

Mayor's Update



Better Senior Transportation

I'm so excited to be introducing a groundbreaking new transportation service for seniors that I really think will be a game-changer.

The new service, to launch this summer, will drive people to specified destinations in Newton such as to medical appointments, to our village centers, and the Senior Center. The service will also feature easily identifiable vehicles and vetted drivers who can walk passengers to their doors.

I want seniors to be able to stay in Newton and thrive; reliable and affordable transportation is critical to helping people stay involved as they phase out driving.

Historically we've used a paper voucher system with a local taxi company, and seniors had to make reservations at least 72 hours in advance for a guaranteed trip. With the expiration of the existing contract, the City saw an opportunity to significantly improve the service.

Jayne Colino, our Director of Senior Services, worked with Nicole Freedman, our Director of Transportation Planning to put out a bid. Nicole described it as "very aspirational – with a wish list of things we believed would make life easier for seniors." What we discovered is a company, Via, that could really deliver.

The new service provides an on-demand micro-transit service. Seniors can book a trip in real time with an app on their smart phone, by email or with a phone call. The system will create a route to pick up multiple passengers along the way. Ride sharing is environmentally friendly, provides a social experience for passengers, and improves the service time overall.

The cost to passengers is affordable. Rides will be on a three point sliding scale from 50 cents to \$3.00 to \$5.00. Passengers will be registered into the program through the Newton Senior Center. Then they will be set to go. Rides will operate Monday through Friday, probably from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Weekend service is also planned--details to be determined.

The City will finalize the contract soon, and the service should be fully operational by the end of this summer. As we firm up the logistics, we'll keep you informed.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. We're brainstorming a creative name for the new service. The best one we've

come up with so far is "WiseWays/Newton." Do you have any suggestions? Email Nicole Freedman at nfreedman@newtonma.gov with your ideas!

