

Who Needs Transportation? A Snapshot of Transit Need in New Hampshire

Public demand for improved public transit options, and particularly basic mobility services for older adults and individuals with disabilities, has been a major theme at the last several biennial cycles of the Governor’s Advisory Commission on Intermodal Transportation (GACIT) hearings on the State Ten Year Transportation Plan. It is backed up by interim responses to NHDOT’s online survey for the 2019 GACIT process, as well as statewide surveys conducted by the UNH Survey Center. Improving transportation access for a rapidly growing senior population to enable older citizens to age in place with dignity is a major recommendation of the recently completed State Plan on Aging (2019). New Hampshire’s four Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) all highlight the need for expanding public transportation access in their regional Long Range Transportation Plans.

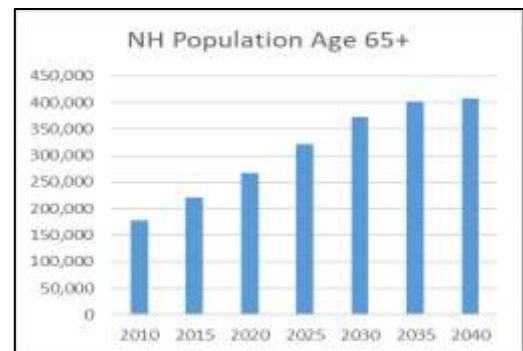
Community Transportation Services in New Hampshire

Provider Type	#	Towns Served	Annual Trips
Urban Transit Systems	5	20	3.5 million trips/year
Rural Transit Systems	6	14	938,000 trip/year
Volunteer Driver Programs	25	197	65,000 trips/year

In addition to formal transit providers and volunteer programs, several dozen non-profit agencies around the state offer transportation for seniors and individuals with disabilities. Twelve of these providers receive Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5310 funding through the NH Department of Transportation.

How Will New Hampshire’s Aging Population Get Around?

Older adults make up a large and growing portion of the non-driving population, along with individuals with disabilities. The American Association of Retired People (AARP) estimates that ***one in five Americans over the age of 65 doesn’t drive***. The number of people over age 65 in New Hampshire is projected to almost double in the next 20 years, growing from 220,672 in 2015 to 373,209 in 2030 to 408,522 in 2040. ***That’s nearly 75,000 non-driving seniors in New Hampshire by 2030.***



How Much Capacity is Needed to Meet Transportation Demand for Older Adults and People with Disabilities?

The Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) is a non-profit organization that provides technical assistance to rural and small urban transit systems around the country. CTAA’s model for estimating trip need for transit dependent populations uses Census data on the population over age 65 and the population under 65 below the poverty line and assumes 15% of that population does not drive. The model calculates each of these non-drivers needs a one way trip approximately every 9 days, or a round trip every 18 days. In other words, a non-driving older adult would need to travel a little less than once every two weeks, or 41 trips/year. The 2017 National Household Transportation Survey estimates that the average American takes 3.4 one way trips (1.7 round trips) per day (1230 trips/year), so this is a very conservative measure.

This yields an estimated ***1.9 million trips needed in New Hampshire in 2017 to meet basic life needs for seniors and other transit-dependent people***. Based on growth projections described above, ***this will rise to 2.8 million trips by 2030 and 3.05 million trips by 2040***. Some of this trip need can be met by families and neighbors, though the CTAA model already assumes family participation. Some of this need will be met by non-profits, though most of these organizations rely on federal, state and local funds as well charitable giving. Building this capacity will require federal funding as the Baby Boom generation isn’t just aging in New Hampshire, but also state funding.

Does New Hampshire Have the Capacity to Meet the Transportation Needs of a Doubled Senior Population?

In short, no. Only 34 of 244 communities in New Hampshire have regular public transit service. Fixed route transit can't be operated efficiently in rural areas lacking adequate population density. In these rural areas the most cost-effective approach to providing accessibility is typically with volunteer drivers backed by wheelchair accessible vehicles for people with mobility impairments.

Twenty-five publicly accessible volunteer driver programs serve 197 of New Hampshire's 244 communities. **Forty-seven communities lack such service.** Altogether these programs provide about 65,000 trips/year. These are critical services, and at the same time equate to only about 4% of the CTAA estimated need for trips for older adults and individuals with disabilities. Even the highest volume volunteer programs only have capacity to meet about 13% of the trip need in their communities. Volunteer recruitment and retention is a perennial concern. **The estimated cost to expand volunteer program capacity to cover 10% of estimated transit dependent trip need statewide, including in the 47 communities that lack VDP service currently, is \$2.3 million.** The estimated cost to reach capacity to provide 50% of estimated trip need is about \$18.3 million.

Do Existing Public Transit Systems Have the Resources They Need to Be Financially Sustainable?

Again, no. Most of the state's public transit agencies already use all the FTA funding available to them and lack resources for expansion. This is due to a combination of increasing labor and insurance rates, exploding demand for paratransit services mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), new services desired by member municipalities and in one case a decline in FTA funding. Demand for ADA services is a good indicator for growing senior transportation needs. COAST's demand for mandated ADA service grew 880% from 2008-2018, and their cost to provide those services grew 744%. Projections of unmet needs for annual operating funding and capital replacement funding for the four urban transit systems are shown below. Federal funds cover 50%-60% of public transit expenses, though FTA funds, like Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) funds for highways, have not kept pace with growing need in recent years. In most states this gap is filled with state investment.

