

Connecting Communities: A Comprehensive
Transportation Vision for Shrewsbury, Westborough,
and Northborough

Final Report

January 2025



Worcester Regional Transit Authority



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INTRODUCTION

Connecting Communities: A Comprehensive Transportation Vision for Shrewsbury, Westborough, and Northborough is a comprehensive operational analysis of transit services in the three communities. The goal of the project is to develop a service plan and vision for transit service in the study area that meets the needs of the community. This project will be cost-neutral in the short term but will identify opportunities for growth and expansion in the long term.

This Final Report marks the culmination of work completed under this project, and is broken into several chapters:

- **Market Analysis:** An analysis of the market for transit in Shrewsbury, Westborough, and Northborough. This analysis helps to inform the level of transit service that may be appropriate throughout the communities, including where transit should go. It also includes an overview of plans and analyses already developed.
- **Service Analysis:** An analysis of existing transit service. Each transit service provided by WRTA in the three communities is described and analyzed to understand how the service operates and service performance (e.g.: ridership, on-time performance, passengers served per hour).
- **Public Engagement:** Efforts to reach out to the public to understand the needs and wants of the community, and if the proposed recommendations align their needs. The study involved multiple public engagement activities.
- **Recommendations:** Recommendations development is the last significant step in the project. Using everything learned from the Market Analysis, Service Analysis, and Public Engagement, the project team developed a service plan for Shrewsbury, Westborough, and Northborough. The team received feedback from the public on the recommendations. The feedback was used to finalize the recommendations.

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MARKET ANALYSIS

The market analysis provides an analysis of the underlying demand for transit service in a community. It includes:

- An analysis of demographics and land use to understand the level of demand for transit and where there are people who are more likely to use transit service.
- An analysis of travel flows to understand the places people are traveling to
- An identification of key trip generators in the study area (see the map in the Community Engagement chapter).
- A review of past planning efforts in the targeted municipalities

Findings from the Market Analysis help to inform service scenarios. The analyses are used to identify where service should go and suggest the level of transit service that is appropriate throughout the community. Key takeaways include:

The three communities have the density to support on-demand transit options. Fixed route service may be inappropriate except in denser corridors.









Sections of Shrewsbury and Westborough have relatively higher residential densities who are more likely to use transit. As recommendations are developed, these areas should be considered.

Travel flows in the area suggest people are largely making local trips, and many trips are dispersed. However, there is a large draw to southeastern Northborough, due to Northborough Crossing.

TRANSIT DEMAND ANALYSIS

A main factor in determining transit demand is the density of people and jobs. Greater densities mean that any given service investment is useful to more people. Higher levels of population and employment density can support more frequent and higher capacity transit services, as illustrated in Figure 1. Clusters of density throughout an area or along a corridor are strong indicators of demand, while an isolated pocket of high density alone in a rural area would not produce sufficient demand itself.

Figure 1: Transit and Land Use Table

 15^{min} Rapid Bus Frequency	 >32 residents per acre >16 employees per acre
 30^{min} Bus Frequency	 16-32 residents per acre 8-16 employees per acre
 60^{min} Bus Frequency	 8-16 residents per acre 4-8 employees per acre
 >60^{min} Demand Response Frequency	 <8 residents per acre <4 employees per acre

Population Density

Northborough, Shrewsbury, and Westborough have low population densities. In much of Northborough and Westborough, there are fewer than 2 people per acre. Shrewsbury is a little denser than Northborough and Westborough with 2 to 8 people per acre in much of the community. Population density is highest in central Shrewsbury and south of Route 9 by the waterfront (in Shrewsbury).

As seen in Figure 2, population density decreases as distance from the Worcester city center increases.

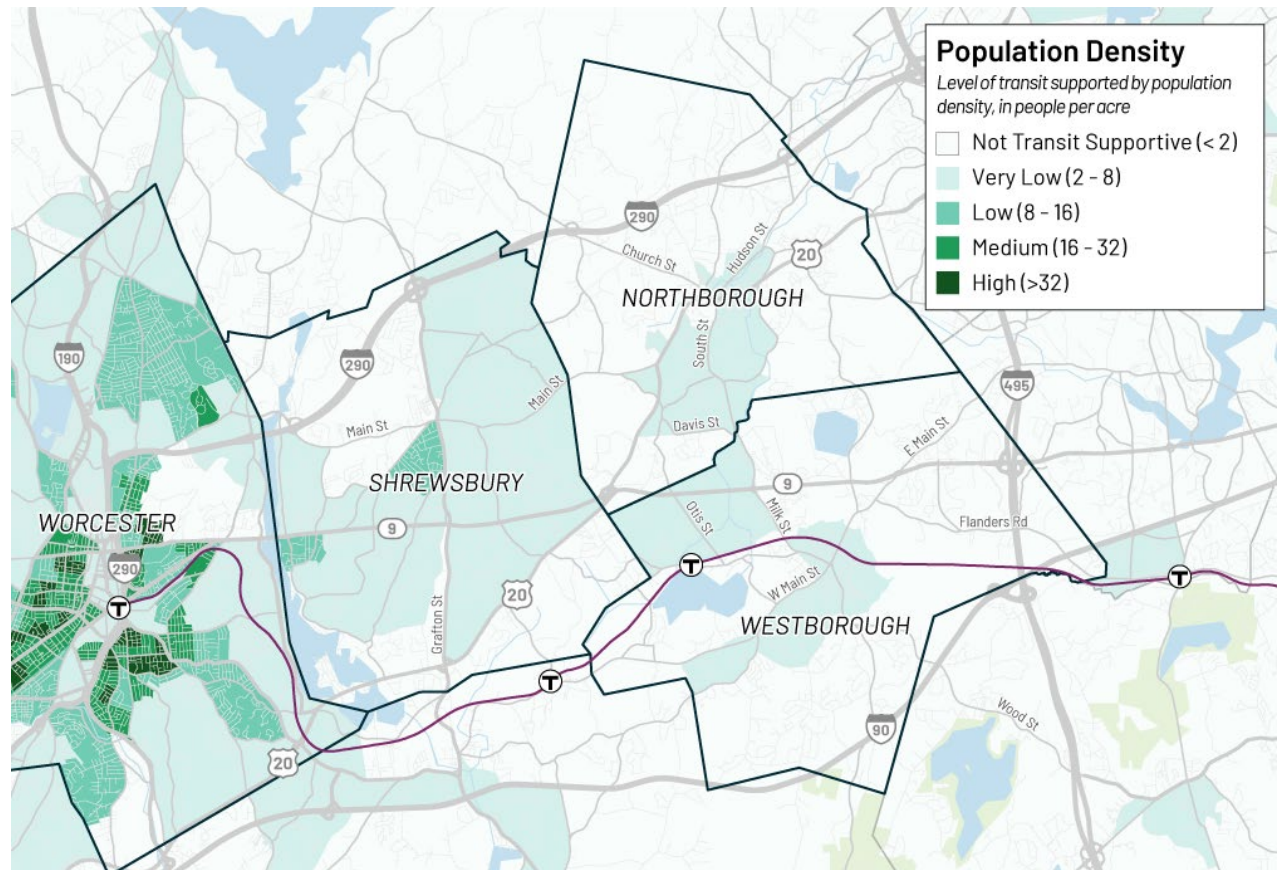


Figure 2: Population Density

Employment Density

Jobs generate transit demand not only from the employees that travel there to work, but also from the potential customers, clients, and patients that visit. As shown in Figure 3, employment density is low outside the Worcester urban core, with limited pockets of job density in the study area municipalities. These areas include the Route 9 and Maple Ave shopping areas in Shrewsbury and Downtown Westborough.

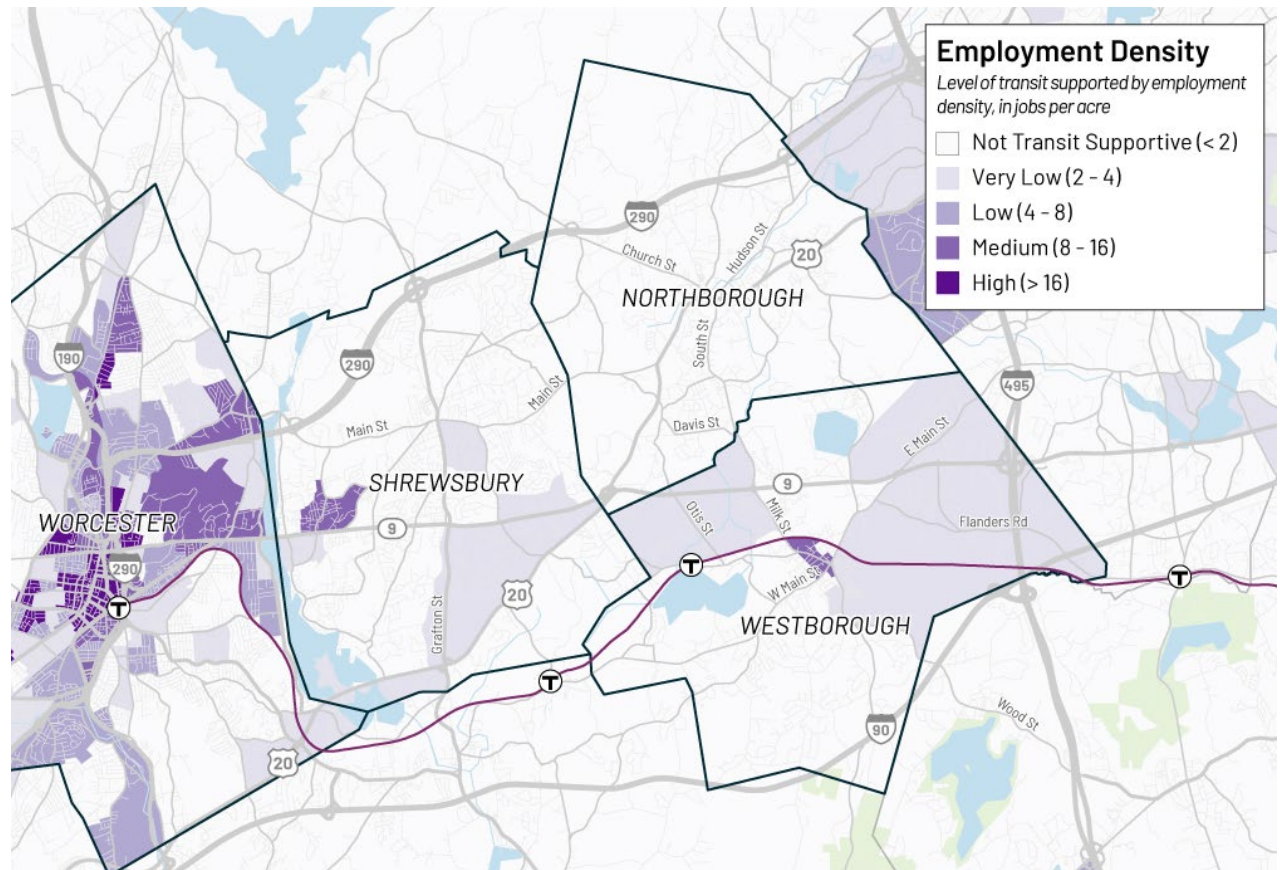


Figure 3: Employment Density

Composite Density

Composite density is population and employment density combined. It provides a picture of potential demand for transit across an area and provides an indication of the level of transit service that may be appropriate. Figure 4 shows composite density by block group. The density of people and jobs across all three communities suggests demand response service may be a more appropriate transit service in these communities although there are pockets of places that could support more intensive transportation. Key areas of higher composite demand include:

- Central and southwest Westborough
- A pocket of density on the Westborough/Northborough border
- The Route 9-Maple Avenue-Main Street corridor in Shrewsbury

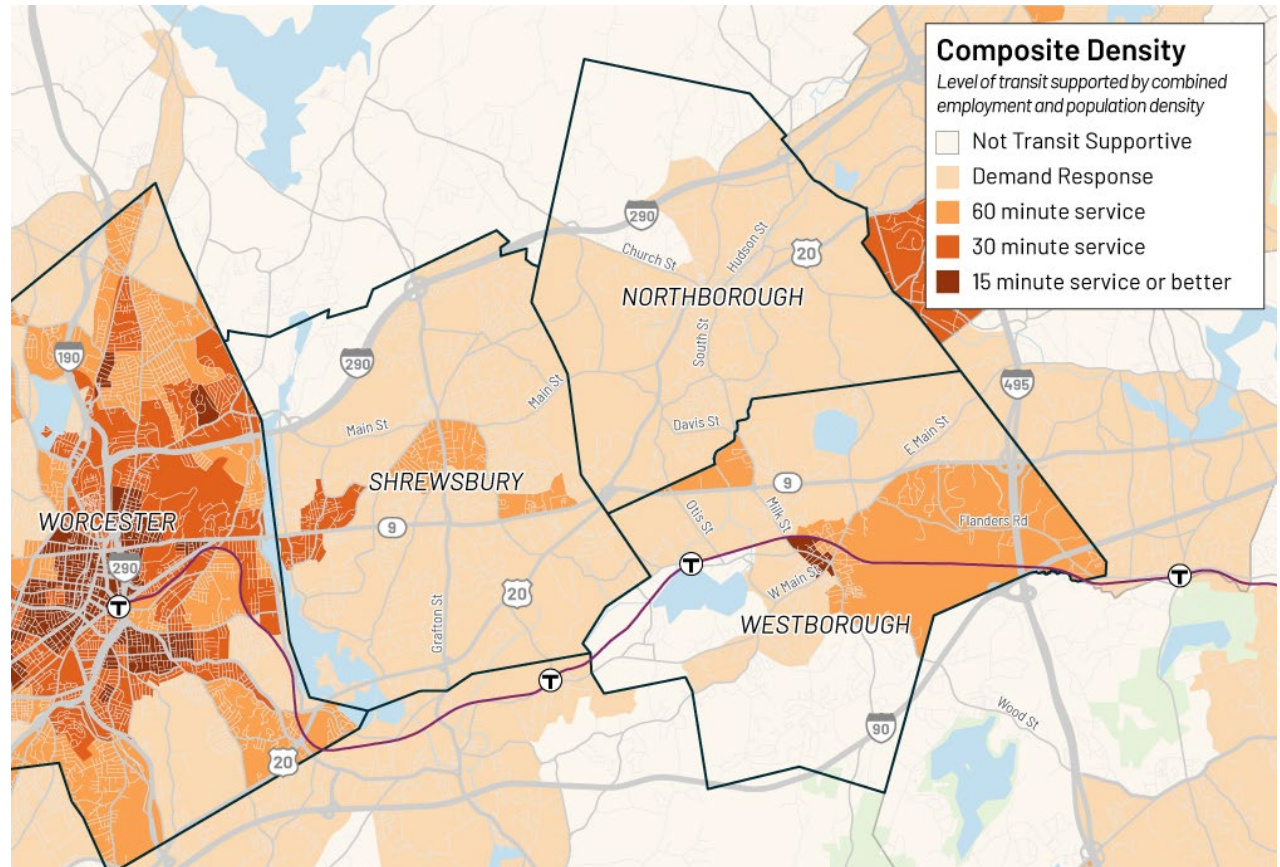


Figure 4: Composite Density

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

While total population and employment density are crucial to understanding transit demand, the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the population are also key factors in understanding the need for transit services. Many population groups, often those historically and currently marginalized, rely on transit more than the public. To plan transit equitably, transit agencies should also focus their investments on areas with high populations of these communities.

Transit Propensity

About Transit Propensity Index

The Transit Propensity Index (TPI) shows where there are greater densities of socioeconomic groups that would most benefit from transit services. Census block groups are assigned a score based on the density of each of the groups included in the analysis in that census block group compared to other census block groups in the study area for the analysis. The groups included in this analysis are:

- People with household income below 150% of the federal poverty level
- Zero vehicle households
- People of color (Hispanic and/or non-white)
- People with a disability

The area used for comparison included the three study municipalities, the city of Worcester, and nine immediately adjacent municipalities.

Transit Propensity in the Study Area

Transit Propensity in the Study Area (Figure 5) shows areas of higher potential transit need with darker colors. These areas have greater densities of people who are more likely to use transit. In our analysis, the following areas have greater transit propensity:

- Shrewsbury
 - Areas along the Lake Quinsigamond waterfront south of 290, especially immediately south of Route 9.
 - Central Shrewsbury south of Main Street.
- Westborough
 - Downtown Westborough
 - The shopping center and apartment complexes along the Northborough border north of Route 9.

Northborough has lower TPI scores than the other study municipalities with some TPI density in the residential neighborhoods in the south.

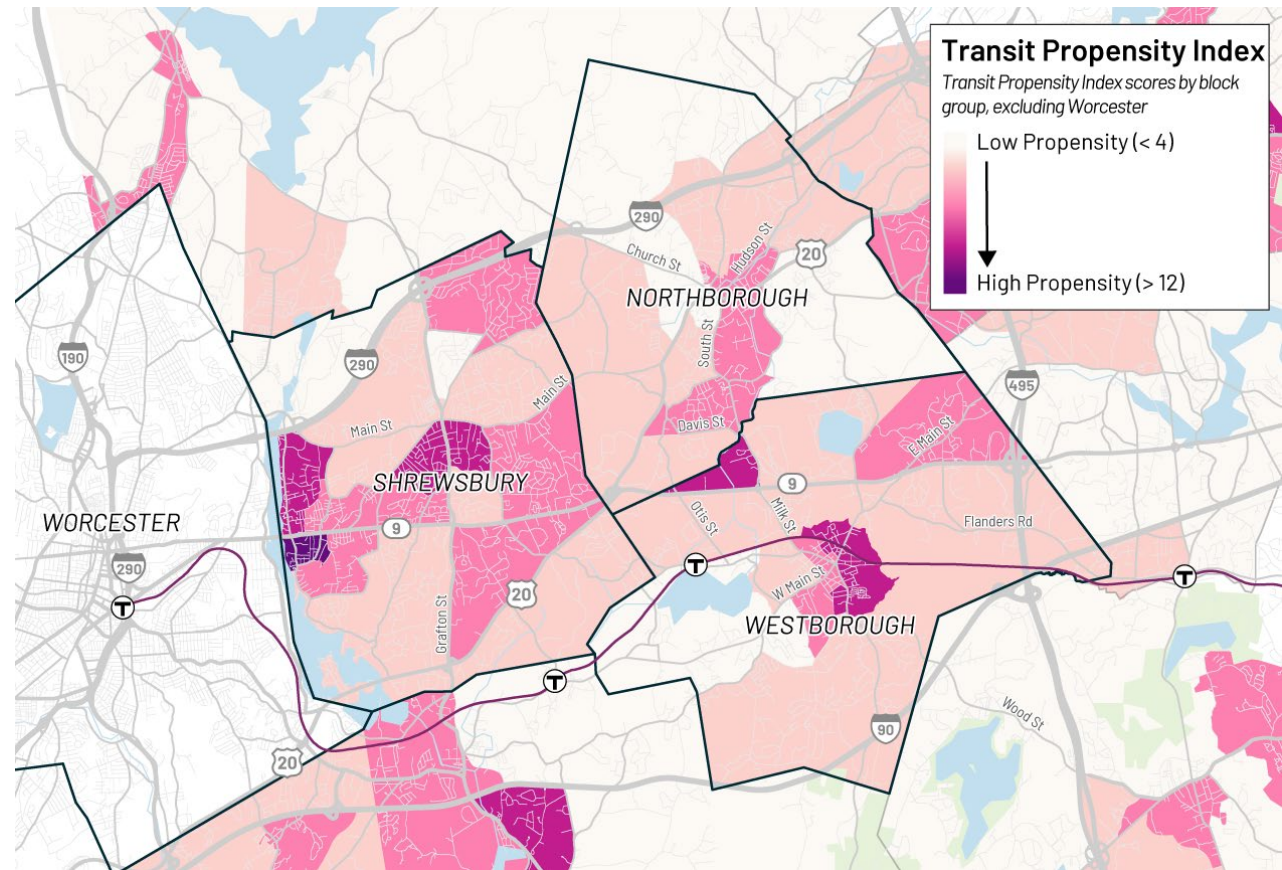


Figure 5: Transit Propensity Index

Older Adults

The Council on Aging provides transportation services for older adults and people with disabilities. Older adults, in some cases, may be more likely to use or have need of transportation services.

Throughout the study area municipalities, there are numerous neighborhoods where older adults make up at least 15% of the population. Areas where more than a quarter of the population are 65 or older include:

- Central Shrewsbury, south of Main Street and east of Grafton Street
- Central Northborough, particularly south of Church Street
- Northern Westborough to the east of Milk Street and down through the town center

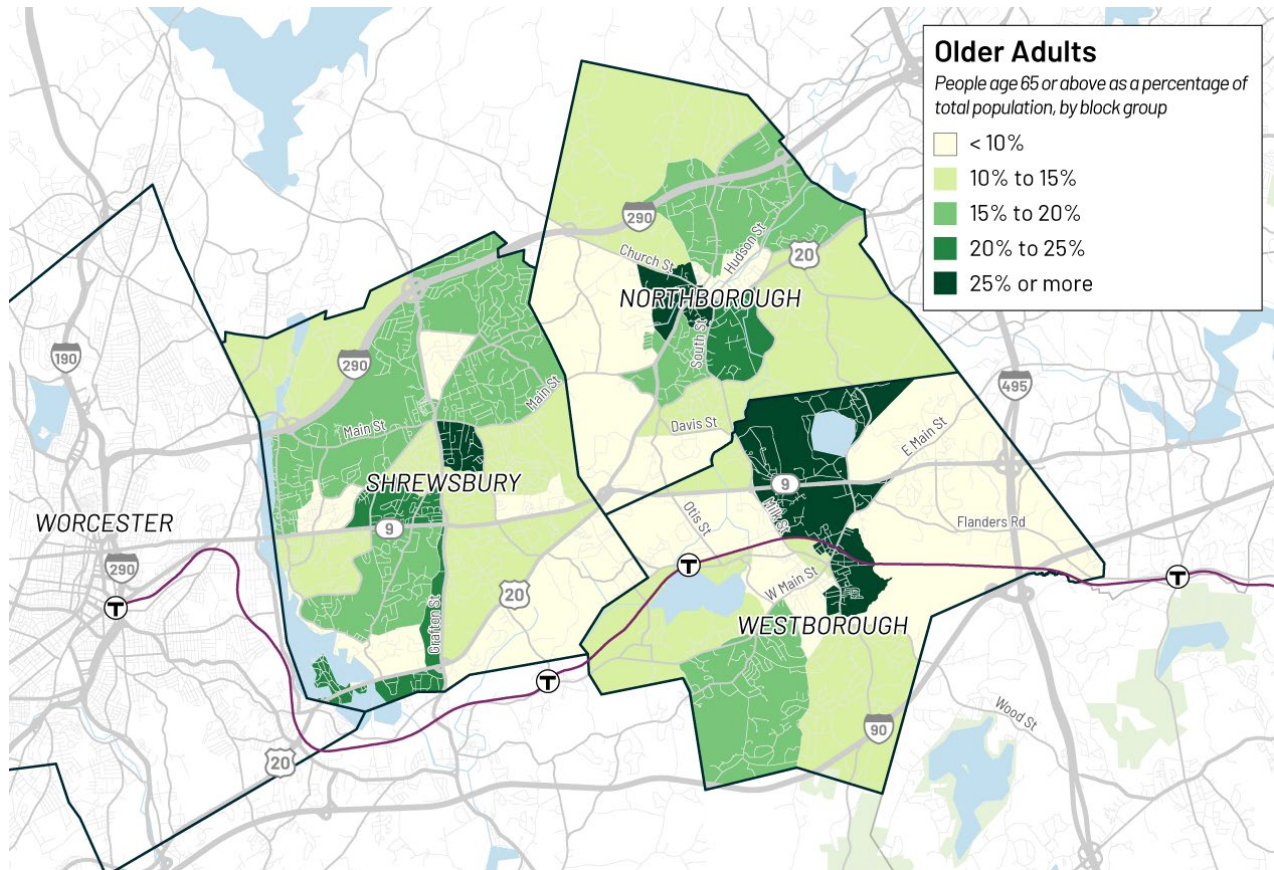


Figure 6: Percentage of Older Adults

People with Disabilities

Although already included in the Transit Propensity Index, people with disabilities have unique transportation needs separate from other targeted demographics. Additionally, the Council on Aging provides transportation services for older adults and people with disabilities.

In most of the study area, people with disabilities make up less than 10% of the population. The following areas have a greater percentage of people with disabilities:

- Central and northern Westborough
- Central Northborough
- There's a high concentration of people with disabilities in the Shrewsbury block group in the triangle of Boylston Street and Prospect Street, though this may be due to the low overall population of the block group.

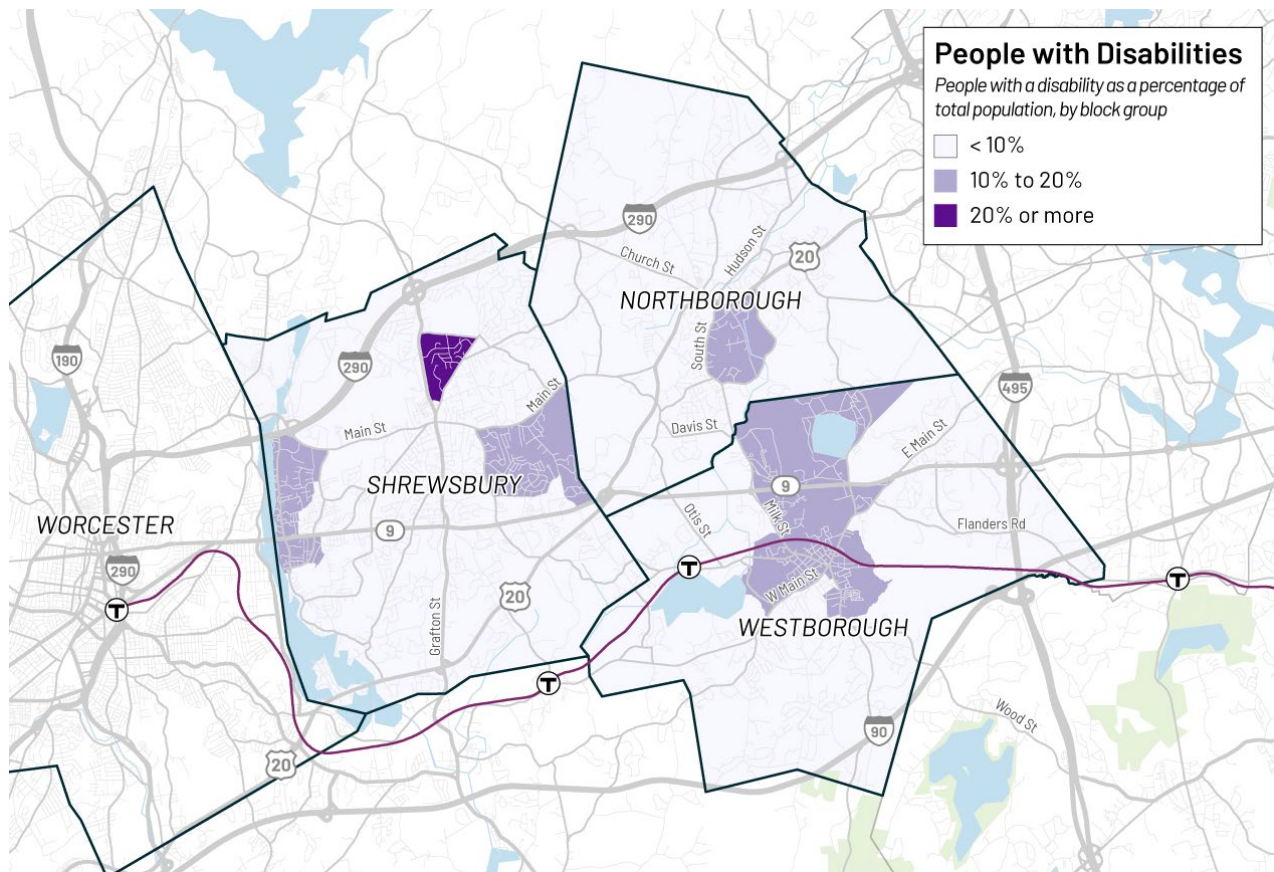


Figure 7: Percentage of People with Disabilities

TRAVEL FLOW ANALYSIS

Travel flows provide an indication of the places people are traveling between and can serve as a guide for the connections transit may help to facilitate.

Using data from Replica that models average daily traffic patterns of trips on all modes of transportation, Figure 8 shows general flows of travel for trips that begin or end in the study area in Fall 2023. Analysis zones are modified census block groups, with some of the larger block groups in Westborough and Northborough split into multiple zones for more precise analysis.

Many trips occur over short distances within municipalities, and the strongest origin-destination pairs are neighboring zones. Despite low overall density, southern Northborough generates a significant number of local trips, likely due to the major activity centers located in that area that attract customers and clients as well as employees.

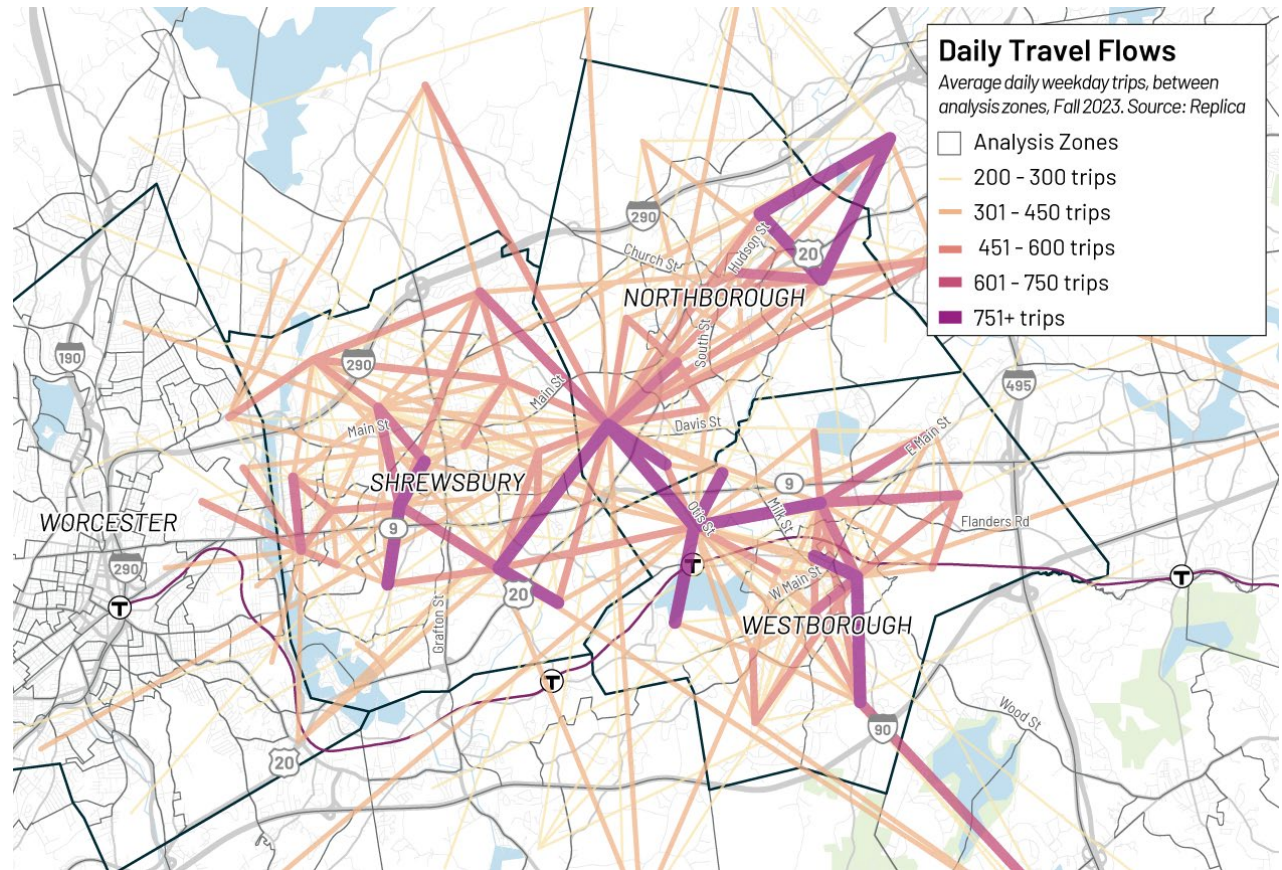


Figure 8: Daily Travel Flows (Weekdays)

MUNICIPAL PLANNING DOCUMENTS REVIEW

Northborough

Northborough Transportation Needs Survey

The Town of Northborough completed a survey to learn about the public transportation needs of residents. The survey was open from March 20, 2024, to April 5, 2024. Findings from the survey include:

- The most popular responses to “What town do you usually travel to?” were: Marlborough, Northborough, and Westborough
- Nearly 90% of respondents usually drive for their trips
- Nearly 58% of respondents said they would use transit if it were offered. However, few (14%) said they would use it daily
- 61% of respondents believe if there is public transportation, it should include fixed-route service and 46% believe it should include microtransit service.
- The most popular places they would like to go are Wegmans and Westborough MBTA Station

Northborough Master Plan (2020)

The Transportation Section of the Northborough Master Plan has four goals for transportation. Two of the goals are related to transit:

- Goal 3: “Work with the Worcester Regional Transit Authority, neighboring communities, and the Senior Center to explore ways

to enhance public transit within town.” (8-7). Its strategies include:

- T3-1 – “Investigate/evaluate the potential for the senior and special needs van service to run on a regular schedule, including during evening hours and weekends.” (8-8)
- T3-2 – “Investigate/evaluate the feasibility of providing a shuttle between the town center and/or Northborough Crossing and the Westborough Commuter Rail Station.” (8-8)
- Goal 4: “Plan for the future of transportation and how potential changes may impact Northborough’s transportation network”
 - T4-3: “Evaluate the feasibility of implementing a private/public partnership to develop a community-driven rideshare program.”
 - T4-4: “Look for opportunities to coordinate with neighboring communities to provide a commuting shuttle to Metro-Boston employment destinations.”

