

Age-Friendly Transportation Survey Summary Report

WICE Consulting

Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission

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Executive Summary

The Age-Friendly Transportation Survey was conducted in New Boston, NH by the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission (SNHPC) in coordination with the Manchester Transit Authority, New Boston stakeholders, and WICE Consulting (a student consulting team from Southern New Hampshire University). Currently, New Boston has a free shuttle that runs every Wednesday between the hours of 10 AM and 3 PM. However, only two to three residents have been taking advantage of the service. The survey presented an opportunity to educate New Boston residents on the current public transportation options, as well as get feedback on how to improve these options. The survey ran from January 2020 through the end of February 2020 with 130 total participants (6 were non-residents) and included both online (through Survey Monkey) and paper survey format. The survey consisted of 14 questions taking the average respondent 2 minutes to



complete. Most of the participants were New Boston residents 65 years of age or older. Although a lot of residents have a driver's license and still drive in some capacity, 24 participants indicated they drive occasionally or not at all. More than half of the participants were not aware of the free shuttle service offered by the MTA. Over 50% indicated they would utilize the shuttle service if they were not able to drive themselves. In addition, about 14% indicated they would utilize a volunteer driver. Also, about 53% of people have utilized a ride-hailing service such as Uber. If financial assistance was provided for ride hailing services or taxi rides, 31% indicated they

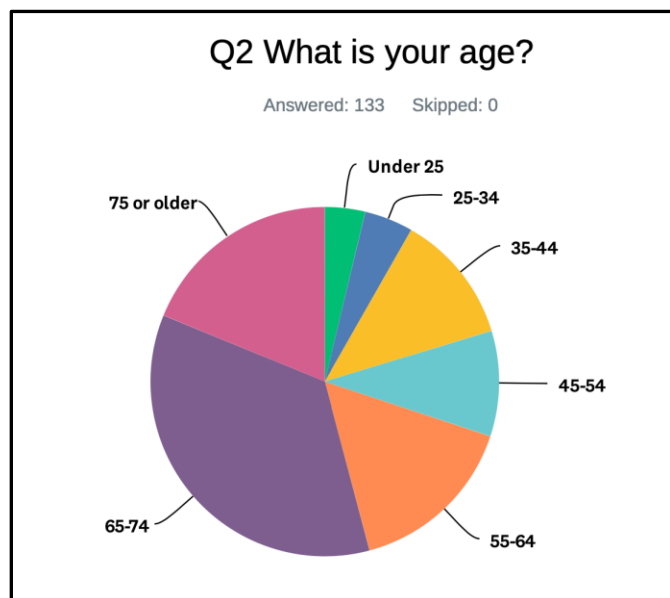
would use them one to two times per week, 4.2% indicated three to five times per week, and just under 1% indicated they would use them more than five times per week.

About 73% of participants indicated they would prefer to learn about the new service through advertisement in the New Boston Beacon and 38% or 47 individuals were interested in attending an informational presentation about the service. When analyzing the service, a majority of respondents pointed out that they would like extended hours and more destinations for the service. Participants may not have known that the shuttle presently provides services between New Boston, Goffstown, and Bedford with medical appointments in Manchester.

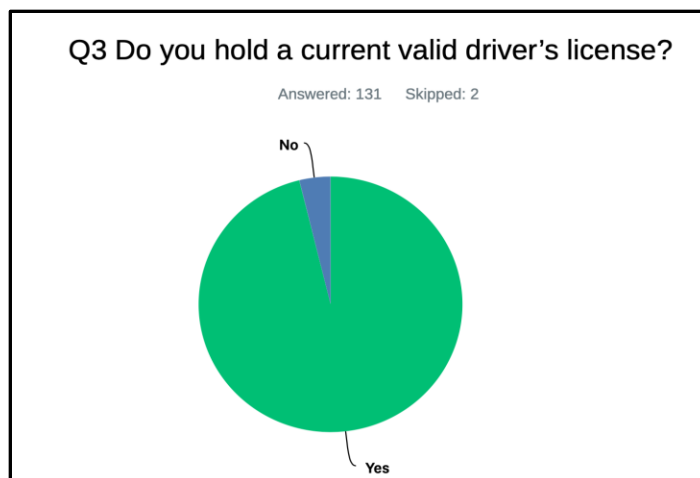
Most participants seem interested in the service; they just do not know much about it. Therefore, increased outreach and educational efforts would be beneficial for the New Boston Shuttle. As part of this project, outreach materials have been created to help educate New Boston residents about the new service program that is planned to begin July 1st, 2020.