Projected Capital & Operating Needs for Existing Urban Systems and Equitable Rural Coverage

Federal Fiscal Year	Urban System Unmet Operating Need	Urban System Unmet Capital Need	Urban System Frequency Improvements	SSTA New Rural Intercity Routes	SSTA New Commuter Routes	SSTA New Local Routes	SSTA Tech Upgrades (Mid-Range)
2021	\$ 378,000	\$ 287,000	\$ 10,312,000	\$ 1,507,000	\$ 2,538,000	\$ 1,505,000	\$ 327,500
2022	\$ 796,120	\$ -	\$ 10,811,228	\$ 1,567,280	\$ 2,639,520	\$ 1,565,200	\$ 3,590,532
2023	\$ 1,339,445	\$ 2,980,000	\$ 11,243,677	\$ 1,629,971	\$ 2,745,101	\$ 1,627,808	\$ 4,467,888
2024	\$ 2,726,623	\$ 4,272,000	\$ 11,693,424	\$ 1,695,170	\$ 2,854,905	\$ 1,692,920	\$ 1,388,023
2025	\$ 2,835,687	\$ 1,129,000	\$ 12,161,161	\$ 1,762,977	\$ 2,969,101	\$ 1,760,637	\$ 3,716,523
2026	\$ 2,949,115	\$ 483,000	\$ 12,647,608	\$ 1,833,496	\$ 3,087,865	\$ 1,831,063	\$ 2,271,479
2027	\$ 3,067,080	\$ 2,994,000	\$ 13,153,512	\$ 1,906,836	\$ 3,211,380	\$ 1,904,305	\$ 2,445,092
2028	\$ 3,189,763	\$ -	\$ 13,679,652	\$ 1,983,109	\$ 3,339,835	\$ 1,980,477	\$ 3,023,581
2029	\$ 3,317,353	\$ 2,743,500	\$ 14,226,838	\$ 2,062,434	\$ 3,473,428	\$ 2,059,696	\$ 5,103,975
2030	\$ 3,450,047	\$ 4,128,600	\$ 14,795,912	\$ 2,144,931	\$ 3,612,365	\$ 2,142,084	\$ 2,801,232
TOTAL	\$ 24,049,233	\$ 19,017,100	\$ 124,725,013	\$ 18,093,203	\$ 30,471,500	\$ 18,069,191	\$ 29,135,823

Sources: Draft 2019 Statewide Strategic Transit Assessment (SSTA) & NH Urban Transit Providers

Also in the table above are estimated operating costs for new rural local and intercity routes and commuter routes developed for the New Hampshire Statewide Strategic Transit Assessment (SSTA) in 2019. In the righthand column are estimated costs from the SSTA to modernize the state's existing urban and rural transit services with new safety and efficiency technologies including both capital and annual operating costs.

How Is Public Transportation Funded by Other States?

Each year the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) publishes a report on State Spending on Public Transportation. Average per capita state spending (not including federal pass-through) on transit across the 50 states in 2018 was \$58.69. **The median state North Dakota (a rural state with little over half New Hampshire's population) spent \$5.04/capita, much of it on senior transportation. New Hampshire in comparison spent \$1.00/capita.** More than half that amount was for short term mitigation for a turnpike construction project. The table below shows New Hampshire in comparison to our New England peer states and breaks out transit operating assistance from overall spending. The \$200,000 in operating assistance approved in the SFY2020 budget would equate to \$0.15/capita, though these funds are currently not being released due to COVID-related state revenue shortfalls.

State	2018 Population	2018 State Funding	2018 Per Capita Funding	2018 State Funding for Operating	Per Capita Funding for Operating
Massachusetts	6,902,149	2,105,381,276	\$ 305.03	\$1,493,586,393	\$ 216.39
Connecticut	3,572,665	651,477,883	\$ 182.35	\$ 376,188,456	\$ 105.30
Rhode Island	1,057,315	58,441,037	\$ 55.27	\$ 52,182,561	\$ 49.35
Vermont	626,299	7,955,199	\$ 12.70	\$ 6,638,732	\$ 10.60
Maine	1,338,404	1,540,322	\$ 1.15	\$ 1,147,845	\$ 0.86
New Hampshire	1,356,458	1,353,603	\$ 1.00	\$ -	\$ -
		National Average	\$ 58.69		
		National Median	\$ 5.04	(North Dakota)	

Source: AASHTO 2020

Key Takeaways

- New Hampshire's **older adult population will nearly double between 2015 and 2040.**
- Older adults have very different transport needs – **AARP estimates 20% of Americans over 65 don't drive**
- This equates to **nearly 75,000 non-driving seniors by 2030.**
- The best available estimate of annual transit trip need to allow these older adults to age in place with dignity is **1.9 million trips in 2020, rising to 2.8 million trips by 2030 and 3.05 million trips by 2040.**
- This already assumes families, neighbors and non-profits are covering most travel needs.
- Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding has not kept pace with growth in costs, much as Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) funding has not kept pace with inflationary pressures for highway needs.
- **New Hampshire's transit agencies face revenue gaps in the millions of dollars** just to maintain existing services and handle growth in federally mandated services under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- The Draft Statewide Strategic Transit Assessment (SSTA) completed in 2019 identifies need for close to **\$65 million over 10 years to meet rural transportation needs and modernize technology of existing systems for efficiency and safety.**
- Volunteer Driver Programs (VDPs) will be a critical component of meeting growing transit need for seniors and individuals with disabilities. Currently **only 197 of 244 communities have VDP service**, and the largest of these programs meets at most 13% of estimated need. Resources will be needed to expand this capacity.
- New Hampshire lags far behind other states in state support for public transportation. **The average per capita investment of state funding for public transit in 2018 was \$58.69. The median state investment was \$5.04/capita, made by North Dakota – a rural state with about half of New Hampshire's population. NH invested \$1.00/capita. Note that approximately \$0.55 of this was spent on transit mitigation mandated for a highway construction project and ended in FY2020.**