Shrewsbury

Shrewsbury Route 20 Corridor Study

The Town of Shrewsbury developed the Route 20 Corridor study to address congestion and safety concerns along the corridor and potentially increased traffic due to development along the corridor. One of the goals of the study is to “Address the lack of travel options.” The study area is 5.1 miles of the corridor in Shrewsbury and Northborough. Relevant recommendations from the study include:

- “The Preferred Concept will provide continuous and connected bicycle and pedestrian accommodations with the study area.” (114)
- The study recommends Shrewsbury have Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies. One of the alternative modes it should promote is public transportation.
 - As an extension and result of the TDM program, they talk about ways to improve access to public transportation. One idea is adding fixed-route service on the corridor with additional development on the corridor.

Shrewsbury Comprehensive Transportation and Multimodal Study

Shrewsbury’s Comprehensive Transportation and Multimodal Study, known as the Town Center Multimodal Study, is in progress. The project is focused on active transportation.

Shrewsbury 2030 Strategic Plan

One of the strategies in the strategic plan is: “Evaluate and pursue opportunities to improve multimodal transportation infrastructure, including sidewalks, bike lanes, and trails.” (19).

Westborough

Westborough Downtown Plan (2024)

Westborough’s vision for their Downtown includes it being walkable and safer for pedestrians. They would also like additional facilities for bikes.

There are no specific plans for transit in the Plan. Outlined mobility strategies include:

- “Replace the rotary with a signalized intersection or modern roundabout” (54)
- “Improve pedestrian facilities by expanding the sidewalk network, completing gaps in the sidewalk network, and adding and improving pedestrian crossings” (58)
- “Provide bicycle facilities including shared roadways, bike lanes, and bike parking to develop a shared roadway and bike lane network in downtown.” (60)

Westborough, MA Master Plan (2021)

Goal 3 of their Transportation and Circulation sections focuses on improving transit options in Westborough. The actions which accompany this goal are:

- “Improve public communications around the public transit options available in Westborough (e.g., commuter rail, Via), emphasizing the ways in which these options can be accessed” (182)
- “Engage the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority and other pertinent partners in identifying and implementing opportunities to expand access to Westborough’s commuter rails station, including through the continued expansion of parking.” (182)
- “Engage the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority and other pertinent partners to evaluate the feasibility for a commuter rail station in downtown Westborough and/or explore other transit options that leverage new technologies or modes of travel.” (182)

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SERVICE ANALYSIS

The route analysis provides a description and performance assessment of each of the transit services in Shrewsbury, Northborough, and Westborough. The analysis answers questions such as:

- Where does service go?
- When does service operate?
- Are people using the service?
- Where are people using the service? and
- How does use of the service compare to the amount of service provided?

It provides a basis for identifying the strengths and opportunities of existing transit service, and where changes may be appropriate.

For *Connecting Communities: A Comprehensive Transportation Vision for Shrewsbury, Westborough, and Northborough*, route analyses were completed for two fixed-routes, an on-demand service, and a demand-response service intended for older adults and people with disabilities. The fixed-route analysis uses data from WRTA from Spring 2024 (January through May). The Via and Council on Aging services analyses uses data from Via and WRTA, respectively from March 2024.

Figure 9: Services Assessed in the Route Analysis

Service Name	Type of Service
Route 12	Fixed-Route (Bus)
Route 15	Fixed-Route (Bus)
Via	On-Demand
Northborough Council on Aging	Demand Response for specific populations
Shrewsbury Council on Aging	Demand Response for specific populations

ROUTE 12 – SOUTHWEST COMMONS VIA GRAFTON STREET

Route 12 operates between WRTA’s Hub Center and Market Basket at Edgemere Crossing Via Grafton Street and Hartford Turnpike. Select trips deviate to North High School in the morning and afternoon when school is in session. Service operates on weekdays every 50 to 70 minutes.

Major destinations on the route include:

- Worcester’s Union Station (with connections to AMTRAK and MBTA commuter rail)
- Grafton Street retail
- Massachusetts’s RMV services
- Stop & Shop
- Market Basket.

Transfer opportunities to other WRTA services are available at the Hub Center and along Grafton Street for Route 5 and Route 16.

Route 12, like all WRTA services except Via-WRTA, is fare free until June 30, 2025.

Figure 10: Route 12 Alignment

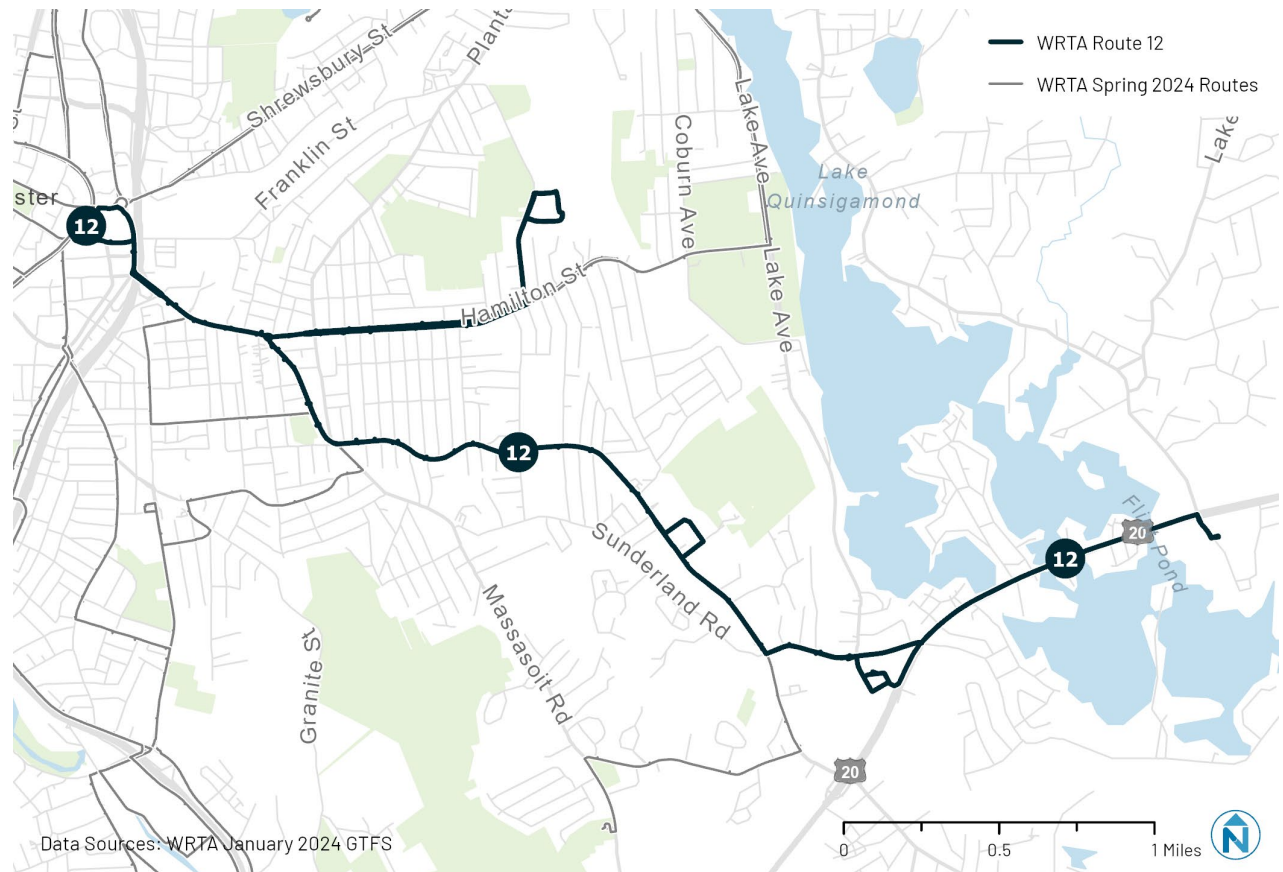


Figure 11: Service Statistics

Day	Headways (min)	Span	Daily Trips
Weekday	50-70	6:10 AM – 9:25 PM	34
Saturday	-	-	-
Sunday	-	-	-

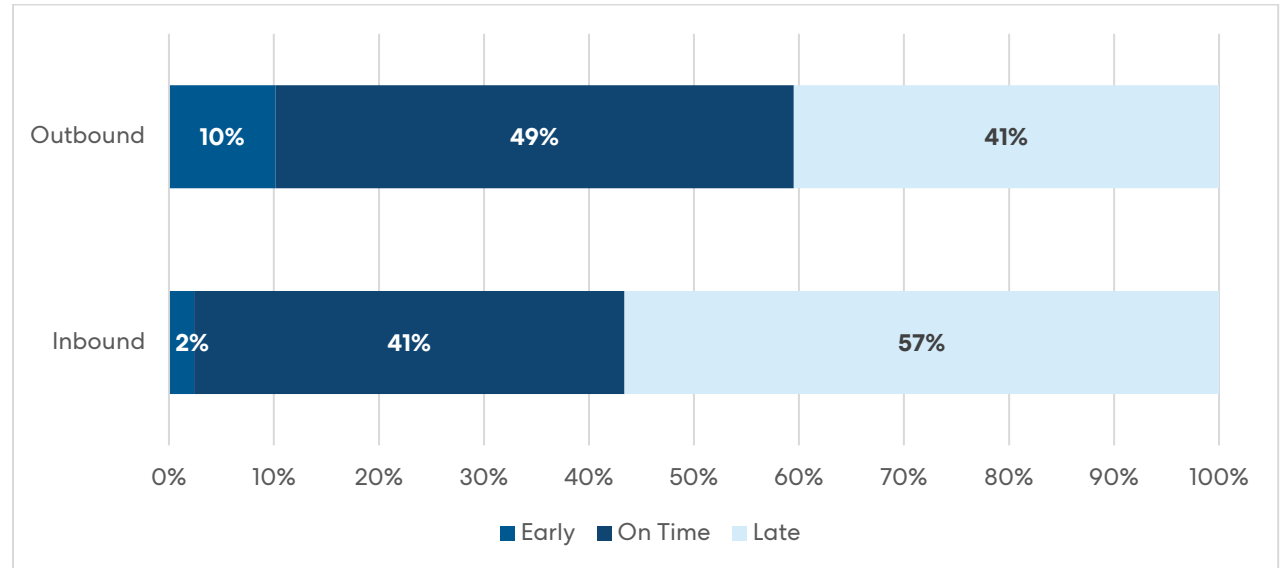
Service Quality, Productivity, and Reliability

- Route 12 is an infrequent local bus route with trips scheduled every 50 to 70 minutes.
- On average, Route 12 had 448 boardings a day and 13 passengers per trip in Spring 2024, and nearly 30 boardings per revenue hour of service.
- Service can be unreliable. Buses are often late to their time points. Only 45% of time points were made within WRTA’s definition of on-time (one minute early to five minutes late).

Figure 12: Service Productivity

Day	Weekday Ridership	Ridership per Trip	Ridership per Revenue Mile	Riders per Revenue Hour
Weekday	448	13.2	2.5	29.2
Saturday	-	-	-	-
Sunday	-	-	-	-

Figure 13: Weekday On-Time Performance



Ridership Activity

- Boarding activity shows a slight peak-directional trend. Outbound trips peak in the morning and inbound trips peak in the afternoon. This trend may be explained by the select trips that serve North High School.
- Despite an average high of 37 riders per trip at 1:23 p.m., load does not appear to be an issue for the route.
- Outbound trips have less variable ridership throughout the day. Just over half of trips average between 15 and 20 riders. Inbound trips vary more considerably, with 6 to 25 boardings per trip throughout much of the day.
- The last three round trips generate only 22 boardings, or fewer than four boardings per one-way trip.

Figure 14: Route 12 Inbound to Hub Center, Weekday Boardings by Trip

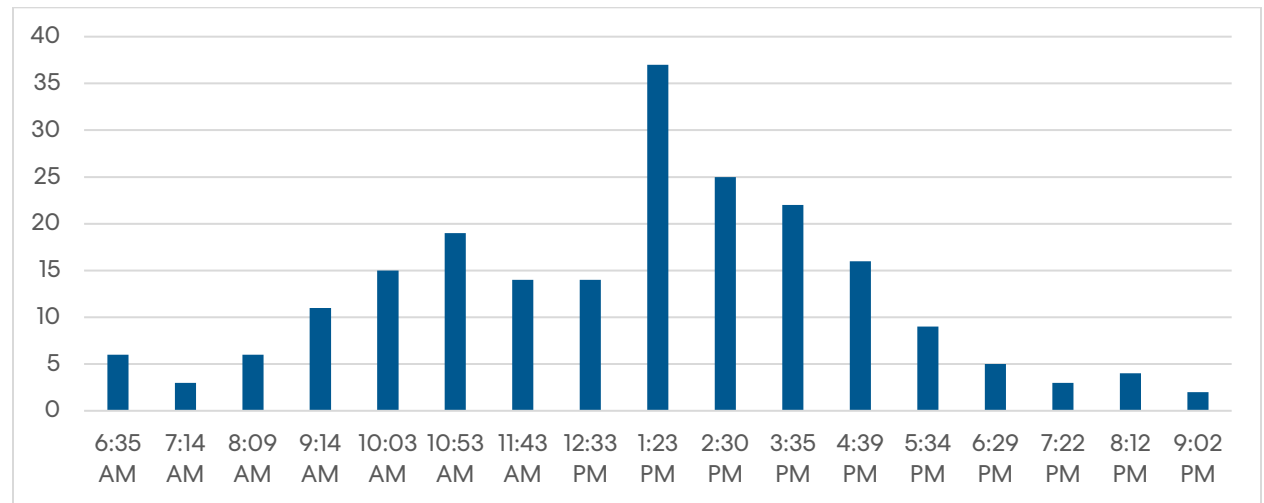
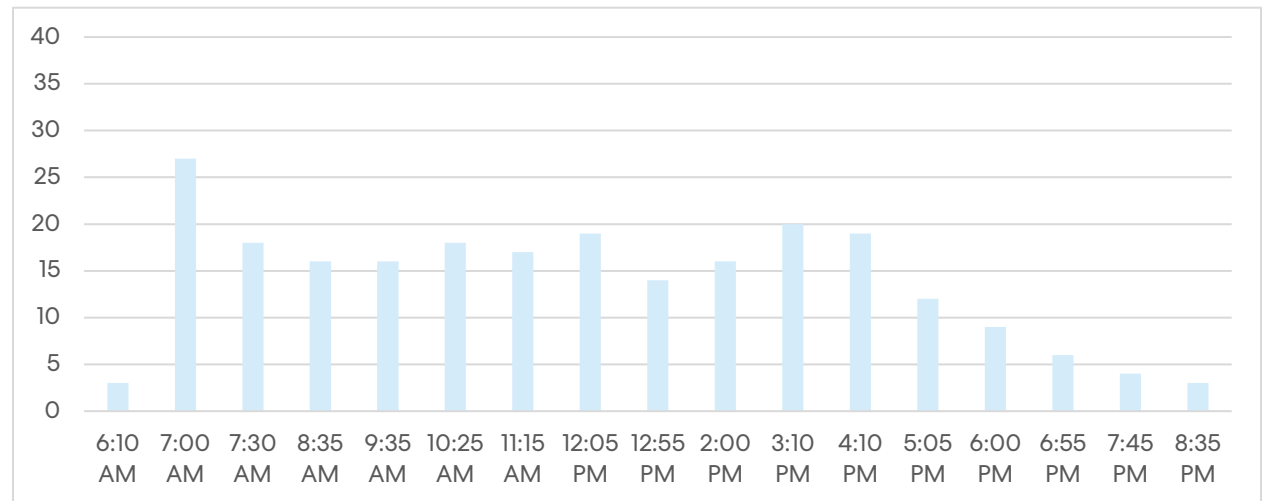


Figure 15: Route 12 Outbound to Edgemere Crossing, Weekday Boardings by Trip



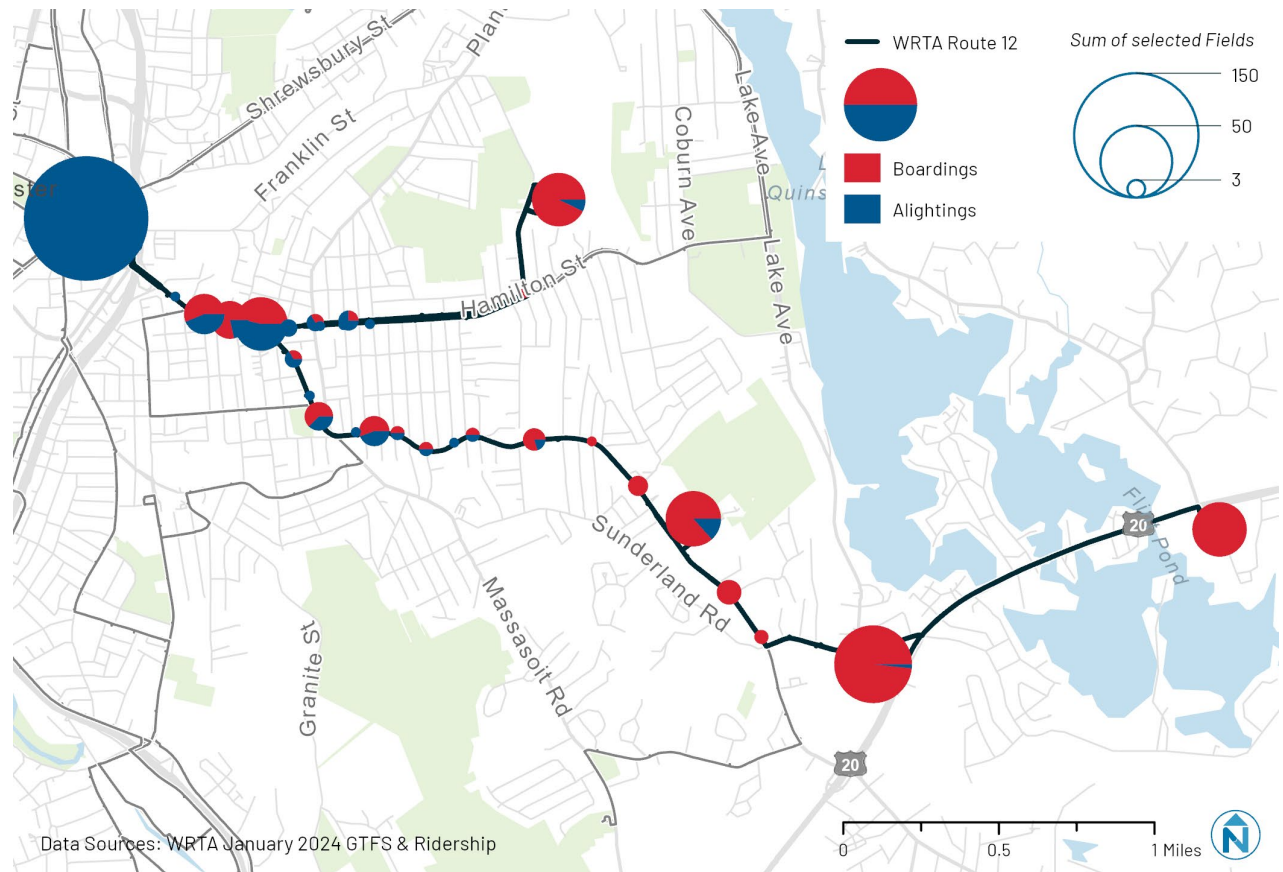
Ridership by Stop – Inbound Service

During inbound trips, the primary destination for many riders is WRTA’s Hub. Alighting activity increases at stops closer to central Worcester.

Route 12’s most popular stops for boarding are (Figure 16):

- North High School
 - 26 inbound boardings across 4 trips
- The three shopping centers on the southern end of the route generate a significant amount of activity. These locations account for 57% of total inbound boardings.
- Service in Shrewsbury is limited to one stop at Edgemere Crossing, which includes the Market Basket grocery store. This stop generates 60 weekday boarding and alightings, or about 7% of total activity on the route.

Figure 16: Route 12, Inbound to Hub Center, Weekday Ridership by Stop



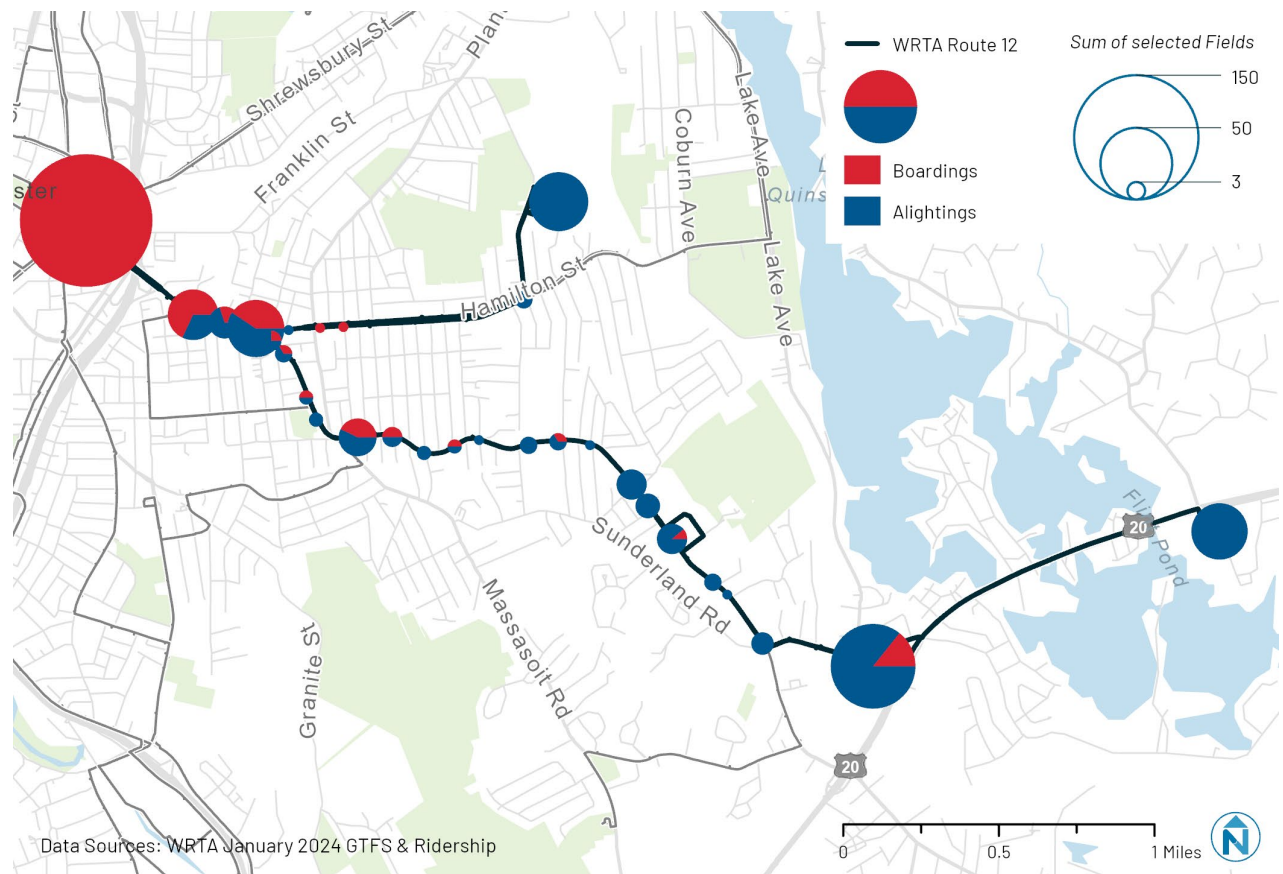
Ridership by Stop – Outbound Service

People use outbound trips to reach destinations along the route, including North High School, Southwest Plaza, and Market Basket.

Most boarding activity happens at and near the Hub Center (Figure 17):

- 74% of outbound boardings occur at the Hub Center, suggesting many outbound riders are coming from other routes or downtown Worcester.
- Within the first mile of Hub Center, 89% of outbound boarding activity occurs between Hub Center and Billings Square. Nevertheless, capacity does not appear to be a persistent problem.

Figure 17: Route 12, Weekday Ridership by Stop, Outbound to Edgemere Crossing



ROUTE 15 – SHREWSBURY CENTER VIA SHREWSBURY ST & ROUTE 9

Route 15 operates between WRTA’s Hub Center and the Southgate retirement community in Shrewsbury Via Shrewsbury Street and Belmont Street. Service operates on weekdays and Saturdays every 60 minutes.

Major destinations on the route include:

- Worcester’s Union Station (with connections to AMTRAK and MBTA commuter rail)
- Shrewsbury Street retail
- UMASS medical complex
- Lakeway Commons shopping center (Whole Foods)
- White City Shopping Center (Shaw’s)

Transfer opportunities are available at the Hub Center. Transfers may also be possible with Route 16 and Route 24 at the UMASS medical complex.

Route 15, like all WRTA services except Via-WRTA, is fare free until June 30, 2025.

Figure 18: Route 15 Alignment

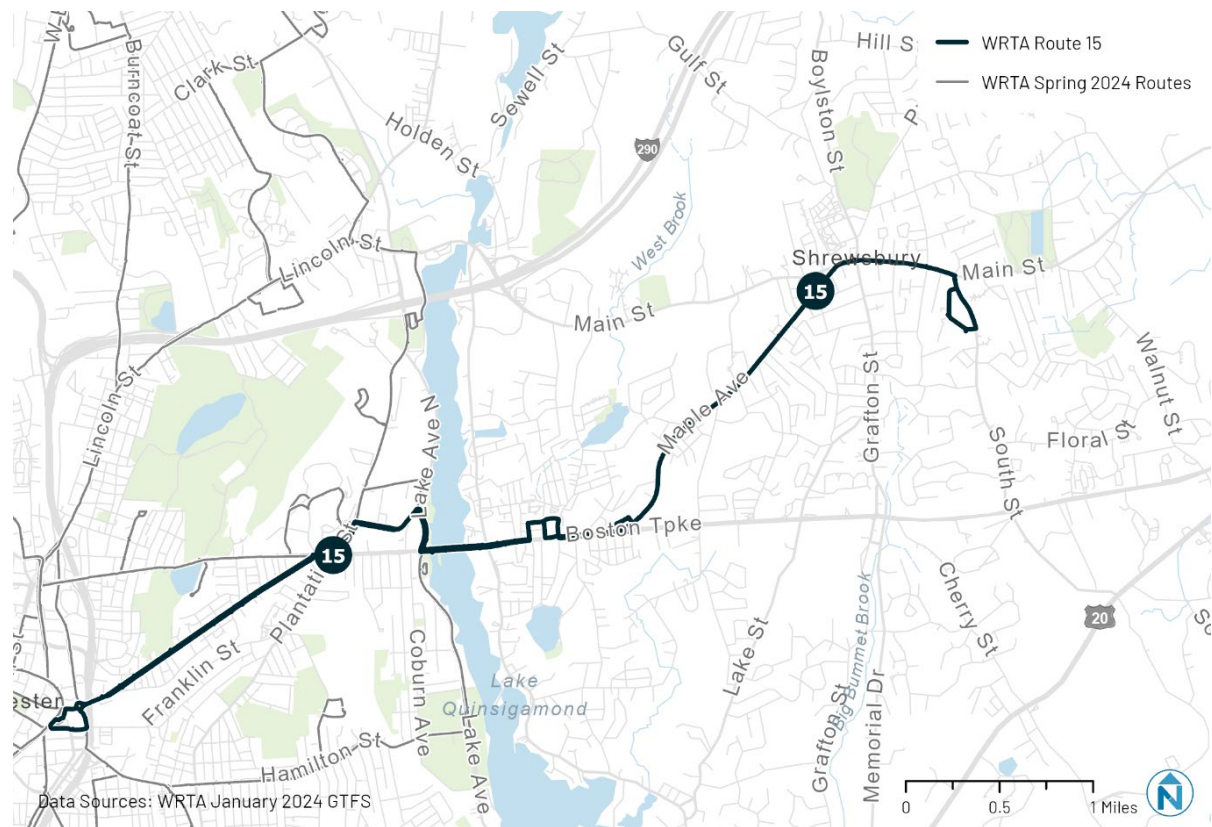


Figure 19: Service Statistics

Day	Headways (min)	Span	Daily Trips
Weekday	60	5:50 AM – 9:10 PM	28
Saturday	60	9:50 AM – 5:50 PM	16
Sunday	-	-	-

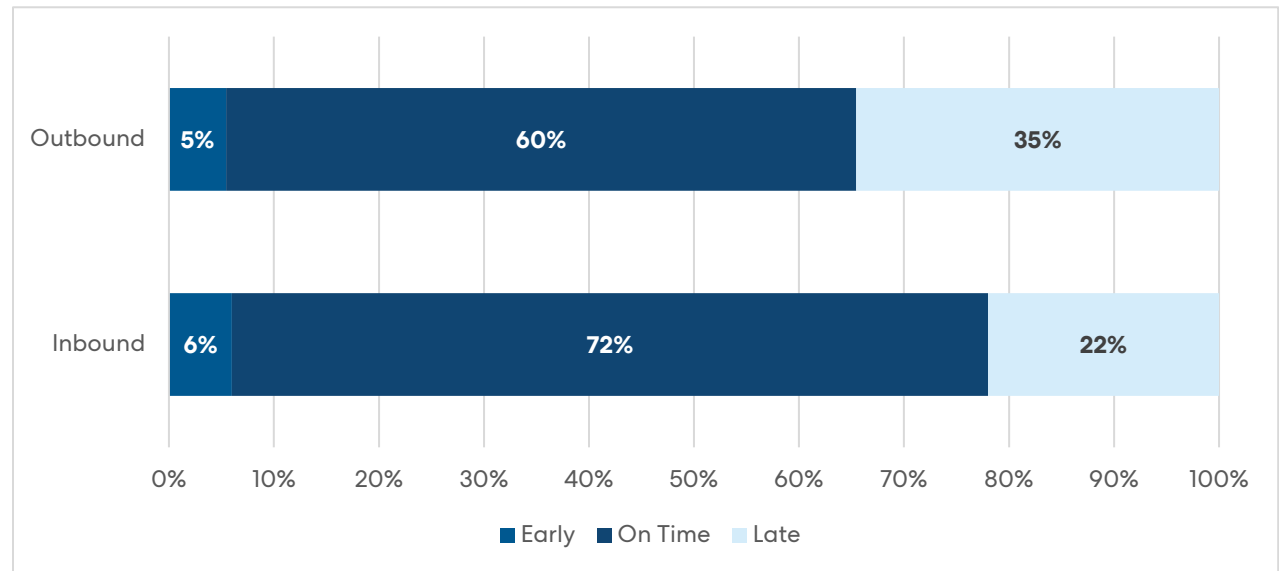
Service Quality, Productivity, and Reliability

- On weekdays, an average of 303 boardings occurred each day. There were 11 riders per one-way trip and 20 riders per revenue hour.
- Route 15 often operates late. On weekdays, timepoints are met late 35% of the time during outbound trips and 22% of the time during inbound trips.
- WRTA’s definition of on-time is one minute early to five minutes late.

Figure 20: Service Productivity

Day	Weekday Ridership	Ridership per Trip	Ridership per Revenue Mile	Riders per Revenue Hour
Weekday	303	10.8	1.6	19.9
Saturday	132	8.5	1.4	17.4
Sunday	-	-	-	-

Figure 21: Weekday On-Time Performance



Ridership Activity

- Ridership is slightly peak-oriented with the highest ridership trips occurring at the beginning of the afternoon peak in both directions of service.
- Outbound ridership is higher overall than inbound ridership. Outbound ridership consistently meets or exceeds 10 riders per one-way trip between the AM and PM peak periods, for 11 consecutive trips. Conversely, Inbound boardings only reach 10 boardings per one-way trip three times throughout the day.

