



WORKING BRIDGES



Perspectives on Transportation Resources from Working Bridges

Testimony to House Committee on Transportation

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Connie Beal

Working Bridges Director

United Way of Northwest Vermont

Connie is deeply committed to helping working Vermonters get what they need to thrive at work. She leads training, innovation, community partnerships, and employer engagement for Working Bridges. In the past, Connie was a Community Resource Specialist for Vermont 2-1-1 and brings over a decade of experience in both nonprofit and public sectors (in anti-violence and substance misuse prevention work). She holds a Bachelors of Psychology from Colby College in Waterville, Maine and a Master of Public Administration from University of Vermont.





What is Working Bridges?

United Way's Working Bridges is an innovative program designed to improve job retention, productivity, advancement, and financial stability by supporting employers and employees with available community resources.





The Why

- Life issues and scarcity of resources can overwhelm anyone's ability to get to, be present at, or succeed in work.
- A good, steady, reliable job helps put people on a path to financial stability. However, employment alone does not ensure financial security.
- Workplaces are communities; platforms for services and support and allow us to "meet people where they are."
- Working Bridges sustains through both fee for service and philanthropic support.
- Triple return on investment: Good for business, good for employees, and good for community.



The How

Resource Coordination

Onsite – Confidential

Resource Coordinators are certified Community Resource Specialists (CRS) through Inform USA. They are also financial coaches, and certified Mental Health First Aiders.

Training Resources

Customizable supervisor/manager training and training coordination (e.g. Working Bridges Concepts) and employee lunch + learns (Bridges Spotlights) are available to employer partners (virtually + in-person). Training needs are identified through conversation with the employer and data from Resource Coordination.

Data + Innovation

Included in partnership with Working Bridges, employer partners are invited to participate in quarterly innovation labs. These convenings support employers in learning about community resources, identifying gaps, and seeking opportunities to try new things by leveraging existing networks, shared resources, funding, and strategies.

Trusted Relationships

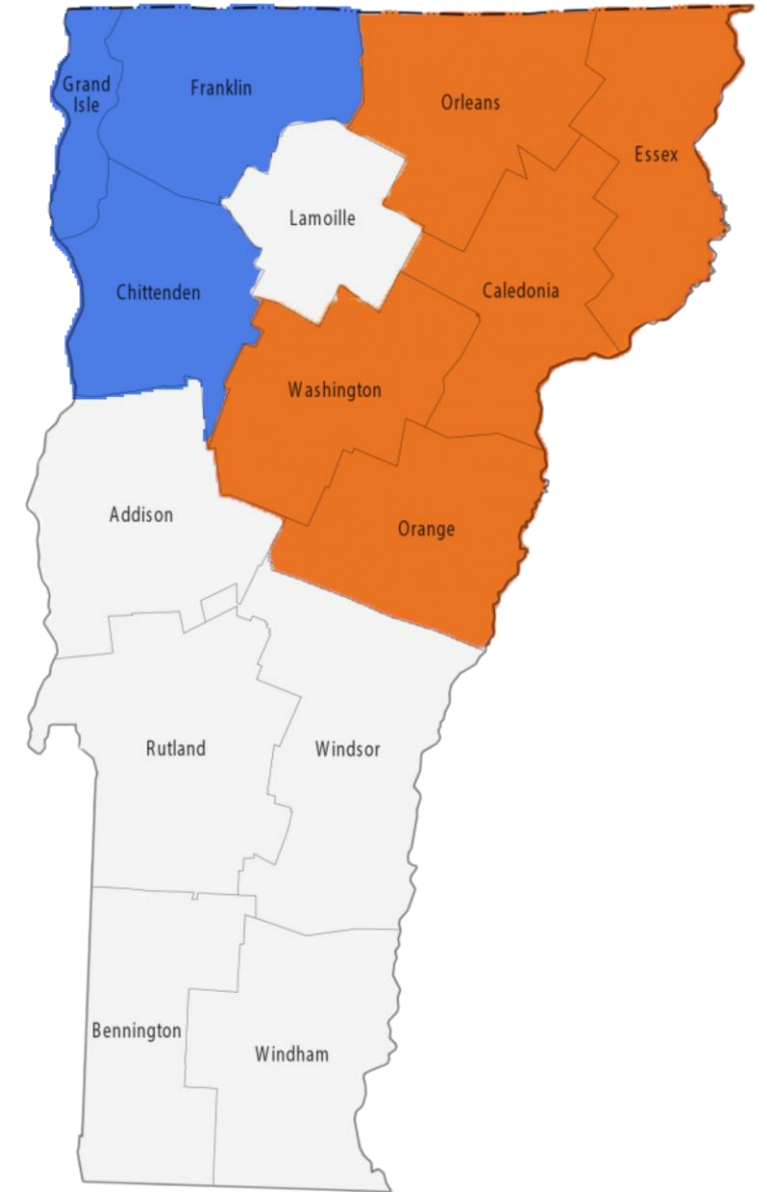
The heart of the work. We build and support relationships with employers, employees, and community partners, as a key strategy in community economic development and workforce sustainability.

Working Bridges Network in Northern VT

30+ EMPLOYER PARTNERS

Partnering with large and mid-sized employers in the following industries:

- Manufacturing
- Healthcare
- Education
- Mental Health
- Non-profits
- And many more growing industries!





