar with rural community services

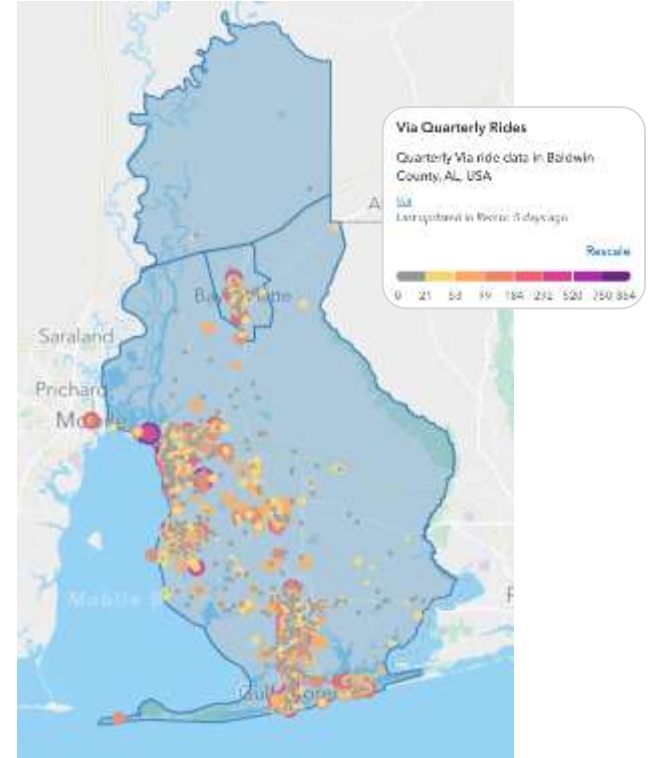


- County-wide microtransit
- Focus on senior population
- Routematch replacement
- Connections to downtown Mobile, AL

2K
Square mile
service area

35%
Increase in
ridership

30%
Reduction in
call volume



We specialize in transportation services for small and mid-sized communities across America



↓
50%
Decrease in
cost per ride



Hall County, GA
Population: 200K
Vehicles: 12



↑
31%
Increase in
utilization



Missoula County, MT
Population: 80K
Vehicles: 15



↑
2x
increase in
ridership



Newark and
Georgetown, DE
Population: 50K
Vehicles: 10

How Does Rural Microtransit Work in Practice?



September 25, 2024

Microtransit Compared to Fixed Route Transit

Microtransit is much more flexible and serves entire defined areas versus travel corridors

Microtransit is door to door transportation

Microtransit is more expensive to operate on a cost per ride basis than fixed route

It takes more microtransit vehicles to serve an area than a larger, transit-sized bus needs on a fixed route corridor

Reservations are required for microtransit, none needed for fixed route rides

Some people prefer set schedules versus having to reserve a ride

Using technology might be a challenge, having to call an 800# frequently.

Why Microtransit?

We choose microtransit in two of our towns for different reasons:

In Windsor:

- No existing fixed route service – residents have no mobility
- Most services are in town and people live off the main road
- Needed flexible service 6:00 am-6:00 pm

In Brattleboro:

- Plenty of daytime fixed route service
- 2nd & 3rd shift employment, large New Americans population, after school activities, access to evening shopping and social activities
- Needed flexible service after 5:00 pm.

How Does Microtransit Work?

1. Make a plan
2. Build a team of partners
3. Gather public input several times
4. Secure funding
5. Select and program the software
6. Do pre- and post-launch marketing
7. Start service



Value of Great Partners

- Advocacy
- System design
- Promoting it
- Networking
- Boots on the ground knowledge
- Bringing in other partners, stakeholders, the public
- Funding – their initial investment provides essential skin in the game to secure sustainable funding
- Access to resources
- Much needed local input.

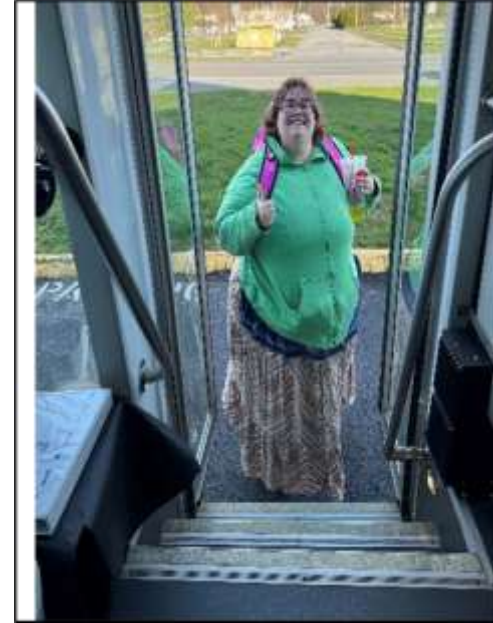


WINDSOR
birthplace of vermont

Securing Microtransit Funding

Sample Microtransit Funding Sources

- Numerous federal funding sources
- State transportation funds
- Town contributions
- Local organizations
- State agencies other than transportation
- Human service partners
- Fundraising
- Businesses who benefit from the service



State, federal, private funders want to see local investment to justify long-term sustainable funding.

