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***DELIVERING COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION SERVICES:  
REPORT ON THE ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES,  
AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF PAID DRIVERS***

***PREPARED BY  
THE BEVERLY FOUNDATION  
ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO***

***AND***

***THE COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA  
WASHINGTON, DC***

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This report provides information about the roles, responsibilities, challenges, and contributions of paid drivers; examples of what they do to meet the transportation needs of older adults; and data on transportation services and programs that employ them. The report is based on the responses of 76 community transportation services that pay drivers to provide transportation...

- (1) to a variety of passengers;
- (2) using a variety of vehicles;
- (3) within a variety of service areas;
- (4) that meets a variety of assistance needs; and
- (5) that overcomes a variety of challenges.

It also provides information about driver pools with respect to their gender, their employment status, their experience, their length of service, their average hourly salary, their benefits, their complaints, and their commitment.

The project was undertaken as a partnership effort of  
the Beverly Foundation  
(Albuquerque, NM)  
and  
the Community Transportation Association of America  
(Washington, DC)

This project was partially funded through the Community Transportation Assistance Program (CTAP), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The views and conclusions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the formal policies of the Department.

## ***THE PROJECT***

Community transportation managers often say that their drivers are the heart and soul of their transportation service. The Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) and the Beverly Foundation joined forces to discover what drivers do, why they do it, and especially how they serve the senior population. While considerable information is available about volunteer drivers and taxi drivers, very little information is available about paid drivers. Thus, the purpose of the project was to gather information that documents the good work of these drivers and to publish the results in a manner that celebrates their contributions to their passengers (especially senior passengers), to their services, and to their communities.

## ***ACKNOWLEDGMENTS***

This project was undertaken as a partnership effort of the Beverly Foundation and Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA). It began in July 2008 and was completed in December 2008. Participants included staff of the Beverly Foundation and CTAA. Additionally, 76 community transportation services, 72 percent of which were located in rural areas, responded to the online survey which resulted in the data for this report. The names of respondents are included in the Appendix of this report.

Professional staff involved in the planning and organization of the project and the preparation of the report include Helen Kerschner and Marie-Helene Rousseau of the Beverly Foundation and Jane Hardin of the Community Transportation Association of America.

“Our drivers are absolutely the reason our service is so popular throughout our service area. They develop a special relationship with our passengers, due to the frequency with which they see them. Every five years we must request a renewal for local taxes to support our system. This request always passes easily with an overwhelming majority. It's due to the attitude and efforts of our drivers, and dispatchers, certainly not to anything done administratively.”

*Interurban Transit Authority,  
Douglas, MI*

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“Drivers commit random acts of kindness and compassion every day. Most of these are unnoted and unobserved. Typically this happens in agencies where a culture of caring and compassion has been fostered. In many small community transportation organizations drivers are de facto case managers and spend more time with some of their passengers than do their families or their formal case managers. At the end of the day, this entire discussion is about expectations and culture. In this organization we have an informal metric and an ingrained culture. It is the ‘mom’ test. We endeavor to treat each and every passenger (especially the older ones) the way we would demand that our mothers be treated. This is an easily understood standard that most drivers will self-enforce.”

*Wiregrass Transit Authority,  
Dothan, AL*

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**The Project** The purpose of the project was to document the roles, responsibilities, challenges, and contributions of drivers who are employed by community transportation services to drive seniors and others. The project was undertaken as a partnership effort of the Beverly Foundation of Albuquerque, NM and the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) in Washington, D.C.

**The Process** The survey included twenty-seven questions, many with sub-questions. It was planned and administered on-line. A total of 225 potential respondents were targeted for survey participation. The survey process included three steps: (1) advance e-mail notices sent to prospective respondents; (2) e-mail messages with a link to the survey; and (3) e-mail prompts to non-respondents. The survey was available to respondents in late October for a period of eight days.

Information was gathered via a national survey that targeted transportation services in rural America. The survey instrument was developed by the Beverly Foundation in collaboration with CTAA. It included background questions about the services (e.g., types of service, service areas, vehicles, budgets, passengers and rides). However, the key questions addressed the characteristics and involvement of paid drivers.

While the majority of the questions were closed-ended, many questions offered respondents the opportunity to provide comments. Additionally, a variety of rating questions were asked regarding driver challenges, complaints, and commitment. In an effort to understand differences in paid and volunteer drivers, respondents were asked if their services also included volunteer drivers.

**The Results** A total of 76 completed responses were received for a response rate of 34 percent. The vast majority (75 percent) identified themselves as offering demand-response service, and a large number (72 percent) said they served rural areas. While the vast majority offered curb-to-curb (93 percent) and door-to-door (90 percent) service, a smaller number offered assistance at the destination (75 percent), and an even smaller number (32 percent) provided door-through-door assistance. Interestingly, almost one-third of the respondents (30 percent) indicated that they also used volunteers as drivers.

**The Report** This report was prepared as a resource for transportation services that employ drivers. Part 1 introduces the goal of the survey. Part 2 discusses the methodology. Part 3 provides information about the respondents. Part 4 introduces the survey results related to drivers. Part 5 discusses the results of the survey in the context of comments from respondents. The appendix includes a list of respondents to the survey.

“Since my drivers saw the need in the community for seniors or folks with disabilities to be able to get in and out of their residences, they formed a group to build ramps and install assistive devices in the bathrooms to help them with their daily activities. It is so successful that the county now funds the project to provide the building materials and the drivers provide the labor force to get the jobs done.”

*Swain Public Transit,  
Bryson City, NC*

# **PART 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The goal of the survey was to gather information that documents the types, and methods of service offered by transportation systems that pay their drivers; and to better understand the roles, responsibilities, challenges, and contributions of the drivers. The expected outcome was to publish the results in a manner that celebrates the contributions of paid drivers to their passengers (especially senior passengers), to their services, and to their communities.

