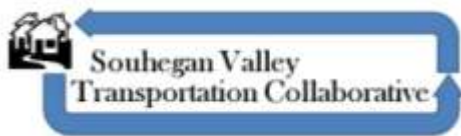


Souhegan Valley Rides

Volume 1, Issue 6

October 2009



Souhegan Valley Rides Celebrates its First Anniversary

Souhegan Valley Rides celebrated its first anniversary at the beginning of October by holding two celebrations, one in Hollis at the Lawrence Barn and one in Milford at the SHARE Center. In addition to celebrating the success of the bus service, a goal of these community gatherings was to obtain feedback from residents about the service.

The celebrations began with a presentation from members of the Souhegan Valley Transportation Collaborative (SVTC). The history, future, and details of the service were explained at both events.

Initiated in October 2008 to provide affordable, wheelchair-accessible rides to non-emergency medical and healthcare related appointments, the bus service has continued to grow in ridership and has expanded in scope. In just one short year, the service has provided almost 1,000 rides to residents of Amherst, Brookline, Hollis, and Milford and has added Thursday shopping rides

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Current Towns Served:

Amherst, Brookline, Hollis & Milford

Schedule:

8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (including travel time)

Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday

To schedule a ride:

Call 880-0100 ext. 1

At least 48 hours in advance on weekdays

**For more information, please call
880-0100 then dial extension 1**



SVTC members Ellen Groh and Dennie Townsend share information about the community transit bus with Hollis Celebration attendees.



Ruth Heden, SVTC member, talks with Senator Peggy Gilmour and Representative Don Ryder at the Hollis Celebration.



to four local shopping centers. The bus service currently has 347 registered riders, and that number increases monthly.

“Look at how far this service has come in just a year,” said Matt Waitkins, a Transportation Planner with the Nashua Regional Planning Commission, which is working with SVTC to create a sustainable, long-range plan to ensure that this bus service is a permanent resource in the Souhegan Valley.

The future funding, including funding from Souhegan Valley towns, of the service was also discussed at the celebrations. “Our number one priority now is to keep the service going,” said SVTC member and Hollis resident Ellen Groh. Last year, SVTC approached Amherst, Brookline, Hollis, and Milford to ask if they would help fund the service. Brookline and Milford residents voted favorably to appropriate specific sums of money for the community bus service, while Hollis implemented an additional motor vehicle registration fee to fund the service. “Every time you register your vehicle in Hollis, a dollar goes to keep the service going,” Groh explained to celebration attendees.

Residents asked questions about the current service, including who is eligible to ride the bus. “Age is not a criterion,” noted Jim Bélanger, SVTC member and Hollis resident. “If you need a ride, the service is there,” he said.

After the presentation, residents were asked to give their honest feedback about the service. Most attendees, whether they had ridden the bus or not, were happy to share their impressions of the service.

Emily St. John, a Milford resident, had nothing but good things to say. “The service is a godsend,” she said. “I was thrilled when the bus became available,” she said. Some riders mentioned the wait time when using the bus, but St. John replied, “The wait time is a small inconvenience compared to the big convenience of getting a ride.”

“The service is needed very badly,” said Maxine Erikson of Milford. “I am very impressed with Souhegan Valley Rides,” she said.

Many residents mentioned that the service is not only useful for the elderly. Troy Brown, town

administrator of Hollis, shared that a Hollis employee had used the service after having hip replacement surgery.

Representatives from Congressman Paul Hodes’ office attended both celebrations. State Senator Peggy Gilmour and State Representative Don Ryder attended the Hollis event. “I’ve heard very good things about the service, and I’m grateful to this organization for providing services to the community,” Gilmour said.

Bill Andrews, a Kaley Foundation trustee, attended the Milford celebration. “The Kaley Foundation is very happy to have helped fund the first year of the service, but the foundation cannot keep funding the service forever,” he said. Andrews went on to say, “That is why it is so important that voters get active.”