Figure 22: Route 15 Inbound to Hub Center, Weekday Boardings by Trip

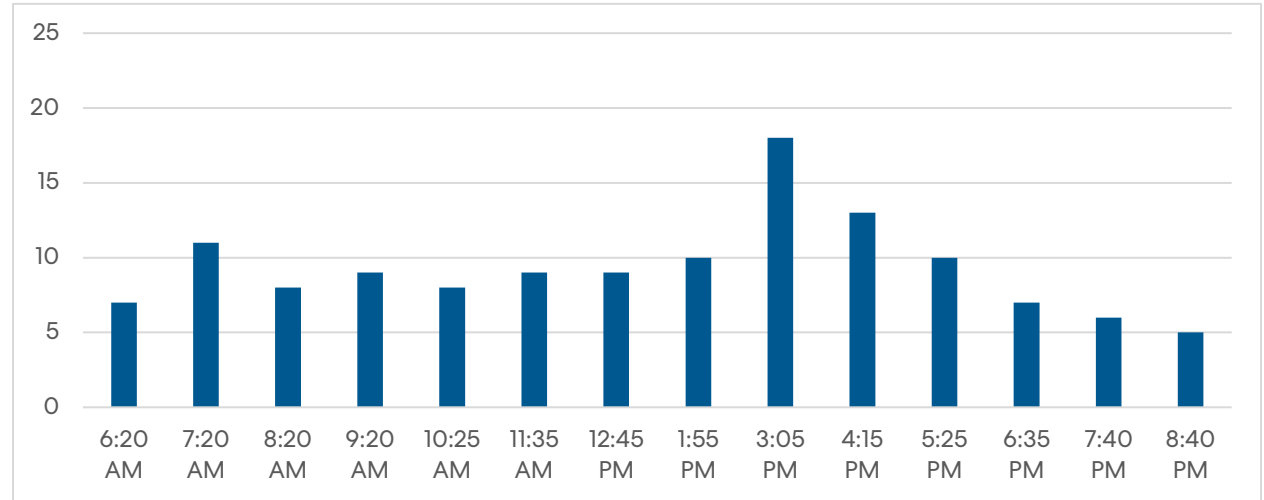
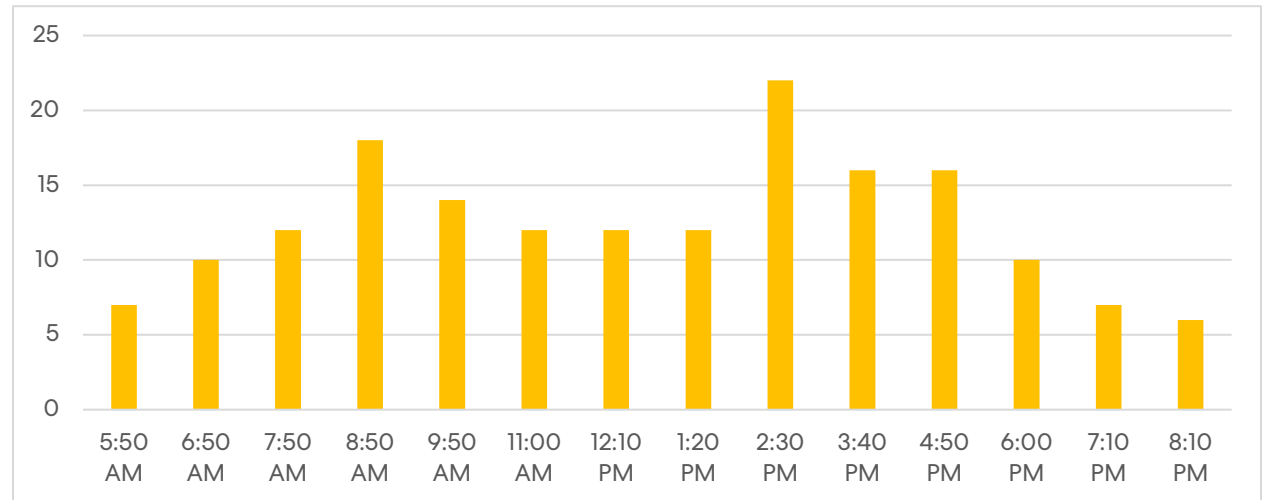


Figure 23: Route 15 Outbound to Shrewsbury Center, Weekday Boardings by Trip



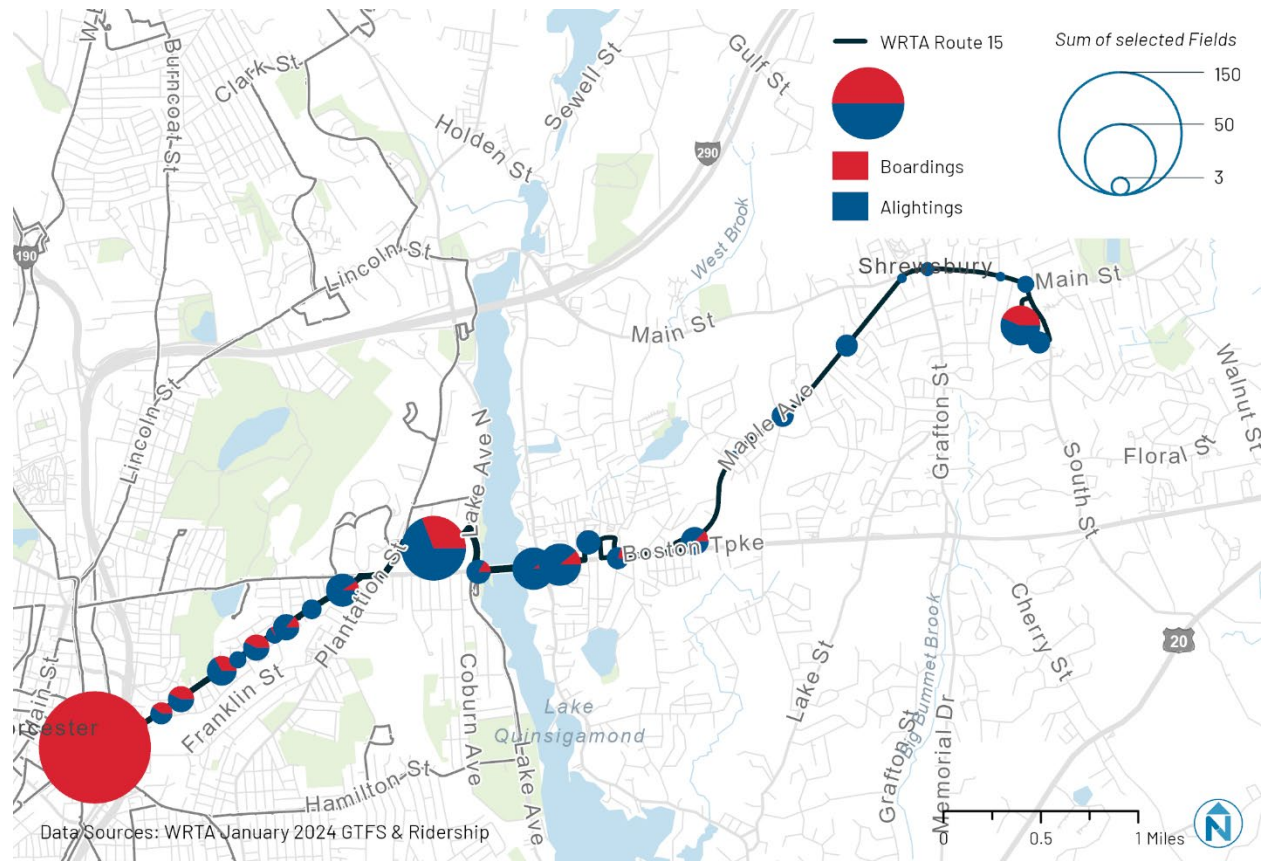
Ridership by Stop – Outbound Service

Popular stops along the route include South Road/UMASS (29 alightings), Boston Turnpike at S. Quinsigamond Avenue (16 alightings), and White City Plaza (16 alightings).

Much of Route 15’s outbound boarding activity took place in Worcester.

- 126 passengers boarded at the Hub Center (73% of outbound boardings). UMass Memorial Health Center had the second greatest number of outbound boardings (13).
- 92% of boardings occur west of Lake Quinsigamond, which constitutes 40% of the route alignment.

Figure 24: Route 15, Outbound to Shrewsbury Center, Weekday Ridership by Stop



Ridership by Stop – Inbound Service

During inbound service, people are traveling to Worcester. There is little alighting activity throughout Shrewsbury.

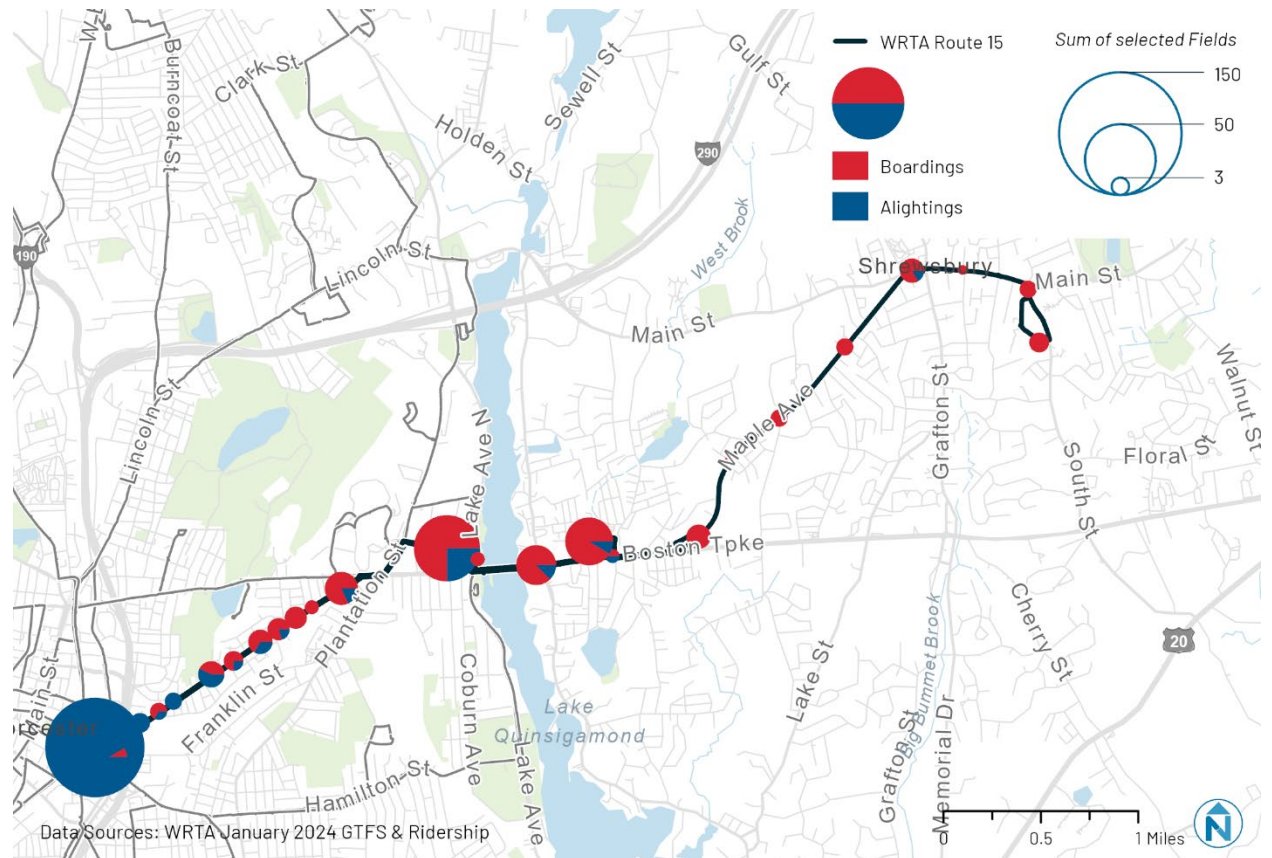
Boarding activity along the route is a bit more variable.

- Inbound boarding activity is heavily concentrated at the major destinations straddling Lake Quinsigamond:
 - UMASS medical complex
 - White Plaza
 - Lakeway Commons.

54% of inbound boardings occur along this one-mile segment of the alignment.

- One-quarter (25%) of inbound boardings occur along Shrewsbury St, which exhibits low but consistent boarding activity along the corridor. The corridor is primarily mixed-use with retail and multi-family housing.

Figure 25: Route 15, Inbound to Hub Center, Weekday Ridership by Stop



VIA-WRTA

Via-WRTA is an on-demand ride-share service that serves parts of Westborough and Shrewsbury. This service permits riders to be picked up and dropped off anywhere within the service zone, shown in Figure 27. However, passengers need to walk to meet their vehicle. Trips are primarily booked through a phone application. Rides can also be booked by phone through Via’s customer service. Wheelchair-accessible vehicles are available upon request.

This report analyzes Via-WRTA ridership data from March 2024.

Figure 27: Via-WRTA Service Area

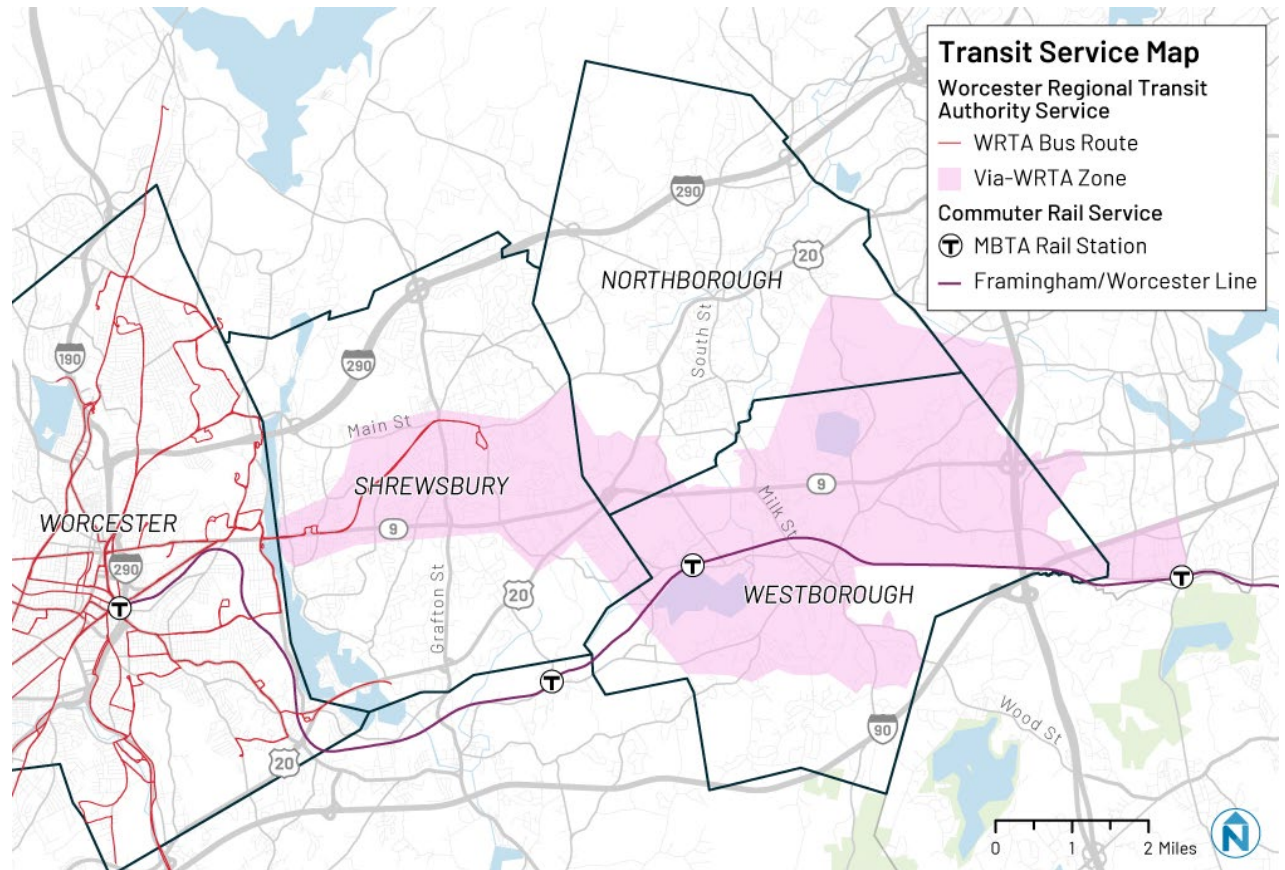


Figure 26: Service Characteristics

	Characteristic
Service Days	Mon - Fri
Service Span	7 AM – 7 PM
Fare	\$2.00
Service Area	25.7 mi
Vehicles	In Service: 3 - 4 Total: 4

Service Performance

In March, Via averaged 121 daily trips with 145 passengers. Most passengers were able to book and conduct a trip by themselves or with their traveling companions. Thirty-seven percent of trips were shared with riders who booked a separate trip. Trips averaged five miles in length and 14 minutes in duration.

Figure 28: Service Performance

	Performance
Trips (Daily)	121
Passengers (Daily)	145
Average Trip Distance	4.7 mi
Average Trip Time	13.6 min
Trips Shared	37%

Out of 397 unique accounts (riders), one-quarter of users made at least 10 or more trips throughout the month of March (Figure 29)

Trip activity is skewed towards the second half of the day, with the four busiest hours occurring consecutively from 1:00 PM through 4:00 PM, constituting 41% of ridership (Figure 30).

Figure 29). 70% of accounts completed at least two trips, indicating one round trip, or in some cases, two one-way trips.

Trip activity is skewed towards the second half of the day, with the four busiest hours occurring consecutively from 1:00 PM through 4:00 PM, constituting 41% of ridership (Figure 30).

Figure 29: Trip Distribution by Unique Rider Accounts

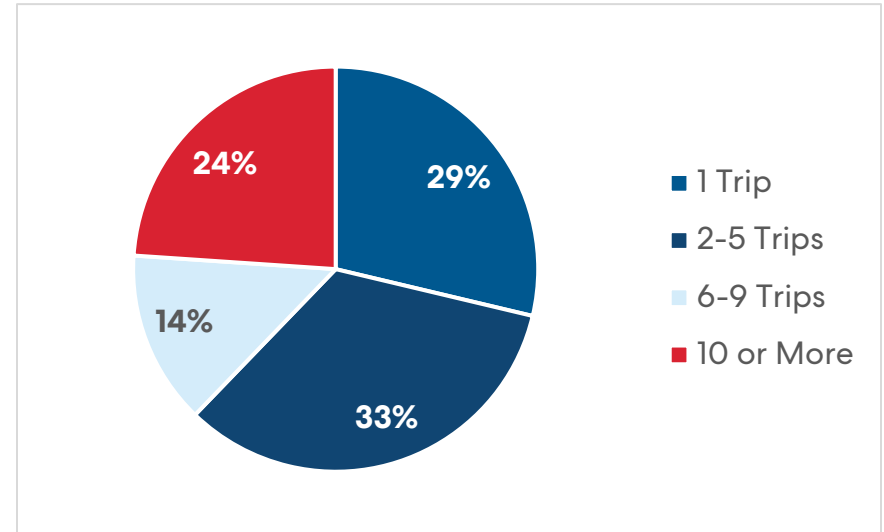
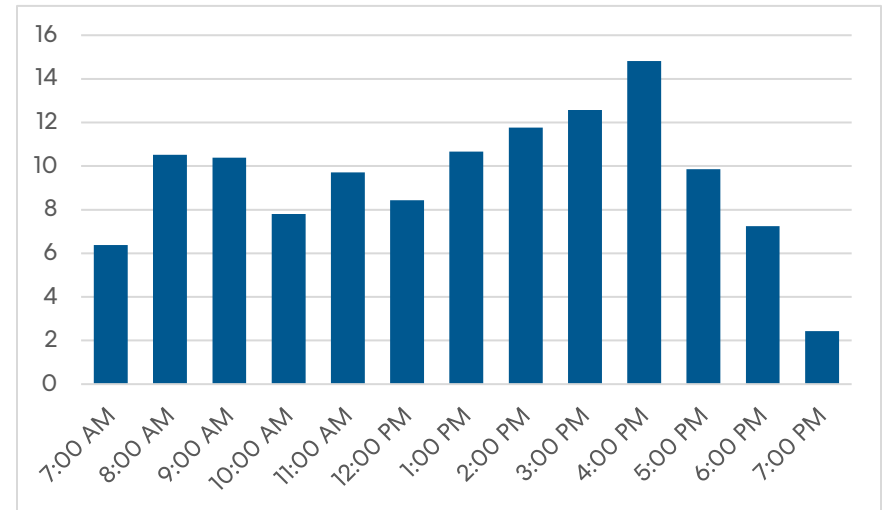


Figure 30: Average Daily Trips by Hour (March)



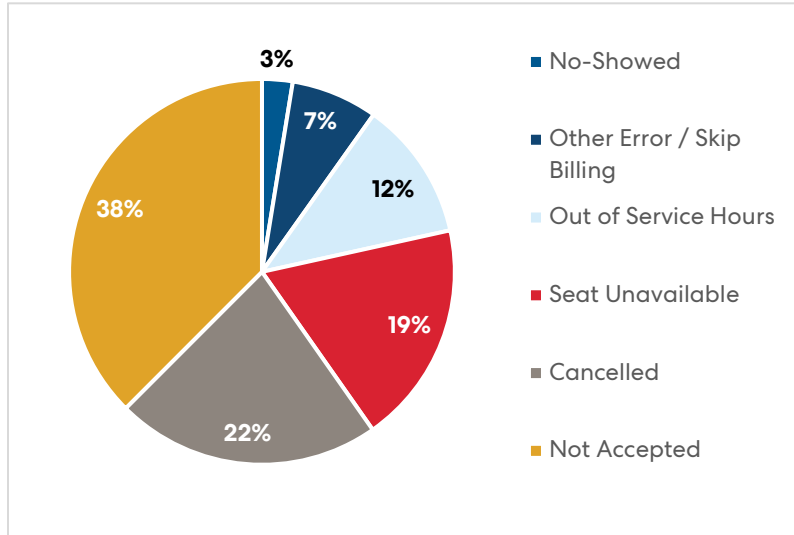
Incomplete Trips

People requested 4,171 trips in March. Of these, 2,574 (62%) were completed. The remaining 38% of trip requests were not completed, with the reasons detailed in

Figure 31. The three top reasons trips were not completed:

- Not Accepted – passenger requested a trip but did not book it (38% of incomplete trips)
- Cancelled – the trip was booked but cancelled (22% of incomplete trips)
- Seat unavailable – all vehicles are at capacity (19% of incomplete trips)

Figure 31: Reasons for Incomplete Trips



Reliability

Service often took longer than anticipated by Via. On average, passengers waited 18 minutes for a vehicle after requesting a trip. This is three minutes more than the average planned wait time.

Although most pickups were on time, a slight majority of trips (57%), arrived at their destination more than five minutes later than estimated by the Via app. Trip delays were even greater when the trip was shared.

Figure 32: Reliability

	Planned	Actual
Avg Wait Time	15.3 min	18.4 min
On Time Performance		
Trip Pickup	67%	
Trip Dropoff	43%	

Note: Due to the nature of on-demand service, early arrivals are considered on time.

Origin-Destination Analysis

People use Via to travel within their towns and to access places in neighboring communities. The following notable observations can be gleaned from Figure 34.

- Nearly two-thirds of all trips (61%) begin and end within the same municipality.
- Over half (55%) of all trips and 76% of Westborough-related trips occur within Westborough.
- The majority of Northborough (97%) and Southborough (95%) trips were to neighboring municipalities, primarily Westborough.
- Shrewsbury and Southborough are non-contiguous but still generated 19 trips.

Figure 33: Trip Origin and Destination Matrix, March 2024

		DESTINATION				
		TOWN	Northborough	Shrewsbury	Westborough	Southborough
ORIGIN	Northborough	7	40	275	0	322
	Shrewsbury	50	136	193	7	386
	Westborough	181	196	1,419	34	1,830
	Southborough	0	12	22	2	36
	Total	238	384	1,909	43	2,574

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Figure 34 illustrates trip activity across the Via zone in areas that have potential trip generators such as shopping, train stations, apartments, and hotels. The most popular origins and destinations include (Figure 34):

- Big Box Stores in Northborough and Northborough Crossing
- Apartments
- Extended Stay Hotels
- Westborough Main Street
- Westborough MBTA Station

Figure 34: Via Pickups and Dropoffs by Zone

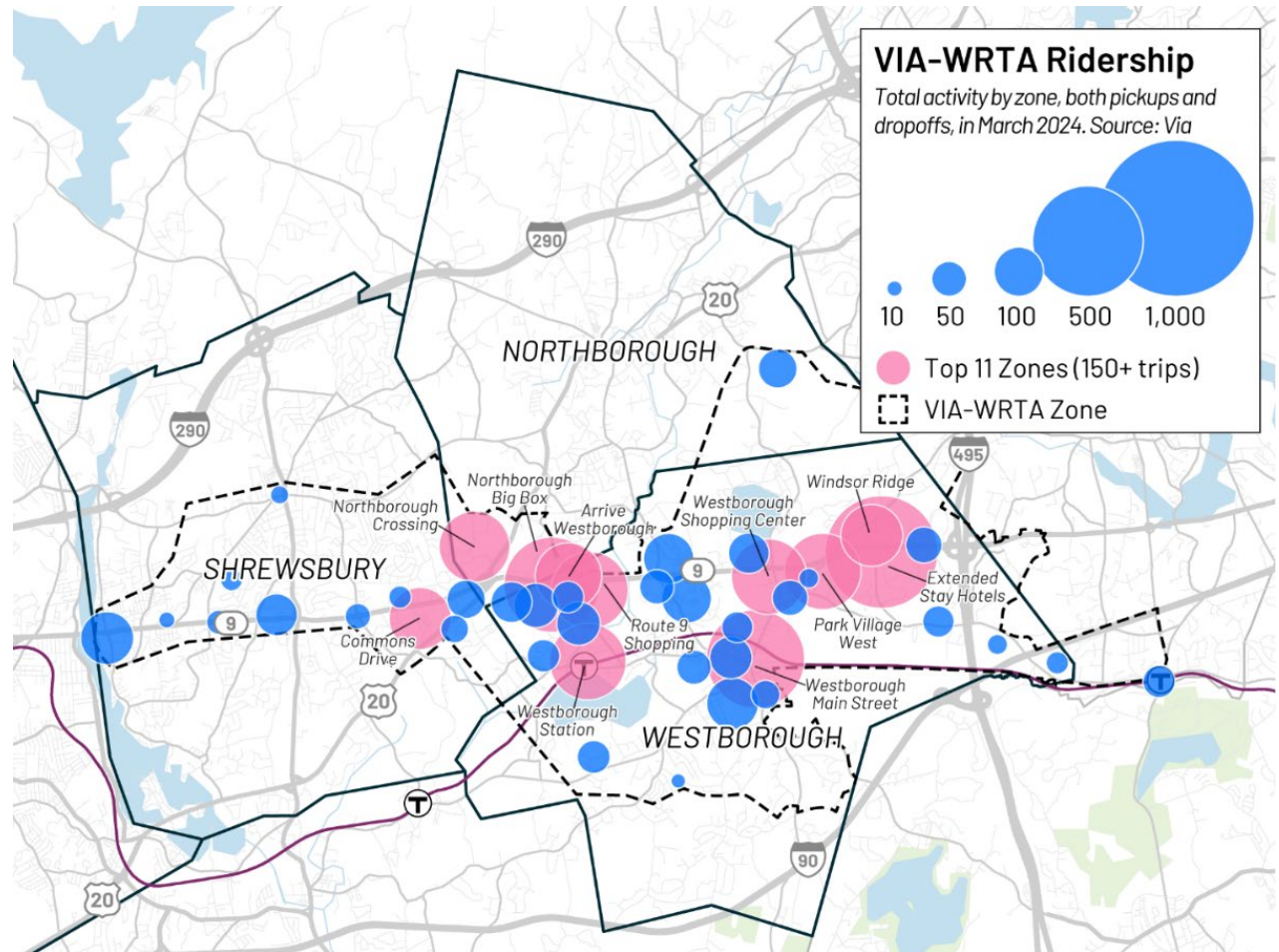
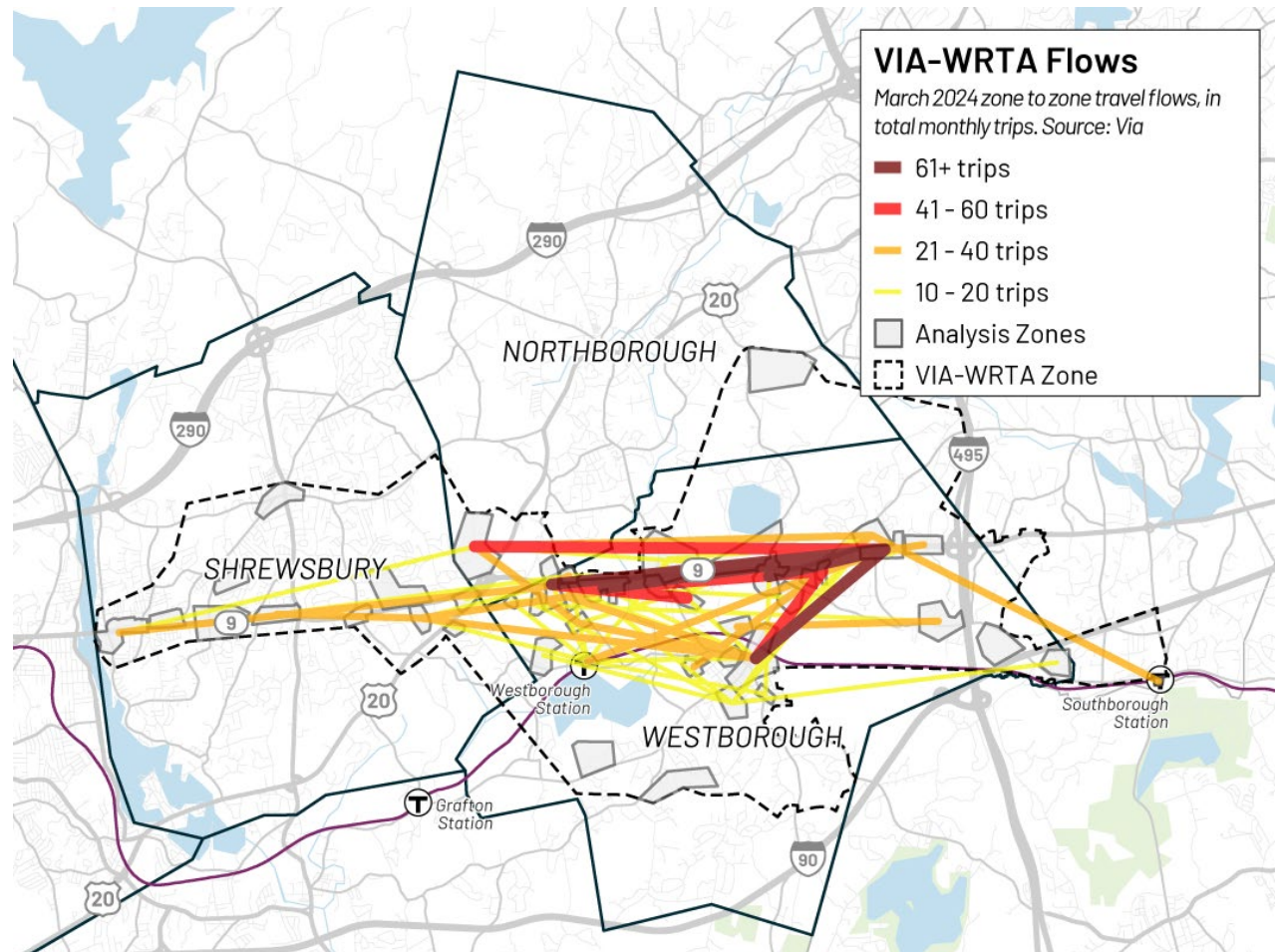


Figure 35 shows the number of trips made between over 40 areas (zones) with concentrated trip activity. Figure 36 is a list of zone pairs with over 30 trips made between them in March 2024. There are a few notable observations from this analysis:

- Many of the most popular trips are between places along Route 9, primarily in Westborough.
- 8 of the 11 top zone pairs include a hotel or housing.
- Figure 36 shows the most popular pairs of trip destinations in the Via-WRTA service area.

Figure 35: Via Travel Flows between Zones with Concentrated Activity



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Figure 36: Zone Pairs with the Greatest Travel Flows

Zone A	Zone B	Total Trips
Boston Turnpike Big Box Stores (e.g., Walmart/Target)	Extended Stay Hotels <i>(Other places in the zone)</i>	124
RK Speedway Plaza <i>(includes Lowe's Home Improvement)</i>	Extended Stay Hotels <i>(Other places in the zone)</i>	105
Downtown Westborough	Extended Stay Hotels <i>(Other places in the zone)</i>	73
Westborough Shopping Center <i>(includes commercial activity across Lyman St. and Route 9)</i>	Extended Stay Hotels <i>(Other places in the zone)</i>	70
Boston Turnpike Big Box Stores	Carlton Garden Condominiums <i>(includes Treetop Park Condominiums)</i>	53
Downtown Westborough	Park Village West <i>(includes McDonald's)</i>	48
RK Speedway Plaza <i>(includes Lowe's)</i>	Park Village West <i>(includes McDonald's)</i>	46
Northborough Crossing <i>(including Avalon)</i>	Extended Stay Hotels <i>(Other places in the zone)</i>	44
Windsor Ridge Apartments <i>(includes other homes and part of Computer Drive)</i>	MBTA Southborough Station	34
Northborough Crossing <i>(including Avalon)</i>	Amazon Robotics Facility	32
Shrewsbury Commons	Westborough Office Park <i>(includes area hugging Route 9)</i>	31

SHREWSBURY COUNCIL ON AGING

Shrewsbury Council on Aging (CoA) offers a curb-to-curb demand response service funded by WRTA and operated by the Shrewsbury CoA. Service is open to Shrewsbury residents who are 60 years old or older and residents with a disability.

