



CITY OF WATERTOWN

Department of
Community Development and
Planning

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To: Economic Development and Planning Committee of the City Council
From: Steve Magoon, Director of Community Development and Planning and Assistant City Manager
Laura Wiener, Senior Transportation Planner
Date: January 14, 2022
RE: Transportation Updates--Bluebikes Bike Share Program and Pleasant Street Shuttle

At the November 30 meeting of the Committee on Economic Development and Planning, the Councilors present requested an update on the Bluebikes Bike Share program and the Pleasant Street Shuttle. Attached is an end of year report on both programs.

The Bluebikes bike share program launched in the summer of 2020, and has now been running for 18 months. Watertown currently has 7 stations at the following locations, with one more to be installed imminently at Arsenal on the Charles.

1. Coolidge Square, in front of Coolidge Playground, northeast corner of Arlington St. and Mt. Auburn St.
2. Nichols Avenue at the Watertown-Cambridge DCR Greenway, within the parking lot at Linx
3. Arsenal Yards, facing Arsenal Street
4. Arsenal Street near Talcott Avenue, near Mosesian Center for the Arts, on the campus of Arsenal on the Charles (coming soon)
5. Arsenal Street, in front of 202 Arsenal (vacant lot), between Gables and Elan
6. Watertown Square, at the Bus Delta
7. Main Street opposite City Hall
8. California Street at Fifth Avenue, abutting the Charles River Greenway

So far there have been almost 12,000 total rides taken from program inception through the end of 2021. Ridership grew steadily between March and October, 2021, as stations were added and the weather was comfortable for biking. Peak ridership was in the month of October, 2021, with 1,386 rides. November and December showed declines, but were still above last year's numbers. The top station for trip origination is Arsenal Yards, with almost 3,800 total rides, followed closely by Watertown Square and Coolidge Square. Arsenal Yards is funding an expansion of their station.

The Bluebikes program is approaching a transition. Watertown was able to launch the program with minimal financial investment. Lyft, the parent company, was interested in expanding beyond its core communities, and offered 6 stations for \$100,000, with no operating costs for 2 years. Each station

normally costs \$45,000. The City successfully applied for a MassDOT grant along with Newton, Arlington and Chelsea, and received \$80,000. The remaining \$20,000 came from TNC funds. That 2 year period ends on July 31, 2022. All 4 of the expansion communities will have to start paying operating costs, determined by the number of bike docking stations, starting in August, 2022. We are exploring grant opportunities, but MassDOT grant programs will not cover operating costs.

Into the future, MassDOT funds are available for 2-3 more stations, to be installed in the spring. Two development projects have committed to installing stations as well—66 Galen Street and 99 Coolidge Ave. Increasing the density of stations is likely to increase ridership, but also increases operating costs. However, a ride taken on a Bluebike is one not taken in a car, which helps to meet our goals to reduce congestion and carbon emissions, as stated in the Transportation Demand Management ordinance, and the draft Climate Action Plan.

Attachments:

1. Bluebikes 2020-2021 Trips (by station)
2. Watertown Bluebikes Trips, from July 31, 2020 through 2021

Attachment 1.

Bluebikes 2020-2021 Trips by station

1/4/2022 trips to date

	Starting
<u>Watertown</u>	<u>Trips</u>
1 Coolidge Sq	2146
2 Watertown Sq.	2541
3 N.Beacon/N. Beacon Ct. (1)	297
4 Arsenal Yards	3779
5 Main St. at Town Hall	626
6 160 Arsenal St.	1310
7 Nichols/Greenway/Linx (2)	1000
8 California St/Fifth Ave (3)	185
Total Trips	11,884
Average/station	1,981