The project surveyed providers in the Community Transportation of America's (CTAA's) transportation network, especially ones located in rural America. One reason is because of CTAA's emphasis and expertise in rural America, and another is because the project builds on previous studies of transportation for older adults in rural America by the Beverly Foundation and CTAA.

We know from this and other reports that in rural America, when people cannot drive and family members cannot drive them, community transportation services may be their only hope of being able to get where they need to go. We also know that regardless of whom they serve, how they are organized, or where they are located, community transportation services generally share a common denominator...paid drivers. Many transportation providers say that drivers can constitute as much as 50 percent of the operating cost of a transportation service. And, while many providers express concern about the high cost and low pay of their drivers, they also say that drivers are the key to success of a customer-oriented service.

According to a 2006 CTAA/Beverly Foundation report titled Transportation Innovations for Seniors: a Report from Rural America, experts described drivers as...

“...the heart and soul of any transportation service...”

“...in it because they care about passengers...”

“...accounting for the personalized nature of transportation services in rural areas because they know the names of all the passengers, their children, and their grand-children...”

While respondents to this report concurred with these observations, their responses resulted in considerable information related specifically to paid

“Our drivers are absolutely the reason our service is so popular throughout our service area.”

“Drivers are our eyes and ears when it comes to customer service.”

drivers and...

“We rely heavily on the relationships that are fostered between driver and customer.”

- ...the nature of their employment
- ...their gender and experience
- ...their salary and benefits
- ...the assistance they provide and reasons they provide it
- ...their challenges, complaints, and commitment
- ...their role as conduit for helpful information about senior passengers
- ...their willingness to “go the extra mile” in helping senior passengers

While the report provides considerable information about thousands of paid drivers, its contents were developed from their managers and supervisors, and not from paid drivers themselves. Thus, while the study offers the perspective of community transportation staff, it also provides a first glimpse of the interface between paid drivers and the community transportation services that employ them.

Because a large number (30 percent) of the respondents to the survey indicated that they involved volunteer drivers in addition to paid drivers, the study also provides an opportunity to discover some of the features of services that also include volunteer drivers.\*

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\*In the past several years, the Beverly Foundation has gathered data on 543 volunteer driver programs, 69 percent of which served rural areas. This database was developed in the course of the Beverly Foundation’s annual STAR Search surveys from 2004-2007. While 25 percent of its volunteer driver programs only served seniors, the vast majority served seniors and others, especially people with disabilities. See [www.beverlyfoundation.org](http://www.beverlyfoundation.org)

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## **PART 2**

# **METHODOLOGY**

As was stated earlier, the purpose of the project was to gather information on paid drivers via a survey of transportation service managers and directors who are part of CTAA's rural transportation network. The study came about because considerable information is available regarding the important roles, myriad responsibilities, and enormous contributions of volunteer drivers; but limited information had been gathered about paid drivers. Their managers generally said their paid drivers played important roles, assumed a wide range of responsibilities, and made enormous contributions to senior passengers and other passengers they served. The project provided the opportunity to know more about paid drivers and perhaps validate many of the views regarding their service.

**The Partnership** This is the third research project undertaken by a Beverly Foundation and CTAA partnership. This particular partnership was developed specifically to gather information and prepare a report on paid drivers who provide transportation. While the Beverly Foundation created the initial survey, CTAA reviewed and modified it. The Beverly Foundation converted the survey instrument into an online survey using surveymonkey.com, a web-based survey management site, and CTAA prepared an e-mail list from their database of rural providers of service for older persons and people with disabilities who employed paid drivers. The survey process included: (1) an e-mail message to targeted transit providers about the upcoming survey; (2) an e-mail message regarding the survey with a link to the on-line survey; and (3) an e-mail prompt to late respondents.

**The Survey Instrument** The survey targeted managers and directors of community transportation services. It included 27 questions with several sub-questions. Apart from an open-ended question that asked respondents to comment on the general impact of paid drivers on service quality, all questions were close-ended or multiple choice. However, respondents also had the opportunity to provide comments after most questions.

While several questions addressed the type, location, and size of the transportation services; most focused on the information about paid drivers (number employed, gender, time commitment, driver pool experience, length of service, salaries, and assistance provided to passengers). Other questions addressed the driver challenges, complaints, and commitment. Several questions at the end of the survey asked about the overall contributions of paid drivers to the quality of the organization's services.

“Our drivers are friendly and very helpful to our clients and that is why clients enjoy using our transit system.”

***The Respondents*** A total of 76 unduplicated surveys were received. While a greater number of surveys were submitted, several were eliminated from the analysis because services submitted multiple surveys or did not employ paid drivers. When only unduplicated surveys are taken into account, the response rate was 34 percent.

***Data Analysis*** The open-ended or multiple choice questions were analyzed using statistical tools provided by the web-based survey management system, and a key-word analysis method was used to analyze qualitative questions. Additional comments were reviewed and organized for inclusion in the report.

***Time Frame*** The project was planned and completed in a very short period of time. Initial discussions were held and an agreement was developed in September 2008; the survey was prepared, initial information about the survey was conveyed and the survey was distributed in October; the responses were downloaded, and the results were analyzed in November; and the report was prepared in December of 2008.

## **PART 3**

# **PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS**

A total of 76 unduplicated responses were used as the basis for data analysis. What follows is a brief summary of data.