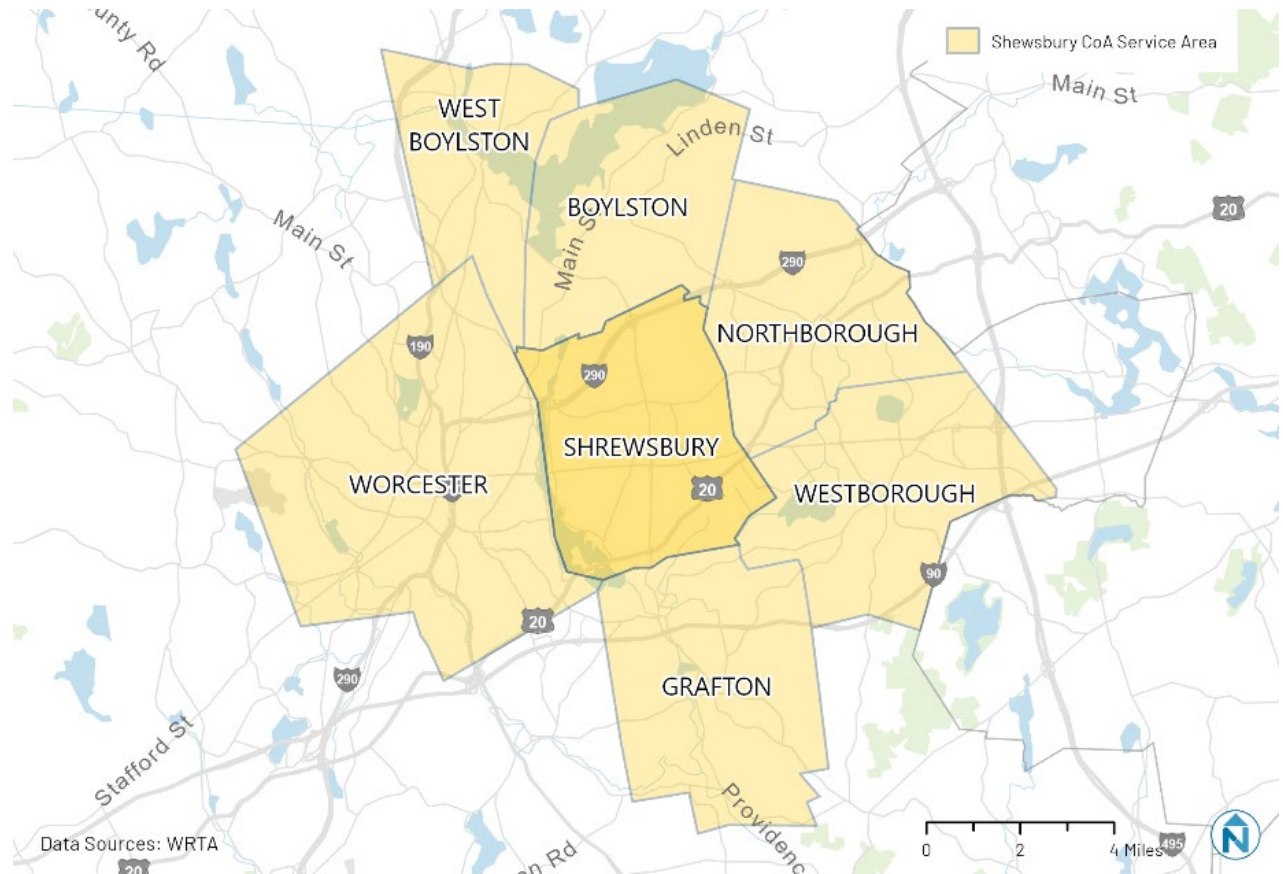
There are two categories of service: ADA van service and non-ADA van service. ADA van service covers Worcester and areas within $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile of bus routes serving Shrewsbury. ADA service is only available for pre-qualified riders with disabilities (regardless of age). Non-ADA van service makes trips within Shrewsbury and other communities, such as Worcester, Northborough, and Westborough. Non-ADA van service is open to passengers with disabilities and/or adults that are 60 or older.

Shrewsbury CoA, like all WRTA services except Via-WRTA, is fare free until June 30, 2025.

Shrewsbury also provides 'group outings'. These trips require a deposit

and older adults outside of Shrewsbury can participate.

Figure 37: Shrewsbury Service Area



Service Availability

Shrewsbury’s CoA service is available on weekdays. The hours of service vary across the week. Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday have the same schedule. Service is available longer on Tuesdays, and only in the morning on Fridays.

Figure 38: Service Availability

	Service Days	Service Span	Service Area
Shrewsbury	Mon-Fri	M,W,Th: 8:00 am – 3:30 pm Tu: 8:00 am – 5:30 pm F: 8:00 am – 11:00 am	157 Sq Mi

Ridership

In March 2024, Shrewsbury’s CoA service served 488 clients and made 480 trips. Most clients traveled without personal care assistants (PCA) or companions.

Figure 39: Ridership

	Trips	Clients	Companions	PCAs	Total Riders
Shrewsbury	480	488	20	38	546

Productivity

The CoA saw approximately 2 riders per revenue hour. Even though a plurality of trips occurred within Shrewsbury, the large service area and ability to travel to Worcester and other neighboring municipalities results in low productivity with regards to riders per revenue mile.

Figure 40: Productivity

	Trips per Day	Riders per Day	Rider per Revenue Hour	Rider per Revenue Mile
Shrewsbury	22.9	26	2.1	0.1

Trip Activity

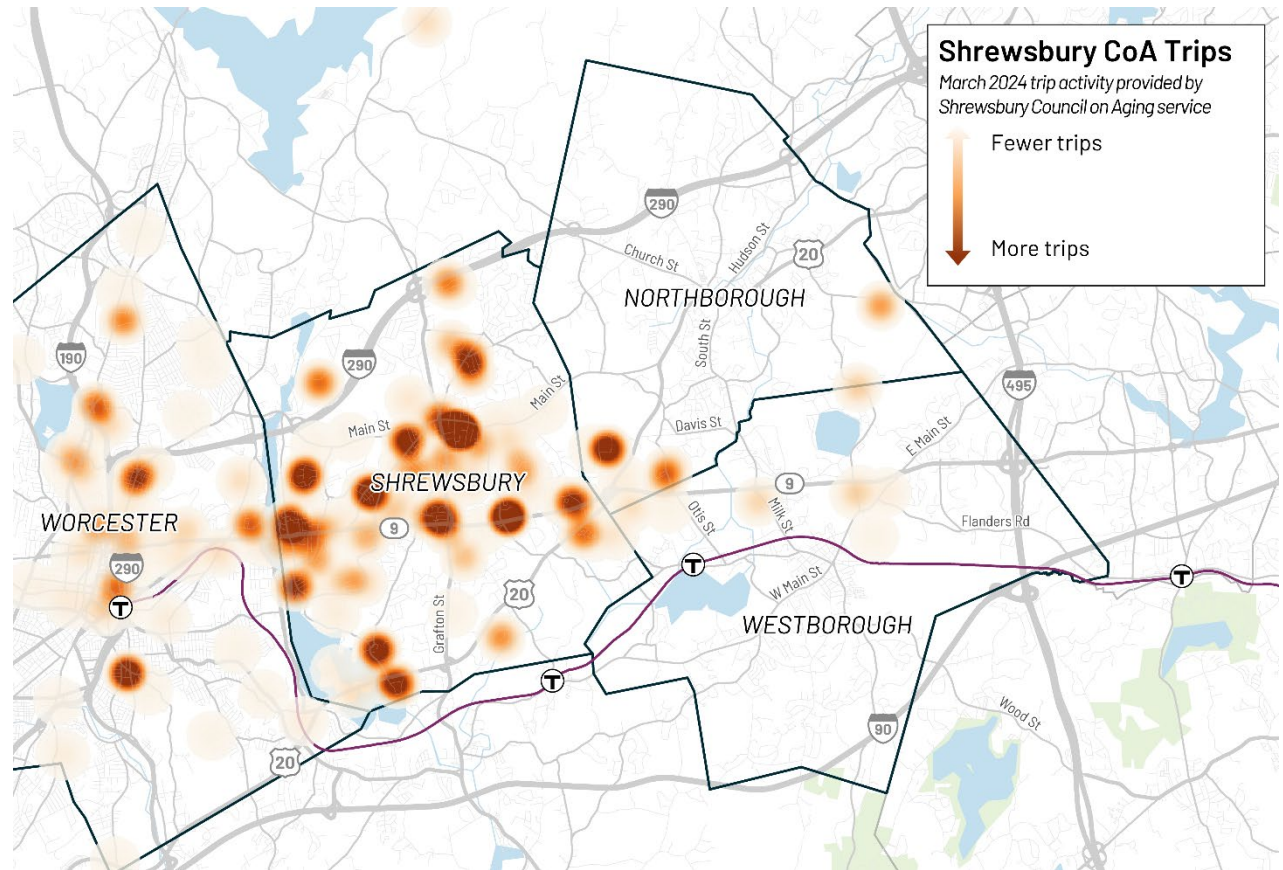
People are using the CoA service to travel throughout Shrewsbury and Worcester (Figure 41).

Thirty-nine percent (39%) of trips both start and end within Shrewsbury. Many trips are concentrated around commercial developments in Shrewsbury. Areas with greater levels of activity include:

- Shrewsbury Senior Center/Town Hall
- Downtown Shrewsbury
- Locations along Route 9 near Lake Quinsigamond

Forty-four percent (44%) of trips start or end in Worcester. Trips there are diffuse but there are concentrations of activity around Worcester Union Station and to a lesser extent, the Worcester Senior Center and UMass Memorial Medical Center – Hahnemann Campus.

Figure 41: Shrewsbury CoA Total Trip Activity



NORTHBOROUGH COUNCIL ON AGING

Northborough Council on Aging (CoA) offers a non-ADA, curb-to-curb ride-share service funded by WRTA and operated by the Northborough CoA. Town residents are eligible for this service if they are 60 or older or have a disability (regardless of age).

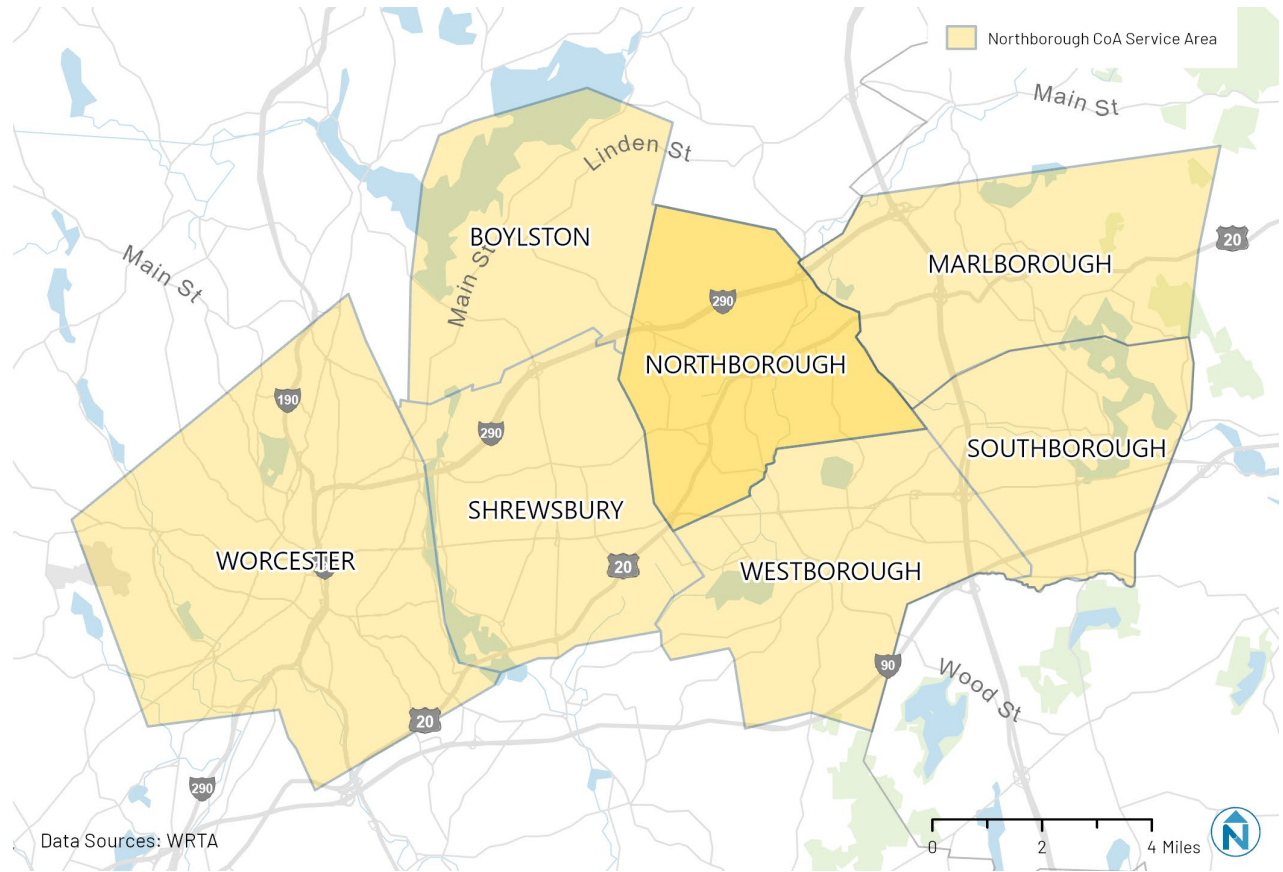
The service area includes Northborough and neighboring municipalities (see Northborough CoA, like all WRTA services except Via-WRTA, is fare free until 2025.

Figure 42).

Rides must be arranged at least one day in advance. All vehicles are lift-equipped.

Northborough CoA, like all WRTA services except Via-WRTA, is fare free until June 30, 2025.

Figure 42: Northborough CoA Service Area



Service Availability

Northborough’s CoA service operates on weekdays. Hours of service are the same every day but Friday when service is only available in the morning.

Figure 43: Service Availability

	Service Days	Service Span	Service Area
Northborough	Mon-Fri	M-Th: 7:30 am – 3:20 pm F: 7:30 am – 11:30 am	158 Sq Mi

Ridership

In March, Northborough Councils on Aging served 301 clients and made 297 trips, with most clients traveling without a PCA or companion

Figure 44: Ridership

	Trips	Clients	Companions	PCAs	Total Riders
Northborough	297	301	15	21	337

Productivity

Northborough served nearly 2 passengers per revenue hour. Service to and from Worcester, which lies over ten miles from most of Northborough, significantly impacts the rider per revenue mile metric.

Figure 45: Productivity

	Trips per Day	Riders per Day	Rider per Revenue Hour	Rider per Revenue Mile
Northborough	14.1	16	1.6	0.1

Trip Activity

People are using the CoA service to travel throughout Northborough, Shrewsbury, and Worcester (Figure 46). People are also traveling to Marlborough.

Twenty-eight percent (28%) of trips start and end in Northborough.

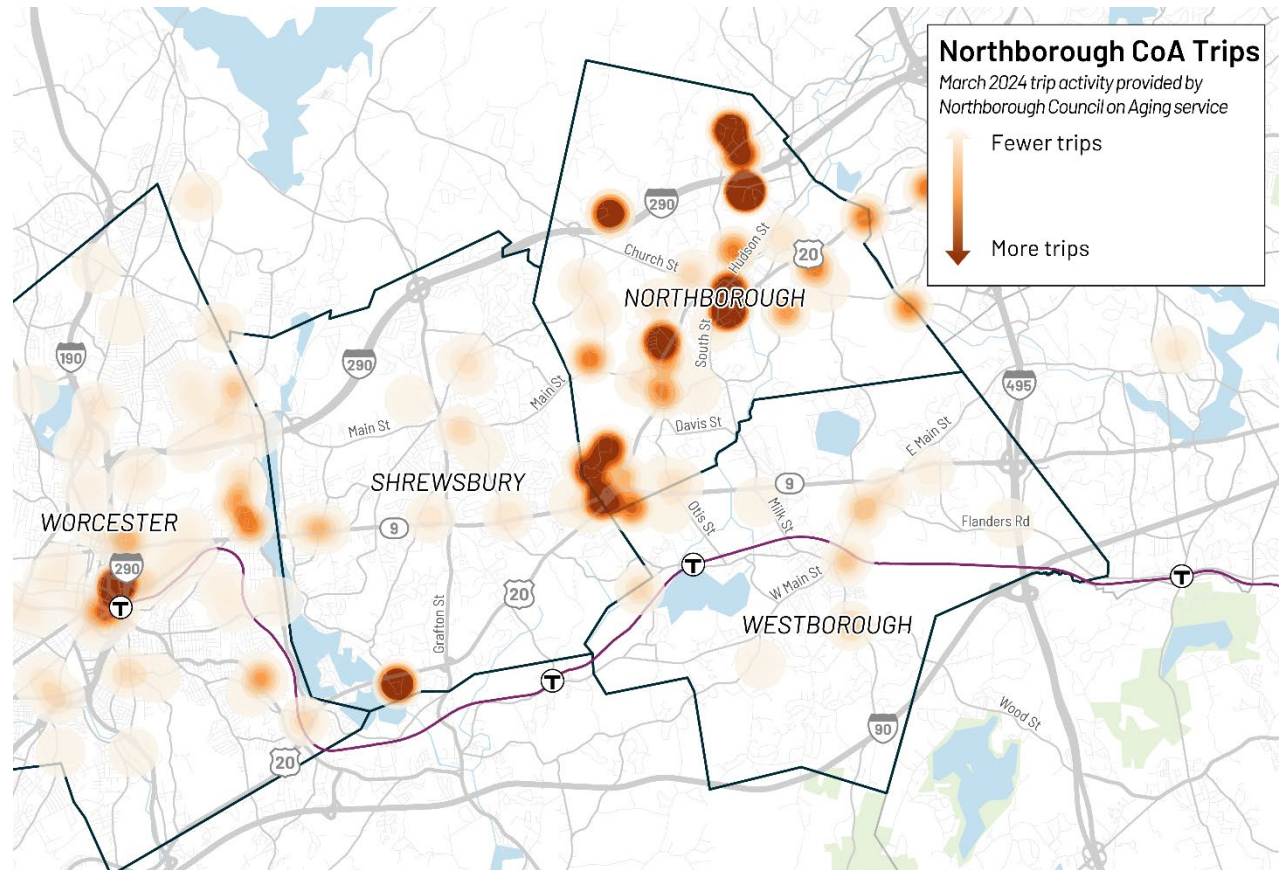
There is a lot of activity in Northborough around places such as:

- Northborough Crossing
- Northborough Senior Center on Bearfoot Rd
- Downtown Northborough, and the Northborough Housing Authority.

In Shrewsbury, Edgemere Crossing, which contains Market Basket, is a popular destination.

Many trips (37%) involve travel to or from Worcester. Trip activity in Worcester is diffuse but there are clear concentrations around Worcester Union Station, and the Central Business District.

Figure 46: Northborough CoA Total Trip Activity



MBTA COMMUTER RAIL SERVICE

The Framingham/Worcester MBTA commuter rail line connects Boston and Worcester with several stops in and around the study area (Figure 48). WRTA provides a connection to Union Station (in Worcester) Via Routes 12 and 15. WRTA’s Via service connects to Westborough and Southborough stations. Grafton Station is not served by WRTA; however, it is located near the study area. Below is the average weekday MBTA commuter rail boardings and alightings at stations in and around the study area in Spring 2018 (Figure 47).

Figure 48: MBTA Commuter Rail Stations

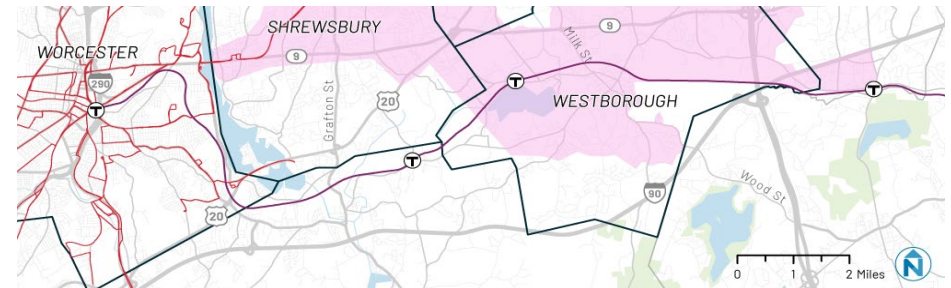


Figure 47: Spring 2018 Average Weekday Ridership

Station	To Boston		To Worcester	
	Boardings	Alightings	Boardings	Alightings
Worcester	1298	-	-	1262
Grafton	524	3	4	443
Westborough	737	12	17	679
Southborough	518	17	7	572

Source: MBTA Commuter Rail Ridership by Trip, Season, Route/Line, and Stop

KEY FINDINGS

Balancing Transit Service Options

- The public has two options for transit service, the bus and on-demand rideshare service. However, there is limited overlap between the services outside of the study area. However, Route 15 significantly overlaps with Via-WRTA service in Shrewsbury, which contributes to these services competing for the same passengers.
- Shrewsbury is the only community within the study area with fixed-route bus service. With the region's anticipated and existing development, there may be opportunities to expand fixed-route bus service further into the study area communities.
- Northborough has the most limited transit access. It is not served by fixed-route bus service and a small portion of the community is served by Via. It does have access to Council on Aging service, however, it is not open to the general public.

Off-Peak Access

- Routes 12 and 15 have good weekday spans of service, extending from the early morning and into the night. This means people have transit access along these routes for much of the day. Via also operates on weekdays; however, the span of service is more limited (7 AM to 7 PM).
- Conversely, weekend service is limited. Only Route 15 is available to the public on Saturdays, and the span of service is shorter than on weekdays, although this is common. There are no services available on Sunday in any of the communities.

- Northborough and Shrewsbury's Council on Aging services operate on weekdays only and their spans of service are more limited and inconsistent.

Opportunities to Improve Transit Legibility and Reliability

- Route 12's headways are infrequent and inconsistent, with service every 50 to 70 minutes. This makes service less convenient and predictable for passengers. Ideally, bus routes operate with clock-face headways, especially when they are infrequent. Route 12 may be a candidate for consistent, 60-minute service.
- Route 12 and Route 15 have poor on-time performance and are often operating later than scheduled. This makes service less convenient for passengers. Update schedules or route alignments to provide more reliable service to passengers.
- Via often reaches passengers' destinations later than anticipated. WRTA could work with their partners to identify solutions to improve time estimates.
- There is more demand for Via service than is fulfilled. The demand may come from people requesting service when and where Via does not operate. It also comes when there are no seats for requested rides.
- There is demand and interest in transit service within the three study areas. This suggests there is room to consider:
 - Additional opportunities for fixed-route service to meet demand for service.
 - Expanding Via service, by increasing the span of service or the area covered.
 - Exploring solutions to more efficiently provide service.

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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

SUMMARY OF ENGAGEMENT

The following is a summary of input from the general public and stakeholders. Several community engagement events took place over the course of the project to understand public transit in the three-town region, the community's needs, and feedback on proposed recommendations. Figure 49 provides an overview of the community outreach completed as part of the *Connecting Communities* project.



Pop up event at Community Night, Shrewsbury, Sept. 25, 2024

Figure 49: Overview of Community Outreach

Engagement Forums

The following forums were held in conjunction with this project:

PROJECT INTRODUCTION MEETING WITH EACH MUNICIPALITY

SHREWSBURY COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

Wednesday, October 23 @ 1:00-2:30 PM

WESTBOROUGH COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

Wednesday, October 30 @ 3:00 - 4:30 PM

NORTHBOROUGH COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

Monday, November 4 @ 2:00 - 3:30 PM

REGIONAL WORKSHOPS

Disability Commission/Advocates:

Monday, October 28 @ 1:30 PM – 3:00 PM

COAs/Senior Centers:

Monday, October 28 @ 3:30 PM – 5:00 PM

Economic/Business Development Groups:

Tuesday, October 29 @ 12:30 AM – 2:00 PM

Planning, and Public Health Staffs:

Wednesday, October 30 @ 11:00 AM – 12:30 PM

MBTA USERS MEETING

Wednesday, November 13 @ 7:00 – 8:30 PM

DIGITAL RIDER SURVEY

November 18 – November 22, 2024

Public Meeting

December 5, 2024 @ 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM

POP UP EVENTS

one in each of the three communities

KEY FINDINGS

The following are key findings from engaging with stakeholders, riders, and the general public.

Overarching Themes

- All three communities have a series of **goals in their master plans and strategic plans which can, in part, be achieved with the provision and use of public transit**; these include: increasing access to resources, connectivity for all ages, supporting an aging population and the disabled, reducing carbon footprint, reducing traffic congestion, and supporting economic development. Westborough also lists supporting physical and mental health, among others. Promote how transit helps to achieve these.
- All expressed a need for **better access to information, increased awareness** regarding existing services and **increased visibility**. Suggestions to address these needs include: create a Cable TV show promoting service; install signage with map, QR code, other info, etc.; provide information regarding “informal stops;” create bus stops in highly frequented locations.
- Many mentioned a desire to **increase collaboration between municipalities, the private sector and WRTA**. For example, the Town and private actors could taking on some responsibilities, such as, improving the pedestrian environment (provide and repair sidewalk connections), and providing and maintaining bus stops, as well as by promoting transit services.
- Some thought promoting the idea of shared rides and making it “cool” to ride transit could improve ridership.
- **The population in the three-town region is getting more diverse** (racially, linguistically, etc.)
- **The population is aging**; many residents want to “age in place.” They have different transit needs than those in assisted living and other senior living environments

Expand Geographic Reach of Service

Expand geographic reach of service including more connections between the three towns, as well as to Marlborough, Framingham, Boston, and Worcester desired. Connections also desired to:

- MBTA stations & other regional transportation hubs
- Downtowns (consider creating bus stops here)
- Provide food access to grocery stores, food pantries, community fridge, culturally responsive food outlets
- Key municipal destinations include town hall, library, schools, etc.
- Large employers in the area
- Popular locations include Northborough Crossing, Walmart, medical facilities in Worcester, pharmacies, Market Basket, White City shopping center, Marlborough, Framingham, and Grafton.
- Northborough Crossing is a key destination for shopping and employment
- Access to medical facilities should be prioritized

Representative Stakeholder Comments

“I have no idea how to take the bus...When do the buses come? How often do the buses come? When and where do they stop? ...It’s like a secret handshake...”

How do I find out the answers to these questions?”

“I actually had to ride my wheelchair across the highway because Via wouldn’t give me a ride back.”

“We use the train frequently, but every time I try to use Via, it is not available. The train is a 45-minute walk from our house. Instead, I take my bike, which is not always ideal, but also transit is not able to accommodate bikes. “

“Use an equity lens to ensure that public transit is equitable (including affordability, access to recreational and other amenities for all, allowing for alternative payment options).”

Reach New Demographics

Expand service for various demographics including:

- Expand hours for **shift workers** (expand hours of operation to include early morning and late night/after 7 PM)
- **Refugees** living in emergency shelter
- **Housing Authority residents**
- Expand service for **older adults** to have access to additional locations and later hours; also create more “shopping days,” “entertainment nights,” etc... Also need to consider the transit needs of those providing in-house services (e.g. cleaning, laundry, nursing care) to older adults “aging in place” in their homes. Recruitment of CoA van drivers has been a challenge.
- Expand service for **students** who need to get to after school sports, workplaces, and other activities. Also, there is a growing population of college students. Need to promote idea that rides should be shared with other riders.
- **Employees** who work in the three-town region, but do not live there (e.g. fast food, grocery stores, etc.)
- **Consider the multi-family development projects in the pipeline** and expected future expansion because of the MBTA Communities Act as well as other growth areas (e.g. along Rt. 9, Rt. 20, etc.) as these will likely have an impact on the number of people wanting to use transit

Representative Stakeholder Comments

“We need to increase access to the service by improving communication, increasing visibility, providing multi-lingual interaction, and providing alternative ways of access that do not only depend on a smartphone App.”

“Personally, if Via serviced my area (in Northborough), I would love to use it. If the service was available I would definitely use it. This summer I needed to get a ride to the MBTA station daily because of a lack of useful connection to commuter rail. I see others doing the same.”

“It’s wonderful that we have some public transit. It would be great if we could expand it to serve more people, more places and longer hours as well as on weekends.”

“We need to find a way to support shift workers and employees who work in our towns but don’t live here.”

Customer Experience

- **Improve reliability** (be on time and don't cancel/deny trips)
- **Improve pedestrian and bicycle connections** (responsibility of municipalities) and provide the option to carry a bicycle to destination.
- Ensure that service is **affordable** and **allow for multiple ways of paying** (e.g. offer ability to tap a credit card, recognize that refugees do not have a bank account, account or fact that some seniors do not feel comfortable using a smartphone). Consider charging on a sliding scale.
- Improve process for **Via and wheelchair vehicle dispatch** (reports that people are not using service because of perceived competition between the general population and those with a disability and with return trips being denied resulting in people being stranded). Consider developing a separate service for people with disabilities and seniors (or priority given) and a way to vet that the individual seeking a ride has a disability.
- Consider providing **physical bus stops at key destinations**. These could be created and maintained in a public/private partnership between the Town, private sector and WRTA and could go in such places as: key municipal locations (town hall, library, schools), downtowns, Northborough Crossing, Walmart, medical facilities in Worcester, Market Basket, White City shopping center, etc.

Representative Stakeholder Comments

“There is a lack of support for people working outside of 9-5, they have to have a car to get to work. I have heard from employers that they are struggling to hire...”

“People use Via as if it were a cheap Uber. They need to be encouraged to share rides. Make taking public transit cool!”

“It would make a difference if there was a schedule I could depend on.”

“We should try to develop bus stops at key locations through public/private partnerships. Agreements can be made with the private sector to maintain these.”

“Route 9 is not pedestrian-friendly so more bus stops would make it safer to travel to housing complexes, retail plazas and employment centers.”

Access to Service Information

- **Improve customer service** and responsiveness to complaints
- A call to **increase access for individuals not comfortable** with technology, who do not own a smart phone, who do not own a credit card, do not have a credit card, and for people whose first language is not English.
- **Provide multi-lingual information and access** (currently Via information is translated on the official WRTA website, but is not available in a language other than English on the Via-maintained website)

- **Survey residents** to better understand the needs of users and potential riders.

Expand Hours & Days of Service

- **Make transit service permanent** so that people can rely on it to make employment decisions
- Consider expanding service to **weekend days**.
- **Support Council on Aging in their desire to expand hours and days of operation and share resources** and transport older adults to surrounding towns and beyond for medical, cultural, and entertainment trips.

Prioritization of Findings

Participants in all the community and municipal workshops were asked to prioritize improvements by responding to the following question: “If you could do one thing to improve public transit, what would it be?” Responses are documented in the table below.

Figure 50: Community Prioritization of Findings

If you could change one thing to improve the existing public transit system, what would it be?	Comments	# of Responses
Create an expanded public transit system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expand it throughout the main roads ▪ More complete routes, especially to surrounding towns ▪ Connect to existing lines of transit ▪ Connect to new locations (including Hopkinton) ▪ There are segments of town that don't get any service ▪ Expand to Northborough 	13
Information/advertise/promote the service (9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve communication between WRTA and vendors operating transit ▪ Clean up process for Via and wheelchair vehicle dispatch ▪ Improve customer service and responsiveness to complaints 	9
Expand hours of operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Address shift worker's needs (expand hours of operation) – (2) 	6
Weekend service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide trips to commuter rail for nights out in Boston & Worcester 	3
Expand CoA/WRTA service to all people		2
Increase collaboration between municipalities & WRTA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ WRTA can only do so much 	2
Make transit service permanent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ so people can rely on it to make employment decisions 	2
Make it cool		2
Make access easy		2
Improve reliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Be on time and don't cancel / deny trips 	2

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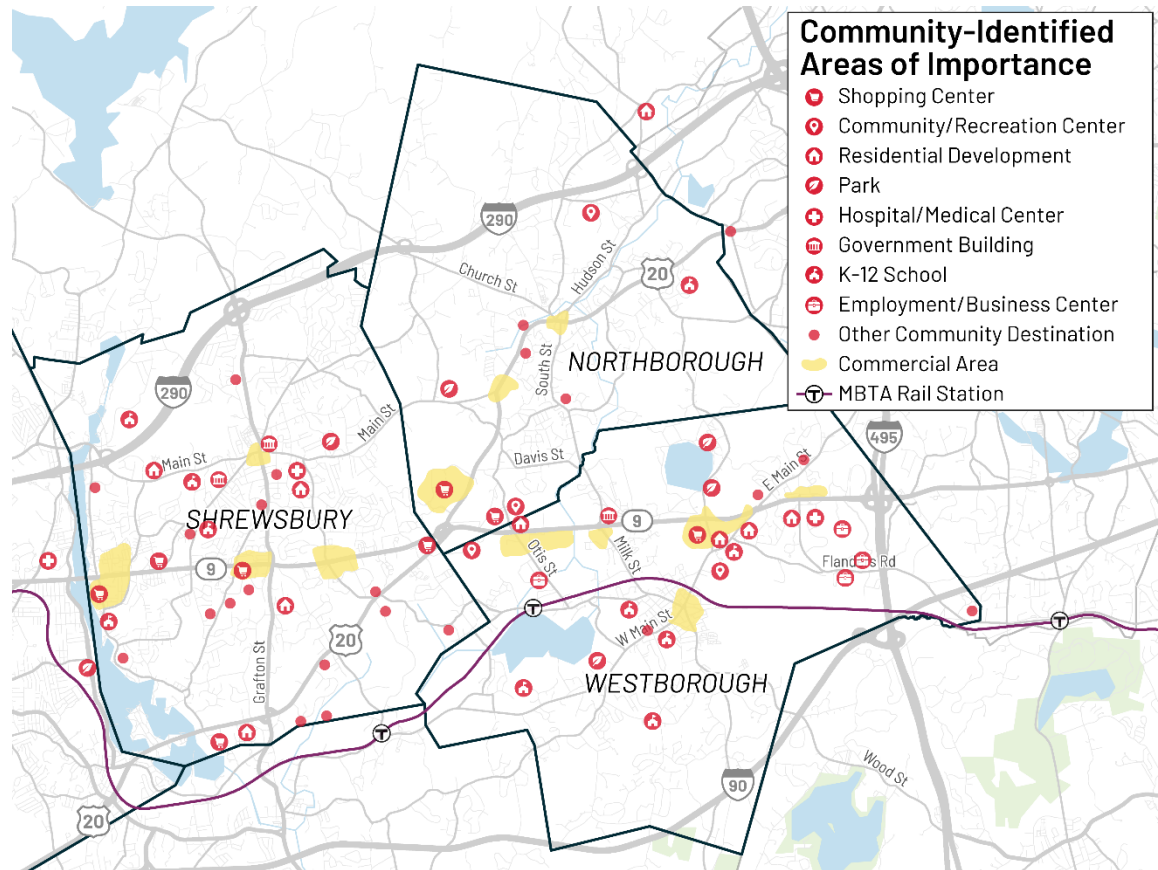
Increase both span and area served		2
Public/private partnerships to create and maintain bus stops		1
Convenience and affordability		1
Prioritize those who have no other option		1
More sidewalks and safer bike paths		1
Use smaller vehicles with specific routes and scheduled service		1
Create a Jitney type service		1
Micro transit that operates across the whole town-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ separated for people with disabilities and seniors 	1
Find out specific needs of the population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ survey residents 	1
More cars, more drivers		1
Follow same fare-free policy as the rest of the WRTA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ make public transit equitable 	1

Community-Identified Areas of Importance

Figure 51 consolidates the findings from public engagement mapping exercises, in which study area residents were asked to identify the most important locations in their community on a map.

