

# Age and Dementia Friendly Action Plan

## 2025 STATUS REPORT

*February 2026*



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# Introduction

## Central Massachusetts Region

The Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC), in coordination with the Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative and the Age Friendly Central Mass Action Team, published the Central Massachusetts Age and Dementia-Friendly Action Plan in 2023. The Action Plan is the result of our rigorous community engagement process, which included a survey, listening sessions, interviews, and meetings with community members, leaders, and stakeholders.

With the rapid and unprecedented shifting demographics of the region, having a healthy aging plan for the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) planning region is more important now than ever. While the United States is projected to have more older adults than children for the first time in the year 2035, Central Massachusetts is projected to see the shift much earlier – between 2025 and 2030. By 2040, at least 30% of residents of most cities and towns in the Central Massachusetts region will be older adults, with some towns reaching an older adult population of at least 35 percent. Meanwhile, cities and towns across the region have limited resources and infrastructural preparedness for this significant demographic shift. Age Friendly Central Massachusetts aims to make sure that our region will adapt to the changing needs of our residents.

The 2025 Status Report intends to share with the community at large the work that has been completed or currently in progress, not only by the Central Massachusetts Planning Organization but also by many organizations in the region that are working towards an Age and Dementia Friendly region.



# Action Plan – Domain Goals

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## Transportation

Transportation is the backbone to accessing community and health services, social gatherings and events, jobs, continued education, and outdoor spaces, among other opportunities. This means that public and active transportation modes should be accessible, affordable, connected, and convenient for older adults.

### Goal 1: Expand transportation services in rural communities.

#### *Strategies and Updates*

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#### *A. Support the implementation of and investment in localized on-demand transit services for communities with similar needs.*

- CHNA9 Transportation Study underway and forming a Transportation Management Agency in North Central MA
- Blackstone Valley Transportation Needs Survey completed in 2025. Community Engagement process underway to address identified needs.
- Northborough Transportation Needs Survey completed in 2025
- CMRPC participates in the QRCC Transportation Working Group

#### *B. Identify potential opportunities to expand existing on-demand and shuttle services to neighboring communities with similar needs.*

- CMMPO staff conducted a Worcester County MicroTransit Suitability Analysis.
- CMRPC participates in the Statewide MicroTransit Learning Collaborative.
- The Town of Paxton joined the SCM Elderbus Paratransit service region.



- CMRPC funded TriValley to provide long-haul transportation for medical appointments in Charlton, Douglas, Upton, and other communities.
- CMMPO recently endorsed the 2024 Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan (CPT-HST).

*C. Encourage and promote private, subsidized transportation services to expand access.*

- WRTA Fare Free public transit and paratransit services.
- Quaboag Connector - 11, 753 rides total in 2025; 970 rides total in December 2025, 52% for seniors

## Goal 2: Invest in accessible, equitable, and connected multi-modal infrastructure.

### *Strategies and Updates*

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*A. Incorporate an age and dementia friendly lens into bicycle and pedestrian project planning and implementation.*

- CMRPC Imagine 2050
- CMRPC Regional Bicycle Plan completed in 2025
- CMRPC, Worcester Earn-A-Bike and the City of Worcester are working with MassBike on the second phase of the E-Bike Pilot Program
- CMRPC was awarded Safe Streets for All Program grant funds to develop a Safe Streets for All Action Plan and Vision Zero Advisory Committee.
- CMRPC awarded funds for Vernon Connected project.
- CMRPC participates in the City of Worcester Vision Zero Work Group.
- WRTA working with Visually Impaired transit riders on accessibility improvements to the WRTA Hub.



*B. Promote programs like the Community Transit Grant to support the implementation of pilot services.*

- SFY 2025 CTGP Awards: <https://www.mass.gov/community-transit-grant-program>. Awardees include Health Equity Partnership of North Central Mass, Quaboag Connector, TriValley Inc., and WRTA.

*C. Encourage transit-oriented development and multi-modal hubs in coordination with the WRTA in areas of high transit use and compact residential development.*

- CMRPC works in collaboration and coordination with WRTA.
- CMRPC conducting Regional Housing and Transportation Plan
- Plans to redevelop the former Boys Club in Worcester at Lincoln Square into 80-apartment community complex for older adults in downtown Worcester.
- CMRPC completed feasibility study for the town of Shrewsbury assessing the WRTA Route 15 corridor and providing guidance on implementing neighborhood multi-modal hubs

*D. Identify priority walking routes or areas where older adults congregate with other age groups to prioritize funding for improved pedestrian facilities.*

- CMRPC developed the Auburn Age Friendly Pedestrian Plan and the web application with Pedestrian Friendly Routes.

