

***VOLUNTEER DRIVERS IN AMERICA
THE HOPE OF THE FUTURE***

A BRIEF FROM THE BEVERLY FOUNDATION

AUTHORS

HELEN K. KERSCHNER, PH.D.

AND

MARIE-HÉLÈNE ROUSSEAU, PH.D.

AND

CHERYL SVENSSON, PH.D.

MAY, 2008



Table of Contents

Part 1 The Critical Issue of Transportation	Page 3
Importance of Mobility	3
Special Conditions of the “Old-old”	3
Challenges for Traditional Transit Services	5
Service Delivery	5
Service Design	5
Part 2 Volunteerism in America	7
Local Focus	7
Multiple Contributions	7
Rate of Involvement	7
Organizational Emphasis	8
Types of Activities	8
Boomer Involvement	8
Older Adult Involvement	8
Benefits of Volunteering	9
Prospects for the Future	9
Part 3 Volunteer Drivers in America	Page 11
Community Action	11
National Survey	11
Driver Profile	12
Driver Demographics	12
Driving Experience	12
The Typical Driver	13
Part 4 Their Contributions	Page 15
They Are Available	15
They Go to Many Destinations	15
They Assist Passengers	15
They Give Their Time	16
They Loan Their Vehicles	16
They Socialize With Their Passengers	16
They Save Money	17
They Fill The Gap	17
Part 5 Their Motivations and Satisfaction	Page 19
Prior Volunteer Involvement	19
Driving Challenges	19
Motivations for Volunteering to Drive	19
Satisfaction They Receive	20
Clues to Their Success	20
Conclusion	Page 23
Resources	Page 26



PART 1

THE CRITICAL ISSUE OF TRANSPORTATION

Once upon a time it was expected that family members or friends would be there to help older adults who no longer drive. But for many today America is no longer the environment of the multigenerational family with stay-at-home daughters or daughters-in-law who can fill in the driving gap. Thus, many seniors who do not drive depend on their communities to be responsive to their transportation needs for both life-sustaining and life-enriching transportation support.

Importance of Mobility. Today organizations and groups across the country are working hard to design and create livable communities in which older adults and people with disabilities can work and enjoy an enriching and fulfilling quality of life. Such an agenda is an important contributor to ensuring older driver safety and enabling older adults to remain independent.

While countless older adults are safe drivers, many choose to limit their driving to surface streets, to their immediate neighborhood, and to daytime. Others are forced to give up their keys because they are fearful of driving or experience physical, mental or financial limitations. As a result, many outlive their driving expectancy. According to recent research, there is a mismatch between driving expectancy and life expectancy. The research notes that both men and women are likely to live for a period of years (as many as 6 years for men and 11 years for women) beyond the period when they can drive safely, years when they will lose the independence of the personal automobile and will become transportation dependent.¹

Older adults tend to relate the ability to drive to freedom, independence and control.² At the same time, the ability to remain free, independent, and in control of one's life by remaining in one's own home is a goal of the majority of older adults as well as a public policy agenda in America. Unfortunately, a loss of mobility by having to "give up the keys" may occur when the goal of "aging in place" is realized. Today, many older adults and many communities are faced with developing solutions to what is increasingly a contradiction of longevity: gains in the ability of older adults to remain in the community and losses in the ability to get where they need to go.

Special Conditions of the "Old-old"^{*}. In most discussions, the older American population is defined as persons age 65 years and older. The projected rapid expansion of this age group in the next decade or two presents major challenges to society in matters such as consumer markets, workforce composition, and productive retirement. However, when addressing the topic of transportation options, especially options that meet the needs of older adults who no longer drive, it is the 85+ population, the "old-old"³, that presents the greatest transportation challenge. Providers of transportation to older adults say that those who are age 85 and older are the most likely to have given up their keys and to need help accessing transportation options. While the num-

ber of older adults in the United States is projected to increase dramatically over the next fifty years, the 85+ age group is expected to more than quadruple by the year 2050.