Key types of locations identified include shopping centers and grocery stores; community recreation centers, such as senior centers and the YMCA; residential developments, including retirement communities, multifamily housing developments, and apartment complexes; parks; hospitals and medical centers; government buildings, including post offices and public libraries; K-12 schools; employment centers, like office parks and industrial buildings; and MBTA rail stations. The map also includes commercial areas that are less defined than shopping centers, such as downtowns or commercial corridors, and other points placed by community members for specific businesses or housing clusters.

Figure 51: Community-Identified Areas of Importance



Community Summaries

The following represents feedback specific to each municipality from the engagement activities, including municipal and regional workshops, MBTA-users meeting, and pop-up events

Shrewsbury

- Shrewsbury continues to see significant redevelopment and transit-oriented style development projects (e.g., Lakeway Commons and Edgemere Crossing). With continued growth expected (especially along Route 20) significant challenges and opportunities are likely for the Town and WRTA. A **proactive and collaborative approach to transit networks** will be needed.
- **Locations considered important to connect** include MBTA stations (also consider reverse commute), access to food (including food pantries, community fridge, grocery stores and culturally responsive grocers), public housing, senior housing, access to medical services/urgent care, refugee housing, town center, surrounding towns
- **Expand service** for students who need to get to work, refugees, Housing Authority residents without a car, seniors who use the MBTA to visit family, early and late shift workers
- A **need for information, communication and increased visibility** regarding existing service and an indication of where and when one can access it was strongly expressed; seniors not always comfortable with using technology, non-English speakers may need linguistic support, would like physical indicators on site

(signage, QR codes, maps of routes, bus stops, etc.); create a show on CableTV

- Inform riders of the **“informal stops”** so that they can better access the bus
- **The three top attributes** selected as being most desirable: **minimized wait time, minimized travel time, affordable service**

Westborough

- Desire to **increase connections** to include HUD and Housing Authority Housing, refugee emergency shelters, downtown to train station, to large employers, among other destinations
- Identified a need to **improve pedestrian and bicycle connections**
- Identified a need to **provide multi-lingual information** and access to Via (currently only available in English)
- Need for **late night service** for shift workers
- Identified a need to provide **multiple ways of paying** for the service (e.g., offer ability to tap a credit card, recognition that refugees do not have a bank account). Also ensure that service is **affordable** (e.g., provide sliding scale?)
- Call for **surveying users** and those desiring to use service to understand their needs
- They are **hoping to expand the existing COA service by partnering with WRTA** in the future. Right now, they are limited to days/hours because its volunteer based and there are no paid drivers.

- The **top three attributes** of public transportation selected as being most desirable: **affordable service, late service (7 PM), minimized wait time**

Northborough

- There is **no public transit currently available** in Town other than the CoA van service for seniors and people with disabilities. Some discussion regarding just how much demand there would be.
- A **desire for expansion** of service geographically as well as to evenings and weekends
- A **need for increased awareness** regarding the service and access to **information** was emphasized (e.g., post approximate time of arrival and map with destinations, market the service to increase ridership)
- If service were to be provided, **needed connections** include: Worcester, Housing Authority units, access to medical care, food, access to employment, make

downtown a destination stop, link to transportation hubs, e.g. other existing transit lines

- **Additional users** needing public transit include recent immigrants and refugees, youth needing rides to and from school sports, QCC, and workplaces
- **Northborough Crossing** is a key destination for shopping and employment
- **Service to older adults** seems to be working well, but could be improved with an increase in the hours of operation and days of the week
- **Improve pedestrian and bike connections** (missing sidewalks) and provide the option of being able to carry a bicycle to one's destination
- **Expand ways of requesting service** (need for smartphone limits access)
- **The three top attributes** selected as being most desirable: **affordable service, clear and accessible information, late service (after 7 PM)**

RECOMMENDATIONS

Connecting Communities: A Comprehensive Transportation Vision for Shrewsbury, Westborough, and Northborough's primary goal is to develop a transit network that aligns with the needs of the three communities using existing resources in the short-term, and what service can look like in the future with additional resources. Findings from the market analysis, route profiles, and community engagement all informed the recommendations. Key findings include:

- Fixed-route services have some on-time performance challenges and Route 12 has a somewhat irregular schedule.
- There is greater demand for service than is supplied. There may be opportunities to serve more people by adjusting service design.
- Population and employment density throughout the region suggest on-demand transit services are appropriate for much of the area. However, fixed-route service may be appropriate for areas with new and existing development today and in the future.
- People want to reach places throughout the three communities.

Recommendations are divided into two categories: service recommendations and administrative recommendations.

Service recommendations cover the design of transit service, for example, where service goes, when service is available, and how frequent service is. Administrative recommendations are policies, strategies, initiatives, and investments in transit infrastructure that would complement the design of transit service.

SERVICE RECOMMENDATIONS

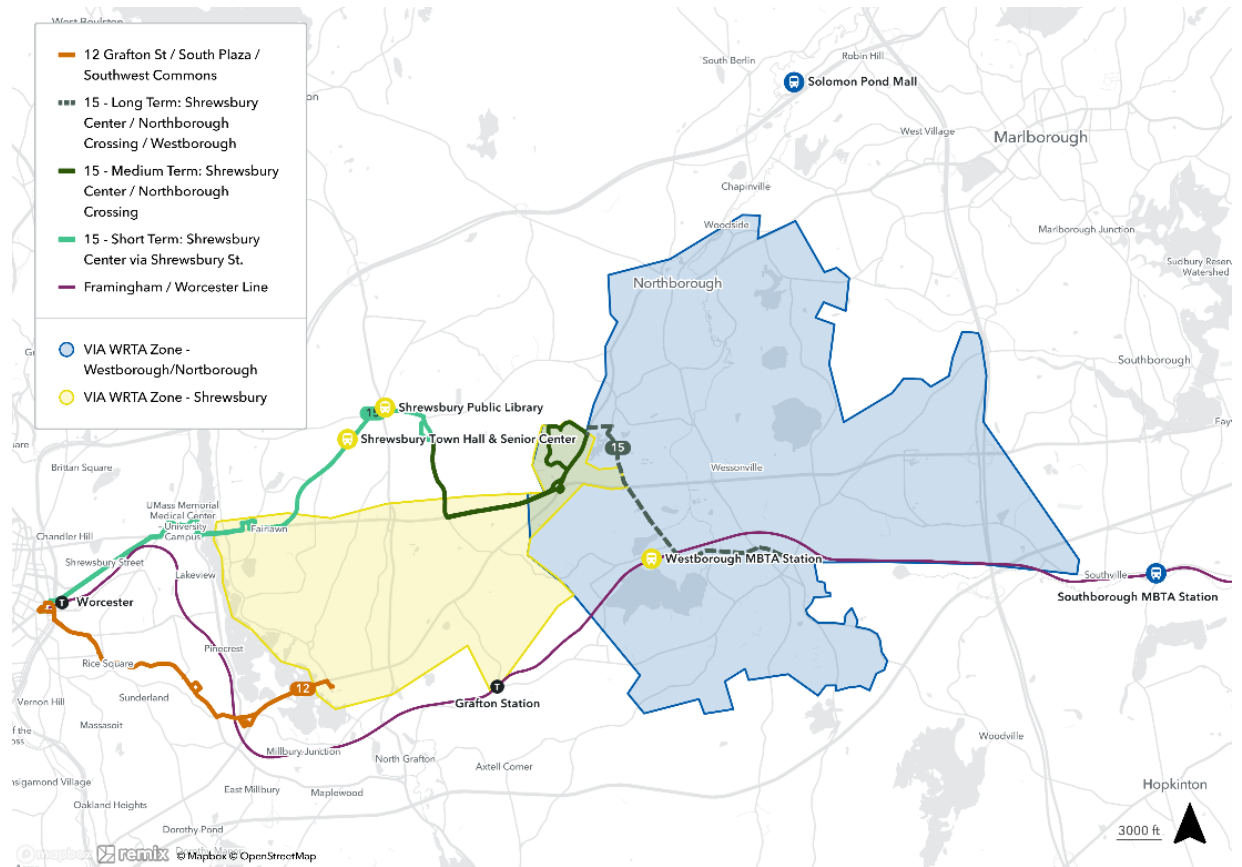
The recommended service plan is designed in three stages (Figure 53). The first stage is cost-neutral and designed to be implementable in the short-term. The medium- and long-term recommendations are not tied to specific implementation dates, but instead to when funding becomes available for implementation.

In the short-term, the recommended network is similar to the existing network. The recommendations focus on improving the operations of service. The biggest difference between the existing and short-term recommended network is the design of Via-WRTA service. The recommended changes to Via-WRTA are to address existing operational challenges and expand transit access.

In the medium- and long-term, Route 15 would be extended to Northborough Crossing and then Westborough as additional resources become available.

Individual service change description profiles can be found in Appendix B.

Figure 52: Recommended Transit Network



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Figure 53: Key Changes for Each Service

	Short-Term	Medium-Term	Long-Term
Route 12	Scheduled service every 60 minutes	No Change	No Change
Route 15	No change	Extend to Northborough Crossing	Extend to Downtown Westborough
Via-WRTA	<p>Divide service into 2 zones and adjust the areas served.</p> <p>More of Northborough is included in Via-WRTA service.</p> <p>Service in Shrewsbury is flipped. Areas south of Route 20 are covered and areas north of Route 20 are no longer covered.</p>	Expand hours of service for evening service and Saturday service.	No Change
Northborough Council on Aging	No change	No change	No change
Shrewsbury Council on Aging	No change	No change	No change

Route 12: Southwest Commons Via Grafton Street Recommendations

Overview

Route 12 operates between WRTA’s Hub Center and Market Basket at Edgemere Crossing Via Grafton Street and Hartford Turnpike. Select trips deViate to North High School in the morning and afternoon when school is in session. Most of the route’s alignment is in Worcester. Market Basket is the only destination served in Shrewsbury.

There is no alignment change proposed for this route. However, the proposed Route 12 operates with hourly service to help improve on-time performance and make the schedule easier for passengers to understand and predictable (see Figure 54).

Resources Needed

Additional resources may be needed for hourly service.

Figure 54 Route 12 Existing and Proposed Span & Frequency

	Weekday		Saturday		Sunday	
	Span	Frequency	Span	Frequency	Span	Frequency
Existing	6:10 AM – 9:25 PM	50-70	-	-	-	-
Proposed	6:00 AM – 9:30 PM	60	-	-	-	-

Potential Considerations for the Future

While State Highway 20 shows potential for future transit growth, current density along the corridor is better suited for on-demand service. WRTA should only consider the extension of Route 12 with significant growth along the State Highway 20 corridor.

Route 15: Shrewsbury Center Via Shrewsbury Street Recommendations

Overview

Currently, Route 15 provides service into downtown Shrewsbury Via Maple Avenue from the Hub.

In the short-term, no change is recommended for Route 15. In the medium-term and long-term, the route is extended to Northborough Crossing and downtown Westborough, respectively. Extending Route 15 would improve service to transit markets identified along the State Highway 9 corridor and downtown Westborough. It also aligns with east-west Via-WRTA travel patterns along the State Highway 9 corridor. There is no proposed change in frequency (see Figure 55).

Figure 55: Route 15 Span & Frequency

	Weekday		Saturday		Sunday	
	Span	Frequency	Span	Frequency	Span	Frequency
Existing	5:50 AM – 9:10 PM	60	9:50 AM – 5:50 PM	60	-	-
Proposed (Medium-Term)	6:00 AM – 9:00 PM	60	10:00 AM – 6:00 PM	60	-	-
Proposed (Long-Term)	6:00 AM – 9:00 PM	60	10:00 AM – 6:00 PM	60		

Resources Needed

Extending Route 15 requires additional resources. WRTA should consider partnership with all three towns to fund the capital and operational needs of this expansion.

Figure 56: Additional Resources Required

	Short-Term	Medium-Term	Long-Term
Additional Vehicles	No change	1	2
Additional Hours of Service (Annual)	No change	3,500 – 4,000	7,000 – 8,000

Via-WRTA Recommendations

Via-WRTA is a popular microtransit service that provides connections across large portions of Shrewsbury and Westborough. However, travel times can be slow, and scheduling reliability has been challenging. To address these issues, WRTA should consider the following modifications to Via-WRTA service:

Develop two smaller zones: Because the current zone is so large (25.8 square miles), trips can be quite long, reducing opportunities for other potential riders to schedule trips. By dividing the zone into two smaller zones, WRTA will be able to better control for trip length.

For passengers wishing to travel across zones, WRTA should consider the adoption of a zone surcharge for longer trips. This policy will allow for trips between Shrewsbury and Westborough, and incentivize shorter trips.

Expand into Northborough: The market analysis suggests there is demand for on-demand public transportation in Northborough, especially within the downtown area. In partnership with the Town of Northborough, WRTA should consider expanding the new Westborough zone to include portions of Northborough.

Reshape Shrewsbury Zone: Currently the Via-WRTA service in Shrewsbury significantly overlaps with Route 15. WRTA should reshape the new Shrewsbury zone to minimize overlap between these services and expand microtransit to cover State Highway 20 and the Grafton MBTA station.

Council on Aging Service Recommendations

Shrewsbury and Northborough both benefit from robust Council on Aging services that provide connections for older adults and people with disabilities in their respective communities. These services should continue to operate as designed due to the vital mobility connection they provide within their communities.

With Via-WRTA service open to the public, Council on Aging services provide additional mobility options for people who may not be able to easily access the microtransit option.

WRTA should consider partnering with Westborough to explore bringing the Council on Aging service model to their community, to provide an additional mobility option for older adults and people with disabilities.

ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

Vehicles

Require entire on-demand fleet to be wheelchair accessible: WRTA should require their operator to exclusively use wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs) for Via-WRTA service. Currently, one to two WAVs operate during service,, while service can require up to four vehicles. Passengers that require a WAV may not have access to the service if a vehicle is unavailable for their trip because it is requested by other people. By transitioning to an all-WAV fleet, Via-WRTA service can remove this scheduling complication and provide accessible service for all riders.

Infrastructure

Coordinate with MassDOT and each municipality to install bus stop infrastructure: WRTA should consider designated bus stops along Route 15, especially as it is extended to Westborough. Bus stops should have passenger amenities to clearly delineate where buses stop and provide waiting areas with protection from the elements. Currently, WRTA service operates as a flag stop system in Shrewsbury. Investment in bus stops will improve people’s awareness of bus service in their community and create a safer waiting environment for passengers.

Advocate for improved pedestrian infrastructure: WRTA should coordinate with all three communities and MassDOT to address pedestrian connectivity in the region, especially along the Route 9 corridor. Route 9 is not comfortable or safe for people to walk along. Improving the pedestrian environment will improve access to Route 15.

Fare Products

Allow additional fare payment options for Via-WRTA service: Via-WRTA service requires passengers to use a credit or debit card to reserve a trip. This practice limits passengers without access to these financial products. WRTA should work with their partner(s) to offer alternative means of payment for Via-WRTA service. Expanding fare collections to allow for passes will create opportunities for new riders to access Via-WRTA service.

Municipal Coordination

Coordinate with municipalities to advance service recommendations: WRTA should coordinate directly with each of the municipalities on implementing the recommendations in this report. Each of the recommendations in this report will carry financial obligations that may extend beyond the resources available to WRTA. However, each community is eligible for state funding that can be applied towards local transit services. WRTA should work with the municipalities to access funding for these service recommendations.

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APPENDIX A: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS

REGIONAL WORKSHOPS

Disabilities Community Regional Workshop

Purpose: To bring together key stakeholders in a focused discussion regarding the specific transit needs of persons with disabilities.

There were five participants at the Regional Workshop on Disabilities. Northborough does not have a Disabilities Commission. A representative of WRTA was also in attendance.

The Workshop began with a presentation by the Consultant Team sharing Early Findings describing existing conditions. This was followed by an invitation to participants to identify key destinations on a map as well as to answer a series of questions regarding existing and desired conditions of public transit as they relate to meeting the needs of persons with disabilities.

Key Findings

- **Via is perceived as not being reliable**, several reports of people getting a ride one way only to be stuck without a ride back, resulting in some people with disabilities avoid using the service all together

- All three towns expressed an **interest in shared trips**, crossing over town lines and sharing CoA resources
- Would like **more connections** to medical services in surrounding towns, job training sites, Northborough Crossing (for shopping and employment), jobs, micro transit throughout the town for people with disabilities
- **Improve communication** and customer service response
- **Improve reliability**, don't cancel trips
- Provide **weekend service**

Summary of Meeting Notes

A summary of the facilitated discussion follows.

Monday, October 28 @ 1:30 – 3:00 PM

Forbes Municipal Building

Notes By: Daphne Politis, Principal, Community Circle

Participants

Heather Crump, Disabilities Commission (Westborough)

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Rich Strecker, Disabilities Commission (Westborough)

Constance Mellis, Central Mass Region

Deb DeDitto, Disabilities Commission (Shrewsbury)

Jenny Gringas, Director of Planning, Westborough

Participants noted that the data presented in the PPT slide show was consistent with their experience and knowledge of the state of public transit today. Comments included:

- The apartments next to Walmart are denser than the maps show
- The triangle that shows a concentration of individuals with a disability on the map is either a senior housing complex with a high percentage of people with disabilities on Julio Drive and/or a group home located in the same general area.
- Comment that all those providing transportation, including companies that do so, could be involved in the conversation

Questions

How do individuals with disabilities in your community currently access services?

- Shrewsbury – there are volunteers (church community) that help supplement COA services
 - Westborough – Via and Council on Aging services
 - Paratransit service only operates in Westborough on two days per week

- Dial-A-Ride through MetroWest: door-to-door service which goes everywhere. Would like to have access to this throughout the three-town region.
- Northborough and Shrewsbury have free curb-to-curb CoA service with Shrewsbury experiencing slightly higher usage.

•

Are there people that due to the way WRTA currently operates have limited access or do not have any access to WRTA's services?

- People with mobility impairments that don't use a wheelchair
- Long waits have discouraged people from utilizing service
- Perceived competition for service between general population and people with disabilities and seniors
- The CoA vans provide limited service
- Via is not reliable, several reports of people getting a ride one way only to be stuck without a ride back, resulting in some people with disabilities avoid using the service all together
- Reports of many rides being denied.
- The reason some places are not seeing activity on Via is that people may have stopped using it. Would rather schedule with the Senior Center or just not go. Via is not reliable.

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- All parts of the community, including the less dense areas, should be served by public transportation
- Some individuals in wheelchairs report riding their wheelchair on highways because of trip denials

Are there opportunities to create shared trips across communities? (e.g., grocery day – medical circulator?)

- Shrewsbury Commission on Disabilities advertises shared trips on their website and they venture out to several places
- Westborough: They would be interested in a shopper type of service.
- If in Westborough, cannot cross town lines on some services. EG: Cannot get to Northborough Crossing.

Are there any important regional links missing? (e.g. Are there places across the three towns that users may want to access that they currently are unable to reach?)

- Westborough COA can't get to Northborough crossing, Walmart,
- Westborough needs connection into Worcester for medical connections
 - Would like access to Framingham, MetroWest
 - Grafton-Westborough-Northborough-Shrewsbury loop

What gaps do you see in the transportation network as it exists today?

- Communication with WRTA

- Westborough has no connections outside of Via to Shrewsbury and Northborough
- Northborough Crossing is a major destination both for shopping as well as for employment
- Disabled and seniors do not have access to the edges of Westborough
- Only Shrewsbury has a bus going through part of the Town

Are there job training facilities and day center facilities that require public transportation access?

- Job training site near commuter rail in Grafton
- Grafton MBTA station is not ADA-compliant (confirm)
- New to town: Post 22 facility (trains people with disabilities for employment, gives internships)- near Bay State Commons – operates their own vehicle/mini van
- The school system has a borough program which trains kids for jobs
- Once someone is done with the training program, there are limitations on where they can get jobs because of lack of access
- There is a training center in Marlborough
- May have to walk ½ a mile to Via to access employment and this may be an obstacle to a disabled person to wishing to access employment

Other Comments:

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- The downtown revitalization plan is focused on transportation issues in the downtown.
- “Users should have to prove they are disabled in order to receive priority for Via”
- “How will the plan be funded? Can we change the way public transit is funded? Each town receives a certain percentage from Uber, Lyft, etc. Can that money be used to pay for public transit system?”
- “When you contact WRTA, it is frustrating. They are very on edge. They do not want to hear that there is a problem. They don’t return your call.”

If you could change one thing to improve the existing public transit system to help meet the needs of people with disabilities, what would it be?

- Micro transit that operates across the whole town – separated for people with disabilities and seniors
- Communications – improve communication between WRTA and vendors operating transit
- Improve process for Via and wheelchair vehicle dispatch
- Reliability – be on time. Don’t cancel/miss trips
- Weekends
- Improve customer service and response to complaints
- With limited service, how would you expand service?
- Would need to find the needs of the population

- Increase both: Span and Area

Please rank these service investments in order of priority to meet the needs of people with a disability

- 1st | Better connections regionally (Boston, Worcester, Framingham)
- 2nd | Expanded local connections
- 3rd | Longer span of service (later nights, earlier mornings)
- 4th | More days of service (weekends)

Council on Aging Regional Workshop

Purpose: To bring together key stakeholders in a focused discussion regarding the specific transit needs of older adults.

There were participants from all three towns as well as a representative from WRTA.

The Workshop began with a presentation by the Consultant Team sharing Early Findings describing existing conditions. This was followed by an invitation to participants to identify key destinations on a map as well as to answer a series of questions regarding existing and desired conditions of public transit as related to meeting the needs of older adults.

Key Findings

- **Connections needed** to medical services (some located in Worcester, Framingham and Marlborough), groceries and entertainment; also to MBTA
- In order to expand service, there is a need for additional van drivers and it is reportedly **challenging to recruit drivers**
- Service is needed to **help providers of in-home services for older adults to do in-home visits**
- Top three (3) investments to meet the needs of older adults:

- **better regional connections** (Boston, Worcester, Framingham)
- **longer span of service** (later nights, earlier mornings)
- **more days of service** (weekends)
- The #1 improvement that would have the biggest impact on increasing ridership among older adults is: **better access to information regarding service(s)**
- Trade offs: all agreed that a **shorter walk but longer service** is preferable to older adults than a longer walk but shorter service

Summary of Meeting Notes

A summary of the facilitated discussion follows.

Monday, October 28 @ 3:30 – 5 PM

Forbes Municipal Building

Notes By: Daphne Politis, Principal, Community Circle

Participants

Cynthia Willis, Transportation Coordinator, Shrewsbury, CoA

Kendra Faldetta, Northborough COA

Kristen McHugh, Westborough Senior Center

Alma DeManche, Westborough COA

Bradbury Huff, Westborough COA

David Farrow, Westborough Senior Center

Kristen Belanger, Assistant Town Planner, Westborough

Participants noted that the data presented in the PPT slide show was consistent with their experience and knowledge of the state of public transit today.

Most Popular Locations

- Northborough Crossing
- Walmart
- Worcester for Medical Facilities, U Mass buildings
- Shopping in Hudson & Berlin
- Medical Facilities in Framingham – they don't do this now. But there is demand.
- CoA partners with WRTA
- People are not typically denied service. If WRTA unavailable, can send a taxi

Unmet Needs:

- Framingham for medical appointments
- There are still people who need to connect to the MBTA, we just haven't talked to them yet
- Does not have a shopper service, but they go to Northborough every day – so it is filling the need.
- Not enough van drivers. Struggling with recruitment.
 - They have been advertising positions. Struggling to fill 2 positions.

- Also, many drivers are part-time after a career. This can be tricky. Also, some drivers have other jobs. They are not able to offer full-time jobs because of WRTA reimbursement. Would like 6 PT or 2 FT drivers. So there are days they deny trips because there are no drivers.

Northborough

- Marlborough residents can go to Northborough, but Northborough cannot go to Marlborough. This may be because Marlborough operates their own service, and Northborough's is through WRTA and Marlborough is not within the district/region.
- Will go to Marlborough for medical appointments.
- People also split between Worcester and Framingham for medical appointments. They don't have volunteer drivers.
- Springwell is their ASAP (in home services)
- It can take a long time for someone to get to Northborough because it is hard to get people to get to people's homes. It sounds like this is also an issue for Westborough.
- The issue is not the home, but getting people to the home.
- Would be interested in sharing resources and in connecting to CoAs activities in adjacent towns. There should be a different way of sharing. Different ways to reach people. Need to change how information is distributed. They distribute information, but are people reading it (e.g.: in Newsletter).

If you could do one thing to improve service for older adults, what would it be?

They are open late on Tuesdays, but because transportation ends at 4, they cannot get people to the late activities. It would be nice to have additional service on the days they are open later.

Westborough

- Reservations made to the Senior Center
- Thursdays rides are given to the grocery stores
- Tuesday afternoons: provide Shopping Trips (e.g.: Walmart)
- Picks people up from home
- Will bring people to the Senior Center
- Will curtail Dr. Appointment on Thursday because of the shopping trips
- Will help people in more serious situations
- 3 vehicles, 2 are used on the road every day. They are all different sizes.
- The shopper services are very popular. Easily fills 20 max van.
- Every once in a while they cannot serve everyone. Sometimes people need to wait a day (this happens every week).
- There is a requirement for having a certain certification/skill for operating the vehicles.
- Will use a volunteer for out of town medical appointments.

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- In some cases, need to use their buses.
- Evenly divided between people living in their homes, and people who live elsewhere.

If you could do one thing to improve the service for older adults, what would it be?

Expand service hours. They have done evening service for events.
Increase pay.

Shrewsbury

- Since September, 2023 – turned their service over to WRTA because the service was big and busy. Needed to hire another person.
- They had 2 RTA and 2 MAP vans. RTA took their two vans
- Shrewsbury has been doing something slightly different – Director calls them “fun” trips. Will take people to casinos, malls in different communities – it is more focused on entertainment than on basic needs and has become very popular and attracted a new group of people who were not taking service before.
- Eligibility: Will take seniors from other communities (e.g.: Westborough). Shrewsbury residents take priority, but effectively first come first served. Can take people to Worcester senior centers. They go to Worcester regularly for trips. Harder to get to Northborough’s senior center. Are not really going to Westborough.

- For larger trips, they ask for a deposit. So people don’t just sign up and then not go.
- Money goes into their gift account.
- They also ask for feedback and where people would like to go.
- Their goal is to fill their vehicles.
- They had a shopper service previously, e.g., Price chopper every Friday.
- Can speak to what was happening year ago (where people going): Senior Center, Medical Centers, UMass, doctor’s appointments, Podiatrist, Grocery: Market Basket, Price Chopper, Trader Joe’s, Grocery stores catered to Indian people, pharmacies, shopping, barber shop, hair dresser
- Where people cannot go depends on the person:
- Ocean State (the person who wanted to go was in Worcester, so they could not go)
- Tries to minimize refusals. Will also try to schedule trips to another day. There is a prioritization of trips. It is a function of demand.
- Aging in Place: Need for PCAs to assist (or a family member). Many people do not have family in the area.
- Regional connections are needed and are important especially when it comes to medical services; people call to get to places like Boston for medical care.

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If you could do one thing to improve the service for older adults, what would it be?

Expand service out more. There are segments of town that don't get service (Re Via: Has heard that people want it expanded).

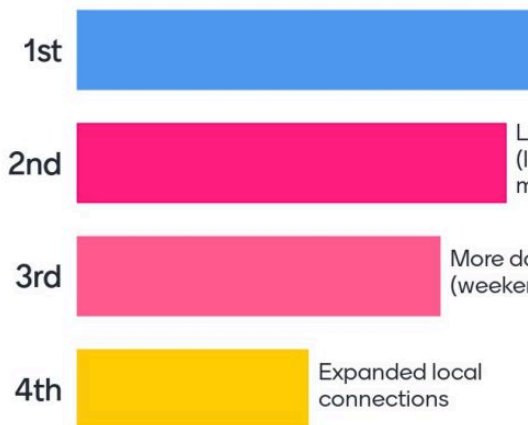
Additional Comments:

- Westborough is planning more pedestrian connections parallel to Rt. 9 which will help to increase ridership

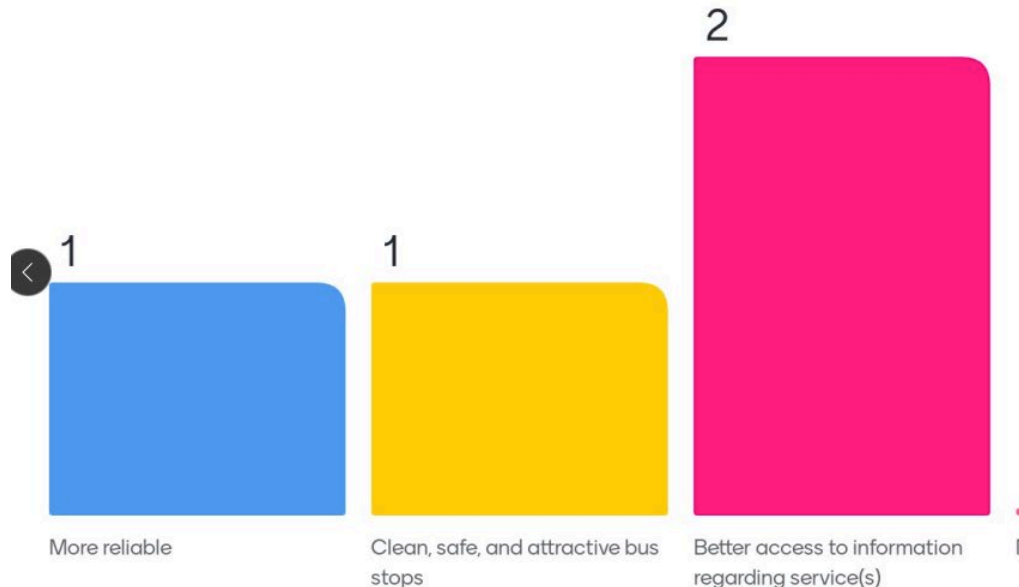
- Westborough would like better access to the MBTA; since COVID many more people are working from home so maybe MBTA connection is needed less
- When Via started, it was about getting people from the train to work in the Route 9 area (?). Covid saw some changes.

Polling

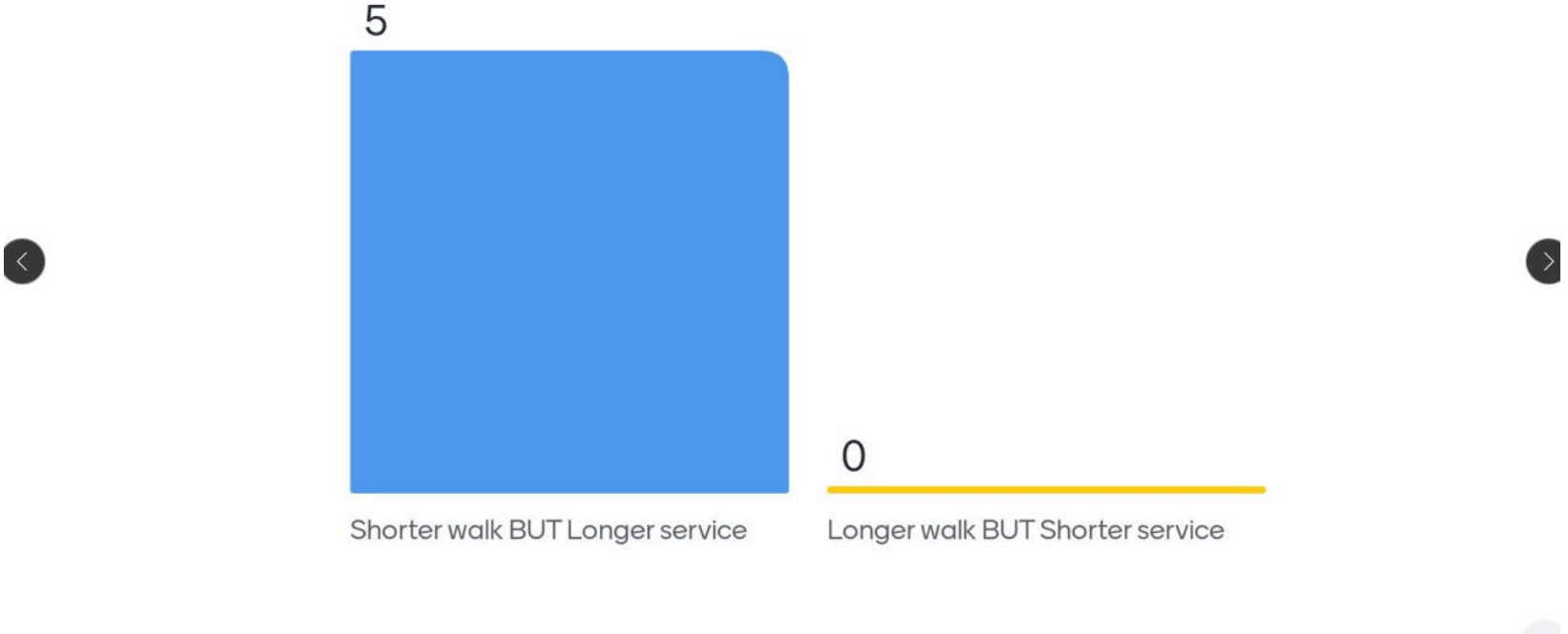
Please rank these service investments in order of priority



Which of the following improvements would have the biggest impact among older adults?