Survey Results

A majority of participants were New Boston residents, 95.38% compared to 4.62% non-residents. The largest age groups were 65-74 years old (36.15%), 75 or older (19.23%) and the 55-64 age group (15.38%). The remainder of participants were in the following groups: 35-44 (12.31%), 45-54 (9.23%), 25-34 (4.62%), and under 25 (3.08%). 96.88% of participants hold a current valid driver's license.



When asked to describe their current driving status, 81.54% typically drive a car on a daily basis, 15.38% drive a car occasionally, and 3.08% do not drive at all. Also, 55.04% of participants were not aware that the MTA provides a free and accessible shuttle service on Wednesdays.



When asked to suggest any changes to the current MTA shuttle, 56.18% selected to extend the hours of service and 56.18% also selected to add more destinations. 15.73% wrote in another suggestion, 14.61% selected to change the



day, and another 14.61% selected to provide assistance with boarding and exiting the bus.

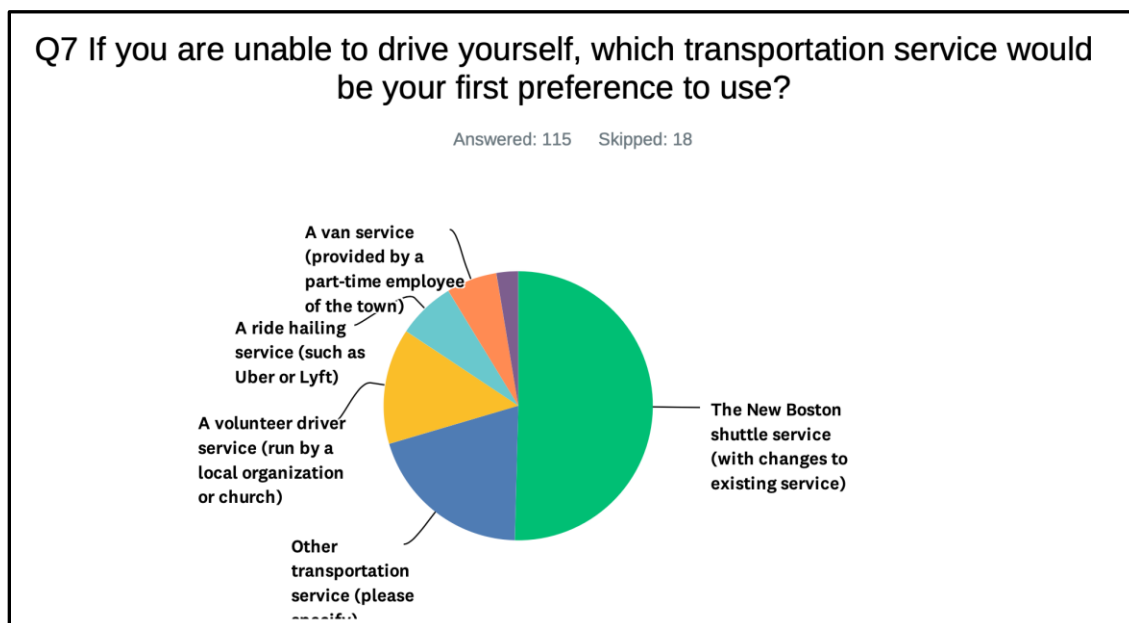
When asked about the first preference for transportation if they were unable to drive themselves, the top three choices were: the New Boston shuttle service with changes to existing services (50.89%), other transportation service (20.54%), and a volunteer driver service run by a local organization or church (14.29%). Only a few participants selected a ride-hailing service, 6.25% (such as Uber or Lyft), a van service 5.36% (provided by a part-time employee of the town), or a taxi or cab service 2.68% (with financial assistance or vouchers).