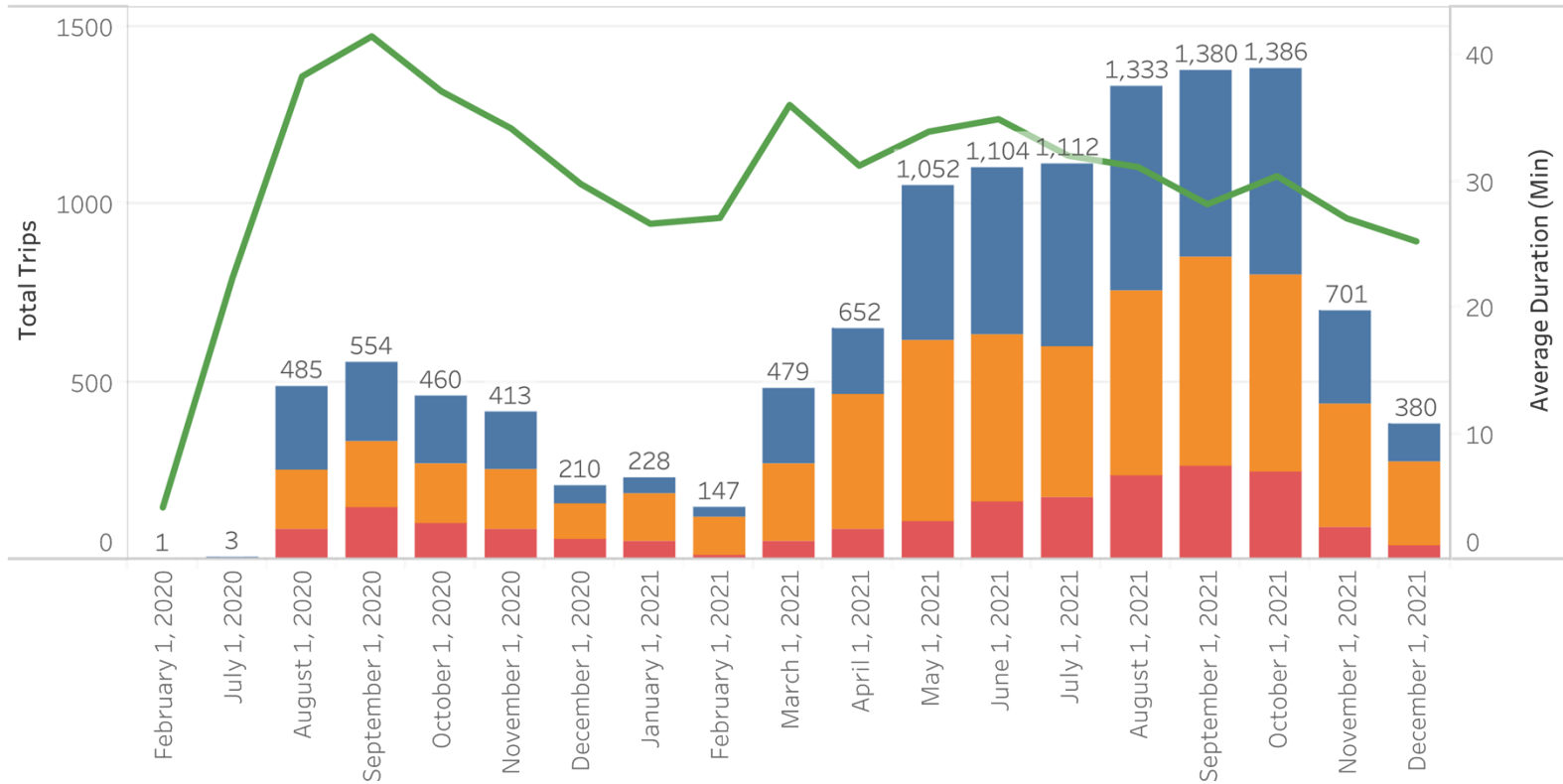
(1) station moved to Main St/City Hall.

(2) station installed March, 2021

(3) station installed Sept., 2021

Watertown Bluebikes Trips from Launch through 2021

Trip Count & Average Duration
 --trips greater than 60 seconds and capped at 2 hours



Pleasant Street Commuter Shuttle

The Pleasant Street commuter shuttle, a.k.a. the Watertown Connector, launched on September 7, 2021. It is a joint partnership between DPCD, the Watertown TMA, and WeDriveU. The shuttle starts at The Mews, with 2 stops along Pleasant Street, a stop in Watertown Square, and terminates in Harvard Square.

Currently there are four WTMA members participating in the shuttle—The Watertown Mews, Watermills at Bridgepoint, Aver, and Riverworks. The first 3 members are required to participate in the shuttle by their Special Permits. Riverworks joined voluntarily, and is the biggest user. In addition, ridership is open to the general public, who can either use the Tripshot App. as the TMA members do, or they can purchase a 10 ride pass at the City Clerk's office for \$10.00.

Ridership is off to a good start, considering that many people are still working from home. The general public represents 25% of total shuttle ridership to date, and 34% of ridership in December, 2021. Here is a breakdown of ridership from inception (Sept. 7, 2021) through December, 2021.

Pleasant Street Shuttle Ridership Report, through 12/31/21

	<u>Sept</u>	<u>Oct.</u>	<u>Nov.</u>	<u>Dec.</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>%</u>
Watertown Mews	10	19	53	28	110	31%
Watermills	2	0	1	0	3	1%
Aver *	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Riverworks	72	48	32	49	152	43%
General Public	<u>19</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>90</u>	25%
	103	87	98	116	355	100%

*Aver is not yet fully occupied.