According to the US Census Bureau, in 2000 there were more than 35 million Americans age 65+.⁴ That number is expected to increase to over 71 million by 2030. While the “young-old” (those in the 65-85 age group) will increase dramatically, the “old-old” (those in the 85+ age group) will show even more impressive growth. For example, in 2000 10.9% of the population was age 65-85 and 1.5% was age 85+. These numbers will increase to 17% and 2.6% respectively by the year 2030, and to 15.7% and 5% in 2050.

Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs) provide indicators of an individual’s ability to carry out tasks that are important for living independently.⁵ They include the ability to travel, to use the telephone, to shop for and prepare food, to keep house, to do laundry, to take medications and to handle finances. The ability to travel can be characterized by five degrees of mobility: traveling independently, arranging travel, traveling when accompanied by another or traveling with assistance from another, and an inability to travel. As people age, their ability to perform IADLs tends to diminish. This suggests that while many of the “young-old” might experience some limitations, the “old-old” are likely to be frailer and have greater mobility challenges than the “young-old”. For this reason, the “old-old” often need a much higher level of transportation assistance and support than the “young-old”.

Chart 1. IADL Scale for Transportation

1. Travels independently on public transportation or drives own car.
2. Arranges own travel via taxi, but does not otherwise use public transportation.
3. Travels on public transportation when accompanied by another.
4. Travel limited to taxi or automobile with assistance of another.
5. Does not travel at all.

Chart 2. Medical Conditions Related to Impaired Driving

- Diseases affecting vision
 - Cardiovascular disease ◇
 - Neurological disease ◇
(including dementia)
 - Psychiatric disease
 - Metabolic disease
(including diabetes)
 - Musculoskeletal disabilities ◇
 - Chronic renal failure
 - Respiratory disease ◇
- ◇ condition more prevalent among people who are 85+ than among younger seniors

Chronic health conditions also provide indicators of functional health status. Chart 2 lists several of the conditions that physicians use to assess for medically impaired driving. Many of these conditions are those that are more prevalent among older seniors than younger seniors. The implication is that the transportation needs of older seniors may be very different than those of younger seniors based on the differences in challenges that they face. Seniors who face challenges in accessing transportation are at risk of isolation from the people and resources they need to live happy, healthy lives. Given the projected growth in the 85+ population, the coming years are likely to bring an increase in people who have challenges in accessing transportation as well as added urgency to respond to the transportation needs of seniors.

It is the 85+ population that is most vulnerable to consequences of the normal aging process that can make it difficult or impossible to drive. It is the 85+ population that may have outlived its driving expectancy and thus become transportation dependent. It is the 85+ population that may have functional limitations that not only can make driving unsafe but also interfere with using traditional transportation options. It is the 85+ population that may need special assistance and support in accessing transportation services.

Challenges for Traditional Transit Services. Many in the aging service community have noted that it is difficult if not impossible for older adults to stop driving if they do not have alternative transportation available to them. There are, of course, many public and community-based transportation services such as fixed route, circulator route, ADA paratransit, Dial-a-Ride, taxi service, and human service transit programs. However, many communities do not offer all of these services and even where they are available, older adults may not be able to use them, because the very difficulties that forced them to give up driving also make it impossible to use at least some of the alternatives. For these elders, it can be difficult to walk to the curb, let alone all the way to a bus stop a few blocks or a mile from home; or to climb the steps of a bus or van once they get there.⁶

Service Delivery Meeting such needs can be difficult for public and ADA paratransit services and even for human service organizations that provide transportation to seniors. Resource and funding constraints and distance to destinations often limit transportation services to a single purpose, or to certain days of the week or hours of the day, and in so doing, eliminate transportation to “quality of life” destinations. Grandma may be able to find community transportation to get to a doctor’s appointment, but may not be able to get to her bridge group or the hairdresser like she did in years past. The inability of transportation providers to adapt schedules and reduce wait times can lead to disappointment and frustration on the part of senior riders. Costs for paid staff, vehicles, equipment and insurance can dramatically limit the ability of a transportation service to do more than provide fixed route or curb-to-curb service for older adults. Drivers without proper training who treat seniors with insensitivity or rudeness can mean the difference between seniors getting where they need to go and choosing to stay at home, and becoming at risk for social isolation.

