



TOWN OF CONCORD

Department of Planning & Land Management

To: Greg Higgins, Concord Business Partnership
Marie Foley, Concord Chamber of Commerce
Jennifer Schunemann, Economic Vitality Committee

From: Marcia Rasmussen, Director DPLM
Elizabeth Hughes, Town Planner
Beth Williams, Economic Vitality and Tourism Manager
Erin Stevens, Public Information Officer

Re: Town of Concord Trolley/Shuttle Pilot

Date: May 24, 2022

This memorandum is intended to provide you and your group with background information about a pilot program to provide a trolley/shuttle for visitors to historic Concord – providing transportation services to/from the Thoreau Depot to multiple historic sites – and, to seek your recommendations and support to the Select Board for its June 6th meeting.

Town staff has requested funding for one (1) trolley/shuttle to operate in Concord from approximately June 15, 2022, through October 31st, 2022, in a one season pilot program. The trolley will operate on a fixed loop beginning at the Thoreau Depot to Concord Center/Visitor Center and five tourist destinations as noted in the below. While requesting a one season turnkey contract as a pilot program, the Town is interested in documenting use and interest in a shuttle program to support expanding services for future operations. These expansions, subject to data gathered during the pilot, funding, and interest level, may include:

- A wider visitor route to include the towns of Lexington and Lincoln with the Minute Man National Historical Park (MMNHP) sites
- An additional loop or expanded route to West Concord
- An expanded time of operations to include commuters “first mile/last-mile” needs

The pilot trolley/shuttle is to be operated in a “hop-on, hop-off” capacity serving five (5) tourist destinations beginning at the MBTA Concord Center commuter rail stop to allow visitors and locals alike to be less car dependent while in Concord Center and visiting the historic sites. The goal is to provide a convenient, less stressful visitor experience, reduce the number of cars on local streets, and promote the use of the commuter rail service. The shuttle schedule will be timed to align with the MBTA schedule.

This trolley/shuttle pilot program is in line with the Town’s Envision Concord - Bridge to 2030 Long Range Plan (<https://concordma.gov/2281/Comprehensive-Long-Range-Plan>), Concord’s Climate Action Plan, Transportation Advisory Committee goals, and the Town’s overall goals to be a more inclusive community by allowing greater access for a wider variety of people to visit Concord without the need for a car. The Visitor Center reports that at least twice a week there is a request for a vehicle to help guests visit multiple sites around town.

The trolley/shuttle operator will be providing full service, turnkey operation. Operating hours are to be 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM on a continuous, fixed route, 7 days per week during the operation season and offered at a low cost



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(initial proposal is \$4 per passenger). Fees collected will use an online web-based payment software; several such programs were considered and FareHarbor was selected based on their integration with the Visit Concord Website, ease of use, and ability to have a flexible contract. Users would also be able to track the trolley using an app.

Based on the number of visitors who walk through the Visitor Center, a conservative estimate is that a quarter of the people who go to the Visitor Center, or roughly 4,000 people, will ride the trolley in its first pilot year. This is a potential revenue stream that could offset some of the cost to the Town. Alternatively, the trolley could be offered as a free service to provide better use data but would not recoup any costs.

Based on quotes received in response to the Town's RFQ (see in *Additional Information* below) the Town is seeking \$100,000 in ARPA funds to run the pilot shuttle program. Due to the higher than predicted cost, the quotes have triggered the need for a bid process to be completed. Bids are due May 31st. It is expected that this process will be completed by the beginning of June when an award can be made, and trolley/shuttle operations may begin in mid- to late-June.

Conducting a pilot trolley/shuttle program this year and collecting data will support and strengthen future grant applications. Currently, the Town is working with the towns of Lexington and Lincoln along with the Minute Man National Historical Park to prepare a grant application seeking funds for an expanded shuttle/trolley program through the Federal Land Access Program, which is due in August 2022. If awarded, funding would be available in late 2023. This FLAP grant application is supported by a [Feasibility Study for Town-Led Shuttle Service](https://concordma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/35762/MIMA-Shuttle-Study_August-2021) prepared by the Volpe Center in 2021 for the Minute Man National Historical Park, Concord, Lexington, and Lincoln (https://concordma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/35762/MIMA-Shuttle-Study_August-2021), which suggested "A pilot could help gather data to refine service details and inform a full implementation." The 2022 pilot program envisioned by Concord will provide data for a more competitive FLAP grant package. This data will also be useful if the State's Workforce Transportation grant funds become available again in demonstrating that Concord is invested in making various forms of public transportation viable for getting around Town.

