



LAB Report

White River Junction, VT



Bugbee Senior Center Field Trip & Lunch
June 2024 Transit Field Trip

with support from **AARP**

Where We Started

Mpact:LAB and AARP Vermont started with the goal of following up on a 2023 Making Connections workshop hosted by Vital Communities, Bugbee Senior Center and AARP Vermont, funded by a grant from V-Trans, the state's transportation agency. The workshop focused on the idea that development should follow transit and other modes besides cars and provided tools to advocate for local change to the built environment to support aging in community. A lot of growth is happening in the Upper Valley region of Vermont. It's an opportune moment to find ways to shift the car-dependent mindset and encourage people to use transit more.

One way to do this, AARP and local partners decided, was to provide a fun experience to encourage older adults to explore riding the bus. They shared their interest in showing people a new way to get around and to link to other opportunities. This is especially timely as funding is going into transit & active transportation. In planning the transit field trip, local partners identified infrastructure-related barriers: lack of and often poorly maintained sidewalks when people get off the bus and limited number of shelters. Perhaps the greatest barrier is a generational stigma around the bus and the feeling that public transportation is foreign, overwhelming and intimidating. The group agreed that the more we can get people on for the first time, the more we can break down barriers.

Approach

Together, AARP, local partners, and Mpact:LAB hosted a transit field trip at Bugbee Senior Center for a lunch outing to King Arthur Baking Company. At the senior center, Mpact:LAB led a training for the group which covered how to ride the bus, how to plan a trip and myth "bus" ting.

Opportunity

White River Junction is fortunate to have free transit service through two providers: Advance Transit provides fixed route, in-town service (and paratransit as well) while Tri-Valley Transit covers Addison, Orange, and Northern Windsor Counties, offering commuter and circulator routes along with a robust demand-response program. White River Junction is a rural place with rural traditions but an urban form and cosmopolitan mindset to it. There are a lot of people interested in riding the bus, but need help overcoming the barrier of riding for the first time.

After the training, participants unanimously agreed that the outing was fun and enjoyable. They reported increased familiarity with transit.

Interested in learning more? Contact Sarah Rudolf at sarahr@mpactmobility.org.





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Outcomes & Next Steps

Twenty older adults participated in the June 28 transit field trip, along with representatives from AARP, Advance Transit, Tri-Valley Transit, and Vital Communities, a nonprofit that convenes people around regional challenges. During a Transit 101 training prior to the ride, participants reviewed key steps to success for riding transit: trip planning (schedule, routes and transfers), first/last mile, and riding etiquette. In addition, participants reviewed online and printed materials from transit agencies such as maps, schedules, and trip planning software. After the training, participants unanimously agreed that the outing was fun and enjoyable. They reported increased familiarity with transit. One participant reported that the bus was cleaner and nicer than expected. AARP will likely work with key partners to host a leaf viewing bus ride this autumn.

Interested in learning more? Contact Sarah Rudolf at sarahr@mpactmobility.org.



LAB Capacity-building and Stakeholder Development

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