



5 years

211,826
rides



BerkshireRides

Getting You Where You Need to Be



At BerkshireRides' five-year celebration, the "Skittle towers" represented total rides to select locations — 10,000 rides to daycares, 6,000 rides to BRTA bus stops, and 16,500 rides to bring employees to work at Northern Berkshire Health Systems.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 2 From Concept to Reality: A Community Driven Approach
- 5 What Our Legislators Are Saying About BerkshireRides
- 8 Our Riders
- 12 Celebrating Five Years of Service . . . and Counting
- 16 Adding It All Up



FROM CONCEPT TO REALITY:

A Community Driven Approach

Although BerkshireRides this year celebrated its fifth anniversary, the idea for the transportation service began more than a decade ago. In 1995, at a meeting of the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition (NBCC), area leaders knew that a better form of transportation was needed for Adams, Clarksburg, Cheshire, Florida, North Adams, Savoy and Williamstown, amidst the rapidly changing Northern Berkshire economy.

There were both jobs available and people who wanted to work, but many did not have an automobile to take them to find and keep that employment. In addition, the sprawling rural landscape spread between people's homes and businesses and the fact that many were far removed from bus routes or other public transportation further frustrated potential employers and employees alike.

While the idea of living in the Berkshires without an automobile may seem unimaginable to many, for approximately 16 percent of Northern Berkshire County adults, that notion is a reality. For those without a car, getting to or from a job at night, or to education or training first thing in the morning — especially if they have children needing day care — was a sizable problem.

But lots of dedicated community leaders and residents were determined to find a solution, and the conversation of how to solve the region's transportation issues continued in earnest. Then, Congressman John W. Olver — who serves on the Transportation Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee — listened to concerns from the folks at a NBCC monthly forum and supported a plan for connecting people all over the Northern Berkshires with jobs, education and training. The Transportation Association of the Northern Berkshires (TANB) was born.

BerkshireRides

With the help of a yearly \$400,000 federal grant obtained by Congressman Olver, those needing transportation to their job or job-related activities had a place they could call to help get them where they needed to go. And, for the nearly one-in-six Northern Berkshire adults without ready access to an automobile, TANB also soon became an important resource.

Also known as BerkshireRides, the nonprofit organization is a transportation center for the seven Northern Berkshire communities it serves. Those in need of a ride can get transportation 24 hours day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, through contracts and arrangements with many transit providers.

In December 2004, further federal assistance facilitated by Congressman Olver came in the form of an additional \$50,000, boosting TANB's annual budget to \$450,000. This money allowed the association to create a new service using van pools and ride sharing to expand the ways that people could get to work.

Little more than a year later, in January 2006, the service expanded to include rides for those who needed to get to application appointments for heating fuel assistance



BerkshireRides 2006-2007 Board of Directors

Front row: David Bissaillon, President, Chad Jzyk, and Treasurer Al Bashevkin. Back row: Sandy Totter, Clerk, James Art, and Shirley Geno. Missing from the photo: MaryLee Daniels.

at Community Action in North Adams. It also was approved as a training agency for the Senior Community Service Employment program.

Today, the public transit and ride-sharing program is more popular than ever, with a growing number of people looking for ways to save gasoline and reduce emissions. Over the summer of 2007, BerkshireRides experienced a 38 percent increase in riders, and there are no signs the demand will slow down. Three new vans now transport area children to after school and other various youth programs in collaboration with the North Adams Public Schools, the Northern Berkshire YMCA, the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition and the COTY Youth Center:

BerkshireRides also is working with VPSI, Inc. and private employers to create and promote shared rides for employees — especially those who work a second or third shift, when no bus service is available.

The organization will continue to mitigate the needs of the Northern Berkshire community as it continues to move forward on its mission to remove transportation

barriers for area residents. Said BerkshireRides project manager Jana Brule, "I would love to see a future where a service such as ours is offered county-wide, whether it is an expansion of BerkshireRides, an expansion of Berkshire Regional Transportation Authority services, or even another alternative. A seamless system for the riders is essential."