- A majority (75 percent) said they provided demand-response services which included curb-to-curb, door-to-door, and door-through-door services as their primary type of services offered; while the others (25 percent) provided fixed route services which included deviated fixed route, circulator route and shuttle services.
- Most (72 percent) said their services were located primarily in rural areas, while a much smaller number (19 percent) identified their primary location as urban, and an even smaller number (8 percent) identified their primary location as suburban.
- They served a variety of passenger groups with senior passengers the top group served (69 percent), followed by people with disabilities other than seniors (68 percent), and the general public (63 percent) as the third highest group served.
- They served varying numbers of passengers with the highest number (38 percent) serving less than 5,000 passengers, the second highest number (36 percent) serving between 5,000 and 80,000 passengers, and the smallest number (26 percent) serving more than 80,000 passengers.
- The greatest number (94 percent) used vans for transport, although a very large number (91 percent) used buses. While almost half (47 percent) operated (including owned, leased, or contracted) less than 20 vehicles, a large number (36 percent) operated between 20 and 100 vehicles, and a smaller number (17 percent) operated more than 100 vehicles.
- Services varied considerably in the number of one-way rides they provided with almost one third (31 percent) providing fewer than 50,000 rides; a substantially smaller number (10 percent) providing more than 1,000,000; and the largest number (59 percent) providing between 50,000 and 1,000,000 rides.
- Budgets varied substantially with a very small number (3 percent) having budgets less than \$100,000; a somewhat larger number (6

“Maybe because most of the drivers are over 60 themselves, they can better relate to the elderly and disabled.”

percent ) more than \$1,000,000; a substantial number (44 percent) between \$100,000 and \$1,000,000; and the greatest number (47 percent) had budgets between \$1,000,000 and \$10,000,000.

Additional information about services, their location, budgets, trips, and passengers vehicles, passengers, is presented in this section of the report.

**3a. Respondent Profile** Below is a general profile of the 76 respondents whose data are included in this section.

CHART 1 GENERAL PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS	
Number of Respondents: <b>76</b>	Primary Service Area
Represented States: <b>36</b>	Rural: <b>72%</b>
Represented Towns: <b>74</b>	Urban: <b>19%</b>
Primary Type of Service	Suburban: <b>8%</b>
Demand response and/or any curb-to-curb, door to door, door through door services: <b>75%</b>	Transportation Budget
Fixed route, deviated route, circulator route or shuttle: <b>25%</b>	Less than \$100,000: <b>3%</b>
	\$100,000 - \$1,000,000: <b>44%</b>
	\$1,000,000 - \$10,000,000: <b>47%</b>
	\$10,000,000 and more: <b>6%</b>

“We have a county that is 918 sq. miles with a population of less than 9,000 people.”

*\*In the survey, fixed route included deviated route, circulator route, and shuttle but will be referred to hereafter as fixed-route services; and demand response included any curb-to-curb, door-to-door, door-through-door services but will be referred to hereafter as demand-response services.*

The survey respondents represented 36 states. The state with the largest number (15) was North Carolina. The number of respondents from other states varied from four to one with four respondents from New Jersey, followed by Alabama, Arizona, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri and Wyoming with three each. Respondents were located in 74 cities and towns, and Charlotte, NC, and Riverton, WY, included two respondents each.

**3b. Type and Location** One-fourth (25 percent) of the respondents selected fixed-route as their primary service type, while three-fourths (75 percent) selected demand-response as their primary type of service. The great majority (72 percent) indicated their primary location was in rural areas, while smaller number (19 percent) served urban areas, and an even smaller number (8 percent) in suburban areas. The accompanying chart indicates that the ratio of fixed-route and demand-response services did not vary when sorted by location.

It should be noted that the high percentage of rural transportation services in the study is consistent with the fact that CTAA was founded to support rural transportation and rural communities and, although CTAA's focus is on all geographic areas, a high percentage of CTAA members represent rural communities and rural issues. However, it is important to acknowledge that in many instances service areas were not exclusive, for many respondents provided transportation in one, two, or all three locations.

CHART 2 SERVICE TYPE		
<u>Service Type</u>	<u>Urban + Suburb</u>	<u>Rural</u>
Fixed Route	25%	25%
Demand Response	75%	75%

**3c. Passengers** When asked to identify their top three passenger groups, 69 percent of the respondents selected senior passengers, 68 percent selected people with disabilities other than seniors, and 63 percent selected general public. The other passenger groups selected included: seniors with disabilities (36 percent), people traveling to and from work (31 percent) and children (14 percent). Several respondents also indicated that they served clients of social service agencies or human services.

“Drivers are mostly concerned about their elderly passengers.”

Chart 3 suggests the placement of each of six passenger groups by type and location of service. While the top three passenger groups varied according to types of service and location, senior passengers were consistently identified as one of the largest, if not the largest, passenger groups served by paid drivers.

CHART 3 PASSENGER GROUPS				
<u>Services/Locations</u>	<u>Fixed Route</u>	<u>Demand Response</u>	<u>Urban+ Suburb</u>	<u>Rural</u>
Senior Passengers	44%	77%	55%	71%
Seniors with Disabilities	29%	39%	65%	29%
People with Disabilities	50%	75%	70%	67%
General Public	83%	56%	35%	35%
Children	17%	17%	5%	17%
People Going to Work	56%	31%	30%	31%

Although it is difficult to know just how respondents differentiated seniors with disabilities from people with disabilities, it is interesting that senior passengers and seniors with disabilities were identified as one of the top four passenger groups by all respondents. However, what is important is the fact that senior passengers, and seniors with disabilities ranked so highly in almost all groups, for these are passengers who quite often need assistance from drivers.