Service Design Perhaps the major reason that many traditional transportation providers find it so difficult to serve the “old-old” is that they were not designed to meet many of the support needs of those who are frail and require assistance. Yes, they are designed to get passengers from one point to another, and even to take them to a variety of life-sustaining and life-enriching destinations. However, the service they provide generally does not include activities outside the vehicle such as helping the passenger to and from the vehicle or staying with the passenger at the destination. This is what some call “supportive transportation” and includes door-to-door and door-through-door assistance as well as escort assistance at the destination. Such support can be an es-



PART 2

VOLUNTEERISM IN AMERICA

Although volunteerism is not a critical piece of the cultural fabric in many countries, it holds great value in the United States, and it is a way of life for many Americans. It also contributes significantly to the economy of the country. According to a 2001 Report by the Independent Sector, in 2000, 44% or 83.9 million American adults volunteered for a total of 15.5 billion hours representing the equivalent of over 9 million full-time employees at a value of \$239.2 billion. At that time, the Independent Sector set the value of a volunteer hour at \$15.40.⁷ In 2007 it was \$19.51.⁸

Local Focus. While many adults volunteer for international service opportunities offered for example by Peace Corps and Doctors without Borders and national service opportunities offered by VISTA, Teach America and others, volunteers most often are involved in their local communities, and quite often within their neighborhoods. Thus, a person's attachment and commitment to the neighborhood or community can have a relationship to the willingness of neighbors to volunteer for causes that support other neighbors and the community at large.

Multiple Contributions.

Chart 3. Giving and Volunteering

Give Only (46%)
Give and Volunteer (42%)
Volunteer Only (2%)
Neither (10%)

Recent studies report that the intangible benefits of pride, satisfaction and accomplishment are worthwhile reasons to serve, for they offer the volunteers the satisfaction of incorporating service into their lives, and making a difference in their community and country. However, according to an Independent Sector survey, such satisfaction may not be related solely to volunteering, for its 2001 study demonstrated that charitable giving and volunteering go hand in hand. Furthermore, households in which respondents volunteered, gave substantially more than households in which the respondents did not volunteer.

Rate of Involvement.

Factors such as high levels of homeownership and education impact positively on volunteer rates. Alternately, communities with fewer non-profits per capita (with infrastructures to recruit, place, and manage volunteers) can impact negatively on volunteer rates. According to a 2007 Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) report, over a period of three years (2004, 2005, and 2006) the nation had an average of 36.5 volunteer hours per resident, and metropolitan areas ranged from 60 hours to 20.5 hours. Between 2004 and 2006, the average volunteer rate for the nation was 28.1%, while volunteer

Chart 4. State/Regional Volunteer Rate

Utah (48%)	Midwest (33%)
Nebraska (43%)	West (30%)
Minnesota (41%)	South (27%)
Iowa (39%)	Northeast (26%)

rates in metropolitan areas ranged from 14.4% to 40.5%. Chart 4 indicates the volunteer rate by state and region in the U.S.⁹

Organizational Emphasis. Many Americans volunteer informally with friends, within the family, and even in the community. However, a 2003 study by AARP, reported that more than fifty percent of those age 45 and over volunteered within formal organizations.¹⁰ According to data from the 2001 report by the Independent Sector, adults volunteered with formal organizations an average of 24 hours per month. Chart 5 from a 2006 CNCS report identifies the types of organizations in which people volunteer, and also suggests types of activities in which they engage.¹¹

Chart 5. Organizational Based Volunteering

Religious (35%)
Educational or Youth (27%)
Social or Community Service (13%)
Hospital or other Health (8%)
Civic, Political, Professional, Int'l (7%)
Sport, Hobby, Cultural or Arts (7%)
Other (4%)

According to data from the 2001 report by the Independent Sector, adults volunteered with formal organizations an average of 24 hours per month. Chart 5 from a 2006 CNCS report identifies the types of organizations in which people volunteer, and also suggests types of activities in which they engage.¹¹

Types Of Activities. According to the Independent Sector, the top four volunteer activities in the nation in which people engaged were: (1) fundraising or selling items to raise money; (2) collecting, preparing, distributing, or serving food; (3) engaging in general labor; and (4) tutoring or teaching.

Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, indicates that women volunteer at a higher rate than men in all age groups and educational levels. Men were more likely to volunteer for general labor or coaching, while women were more likely to tutor or fundraise.¹²

Boomer Involvement. A 2007 Report by the CNCS on the boomer population identified boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) as having the highest volunteer rate of any age group. Their involvement is said to be related to their higher education levels compared to older generations and the likelihood that they have school-aged children at home. Retention of boomer volunteers is an identified concern as three out of every ten who volunteered in the first year did not volunteer in the second year and only 83% of those who choose not to continue were replaced with new volunteers. The likelihood of volunteering year after year increases: as volunteer hours and volunteer weeks rise; as volunteers perform only one activity for their main organization; and as volunteers are asked directly by a volunteer organization.¹³

Chart 6. Top Boomer Volunteer Locations

Year	1989	2003-5
Religious	#1	#1
Civic, Political, International	#2	#3
Educational, Youth Service	#3	#2
Hospital/Health	#4	#5
Social/Community Service	#5	#4

Older Adult Involvement. The older adult population not only makes up an increasing portion of the general population, it also makes up an important segment of the volunteer population. A 2000 Independent Sector study, reported a substantial percentage of those age 65 and over volunteered: 46.6% in the 64-74 age group and 43% in the 75 and over age group. Over 71% of the seniors surveyed claimed membership in

a religious organization, and almost 55% of those reported volunteering in the past year. Older adults who were asked to volunteer were five times more likely to volunteer than those who were not asked, and approximately 81% of those over 75 years of age volunteered when asked. However, less than one-third of all seniors over the age 65 were asked to volunteer. Although retired seniors were not as likely to volunteer, when they did volunteer, they gave substantial time with 51% giving more than four hours each week, and 21% giving five or more hours each week. Over 50% of the respondents reported that they volunteered because they wanted to give back to society.¹⁴

Benefits OF Volunteering. Not only does volunteering contribute to the economy of the country, it also contributes to the well-being of the community and the individual. This would suggest that communities in the mid-west may benefit from the impact of a high rate of volunteerism. It also suggests the truth in the unstated wisdom of volunteerism that “those who give of themselves also receive”. Volunteering or giving of one’s self without compensation has its own intrinsic rewards as evidenced anecdotally by volunteers who report the ‘pleasure’ they receive from their efforts. Over the past two decades, researchers have begun to look at the ‘helper’s high’ and study the effects of volunteering on personal factors such as well-being, life satisfaction, health, and mortality. Lately there has been a growing body of research on the health benefits of volunteering. In referring to several studies, the 2007 report by the CNCS noted that on average volunteers appear to live longer and have greater functional ability and lower rates of depression later in life than those who do not volunteer, results that hold even when controlled for age, gender, socioeconomic status, education, and ethnicity.

Prospects For The Future. Given that volunteerism is a mainstay in the American way of life, producing economic, societal and personal benefits, it is in our best interest to promote and advance volunteering by all Americans. The following five actions are worth considering.