BerkshireRides staff: Jana Hunkler Brule and Lisa A. Loomis



BerkshireRides, 6 West Street, North Adams, Massachusetts.

What Our Legislators Are Saying About BerkshireRides ...

Congressman John Olver

I am excited to have this opportunity to congratulate BerkshireRides on its fifth anniversary of improving public transportation in Northern Berkshire County!

I have been a proud supporter from the beginning and so I was pleased to recently secure \$700,000 for BerkshireRides in the FY08 Transportation and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Appropriations bill to maintain and expand community transportation services.

There has always been a tremendous need for public transportation services in the region and BerkshireRides has worked very hard to close the gap. There remain unmet transportation needs, however, and therefore it is very important that the program have additional resources to build on the progress we have made together.

New funding will assist BerkshireRides in expanding employment transportation services, while also helping expand opportunities to young people by working even more closely with local partners like the United Way and the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition. I am confident that BerkshireRides will successfully meet these challenges.

Again, congratulations on five years of exceptional service. The future is bright and I look forward to continuing to work with you all!



John W. Olver

What Our Legislators Are Saying About BerkshireRides ...

Senator Benjamin Downing

I am pleased to offer my congratulations to BerkshireRides as you celebrate your fifth anniversary. This milestone denotes five successful years of service for Northern Berkshire County commuters and results in improved public transportation service throughout the region.

BerkshireRides has hit many highlights along the way. The impressive statistics below show that the services provided are essential to the working days for many employees and the economic prosperity of the region. Dependable public transportation services have long been requested by working families in Northern Berkshire County, and BerkshireRides has answered their call. In just five years you have:

- *Provided over 200,000 rides to 5,200 riders*
- *Developed coverage 24 hours a day/7 days a week/365 days a year*
- *Traveled over 1,200 miles a day*
- *Partnered with over 350 employers*
- *Offered transportation assistance to 24 percent of the North County workforce*

I am pleased to count myself as a proud supporter of BerkshireRides, and heartily congratulate you on reaching this milestone.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ben D 3". The signature is stylized and appears to be written on a light-colored surface.

State Representative Daniel Bosley

I'm happy to have this opportunity to offer my sincere congratulations to BerkshireRides as you celebrate the fifth anniversary of the organization! This is not only a great accomplishment for all those involved with BerkshireRides, but also a tremendous gain for our community.

Since the first ride in August of 2002, BerkshireRides has provided well over 200,000 rides and served over 5,200 individuals. With BerkshireRides offering low-cost transportation to work, employment training, and job related appointments 24 hours a day, seven days a week, transportation is no longer an obstacle for the people of Northern Berkshire County.

Again, I congratulate everyone who has worked so diligently to make BerkshireRides a success and, as always, I am pleased to offer my continued support to this project.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel Bosley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, circular initial "D".

Building Opportunities and a Better Future

For Bill Lefebvre, BerkshireRides provides more than a way to get to work, the service makes it possible for him to work at a job at which he has opportunities for career advancement, health insurance and better pay than he had at his previous position.

As a taxi driver four years ago, Bill often would take BerkshireRide clients to their jobs. Then he had an opportunity to work for Wal-Mart, as a cashier. But the job required that he work a variety of days and hours, including late night shifts — during times when the buses did not run. What's more, paying for taxi rides to get to work on a regular basis was beyond his tight budget.

For \$1.50, BerkshireRides provides Bill with a curb-to-curb transportation service — something he's particularly grateful for on the snowy winter days when he would have had to trek up and down the steep road that leads to his North Adams home on Prospect Street. The same service through a taxi cab company would cost him \$5.

"BerkshireRides is important to me because I don't have a car," Bill explained. "It would be a lot harder for me to get to work if it weren't for them, and it would be especially tough when I work nights."

Over the four years he has worked at Wal-Mart, Bill estimates he's arrived at his job at least 1,000 times thanks to BerkshireRides. And, he's not the only Wal-Mart employee to take advantage of the service — at least three of his colleagues also use BerkshireRides.

"I don't know what I'd do if BerkshireRides wasn't there," Bill said.