**3d. Trips** While one respondent indicated that its service provided 2.5 million one-way rides annually, most provided considerably fewer rides. For example, almost one-third of the respondents (31 percent) provided fewer than 50,000, while a substantially smaller number (10 percent) provided more than 1,000,000 one-way rides. A considerably larger number (41 percent) provided between 50,000 and 300,000 rides, while only 18 percent provided between 300,000 and 1,000,000 one-way rides.

**3e. Vehicles** The survey asked respondents to identify the number of vehicles owned, leased or contracted (hereafter referred to as vehicles operated). The number operated varied from less than 10 to more than 100, illustrating the wide range of service size. Almost half (47 percent) operated less than 20 vehicles, while less than a fifth (17 percent) operated more than 100 vehicles, and just over a third (36 percent) operated between 20 and 100 vehicles. The most frequently operated vehicles were vans (94 percent) and buses (91 percent). While a large number (63 percent) used autos, a very small number (14 percent) used taxis. Some respondents indicated that their autos not only were used by their paid drivers, but also were used by their volunteer drivers.

The accompanying chart indicates only minor differences in types of vehicles operated in urban/suburban and rural areas. As one would expect, services located in urban and suburban areas with higher budgets had a greater number of vehicles than smaller services in rural areas with smaller budgets. For example, 55 percent respondents from urban and suburban areas operated more than 50 vehicles, while 56 percent of the respondents from rural areas operated less than 20 vehicles.

CHART 4 VEHICLES		
Vehicle Type	<i>Urban + Suburb</i>	<i>Rural</i>
Buses	100%	87%
Vans	94%	94%
Taxis	33%	5%
Autos	70%	59%

**3f. Budget Size** The budgets of services varied considerably. For example, annual budgets ranged from less than \$50,000 to more than

“We loan out our vans to senior programs when their vehicle is down.”

\$10,000,000. The budgets of a small number (3 percent) were less than \$100,000, and a somewhat larger number (6 percent) were more than \$10,000,000. The greatest number (47 percent) ranged from \$1 million to \$10 million, and an almost equal number (44 percent) ranged from \$100,000 and \$1,000,000.

The accompanying chart indicates considerable variation in the size of annual budgets in services located in urban/suburban and rural areas.

Budget size varied considerably by the types of service offered. While more than two-thirds (67 percent) of the fixed route services had a budget of more than \$1,000,000, just over half (52 percent) of the demand response services had a budget of less than \$1,000,000. As might be expected, budget variances corresponded to the number of vehicles used, the number of drivers employed, the number of passengers served, and of number of one-way trips provided.

CHART 5 SERVICE SIZE		
<u>Budgets</u>	<u>Urban + Suburban</u>	<u>Rural</u>
Less than \$100,000	0%	4%
\$100,000-\$1,000,000	15%	56%
\$1,000,000-\$10,000,000	45%	33%
\$10,000,000 and more	40%	7%

“For many seniors, the driver is like a social companion that helps them remain independent.”

### **Conclusion**

This discussion provides a glimpse at the types of transportation services that responded to the survey. While several comparisons were made regarding the type of services and their location, validation of these comparisons would require a larger study as only a small percent (25 percent) primarily offered fixed route (including deviated fixed route, circulator route or shuttle services); and only a small percent (27 percent) were located in urban/suburban areas.

Part 4, which follows, introduces data on paid drivers.

“The entire staff here understands that their job does not begin and end with the pickup and drop-off of a client. It goes far beyond that, providing comfort, support, and peace of mind to people who need it the most.”

*Metro Transport,  
West Orange, NJ*

## **PART 4**

# **PROFILE OF DRIVERS**

The central purpose of the project was to gather information about paid drivers. While it might someday be possible to survey the drivers themselves, the information included in this report was provided by their managers and supervisors. Below is a summary of several data from the paid driver portion of the survey.

- Almost half (44 percent) of the respondents said their driver pools averaged from 7-10 years of service.
- More than a third (39 percent) indicated that more than half of their drivers were employed part-time.
- A somewhat smaller number (34 percent) said their driver pool included from 50-90% female drivers.
- A majority (64 percent) paid their drivers from \$10.00 - \$14.00 per hour.
- Almost two-thirds (66 percent) said their driver salaries were average when compared with the typical salaries in their community.
- A vast majority (90 percent) said their drivers provided door-to-door assistance.
- In addition to employing drivers, almost one-third (30 percent) also involved volunteer drivers in their service.

“All our drivers are retired, even the full-time drivers. They do not need benefits, they enjoy the job and they have good work ethics.”

Additional information about the drivers, their employment, their experience, their compensation, the assistance and support they provide, and the fact that many paid drivers work side by side with volunteer drivers are discussed in this section. Data provided by respondents regarding volunteer drivers also is included.

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*Data on services indicate that a majority (75%) were primarily demand response services; most (72%) were located in rural areas; the greatest number (38%) served less than 5,000 passengers; more than two-fifths (44%) had budgets from \$100,000 to \$1,000,000; and although the number was small, 10% said they provided 1,000,000 or more one-way rides. However, as was mentioned earlier, when reviewing this report, it is important to keep in mind the considerable differences in the proportion of fixed route vs. demand response and urban/suburban and rural service that responded to the survey.*

**4a. Driver Profile** The profile on Chart 6 provides selected information on paid drivers submitted by the 76 respondents to the survey.

