

The MILEPOST

August 2020

In This Issue...

[Director Commentary](#)

[Getthere Cases Rebounding](#)

[Employment Success](#)

[Advocacy in Action](#)

[Regional Transit Updates](#)

[Announcements](#)

[MobiLinks](#)

[News & Notes](#)

[On the Horizon](#)



Getthere's five county service area

The More Things Change, The More They Remain The Same

Bill Wagner, Getthere Director

It has been five months now since we started to adjust to the Corona Virus which soon became the COVID-19 pandemic. Like everything else, this pandemic has effected Mobility Management and the Transportation Industry immensely. On the surface, the most immediate change for Getthere has been the operation of the Call Center remotely. The "hustle and bustle" of a busy call center has been replaced by a darkened office with only the sound of the AC droning on above my head. Hours of staff meetings, trainings and presentations have occurred by way of Zoom meetings. Staff interactions with each other and myself occur virtually instead of our normal face to face. Terms such as "social distancing", "PPE or personal protective equipment", "sanitizing", "telework" and "telehealth" frequent our Mobility Management discussions. Transit schedules have changed as well as the number of riders allowed on buses. Private cabs, volunteer drivers all reported fewer riders or reduced services with some halting services altogether.

In the early stages of this pandemic, many health care appointments were postponed. Due to safety concerns, many were canceled. Several conversations from Medicaid transportation providers reported the number of requested trips to be

down 40 - 80%. In addition to the healthcare industry, most other industries felt the impact. Many individuals were furloughed or lost their jobs altogether, again reducing the need for rides.

Calls coming into the call center dropped significantly during the early stages of the pandemic. However, as you will see in the article below, sometime in May the calls started increasing and have steadily increased for the last three months. Access to healthcare, food, prescriptions, employment and other essential needs remain. Telehealth will reduce some of the need for transportation to healthcare but in person healthcare services will continue to require transportation supports. Some work can be accomplished remotely but much cannot. Society may have temporarily slowed down the need for mobility but it cannot extinguish it altogether.

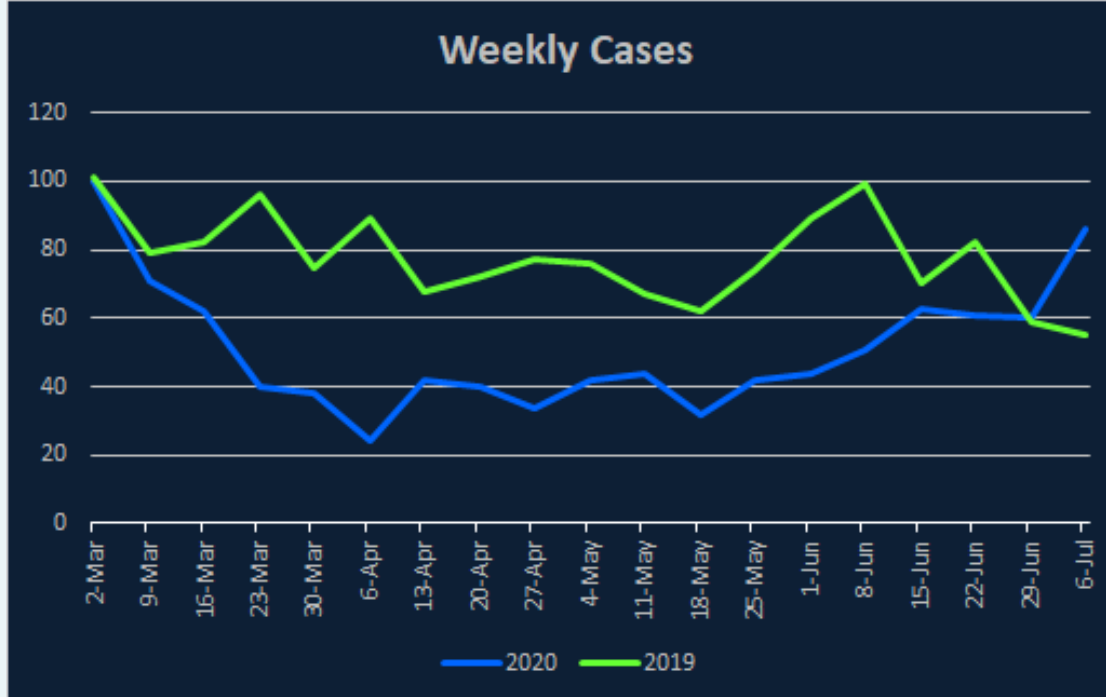
The transportation industry has changed. It will continue to change as we develop safer ways to remain mobile and meet our needs. Technology, innovation and sheer determination will create new and safer ways to access all that is needed. It is important that Getthere and all of the Transportation industry continue to grow and develop as we learn from this pandemic. The basic need for mobility is not going to go away. The more things change the more they remain the same.

Getthere Cases Rebounding

Nick Cecconi

As COVID-19 continues to impact much of the country, one sign that New York and particularly, this region, are resuming a more normal status is the increasing demand for transportation services and assistance after a significant decline. Tellingly, from March 2019 to February 2020, Getthere averaged 336.17 cases a month; however, during March, April, and May of 2020, only 202.67 cases a month- a 60% drop from what it had been for the previous year (see graph below for year over year comparison.)

June showed promise in getting case totals back towards a more traditional average, with 257, while July was even better, with 296. This likely reflects the fact that more people are willing to make trips now than they were for the past few months, though still not quite as much as they had been before March.



Year over year comparison of weekly cases, 2020 vs. 2019.

Transportation to Employment

Katie Blaine

In early March, Getthere's Transportation to Employment Program (TEP) received a referral from one of our partner agencies to assist an individual with transportation to a new job at a nursing home. This was just before concerns regarding COVID-19 led to NYS on PAUSE, which closed schools and businesses across the state.

Nursing home and long-term care facilities found themselves grappling with new guidelines to protect staff and residents against the coronavirus. In addition, some struggled to hold onto staff and hire new staff to replace those that left due to health-related concerns. It wasn't long before staff at these facilities were considered essential and some facilities were deemed hotspots.

For the individual TEP participant, the new job meant a steady paycheck and financial security, and for the facility that hired her, it meant that there would be an employee caring for some of the most vulnerable community members during an uncertain and scary time.

Getthere TEP was able to provide support to help the participant get to and from work initially with a private ride. The participant was able to quickly secure a ride with either a family member or co-worker carpool, leading to a sound sustainable transportation strategy. As a result, the individual participant reached the 90-day employment mark and secured a long-term job performing an essential service during a global pandemic.

MTA Advocacy in Action

Kara Fisher

Advocating for clients and helping them work through challenges is a frequent occurrence at Getthere. The advocacy work we do helps our clients build trust and feel comfortable reaching out as issues arise, even if they may not be directly related to transportation. As the area has started to reopen post-COVID, the Mobility and Transportation Advocates (MTAs) have seen an influx in challenges related to their

non-emergency medical transportation Medicaid benefit and the required forms and documents necessary to receive this benefit. Now that clients are able to arrange appointments again, there have been difficulties with ensuring Medicaid has the forms they need.

I received a call from a client who was frustrated because she had three upcoming appointments she needed to get to, but no way to get there. Typically, she uses Medicaid transportation, but when she tried arranging a ride, she was denied and told she needed a 2020 form. The form is required to be on file with Medical Answering Services (MAS), the transportation broker, whenever there is a request for transportation outside the individual's common medical market area. When clients need transportation to a specialist or a provider outside of their local area, Medicaid requires an explanation as to why this is necessary, which it will either confirm or deny.

In this case, the doctor's office had submitted the 2020 form to MAS, which unfortunately, was backlogged and unable to process the form before her appointment. Neither the client nor the office were able to learn when a decision would be made or whether the form had even been received. Luckily, Getthere has worked with MAS frequently over the years and has developed a good relationship with several of its administrators. I reached out to the Director of Utilization Review to explain the particulars of the case and why it was so important, and to ask if there was anything that could be done to expedite the review process. She understood the urgency and was willing to review the case. She quickly approved the form and contacted the client directly to arrange transportation.

Sadly, not all cases end this way, even with Getthere's advocacy. Furthermore, these types of 2020 form-related incidents have increased notably over the past month. A major difficulty is that Medicaid recipients are not told when the 2020 forms they've already had approved to a particular site expire. In most cases, they find out only when an appointment is pending, and it is too late to have the form re-approved in time; MAS asks for 14-20 days to render a decision. For this reason, Getthere recommends that all people who require a 2020 form to receive transportation to a particular medical site call MAS to verify the forms are up to date and to find out when they are set to expire. This information could be the difference between someone making or missing their next appointment. Of course, the MTAs at Getthere are glad to assist with this or any other problem someone might be facing with regard to their transportation!

For additional information about MAS forms, including the 2020 form, please visit [this page](#).

Updates for Regional Transit Services

The New York Public Transit Association recently published a list of transit providers across New York with changes that were made to services as a result of COVID-19. Though most operators in South Central New York and the Southern Tier have returned to their normally scheduled services, some have not. Below is a list of recent announcements and updates:

- Broome County Transit began collecting fares again on June 15th. Fixed route seating is limited and partitions are being used to separate riders. BC Country, OFA minibus, and BC Lift paratransit service are each allowing a maximum of two riders on vehicles at the same time.
- As of July 5th, C-TRAN's Route #7 Shopper Shuttle and Route #30 Elmira to Ithaca is operating on its normal schedule. Fixed Route and paratransit services

are also operating on normal schedules.

- TCAT's no fare policy will extend to September 5th. Though summer service schedule remains in effect, it is at reduced levels. Please see tcatbus.com for full details.
- Otsego Express' Route 6 resumed service between Sidney and the West Oneonta Park and Ride on June 6th under the operation of Oneonta Public Transit. Routes 5 and 9 remain suspended.
- Oneonta Public Transit's SUNY route will resume August 15th.
- Chenango Transit is operating all routes according to their normal schedules.

Announcements

AmeriCorps Position with Getthere Now Available Access to Health Transport and Delivery Driver

The successful candidate will provide transportation services to Broome County seniors to maintain and improve their health, i.e. rides to healthcare or health related appointments, or food/prescription deliveries utilizing Rural Health Network's van. Primary hours will be Monday-Friday between 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM, for 25-30 hours weekly. AmeriCorps member will drive the Rural Health Network/Getthere vehicle during service hours. Applicants must be punctual, personable, and customer oriented.



For this AmeriCorps position, individuals must be 25 years or older with a clean driving record, current license, and proof of insurance. Comprehensive background check will include FBI fingerprinting and DMV check. Personal vehicle not required.

To apply: <https://secure.jotform.us/form/5026611526114>

NYPTA 2020 Conference and EXPO Now Virtual

The annual New York State Public Transit Conference and Expo is to be presented virtually this year, on October 28, 2020. According to NYPTA, it will feature robust learning and sharing of critical information on a dynamic, interactive, platform open to the entire public transit community. The proceedings are offered by NYPTA in collaboration with Federal Transit Administration Region II, the NYS Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), and NYSDOT Rural Transportation Assistance Program. For more information, visit the [event page](#).

IMA Group Now Performing Tele-Assessments

The Industrial Medicine Associates Group (IMA) has recently begun performing tele-assessments as part of its clinical evaluation work. IMA has offices throughout New York State, where it performs a wide range of medical services including Social Security Consultative Examinations and Independent Medical Examinations. Though transportation is often available to would-be patients through Medicaid, it isn't always. Getthere has assisted dozens of individuals over the years in getting to mandated assessments.

To be able to use tele-assessments, patients will need (per IMA's website):

1. An email address to receive the invitation to connect to IMA's secure platform.
2. A secure internet connection.
3. A quiet area, free of distractions and interruptions.

4. A Computer, laptop, or tablet with a webcam and audio capabilities.

Census 2020: America Needs You!

The Decennial Census is about to be sent out to households throughout the United States. Make sure to fill yours out and be counted!

