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Addressing Non-Emergent Medical Transportation Barriers For Rural Vermont Patients

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Hinesburg Family Medicine

March-April 2023



The University of Vermont
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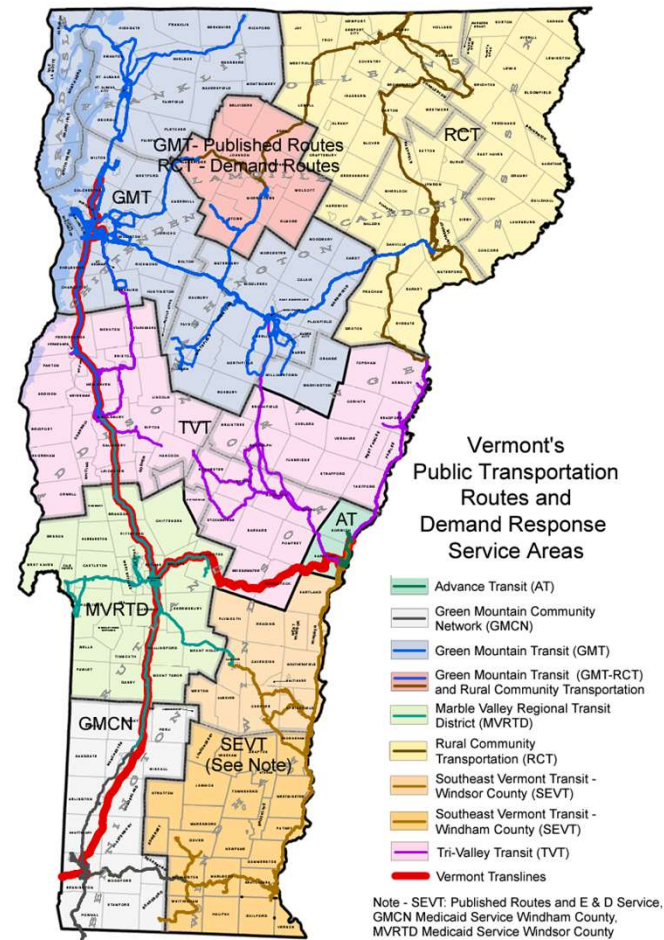
The Problem

- Access to transportation is a Social Determinant of Health
 - Lack of transportation pertains to Health Care Access & Quality (per Healthy People 2030)
 - Prohibits access to primary care provider and completion of recommended health screenings
- Nationally, roughly 3.6 million people miss medical appointments each year due to transportation issues
- 64.9% of Vermont's population lives in rural areas
 - 404,576 rural residents in total

Public Health Cost

- According to the Rural Health Information Hub, all but one Vermont county (Chittenden) is considered to have a primary care health professional shortage
- Several studies cite a lack of evidence linking non-emergent medical transport (NEMT) with health care outcomes due to differences in state administration of NEMT
- Hinesburg is serviced by two public transportation routes
 - Green Mountain & Tri-Valley Transit
 - Per Vermont Public Transportation Association: 5,126,151 total rides were given in FY19
 - Due to Hinesburg's location, patients may travel from one of several counties, complicating the transportation picture
- Rides available through Medicaid
 - As of 2021, 24% of Vermonters (150,000) are enrolled in Medicaid
 - Many barriers exist, including medical necessity, cost, & scheduling requirements

Vermont Public Transportation



Map Produced by the VTrans Mapping Section - 1/23/2018

Community Perspective

- “Some pre-pandemic ride programs are not as substantial as they were before the pandemic...developing relationships with patients is important; rapport helps back up recommendations...a local feel is important to our community members and facilitates better conversations about the barriers they face.”
 - Dr. Michelle Cangiano, MD: Hinesburg Site Leader
- “Program expansion is necessary to meet the community need. Education and community-based work needs to be done to destigmatize medical follow-up and ride services. We should start conversations about preventive care years in advance to understand patients’ unique barriers.”
 - Sarah Dale, LICSW: Hinesburg
- “We’re a lot more than a ride; our drivers and people’s communication with staff may be their only encounter on a given day. We strive to provide a safe and caring environment that is more than just a ride.”
 - Anonymous Community Member

Intervention & Methodology

- Interviews were conducted with Hinesburg Family Medicine staff and a local ride service program
 - Sought to **characterize** transportation barriers faced by rural Vermonters, current **strengths** of the system, and areas for potential **improvement**
- Effective communication & relationship building with rural Vermonters is crucial
 - Intervention will seek to **facilitate improved communication** between clinic staff & patients
 - Improved communication will lead to **patient-centric solutions**