CHART 6 PROFILE OF PAID DRIVERS	
<u>Number of Drivers</u> Fewer than 20 <b>46%</b> 20-50 <b>29%</b> More than 50 <b>25%</b>	<u>Length of Service of Drivers</u> Less than 6 years <b>47%</b> 7 - 10 years <b>44%</b> 11-15 years <b>6%</b> more than 15 years <b>3%</b>
<u>Driver Gender</u> 50% or more female <b>34%</b>	<u>Average Hourly Salary</u> Less than \$8.00 <b>1%</b> \$8.00 - \$10.00 <b>20%</b> \$10.00 - \$14.00 <b>64%</b> More than \$14.00 <b>14%</b>
<u>Driver Employment</u> 50% or more part-time <b>39%</b>	<u>Employment Benefits</u> Services pay benefits <b>82%</b>
<u>Driver Assistance</u> Curb-to-curb <b>93%</b> Door-to-door <b>90%</b> Door-thru-door <b>32%</b>	

“Not all receive health insurance, but all receive some benefits, like retirement benefits.”

**4b. Drivers as Employees** Almost half (46 percent) of respondents employed fewer than 20 paid drivers, more than two-thirds (37 percent) employed between 20 and 100 paid drivers, and the others (17 percent) employed more than 100 paid drivers. Only a small number (10 percent) of the respondents employed fewer than 10 drivers, while a somewhat larger number (17 percent) employed more than 100 drivers. Not surprisingly the numbers of paid drivers employed were similar to the number of vehicles used by the transportation services.

While only 10 percent said their drivers averaged less than three years of employment, none of the respondents indicated their drivers averaged more than twenty years of employment. What may be surprising is that more than half (53 percent) of the driver pools averaged more than seven

CHART 7 DRIVER POOL CHARACTERISTICS			
<u>Drivers</u>	<u>Total Sample</u>	<u>Less than 7 years</u>	<u>More than 7 years</u>
Career drivers	71%	58%	80%
Retiree drivers	85%	87%	83%
Need a job drivers	54%	61%	47%
Less than \$10 hr.	22%	34%	11%
\$10 - \$14 hr.	64%	56%	69%
More than \$14 hr.	14%	9%	17%
Benefits to drivers	82%	78%	83%

years of employment. Chart 7 shows the relationship between driver pool experience, compensation and retention.

Although respondents were asked to report ratios rather than percentages to questions related to driver employment status and gender, data indicates that more than one-third (39 percent) employed at least half their drivers part-time, and a somewhat smaller number (33 percent) employed females as at least half their driver pool.

**4c. Driver Experience** While many respondents (54 percent) indicated that they employed what might be called “need a job” drivers, a larger number (60 percent) employed “second-career” drivers. An even larger number (71 percent) employed “career” drivers and a whopping 85 percent employed retired people who had returned to the workforce.

“Full time= full benefits  
Part time= limited benefits.”

CHART 8 RETIRED PEOPLE AS DRIVERS	
...provided benefits to their paid drivers (82%)	
...were located in rural areas (81%)	
...provided demand response services (79%)	
...employed fewer than 50 drivers (79%)	
...served senior passengers as primary passenger group (78%)	
...averaged budgets of \$500,000 - \$2,500,000 (54%)	

Chart 8 provides data on services that included retired people who had returned to the workforce in their driver pools.

**4d. Driver Assistance and Support** Respondents indicated that their paid drivers provided high levels of curb-to-curb and door-to-door transportation assistance. And, although many said their drivers provided assistance at the destination, few provided door-through-door or escort transportation assistance. Chart 9 suggests that, regardless of type of service or its

“Drivers are instructed to provide door-to-door but are also told to use best judgment.”

location, paid drivers provide assistance, but it tends to be at-the-curb or to-the-door.

The size of driver pools, salaries, and benefits did not appear to im-

CHART 9 TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE				
<u>Transportation Assistance</u>	<u>Fixed Route</u>	<u>Demand Response</u>	<u>Urban+ Suburb</u>	<u>Rural</u>
curb-to-curb	100%	89%	91%	93%
door-to-door	90%	90%	92%	90%
door-through-door	14%	38%	50%	26%
escort	29%	38%	20%	39%
stay at destination	70%	77%	57%	79%

act greatly on the provision of higher levels of service. However, the use of autos resulted in a higher number of services providing door-through-

door (46 percent) and escort service (44 percent); and the involvement of volunteer drivers resulted in a considerably higher level of door-through-door service (50 percent).

According to survey respondents, their drivers provide assistance to passengers for the reasons identified in Chart 10 below.

“Our drivers are very ‘family oriented’ and will go the extra mile to help our passengers.”

CHART 10 TOP REASONS FOR PROVIDING ASSISTANCE TO SENIORS	
(1) passengers need help getting in and out of vehicle (77%)	(2) passengers are in danger of falling (49%)
(3) passengers are unable to get to the vehicle, and passengers need help carrying heavy loads (41%)	(4) passengers need help at the destination (29%)

And finally, respondents expressed strong agreement with the statement, “Our paid drivers are able to meet most of the mobility needs of our passengers”; they did not agree with the statement, “Our service tends to take a don’t ask don’t tell” attitude toward some of the assistance provided by our paid drivers.”

**4e. Driver Compensation** Only 22 percent of the respondents indicated the hourly salary of their drivers averaged less than \$9, while 14 percent said they averaged more than \$14, and 64% said they averaged between \$10 and \$14 per hour.

“We worked with an HR consulting agency on a revision to bring wages up to average.”

The vast majority (82 percent) indicated they paid benefits to their drivers; and a smaller number (66 percent) indicated their salaries were average when compared with typical salaries in their community. Respondents from demand response and rural systems reported they paid benefits in similar proportions to their representation in the sample (71 percent and 73 percent respectively). Chart 11 suggests the relationships between benefits and other characteristics of drivers and the driver pools.