When asked for a second preference, the New Boston shuttle service was still favored at

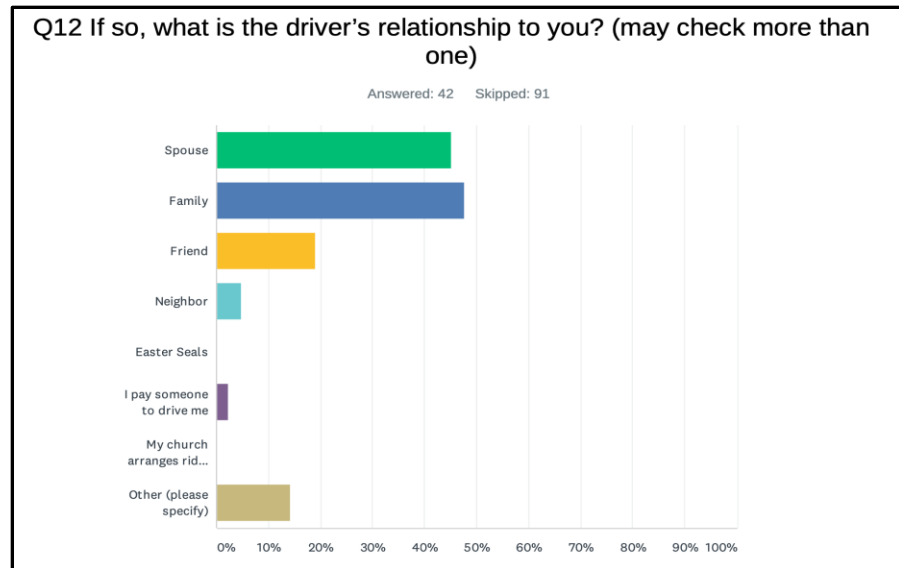
25.47%. Following closely were preferences for a volunteer driver (22.64%), van service (20.75%), and ride-hailing services (18.87%). Again, the least favored was a taxi or cab service (9.43%) and other transportation services (2.83%). Overall, the New Boston shuttle service was the overwhelming favorite for first and second preferences.

When asked about whether they had utilized a ride-hailing service such as Uber or Lyft 53.49% said yes while 46.51% indicated they have not. With the availability of financial assistance to help pay for a taxi or Uber, 63.79% still said they would not use the services. Others who would use the service were divided as follows: 31.9% indicated they would use it 1-2 times per week, 3.45% indicated they would use it 3-5 times per week, and 0.86% indicated they would use it more than 5 times per week.

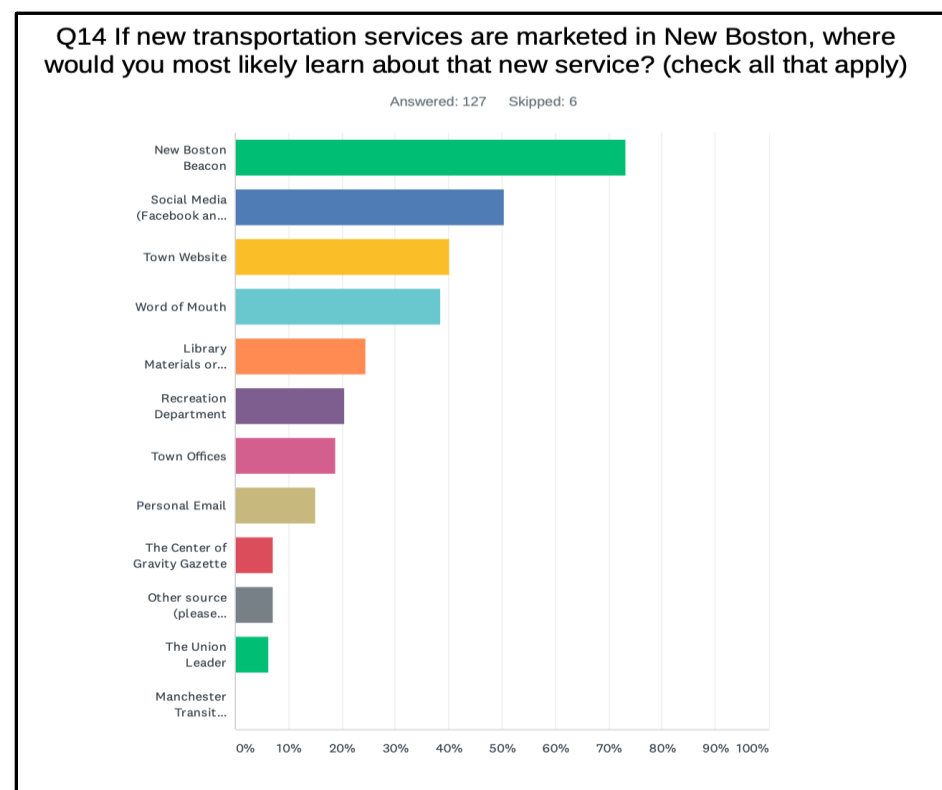
As part of the survey, one of the goals was to better understand if New Boston residents were getting rides from family or friends. A majority of residents are not getting rides from someone, while approximately 35 residents are getting rides to appointments, shopping, or other