*E. Explore existing mobility management programs.*

- MassDOT now has statewide Mobility Manager addressing connections between community members and regional and municipal transit services.
- WRTA Has expanded Travel Training program by hiring second travel trainer.



F. *Ensure all transit-oriented infrastructure developments adhere to dementia-friendly equitability standards.*

- WRTA Bus Shelter Inventory
- CMRPC Data Services include inventories and conditions of sidewalks and curb ramps.
- MassDOT Vulnerable Road Users Assessment

G. *Generate inclusive infrastructure designs that consider varying degrees of human ability.*

- Design checklist: [“Massachusetts Dementia Friendly Design Considerations for Shared Streets and Spaces”](#)

**Goal 3: Support the financial sustainability and maintenance of localized and municipal older adult transportation services.**

### *Strategies and Updates*

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A. *Create and incentivize a volunteer program that is focused specifically on transportation for senior centers.*

- No updates related to this item.

B. *Provide volunteers with trainings related to accommodating the needs of older adults with disabilities such as dementia or age-onset vision loss.*

- MArTap Trainings: <https://www.mass.gov/guides/driver-training-for-community-transportation-providers>;
- NADTC Resources: <https://www.nadtc.org/resources-publications/resource/nadtc-best-practices-compendium/>
- NADTC Trainings: <https://www.nadtc.org/resources-publications/resource/removing-barriers-to-transportation-and-expanding-mobility-webinar/>



- Easter Seals Trainings: [How to...with NADTC: How to Start a Volunteer Transportation Program \(youtube.com\)](#)

*C. Conduct program workshops at Councils on Aging and Senior Centers to teach older adults best practices for using public transit services.*

- WRTA Travel Training at Senior centers, seniors teaching seniors how to ride transit services in their communities.
  - i. 31 travel training aging initiatives and events held specifically for older adults, including sessions with Spanish, Haitian Creole, and ASL language interpretation.

*D. Support digital equity to minimize the need for transportation where applicable.*

- Digital Equity Training at the Green Island Neighborhood Community Center.
- Digital Equity plans under development for Berlin, Boylston, and Mendon.

*E. Promote funding opportunities for communities to support new and existing local services.*

- Funding opportunities are shared through CMRPC social media platforms, and monthly newsletter.
- The Massachusetts Federal Funds and Infrastructure Office shares available funding opportunities every month and provides Technical Assistance.
- The Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative shares funding opportunities through newsletters, and direct email.

*F. Build the capacity of Councils on Aging to support increased transportation services for older adults and older adults with disabilities.*

- Services provided by the WRTA Mobility Management division.
- Travel Training partnerships with UMass Chan Medical students.



Goal 4: Bolster community participation and recreational opportunities through transportation access.

*Strategies and Updates*

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*A. Extend public transit and senior center transportation services to trail and park access points.*

- CMRPC participates in the Town of Oxford Inclusive Health Coalition (IHC).
- CMRPC Regional Bicycle plan includes connections to transit and bicycle accommodations at transit stops.
- The Town of Blackstone recently unveiled an all abilities playground connected to the Blackstone River Valley Greenway/Bikeway.

*B. Expand public transit options to connect older adults to grocery stores, shopping plazas, senior center services, local community events, and volunteer opportunities.*

- CMRPC participates in the Food Policy Transportation Working Group
- The Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester recently released the Worcester Community Food Assessment. Older adults are a priority population.
- Food Access Study conducted for the Town of Oxford focused on Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities

*C. Encourage the use of public transit and related services for people of all abilities.*

- The Town of Southbridge applied for CMMPO MicroProjects funds through the CMMPO Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to develop a promotional campaign about the WRTA services available in the town.



## Housing

Aging in place starts at home. For those that choose to age in their current homes, access to affordable and trustworthy home improvement options will ensure a home remains “age proof”. Providing a variety of affordable and accessible housing options for those that choose or need alternative housing will also allow older adults to remain comfortably within their communities.

**Goal 1: Support the development of quality and affordable housing units for people of all ages, abilities, and income levels.**

### *Strategies and Updates*

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- A. *Promote the use of housing production plans, as well as other plans that map out future housing development.*
  - Housing Production Plans completed or in progress in 2025
    - Sutton, Warren, Sturbridge, Northborough, Charlton
- B. *Utilize creative place-making strategies to enhance the safety, accessibility, and livability of existing low-income and senior housing developments.*
  - Barre Housing Authority used place-making to increase local programming for older adults.
  - CMRPC created visualizations for the Barre Airport
- C. *Recognize persons experiencing homelessness and utilize the services and best practices provided by programs such as Housing First.*
  - Shared Services is connecting people to services, working with Open Sky and Central Mass Alliance and others.
  - Elder Services of Worcester, City of Worcester, Open Sky, Southern Middlesex Opportunity Council, and Community Healthlink organized Older Adult Outreach events to connect older adults to services.



[From Isolation to Inclusion: Bridging Services for Worcester’s Older Adults in Need - ESWAESWA](#)

*D. Incorporate best practices from the Age and Dementia Friendly Infrastructure Team as a way of increasing accessibility.*

- CMRPC developed the Accessible Trails Guide
- CMRPC promotes and shares with developers the [Age Friendly Infrastructure design guidelines](#)

*E. Address the needs of older adults with disabilities, such as age-onset vision-loss, by promoting local assessment tools or services like MABVI’s in-home vision rehabilitation, which provides guidance regarding necessary home adaptations.*

- CMRPC engages with Liz Myska VISIONS Consulting LCC.

*F. Identify local policies and leaders that engage in narratives for affordable housing.*

- CMRPC Housing and Transportation study
- Collected input from CMRPC region on "A Statewide Housing Plan" <https://www.mass.gov/a-home-for-everyone>
- Support Affordable Housing Trusts in Shrewsbury Auburn and Berlin

*G. Encourage the development of more genuinely affordable housing with considerations for subsidized housing, rent as a percentage of income, etc.*

- CMRPC hired a Regional Housing Coordinator to work on this topic and to support the Affordable Housing Trust.
- The City of Worcester has a property tax abatement for low income adults.

*H. Champion affordable housing development designs that prioritize the needs of people with dementia or other diseases or disabilities.*

- CMRPC uses the [AARP HomeFit Guide](#) as a guide and shares with municipalities interested in developing affordable housing.



- I. Consider, promote, and plan for alternative housing types for older adults.*
- CMRPC pursuing funding with partners for homeshare program matching older adult homeowners with graduate student renters.
  - Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance has a program to assist people who had CORIs access housing.
  - City of Worcester piloted a program to allow 20 eligible older adults to volunteer labor in exchange for reduced property taxes.

Goal 2: Coordinate with local businesses and communities to establish affordable, equitable, and convenient home repair, modification, and maintenance as well as everyday services for older adults.

*Strategies and Updates*

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- A. Establish local volunteer groups or organizations that help disabled, low-income, and older adults with home repair, modification, and maintenance services.*
- Central MA Agency on Aging Home Repair Program: [SENIOR HOME REPAIR PROGRAM - Central Massachusetts Agency On Aging, Inc. \(seniorconnection.org\)](https://seniorconnection.org)
  - Nashoba Neighbors Case Study [Homepage Logo Page \(Feb 2024\) - Nashoba Neighbors](#)
  - Worcester Community Action Council – Neighbors Helping Neighbors
  - Worcester Community Action Council – Healthy Homes program
  - List of Age Friendly Organizations: <https://www.seniorconnection.org/resources/age-friendly-worcester/>
- B. Collaborate with private companies to explore reduced costs for services for older adults through subsidies, grant programs, and/or other incentive programs.*



- Municipal Electrical Aggregation: Auburn, Berlin, Charlton, Douglas, Grafton, Leicester, Mendon, Millbury, Millville, North Brookfield, Northbridge, Upton, Uxbridge, Worcester. More information here: [Municipal aggregation | Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov/municipal-aggregation)

C. *Emphasize the need for community partnerships with companies and organizations that specialize in home repair and remodels for those living with dementia and other disabilities.*

- Central MA Agency on Aging Home Repair Program: [SENIOR HOME REPAIR PROGRAM - Central Massachusetts Agency On Aging, Inc. \(seniorconnection.org\)](https://www.seniorconnection.org)

## Community & Health Services

Local, convenient, and affordable community and health services are essential as people age. Providing varying types of services, such as in-home care, rehabilitation, and local provider, ensures that services remain accessible through different stages of life and into older adulthood.

### Goal 1: Support in-home care for older adults.

#### *Strategies and Updates*

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- A. *Identify the homebound population and those needing in-home care services.*
- The Town of Northbridge is currently in the process of identifying frequent EMS users.
- B. *Increase access to in-home medical care.*
- The Town of Northbridge is conducting home visits to check the general health of Northbridge’s homebound population.
- C. *Address the workforce shortage for professional and family in-home caregivers.*
- No updates on this item.



*D. Promote telehealth services to alleviate some of the need for in-home care.*

- It is also included in the Digital Equity Training. At the Green Island Neighborhood Community Center the training include lessons using Zoom for Telehealth.
- Several communities are using Interface Referrals for mental health counseling virtually.

## Goal 2: Expand mental health resources and services in the region.

### *Strategies and Updates*

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*A. Coordinate with regional mental health providers to incorporate interpretation and multilingual services.*

- Several communities are using Interface Referrals for mental health counseling virtually. They match individuals based on preferred languages.

*B. Incorporate a list of mental health service providers in regional resource guides.*

- State now has resource guide connected to new mental health hotline: <https://www.masshelpline.com/bhhldirectory>

*C. Provide case management services to help individuals navigate available resources.*

- Community health workers employed by the Charlton Coalition for Public Health, South Central Mass Partnership for Public Health, and the Blackstone Valley Partnership for Public Health
- South Central Mass completed a plan for the following communities: Webster, Auburn, Oxford, Southbridge, Dudley, Brimfield.



- The Town of Northborough is hiring workers now to provide case management services.
- Blackstone Valley and South Central Mass community hired health workers.
- The UMass Memorial Division of Geriatric Medicine is an Age Healthy Care System.
- Worcester Senior Center hosting behavioral health group for men 65+

## Goal 3: Emphasize senior centers and Councils on Aging as primary community resources for older adults.

### *Strategies and Updates*

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#### *A. Involve senior centers and Councils on Aging in the planning process (including regional transportation planning, housing, master plans, recreation, etc.)*

- CMRPC Happy Factor project removing barriers to civic engagement for older adults
- CMRPC incorporates the Councils on Aging in the development of community Master Plans.
- The Digital Equity Plans are completed in close collaboration with the Councils on Aging.
- CMRPC is participating on the Town of Oxford Inclusive Health Coalition (IHC).

#### *B. Promote senior centers, Councils on Aging, and their respective community resources.*

- Ongoing.

#### *C. Ensure access to reliable transportation options to senior centers Councils on Aging, and related resources.*



- Through the Rural Vaccine Equity funds CMRPC released an RFP soliciting vendors for medical transportation for older adults and individuals with disabilities for the following communities: Douglas, Sutton, Mendon, Charlton, Sturbridge, and Upton.
- TriValley received a MassDOT Community Transit Grant to provide transportation services in their service region.

## Goal 4: Support the implementation of preventative programming or infrastructure that encourages active living.

### *Strategies and Updates*

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- A. *Participate in community-led racial equity training to learn about and address the causes of racial and ethnic health disparities.*
- CMRPC participated in the following:
    - TRETTI Training: [Healthy Greater Worcester Training Institute — Healthy Greater Worcester](#)
    - CHIP Evaluation Report 2025 in topics related with transit’s zero fare, free high quality internet, complete streets policy implementation and the Age Friendly Action Plan [Current Community Health Improvement Plan — Healthy Greater Worcester](#)
    - Health and Racial Equity Training
- B. *Recognize that providing reliable housing and transportation promotes rehabilitation from substance abuse.*
- Included on the South Central Mass Opioid Abatement Plan.
  - CMRPC is a regional coordinator supporting municipalities in effectively utilizing opioid settlement funds to end the overdose crisis.



Approximately 40 percent of the state’s total settlement funds are directly allocated to municipalities.

## Communication & Information

As technology advances and resources become more accessible online, it is important to educate about and reinforce new technologies to ensure older adults continue to have access to information and resources. It is equally important to ensure that older adults have convenient and equitable access to information, whether in an online format or in print.

### Goal 1: Expand broadband access for all residents.

#### *Strategies and Updates*

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*A. Establish internet hotspots at community centers.*

- This item was completed.

*B. Promote the Affordable Connectivity Program (\$30 off internet services).*

- This item was completed.

*C. Consider the potential for free Wi-Fi within affordable and senior housing units.*

- Digital Equity Plans have been produced for the following communities: Worcester, Millbury, Brookfield’s region and Charlton.

