



For immediate release

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MVRTA Donates Van to Amesbury Council on Aging, Launching COAVan in April

Amesbury – The Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority (MVRTA) generously donated a van to the Amesbury Council on Aging (COA), which was officially accepted unanimously by the Amesbury City Council at their March 8th meeting. The van will be used primarily for Amesbury residents who are 60 years of age and older, to supplement existing transportation options available to those who need it.

The COAVan will ease the process that older adults without personal transportation go through trying to find rides to important medical appointments and recreational activities. The pandemic highlighted the need for communities to help prevent isolation for older adults and provide opportunities for increased social engagements; this van will help with these issues. The COA recognizes that there is an unmet need for convenient, reliable, affordable and scheduled transportation for older adults who have been isolated at home throughout the pandemic.

The van will supplement the other options currently available in our community for older adults, including the MVRTA, Northern Essex Elder Transport (NEET) and private taxi services. The COA had a van until 2010, at which time it was retired and not replaced. Other Councils on Aging in the region, including Newburyport, Salisbury, Merrimac, West Newbury, Rowley, and Groveland have their own van to help provide transportation for older adults in their communities.

The COAVan has an official launch date of Friday, April 15th. The City of Amesbury is currently seeking to hire a van driver for the project, while the Council on Aging finalizes the reservation system and promotion plan.

Key highlights of the service include:

- Most trips will remain in Amesbury. Some elders may be picked up from their neighboring towns if they are participating in COA programs.

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- Destinations would include the Amesbury Council on Aging/Senior Community Center located at the Nicholas J. Costello Transportation Center, Vermette's and Stop and Shop, the Amesbury Health Center, the monthly Veterans' Luncheon at the Hungry Traveler in Salisbury, the Amesbury Public Library, Amesbury beauty salons, barber shops, doctors' and dentists' offices, and to the polls on election days.
- To start, the van service will be offered Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays from 9 am to 3 pm. It will serve adults 60 years of age and over, who are capable of scheduling rides and can enter and exit the van safely.
- Booking 2 business days in advance is required. Riders will receive 20-minute pickup window.
- The service will be curb to curb, though door to door service will be provided for those who need it.
- The service will start at no cost, though the Council on Aging reserves the right to charge a small fee in the future.

The mission of the Amesbury Council on Aging (ACOA) is to advocate for older adults: to identify their needs; to meet their health, economic, social and cultural needs; and to encourage maximum independence to improve their quality of life. The COA serves over 4000 Amesbury seniors and their families as well as those in surrounding communities through regular activities, case management and the Elder Mental Health Outreach Team (EMHOT).

Quote from Mayor Cassandra Gove

“Amesbury is fortunate to have a Council on Aging that responds to the needs of our older adults. Especially during the pandemic, we saw how quarantine and isolation affected our community and for those without personal transportation, getting to something simple like a doctor's appointment proved extremely difficult. I'm happy to see the van come back to our community to provide necessary transportation services to the folks in our community who need it most. Thanks to Doreen and her team for making this program happen.”

Quote from Doreen Arnfield, Council on Aging Director

“Bringing the COA van back to ease the process of getting people to where they want to be is very exciting for me and our COA team. I have seen many challenges with transportation over the years, and now with this additional option, it will positively impact our community. Many thanks to the Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority for their generosity and continued partnership.”