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# Transportation as a Barrier to Healthcare

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# Transportation as a Barrier to Healthcare

Melissa Romero, MSIII

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# Problem Identification and Description of Need

- In personal interviews with patients and along with provider acknowledgement, it has been demonstrated that many patients choose not to receive or pursue medical care because of lack of transportation.
- “Every year, approximately 3.6 million Americans, urban and rural, miss or delay essential, non-emergency medical care because they experience transportation barriers. The simple issue of not being able to find or purchase a ride to the doctor’s office can, ultimately, result in poor health outcomes and enormous health care costs, especially for those who are chronically ill.” [1]
- “Transportation barriers lead to rescheduled or missed appointments, delayed care, and missed or delayed medication use. These consequences may lead to poorer management of chronic illness and thus poorer health outcomes.” [2]



# Public Health Cost

“This simple issue — not being able to find or afford a ride — turns into an enormous hidden costs for patients, caregivers, providers, insurers, and taxpayers alike. Missed appointments and the resulting delays in care cost our health system an extra \$150 billion each year.” [3]

Hospital and health systems can improve their bottoms lines by addressing transportation needs. Patients without access to transportation are more likely to go without filled prescriptions and miss appointments, leading to delays in care, progression of disease, and complications of health. [4]

# Community Perspective

- Comments expressed around the community:
  - “Even with Medicaid, its still such a hardship for folks.”
  - “It’s a huge problem.”
  - “There are barriers even if they have Medicaid.”
  - “There are tons of hurdles in this area with regards to transportation.”
  - Provider Perspective: “There is a limited number of uses for transit. The local transit requires advanced booking which is clearly an obstacle for folks getting in acutely or getting to the hospital.”

# Intervention and Methodology

- Transportation resources for patients in Franklin County are severely lacking. For those with Medicaid/Medicare, the GMTA provides options for public and private transportation. Others may find resources via [connectingcommuters.org](http://connectingcommuters.org) who have created this flyer for public information. As an intervention, this flyer should be placed in every primary care office for patients to take with them during their visits.

**NEED TRANSPORTATION IN FRANKLIN COUNTY?**

This is your transportation resource to get you to your doctor's appointments, workplace, shopping or job interview. We'll help you get where you need to go -- by bike, bus, taxi, or carpool.

**Need a bus ride?** Let us help you plan your trip. Ask **Green Mountain Transit** for a ride: **802-527-2181**  
For all other transportation options: visit [www.connectingcommuters.org](http://www.connectingcommuters.org) or call **800-685-RIDE (7433)**

**Meeting your travel needs! We are working to get you where you need to go**

**BUS**  
Transit service is available in Franklin, Grand Isle, Chittenden, and Washington counties. For schedule and route information: <http://gmtaride.org/schedules-and-fares/routes-schedules/> or call **802-527-2181**

**CARPPOOL & VANPOOL**  
Go! Vermont partners with two companies, ZimRide and vRide, to provide low cost carpool and vanpool options. Check out our ride referral service at: [www.connectingcommuters.org/carpool/](http://www.connectingcommuters.org/carpool/) & [www.connectingcommuters.org/vanpool/](http://www.connectingcommuters.org/vanpool/)

**TAXI**  
Alburgh Taxi\*: **802-318-2084**  
Franklin Co. Transportation: **802-582-6395**  
Green Cab VT, So. Burlington: **802-864-2424**  
St. Albans Taxi: **802-524-2712**  
Swanton Taxi, Highgate Center: **802-782-0440**  
\*Approved to provide Medicaid rides

**WALK AND BIKE**  
• Find trails and multi-use paths through **Local Motion's Trail Finder**: [www.localmotion.org](http://www.localmotion.org) or Lamoille Valley River trail: [lvt.org](http://lvt.org)  
• Find eAssist and electric bike resources and assistance through vBike: [www.vbikesolutions.org](http://www.vbikesolutions.org)

**PARK & RIDE**  
Looking for a convenient place to park for the day? Find a complete list of state listed park and ride locations: [parkandrides.vermont.gov](http://parkandrides.vermont.gov)

**MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS**  
Contact Green Mountain Transit for guidance on bus and special travel options (like Volunteer Community Drivers): **802-527-2181**  
See reverse side for details on becoming a volunteer driver.

**VETLIFT**  
A volunteer program giving Veterans a Lift: [www.connectingcommuters.org/vetliftvt/](http://www.connectingcommuters.org/vetliftvt/)

**GUARANTEED RIDE HOME**  
If something comes up and you need to get home, Go! Vermont will reimburse your travel expenses, up to \$70: [www.connectingcommuters.org/guaranteed-ride-home-benefit/](http://www.connectingcommuters.org/guaranteed-ride-home-benefit/)

**SCHOOLS AND DAYCARE**  
• For local bus service contact Green Mountain Transit: **802-527-2181**  
• ReachUp provides reimbursement transportation services to families and children: **800-479-6151**

**SHOP**  
Walk, bike and/or bus. All Green Mountain Transit and LINK buses accept bikes.

**FERRY**  
Grand Isle Ferry Service: [www.ferries.com/vt-to-plattsburgh-ny/](http://www.ferries.com/vt-to-plattsburgh-ny/)

For more transportation options, call Green Mountain Transit at **802.527.2181**, visit [connectingcommuters.org](http://connectingcommuters.org), or call **800-685-RIDE (7433)**

**OTHER TRAVEL CHOICES**  
City-to-City Bus Service -- connect to other counties and major cities, like NYC, Boston or Hartford: [connectingcommuters.org](http://connectingcommuters.org)

- **Amtrak** -- Intercity passenger train service, for schedule: [www.amtrak.com/home](http://www.amtrak.com/home)
- **Good News Garage** -- Offers affordable and reliable vehicles for purchase: **802-864-3667**

**VOLUNTEER DRIVERS NEEDED**  
Volunteer Drivers are a critical element to increasing the capacity of rides offered to Franklin County residents. Be a part of the solution and become a driver volunteer. Call Green Mountain Transit: **802-527-2181**.

Northwestern Vermont Maps of Bus Routes and Designated Park and Ride Parking Lots

1 CCA/GMTA SYSTEM MAP Grand Isle/Western Franklin Counties  
2 CCA/GMTA SYSTEM MAP Franklin County  
3 CCA/GMTA SYSTEM MAP Burlington/Chittenden County  
4 CCA/GMTA SYSTEM MAP Chittenden/Washington/Lamoille Counties

For more transportation options, call Green Mountain Transit at **802.527.2181**, visit [connectingcommuters.org](http://connectingcommuters.org), or call **800-685-RIDE (7433)**



## Results/Response

- The flyers provided by [connectingcommuters.org](http://connectingcommuters.org) will be placed in the waiting room at NOTCH, on every bulletin board in the office, in every patient room, and the checkout window where patients go to make follow up appointments. Increasing awareness of the resources available for transportation is one part of the complex solution to this issue.
- Short term goal: Increased awareness.





# Evaluation of Effectiveness and Limitations

## Effectiveness

Many patients are unaware of the resources available to them. Handing out these flyers will educate patients to options they can explore when looking to get to their medical appointments, an improvement of the current status quo. To evaluate effectiveness, longitudinal follow up would assess the number of skipped or declined medical appointments due to transportation issues, before and after access to the flyer.

## Limitations

There are still barriers to the transportation options provided in that many patients in the most rural of areas, will not have access to many of these options. Alternatively, there are many barriers for those using Medicaid/Medicare that make it hard to schedule transportation such as the need for vouchers, requirement of proof that one does not have access to a personal vehicle or other means, and advanced notice for scheduling, to name a few.

## Recommendations for the Future

1. The Rides to Wellness Project, currently being piloted in St. Johnsbury and Mt. Ascutney, is demonstrating great promise as a solution to this issue here in Vermont. In the future, it would be ideal to expand the program to St. Albans and across the state.

“Every year, thousands of patients miss their scheduled appointments at community health centers in Vermont, many of them because they have no way to get there. Other people do not even schedule appointments that they need because of the transportation barriers they face. The Rides to Wellness program seeks to lower these transportation barriers and make sure that, in the future, lack of transportation will no longer be a reason that people fail to get health care when they need it.”

<https://vtrans.vermont.gov/public-transit/rides-to-wellness>

2. Improvement of NEMT programs with public-private partnerships between state Medicaid agencies and technology platforms, such as Uber and Lyft.

3. Expansion and utilization of companies such as Ride Health who is focused on using widely available on-demand ride technology to help connect the dots between patients, providers, insurers, and drivers. [5] <https://ride-health.com/>



## References

- 1. *Ngyen, H. (2018, July 6). Breaking Down the Transportation Barrier to Health Care Access [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://www.chlpi.org/breaking-transportation-barrier-health-care-access/>*
- 2. Syed ST, Gerber BS, Sharp LK. Traveling Towards Disease: Transportation Barriers to Health Care Access. *Journal of Community Health. 2013;(38)5 976-993.*
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- 4. Health Research & Educational Trust. (2017, November). Social determinants of health series: Transportation and the role of hospitals. Chicago, IL: Health Research & Educational Trust. p. 9. Accessed at [www.aha.org/transportation](http://www.aha.org/transportation).
- 5. Cronk, I. (2 September 2016). *Transportation Shouldn’t be a Barrier to Healthcare*. Retrieved from <https://www.statnews.com/2016/09/02/transportation-barrier-health-care/>