Jessica's Story From Daycare to Health Care

As a single mother of two, Jessica Amos is responsible not only for taking care of herself, but her young daughters — Havana, 4, and Maphia, 2. A Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), Jessica works at Hillcrest Commons in Pittsfield. But before she heads to work, BerkshireRides takes Jessica to drop off Havana and Maphia to their daycare center, Kiddyland in Adams.



"BerkshireRides picks us up every day, and they work with my schedule," Jessica said. "Sometimes when I have to stay later at my job, they will come back to get me."

Jessica and her daughters enjoy using BerkshireRides because the people are nice to them. One BerkshireRides office staffer went above and beyond the call of duty when she helped Jessica move to her new North Adams apartment this past year.

Without BerkshireRides, it would be difficult for Jessica to get to her job because her extended family is not always available to help her. She explained that taking a bus would not work out because of the hours she works and her need to get her daughters to day care. Affording a taxi would be a struggle, she added.

Jessica plans on using BerkshireRides far into the future.

"It's worth it. It's a good community ride, it's easy to use and the best way to travel if you don't have a car. They have safe drivers who make sure we buckle up. They help you out when you need it."

BACK ON HER FEET:

BerkshireRides Aids Williamstown Resident With Broken Ankle

Unlike some of the clients who use BerkshireRides, Karen Charbonneau has a car. But, two years ago, she fell and suffered a severe ankle break, which left her unable to drive for months. With no bus route near her South Williamstown home, Karen's only other option for transportation to her job as director of the Early Intervention Program in North Adams was a taxi cab, which would have cost her \$13 each way.



Then, her daughter suggested she try BerkshireRides. At first, Karen thought the sole purpose of the service was to help people who did not have transportation and who could not afford a taxi return to the workforce. "When I called, I expected to hear I was over-qualified," she said.

Instead, BerkshireRides got Karen back to work much sooner than she ordinarily would have been able to, and continued to take her there for more than three months. And, Karen appreciated that the vans came right to her door — eliminating the need for her to walk down her long driveway during that winter, when snow and ice made for some tricky maneuvering, especially for someone on crutches. Oftentimes, the BerkshireRide drivers would offer a steadying arm.

"I so appreciated the service," Karen said. "It was wonderful. I found the drivers pleasant and personable. If it weren't for BerkshireRides, it would have been hard, if not impossible, for me to otherwise return to work so soon."

BerkshireRides Reaches a Milestone

Cynthia Smith of Florida thought she just was getting another lift to work last June 13, but the trip turned out to be quite a milestone. Smith, who was headed to her job at The Porches Inn, was the 200,000th person to use BerkshireRides, and as such was greeted with a bouquet of flowers and the gift of a month's worth of free rides. She also was treated to a catered lunch with co-workers for being the 200,000th passenger.

Before BerkshireRides, Smith said she had to get a ride to work with a friend or neighbor, in a taxi, or whatever she managed to arrange, as no bus traveled up to Florida Mountain from North Adams.

"It was tough," Smith said, adding that BerkshireRides made getting to work much simpler and that the service was an efficient and inexpensive way to get to her job. "The drivers are very polite and they're always on time."



Driving Donations

In addition to taking people to their jobs, training, work-related appointments and more, BerkshireRides makes sure they get to Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) appointments with Community Action in North Adams, where they meet with Director Marie Harpin to sign up for fuel assistance for the winter:

Harpin said BerkshireRides helped stock Community Action's food pantry in September 2006 by providing rides in exchange for the donation of a non-perishable food item. The food pantry serves as an emergency resource to help community members in need.

"People using BerkshireRides often are those trying to get back on their feet and need the service because of transportation issues in the community," Harpin said. "They are using BerkshireRides but still think of others. I think that's wonderful."

Celebrating Five Years of Service . . . and Counting

The ribbon cutting for the Youth Transportation Network, held at Western Gateway Heritage State Park on August 9, 2007, was more than just the launch of three new minivans for BerkshireRides and a new service to get local children where they need to go: It was a celebration of a 10-month collaboration between the agency and Northern Berkshire United Way, Church Outreach To Youth (COTY) Center, the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition, North Adams Public Schools and the Northern Berkshire YMCA.