Based on historic data from MMNHP and other similar sized National Park celebrations, it is anticipated that there will be an additional 200,000-300,000 visitors coming to the MMNHP in 2025, with most of the increase concentrated to special occasion months such as April and July. Concord can expect to see a strong visitor influx in correlation with that number. The Town and the region must prepare now to be able to transport visitors around and improve the experience for both visitors and the community as a whole.

So why is promoting visitors and tourism through provision of a trolley/shuttle program important to Concord? In general, the travel and tourism industry supports a tourist's or traveler's need for transportation, food, lodging, amusement, and entertainment. Broadly these sectors include the transportation sectors, entertainment and recreation, food services, retail trade, lodging as well as the travel arrangement sector. The Visitor Center has numerous anecdotal stories that business is boosted by tourists, which has recently been affirmed via data gathered by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) staff through a study to measure the regional economic impacts of tourism of Concord, Lexington, and Arlington. Data on spending in Concord suggests that tourism is a major driver in supporting local business; based on the input-output model analysis (RIMS II) it is estimated that direct tourism output (visitor spending on tourism commodities) for Concord accounts for 33.1% or \$72.3 million of its total annual sales of commodities of tourism and allied sectors. These percentages increase to 53.1% for Concord for total tourism output which includes indirect and induced impacts in addition to the direct impacts. Indirect spending results from regional travel-related businesses purchasing goods and services within the region, while induced spending results from employees of travel-related businesses spending part of their



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income in the region.” Additionally, Concord collects local taxes through two different sources: the Local Option Meals Tax and the Local Option Room Occupancy Tax. Tax rates and revenues/collections for Concord are published by The Division of Local Services, within the MA Department of Revenue data, and is presented in the tables below. These funds contribute toward the many revenue sources that support town services.

Local taxes collected in dollars from 2015-2020

	Local Options Rooms Tax	Local Options Meals Tax	Total taxes collected
Year	Concord	Concord	Concord
2015	\$297,885	\$333,073	\$630,958
2016	\$334,372	\$360,184	\$694,556
2017	\$472,779	\$353,567	\$826,346
2018	\$667,462	\$380,082	\$1,047,544
2019	\$865,598	\$423,880	\$1,289,478
2020	\$530,214	\$393,523	\$923,737

Source: Division of Local Services Databank, MA Dept. of Revenue



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Additional Information:

- Stops include:
 - Concord Visitor Center
 - Old Manse/Robbins House/Bridge
 - North Bridge Visitor Center
 - Concord Museum/Emerson House
 - Meriam's Corner
 - Orchard House/Wayside Home of Authors
 - Concord Center MBTA
- Approximate distance of route is 7 miles, route breakdown is below

Trolley Route

Depart Concord Center MBTA: Visitors get on/off here for MBTA train service. *Schedule timing based on MBTA commuter rail schedule*

Stop 1: Drive .5 miles to 58 Main Street (Visitor Center)

Stop 2: Drive 1.7 miles to North Bridge lower parking lot: Visitors get off here to visit the Old North Bridge, Old Manse and Robbins House

Stop 3: Drive .2 miles to North Bridge Visitor Center: Visitors get off here to visit the Visitor Center and walk down to Bridge, Old Manse and Robbins House

Stop 4: Drive 1.4 miles to the Concord Museum: Visitors can go to the Museum or Emerson's House

Stop 5: Drive 1.1 miles to Meriam's Corner, Visitors can visit Meriam's corner or get off here to walk the Battle Road

Stop 6: Drive .6 miles to Orchard House, Visitors get off here for Orchard House and Wayside home of Authors

(If Additional Time) Stop at the Concord Visitor's Center

Stop 7: Drive 1.4 miles to Concord Center MBTA, Visitors get off here for MBTA

Total distance 7 miles, approximately 45-60 minutes