CHART 11 DRIVER BENEFITS	
<u>Driver Pool Characteristics And Payment of Benefits</u>	<u>Driver Benefits</u>
Salary Average \$14.00+ hr.	100%
Salary Average \$10.00 - \$14.00	86%
Salary Average Less than \$10.00	60%
More Than 7 Years Employment	89%
Less Than 7 Years Employment	75%
Career Drivers	100%
“Need a Job” Drivers	86%

**4f. Volunteer Drivers** While the core of the survey dealt with paid drivers, the final question asked whether respondents involved volunteer drivers in addition to their paid drivers. A substantial number (20) answered affirmatively. The numbers of volunteer drivers they engaged ranged from 2 to 370, with a median of 10. Chart 12 suggests several the similarities and differences in services that did and did not include volunteer drivers in their driver pool. As was the case with driver benefits, respondents from demand-response and rural systems indicated they included volunteer drivers in similar proportion to their representation in the sample (75 percent and 75 percent respectively).


CHART 12 PAID AND VOLUNTEER DRIVERS: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES			
<u>Systems and Driver Pool Characteristics</u>	<u>Total Response</u>	<u>Yes Volunteer Drivers</u>	<u>No Volunteer Drivers</u>
% that use autos	62%	73%	58%
% with career drivers	65%	65%	74%
% with retired people drivers	85%	85%	85%
% 50% or more female drivers	34%	26%	38%
% 50% or more part-time drivers	39%	47%	34%
% door-thru-door assistance	32%	50%	21%
% escort assistance	36%	44%	32%
% destination assistance	75%	77%	73%

“Our paid and volunteer drivers equally contribute to our quality of service.”

**Conclusion**

This discussion offers a glimpse at the drivers, their experience and gender, their service longevity, driver salaries, and benefits and volunteer driver involvement.

Part 5, which follows, discusses survey results and their implications.



“We are a team here to help others.  
We will never be  
‘just a transportation company’.”

*KABS,  
Wasaw, IN*

## **PART 5**

# **CONCLUSIONS & CONSIDERATIONS**

The success of this survey was indicated by the substantial response and the data generated. We know, for example that the paid driver pools in this sample:

- included on average less than 50 drivers;
- were populated by a large number of part-time drivers;
- were comprised of a large number of females;
- consisted of number of retired people who have returned to the workforce;
- received salaries that are considered average for their communities;
- were people who are from the immediate community;
- retained a large number of drivers who had many years of service;
- provided transportation to senior passengers;
- provided considerable passenger assistance;
- included some volunteer drivers.

Another reason the survey was a success is because almost all respondents took the time to provide comments about their driver pools and their drivers, whom they serve, what they do, and why they are the heart and soul of their transportation service.

What follows are many of the comments respondents included in their surveys, and the quotations throughout this report are from the respondents.

**5a. Driver Pools and Drivers** Driver pools included both full- and part-time drivers, a large number of retired people, and volunteers; and that in addition to receiving benefits, most received salaries that were considered average for their community. One respondent commented that... “I have a waiting list of people calling for driver employment. I may interview 20 people for a job.”

The following comments provide considerable insight into why driver retention is so high, and some services even have a waiting list.

### They Include Part -Time Staff

“We have one full-time driver and 12-14 part-time drivers.”

“Full-time and part-time drivers receive the same training and meet the same standards.”

“Many of our part-time drivers tell us that it is not about the money. It is their way of giving back to the community to help the elderly and disabled without totally doing volunteer work which would cost them gas money to go back and forth.”

“Some part-time drivers are also volunteer drivers on their days off.”

### They Include Retired Persons

“Maybe because most of the drivers are over 60 themselves, they can better relate to the elderly and disabled. Also, the drivers do not have the issues at home to deal with that take their attention from their job and therefore may help riders even on their time off. They also need the extra money to stretch their retirement income.”

They Include Volunteers

“We use both paid and volunteer drivers in our system (mostly paid). I find both paid and volunteer drivers give the highest level of service quality. Our problem is finding an adequate number of volunteers able and willing to provide service.”

“We believe both our paid and volunteer drivers have equal and positive impacts on the quality of the service they provide to our customers.”

“I think if drivers are paid they are willing to do a little more, than a volunteer driver.”

They Pay Average Salaries and Provide Benefits

“It is very important that drivers be paid a livable wage and benefit package.”

“Only the full-time drivers receive benefits.”

“All regular and part-time drivers receive benefits, but part-time are prorated.”

“Retention is key and certainly has an impact on service quality. Our drivers are professional, responsible, and caring employees, so in return as a company we need to treat them right.”

**5b. Drivers Give Rides to Seniors** Drivers provide rides to a large number of people, many of them seniors. One comment suggests the importance of this role: “Drivers have the responsibility of transporting very precious cargo (someone's family member) in a safe and reliable manner.”

Other comments suggest additional reasons why they like to drive seniors and how they treat them.

They Like People

“All of our drivers are working here because they like people (specifically the senior population). They are retired workers or of retirement age and are truly socially conscious and very concerned about their passengers.”

They Treat Them Like Family

“Most of our drivers see the passengers several times a week, so they become part of their family.”

“A driver of a senior route brings the ladies flowers on holidays such as Mothers' Day and Easter. He also carries their pocket books and unlocks their doors.”

“Drivers take a personal interest in the passengers. When passengers are hospitalized or die, drivers visit on their own time.”

They Are Appreciated

“I have had several comments from different senior passengers...they wouldn't be alive today if it wasn't for our transit system.”

They Treat Them Like Mom

“In this organization we have an informal metric and an ingrained culture. It is the "mom" test. We endeavor to treat each and every passenger (especially the older ones) the way we would demand that our mothers be treated. This is an easily understood standard that most drivers will self-enforce.”