Results

- Document of compiled transportation resources
 - Includes transportation vendors by county with contact information
 - Identifies Medicaid providers
 - Includes ADA paratransit, Elderly & Disabled, and Veterans' options
- To be **used by clinic staff** as a **quick reference** of available options for patients
 - Improving staff **knowledge & awareness** will facilitate **early and frequent communication** with patients about their unique transportation needs
 - Knowledgeable staff & frequent conversations **build rapport** with patients and **destigmatizes** ride programs

Deliverable

Transportation Resources for Patients

Transportation Vendors

Vendor	Counties Served	Phone Number	Website	Medicaid Provider?
Special Services Transportation Agency	Chittenden	(802) 878-1527	https://sstarides.org/	Yes
Rural Community Transportation	Northeast Kingdom & Lamoille	(855) 811-6360	https://www.riderct.org/	Yes
Marble Valley Regional Transit District	Rutland	(800) 339-3191	https://thebus.com/	Yes
Tri-Valley Transit	Addison Region Orange/Northern Windsor	(802) 388-2287 (802) 728-3773	https://www.trivalleytransit.org/	Yes
The Green Mountain Express	Multiple	(802) 447-0477 (877) 530-6116	https://greenmountainexpress.com/	Yes
Green Mountain Transit**	Washington Franklin Chittenden	(802) 223-7287 (802) 527-2181 (802) 864-2282	https://ridegmt.com/	Yes
Southeast Vermont Transit	Deerfield Valley Southern Windsor/Windham	(802) 460-7433 (888) 869-6287	https://www.moover.com/	Yes
Advance Transit	Dartmouth, White River Junction, & Norwich	(802) 295-1824	https://advancetransit.com/	No

**Also provides ADA paratransit service for non-Medicaid patients. Visit <https://ridegmt.com/ada-paratransit/> for more information and to access the application form.

Transportation Resources for Patients

Elderly & Disabled Programs by County

Qualifications: Age 60+ and/or living with an ADS defined disability.

County	Vendor	Phone Number	Website
Chittenden	Special Services Transportation Agency	(802) 878-1527	https://sstarides.org/
Addison	Dial-a-Ride	(802) 388-2287	https://www.trivalleytransit.org/dial-a-ride/#medicaid
Windsor/Orange	Ticket to Ride Program	(802) 728-3773	https://www.trivalleytransit.org/dial-a-ride/#ticket-to-ride
Franklin/Grand Isle	Green Mountain Transit	(802) 527-2181	https://ridegmt.com/regional-programs/
Lamoille/Essex/Calendonia/Orleans	Rural Community Transportation	(802) 748-8170	https://www.riderct.org/elders-and-persons-with-disabilities-transportation
Washington	Green Mountain Transit	(802) 223-7287	https://ridegmt.com/regional-programs/
Rutland/Bennington	Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging	(802) 786-5990	https://svcoa.org/transportation
Windham	MOOvers	(802) 460-7433	https://www.moover.com/elderly-disabled-medicaid-ada/

Veterans' Options

Vendor	Contact Person(s)	Phone Number & Email	Website
VetRide	Trevor McCants Nancy Eastman	(802) 295-9363 ext. 4382 Trevor.McCants@va.gov (802) 295-9363 ext. 5531 Nancy.Eastman@va.gov	https://www.vetride.va.gov/app/home

**For veterans eligible for VA health care benefits with a VA-authorized appointment.

Effectiveness & Limitations

- Proposed Evaluation of Effectiveness
 - Survey clinic staff on their **confidence** discussing transportation barriers with patients
 - Track impact on quantity of **missed appointments**
 - Track **patient completion** of recommended health screenings
 - Survey **patients' attitudes** towards discussing transportation barriers with clinic staff
- Limitations
 - **Time constraints:** clinic staff already face tight schedules and may have difficulty incorporating lengthy discussions about transportation into a patient visit
 - **Actionable solutions:** improved communication and rapport with patients may not be sufficient to solve their unique transportation barriers
 - **Patient attitudes:** patients may be reluctant to seek out solutions regardless of support from clinic staff

Future Directions

- Establish more robust screening for transportation barriers
 - Identify **common unfulfilled screening recommendations** that are attributable to transportation barriers (i.e., colonoscopies)
 - Ask for **open-ended feedback** to understand transportation barriers in greater depth (i.e., cost for parking, need for a companion/chaperone, etc.)
- Explore **funding** options for patients who **fall off the income cliff** and do not qualify for pre-existing ride programs but still face transportation barriers

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