



November 2007

Greetings! Welcome back to our informal newsletter. For those of you who aren't familiar with the Contoocook Valley Transportation Cooperative, we are a grassroots cooperative, established to create an affordable, accessible, coordinated, inclusive community transportation system for the fourteen towns of the Contoocook Valley. We are always looking for new energy and ideas, so if you want to contribute, please give us a call or send an e-mail.

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Now that cold weather is on its way, we're moving indoors. After a summer of spreading the word about CVTC at fairs and festivals, we're meeting with business and municipal leaders to tell them about our project. Support has been universal and enthusiastic.

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In October we had our first meeting of the Board of Town Transportation Representatives. We have at least one representative from twelve of the fourteen towns. Ideally we would like two from each. If you know anyone in Greenfield or Jaffrey who is interested in helping to create community transportation, please contact us at 924-2159 or info@cvtc-nh.org.

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At the November meeting of the Board of Town Reps, we began work on the first of our transportation options: ridesharing. There are many forms of ridesharing.

Commuters can car-pool and parents can "school-pool" to share the school run. People going to the same cultural event or meeting can "event-pool". Neighbors and friends going shopping can "errand-pool". The key to making these concepts work is to get the riders and drivers together in a coordinated rideshare program. This gives people a place to post their trips and ride requests so that they can get together.

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Ridesharing has been implemented successfully all over the country. We looked at several of these programs. The Upper Valley Ride Share program in the Hanover/Norwich area has been going for 15 years and now serves 180 towns in New Hampshire and Vermont. They've been very generous in sharing their experiences with us.

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Database software, cell phones and the internet make it easier than ever for people to share rides, but we must be sure to make our rideshare program available to those who don't go online. We discussed several ways, including phone access and creating an online "buddy" program.

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Successful rideshare programs have one thing in common: they all started by getting the major employers in the area involved early on. Doing this will give us the critical mass needed to get carpooling up and running, but it also raises awareness of

community transportation and CVTC with the general public and with community leaders. We will offer rideshare kits to employers, with posters and activity programs to promote ridesharing. Most importantly, we will provide a coordinated, regional online rideboard so that the employers don't have to create their own. This also gives employees a wider pool of commuters to choose from.

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Simultaneously with developing the online rideshare facility and engaging employers, the town reps will be working in their towns to implement other types of ridesharing, especially errand-pooling. There are many people who would be happy to take a neighbor along to the grocery store or the medical center. They just need to know who wants to go. Sharing trip information is what will make this work.

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Volunteer drivers form an integral part of many rural transportation systems, and we are no exception. There are buses and vans in our region sitting idle for lack of qualified volunteer drivers. We're researching how to recruit and train volunteers to make use of these resources. At the same time, our town reps are identifying public-spirited citizens who are willing to use their own vehicles to help their neighbors get to medical appointments and grocery stores. We are researching ways to reimburse these volunteers for their mileage. If you or anyone you know wants to become a volunteer driver, please contact us at 924-2159 or info@cvtc-nh.org.

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Thank you for your interest and involvement in this very important project. If you have any ideas or suggestions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Best wishes,
Rebecca

Rebecca Harris, Project Coordinator
Contoocook Valley Transportation Cooperative
Telephone: (603) 924-2159
E-mail: rlharris@cvtc-nh.org

Here are some trips you might like to take:

Weekly Antrim Community Bus Trip to Seniors' Lunch at Sargent Camp in Hancock on Tuesdays. Phone 588-3121 to reserve a spot.

The Antrim Community Bus makes shopping trips from Antrim to Hillsborough and Antrim to Peterborough on alternate Wednesdays. Phone 588-3121 to reserve a spot.

The Senior Focus bus makes regular shopping trips. Phone 532-2426 for more information.