destinations. Of those getting rides, most of the rides were given by a family member (47.5%) or from their spouse (45%), the remainder were from friends (20%) a neighbor (5%), and finally, one person (2.5%) pay someone to drive them.



Also, of interest to stakeholders conducting the survey, was to see if residents would be interested in attending an informational presentation to discuss the potential options for new transportation services in New Boston.



47 residents stated they would be interested, 39 of which are over the age of 55.

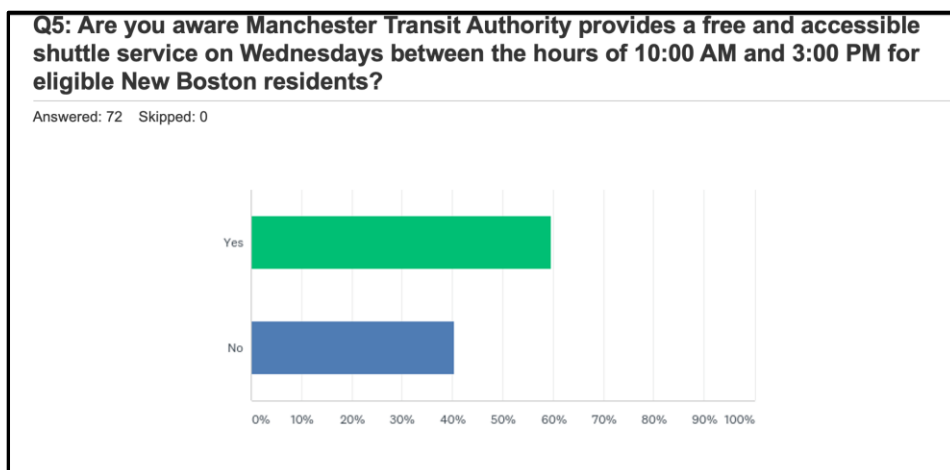
The final question asked was related to where participants would be most likely to learn about the new service if new transportation services were marketed in New Boston. 72.58% preferred the New Boston Beacon, 50.81% selected social media, 40.32% utilize the town website, 39.52% get information through word of mouth, 24.19% selected library materials or programs, 20.97% selected from the Recreation Department, 19.35% selected Town Offices, 15.32% rely on personal emails, 7.26% selected The Center of Gravity Gazette, 7.26% selected other sources, and 5.65% selected The Union Leader.

Filters

To better understand survey participants and their responses, filters were applied to the survey to better analyze the data. It was important to filter answers that would best represent the target audience of older adults and their understanding of existing services and other survey elements.

