

Community Rides Vermont, Inc.

The **Capstone Electric Vehicle (EV) Mobility and Equity Project**, newly incorporated as **Community Rides Vermont**, is a next generation rural mobility pilot project that simultaneously combats poverty and climate change.

The largest greenhouse gas emissions in Vermont come from the transportation sector. For low-income Vermonters, the lack of reliable transportation creates significant barriers to successful employment and economic security. This project leverages emerging technologies and Capstone's experience addressing poverty to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and to combat economic disparity by reducing barriers to self-sufficiency for rural low-income Vermonters. The project goals are threefold:

- **Reduce greenhouse gas emissions** by utilizing electric vehicles (EVs) to decarbonize State-supported E&D, Medicaid and demand response transit services;
- **Provide mobility-on-demand** for Vermonters who currently lack access to transportation for critical needs such as employment, health care and food; and,
- **Support workforce development** for area businesses that have recruiting and retention challenges by providing reliable EV transportation for disadvantaged community members to get to work.

Project Status and Needs:

- With support from VTrans, Capstone is poised to partner with Green Mountain Transit (GMT) to provide additional capacity to their Elderly & Disabled and Medicaid services in Central VT, as well as to pilot two new service offerings: Recovery and Job Access rides, and general Community Mobility. We will also partner with GMT to provide capacity for their MyRide expansion into Barre.
- Capstone seeks an **adjustment to legislation and regulation** addressing Transportation Network Companies (see attached memo and proposed language)
- Capstone seeks additional funds for project start-up and to expand upon the anticipated GMT services, including:
 - **Capital Investment in a Community Rides EV-HUB.** The HUB will consist of a garage with facilities for car charging, cleaning and routine maintenance; office support and parking for the growing fleet of electric vehicles. *(\$200,000)*
 - **Funding for an additional 6 months of operations (drivers, electricity, and vehicle costs) and additional cars for expansion of workforce development and providing rides outside of transit hours and locations** *(\$300,000)* - This funding would result in an additional nine rides per day
 - Software for ride scheduling, routing, billing allocation and payment processing *(\$100,000)*
 - Program startup and marketing costs *(\$150,000)*

Total Request: \$750,000

Why Vermonters Need Community Rides:

Among the greatest challenges that low-income Vermonters face in their struggle to exit poverty is access to quality jobs, housing, healthcare and childcare. All are necessary requirements for people to build a better life for themselves, and transportation is at the nexus of these issues. Having access to a reliable vehicle in Vermont has become a necessity in order to reach quality employment opportunities and other essential needs of life, but the high cost of car ownership is frequently beyond the financial means of many low-income Vermonters.

Last summer Capstone conducted a Central VT transportation needs assessment which revealed that 15% of people surveyed lived in a home without a vehicle, with the most common reasons being: a) not having a driver's license; and, b) the prohibitive costs of owning or leasing a vehicle. A Vermont Reach Up program report concluded that "access to a vehicle was the most important factor for upwards social mobility, greater than having consistent housing." These findings underscore the need to provide transportation solutions for the population served by Capstone.

Vermont's Global Warming Solutions Act and subsequent Climate Action Plan also recognize the urgent need to decarbonize and dramatically reduce GHGs from the transportation sector. Solutions require a rapid increase in Electric Vehicle utilization. At the same time, the negative impacts of the changing climate will be felt the hardest by those who have the least financial means to adapt.

The Community Rides Solution

Community Rides Vermont will create a reliable, zero emissions transportation solution for rural communities in Central Vermont. A customer uses a mobile app or places a phone call to a dispatcher that schedules their ride within 30-60 minutes. This service is provided by a paid driver who is employed by the mobility company. These mobility trips can be to work, health care, for errands or social visits. The goal of this service is to extend the reach of public transit by providing on-demand rides for those who do not own or have access to a vehicle, those not able to drive, or to communities without public transit. Currently there are services for elderly and disabled community members, but they must be reserved two days in advance and have restrictions on how many rides an individual can take. Our service aims to cast a wider net than public transit (e.g., back roads and small villages) and to operate outside the hours of service of public transit, to serve those in lower paid jobs who often do not work M-F, 8-5 -- namely early mornings, evenings, and weekends. A contractual relationship under development with GMT establishes a foundational partnership to help launch Community Rides Vermont. We aspire to offer the service to the general public as well as subsidized riders, to make as many efficiencies as possible.

Community Rides will also expand **Workforce Mobility** in partnership with regional employers by providing reliable EV transportation to employees of businesses and institutions that have difficulty recruiting and retaining employees. This program would work with existing workforce training programs to match employees and employers to solve one of the key challenges to maintaining a stable workforce: reliable transportation. Employees would be either driven to work by a driver of this new mobility company or a group of employees at a common employer could utilize our vehicles for a carpool.