Public Transportation often requires tradeoffs. Please select the option that is most important to you.



Economic Development Regional Workshop

Purpose: To bring together key stakeholders in a focused discussion regarding the specific transit needs that could support economic development in the three-town region.

There were seven participants at the Community Workshop, primarily Town Staff. A representative from WRTA was also in attendance.

The Workshop began with a presentation by the Consultant Team sharing Early Findings describing existing conditions. This was followed by an invitation to participants to identify key destinations on a map as well as to answer a series of questions regarding existing and desired conditions of public transit and its role in supporting economic development in the region.

Key Findings

- **Economic activity is expected to grow** in the region soon. Transit seen as being an important way of supporting such activity.
- The number of people living in the new housing units created by **MBTA Communities Act will result in increasing the number of people wanting to use public transit**

- **Bay State Commons** (new community center that combines senior and veterans and community activities) **will result in increasing the number of people needing public transit**
- **Need connections to:** Refugee housing, multi-family housing (existing and in the pipeline), and connect to retail, large employment centers, downtowns, etc.
- **Employers report difficulty recruiting workers** in part due to lack of public transit access. Need to connect workers to jobs (including fast food workers, shift workers, etc.) and make Via permanent so that employees can depend on it when making employment choices
- **Need better pedestrian connections** (responsibility of the municipality)
- **Make taking public transit cool**
- **The top three (3) features of the public transit system most important to supporting economic development:** more reliable, better regional connections, longer span of service (later nights, earlier mornings)

Summary of Meeting Notes

A summary of the facilitated discussion follows.

Tuesday, October 29 @ 12:30 – 2:00 PM

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Final Report

Forbes Municipal Building

Notes By: Daphne Politis, Principal, Community Circle

Participants

Lara Crawford, Town of Westborough

Patrick Welch, Select Board, Westborough

Jason Palitsch, 495/MetroWest Partnership

Sandra Coker, EDC Westborough

Karen Chapman, Chamber of Commerce

Kristen Belanger, Assistant Town Planner, Westborough

Jenny Gringas, Director of Planning, Westborough

Participants noted that the data presented in the PPT slide show was consistent with their experience and knowledge of the state of public transit today. They made the following comments:

- The MBTA Communities Act will have an impact on the number of people wanting to use public transit (1250 units required in Westborough, overlaid on top of existing multi-family
- The triangle in Shrewsbury may be The Plants, a neighborhood of starter homes
- Westborough's map may be dated, there are 14 units per acre near the T stop
- Community Center in Bay State Commons - Westborough, near Roche Brothers, senior center, veteran center, and other multi-generational activities
- Show apartment complexes on map to make up for large zones and low density

Questions

Locations to connect with public transit:

- Sharpe building – refugees emergency housing
- Westborough has more hotel rooms than Worcester
- 25 Connector Westborough 109 units, right off Route 9, 25% affordable
- 18 Lyman St, ~300 units, 25% affordable, mixed use

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Final Report

- 134 Fisher St, 18 units near MBTA station, small single family
- Apartment building, same area for 19 units, transit-oriented village, high density development
- “Can we compare the # of trips with road capacity and condition?”
- Northborough Crossing is a main destination
- Suggestion to provide visualization of the flows by municipality
- Suggestion – show trade offs between micro transit and fixed-route where they are served by both, changes in weather

How do you expect your communities to change over the next 20 years? For example, centers of increased economic activity

- Bay State Commons – new community center (new senior and veterans centers) – upper floors renovated to other community activities
- Multi-family housing – 109 units (25% affordable)
- 18 Lyman street – 300 units (25% affordable) and mixed use
- 134 Fishers street (phase 1 18 units) – getting ready to apply for building permit (another 19 units nearby)
- Sharpe building (refugee housing) – space for 20 families
- Understand where there are hotels housing refugees

How successful are the businesses in your community at recruiting and/or retaining employees today? Do any businesses in your community have employees that rely on public transportation?

- Employment isn’t centralized – there are lot of employers spread out across the region (many 250-500 sized employers, except Amazon), located all along the Rt. 9 corridor
- Amazon has shifts 24 hours of the day
- Cost of living is expensive, in comparison lower cost for businesses – translates to challenges finding employees, not necessarily transportation specific.
- Via has been a welcome improvement to connecting employees to jobs
- Route 9 intersection (Arrive, Walmart) is being improved to be more ped friendly
- Route 9 rail to trail project currently in development
- Yes, employers have trouble in the context of a non-affordable place to live, shift workers having trouble to retain
- Fast Food gets workers from Worcester, not in study communities
- Used to be a Rt 9 bus service Worcester into Boston
- Safety and functionality on Route 9 are issues where Walmart is

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- High vacancy rate for lab space currently

How does your community support workers who are working non-standard shift times?

- Currently there is not much support for these workers, they must find individual solutions
- Lack of supporting for people working outside of 9-5; have to have a car to get to work, heard from employers they are struggling to hire
- Talk to Chris Egan stakeholder - Carruth Capital
- Is there an appetite for employers to talk about shift times?

If you could change one thing to improve the existing public transit system to help meet economic goals, what would it be?

- Extend Via service to be permanent
- Improve the transit network’s geography to connect to new locations (Hopkinton)
- Smaller vehicles with specific routes and scheduled service
- Make it cool
- Make transit service permanent so people can rely on it to make employment decisions
- Address/Attract/support shift workers
- Expanding transit service geographically

- Jitney type service

Please rank the following attributes of public transportation from most to least important



Planning and Public Health Regional Workshop

Purpose: To bring together key stakeholders in a focused discussion regarding the ways in which transit can support planning and public health goals.

There were five participants at the Community Workshop, from the Towns of Westborough and Northborough. A representative from WRTA was also present.

The Workshop began with a presentation by the Consultant Team sharing Early Findings describing existing conditions. This was followed by an invitation to participants to identify key destinations on a map as well as to answer a series of questions regarding existing and desired conditions of public transit and its role in supporting planning and public health goals.

Key Findings

- All three communities have a series of **goals in their master plans and strategic plans which can in part be achieved by the provision and use of public transit**; these include: increasing access to resources, connectivity for all ages, support to aging population and the disabled, reducing carbon footprint, reducing traffic congestion, supporting economic development, Westborough also lists supporting physical and mental health, among others
- There are **several projects in the pipeline** with large concentrations and density of people (including units developed because of the MBTA Communities Act)
- **Population is aging**, many residents wanting to age in place with different needs than those in assisted living and other senior living environments
- **Service needed** to regional transit hubs and for: students, others who don't have cars, including a number of people who work in the three municipalities, but do not live in them, refugees, shift workers, Housing authority residents, etc.
- **Population is increasingly more diverse** (Chinese, Indian and Spanish-speaking populations on the rise)
- **Need for better access to information and increased visibility of available service(s)**
- **Consider actual bus stops in key locations** (need to coordinate with the Town)
- **Route 9 is not pedestrian-friendly so more bus stops would make it safer to use** (at housing complexes, retail plazas, employment centers)
- **More coordination between the municipalities, private sector, and WRTA**
- **Make taking public transit cool!**

Summary of Meeting Notes

A summary of the facilitated discussion follows.

Wednesday, October 30 @ 11:00 AM – 12:30 PM

Forbes Municipal Building

Notes By: Daphne Politis, Principal, Community Circle

Participants

Hazel Nourse, Westborough Planning Office

Mark Silverberg, Chair, Master Plan Implementation Committee,
Westborough

Kristen Belanger, Assistant Town Planner, Westborough

Jenny Gringas, Director of Planning, Westborough

Laurie Connors, Director of Planning, Northborough

Participants noted that the data presented in the PPT slide show was consistent with their experience and knowledge of the state of public transit. Comments included:

- Provide connection between different regional transit systems, other than just the MBTA, at least overlap or places to transfer
- Aging population gap - trip type broken down, CoA do track trip type
- Does Via and WRTA have trip type?
- Downtown Westborough will become more walkable (downtown revitalization plan underway)

Questions

Additional public transit connections needed:

- Need service for students, people who don't have cars
- Route 9, high density of multi-family
- Workers at grocery stores
- Bus route on Rt 9, Rt. 20 and downtown
- Need connections to 40B development(s) and refugee housing
- In Northborough has CoA
- Shift workers are not being served
- Have housing authority, don't necessarily have cars
- Would like to get to Shrewsbury

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- Refugees at Econo lodge - definitely don't have cars

If you could change one thing to improve public transit in your community, what would it be?

- Expanding CoA service to all people
- WRTA can only do so much, communities must meet them
- Tell me what we have to do to support it
 - Public -private partnership: consider creating one at Walmart in Northborough Crossing e.g. Blackstone Valley Mall in Millbury is maintaining bus stop
 - Towns need to bring WRTA to the table
 - Convenience and affordability
 - Prioritize those who have no other option
 - Make it cool and easy

Additional Comments

- affordability to connect to train station, would rather not pay for parking
- Can services that connect into the MBTA be free?
- Southborough is cheaper fare, different zone, served by Via
- Northborough getting more diverse, Chinese and Indian populations are growing

- More multifamily housing in terms of townhouses, don't anticipate much growth in MBTA areas
- Developments on Route 20
- People who work in study area communities don't work in them
- Need better access to information and increased visibility
- Could there be an actual Via bus stop at the Community Center, Senior Center, high school, and other schools; need to coordinate with the Town(s)
- Rt. 9 is not pedestrian-friendly so need more bus stops (e.g., housing complexes, retail plazas, employment centers)

COMMUNITY SPECIFIC ENGAGEMENT

Shrewsbury Engagement

Shrewsbury Community Workshop

Purpose: To bring together key stakeholders in a focused discussion regarding the specific transit needs of the Town of Shrewsbury.

There were eleven participants at the Community Workshop, primarily Town Staff and including a representative from WRTA. The Workshop began with a presentation by the Consultant Team sharing Early Findings describing existing conditions. This was followed by an invitation to participants to identify key destinations on a map as well as to answer a series of questions regarding existing and desired conditions of public transit in Shrewsbury.

Key Findings

- Shrewsbury continues to see significant redevelopment and Transit-oriented style development projects (e.g., Lakeway Commons and Edgemere Crossing). With continued growth expected (especially along Route 20) significant challenges and opportunities are likely for the Town and WRTA. A **proactive and collaborative approach to transit networks** will be needed.
- **Locations considered important to connect** include MBTA stations (also consider reverse commute), access to food (including food pantries, community fridge, grocery stores and culturally responsive grocers), Housing Authority Housing, senior housing, access to medical services/urgent care, refugee housing, town center, surrounding towns
- **Expand service** for students who need to get to work, refugees, Housing Authority residents without a car, seniors who use the MBTA to visit family, early and late shift workers
- A **need for information, communication and increased visibility** regarding existing service and an indication of where and when one can access it was strongly expressed; seniors not always comfortable with using technology, non-English speakers may need linguistic support, would like physical indicators on site (signage, QR codes, maps of routes, bus stops, etc.); create a show on Cable TV
- Inform riders of the **“informal stops”** so that they can better access the bus

- **The three top attributes** selected at being most desirable: **minimized wait time, minimized travel time, affordable service**

Summary of Meeting Notes

A summary of the facilitated discussion follows.

Wednesday, October 23 @ 1:00 – 2:30 PM

Meeting Room A, Shrewsbury Public Library

Notes By: Daphne Politis, Principal, Community Circle

Participants

Nick Repekta, Highway Division

Andy Truman, Town Engineer, DPW

Deb DelDotto, Committee on Disabilities

Holly Licht, Director of Council on Aging

Kathy McSweeney, Housing Authority

Beth Casavant, Select Board

Michelle Conlin, Select Board

Luis Rodriguez, DEI Committee

Taylor Galusha, Town Manager's Office

Kushal Raghuram, Assistant Planning Director

Louise O'Neill, Planning Office

Participants noted that the data presented in the PPT slide show was consistent with their experience and knowledge of the state of public transit today and made the following comments:

Comments on Transit Propensity Map:

- The northeast corner of the Town is the wealthier part of Shrewsbury, but it is identified as having transit propensity. Why?
- The two darker areas on the map represent Housing Authority housing.
- What does triangle identifying a high concentration of the disability community mean? What is it?

Other Comments:

- Shrewsbury continues to see significant redevelopment and Transit-oriented style development projects (see Lakeway Commons and Edgemere Crossing) and has successfully worked with WRTA to coordinate infrastructure and routes with these significant projects. With continued growth on the horizon expected (especially along Route 20) significant challenges and opportunities are likely for the Town and WRTA. A proactive and collaborative approach to transit networks will be crucial to successful outcomes. What will that look like?

- What is not captured is seniors wanting to go to the MBTA to visit family members. This is not an activity that takes

place daily, not even weekly, but nevertheless is very important to these individuals.

- Food Access is an issue; there are several locations where food is distributed (and where presumably individuals needing food must access, with some probability of them needing public transit to get there). These include
- 2 food pantries and one community fridge.
- White City Plaza has three grocery stores, Market Basket
- Culturally responsive food at Christmas Tree Shoppe location, Patel Brothers, India Market

Polling

What are the best features of the public transportation system in your community today?

- Don't know/never used it (2)
- Community access
- Via allows for flexibility COA transportation for seniors
- Affordable
- Connectivity right in front of Town Hall and connectivity to the MBTA Station
- Free (2)
- WRTA easy to use phone schedules, confirmations
- Direct connectivity to the MBTA station that is within a reasonable time. Also does not consider reverse commuting.

What are the public transportation features most in need of improvement in your community?

- Expanded access
- Limitations of stops (Route 20 and other side of route 9 need service)
- Some physical bus stops to make the routes more apparent (seating and cover)
- Connections within Shrewsbury; access from Shrewsbury to Northborough and Westborough
- More connections in town (north to south) and visibility of existing routes
- Expansion of Via (service for students who need to get to work that don't have a car, can't use uber)
- Access for people with disabilities and transports within Shrewsbury, Northborough and Westborough
- Bus stops with route signage
- Routes that do not need to go through the central hub in Worcester
- Direct access to MBTA station and the connection to the Town center

Additional comments:

- Need better access across the three communities
- There are no bus routes on Rt. 20
- Lack of visibility of existing routes (because there are no bus stops)

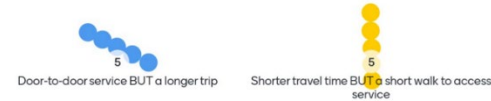
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- “I have no idea how to take the bus,” “When do the buses come?,” “How often do the buses come?,” “How do I find out the answers to these questions?”
- “It’s like a secret handshake”
- Suggestions included: display maps, QR code, phone number to call on signs along the route explaining how to take the buses, how often they come, etc.
- Inform the riders of the “informal stops” that is where those in the know gather to stop the bus
- WRTA responded letting participants know that there is a “bus tracker” on the WRTA website, and if put in physical bus stops then these require maintenance including shoveling in the winter as well as keeping the shelters free of people seeking to sleep in them or sell drugs, etc.. Additionally, there needs to be coordination among MassDOT (state), the Town and WRTA

Trade offs

- Participants agreed that they rather get to where they are going faster as opposed to other choices.
- In terms of walking to access the bus, it was emphasized that the walk should be short, but also safe
- Those working early and late shifts need access and may choose a longer wait for extended hours

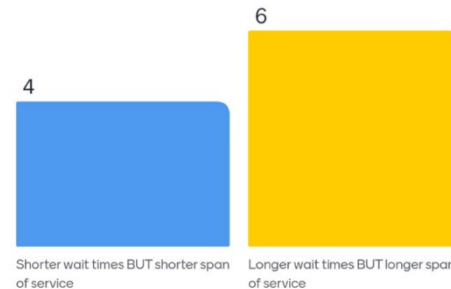
Public Transportation often requires tradeoffs. Please select the option that is most important to you.



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What do you see as missing from the current transportation system? Have you seen something elsewhere that you think could work well here?

- Advertisement for services (3)
- Variety in multimodal transportation options
- Better communication and visibility (2)
- Connectivity
- Limited stop heavy bus routes oriented to grocery stores and MBTA station
- Route maps in and on buses
- Routes within Shrewsbury
- Areas outside of Via and existing bus routes
- Public housing connections

Members of the Community Not Served

- EJ community
- Public housing areas
- Apartment complexes
- Senior housing communities
- Areas not served by the existing bus routes and Via service
- Education on the service
- Refugees (they have recently been relocated to White City Hotel for a more permanent location)
- Recent immigrants

- Question asked regarding how old do riders need to be in order to ride the bus. WRTA responded that FTA requires that riders 12 years old and younger must be accompanied by an adult. Bus drivers are trained to make a good faith effort to estimate the age of riders and not to let children that are too young to ride. Teenagers take the buses to school.

If you could change one thing to improve the public transit system, what would it be?

- Expand it (4), more connectivity throughout the main roads
- Information/advertising on the service (4)

Additional Comments

- Better advertise services
- Need more complete routes, especially to surrounding towns
- Need access to medical services/urgent care (there are 2 urgent care centers at Northborough Crossing; there is emergency care for pets, but no urgent care for people in Shrewsbury)
- Use free resources to get the word out
- Create a show on Cable TV to increase awareness regarding the service

- WRTA response: There is a new travel trainer available to help show people how to use the system, including ADA
- If resources are limited, how can service be expanded?

Please rank the following attributes of public transportation from most to least important



- paratransit for Housing Authority residents (participants were unaware of this support service)
- The fact that it is free: this lets people try it and those the most in need are low income so the fact that it is free is most helpful to those that need it the most
 - Seniors like the person-to-person service; they don't like Via because they are not comfortable using the technology

Shrewsbury Pop-Up

September 25, 2024

Shrewsbury Community Night

We asked:

- Where are the most important locations in your community?

We heard:

- White City Shopping Center
- Market Basket
- Walmart (Northborough)
- BJs (Northborough)
- Downtown Shrewsbury



Westborough Engagement

Westborough Community Workshop

Purpose: To bring together key stakeholders in a focused discussion regarding the specific transit needs of the Town of Westborough.

There were fifteen participants at the Community Workshop, primarily Town Staff. A representative of WRTA was also present.

The Workshop began with a presentation by the Consultant Team sharing Early Findings describing existing conditions. This was followed by an invitation to participants to identify key destinations on a map as well as to answer a series of questions.

Key Findings

- Desire to **increase connections** to include HUD and Housing Authority Housing, refugee emergency shelters, downtown to train station, to large employers, among other destinations
- Identified a need to **improve pedestrian and bicycle connections**
- Identified a need to **provide multi-lingual information** and access to Via (currently only available in English)
- Need for **late night service** for shift workers
- Identified a need to provide **multiple ways of paying** for the service (e.g., offer ability to tap a credit card,

recognition that refugees do not have a bank account). Also ensure that service is **affordable** (e.g., provide sliding scale?)

- Call for **surveying users** and those desiring to use service to understand their needs
- The **top three attributes** of public transportation selected as being most desirable: affordable service, late service (7 PM), minimized wait time
- Town Management would like to **explore partnering with WRTA and the CoA to expand service to the Town's older adults**

Summary of Meeting Notes

Jenny Gringas, Director of Planning, Westborough

A summary of the facilitated discussion follows.

Wednesday, October 30 @ 3:00 – 4:30 PM

Forbes Municipal Building

Notes By: Daphne Politis, Principal, Community Circle

Participants

Nathan Walsh, BOH, Chair

Cindy Crowley, School Department, Transportation Coordinator

Maureen Sullivan

Suzanne Pahr, ATSC, Committee Member

Schott Hardy, Coghlin Co., Facilities

Jenn Kirkland, Department of Recreation, Chair

Adriana Siqueira, School Dept. Parent & Community

Liaison/Portuguese & Spanish Translator

Fred Lonardo, Town Community Development Director

Laura Watkins, WS NST, neighborhood coordinator for Ascentria (a nonprofit that assists with refugee resettlement) and she is a team leader for Westborough/Southborough.

Krish Williams, Town Manager

Kim Forster, Assistant Town Manager

Julia Oneil-Welch, Youth & Family Service Outreach/Resource Coordinator

Leslie Leslie, Disability Commission, member

Kristen Belanger, Assistant Town Planner, Westborough

Participants noted that the data presented in the PPT slide show was consistent with their experience and knowledge of the state of public transit today. Additional comments regarding maps included:

- The triangle on the map may be Southgate housing complex for people over 55 years of age
- In Westborough, the Westborough Country Village and the Housing Authority both HUD housing with a large percentage of disabled persons
- Some discussion regarding the potential benefits and trade offs of using the data collected in the Town survey
- Some interest expressed in information regarding trip type, trip purpose, and time (can be looked at in Replica)
- Kids from high school are using Via

Polling

What are the best features of the public transportation system in your community today?

- Reducing traffic congestion (3)
- Connection to Boston (2)
- Some access for non-drivers to access community resources
- We have the option of public transportation
- Access to Worcester
- Allows independence
- Commuting options

What are the public transportation features most in need of improvement in your community?

- Local connectivity
- Weekend local service
- Access from downtown to train station
- Community awareness
- Short trips
- Round trip scheduling
- Connectivity to desirable locations
- Round trip
- Connection to large employers
- Sidewalks
- Bike paths
- More connections and hours of operation
- Matching hours that service is available with hours riders desire to use - conduct a survey
- App needs language options

What do you see as missing from the current transportation system? Have you seen something elsewhere that you think could work well here?

- Easier access to bus to Worcester
- Would like to offer ability to tap a credit card on transportation and not have to have a Charlie card
- Longer hours of service and more connections
- Late service for people who work late shifts

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- Reliable vans to transport wheelchairs
- Park and ride (2)
- Multilingual information and access (Via cannot be used in other languages, especially relevant are Spanish, Mandarin and Hindi)

Are there any members of the community who are not served as well as they could be? Or who are not served at all?

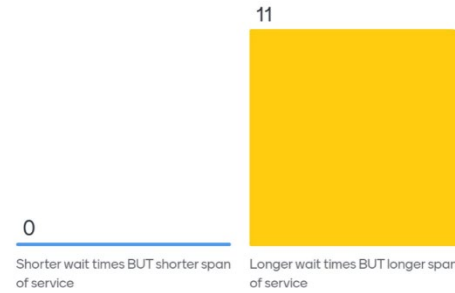
- Disabled passengers who cannot book a guaranteed return service
- Seniors
- Refugees cannot get bank accounts without temporary address

If you could do one thing to improve the existing public transit system, what would it be?

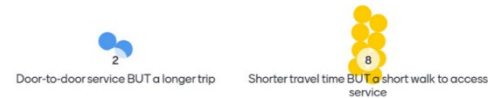
- More hours available
- Increased availability across town
- Reliable service/there when you want it
- Longer hours of available service
- Longer hours and more frequent
- Easier access

Trade-Offs

Public Transportation often requires tradeoffs. Please select the option that is most important to you.



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Public Transportation often requires tradeoffs. Please select the option that is most important to you.

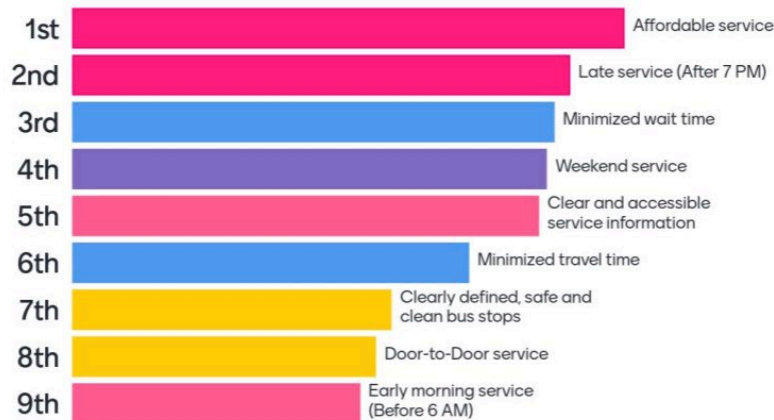


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Additional Comments

- Amazon wants to partner with Haitian Refugees at the hotels
- Interest in analysis of businesses who provide transit, e.g., Amazon
- Can we track the wheelchair users in Via?
- Example of desirable service: Magic Carpet service TMA near Weymouth
- Increase awareness regarding service: Spread the information through the school
- Can we provide a sliding scale for Via?
- Westborough has a micro transit service at the COA, but it's all done through volunteers. They currently do not work with WRTA for the service. They are hoping to expand the existing COA service by partnering with WRTA in the future. Right now, they are limited to days/hours because it's volunteer based and there are no paid drivers.
- The total number of multi-family units required by the MBTA Communities Act formula is 1,572. The Town has already built 1,088 of these. The additional units are expected to increase demand for public transit

Please rank the following attributes of public transportation from most to least important



Westborough Pop-Up

October 10

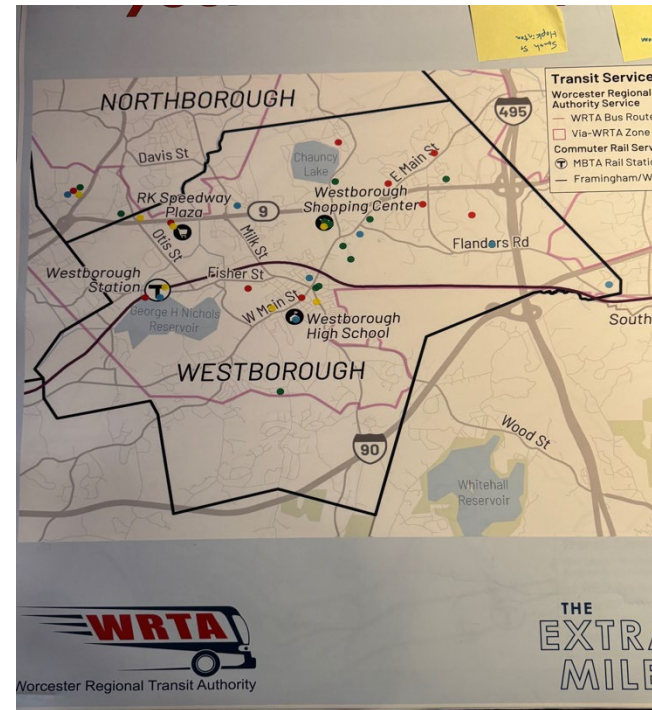
Westborough Farmers' Market

We asked:

- Where are the most important locations in your community?

We heard:

- Northborough Crossing
- Westborough Shopping Center
- Downtown Westborough
- Walmart (Northborough)



Northborough Engagement

Northborough Community Workshop

Purpose: To bring together key stakeholders in a focused discussion regarding the specific transit needs of the Town of Northborough.

There were fifteen participants at the Community Workshop, primarily Town Staff. A representative of WRTA was also present.

The Workshop began with a presentation by the Consultant Team sharing Early Findings describing existing conditions. This was followed by an invitation to participants to identify key destinations on a map as well as to answer a series of questions regarding existing and desired conditions of public transit in Northborough.

Key Findings

- There is **no public transit currently available** in Town other than the CoA van service for seniors and people with disabilities. Some discussion regarding just how much demand there would be.
- A **desire for expansion** of service geographically as well as to evenings and weekends
- A **need for increased awareness** regarding the service and access to **information** was emphasized (e.g., post approximate time of arrival and map with destinations, market the service to increase ridership)
- If service were to be provided, **needed connections** include: Worcester, Housing Authority units, access to medical care, food, access to employment, make downtown a destination stop, link to transportation hubs, e.g. other existing transit lines
- **Additional users** needing public transit include recent immigrants and refugees, youth needing rides to and from school sports, QCC, and workplaces
- **Service to older adults** seems to be working well, but could be improved with an increase in the hours of operation and days of the week
- **Improve pedestrian and bike connections** (missing sidewalks) and provide the option of being able to carry a bicycle to ones destination
- **Expand ways of accessing** (need for smartphone limits access)
- **The three top attributes** selected at being most desirable: **affordable service, clear and accessible information, late service (after 7 PM)**

Summary of Meeting Notes

A summary of the facilitated discussion follows.

Monday, November 4 @ 2:00 – 3:30 PM

Northborough Free Library

Notes By: Daphne Politis, Principal, Community Circle

Participants

Fran Bakstran, Council on Aging, Master Plan Implementation Committee

Amy Poretzky, Planning Board, Design Review Committee, Master Plan Implementation Committee

Bob Frederico, Building Inspector

Mitch Cohen, Select Board

Brian Rost, resident

Cindy Rost, resident

Stephanie Bacon, Town Administrator

Diane Wackell, Assistant Town Administrator

Brian Griffin, Police Chief

Jean Cahill, Master Plan Implementation Committee

Ruediger Volk, resident

David Parenti, Fire Chief

Laurie Connors, Planning Director

Ron Bonney, Director of the Housing Authority

Participants noted that the data presented in the PPT slide show was mostly consistent with their experience and knowledge of the state of public transit today

Comments:

- The Police Chief reported often giving rides to individuals that do not have a way of getting home after leaving the District Court, sober houses, and others wanting to go primarily to Worcester.
- A resident expressed a desire to want to live with one car instead of two, but feels unable to do so without adequate public transit.
- People living in Housing Authority units have a significant need for public transit: older adults need access to medical care and food and families with children need access to jobs.
- “I’m surprised that the high school is not on the map.”

Polling

What are the best features of the public transportation system in your community today?

- None available
- I see neighbors using the CoA vans
- Senior Center service works
- It is available
- Helpful to some of the most needy

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- Senior bus services residents well, increase in hours of operation and days of week would be an improvement
- If it is available for the seniors today with the van service, I think it is working
- I think low demand for other public transportation
- After 40 years in Northborough, I have never used public transportation because there are no services that are useful

What are the public transportation features most in need of improvement in your community?

- Frequency
- Via seems like a good service
- Via sounds good for non-Northborough residents. It should be expanded, geographically and to evenings and weekends.
- Wider population should have access
- I cannot say because there are no services useful to me
- additional hours of service through Via
- Evening, weekend service
- Recent immigrants need rides to and from school sports, QCC, workplaces
- Expand Via service areas

- Can be there a post with approximate arrival time and map of destination? When someone knows the time and destination and use it, then it will be used more.
- Marketing of the available services to the pop
- Limitations by smartphones
- Via service to public transportation hubs

What do you see as missing from the current transportation system? Have you seen something elsewhere that you think could work well here?

- Option to carry bike to destination (2)
- Awareness of what is available!
- Missing sidewalks (2)
- I would focus more on the seniors and disabled . Via services may help
- Youth need to get places, not having a ride
- New residents may not have a car
- Downtown revitalization; create a destination stop

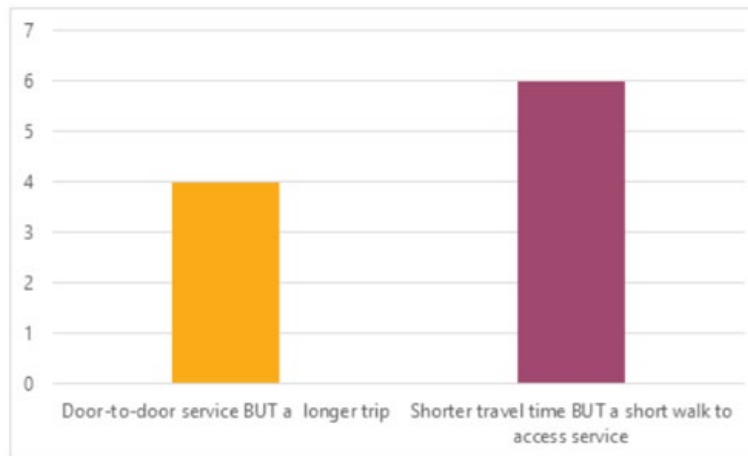
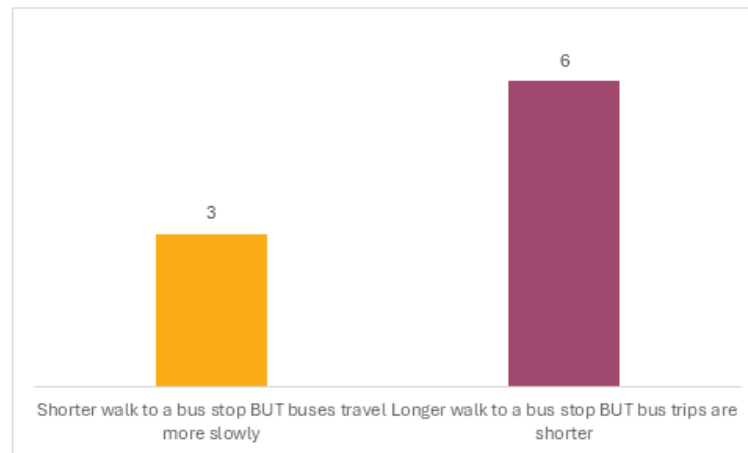
Are there any members of the community who are not served as well as they could be? OR who are not served at all?

- General population is not served compared to elderly w COA van service
- added staff hours to accommodate seniors on weekends and evenings

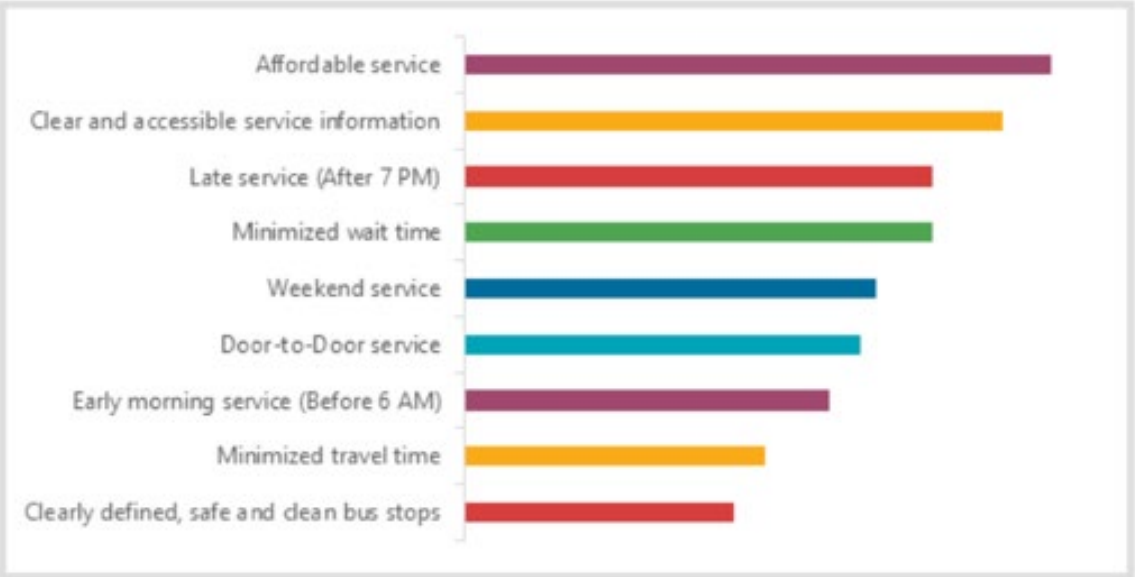
If you could change one thing to improve the existing public transit system, what would it be?