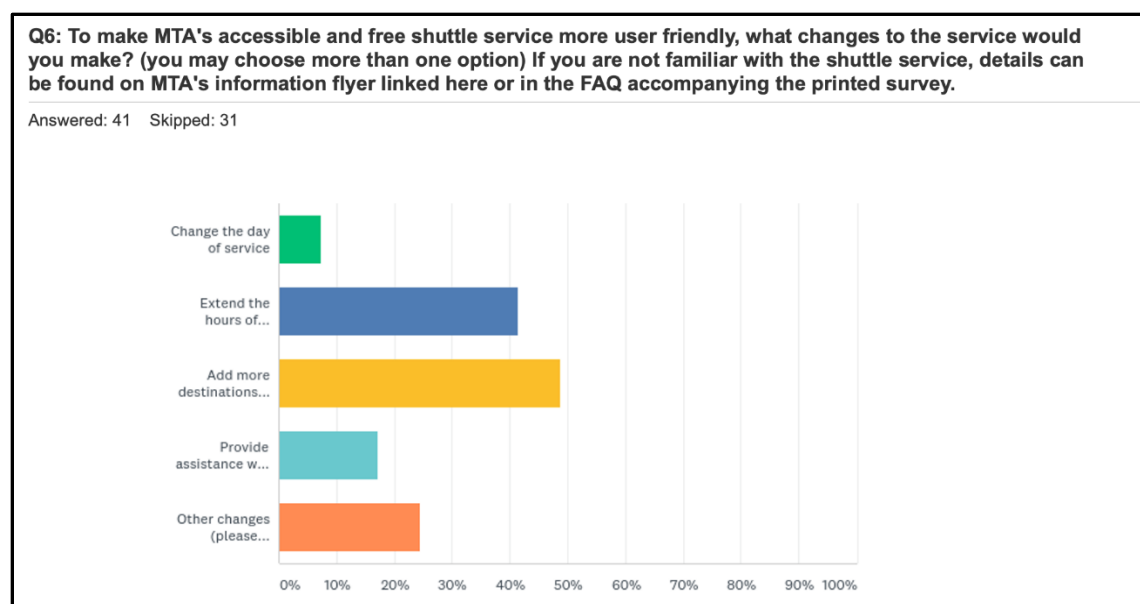
Participants 65 and Over

As transit services are geared for older adults, the survey team was interested in better understanding participant response from those who indicated they were over 65 years old in question 2. This resulted in 72 total responses with 100% of the participants indicating



they do have a valid driver's license, but about 18% only drive occasionally. This indicated there is a need for other forms of transportation among this age group. A key statistic was that only

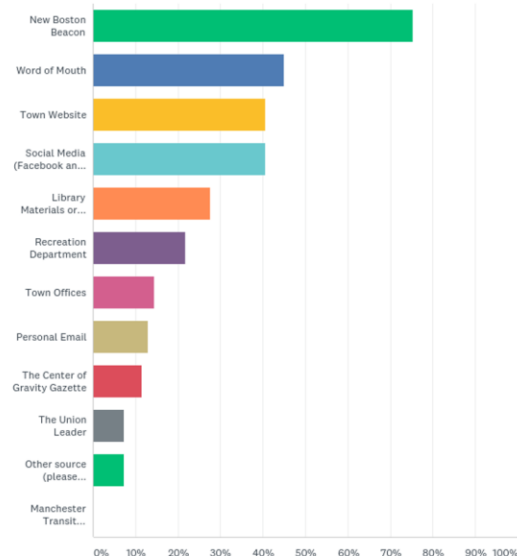
59% previously knew about the New Boston shuttle service. This further proves that more outreach for the service is vital to increase ridership. When asked about the changes they would apply to the current shuttle service, the most popular answers were changing the destination (48.78%) and extending the hours of the service (41.46%). About 55% picked the New Boston shuttle service as their first preference if they were unable to drive. Also, when asked for the second preference, 30% of survey participants chose the New Boston shuttle as well. This emphasizes the point that the community desires revisions to the existing shuttle service, rather than changing to a taxi or volunteer driver program. There was a lack of interest in ride-hailing services such as Uber among this demographic. 56% of survey participants indicated they have



never used a ride-hailing service, and nearly 70% indicated they would never use a ride-hailing service, even with financial assistance. Of participants 65 and over, 28 or 42% of them would be interested in attending an information session regarding the New Boston shuttle, revealing a high utility for hosting an informational session when the shuttle revisions are adopted. Also, the New Boston Beacon was the clear choice for obtaining information regarding the service with 75.36%.