**5c. They Provide Assistance** Regardless of the level or intensity, it is the driver who provides the assistance. While higher levels of assistance are somewhat limited, such limitations may have a closer relationship to policies than to drivers. For example, one respondent commented: “We have policies that don’t allow entry to help seniors although the policy is a safeguard for both parties.” Several other comments describe the challenges associated with providing assistance and the ways those challenges are addressed.

The Assistance Challenge

“Assistance is a challenge because our responsibility technically begins once the individual boards the bus and ends once they have left the bus. Special or unique assistance outside of the bus is very problematic and is usually done as a judgment call by the driver and carries with it a high level of risk.”

“Drivers are not allowed to enter the home of any rider. They may assist them from the door, down a ramp, and on-and-off the van. They may not assist a rider up or down stairs. Drivers are to wait until an elderly or disabled rider is inside their home. If the driver HAS to open the door to the home to assist the rider inside the home, the driver is to call the office to document the event.”

Responding to the Challenge

“Those are official answers. I know drivers go way beyond and break the rules to help a customer.”

“Officially we are curb-to-curb with limited assistance provided to our passengers. The reality is that drivers exercise judgment and humanity that is not officially acknowledged.”

“We provide door-to-door primarily, but drivers will help senior passengers into their homes when necessary, especially during the winter and inclement weather.”

“We do not have a “don’t ask don’t tell” attitude. But the reality is that drivers will help if they feel the safety of a senior is at risk and will report it.”

**5d. They Act as a Conduit** When asked if their drivers were a conduit for helpful information about senior passengers, the overwhelming response was yes. What is interesting in follow-up comments is that in many instances the information transfer can go two ways.

A Conduit For Passenger Concerns

“Our drivers and dispatchers stay in close contact with many of our senior riders, and we frequently contact family members when drivers report changes in behavior, or other problems.”

“Drivers will inform office if they find passengers with no food or heat.”

“Drivers are consistent in bringing their concerns about their passengers to the administrative staff so that we can try to get the passenger additional assistance from outside agencies.”

“If a driver notices a potential problem or is concerned about a passenger he/she will notify the office and appropriate measures will be taken.”

A Conduit for Passenger Information

“The drivers share information with the seniors about other programs going on in town that they could be interested in.”

“We try to make sure our drivers are educated about all facets of the senior center so they can share information with our passengers or can get more information from a specific individual.”

**5e. They Face Challenges** Respondents were asked to rate six challenges drivers face in providing rides to seniors. The three they rated as extremely difficult were: (1) helping seniors who are incontinent, (2) helping seniors with dementia, and (3) helping seniors who have cognitive limitations. Their follow-up comments suggest that drivers experience challenges that are not necessarily related to driving passengers.

When asked about major complaints, more than half the respondents selected the option driving senior passengers who always complain/cannot be satisfied. While follow-up comments identified a few complaints, those that were identified were related to not having enough time, grumpy passengers, carrying shopping bags, and having to do paperwork. What follows are comments about challenges.

Challenges

“The biggest challenge is wanting to do more than policy allows.”

“They want to do more for them than is allowable as a result of liability/insurance issues.”

**5f. They Are Committed** Respondents were asked to select two of eight factors that might impact favorably on driver commitment. Their top two selections were: (1) driving senior passengers who don't have anyone to help them, and (2) driving one or several senior passengers frequently. Their follow-up comments suggest a variety of reasons for their commitment.

They Appreciate Seniors

“They know that they are making a contribution to the ability of older adults and people with disabilities to stay in their homes.”

“Helping the seniors in need has the greatest impact.”

“I'm continually amazed and impressed at the level of dedication our paid drivers show toward their senior passengers.”

It Isn't Necessarily About Money

“Our drivers take a lot of pride in being a small family that gives back to the communities that they grew up in. It takes dedication to start out at 5:00 a.m., be off middle of the day, and end up at 7:30 p.m. coming back home. It is not about the pay!”

It May Be Due To The Culture

“Drivers commit random acts of kindness and compassion every day. Most of these are un-noted and unobserved. Typically this happens in agencies where a culture of caring and compassion has been fostered. In many small community transportation organizations drivers are de facto case managers and spend more time with some of their passengers than do their families or their formal case managers. At the end of the day, this entire discussion is about expectations and culture.”

**5g. They Go the Extra Mile** When asked if their drivers sometimes go the extra mile in helping senior passengers, 100% responded yes. They then proceeded to give countless examples, one which included involvement of the entire driver pool. Several of their extra mile comments are included below.

They Go The Extra Mile

“All the drivers seem to want to help others and that is why some are also volunteer drivers who are paid per mile to operate their private vehicle. I know that some drivers will assist riders on their time off.”

“Drivers have been known to provide hot meals to seniors living alone during the weekends and holidays.”

“I have a driver who actually takes the senior to a food store and then while the senior waits in the bus, the driver goes in and shops for her.”

“A driver has prepared and delivered meals to seniors who are unable to fix food for themselves.”

“We have drivers who carry groceries into the house when our policy is to take it only to the door.”

“I have a driver who is looking into buying a client a helmet because her seizures have gotten worse and she falls.”

“At our last meeting the drivers decided that they would make a list of our fragile clients and they would always get out of their seat to help these clients.”

**5h. They Are the Heart and Soul...** While the heart and soul is often associated with the system, drivers are also described as the eyes and ears of customer service. What follows are several what might be called heart and soul comments.

They Are At The Heart of Customer Service

“Drivers are the cornerstone for transportation services, especially door-to-door where the personal touch is so very important. They can make or break the communities’ perception of the quality of your service. Fortunately, most all are very caring individuals and it comes across.”

“Our drivers’ customer service and interaction with the passengers is the number one determinant of whether or not the passengers feel they received good customer service. Passengers are very forgiving of late trips when they have a good relationship with the driver and the driver assists them and treats them with respect, helping them maintain their dignity.”