- More sidewalks and safer bike paths
- Advertise it so citizens know what is available
- Give us a public transit system, even on a limited basis
- Promote Via services
- Expand WRTA to all residents
- Connecting to existing lines of transit

Trade-offs



Please rank the following attributes of public transportation from most to least important



Northborough Pop-Up

October 22

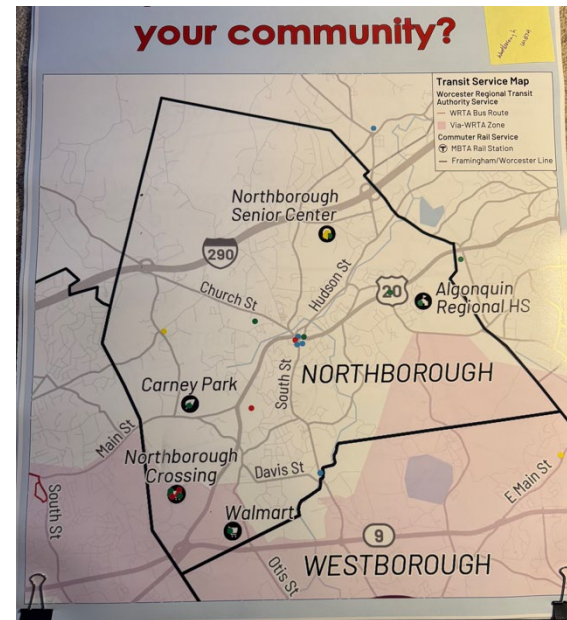
Northborough Trunk or Treat

We asked:

- Where are the most important locations in your community?

We heard:

- Northborough Crossing
- Northborough Senior Center
- Downtown Northborough
- Walmart



SURVEY OF VIA-WRTA USERS

A survey link was sent to Via users by email. The survey, intended to collect input from the users of the service, was open from Sunday, November 24 through Tuesday, December 3, 2024. There were 41 respondents.

Key Findings

- **The primary reason** that respondents use the Via service is for **commuting to/from work**
- **Almost half of the respondents use the Via service “Very Often (10+ times per month)”**
- **Improvements to the service** in ranked order:
 - Night service (after 7 PM)
 - Service on Saturdays
 - Early morning service (before 7 AM)
 - Service on Sundays
- **Desirable locations** currently unable to reach include:
 - Grafton MBTA Station
 - Market Basket
 - Locations in Westborough
 - Ocean State Job Lot

- Locations in Northborough
- Marlborough
- Worcester
- White City Plaza
- Didn’t know it was available in Shrewsbury

Survey Questions

1. WRTA is exploring ways to improve Via service. Rank improvements in order from most important to least.
2. Are there any locations within Shrewsbury, Northborough, or Westborough you are unable to reach on Via today that you would like to reach in the future?
3. Which WRTA services do you regularly use?
4. How often do you ride Via service?
5. What is your primary purpose for using Via service?
6. How old are you?
7. Where do you live?

Summary of Responses

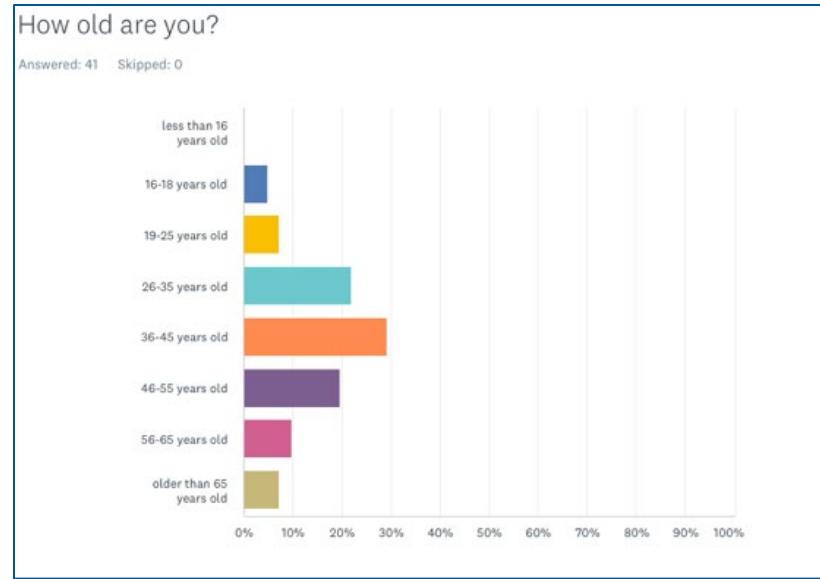
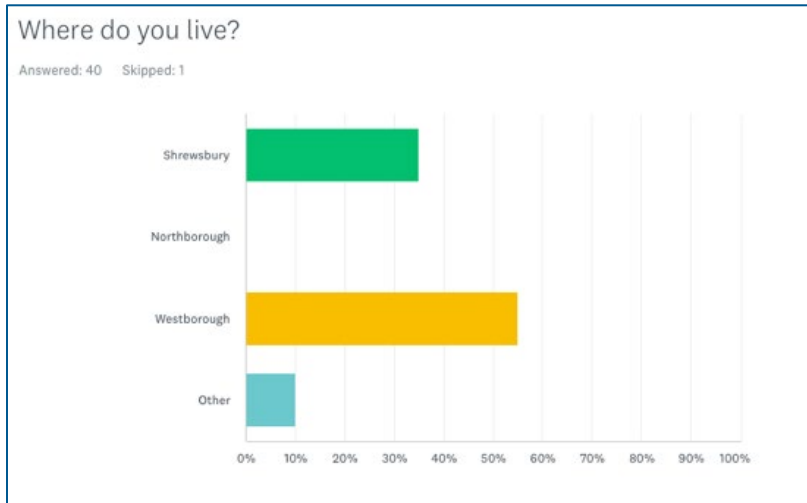
Participants

The majority (78%) are users of the Via microtransit service, followed by users of Route 15 (33%), Route 12 (22%), Shrewsbury Council on Aging (14%), and Northborough Council on Aging (3%)

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Most respondents are between the ages of 26 and 55 years old. Approximately one-third of respondents (29%) are 36-45 years old, followed by 22% that are 26-35 years old and 20% are 46-55.

More than half (55%) of the respondents live in Westborough, followed by (35%) who live in Shrewsbury with 10% living in an “Other” location.



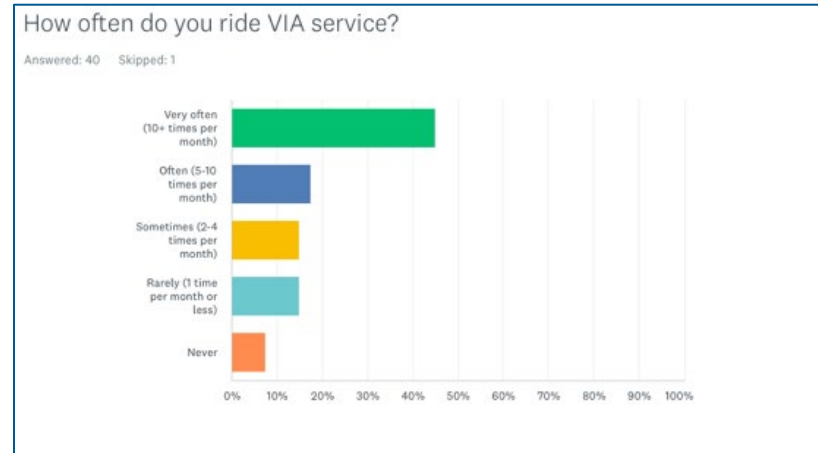
Responses to Questions

Are there any locations within Shrewsbury, Northborough, or Westborough you are unable to reach on Via today that you would like to reach in the future?
(open ended) 27 responses

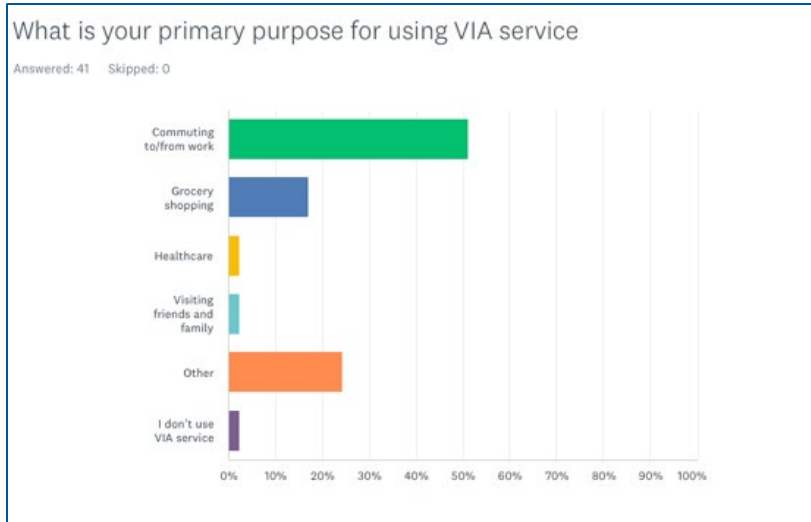
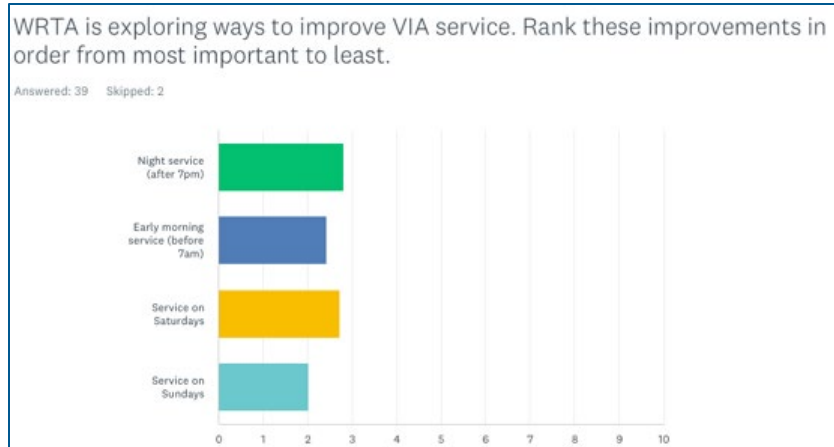
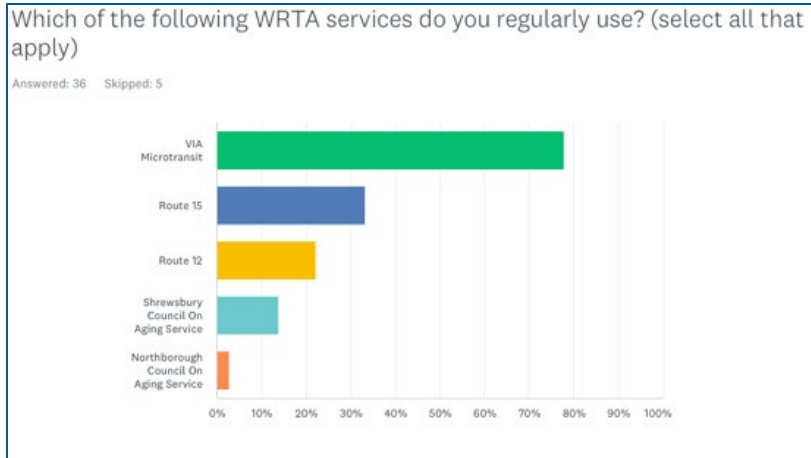
- The Grafton MBTA Station (2)
- Dean Park and surrounding neighborhoods
- No (5)

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- Via will not pick me up at my address in Westborough - 4 Stratton Drive - why? I am 79 years old and would use Via if it were available
- Market Basket in Shrewsbury. Ocean State Job Lot Westborough
- It's not available for Whitney St. Northborough and for many locations in Shrewsbury.
- 53 and 55 Barefoot Road, Northborough (3)
- Northborough Shops
- North Grafton
- Yes, stops beyond Julio Drive until 810 Boston turnpike at least would be helpful.
- I didn't even know you go to Shrewsbury
- It would be better if you provide services to wayside road in Westborough location
- Northborough Main St
- Market Basket in Shrewsbury.
- Marlborough
- Worcester
- 258 W Main St, Northborough
- Northborough library
- Yes, white city plaza



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MBTA USERS VIRTUAL MEETING

Purpose: To bring together MBTA Users in a focused discussion regarding their experience with WRTA service

There was a total of eleven (11) participants at the virtual meeting. Participants included residents from Shrewsbury, Northborough, Westborough, and Worcester. Also at the meeting were a Via driver and the Chair of the Northborough Select Board.

The majority (43%) of participants were 56 – 65 years old and almost one-third (29%) were 19-25 years old. Almost one-third (29%) of attendees report using the WRTA’s Via service “Very often” (10+ times per month). The majority (71%) of attendees at the meeting reported “Never” having used WRTA’s Via service, but all reported being very interested in using it for a variety of reasons. The reasons they currently are not using the service are varied, but mostly relate to geographic limits to the zone serviced as well as time.

Also of note is the fact that most (83%) attendees “Never” use WRTA’s Via service to access an MBTA Commuter Rail station. Only one participant uses the service “Often” (5-10 times per month) to access an MBTA Commuter Rail station. The majority of the meeting’s attendees use the Westborough MBTA Commuter Rail station most often.

Almost half (44%) use Via because they do not own or have access to a car. Approximately one-fifth (22%) use the service because it is affordable.

The Workshop began with a presentation by the Consultant Team sharing Early Findings describing existing conditions. This was followed by an invitation to participants to answer a series of questions regarding existing and desired conditions of public transit in the three-town region.

Key Findings

- Desired **locations for Via connections** include:
Northborough, Marlborough, MBTA, New England Botanical Garden (Boylston)
- **Appreciated features of Via:** low fee, door-to-door service
- Most attendees **do not use Via because:**
 - Does not service desired locations
 - Cannot access MBTA commuter rail
 - Does not service street or town they live in
 - \$2.00 sill high for low-income people
- Via service - **Most in need of improvement:**
 - Provide earlier and later buses

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- Include hospitals in Via service zone
- More cars and drivers
- Make it fare-free
- Expand geographic reach to provide service to Northborough, more areas in Shrewsbury, and other locations
- Provide weekend service
- **Call to use an equity lens** to ensure that public transit is equitable (including affordability, access to recreational and other amenities for all, allowing for alternative payment options)
- **The three top attributes** selected at being most desirable: **late night service (after 7 PM), Saturday service, Early morning service (before 7 AM)**

Summary of Meeting Notes

Wednesday, November 20 @ 7:00 – 8:30 PM

Virtual (Zoom)

Notes By: Daphne Politis, Principal, Community Circle

Participants noted that the data presented in the PPT slide show was consistent with their experience and knowledge of the state of public transit today.

Comments:

- "I live on Rt. 20 and it is higher density there than the map indicates."
- "What is the density of the number of cars? Isn't there a disproportionate number of cars, if there was a better public transit system people would use their cars less."
- "We used to be a two-car household. We are trying to be a one-car household, but it has been challenging. We use the train frequently, but every time I try to use Via, it is not available. The train is a 45 minute walk from our house. Instead I take my bike, which is not always ideal, but also transit is not able to accommodate bikes. "

Are there any locations you wish Via service would take you? If so, where?

- I am not aware of any bus services near my neighborhood at all
- Downtown Northborough
- Marlborough (3)
 - Apex
 - Solomon Pond Mall (3)
 - UMass)
- All of Northborough (2)
 - Downtown
 - Northborough public schools
 - Lowes Meat Market Plaza (255 W. Main St.)

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- Ellsworth McAfee Park, Northborough
- Northborough Senior Center
- Center of Westborough to MBTA station, synchronized to train arrival and departure times
- I use MBTA services, but the frequency is low, should increase the frequency for more during the peak hours. Currently run at 45-minute intervals, should be at least at 30-minute intervals.
- “I want to go to the New England Botanical Garden at Tower Hill in Boylston. I am a volunteer there and because I qualify I take paratransit to get there with limited hours. Others, including people from Worcester should be able to access this regional resource.”

What are the best features of the public transportation system in your community today?

- Economic pricing
- Door-to-door pick up

Why do you use Via?

- Most of the attendees do not use Via for a variety of reasons:
 - Does not service desired locations
 - Cannot access MBTA

- Even though \$2.00, still high for low-income people
- Does not service street or town they live in
- All attendees expressed significant interest in using the service if it better met their needs

What are the public transportation features most in need of improvement in your community?

- “We need earlier and later buses. Extend the bus from Grafton (B route). I’m from Worcester, I don’t have a car and I try to access places in the three-town region, but face many limitations. Bus 15 limits Shrewsbury residents access to Worcester trains.”
- “Bus 15 is an hourly bus, it is not useful the way it runs now (times of day limit access).”
- “There is no access to the Grafton MBTA station.”
- “There is a gap in the schedule, there is no bus outbound on Maple Street (Bus 15) in the late afternoon (at 4 PM).”
- “Shrewsbury residents don’t have the opportunity to use MBTA services earlier than the bus schedule which is hourly. (e.g., Routes like the 15)
- “It’s never available when I need it. I would prefer a more regular service even if I have to walk to a bus (would give up door-to-door feature if could be more regular service).”
- “My street (where I live) is in a pocket not serviced by Via (but very near the zone that is serviced).”

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- “I am a Via driver. I have been doing this since March 2024. We only have 3 drivers in the morning and 4 in the afternoon. The service is extremely popular. It is very inexpensive. There are many sections of the area we do not cover including job opportunities, shopping, and medical facilities. For example, there are no hospitals in Westborough and Shrewsbury and we drop off sick people seeking medical care in Worcester in a Burger King parking lot because that is where the service zone ends (at the bridge which goes to Worcester). The hospital should really be included in the zone. The Southborough Train station is a small square. Why isn’t the hospital treated the same way?”

If you could change one thing to improve the existing public transit system, what would it be?

- Provide service to Northborough! (2)
- Expand service to other locations
- Better service hours, more drivers
- Follow the same fare-free policy as the rest of the WRTA
- Weekend trips to commuter rail for night outs in Boston or Worcester
- Saturday service
- More cars and drivers
- Expand service in Shrewsbury

Are there any additional comments about WRTA’s Via service you would like us to know?

- “One of the most important things about public transit is helping to reduce our carbon footprint. If we are interested in climate change mitigation there should be more public transit made available.”
- “Personally, if Via serviced my area (in Northborough), I would love to use it. If the service was available I would definitely use it. This summer I needed to get a ride to the MBTA station daily because of a lack of useful connection to commuter rail. I see others doing the same.”
- “If my son misses the school bus and I have to take him to school, I miss the train because of the low frequency and the fact that public transit connections are not synchronized with the commuter train schedule, and so I get to work extremely late.”
- “Also MBTA commuter train service is not frequent enough.”
- “I haven’t used Via, even though it is \$2.00, that is still high for me and service is very limited. Even though density [in the three-town region] is lower than in Worcester I think that frequent and reliable service would be used. I think there is an opportunity for fixed route service. For us in Worcester it would give us more mobility if there was a set schedule, it makes it easier to plan. Many of us are low-income and minorities and we cannot access recreational facilities among other

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locations. We should use an equity lens to the provision of equitable public transit.”

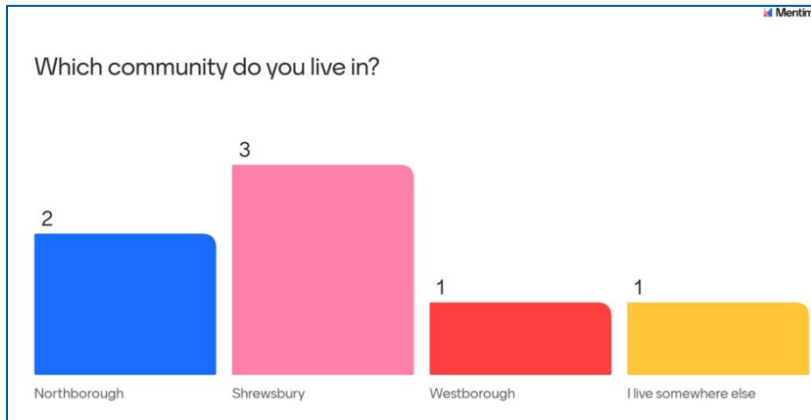
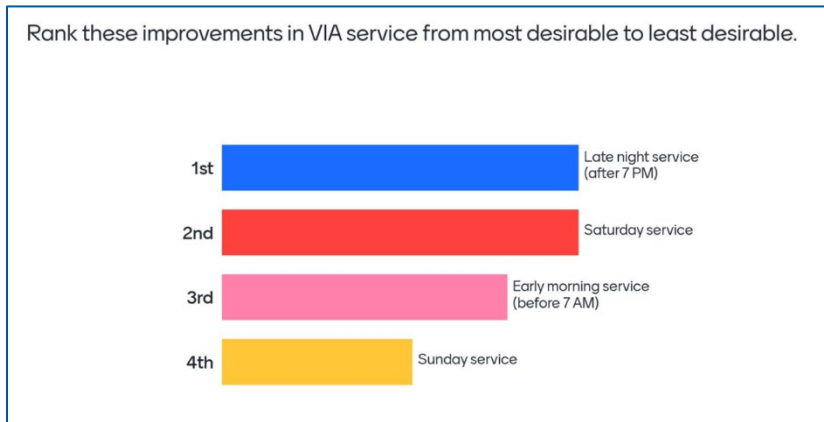
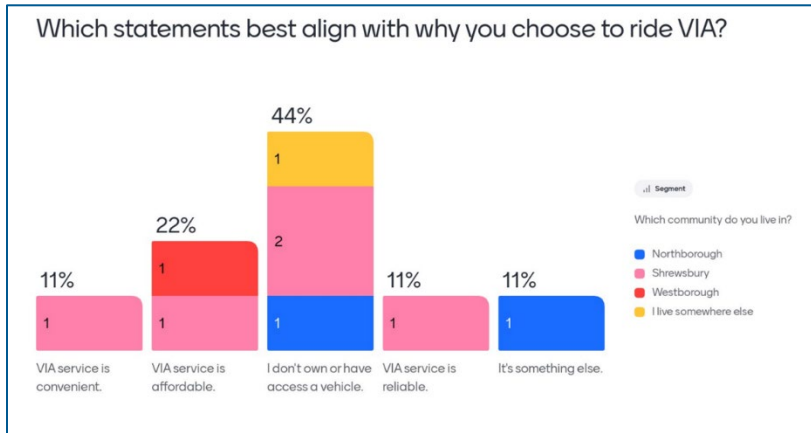
- “In terms of the equity issue, Via is Uber-like in that you use a credit card to pay with; owning a credit card is not a given in some populations”
- “In case a rider is not tech savvy, users can call and dispatchers will reserve a ride for them.”
- “How much does the budget play a role in the formulation of recommendations and subsequent improvements?”
- “Via has 7 active drivers. Adding more schedules/availability would make it easier for people, cut down waiting time. Most of the vans are 5 passengers. Wheelchair accessible vans too. More vehicles would be

good for everyone. It would allow more people to get into the service. So many want to use the service and depend on it.”

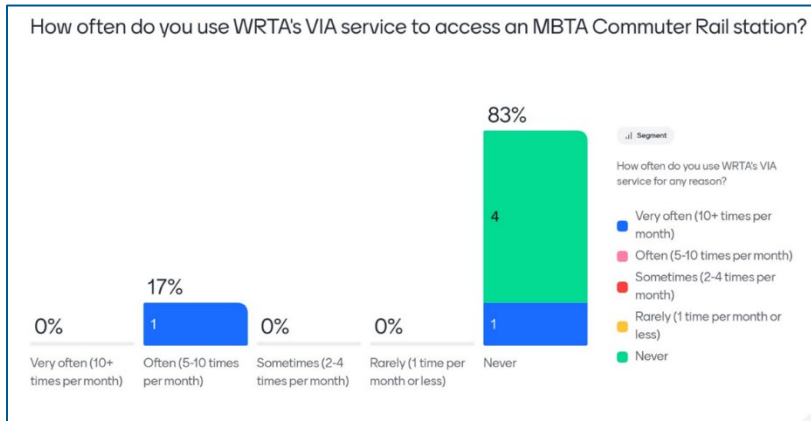
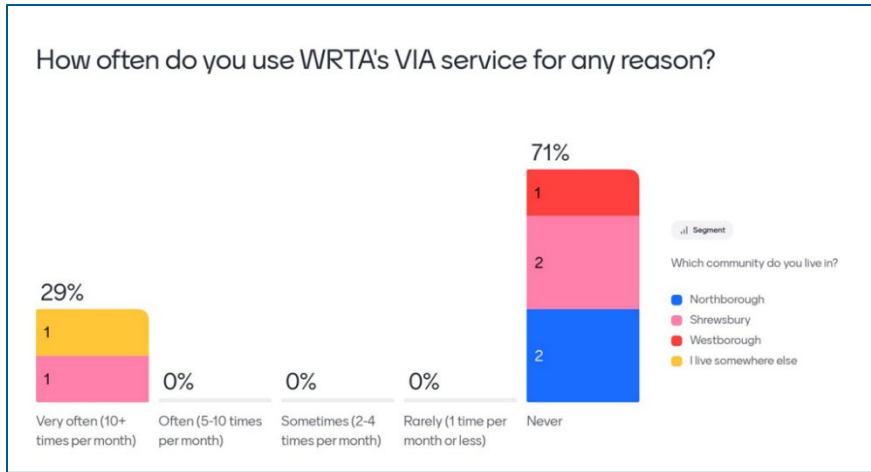
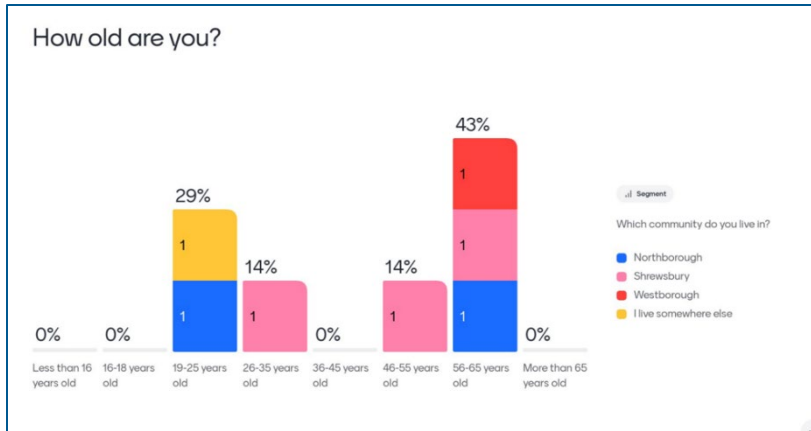
- “Would it help if we wrote to the Town in support of expanding the Via service?”
- Mitch Cohen, Chair Northborough Select Board: “I am very very eager to see some form of public transport available to as many Northborough residents as possible... the Select Board is watching this very carefully. Obviously, I cannot commit funds at the moment, but I anticipate there will be real interest in putting MBTA Communities money towards benefitting Northborough residents and connecting them to public transportation.

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Polling



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MUNICIPAL LEADERS INTERVIEWS

Purpose: To interview municipal leaders about the ways in which public transit currently operates and how it can better support their municipalities.

Date: September 13, 2024

Interviewers: Greg Nordin/Adija Manley

Key Findings

- There is an **expected increase in demand for public transit connections to commuter rail as new development occurs** (as a result of MBTA Communities Act, 40B projects, transit-oriented development, and higher density housing, as well as general growth trending in the region. Commuter rail parking is already overflowing.
- Identified need to **increase visibility of routes**; some interest in providing a more established, fixed route system. Many of the roads are MassDOT. Would need to coordinate to provide physical bus stops. Potential locations include: downtowns, Northborough Crossing, Walmart, Avalon Northborough, YMCA, Senior Centers, Housing Authority housing, major retail centers, large employers, Assisted Living, etc. At the very least **provide connections** to these locations as well as to medical buildings, multi-family housing, grocery stores, pharmacies, Bay State Commons (new community center), and key municipal buildings.
- Emphasized the importance of **increased awareness and information** regarding service. Suggestion that some signage be installed with information regarding where and when to access a bus.
- **Populations needing transit** include: seniors, commuters, students, immigrant population, stay-at-home mothers, refugees, others without a car
- Would like to **increase collaboration between municipalities, private sector and WRTA**
- **Access to medical service** is important
- **Downtowns** provide an opportunity for more potential riders
- Respondents in Northborough survey request an **increase in weekday service above weekend**.
- **Improve service for those individuals with a disability**. Reliability has been an issue: reportedly some people with a disability call for a ride and then are stranded without a ride back. Hours of availability is too narrow. Not all vehicles are handicapped equipped.
- **Improve pedestrian bicycle connections** including bike lanes, amenities for bike riders, and ability to bring bike on transit

- Might be useful to **survey riders and potential riders** including high school students.

Questions

Municipal leaders were asked the following questions:

- Q1.** Are there specific goals or outcomes you would like to see come from this project?
- Q2.** Are there any groups of people within your community with transportation needs that we should consider? (seniors, individuals with lower incomes, students, commuters, etc...)
- Q3.** What are the destinations within your community that are the most important to serve with public transportation? (grocery stores, medical facilities, senior centers, housing, etc.)
- Q4.** Thinking regionally for a moment, are there transportation challenges you're aware of between your community and neighboring communities? (access to destinations beyond borders, etc.)
- Q5.** Are there any facts/data points/observations about your community that we should be aware of as we work on this project?
- Q6.** What do you hear from members of the community regarding needs and/or wants for transit?
- Q7.** Have you used WRTA service? Do you know of people who use WRTA service? How familiar are you with WRTA service?

Interview Notes

Shrewsbury

Interviewees

- Christopher McGoldrick, Director of Planning & Economic Development
- Kushal Raghuram, Assistant Town Planner
- Louise O'Neill, Assistant Town Planner
- Justin Dobson, Assistant to Town Manager
- Keith Baldinger, Assistant Manager, Town Operations

Summary Notes

Q1. Are there specific goals or outcomes you would like to see come from this project?

- See increased need for multi-modal transit. Connections to commuter rail to expand regional connections. See likely increased demand as new development happens in the community which is also expanding their tax base.
- Seeing growth along Rt 9, Rt 120 and in other places.
- Wants to keep or expand routes.
- Wants to provide more visibility to routes. They want to shift to a more visible, established route.
- They get requests for a schedule, timed-stops.

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- The main route through town – wants it to reach new development along the corridor. Expecting 500 units of development. This is an area that was vacant.
- Also, missing a connection on the Route 20 corridor between Worcester and the Market Basket. This is not a long stretch of space.
- There is also no north-south connection. (140, S. ____ Ave).
- There is a commuter population, Grafton Station on Memorial Drive. The commuter lot is over parked.
- ALSO: how do you have modeshift (aside from transit) from Grafton.
- The other commuter rail parking station is overflowing too.

Via:

- Kushal uses Via as a commuter (Westborough – Shrewsbury)
- Via is not available at Grafton Station.
- There is a limited number of cars, so there can be long wait times. The demand exceeds the supply.
- Will book an hour before needed. + 20 minutes wait. (in the fall) – during busy peak hours. There are also times when they are the only passenger there.
- In the summer, the wait can be 10 minutes.
- They get good feedback on the service. People want more service.
- They like the program, does not want it to go away.

- It sounds like the service has improved since it began.

Q2. Are there any groups of people within your community with transportation needs that we should consider? (seniors, individuals with lower incomes, students, commuters, etc...)

- Seniors – people express a need for transit for Seniors.
- Commuters
- Students – a growing population in Shrewsbury (college students, in Worcester). A renter population. They go under the radar and are not always well-represented in engagement.
- Shrewsbury has a large immigrant population
- They were primarily in southern Shrewsbury, south of Route 20. In the last 5-10 years widespread throughout the community.
- Also ____ Rd, along the Lake.
- Show up in their EJ maps.
- Stay-at-home women going to White City (retail development on Route 9)
- Also Lakeway Commons
- It can be challenging to go grocery shopping while using transit.
- Are there any progressive ways to facilitate grocery shopping on public transit?

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Q3. What are the destinations within your community that are the most important to serve with public transportation? (grocery stores, medical facilities, senior centers, housing, etc...)

- Housing Growth: MBTA Zoning (South Street, Route 20, Green Street)
- Asking new developments to coordinate with the WRTA to see when transportation options are suited for it.
- They want to leverage private-partnerships
- Shopping centers along Route 9
- (They will send out the projects)
- Their challenge is that physically, there are few north-south routes. Vehicles have to meander.
- Quinsigamond Ave (both connect to Worcester). There are housing developments along the route.

Q4. Thinking regionally for a moment, are there transportation challenges you're aware of between your community and neighboring communities? (access to destinations beyond borders, etc...)

- If you're going to medical services, going to Worcester. It is important to have connections of Worcester. Access to medical service is a big deal.
- To the east, there are large residential developments and retail.
- They want more scheduled routes.

