

Western Maine Transportation Expands to offer Farmington to Lewiston bus route

United Way of the Tri-Valley Area is honored to have so many incredible Community Partners throughout the community. We fund these organizations because they tirelessly try to make a difference within our community and they efficiently and effectively use our investment.

Western Maine Transportation Services' (WMTS) buses and vans are open to the public where they provide safe, reliable, comfortable and affordable services. Monday – Friday rides can be given to those who need a ride to work, education, pharmacies, shopping, healthcare appointments, hair and other personal appointments, libraries, visits with friends or families, food pantries and so much more. Since 1976 WMTS has provided public transportation within Androscoggin, Franklin, and Oxford counties. They provide services for all with their United Way-funded Community Rides program, SeniorsPlus Elder Rides, and even a complementary Americans with Disabilities Act program. Each program requires an individual to meet a certain income guideline.

WMTS provides general transportation as well and its public bus fares for the Androscoggin, Franklin, and Oxford area cost varies based on miles. Actual cost is based by 0-25 miles \$1.50/trip* - \$3.00/trip; 26-50 miles \$3.00/trip* - \$6.00/trip; 51+ miles \$3.75/trip* - \$7.50/trip. Lisbon Connections only costs \$1.50/trip - \$0.75/trip* and CityLink ADA Service costs include \$3.00/trip. (* are the reduced prices for those who are Seniors 60+, children 5-11, disabled, Medicare) Children who are under five of age and are accompanying an adult can ride for free.

For over 20 years, WMTS has received United Way funding for their Community Rides program, allowing for 30-60 individuals who can't afford transportation each year to get where they need to go. If WMTS didn't receive funding from UW, then the Community Rides program would not exist to help the many individuals who need it. It also helps with qualifying for WMTS's required "local match" to draw-down federal funding. "Someone with Maine Care may have transportation provided to get to a healthcare appointment but that same individual is often unable to find transportation to get to the pharmacy or to a grocery store," explained Craig Zurhost.

Western Maine Transportation's focus has evolved, focusing on those who need access to employment and higher education, but they continue to serve riders needing access to healthcare, shopping or other services. Last year, WMTS began a seasonal winter commute service with a bus from Farmington to Carrabassett Valley/Sugarloaf while also having a route from Stratton to Sugarloaf.

An exciting new pilot commuter route between Farmington and Lewiston Auburn is the latest service offered by WMTS. The pilot testing of this commuter route was launched on March 25. "The first week was a trial run," said Zurhorst. "The purpose of the first week was to test stop locations and schedule timings before we print and promote the schedule, although we'll absolutely be open for service." The Farmington-Lewiston Auburn commuter service was identified as one of two most needed and desired routes based on Western Maine Transportation Service's 2017 Transit Feasibility Study. "The resources to make this route possible have now come together, and we are very pleased and eager to get it on the road." said Zurhorst.

The preliminary schedule is available on the WMTS website at www.wmtsbus.org, as is the WMTS transit study. WMTS Customer Service is available to respond to inquiries about the new commuter route and other WMTS-operated public transportation at 1-800-393-9335, non-holiday Mondays through Fridays from 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM and Saturdays from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM.