



Newton in Motion

A completely accessible on-demand transit solution for seniors.

PARTNER

City of Newton, Massachusetts

LOCATION

Newton, MA

LAUNCH

June 2019

CHALLENGE

Build a transit service that is both efficient and accessible for an elderly population

USE CASE

Apply on-demand technology to make shared transit attractive and convenient for senior citizens



Overview

Following a competitive procurement in spring 2019, the City of Newton selected Via to design, launch, and operate an on-demand transit service for exclusive use by the City’s senior population. Just two months later, Via and the City launched “Newton in Motion” or NewMo: our best-in-class, on-demand ridesharing solution tailored to the unique needs of an elderly rider cohort. NewMo replaced a legacy dial-a-ride service, which required seniors to book trips 72 hours in advance. After many reported missed trips and driver supply issues, Newton sought an enhanced mobility option for its senior population. Via manages day-to-day operations, and provides the City with ongoing customer service support and data analysis to continuously optimize NewMo.

700

SENIORS ENROLLED IN THE FIRST TWO MONTHS OF SERVICE

11 min

AVERAGE WAIT TIME COMPARED TO THREE DAYS BEFORE VIA

“Reliable, safe, affordable transportation is a key to giving people options for staying involved in their community as they phase out driving. This is a ground-breaking program that I really think can be a game-changer.”

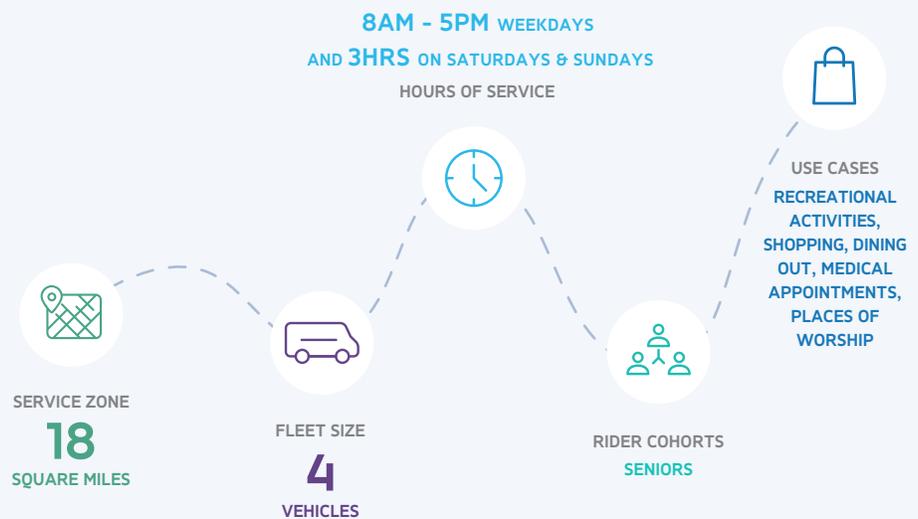
– Ruthanne Fuller,
Newton Mayor

“This gives you some freedom. This will be perfect for [Newton seniors]. They’re older, and they need help getting out. And [this service now means] they will have a way to do that.”

– Phyllis Chmara,
NewMo Rider

Solution

With Via’s platform, any resident aged 60 or older can travel to key destinations around Newton, including the senior center, doctors’ offices, and places of worship. To accommodate seniors with limited mobility, NewMo includes wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs) in its custom-branded fleet and offers both curb-to-curb and door-to-door service. Further, all vehicles are retrofitted with a stepping stool and additional handles to facilitate an easy and safe boarding experience. In collaboration with Newton’s Senior Center, Via trains all drivers to provide high-touch support, including proactively assisting riders with bags and automatically opening the van’s sliding door upon arrival. In recognition of lower smartphone adoption among older adults, Via allows riders to book on-demand or pre-scheduled rides through the mobile app or by phone. All phone operators receive senior sensitivity training, including expectations to speak slowly and repeat instructions.



Results

NewMo was an immediate hit with the senior community, who have gained an unprecedented level of independence from Via’s flexible mobility model. With over 700 users enrolled within two months, the service demonstrates the power of Via’s technology to restore freedom of movement to seniors, and makes the case for deploying similar services that empower elderly communities around the world.