Over the past five years, BerkshireRides gave 200,000 rides to 5,000 community members in need of transportation to work for 450 employers. Now, this new collaboration will take BerkshireRides' success story even further into the community and the people it serves.



TOTAL RIDES in five years: 211,826

Here is a sampling of
where we go ...

Employers:

Berkshire Mall
Big Y Supermarkets
Cascade School Supplies
Clark Art Institute
Crane's Personal Design
Dunkin' Donuts
Excelsior Printing
Goodwill Industries
Interprint
Jiminy Peak Mountain Resort
Northern Berkshire
Health Systems
O'Connell Gas &
Convenience Stores
Stop & Shop Supermarket
Wal-Mart

Education/Training:

Mildred Ely
BCC
MCLA
MCLA — ABE/GED/ESOL
classes at the main campus,
plus locations in North Adams,
Williamstown and Adams
CPM - Corporation for Public
Management (North Adams
and Pittsfield locations)
McCann Tech
North Adams Library
Community Corrections
MELD — education and support
group for teenage mothers

Daycares: 10,000 rides

BRTA B-Bus Stops: 6,000 rides

Other:

WIC
Northern Berkshire Community
Action for fuel assistance
applications

Volunteers: to North Adams
Regional Hospital and
North Adams Commons



Richard Alcombright, North Adams city counselor, welcomes attendees to ribbon cutting and five-year anniversary celebration.

Funded by a three-year, \$81,000 Northern Berkshire United Way grant, two Toyota Sienna minivans arrived at BerkshireRides' headquarters, expanding the organization's ability to help even more Northern Berkshire residents — school children in need of transportation to local youth programs. And, in early September, a third, 12-passenger van was added to the fleet to further that effort. These new vans allow a new population to be served as they take children without transportation to afterschool and summer programs.

As North Adams City Counselor and Northern Berkshire United Way President Richard Alcombright prepared to cut the ceremonial ribbon between two of the new minivans, he remarked what perfect sense it made to have the coordination of transportation efforts for youth that take advantage of the wide range of services offered by these affiliated agencies. It is

through this collaboration — and through the hard work and support of many — that BerkshireRides is capitalizing on its success and finding yet another way to benefit the community.

“This program is designed to create a reliable and efficient

system to bring school-aged children where they absolutely need to be,” Alcombright said. “This effort has been the poster child for how state, local, and federal governments can come together efficiently and effectively to bring forward a program that truly benefits both those in need and the communities it serves.”

Although participating agencies provide their own drivers, BerkshireRides acts as the umbrella organization, housing the vans, taking care of the insurance, maintaining a list of who is qualified to drive and overseeing the schedule for the vans’ use. Although the first priority for this new service is to transport the children, BerkshireRides also brings families who don’t have a means of transportation to their children’s schools for meetings like parent-teacher conferences and special events.

According to Alan Bashevkin, director of the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition, his organization would make frequent use of the vans, taking children to step-dancing practices, sporting league practices, and making sure that youth leaders without transportation get to where the children need to be, too.

In addition to the launch of the new vans, the celebration was an opportunity to recognize American Livery Service owners Candy Tripodes and Lori Pratt, who provide rides for BerkshireRides. “We’re the ones who stuck it out,” Tripodes said. “We provide about 150 rides a day. We’re very busy.”



BerkshireRides Board Members Al Bashevkin, Dave Bissailion, Chad Jzyk, MaryLee Daniels, Sandy Totter, and Shirley Geno with Richard Alcombright, while Donald Atwater of Community Action looks on.



Candy Tripodes, co-owner of American Livery, accepting an appreciation award from Linda Greenbush (center) chair of the BerkshireRides Community Advisory Committee, and Jana Hunkler Brule, project manager.

Helping Employers Build the Local Economy

BerkshireRides helps more than Northern Berkshire residents in need of transportation to work: the service is invaluable to many area businesses that need workers to keep their operations running.

