

The Family of Transportation Options

HIGHLIGHTS

Starting Point

Identifies members of the transportation family of options

Options and Gaps

Addresses why all family members may not be available and why there may be gaps

Definitions of Options

Defines six types of formal transportation options and describes common characteristics

Similarities and Differences

Describes volunteer driver programs and addresses its similarities and differences with other options

Program Examples

Describes five members of the transportation family

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please visit the numerous fact sheets and exercises in addition to the planning, implementation, and evaluation sections of the TurnKey Kit.

MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY

The transportation family includes a variety of options that may or may not be available in a community.

- Family members
- Caregivers
- Friends who help with errands
- Neighbors who live nearby
- Public transit
- ADA Paratransit for people with disabilities
- Dial-A-Ride and other shuttle services
- Community transit
- Volunteer driver programs
- Private transit
- Ride Share services
- Private automobiles
- NEVS (neighborhood electric vehicles)
- Low speed vehicles and golf carts
- Bicycles and walking

OPTIONS AND GAPS

Even when this broad array of “family members” is available in a community, there are many reasons it still may be difficult for residents to get where they need to go. For example, while the vast majority of people enjoy driving their car, research tells us that people outlive their driving expectancy.

Older adults who are “transportation dependent” may not have family members, caregivers, friends, or neighbors who are able to drive them where they need to go. Even when public, paratransit, community transit, and ride sharing programs are available, many older adults may not be able to access them. The same may be true for golf carts, bicycles, and walking.

TRANSPORTATION OPTION DEFINITIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

Although informal providers of transportation (family members, friends, neighbors, and caregivers) are easily defined, the definitions of formal transportation options that often are available in a community may need clarification. Below are six organized transportation options. It is important to know their definitions when providing transportation, when using transportation, and when assisting people in their use of transportation.

Public Transit	Public transit is transportation by a conveyance that provides regular and continuing general or special transportation to the public. It may include services by buses, subways, rail, trolleys, and ferryboats.
ADA Paratransit	The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) requires all public transit systems that provide fixed route bus and rail service to also provide complementary service (usually in vans and small buses) for people with disabilities who cannot use fixed route bus or train.
Dial-A-Ride	Dial-A-Ride programs serve people who have a certified disability and often serve older adults. They generally provide curb-to-curb service.
Community Transit	Often referred to as paratransit, community transportation options provide a range of transportation services to a variety of passengers groups. Vehicles may include small buses, automobiles, or vans.
Private Transit	Private transit generally includes limousines, taxi services, and chauffeur services that require reservations and payment for rides.
Ride Share and Ride Hailing Services	In the past, ride sharing was considered group transportation to work. Today, specialized ride sharing services such as Uber and Lyft involve drivers who use their own automobiles to provide transportation.
Volunteer Driver Programs	Volunteer driver programs provide rides using volunteer drivers and often volunteer vehicles. They may, or may not, charge for rides, operate at a low cost, and often emphasize providing rides to older adult passengers.

The accompanying transportation options described in this section share a number of common characteristics, including the drivers and vehicles they use, their methods of providing and managing their rides, their efforts to limit their exposure, and their methods of ensuring their sustainability.

- **Drivers (paid, volunteer, or paid and volunteer)**
- **Vehicles (owned, volunteer, or owned and volunteer)**
- **Staff (paid and/or volunteer)**
- **Ride scheduling (staff and/or driver)**
- **Organization (menu or free standing)**
- **Data management (high tech, low tech, no tech)**
- **Insurance (some, incomplete, or no coverage)**
- **Service area (defined or flexible)**
- **Financial resources (taxes, grants, donations, fees)**

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Clearly, members of “the family of transportation options” vary greatly in the way they are organized, the types of services they provide, the ways they can and cannot be accessed, how they can and cannot be adapted to meet passenger needs, and affordability for the passengers who use them.

Volunteer Driver Programs

Some people think of volunteer driver programs as a new concept although they have been around for some time. In fact, Ecumen Parmlly Life-Points of Chicago City, WI, began providing transportation in sleighs and wagons in 1905.

- Some provide transportation in urban areas, others in suburban areas, and others in rural areas.
- Some have a large staff and multi-million dollar budgets, others have small staff and small budgets.
- Some pay drivers, others include paid and volunteer drivers, and others include only volunteer drivers.
- Some own large vehicles including buses, shuttles, and street cars, while others own small vehicles or involve vehicles owned by volunteer drivers.
- Some provide rides to specific destinations (especially health care services), others provide rides to any destination.
- Some provide millions of rides each year, others provide hundreds of rides each year.
- Some charge fees to passengers, others do not charge but suggest donations from passengers.
- Some receive tax support, grant funding, or accept donations, others hold fundraisers.