Q14: If new transportation services are marketed in New Boston, where would you most likely learn about that new service? (check all that apply)

Answered: 69 Skipped: 3

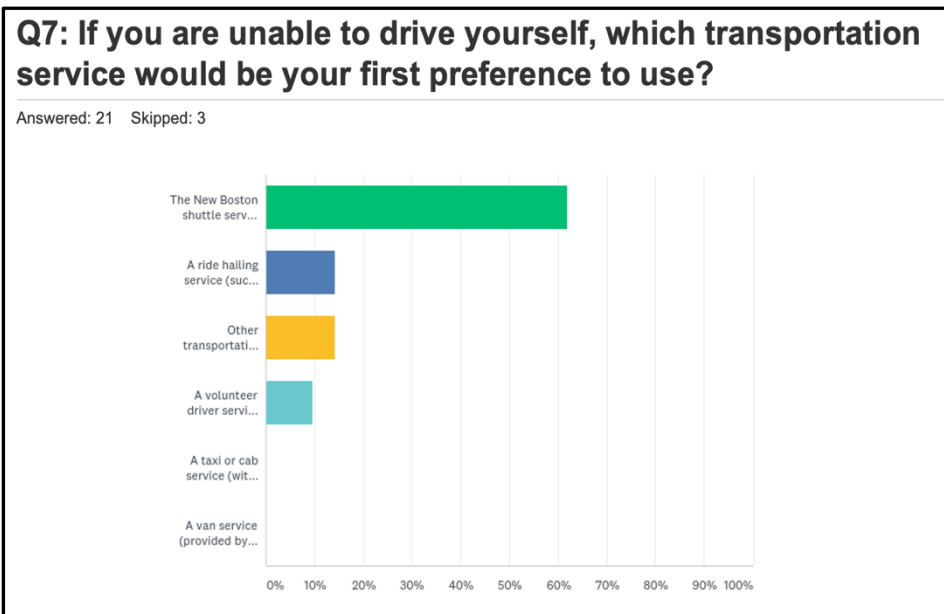


Daily Drivers Excluded

Another filter used to better understand participant responses was to exclude those who drive every day. The thought process was that they were capable of driving and therefore not in need of the transit service. By utilizing this filter, it was hoped that the thoughts and opinions of those who are more likely to engage in this service will help decision-makers in creating an improved program.

Application of this filter resulted in 24 total responses. The largest age group was those who are 65 and older (54.17%). This group represents an older group that does not drive daily which is one of the main target demographics of this survey. Of these 24 survey participants, 83.33% only drive occasionally and 16.67% do not drive at all. Also, 60% of this group were not aware of the New Boston shuttle service prior to this survey. Again, this reinforces the idea that this service needs to be promoted more effectively. When asked for suggestions for the current service, the most popular answer was to add more destinations (52.94%). The first preference

when unable to drive, was the New Boston shuttle (61.90%), revealing a strong interest in the service.



66% of these survey participants have someone to drive them to appointments, etc. with the majority being driven by family or their spouse. About 48% of survey participants indicated they would attend an information session regarding the New Boston shuttle showing interest in the service. The New Boston Beacon was again the favored choice for where to get information regarding the service at 60.87%.

Previously Aware of Shuttle

The next filter segmented those who were already previously aware of the New Boston shuttle. This filter resulted in 58 responses. These responses are important in order to find out what people already know about the service as well as address any misconceptions.

Of the 58 responses, 74.14% of the participants were 65 and over. 100% of the individuals have a valid driver's license and 84.48% drive daily. When asked for any suggestions for the shuttle service, 48.73% indicated more destinations should be added and 45.59% wanted extended hours. Ride-hailing services were not popular with this group. Half of the participants indicated they would not utilize the services, and 68.81% indicated they would not use ride-

hailing services even with financial assistance. When asked for the first preference when driving was not an option, almost 60% chose the New Boston shuttle service. The information session regarding the New Boston shuttle was popular with 51.85% of survey participants indicating they would attend. Similar to the other groups, the New Boston Beacon was the preferred outlet (80%) for information regarding the service.

Willing to Attend Information Session

With the information session serving as a possible outlet to educate New Boston residents on the new shuttle service, the next filter segmented those who are willing to attend. There is a clear interest in the service, so getting a point of view from those who are open to learning about the service is beneficial for this study.