Over the past five years, the service has provided many rides to Northern Berkshire Health Systems. At nearly nine rides a day, seven days a week, that adds up to nearly 16,500 trips to North Adams Regional Hospital, Sweet Book Transitional Care and Living Center, Sweetwood Retirement Community and the Visiting Nurses Association.



Paul Hopkins

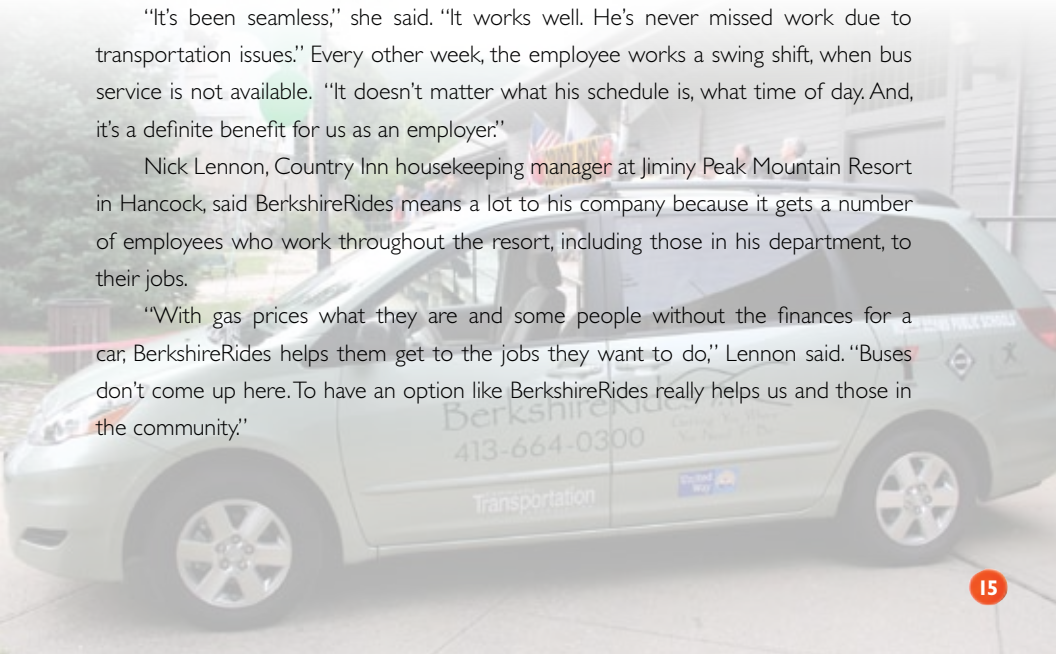
"If you look at the people we employ, some are part time and it's often their first job and they don't have reliable transportation yet," said Paul Hopkins, public relations director for Northern Berkshire Healthcare. Others are volunteers, many elderly, for whom BerkshireRides is the best transportation option. "BerkshireRides is critical to keeping everything running smoothly."

Kelly Palmer, the human resources representative at Interprint, Inc. in Pittsfield, said the service helps her company staff its operations by eliminating one of the factors that keeps employees from getting to work — lack of transportation. In fact, BerkshireRides has driven one of her employees to Interprint since he started working there three years ago.

"It's been seamless," she said. "It works well. He's never missed work due to transportation issues." Every other week, the employee works a swing shift, when bus service is not available. "It doesn't matter what his schedule is, what time of day. And, it's a definite benefit for us as an employer."

Nick Lennon, Country Inn housekeeping manager at Jiminy Peak Mountain Resort in Hancock, said BerkshireRides means a lot to his company because it gets a number of employees who work throughout the resort, including those in his department, to their jobs.

