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How Community Rides' Transportation Program, Gopher, is Responding to Funding Changes

Barre, VT --Community Rides Vermont, also known as Gopher, is a community-based non-profit organization launched by Capstone Community Action in 2023. Based in Barre, Vermont, Gopher assists community members with transportation needs in Washington and neighboring towns in Orange County. Gopher's professional drivers provide safe and comfortable rides in a fleet of zero-emissions electric SUVs.

In 2024, Gopher provided 7,040 rides, primarily through Mobility For All (MFA), a pilot program providing subsidized rides, funded in part by the State of Vermont through an agreement with Green Mountain Transit (GMT). In addition, Gopher has provided contracted rides for school children, rides to Central Vermont Medical Center (CVMC), and transportation to jobs, church, and food shopping for underserved Vermonters.

Due to reductions in funding provided through the Vermont Agency of Transportation and GMT, the MFA program is being terminated as of July 1, 2025. "While this news is disappointing to receive, we understand the financial constraints the State and GMT were under to support our pilot for the third year when core public transportation services were being reduced," stated Chris Cole, Executive Director of Gopher.

Gopher is continuing to provide transportation services that support our community in the following areas:

- Launch Gopher-It Rideshare, a new discounted market-rate ride share program. Continue to offer a full-market rate service for individuals with the means to pay full fare.
- Support students in transitional housing or those attending independent schools that lack reliable transportation.

- Support CVMC to enable community members without transportation to access necessary life sustaining medical services.
- Continue to collaborate with other community organizations and institutions to assist in addressing transportation needs for their clients and customers.

Gopher's goal is to support community members, without access to reliable transportation, through a model where different entities pay for different riders on the same trip. These ride services aim to increase access to employment, government services, medical services, and food access, and to enhance community engagement through ride sharing.

Sue Minter, President of the Board of Directors of Community Rides Vermont, Inc., stated, "While Gopher will no longer receive the Mobility For All funding that has supported so many community members, it continues to receive funding from other generous donors and grants. As Gopher moves forward with operations in this new chapter, we are hopeful that our new discounted rideshare program, Gopher-It Rideshare, fills a portion of the need to provide affordable transportation to our Central Vermont neighbors."

Gopher has been able to start the **Gopher-It Fund** with \$60,000 provided by some generous donors. These funds are being leveraged to raise additional monies from the community through a [GoFundMe page](#) in an effort to double the impact by raising another \$60,000 for the Gopher-It Fund. This program will continue to provide access to reliable transportation services through discounted market-rate rides for underserved Washington and neighboring Orange County residents.

Learn more at <https://gophervt.org/>. For general or ride-related inquiries, contact us at 855-467-4375 (toll-free) and rides@communityridesvt.org.