NORTHEASTERN VERMONT REGIONAL HOSPITAL



Northern Counties HEALTH CARE



ESTABLISHED 1975



Central Vermont Medical Center



NORTHWESTERN COUNSELING & SUPPORT SERVICES



WEIDMANN



Home Health & Hospice



Overview of Transportation – Employer Perspective

- Recruitment + retention problem
- Vanpooling works when it works and doesn't work for every employer
 - Unable to ensure ridership to initiate and sustain vanpools
 - Lack of reliable driver(s) on staff
 - Potential of shift disruption (e.g. if one shift doesn't show up because of a ride, a whole line is down or patients won't have care)
 - Real/perceived liability concerns
 - Rural workforce cannot get to pick ups
- Multiple shifts demand 24-7 transportation solutions
- Housing crisis is connected to transportation
- Vermont's workforce shortage has employees working longer hours, more overtime, multiple jobs on top of caregiving responsibilities (older parents, children, etc.)

Overview of Transportation – Employee Perspective

In 2024, of the **1,620** employees served in Northern Vermont, **127 employees** reached out for **transportation assistance**. Resource Coordinators provided 181 referrals to transportation services.

Childcare	137	3%
Disaster Assistance	17	0%
Education and Training	163	3%
Employment	73	1%
Financial	821	15%
Food and Nutrition	255	5%
Health Care	354	6%
Housing	806	15%
Human Services	529	10%
Legal	228	4%
Mental Health & Substance Use	247	5%
Problem Solving/Listening Support	479	9%
Recreation	261	5%
Relationships	29	1%
Transportation	181	3%
Wellness	308	6%
Workplace	577	11%

What kinds of transportation questions to Resource Coordinators respond to?

"My car died. How will I get to my shift that starts at 11:00pm?"

"My auto loan is over \$600 a month and I can't afford it."

"My license is suspended. Can you help me get my license back?"

"Do you know the bus routes and schedule, and how much the fare is?"

"I need to get new winter tires. Do you know where I can get affordable tires?"

"I just need a little help with gas until my next paycheck."

"How can I find someone to carpool with?"

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Commuter Co-Op	3
Replace Your Ride vehicle incentive program	1
Capstone	15
Gopher Ride Service	1
Mileage Smart Incentive Program	14
Car Share Vermont	7
Car sharing options	7
Community Rides Vermont	2
Gopher	2
Department of Financial Regulation	2
Auto insurance	2
Department of Motor Vehicles	6
Driving Info, Tests, Licenses	6
GMTA	12
Job Access + Rides to Recovery Gas Cards	12
Good News Garage	2
Obtain donated vehicle	2
JUMP	1
Gasoline voucher/card	1
Local Mechanic/Garage	7
Car Repair	7
Old Spokes Home	9
Everybody Bikes program	9

SSTA / <u>NeighborRides</u>	6
Paratransit rides	6
Utility company	2
Rebate on e-bike purchase	2
UVMCC EFAP	1
Gas card	1
Vermont Department of Transportation	10
<u>Go!Vermont</u>	10
VETI	1
Short-term transportation funding	1
Wheels for Warmth	25
Winter Tires	25
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Accident Report Assistance	1
Application Assistance - License Renewal	1
Assistance applying for disabled plates and placards	2
Bridge Fund - Transportation	4
Car Registration Assistance	2
Gas card	4
Gas card - Home Health and Hospice	3
Loan for Transportation Repair or Purchase	4
Transportation Counseling	21
Transportation counseling - auto insurance	13
Transportation counseling - auto purchasing & selling	13
Transportation counseling - emergency rides	1

Innovations + Opportunities

1) Workplaces are a community, a platform for transportation services

- In 2019, Working Bridges tested a Transportation Pilot with Good News Garage, Ready to Go Program in a 6 month pilot, 3 employers (Wake Robin, Rhino Foods + Edlund Corporation) July 2019 – December 2019
- A total of 67 employees received door to door rides (via van or cab) when their existing transportation fell through unexpectedly. In total, those rides cost **\$1,938.10 (a rough \$27 per person)**

2) Short-term flexible funds for employees with no transportation resources

- Wake Robin's Healthy Car Fund –internal loan/grant benefit for employees for car repair, snow tires, + pre-purchase inspections
- Working Bridges 185 Bridge Fund (In 2024, of the 127 employees needing transportation assistance, only **7 employees** received financial assistance from this fund (a total of **\$1,140 distributed as VISA gift cards**)
- GMT Job Access + Rides to Recovery - \$10 gas cards to help employees with rural commutes
- Vermont Employment Transportation Initiative (VETI) - no longer available, state funds through Creative Workforce Solutions

3) Engage employer networks in education about existing resources as well as local, customizable, scalable on-demand/short-term strategies for the unexpected, for example:

- Working Bridges provides education to employers about existing resources such as Vanpooling, Go Vermont's carpooling and guaranteed ride home benefit, and local bus routes
- Central VT Gopher/Community Rides On-Demand Pilot with CVMC
- Franklin County – 3 employers interested in collaborating in a networked, on-demand solution but need transit provider

WORKING BRIDGES



**Questions?
Clarifications?
Reactions?**

"I wasn't sure whether I'd be able to keep working with everything I had on my plate. Now I come to work and can leave the other stuff behind."

- Kristy, Working Bridges participant



Watch
Kristy's
Story

A blue rectangular box containing the text "Watch Kristy's Story" and a QR code to the right. Above the text is a small audio waveform icon.