“They develop a special relationship with our passengers, due to the frequency with which they see them.”

They Are The Soul of The System

“Our drivers really care about the clients, the community, and each other.”

They Are The Magnet for Funding

“Every five years we must request a renewal for local taxes to support our system. This request always passes easily with an overwhelming majority. It's due to the attitude and efforts of our drivers, and dispatchers, certainly not to anything done administratively.”

***Concluding Comment***

This survey is but a first step in understanding the roles, responsibilities, and contributions of paid drivers in providing service to senior passengers and other passenger groups. While it provides considerable data on driver pools, it does not explore the hearts and minds of the people who actually drive. However, in addition to providing a treasure trove of helpful information to transportation services, the survey offers a starting place for future research that focuses on the thousands of people who are paid to drive seniors and other passengers in urban, suburban, and rural areas across America.

# **ATTACHMENT**

## **SURVEY RESPONDENTS**

### **Alabama**

Baldwin Rural Area Transit System	Robertsdale
Covington Area Transit System	Andalusia
Wiregrass Transit Authority	Dothan

### **Arizona**

Cottonwood Area Transit	Cottonwood
Helping Hands Express	Page
Northern Arizona Intergovernmental Public Transportation Authority	Flagstaff

### **Arkansas**

Eureka Springs Transit System	Eureka Springs
Southeast Arkansas Transportation	Pine Bluff

### **California**

The Bus - Merced County Transit	Merced
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### **Colorado**

All Points Transit	Montrose
Special Transit	Boulder

### **Connecticut**

Middletown Transit District	Middletown
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### **Florida**

St. Johns County Council on Aging, Inc.	St. Augustine
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### **Idaho**

North Idaho Community Express, Inc.	Coeur d'Alene
Treasure Valley Transit, Inc.	Nampa

### **Illinois**

Voluntary Action Center of DeKalb County	Sycamore
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### **Indiana**

Access Johnson County	Franklin
KABS	Wasaw

### **Iowa**

Ottumwa Transit Authority	Ottumwa
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### **Kansas**

ACCESS Transportation	Hays
Sedgwick County Transportation Brokerage	Wichita

**Louisiana**

Baton Rouge CATS

Baton Rouge

**Maine**

York County Community Action Corporation Transportation Service

Sanford

**Maryland**

Delmarva Community Services, Inc.

Cambridge

**Michigan**

ALTRAN

Hope Network Transportation

Interurban Transit Authority

Munising

Grand Rapids

Douglas

**Minnesota**

Chisago - Isanti County Heartland Express

Community Transit

Tri-Valley Heartland Express Bus

Cambridge

Marshall

Crookston

**Mississippi**

Choctaw Transit

Jackson County Civic Action Committee, Inc.

Choctaw

Moss Point

**Missouri**

Dunklin County Transit Service, Inc.

OATS, Inc.

Southeast Missouri Transportation Service SMTS, Inc.

Malden

Columbia

Fredericktown

**Nevada**

Southern Nevada Transit Coalition

Laughlin

**New Hampshire**

North Country Transit

Berlin

**New Jersey**

Metro Transport

Monmouth County DOT

Sen Han Transit of Camden County

Somerset County Transportation

West Orange

Freehold

Mt. Ephraim

Somerville

**New York**

Medical Motor Service, Inc.

Rochester

**North Carolina**

Alamance County Transportation Authority

Anson County Transportation System

Charlotte Area Transit -Special Transportation

Craven Area Rural Transit System

Dare County Transportation System

East Carolina University Student Transit Authority

ITRE (Institute for Research and Education)

Burlington

Wadesboro

Charlotte

New Bern

Manteo

Greenville

Raleigh

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Johnston County Area Transit System	Smithfield
Macon County Transit	Franklin
Mountain Mobility	Asheville
MY Bus	Charlotte
Polk County Transportation Authority	Columbus
SCUSA Transportation	Albemarle
Swain Public Transit	Bryson City
Union County Transportation	Monroe

**North Dakota**

Souris Basin Transportation	Minot
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**Ohio**

Fayette County Transportation	Washington Court House
Share A Ride	Sandusky

**Oklahoma**

KI BOIS Area Transit System	Stigler
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**Oregon**

Lincoln County Transit	Newport
Ride Connection, Inc.	Portland

**Rhode Island**

Ride Program	Providence
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**South Dakota**

Prairie Hills Transit	Spearfish
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**Tennessee**

Knoxville Area Transit	Knoxville
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**Texas**

Hill Country Transit District	San Saba
The District	Bryan

**Vermont**

Advance Transit, Inc.	White River Jct.
Green Mountain Express	Bennington

**Washington**

Mason County Transit Authority	Shelton
OCTN (Okanogan County Transportation and Nutrition)	Omak

**West Virginia**

Fairmont-Marion County Transit Authority	Fairmont
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**Wyoming**


Riverton Senior Citizens Center	Riverton
Sheridan Mini Bus	Sheridan
Wind River Transportation Authority	Riverton

# ***NOTES***



**Community  
Transportation**  
ASSOCIATION

*Located in Washington, DC, the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) is a national nonprofit professional membership organization. Its mission is to make transportation available, affordable and accessible for all Americans, particularly for those who cannot use conventional public transit services.*

 **Beverly Foundation**

*Located in Albuquerque, NM, the Beverly Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to foster new ideas and options to enhance mobility and transportation for today's and tomorrow's older population.*

For more information about senior transportation  
please visit the partners' websites:

[www.ctaa.org](http://www.ctaa.org)

[www.beverlyfoundation.org](http://www.beverlyfoundation.org)