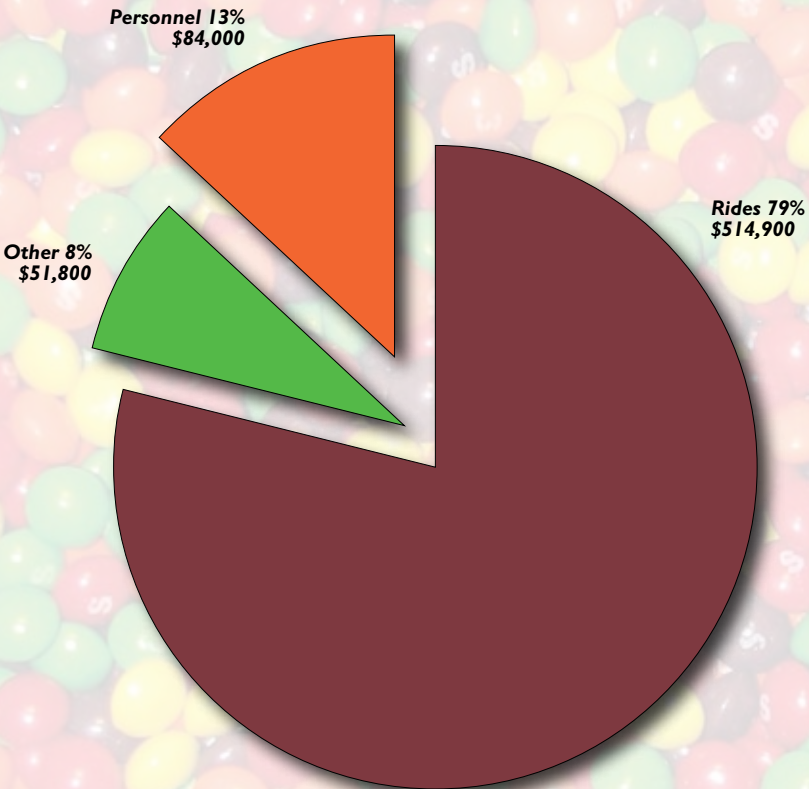
"With gas prices what they are and some people without the finances for a car, BerkshireRides helps them get to the jobs they want to do," Lennon said. "Buses don't come up here. To have an option like BerkshireRides really helps us and those in the community."



Adding It All Up

Average Annual Costs of Operation - \$650,700

BerkshireRides is committed to transporting the people of North County. Annually, it spends more than four out of every five dollars on the direct provision of transportation, the majority of which support local private and public transportation operators. The agency seeks always to find the least cost alternative to transport local residents effectively and efficiently. In fact, the agency's efficiency compares favorably with national averages for systems operating in similar areas.



BerkshireRides

HOME

FIND
A RIDE

ABOUT US

CONTACT US

WELCOME TO OUR WEBSITE



For more information
Read our riders guide...

[read more](#)

[BRTA info](#) [Booking Rides](#)
[FARES](#) [Cancelling](#)



Booking
413.664.0300

Cancellations
800.733.0205



Transportation is an integral part of accessibility to all service agencies and to full participation in community life. We at BerkshireRides are dedicated to removing transportation as a barrier for our neighbors here in Berkshire County. This website is designed to help you find a ride from the many diverse public, community-based, and private transportation options currently available.

[read more](#)



What do we do?

We help people get rides to work, and to job training, employment counseling, and interviews. We can bring your children to daycare when we bring you to your job. We do charge a minimal fare for each ride...

CURRENT NEWS/ INFO

[.01](#)

[.02](#)

[HOME](#) | [TRANSPORTATION PROVIDERS](#) | [ABOUT BERKSHIRE RIDES](#) | [CONTACT US](#)

© All rights reserved. berkshirerides.org. 2007.

www.berkshirerides.org

In November 2007, BerkshireRides launched a new Web site, www.berkshirerides.org, which is designed to help area residents find a ride from the variety of public, community-based, and private transportation options available. The site offers information on rides from private taxis, the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority's "B-Bus," as well as through medical, senior and even pet transportation services. In addition to listing the array of ride options in the Berkshires, this site is a tool for BerkshireRides' staff, helping them to schedule trips for those who use the nonprofit organization's services.

BerkshireRides

6 West Main Street, North Adams, Massachusetts 01247
(413) 664-0300 • fax (413) 664-2727 • www.berkshirerides.org



6 West Main Street
North Adams, Massachusetts 01247

NONPROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
N READING, MA
PERMIT NO. 121