Why is the 2020 Census Important?



Everyone Counts. The Census counts every person living in the U.S. once every ten years



Political Representation. The Census results are used to determine how many representatives each state has in Congress and are used to inform the redrawing of congressional district boundaries



It's Your Civic Duty. It is in the Constitution that everyone must be counted



Federal Funding. Census data is used to distribute \$675 billion in federal funds annually to states, counties, and local communities



Confidentiality. Federal law protects your Census responses. Your answers can only be used to produce statistics and cannot be shared or used to identify you or your household.



Answering the Census is the law, and it is important to our community. Please complete it accurately.

How is Census Data Used?



To determine funding for public services in our community



To determine where to build new infrastructure and community facilities



To determine where to open new companies, businesses, and stores



To write grant applications for community projects



To plan for emergency services

How & When do I Respond to the Census?

In March 2020, every household will receive an invitation to complete the Census, you can complete the questionnaire:



Online



By phone



By mail

Postcard reminders and a hard-copy questionnaire will be mailed throughout March and April. A Census taker will follow-up with non-responsive households.

MobiLinks

Uber to Acquire Routematch

Andrew Hawkins | [The Verge](#)

Uber announced that it will acquire Routematch, an Atlanta-based company that develops software for public transportation agencies. The news comes amid the ride-hail company's push into public transit.[...] [Read More](#)

Michigan Investing in Mobility with PlanetM

Jeff Kart | [Forbes](#)

Detroit has long been known as the Motor City. Maybe "Michigan: the Robot State" will catch on? Officials here are touting a rise in robotics as efforts continue with using advanced machines to keep people safe from the coronavirus ... and transitioning to the Fourth Industrial Revolution.[...] [Read More](#)

New York Looking to Expand EV Usage

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo announced on July 16th a package of major clean transportation initiatives, including a "Make Ready" order approved by the New York State Public Service Commission to advance New York's commitment to accelerate its transition to cleaner mobility.[...] [Read More](#)

News and Notes

TCAT to Start "Pop Up" Route Service to Local Parks

TCAT launched a Wednesday - Saturday route to local parks as of July 22. The route will begin after 9 a.m. and end late afternoon traveling to and from Ithaca Commons and Taughannock State Park, serving northwest destinations to include the

Ithaca Children's Garden and Cass Park. In the city's northeast, the route will travel between Stewart Park and the Commons, stopping at Ithaca High School and the Fall Creek area.

Your Story Here!

Got a news tip for Getthere about transportation in South Central New York? An event coming up? We're always looking for stories, articles, and announcements, even brief ones, that let people know what's going on with transportation in our area. Give us a call or shoot us an email!

On the Horizon

Upcoming Events, Conferences, & Workshops

July 28 over six weeks	<u>Association of Travel Instruction Annual Conference</u>	Virtual via Zoom
August 2-5	<u>Association for Commuter Transportation International Conference</u>	Online
August 20 12 PM	Getthere Advisory Committee Meeting	Virtual via Zoom
September 1-3	<u>Move America Virtual Event</u>	Online

If you'd like your transportation meeting or event featured in next quarter's *The Milepost*, please contact us at getthere@rhnscny.org. Those interested in attending or learning more about Getthere's Advisory Committee meetings should contact Bill Wagner

You Can Help

Join in promoting our cause! You can help spread the word and gather feedback. Share this communication with others who may be interested or let us know who to add to the distribution list. Share your ideas and those you hear from others with us. Share mobility related news, events, and images representative of your area.

Partner involvement and support at the local, regional, state and national level has been critical to Getthere. We extend thanks to our numerous partners, stakeholders, and funders.

Contact information:

Getthere phone: 607-692-7669

William Wagner, Director, e-mail: wwagner@rhnscny.org

Nick Ceconi, Assistant Director, e-mail: nceconi@rhnscny.org

Getthere Call Center phone: 1-855-373-4040

Getthere Call Center hours: 7 am - 7 pm weekdays



<https://gettherescny.org>

Getthere is the mobility management program of
Rural Health Network of South Central NY

www.rhscny.org

STAY CONNECTED

