

# The 5 A's Of Age-Friendly Transportation

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Availability

Describes only one solution to transportation challenges for older adults

### Acceptability

Suggests older adult passenger criteria of comfort and convenience of service

### Accessibility

Addresses how passengers must be able to access the vehicles and the services

### Adaptability

Calls for the service to meet the assistance needs of older adults

### Affordability

Describes how transportation must be affordable to passengers but also affordable to transportation providers

### 5 A's Calculator

Provides an easy way to calculate the age-friendliness of a transit service

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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

## HISTORY

Transportation options can be critical to the ability of older adults to get where they need to go, especially when they have limited their driving or have stopped driving altogether. However, older adults and their caregivers often say that the traditional transportation options that are available do not meet their needs.

Today, there is increasing awareness that it is the degree of "age friendliness" that determines whether older adult passengers are able to use community-based transportation options. Research conducted by the Beverly Foundation on the special transportation needs of older adults identified the 5 A's of Age-Friendly Transportation.\*

## THE 5 A'S

**Availability**  
**Acceptability**  
**Accessibility**  
**Adaptability**  
**Affordability**

The 5 A's methodology is accepted by many national, state, and local policy and program initiatives as criteria for assessing the usability of transportation options by older adult passengers.

This fact sheet discusses each of the 5 A's with respect to their importance to older adults and transportation providers alike. The Age-Friendliness Calculator can be used by transportation services and community groups to identify ways to improve existing services as well as to plan the development of new services.

\*The 5 A's of Age-Friendly Transportation methodology was first reported in the Beverly Foundation's 2001 publication, *Supplemental Transportation Programs for Seniors*. The publication and the project from which the 5 A's was originally developed were undertaken in partnership with the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. A subsequent 2004 GAO Report to the Chairman, Special Committee on Aging, U.S. Senate described the 5A's as a method to enhance older adult mobility.

## AVAILABILITY

Public and community transportation systems, as well as private taxi and limousine services, generally are designed as destination services. They all require passengers to get to a transit stop to access the bus or get to the curb to meet the shuttle, the dial-a-ride vehicle, or the taxi. While its availability in a community may meet the needs of the general public, it may not meet the needs of older adult passengers. The reason is that the same limitations that make it difficult or impossible for older adults to drive also can make it difficult or impossible for them to get to the transit stop or the curb, or even to get in or out of a vehicle without assistance.

Just as older adults face transportation challenges, transportation services also face challenges in meeting the needs of older adult passengers. These can be difficult to resolve because traditional services generally are not designed to meet the expectations and requirements of many older adults.

Nevertheless, it is important for transportation providers to be aware of what the older adult population wants and needs with respect to transportation options. This means that, although transportation options may be available, availability alone does not offer a transportation solution for many older passengers. The accompanying chart identifies several of the availability challenges transportation options face when working to meet the needs of older adults.

### 10 Availability Challenges

- Providing demand response services
- Making multiple stops
- Ensuring older adults know about service
- Making sure older adults can reach service
- Picking passengers up at their door
- Crossing jurisdictional boundaries
- Traveling to desired destinations
- Offering service evenings and weekends
- Offering on-time pickup and delivery
- Providing assistance to passengers

## ACCEPTABILITY

Older adults who have driven an automobile for 40 or 50 years are used to the comfort and convenience of getting where they need to go, when they want to go in the vehicle of their choice. Older adults often identify the loss of a license to drive as a loss of freedom, independence, and control. Such losses feed a variety of fears: fear of being a burden, fear of being dependent, fear of not being able to get to activities. In other words, the loss of a driver's license can have a devastating impact on the psychological well-being as well as the quality of life of an older adult. An additional consequence is that a "retired" driver can find it difficult to make the transition to another transportation option.

### 10 Acceptability Challenges

- Going where older adults need to go
- Going to destinations any time
- Offering satisfactory vehicles
- Offering well-maintained vehicles
- Offering a comfortable ride
- Ensuring a convenient service
- Ensuring vehicle cleanliness
- Ensuring minimal wait times
- Ensuring ease of scheduling
- Training drivers to be age sensitive

Even the most admired transportation services may not be viewed as acceptable by older adults who are drivers. Why? Because they often are judged by comfort and convenience criteria of driving a car by people who have not been on a bus since their

school days or have only ridden a shuttle when traveling to the airport. Transportation services need to be aware of these and other criteria by which they are judged. The accompanying chart identifies ten acceptability challenges.

## ACCESSIBILITY

Older adults say that limitations that make it difficult or impossible for them to drive also can make it difficult, not impossible, for them to access public transit along with many community, human service, and other older adult transportation options. Although the most frequent access solution is to provide “how to” training on using transportation services, what can be more important to older adult passengers is assistance and support. In other words, while destination-oriented transportation may not meet their needs, a provider that takes services to passengers, and offers them assistance and support prior to, during, and following their travel can be a solution that may meet their needs.