“SVTC is going back to the towns for more funding,” said Groh. SVTC plans to introduce warrant articles for motor vehicle registration fees to pay for the service in Amherst and Milford. The motor vehicle registration fee model will allow for sustainable funding of the service.

After the presentation and discussions, attendees met with members of SVTC, completed community transportation assessment surveys, and enjoyed cakes decorated with a picture of the bus and a variety of sweet treats at each celebration.

For more information about the community bus service and its future, please visit the SVTC website at www.SouheganRides.org or contact SVTC at Info@SouheganRides.org or (603) 673-8482.

Submitted by Kaley Lentini, GSO

Fare Voucher Program

Thanks to continued support from and collaboration with SHARE and the Hollis Seniors, SVTC is able to offer a voucher program for the bus fares. The vouchers are available for riders who are unable to afford the fare for each trip. To obtain a voucher, please request one when scheduling your ride with the NTS dispatcher. For more information, please contact Marcia Nelson at (603) 673-8482.



SVTC Debuts New Website!

As part of the ongoing effort to “get the word” about Souhegan Valley Rides, SVTC has been developing its own website. Thanks to the talents and leadership of SVTC member and Hollis resident Jim Bélanger, this website is becoming a reality! While Jim and his committee continue to work on making the site more user friendly, the important information about SVTC and the Souhegan Valley Rides bus service is available on the net!

Please take a moment to visit the SVTC website at www.SouheganRides.org. Feel free to share this internet site with your friends and contacts. “Word of mouth” or, in this day and age, “word of keystroke” remains the best tool in the publicity toolbox.

Transit Tidbit:

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE MANY BENEFITS OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION?

- Public transportation provides personal mobility and freedom.
- Every dollar invested in public transportation projects generates from \$4 to \$9 in local economic activity.
- Public transportation is an immediate means of helping our environment and conserving energy.
- Public transportation helps relieve traffic congestion, reducing hours of delay in major travel corridors.
- Non-users benefit as a result of public transportation.

From the American Public Transportation website
www.publictransportation.org/facts/faq.asp.

Many Thanks to Our Contributors!

Without the support and interest of our contributors, the Souhegan Valley Rides pilot program would never have “rolled out of the garage.” Three cheers and many thanks to the individuals and organizations who have so generously contributed to the implementation of this bus service!

Amherst

The Bean Foundation

Brookline

Brookline Community Church

Brookline Lion’s Club

Brookline Women’s Club

Hollis-Brookline Rotary

Jerry Farwell of C.L. Farwell Construction

Rich Vertullo of Vertullo Landscaping

Kevin and Cindy Gorgolione

of Absolute Mechanical Systems

Loring Webster

Town of Brookline

Hollis

Hollis-Brookline Rotary

Hollis Seniors

Town of Hollis

The Marie Le Doux Foundation

Milford

The Kaley Foundation

The Marchesi Fund

The Milford Hospital Association

The Milford Rotary Club

Town of Milford

Nashua

Dartmouth-Hitchcock

Concord

The Endowment for Health

*Please consider
 supporting our supporters!*

Since the last newsletter in August, SVTC members have been busy with ongoing efforts to strengthen the community presence of the Souhegan Valley Rides community bus service. SVTC participated in the Milford Labor Day Parade, the Hollis Old Home Days Parade, and the Milford Pumpkin Festival and sponsored two First Anniversary Celebrations. If you or your organization would like to have SVTC give a presentation about the bus service, please contact us at Info@SouheganRides.org or (603) 673-8482.