### Goal 2: Encourage collaboration and communication between local Councils on Aging, senior centers, schools, and colleges.

#### *Strategies and Updates*

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- A. *Promote intergenerational opportunities between older adults and youth (K-12).*
  - CMRPC created best practices guide for local cultural council. Provided guidelines for working with older-adults.
- B. *Develop incentive or volunteer programs for youth to support older adults through the schools (i.e., shoveling, raking, etc.)*
  - No updates on item.

## Goal 3: Support continued educational and interactive opportunities for older adults to engage in new and emerging technologies.

### *Strategies and Updates*

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- A. *Encourage a seniors-teaching-seniors platform for continued education in new and emerging technologies where applicable.*
  - CMRPC was granted funds to do a Digital Equity Training at Green Island Neighborhood Community Center.
  - Worcester Elder Services was granted \$3M by AgeSpan to do Digital Equity Trainings with the support of Mass Healthy Aging Collaborative.

## Goal 4: Increase access to local and regional informational resources among older adults.

### *Strategies and Updates*

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- A. *Develop a regional informational guide geared toward older adult resources using AARP's 8 Domains of Livability as a framework and outline.*
  - CMRPC used Public Health Excellence Funds to develop a guide for the Blackstone Valley outlining community resources.



Goal 5: Increase cybersecurity infrastructure and awareness in the region to help older adults use the Internet safely and securely.

*Strategies and Updates*

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- A. *Promote safe practices to enhance cybersecurity for older adults at local senior centers and Councils on Aging.*
  - Incorporated on the Digital Equity Training curriculum.
  
- B. *Advocate for increased cybersecurity within municipal organizations such as senior centers and Councils on Aging.*
  - Ongoing

## Regional Services

Goal 1: Coordinate with the WRTA to expand and improve transit access.

*Strategies and Updates*

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- A. *Encourage expansion of existing fixed routes to include Senior Centers, libraries, and other destinations frequented by older adults on those routes.*
  - Rural transit planning efforts
    - Participation in the Statewide Microtransit Learning Collaborative.
  
- B. *Improve application process and access to paratransit, WRTA services, and other public transportation modes for people with mobility devices and/or disabilities.*
  - WRTA has converted to online statewide ADA paratransit eligibility application.



C. *Identify travel training opportunities to teach older adults unfamiliar with WRTA transit and other locally available transportation services.*

- WRTA developed quarterly newsletter in December 2025 to improve communication with riders.
- Under WRTA Travel Training Program purview.

**Goal 2: Encourage communication and collaboration between municipal Councils on Aging, senior centers, and municipal departments.**

*Strategies and Updates*

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A. *Identify and utilize local programs and services that increase the social inclusion and communal participation of older adults.*

- CMRPC Happy Factor Plan close to completion.
- Good neighbor day events held at the Millbury Asa Waters mansion to promote social connectedness and breaking down generational barriers

**Goal 3: Encourage municipal Emergency Management Services to engage in dementia-friendly training.**

*Strategies and Updates*

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A. *Create and/or adopt a regional dementia-friendly curriculum, including municipal staff, public safety, and business communities.*

- Central Massachusetts Homeland Security provides training to municipal public safety personnel in topics related to dementia.

B. *Advocate and support dementia-friendly training for public transportation staff at the local and regional levels*

- Some of the events where transportation is addressed are: Dementia Friends and Age Friendly Cafes.



Goal 4: Strengthen partnerships, collaboration, and resource sharing between regional Aging Service Access Points (ASAPs) and local governments, Councils on Aging, and senior centers.

*Strategies and Updates*

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A. *Enhance public awareness of aging in the region and cultivate meaningful communication related to aging.*

- Participated in Worcester Age Friendly Coalition meetings, AARP Volunteer Network, and Senior Connections
- CMRPC spoke at Rural Impact podcast to discuss rural transportation and microtransit initiative with TriValley

B. *Encourage age and dementia-friendly partners to engage through AARP, Dementia Friendly Massachusetts, and its programming.*

- Attended the AARP MA Age and Dementia Friendly Conference in Holy Cross (2023)
- AARP Rural Lab – for interactions related to housing
- Reimagining Aging Podcast - Transportation

C. *Support local governments and organizations by creating and sharing a list of suggested innovative service providers that local communities could easily procure funding from, for services such as home improvements and personal care.*

- Recently worked with Salvation Army to develop eligibility criteria to dispense “Extenuating Circumstances Vouchers”.