Using the Software

Reserve rides over the phone, online, or on an app

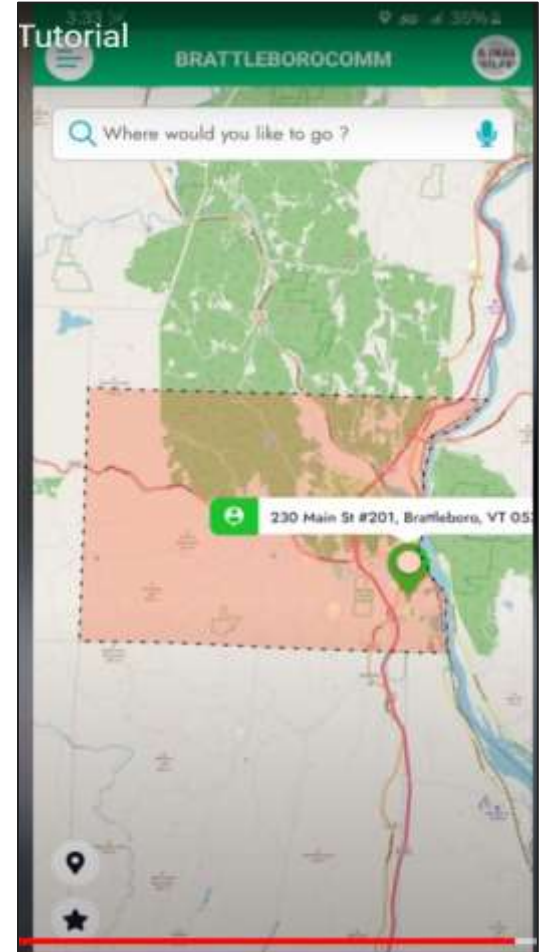
Pickups within 15-30 minutes

Rides can be booked when the office is closed

Tracks usage, riders, destinations, trip purposes, recurring trips, mobility devices, etc.

Key planning tool for effectiveness, future expansion

Several products to choose from. Plan on 4-8 months ahead of launch date.



Marketing

Microtransit is a hot topic, so local, regional, and national media are interested in your project

We were fortunate to be featured on Vermont Public Radio, local NBC and CBS affiliates, community television, statewide and local newspapers, local radio

Presentations made to Sierra Club, business groups, health organizations, state groups and agencies, other transit agencies

The marketing plan needs to be timed carefully at various stages throughout the process. Stakeholders can help with this.



Starting Service

Allow four-eight months to develop the software

Allow three weeks before launch date to test software, train drivers, do the final public marketing

Start taking ride requests 1-2 weeks before the start date

Have a back up plan in case of a software glitch

Soft opening versus hoopla opening

Some media will provide coverage on opening day, others will wait for a few weeks so they can interview riders as part of their story

Plan on not sleeping the night before

Sample Vehicle

Ford Transit with extra high roof and extra long chassis

Seats 7 riders without a wheelchair

Can fit 2 wheelchairs and 3 riders

Rear handicapped lift

Transit style door and step entrance

Two-bike rack any size tires

All wheel drive – no snow days!



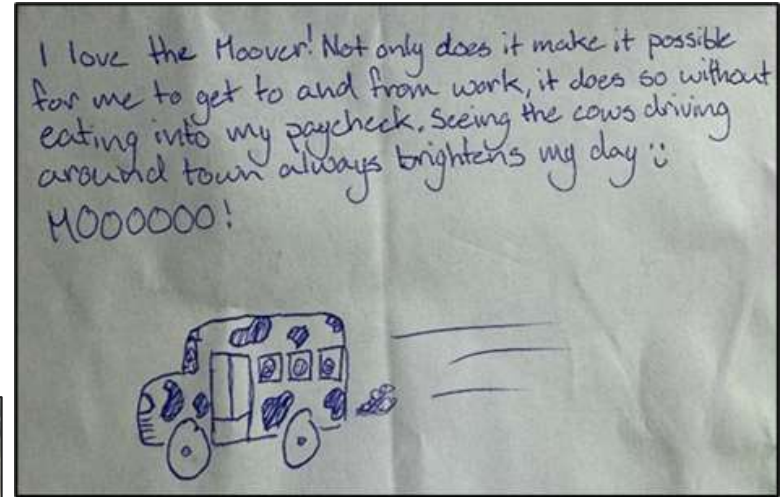
Overview



	Windsor	Brattleboro
Population	3,559	12,106
Square miles	19.8	32.4
Pop/Sq Mile	180	380
#Fixed routes	0	4
Hospital	yes	yes
High school	yes	yes
Industry	light	heavy
Operating Hours (M-F)	6 am-6 pm	5:00 pm-11:30 pm
Private funding	no	\$100,000
Town funding	no	\$24,000
VTrans funding	\$150,000	FY25 \$50,300
Start date	1/23/23	4/15/24
#Vehicles	1	1
Highest trip purpose	personal	employment
Average rides per day	26	20

Microtransit's Community Benefits

- Transportation to work, school, recreation, medical care, personal care
- Provides equity, inclusion for all
- Improves the quality of life for all



You Can Get There From Here: Innovations in Rural Transit

Panel Discussion

Do you have feedback or questions?

*What contributions do you want to make
to this discussion?*

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AFTER LUNCH:

- **Building Physical Rural Arts Spaces One Community at a Time** | Delegation Hall
- **“I Can Help with That”**: **Connecting You with Resources to Help Your Rural News Organization** | Heberton Hall
- **Working Across Fences: Rural Collaborative Land Management and Conservation on Private Lands** | SHOWROOM
- **Ordinary People, Extraordinary Work** | Cohen Hall