

Press Release from the Souhegan Valley Transportation Collaborative
For Immediate Release to the Granite Town Quarterly
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News briefs from the Souhegan Valley Rides bus service

Over 3000 Rides, New Volunteers and a Warrant Article

Over 3000 bus rides provided!

As of January 31, 2011, the Souhegan Valley Rides (SVR) regional bus service had provided 3080 rides to residents of Milford, Amherst, Hollis and Brookline. Milford residents continue to lead the way in using the bus service. Over 72% of the total rides to date have been provided to Milford residents. Reflecting the bus service's primary focus, 82% of the total rides have been for healthcare related appointments. Ridership has increased on average by 5-6 new passengers each month.

Souhegan Valley Rides provides an invaluable service to residents who, either temporarily or permanently, are unable to drive. The availability of this service allows our neighbors to age in place more easily and provides support to caregivers. It is the type of transportation infrastructure that adds to the overall "livability" of our community.

New Members of the Board of Directors

The Souhegan Valley Transportation Collaborative (SVTC) proudly announces that Milford resident Dick Burpee has joined the SVTC Board as its at-large member. Dick brings a wealth of management experience to the board from his days as the principle of Nashua High School. Additionally, Stan Swerchesky of Hollis has been named the official Hollis representative to SVTC replacing Jim Bélanger who will be spending most of his time in Concord now as a new member of the New Hampshire House of Representatives from District #5. Incidentally, Stan has also volunteered his considerable talents to Homes For Our Troops which builds houses for injured veterans.

SVTC is a grassroots organization of area residents who are either appointed or supported by their Boards of Selectmen. SVTC board members represent their hometowns and together form a regional voice for community transportation. All participating communities are guaranteed representation on the SVTC Board of Directors.

Advisory Board established

The SVTC Board of Directors has expanded its circle of volunteers by establishing an advisory board to help roll the bus service forward. Bill Parker of Milford and Amherst residents Nan Stearns, Cynthia Dokmo, and Pete Eiche became the first members of the newly created advisory board. SVTC is reaching out to other area residents to join the advisory board or to become “official” Friends of the Blue Bus. If you are interested, please call Marcia Nelson at 673-8482 or email us at GetInvolved@SouheganRides.org.

March Warrant Article to fund the bus service

A warrant article will be on the March Town Meeting ballot asking Milford voters to raise and appropriate funds to pay our community's portion of the bus service's operating budget. The amount this year is \$35,000 which is over \$2000 less than last year. Each community's share of the budget is based on the percentage of rides provided to residents of each town and on the anticipated direct service costs to provide the bus service. SVTC's administrative expenses are not included in this calculation. As the community using the most bus rides, Milford's share of the budget is the largest and the most critical piece. Milford continues to lead the way in support and usage of the bus service. Passage of this warrant article by Milford residents is critical to the continuation of Souhegan Valley Rides. Without Milford's participation, the bus service would not be able to continue operating in our region.

You're invited to SVTC's Annual Community Meeting!

In mid-April the SVTC Board of Directors will be holding its annual community meetings. To make it more convenient for residents of our four member towns, two meetings will be held – one in the Milford-Amherst area and the other in the Hollis-Brookline area. In addition to being “celebrations of success”, these gatherings are planned as forums to solicit community input about the bus service as we roll along in the third year of operation. Information gathered at these meetings will be used to design future improvements of the service. All riders, residents, and interested Souhegan Valley neighbors are invited to attend. Dates and locations will be announced in the local papers and at www.SouheganRides.org after Town Meeting.

How the bus service works

Souhegan Valley Rides (SVR) is an affordable, door-to-door, shared ride bus service that takes residents of participating towns to non-emergency healthcare appointments, social service agency appointments, and shopping at four local shopping plazas. The fare is \$2 each way per passenger and medically necessary companions ride free. Appointments can be in any of the participating towns as well as in Nashua. Currently, the four participating towns are Milford, Hollis, Brookline and Amherst. Passengers are asked to register for the service and this can be done easily over the telephone. Rides must be scheduled at least 48 hours in advance. The buses and call center operations are subcontracted from the Nashua Transit System (NTS). To register, schedule a ride or for more information please contact the NTS call center at 880-0100 ext. 1. General information about SVTC and the Souhegan Valley Rides bus service is available at www.SouheganRides.org or by calling Marcia Nelson at 673-8482.