Quite often, drivers and support staff are the key to passenger access. Driver training in age sensitivity, concierge and escort programs, passenger assistance, and volunteer driver programs can and often do resolve passenger access challenges. The accompanying chart lists ten accessibility challenges that services need to be aware of when providing transportation to older adults.

### 10 Accessibility Challenges

- Assistance to and from vehicles
- Assistance into and out of vehicle
- Assistance opening doors
- Help with coats, shoes, and boots
- Help in and out of chairs
- Help carrying packages
- Help with assistive devices
- Assistance at destinations
- “How to” training for passengers
- “How to” training for drivers

## ADAPTABILITY

### 10 Adaptability Challenges

- Offering multiple-stop services
- Offering door-through-door service
- Offering transportation escorts
- Accommodating assistive devices
- Accommodating passengers’ pets
- Adapting procedures to rider needs
- Linking passengers with other services
- Recruiting and organizing escorts
- Offering special destination services

Older adults may find it difficult to use options because they lack flexibility. They may not be able to trip chain (make multiple stops); go beyond their immediate neighborhood, city, or county to access activities; or link with more appropriate or less expensive services. Plus, some options that are available may not accommodate the use of walkers or service animals by passengers.

While service adaptations may be desirable, they can be expensive to implement and operate. For example, additional staff may be required for linking passengers with other, more appropriate services. Additionally, new methods of ride-scheduling may be required for enabling passengers to make multiple stops. It can be expensive and time-consuming to recruit and train escorts. The accompanying chart identifies ten adaptability challenges.

## 10 Affordability Challenges

- Creating awareness of actual transportation costs
- Maintaining and operating vehicles
- Maintaining and supporting a driver pool
- Organizing for least expensive operations
- Offering reasonably priced transportation services
- Providing necessary assistance and support
- Ensuring affordability for older adult passengers
- Linking passengers with less expensive services
- Ensuring affordability for community donors
- Conveying cost information on vehicle ownership

## AFFORDABILITY

Research shows it can cost between \$5,000 and \$8,500 a year to own and operate an automobile. However, when older adults can no longer drive, they rarely convert savings in automobile ownership to funds that they can use for another transportation option. Older adults who do the math may discover that they could purchase as many as 3,000 one-way rides from a transportation service that charges \$2.00 per ride. However, they may not do the math or accept the premise that money saved from giving up their car could be used to pay for a transportation option.

Additionally, passengers are seldom knowledgeable about the actual cost of many community-based transportation services. For example, the \$2.00 or \$5.00 older adult ride may actually cost the service \$10, \$20, \$30, or even \$40. Older adult passengers often are not aware of the cost of these services to the provider or the community. Therefore, it is important that: 1) the services are provided at the lowest possible cost, 2) the services provided are affordable to older adult passengers, 3) the services provided are affordable to the community, and 4) older adults are aware of the true cost of the transportation services they receive. The accompanying chart identifies ten affordability challenges.

## **AGE-FRIENDLINESS CALCULATOR FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTEER TRANSPORTATION SERVICES**

The 5 As of Age-Friendly Transportation are criteria that can be used by transportation services and passengers to determine if they are an appropriate option. Check each of the factors below that are represented within your public or community transit service. Each check equals one point. When you have completed your review, add up your score, and look at the scoring key at the bottom of the page to know where you are on “the road to age friendliness.”

### **Availability: The Transportation Service...**

- provides transportation to older adults
- can be reached by the majority of older adults in the community
- provides transportation anytime (day, evenings, weekends, 24/7)
- can take riders to destinations beyond city and county boundaries
- maintains organizational relationships with human service agencies

### **Acceptability: The Transportation Service...**

- uses vehicles that are easy for older adults to access
- offers “demand response” with no advance scheduling requirement
- provides driver “sensitivity to older adults” training
- adheres to a narrow “window of time” for home and destination pick-up
- ensures cleanliness and maintenance of vehicles

### **Accessibility: The Transportation Service...**

- can accommodate the needs of a majority of elders in the community
- has information for improving older adult transportation knowledge
- can provide “door-thru-door” transportation when needed
- can provide services to essential and non-essential activities
- can link older adults with “more appropriate” transportation options

### **Adaptability: The Transportation Service...**

- will provide transportation escorts when needed
- can provide multiple stop trips for individual passengers
- can access vehicles that accommodate wheelchairs and walkers
- maintains a policy of “adapting the system to meet needs of older adults”
- undertakes annual older adult customer survey for service improvement

### **Affordability: The Transportation Service...**

- offers reduced fares (or free transportation) to older adult passengers
- secures funding specifically to support older adult transit services
- offers the opportunity to purchase monthly passes instead of paying cash
- offers options for purchasing tickets by mail or the internet
- uses volunteer drivers to reduce costs for providing “extra” services

**Total Possible Score = 25**

## THE ROAD TO AGE-FRIENDLINESS

**0**

**5**

**10**

**15**

**20**

**25**

**Just  
Starting**

**Out of  
the Garage**

**On the  
Road**

**Chugging  
Along**

**Getting  
Close**

**Age  
Friendly**