



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 7, 2024

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5th Thursday Event Focuses on Microtransit in Western MA

Guest Speakers to Share Challenges and Success

Pittsfield, MA -- Berkshire Regional Planning Commission is pleased to announce the return of their "5th Thursday" series on May 30th. The event will be held at Mazzeo's Ristorante in Pittsfield, from 4 to 6pm, beginning with networking, appetizers, and a cash bar. Registration is available online or by calling BRPC to reserve tickets at \$15 per person.

"For those without a car or unable to drive, getting around Berkshire County for the necessities of daily life can be extremely difficult," shared BRPC Executive Director Tom Matuszko. "Microtransit allows riders to request a pick-up and drop-off anywhere in a given service area, at times that work for them, often using smaller and more efficient vehicles than traditional public transit."

The evening will include an opportunity to mingle with fellow attendees and learn more about microtransit programs operating in western Massachusetts through presentations by two guest speakers.

Megan Rhodes of the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) has over 15 years of experience focusing on the built and natural environments that affect the quality of life for residents, including transportation and housing planning. Megan has assisted the Franklin Regional Transit Authority with the planning and implementation of microtransit in Franklin County, including research into programs in other regions, ridership surveys, marketing, and advocacy, and will share an overview of the [FRTA Access Program](#), past and present.

Tate Coleman, now Program Director of the [TriTown Connector](#) serving the southern Berkshire County, initially proposed and implemented the microtransit program which has expanded to include service in Egremont, Great Barrington, Monterey, Stockbridge, West Stockbridge, and Sheffield. Tate is a Masters student at the University of Massachusetts Amherst studying Regional Planning and Civil Engineering. He is a former chair of the Southern Berkshires County Transportation Advisory Committee and has also worked and volunteered for BRTA, BRPC, and the Town of Great Barrington.

While traditional bus service is useful to the many who live and work near service routes, microtransit can be an invaluable asset to people with mobility issues, households with only one car, and those with the occasional out-of-the-way appointment. By operating along fixed or flexible routes and using small-scale vehicles like shuttles, mini-buses, or cars instead of buses, microtransit offers flexibility to people, still at an affordable price.

In addition to convenience and affordability, microtransit can provide a myriad of secondary benefits. Increasing regional accessibility can bolster the economy by expanding riders'

options on where to work and shop. For employment centers, microtransit can be a reasonable answer to group shuttle needs. And for those without access to a personal vehicle or public transportation, microtransit is a lifeline, from attending critical appointments to simply buying groceries.

What: BRPC's 5th Thursday networking & educational event focused on Microtransit

When: Thursday, May 30th, 2024 from 4pm to 6pm

Where: Mazzeo's Ristorante, 1015 South Street, Pittsfield

Cost: \$15/person, tickets available through www.berkshireplanning.org

About BRPC: *Berkshire Regional Planning Commission is the regional planning agency for Berkshire County, Massachusetts, providing comprehensive planning services to municipalities, which include land use, transportation, community and economic development, housing, public health, and environmental planning. BRPC promotes regional collaboration among communities and works to increase coordination between all levels of government. For more information about BRPC, please visit www.berkshireplanning.org.*

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