Today, communities across the country are the home of volunteer driver programs. These generally are organized for a specific purpose or for one or several passenger groups. For example, many were originally started as transportation for older adults but have evolved as providers of transportation for other population groups, such as people with disabilities.

Such programs are organized for a variety of reasons: an absence of available transportation services, the ability of volunteer drivers to provide physical and sometimes cognitive assistance needed by some passengers, the potential to provide transportation at a low cost, and a reputation for limiting exposure to risk. Risk may impact on sponsors, passengers, volunteer drivers, and the community at large. In many instances, volunteer driver programs are organized to supplement existing transit services with available, affordable, and supportive transportation. An added feature is that their volunteer drivers can help link the program with the community they serve.

Quite often volunteer driver programs organize their service area to allow volunteer drivers to take passengers beyond city,

county, and even state jurisdictional boundaries. It can be an especially important transportation option in rural areas where not only are distances considerable, but the probability of paid drivers having to make “dead head rides” may be prohibitively expensive. The assistance provided by volunteer drivers, the value and relatively low cost of their services, and their jurisdictional flexibility in rural areas are three of the major reasons many volunteer driver programs are located in rural communities.

EXAMPLES OF TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Public Transit Service

Tri Met of Portland, Oregon, is a public agency that operates mass transit in a region that spans most of the metropolitan area. Created in 1969 by the Oregon Legislature, the district replaced five private bus companies that operated in three counties. Tri Met started operating a light rail system in 1986 and opened new lines in 1998, 2001, 2004, and 2009 (including a commuter rail line in 2009). It also operates the city of Portland-owned streetcar system. In addition to rail lines, Tri Met provides the region's bus system, as well as LIFT paratransit service and operates hundreds of buses on numerous routes. It offers "honored citizens" (people age 65+ with Medicare or a disability) rides for \$1.25 or day passes for \$2.50. Learn more at <https://www.trimet.org>.

ADA Paratransit/Dial-A-Ride

Pace ADA of Lake County, Illinois, is a complementary paratransit and shared ride program in which other riders may be picked up or dropped off during a person's ride. Services are provided within three-fourths mile of local fixed routes and trips are only provided at the same times and within the same geographic areas as fixed route. Only persons who are certified by the Regional Transportation Authority as a person with a disability are eligible to ride the service. Passengers call to reserve rides and reservations can be made one day prior to needing service. If the time requested is not available, the service provider has the ability to negotiate trip times and must offer a trip within one useful hour before or after the requested time. A trip is considered on time if the bus arrives within 15 minutes after the scheduled pick-up time. Learn more at <https://www.pacebus.com>.

Community Transportation Service

Prairie Hills Transit of Spearfish, South Dakota, is a nonprofit corporation dedicated to providing public transportation for persons of all ages, including those who may require specialized transportation. With a service area of 12,500 square miles, it offers a service with direct pick-up and specific-destination delivery on clean, comfortable, handicap-accessible buses complete with seat belts and a calm atmosphere. In addition to medical trips, drivers take riders to work, school, daycare, volunteer activities, and social events. Its hours vary by town. It requires advance scheduling of at least a day's notice, and the service is affordable for riders, especially the elderly who ride by donation. Since it is integrated in communities as a regional transit provider, Prairie Hills Transit keeps older adults' costs lower by sharing resources. Prairie Hills Transit has grown from serving strictly older adults in Spearfish to providing transportation to students, elderly, individuals with disabilities, and the general public in a service area of a dozen communities in six different counties. Prairie Hills Transit also operates a small volunteer driver program. Learn more at <https://www.prairiehillstransit.com>.

Ride Share Programs

Ridesharing is a form of transportation people participate in when they share a ride in a van pool or car pool, take a bus or train, or any combination of these means instead of driving alone. Ridesharing reduces the number of single occupancy cars used by people to get to work. Uber is an example of a ride share program developed in 2009. It now operates worldwide. Originally, Uber drivers used cars such as Cadillac Escalades but now has added a wider selection of cars to broaden its customer market. Rides are reserved by sending a text message or by using a mobile app. Learn more at <https://www.uber.com>.

Volunteer Driver Programs

Neighbor Ride in Columbia, Maryland, was started in the early 2000s, as a result of transportation being identified as one of the two main challenges faced by older adults in Howard County, Maryland. Later, a work group was formed that collected best practices for providing transportation services to older adults. These were matched with the characteristics and resources of the county, and the result was Neighbor Ride. Neighbor Ride provides flexible daytime, evening, and weekend rides to older adults. Learn more at <https://www.neighborride.org>.