Ridership Facts as of 9/30/09

Registered riders by Town

Amherst	37
Brookline	34
Hollis	95
Milford	181
Total	347

- Approximately 83% of the bus rides involve appointments located in Nashua, 14% in Milford and 3% in Amherst
- About 70% of the riders are female, 73% are seniors and 32% use some type of assistive device such as a cane or wheelchair
- The number of registered riders has steadily increased on a monthly basis

Total number of one-way rides by Town:

	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Total Rides	% of Total Rides
Amherst	0	2	0	2	4	2	2	8	18	16	28	14	96	9.8%
Brookline	0	2	0	0	0	2	2	0	1	0	2	4	13	1.3%
Hollis	14	34	20	10	11	28	24	24	14	14	16	20	229	23.3%
Milford	30	49	40	60	42	52	55	57	62	61	54	84	646	65.6%
Total	44	87	60	72	57	84	83	89	95	91	100	122	984	

- Between February 1, 2009 and September 30, 2009, there were 54 unique appointment locations used by SVR riders: 4 in Amherst, 13 in Milford, and 37 in Nashua
- The range in frequency of use for these 54 locations was 1 to 57
- 12 of these locations accounted for nearly 75% of the bus service activity: 3 are in Milford and 9 are in Nashua

Transit Tidbit: Funding Community Transportation

According to the FTA website, "in 2007, Federal funding for transit was nearly \$9 billion. Federal support for transit includes revenue from motor fuel taxes (from the Mass Transit Account of the Highway Trust Fund) and general fund appropriations. The amount of Federal motor fuel taxes dedicated for transit in the Mass Transit Account has totaled 2.86 cents per gallon since 1997. Sources of funds at the state and local levels include direct transit system taxing authority, property taxes, motor fuel taxes, tolls, sales taxes, income taxes, and a variety of other tax sources."

In New Hampshire, the State Legislature has granted authority to local municipalities to raise municipal transportation improvement funds through an additional fee on motor vehicle registrations (RSA 261:153, VI). When approved by voters in the local community, the monies raised through this mechanism allow a community to fund, wholly or in part, improvements in the local or regional transportation system including roads, bridges, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, parking and intermodal facilities and public transportation. The funds may be used for engineering, right-of-way acquisition, and construction costs of transportation facilities, and for operating and capital costs of public transportation only. The funds may be used as matching funds for state or federal funds allocated for local or regional transportation improvements.



2009-2010 Board of Directors

Marcia Nelson, Milford, Chairperson
 Janet Langdell, Milford, Vice-chairperson
 Jim Belanger, Hollis, Co-secretary
 Dennie Townsend, Brookline, Co-secretary
 Ellen Groh, GSOP, Treasurer
 Carolyn Mitchell, Amherst
 Ruth Heden, At-large member

SVTC Contact Information

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 753 Hollis, NH 03049
 Email: Info@SouheganRides.org or
GetInvolved@SouheganRides.org

Souhegan Valley Rides is published every two months (April, June, August, October, December and February). Please email any comments or questions and subscription requests to Newsletter@SouheganRides.org

A reminder - As a social services agency, SHARE meets the criteria as a destination for bus rides. If you have an appointment at the SHARE Center on Elm Street in Milford and need transportation, please consider using the Souhegan Valley Rides bus service.



NRPC Nashua Regional Planning Commission

Improving quality of life through planning

For more information about issues, information and planning activities affecting our region, please visit the NRPC website at WWW.NASHUARPC.ORG

The NRPC office is located in Merrimack at 9 Executive Park Drive, Suite 201
 Phone 603-424-2240 ~ Fax 603-424-2230

SVTC Volunteer Opportunities

To learn more about SVTC or to get involved in making the bus service a permanent resource in your Souhegan Valley community, please call Marcia Nelson at (603) 673-8482 or email us at GetInvolved@SouheganRides.org



GSOP Membership Campaign in the Souhegan Valley

As part of an ongoing effort to strengthen its voice and numbers, the Granite State Organizing Project (GSOP) has initiated a membership drive in the Souhegan Valley. GSOP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan grassroots organization incorporated in 2002 that works to improve life in south-central New Hampshire. As an advocacy group with a united voice, GSOP members work on issues related to affordable housing, health care, jobs, education and other topics that affect the quality of life in south-central New Hampshire. If you, your church or other organization are interested in more information about GSOP or potential membership, please contact Kaley Lentini, GSOP Outreach Coordinator, at GSOP, 383 Beech St., Manchester, N.H. 03103, (603)668-8250 or klentinigop@comcast.net.



Upcoming Community Transportation Event

October 29, 2009 7:00 PM ~ NRPC Conference Room ~ Suite 201, 9 Executive Park Drive Merrimack, NH

The Nashua Regional Planning Commission presents:

Patrick Herlihy, Transportation Coordinator NH Department of Health and Human Services and
 Kit Morgan, Bureau of Rail and Transit Administrator NH Department of Transportation

The State Coordinating Council for Community Transportation

For many years, New Hampshire transportation and human services agencies have been discussing ways to coordinate the various community transportation services offered in the state. The goal has been to reduce duplication, increase the availability of service, and make scarce resources go further as the need for transportation increases with an aging and growing population.

Come learn about this statewide program, the regional efforts to date, and what is planned for formalizing the relationship between the Nashua Region 7 Regional Coordinating Council (RCC) and NRPC.

Space is limited. Please RSVP to Karen M. Baker at karenb@nashuarpc.org or 603-424-2240 Ext. 11



Frequently Asked Questions

The Souhegan Valley Transportation Collaborative and the Nashua Transit System are committed to making this a comfortable and reliable service. If you have ideas, suggestions, complaints or compliments, please let us know by calling us at 880-0100 extension 1. Thank you for riding with us!

How the service works

- The van operates between 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM (including travel time) on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.
- Riders are asked to pay \$2.00 each way. Exact Fare Only – No change can be given. Fare vouchers are available and can be requested when scheduling a ride.
- Rides will be given to social service agencies, pharmacies and health care appointments, including doctor visits, dialysis, physical therapy, counseling and hospital services. Rides for local shopping are available on Thursdays only – call for details.
- Service is available to ALL residents of the four towns.
- Riders are asked to register for the service in advance and can register by calling 880-0100 extension 1.
- Riders will be picked up at home by a vehicle equipped with a lift.
- Service animals are permitted and Personal Care Attendants ride free.
- A rider may bring one guest if the guest pays the fee. NTS must be notified.

What information do I need to schedule my ride?

- Your full name
- Your telephone number
- The date of your trip
- The pick-up address
- The drop-off address
- Whether you use a mobility device
- The times you would like to arrive at and return from your destination
- Whether a personal attendant/PCA or companion will be riding with you

How far in advance do I schedule my ride?

Please call 880-0100 extension 1 at least 48 hours (weekdays only) in advance to schedule your ride. **Rides needed on Tuesdays must be scheduled by the previous Friday, rides for Wednesday must be scheduled by the previous Monday, and rides for Thursday must be scheduled by the previous Tuesday.**

Riders can call up to **two weeks** in advance to schedule a ride to an appointment. For riders attending dialysis or other ongoing, regularly scheduled appointments, NTS's dispatching staff will work with the individual rider on extended bookings.

What if I no longer need a ride?

It is very important that you call NTS if you are not going to need a scheduled trip by 5:00 PM the day before your scheduled trip. To cancel a trip, please call 880-0100 extension 1.

Riding the Bus

Please be prepared to meet the vehicle at the curb if you do not need assistance. If you do need assistance getting to the vehicle, and have told us so, please be ready at the building entrance door that you specified while making your reservation. When boarding, please have EXACT FARE ready. For the comfort and safety of all passengers, eating, drinking, smoking and the use of other tobacco products are not permitted in the vehicles. Radios and cell phones are a distraction to the driver and other passengers, EARPHONES only, please.

Other Important How-To-Ride Tips!

The vehicle may arrive anytime within a thirty (30) minute "window", up to fifteen (15) minutes before and fifteen (15) minutes after your scheduled pick-up time.

For example, if your pick-up time is scheduled for 9:00 AM, the vehicle will arrive between 8:45AM and 9:15AM.

Once you are inside the vehicle, the driver will assist you with your seatbelt, if requested, and secure your wheelchair if you have one.