Greg asked about flag stops

- Many of the roads are MassDOT. Thinks it would be possible to get accessible bus stops around here.
- Thinks it is more of a coordination challenge to get to bus stops.
- They want the visibility and infrastructure for people to sit. Want space that is nice for people to congregate at.
- Seniors are largely the people who use public transit.
- The planning dept works with private development.

Q5. Are there any facts/data points/observations about your community that we should be aware of as we work on this project?

- Stop & Shop is closing in November. (There are 2 closing) one in
- This is challenging for residents.
- This community has always been in a state of growth. Seeing an influx in economic development.
- Shrewsbury right in the middle of MA & developers see it.
- Exceeding 40k residents.
- They will share the overlay zoning (in draft form, going to Nov town meeting for adoption). It is a housing bill. (it is on the website)
- It is a maybe.
- It looks at higher density housing in the areas.
- Designing it as TOD. Design zones to facilitate transit, rideshare, school bus routes.

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- There is a great webpage for Shrewsbury.

Q6. What do you hear from members of the community regarding needs and/or wants for transit?

Q7. Have you used WRTA service? Do you know of people who use WRTA service?

How familiar are you with WRTA service?

- They really like using surveys and seem interested in surveys.
- Priorities: PPP, Education & Visibility, working with WRTA???

Northborough

Interviewees

- Kendra Faldetta, Director, Northborough Senior Center
- Laurie Connors, Town Planner
- Mitch Cohen, Town Selectman
- Tim McInerney, Town Manager
- Angie Sowden, Executive Assistant

Summary Notes

They shared the Northborough Transportation Needs Survey with us (paper copy)

Q1. Are there specific goals or outcomes you would like to see come from this project?

- Notes From Planning (*Trying to capture people without transportation*)
 - Working on Downtown Revitalization Project and Streets Project
 - There are some low-income folks who live downtown (some housing properties downtown)
 - Shelter at the Econo Lodge on Route 9 for refugees.
 - They want to see if they can serve these populations.
 - Access to Northborough Crossing, Walmart, Avalon Northborough (apartment complex) – have a bus stop at Avalon and the Shopping Center.
 - YMCA (Westborough) – would be good for a bus stop.
- For the Seniors, Springwell oversees elder care. People in Northborough see longer wait times for in-home care (cleaning, laundry, etc...). Public transit would help people. The lack of public transit makes it difficult.
- Town Manager wants to connect people to Worcester and the train station.
- They shared two potential bus route alignments that connect places they believe should be connected.
- Hear from people that commute to Boston. Some people bike to the train, but it is not very comfortable and not really possible all year round
- Also sees kids walking along Route 20.

The Avalon has 20% affordable housing

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Q2. Are there any groups of people within your community with transportation needs that we should consider? (seniors, individuals with lower incomes, students, commuters, etc...)

- Also concerned about high school kids, people who are disabled.
- Senior Center transports people to Wegmans to work. No transportation Saturday & Sunday
- They could get people to shops in Millbury shops.

Underscoring importance of marketing.

Question of why there is no WRTA signage:

- What about signs saying where it's a good idea to flag down a stop? (Where the bus goes and when it comes, does not have to be exact). Questions of where and when to pick up a bus when there is no signage.
- Lack of information about availability of service is a weakness.
- The ____ Valley (where Lowell is) did a good job of this.
- They want transit and they really want people to use it.

There are people who want to work but cannot for various reasons. Wants to assist them. (e.g.: Refugees)

Econo Lodge is surrounded by highway. It has become more of a permanent shelter. There is hope for a larger hotel on Route 9 – at a former hotel site.

Q3. What are the destinations within your community that are the most important to serve with public transportation? (grocery stores, medical facilities, senior centers, housing, etc...)

- In the Survey
 - Wegmans

- Medical Transportation (Hospital in Marlborough, Worcester)
- Access to shopping.
- People wanted weekday transportation, more than weekends.
- On-demand app based microtransit.
- Westborough MBTA station.
- Solomon Pine Mall – in Marlborough (there is a different transit Authority)
- #1 Request the Senior Center cannot fulfill are trips to Framingham & Boston for Medical Appointments (Cannot get people close)
- Large Employers: National Grid, St. Gobain, Aspen Aerogels
 - Whitney Place Assisted Living (people sometimes need to walk to work after getting to Shrewsbury) – **They have contacts there they can share with us.**

Q4. Thinking regionally for a moment, are there transportation challenges you're aware of between your community and neighboring communities? (access to destinations beyond borders, etc...)

- People go to Northborough crossing from all over because of Wegmans.

Q5. Are there any facts/data points/observations about your community that we should be aware of as we work on this project?

- A parking subsidy incentivized transit use when working in Boston

Q6. What do you hear from members of the community regarding needs and/or wants for transit?

-
- Q7. Have you used WRTA service? Do you know of people who use WRTA service?
 - How familiar are you with WRTA service?

One Concern: Not getting an older person into an uber. Dial-a-Ride could work. An app could be prohibitive. The WRTA sends people in Taxis. Also good to let people know what to look for (e.g.: *the car that is going to pick you up is a silver Toyota*).

Senior/ADA Transit:

- 300 rides/month - Senior Center.
- ADA: Also, seeing younger people using the transportation to get to work too.

Westborough

Interviewees

- Jenny Gingras, Director of Planning
- Hazel Nourse, Chair Planning Board
- Alma Demanche, Senior Center (until Nov 8, 2024)
- Bill Hezlitt, Building Commissioner & Zoning Officer, Staff on Disability Commission
- Fred Lonardo, Community Development Director

Summary Notes

Pop-Ups

Jenny asked if a date had been set for the Farmer's Market. Farmers market ends Oct 6

Other Events:

- Arts in the Common (October 5 – this is a big event in town)
- E-Energy on the 29th (They have a sustainability coordinator, may be a good contact)
- Discussion around e-vehicles

Q1. Are there specific goals or outcomes you would like to see come from this project?

- In terms of ridership, they just have Via. A little over 30K/year, the majority of this is from Westborough. Wants to know where those rides are going and coming from. And who is riding.
 - High School students use it.
 - Some seniors use Via as well.
- Disability Commission – understand who they are and the access they can have.
- Concerned about having a company that arrives and picks people up when they are supposed to. This is an issue they hear from the community (reliability).
 - Reliability: Late Trips, Trips that just don't come
 - Not all vehicles are handicapped equipped. This impacts ability to book a trip.
 - It does not make sense for vehicles to not be handicapped accessible.
 - Another issue is that going to destinations, can get accessible vehicle, then on the way back there may be no accessible vehicles. (*this can strand people*).
 - This has been an issue when the whole trip has been booked (the to and from)
 - Finding drivers is an issue. They have raised wages for drivers to attract more drivers.

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- Is there a requirement that if a vehicle is accessible, the driver needs to meet a certain requirement (there is a course) – it sounds like there may be. This can impact driver availability.
- Hours of availability are too small. Would like service to go later.
- People like there is a service they can use.
- High school students use it. EG: to go to music lessons.
- Believes the community would like Via to stay. Maybe a fixed route service???
- There was a fixed-route service pre-covid. 1st: Train Station - Computer Drive and Stuff (in morning). 2nd: Mc Donald's – Senior Center – High School

- Seniors used the service for free (Via) – during Covid.

Q2. Are there any groups of people within your community with transportation needs that we should consider? (seniors, individuals with lower incomes, students, commuters, etc...)

- People with disabilities
- They get comments about getting to the train station (generally)
 - It sounds like there was a service that brought people to the train, but unsure of how much it was used.
- Large population of people (immigrants and people without a vehicle) to go downtown.
- Mass Facilities on Lyman Street – to get to grocery stores (Sharpe Building) – it is a state facility.
- Extended Stay Hotels too on route 9 – housing immigrants (until they start building low-income housing)
- At Otis & Turnpike (close to Shrewsbury & Northborough) – people who need transit are also here.

- They want to make sure people who are immigrating here can be integrated into the community.

Q3. What are the destinations within your community that are the most important to serve with public transportation? (grocery stores, medical facilities, senior centers, housing, etc...)

- Roche Bros (grocery)
- Bay State Commons: A Community Center is going there soon. (multi-generational center)
- Stop & Shop – Route 9 (grocery)
- Big Red (grocery store)
- Pharmacies (CVS) – their only one.
- Walmart (for the Pharmacy)

Q4. Thinking regionally for a moment, are there transportation challenges you're aware of between your community and neighboring communities? (access to destinations beyond borders, etc...)

- Market Basket would be a great destination for people in Westborough
- People want to go here and do go here from senior services.
- Senior Center provide transportation 5 days/week – occasionally other days if there are events
- 10 – 20 people go to Stop & Shop, Roche Bro
- Northborough Crossing
- There are also medical buildings near there.
- There is a convenient MD on Route 9
- Medical Services.

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- Volunteers do individual trips to hospitals in Worcester. If someone needs a wheelchair, the Senior Center can use their vehicles.
- During Covid, the Senior Center added destinations because no volunteers.
- Places Can Go with Volunteers: Dana Farber, Marlborough, Framingham....
- Important to serve retirement communities.
- Transportation for Seniors is cyclical – by the different places. People aging in place. So there may be less demand in one place and in other years the demand increases and falls in another place.

What about a questionnaire in addition to focus groups?

- Easier for women to transfer to minibuses than men.
- Large Employers that would like transportation to the train;
 - Amazon – they have a private shuttle to the train
 - Columbia Tech (6 locations, 5 in Westborough)
 - Industrial pockets on either end of Westborough.

Q5. Are there any facts/data points/observations about your community that we should be aware of as we work on this project?

- They have large commercial and residential areas
- The downtown is very walkable. But it is very confined. Once you leave it, it is very spread out. Getting transportation to people who live outside of the area is challenging. It would be nice to encourage people to use public transportation if it available.
- 2 shopping plazas with a variety of different stores.
- Going to build up Julia's over the Staples, in that plaza .

- There is interest in adding bike lanes and amenities for people who want to bike.
 - They completed a downtown plan. Incl bike lane suggestions.
 - Planning a multiuse trail. A portion has been completed (BWall or BWol?) – it is a regional trail. 12-mi trail Northborough to Shrewsbury. Supposed to go across the state.
 - Ability to put a bike on transportation would be good.
- Is there a way to spread out use of transit by type of trip across the day?

Q6. What do you hear from members of the community regarding needs and/or wants for transit?

- Disability Commission: Want to make sure you can get somewhere and get back from somewhere. Why can't a disabled rider have some kind of prioritization to make sure they can get back.
 - They were hearing people who were not disabled were also being logged as disabled because they wanted space for groceries.
- It may be good to survey high school students.
 - There is strong interest in the ability to get the bus to another part of town, e.g.: Taco Bell. They have a hard time getting anywhere unless using Via which is not always going there.
- Via does not go everywhere. Some places left out. Apartments.

Q7. Have you used WRTA service? Do you know of people who use WRTA service?

- How familiar are you with WRTA service?

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They have been told that the drivers are responsible for the maintenance of vehicles. Which means it can take some time to fix an issue because they don't always have the money on hand.

One person asked: Are there options other than Via?

- One person believes people think Via is not doing a great job.

All the cars were registered in Indiana – the plates are not from Mass.

APPENDIX B: SERVICE CHANGE PROFILES

Final Report

Route 12 – Southwest Commons via Grafton Street

Overview

Route 12 operates between WRTA’s Central Hub and Market Basket at Edgemere Crossing via Grafton Street and Hartford Turnpike. Select trips deviate to North High School in the morning and afternoon when school is in session.

There is no alignment change proposed for this route. However, the proposed Route 12 operates with hourly service to be more predictable.

Key Destinations:

- Union Station
- North High School
- Grafton Street retail
- South Plaza (Stop & Shop)
- Southwest Commons (Massachusetts RMV and DTA Offices)
- Edgemere Crossing (Market Basket)

Figure 57 Route 12 Alignment; Existing and Proposed

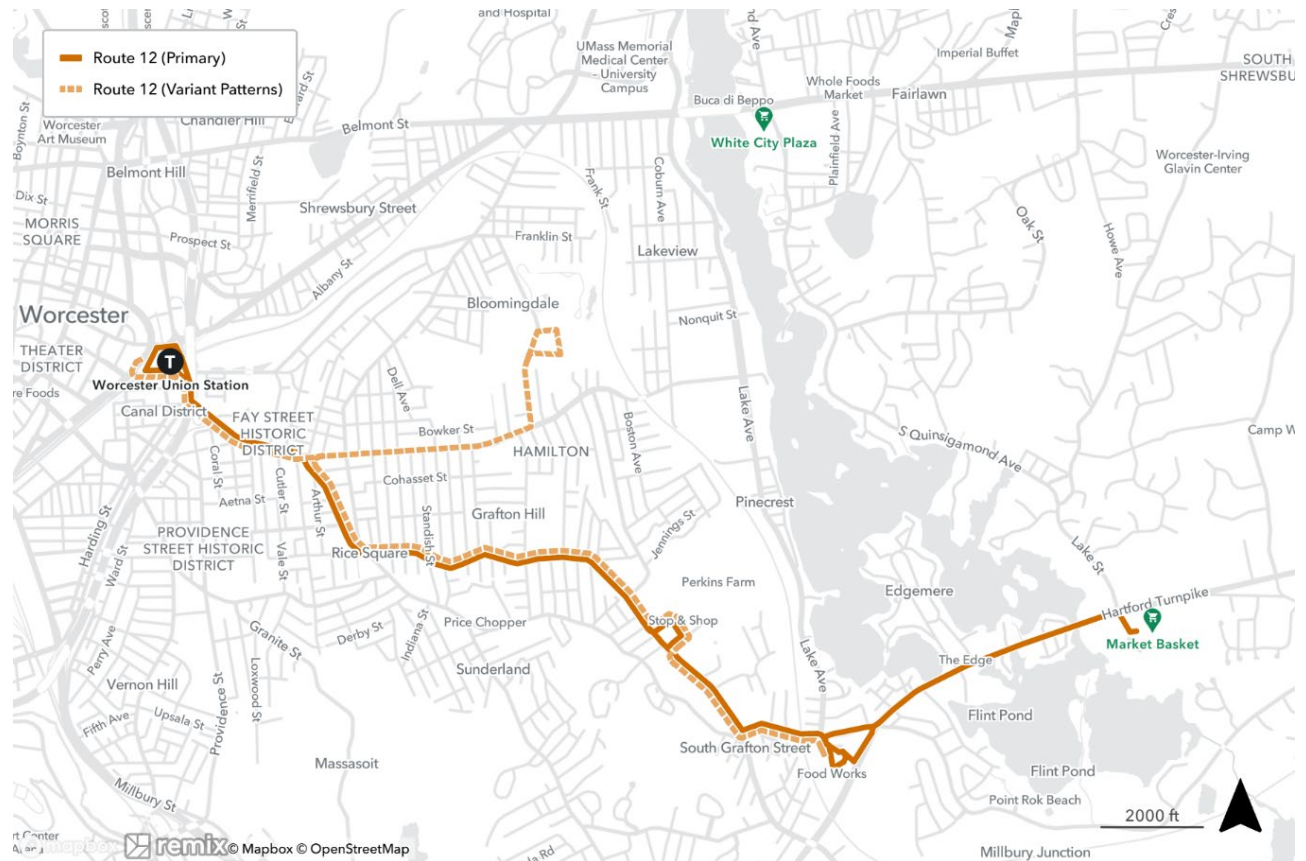


Figure 58 Route 12 Existing and Proposed Span & Frequency

	Weekday		Saturday		Sunday	
	Span	Frequency	Span	Frequency	Span	Frequency
Existing	6:10 AM – 9:25 PM	50-70	-	-	-	-
Proposed	6:00 AM – 9:30 PM	60	-	-	-	-

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Route 15 – Shrewsbury Center via Shrewsbury St

Overview

Route 15 operates between WRTA’s Hub Center and downtown Shrewsbury via Shrewsbury Street in Worcester, and Route 9 (Boston Turnpike) and Maple Avenue in Shrewsbury

In the short-term there is no proposed change to the alignment. In the medium-term and long-term the route is extended to Northborough Crossing and downtown Westborough, respectively.

Key Destinations:

- Worcester’s Union Station (AMTRAK & MBTA commuter rail)
- Shrewsbury St retail
- UMASS medical complex
- Lakeway Commons & White City shopping centers (Shaw’s, Whole Foods)

Additional Places Reached in the Medium-and Long-Terms

- Northborough Crossing (Wegman’s, TJ Maxx)
- Walmart (Otis St)
- Downtown Westborough (Roche Bros., Town Hall)

Figure 59 Route 15 Medium (Above) & Long-Term (Below) Proposed Service

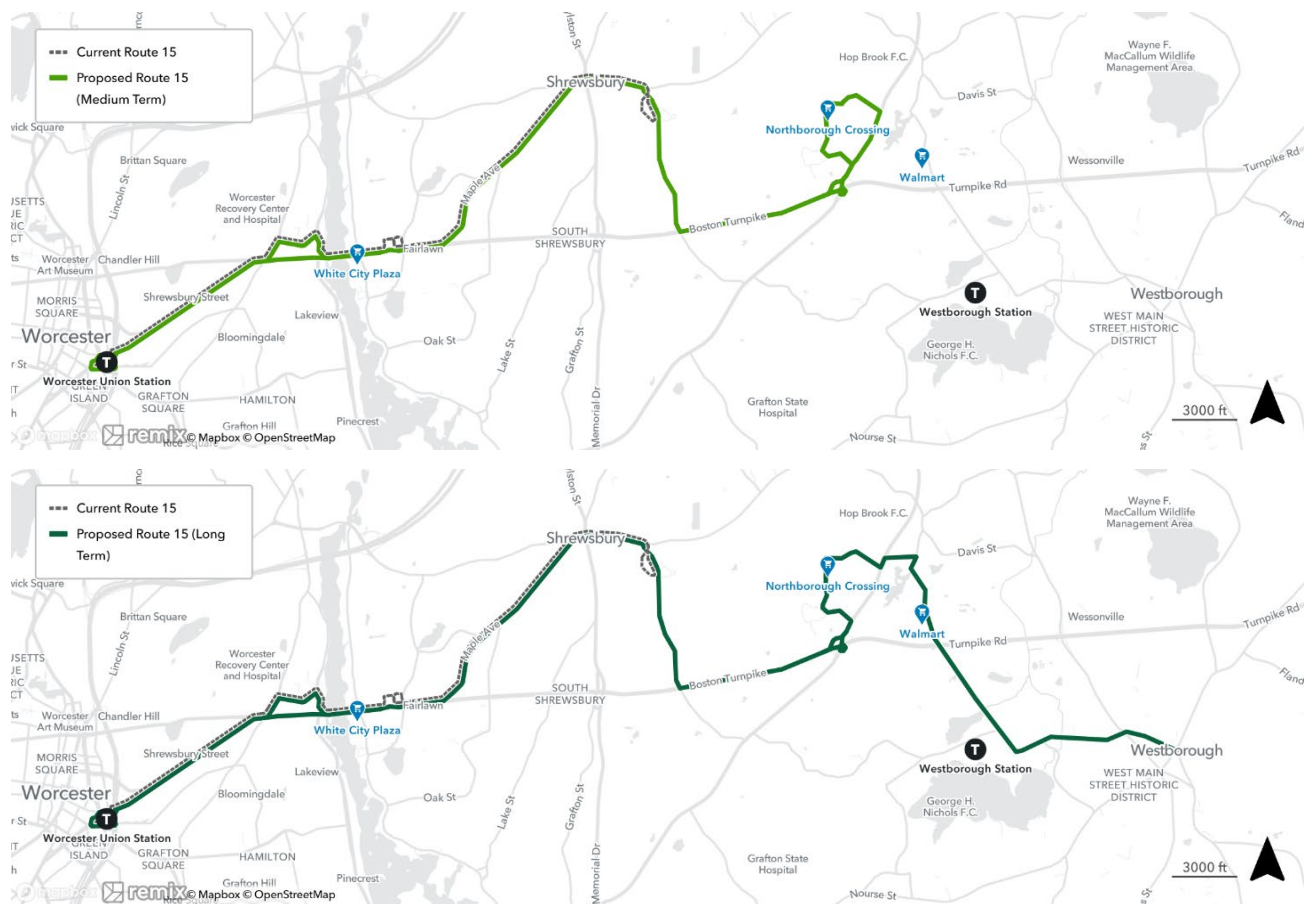


Figure 60: Route 15 Span & Frequency

	Weekday		Saturday		Sunday	
	Span	Frequency	Span	Frequency	Span	Frequency
Existing	5:50 AM – 9:10 PM	60	9:50 AM – 5:50 PM	60	-	-
Proposed (Medium-Term)	6:00 AM – 9:00 PM	60	10:00 AM – 6:00 PM	60	-	-
Proposed (Long-Term)	6:00 AM – 9:00 PM	60	10:00 AM – 6:00 PM	60	-	-

Via-WRTA

Overview

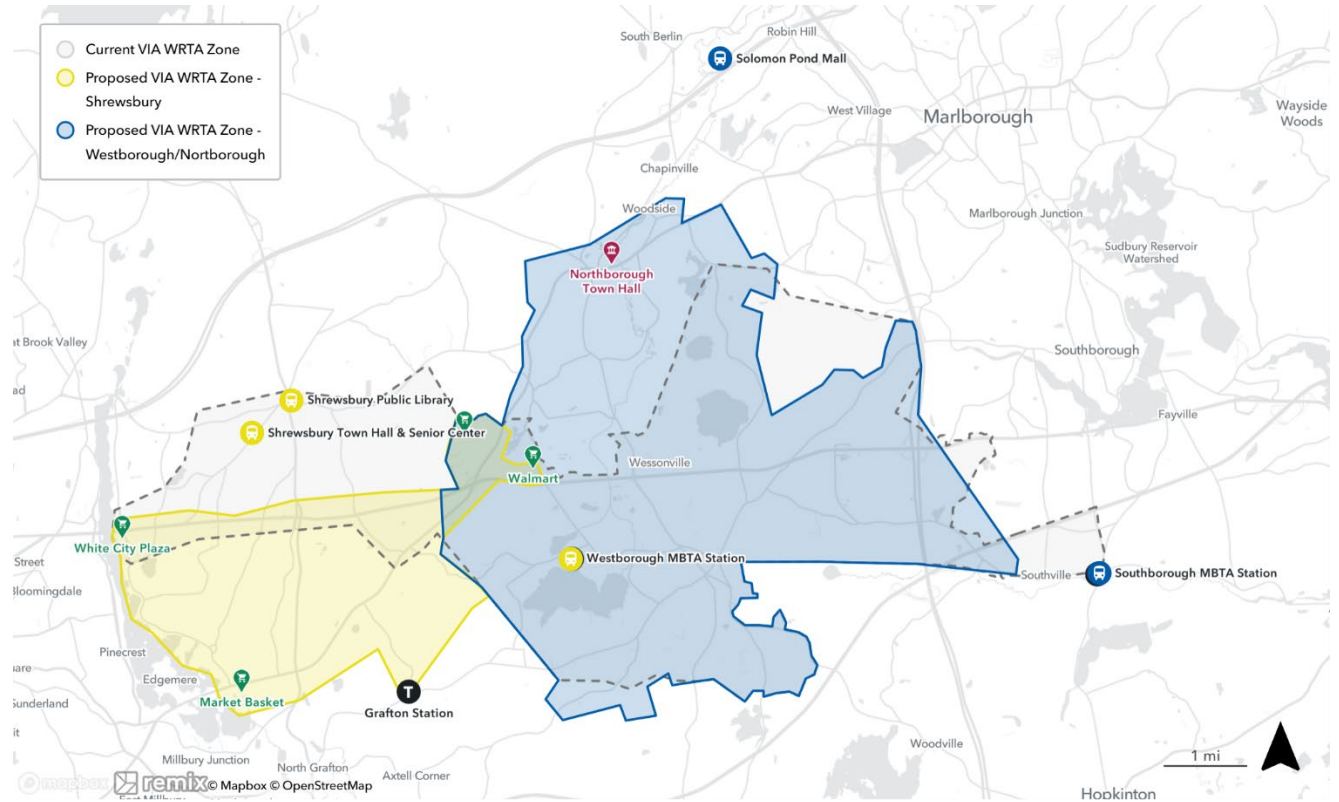
Via-WRTA is an on-demand ride-share service. Riders can be picked up and dropped off anywhere within the zone.

Today, there is a single zone that serves parts of Westborough and Shrewsbury along with small parts of Northborough and Southborough.

The recommended on-demand service is divided into two zones: Shrewsbury and Westborough/ Northborough. They overlap at Northborough Crossing.

See the following pages for information on each zone.

Figure 61 Via-WRTA Zone



Via-WRTA Microtransit Zone: Shrewsbury

Overview

The Shrewsbury zone extends from just north of Route 9 (Boston Turnpike) to Route 20 (Hartford Turnpike) and Grafton State Hospital between Lake Quinsigamond and Northborough Crossing. It provides connections to WRTA Routes 12 and 15.

Outside of the primary zone, the service can stop at Shrewsbury Town Hall & Senior Center, Shrewsbury Public Library, and Westborough MBTA Station.

Today, Via-WRTA in Shrewsbury is available from just north of Main Street to south of Boston Turnpike. It is also part of a larger zone including much of Westborough.

Key Destinations:

- Lakeway Commons & White City shopping centers
- Northborough Crossing
- Walmart
- Edgemere Crossing (Market Basket)
- MBTA Commuter Rail (Grafton Station)

Figure 62 New Shrewsbury Zone

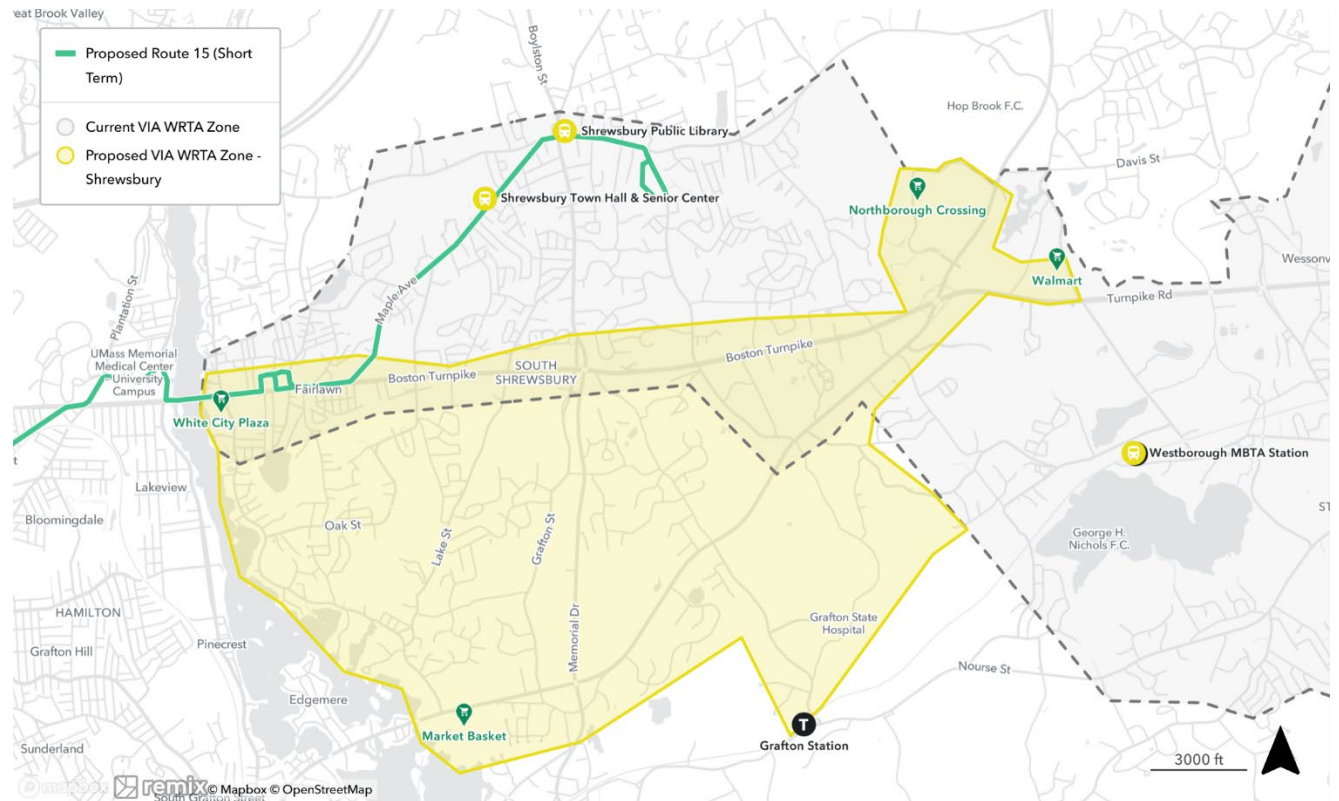


Figure 63: Shrewsbury Zone Service Statistics

	Weekday		Saturday	
	Span	Vehicles	Span	Vehicles
Existing	7:00 AM – 7:00 PM	4*	-	-
Proposed	7:00 AM – 7:00 PM	1	-	-
Proposed (Medium-Term)	7:00 AM – 11:00 PM	1	7:00 AM – 7:00 PM	1

*includes vehicles in Westborough and Northborough

Via-WRTA Microtransit Zone: Westborough / Northborough

Overview

The Northborough/Westborough Zone serves Westborough and Northborough, extending from downtown Northborough to south of Nourse Street/ W Main Street between Northborough Crossing and I-495. Service to Southborough would be eliminated.

Outside of the primary zone, the service can stop at Solomon Pond Mall and the Southborough MBTA Station

This significantly increases access to residential areas while retaining key destinations of the original zone.

Key Destinations

- Northborough Town Hall
- Northborough Crossing
- Walmart
- MBTA Commuter Rail (Westborough Station)
- Downtown Westborough
- Downtown Northborough
- Multiple housing developments northeast of Northborough Crossing
- Housing development south of Old Westboro Road

Figure 64 New Westborough/Northborough Zone

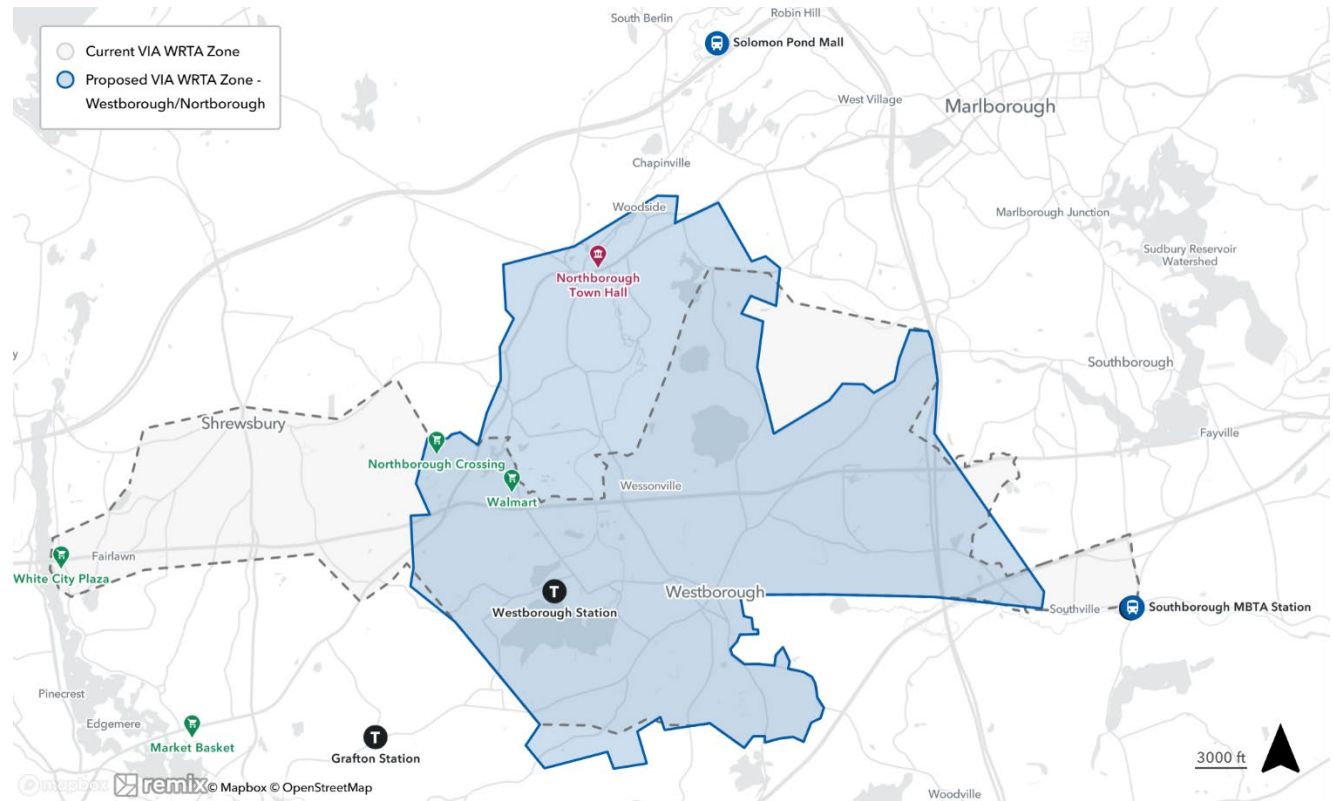


Figure 65: Westborough/Northborough Zone Service Statistics

	Weekday		Saturday	
	Span	Vehicles	Span	Vehicles
Existing	7:00 AM – 7:00 PM	4*	-	-
Proposed	7:00 AM – 7:00 PM	3	-	-
Proposed (Medium-Term)	7:00 AM – 11:00 PM	3	7:00 AM – 7:00 PM	3

*includes vehicles in Shrewsbury

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