This filter resulted in 47 total responses with 62.57% being 65 and over. They all have their driver's license and the majority still drive. Only 60% were previously aware of the service, so an information session would be beneficial to give more information regarding the service to this group. When asked for suggestions for the service, 65% indicated they wanted more destinations and 53% wanted to change the hours. Similar to the full survey, this group was not very open to ride-hailing services such as Uber with the majority indicating they had not and would never use these services even with financial assistance. Again, as with the full group, the New Boston Beacon (78%) was the top choice for where participants wanted to get information regarding the shuttle service.

Recommendations

Encouraging senior citizens to transfer from driving to public transportation is challenging. Many seniors are hesitant due to unfamiliarity with transit. The Age-Friendly Transportation Survey has provided insights into the minds of not only these senior citizens, but

a wide demographic of residents in New Boston.

One way to help ease the transition to public transportation as well as inform residents about the up-coming changes to the New Boston shuttle service is to plan information sessions and events. According to the unfiltered survey, 47 people were willing to attend a session to learn more about the shuttle; 28 were over the age of 65 which is one of the main targets of this study. For those who might not be able to attend a session, it could be broadcasted live on the local TV channel. Some of the residents may be more willing to watch the screen at home rather than attending in person.

Creating a fun event that included food, giveaways, or other incentives would help ensure a positive turn-out. Such an event could help ease any concerns residents may have, especially if a short ride to a local bakery, ice cream shop, or other fun outing was included with providing information about the service. This would not only provide the experience of riding on the bus; it would help associate the trip with having a positive experience. The information session would help educate participating residents who in turn could help educate others through word-of-mouth. Posting and sharing event photos would also help to create a positive image for the service.

Another useful outlet for providing information related to the New Boston Shuttle is to utilize online platforms such as the New Boston Beacon. About 73% of the total survey population indicated that The Beacon was the best way to spread information. As this publication is popular among New Boston residents, one idea is to create an infographic to be highlighted in the Beacon. Multiple, on-going posts, articles and other repeatable reminders might prompt residents to think about the service and remember it when trying to plan transportation alternatives.

Other social media platforms and the town's website including the Library and Recreation Departments' web pages should also feature the New Boston shuttle to increase its exposure to residents. Posts could include a short video to show potential riders the convenience, safety, and pleasantness of the service, highlighting a typical rider's experience: taking the shuttle and interacting with the driver. This could help create some familiarity to the service and ease concerns potential riders may have with the service.

Associating positive and pleasant perceptions with the service might help to increase ridership. MTA or the town might partner with local businesses and provide incentives or free vouchers. For example, residents riding the shuttle for the first time or riding on a specific day would receive a voucher for a free hot dog or other treat. This might encourage new riders to try the service and hopefully give them a positive experience in which they want to come back.

Another way to help residents feel more comfortable with the shuttle is through partnering with local events and town departments. For example, the Recreation Department and MTA could work together to deliver a variety of activities, such as a ride to a park or an ice cream social where seniors take the bus. Again, gaining familiarity with the bus, the driver, and the service in general to reinforce positive perceptions with the service.

Collaborating with existing town efforts is a great way to increase exposure to the shuttle. A "touch the bus," for example, could be combined with farmers' markets or other events where seniors can physically get on and off the bus to explore the accessibility of it. Seniors could meet drivers to feel more comfortable and familiar with the service.

Conclusion

The Age-Friendly Transportation Survey provided great insight into the minds of New Boston residents. This survey was successful with 130 responses via online and print surveys.

The primary audience was elderly residents who may need to rely on public transportation as they age. Through this survey, it was proven that many people in New Boston are open to the shuttle. However, a large part of the sample was uninformed about the service. In fact, 55% of the survey participants did not even know that there was a free shuttle in New Boston. Therefore, education and outreach efforts regarding the shuttle might be the focus of future community and stakeholder efforts. Possible venues could include developing partnerships, information sessions, and incentives to ride. In addition to providing insight into how to better inform people on the service, the survey provided information regarding how they should update the service. At the time of writing this report, MTA planned on implementing a more flexible shuttle service to provide an on-demand service from Mondays through Fridays from 10AM to 3PM. This addresses key concerns and suggestions from New Boston residents.