- (1) *Volunteer opportunities that are interesting and satisfying to older adults and boomers will encourage greater involvement, and contribute to their recruitment and retention as volunteers.*
- (2) *Research shows that the earlier a person begins volunteering, the longer they are likely to continue to volunteer, thus the involvement of students of all ages in volunteer activities will contribute to their long term volunteer involvement.*
- (3) *Interesting and meaningful volunteer opportunities by community-based organizations will be important, for the majority of volunteer activities occur within organizations at the local level.*
- (4) *Public and private initiatives at the national and state levels will promote the message of volunteerism and mobilize citizens to the agenda.*
- (5) *And finally, ‘the ask’ will be key to involving people in volunteer activities. Research indicates that a much higher percentage of people volunteer when they are asked than volunteer without being asked.*



PART 3

VOLUNTEER DRIVERS IN AMERICA

Volunteer drivers increasingly are becoming a critical ingredient in the transportation options that enable seniors to get to their destinations and beyond. This is not to suggest that seniors do not drive, for indeed 70% of the age 70+ population retain their driver's license, although a percentage of that group no longer drive. However, chronic health problems and physical and mental limitations that affect the older population, especially the 85+ age group, can inhibit or altogether eliminate a person's ability to drive safely. As a result they may need to find an alternative transportation option that can meet their needs.

Community Action. In recent years, community-based organizations such as churches, interfaith groups, senior centers, volunteer groups, and community groups have stepped up to the plate to organize and operate a wide range of transportation services that can meet some of the needs of seniors. They know that many of the transit services in their community are not "senior friendly" and they also know that the services they create must be what one might describe as "low cost and low maintenance". While some of these groups have chosen to purchase vehicles and hire paid drivers, many have traveled the route of creating volunteer driver programs. Although volunteer driver programs take many forms, their main ingredients include individuals who volunteer themselves and their automobiles to take seniors (and sometimes people with disabilities) to life-sustaining and life-enriching appointments and activities.

National Survey. In 2004 and 2005 the Beverly Foundation surveyed volunteer driver programs and volunteer drivers themselves and discovered that: they provide transportation at a variety of times of the day and week, to a variety of places, for a variety of purposes, with a variety of drivers.* However, they also provide a wide array of "supportive" transportation services. For example, it may be a volunteer driver who takes Mrs. Smith to the grocery store and drives Mr. Jones to the pharmacy; who helps Mr. Brown with his groceries or stays with Mrs. Taylor while she visits the doctor; who carries Mrs. Simpson's groceries into her house, or who helps Mr. Wallace into the dialysis unit; who helps Mrs. Rose to her door, and who helps Mr. Baylor up the steps of the van. These kinds of activities take time, sometimes require patience, and often cost money. However, they appear to be the kinds of activities that are exceptionally enjoyable and gratifying for the people who volunteer to drive, and make the difference in the ability of some seniors to get out of their homes.

**The volunteer driver survey was undertaken in conjunction with the Beverly Foundation's annual STAR Search survey. STAR Search was initiated in 2000 to identify and document STPs (Supplemental Transportation Programs for seniors) in America. In 2004 and 2005, STPs that responded to the survey were invited to include surveys of Volunteer Drivers. A total of 714 unduplicated surveys were submitted. An outcome of the 2004 survey was the publication (based on a request for stories about driving older adults) of a book Stories From The Road: Stories from the Heart.¹⁵*

Driver Profile. The volunteer drivers surveyed came from all walks of life. Some were homemakers who brought their children along for the ride, and others were empty nesters who were looking for something to do since after-school activities and weekend soccer games were a thing of the past. Some were students who were just beginning their adulthood, and others were retirees who had completed their paid work life. Some were people who leased big expensive luxury cars, and others owned old, utility vans. Some were CEOs who squeezed in an hour or two a week between appointments, and others were hourly employees who have more time than money. Some were mobile and run marathons, and others were disabled and had to use wheel chairs and assistive devices themselves. Some went to church every Sunday and others drove someone else to church every Sunday.

Chart 7 provides data on volunteer drivers discussed in this paper.

Chart 7. Profile of Volunteer Drivers

<p>Total Number of Volunteer Drivers - 714</p> <p>Age: Drivers age 65+ - 63%</p> <p>Gender: Female - 51% Male - 49%</p> <p>Education: Graduated College - 51%</p> <p>Household Income: \$30,000+ - 64%</p> <p>Marital Status: Married - 68%</p> <p>Ethnic Background: Caucasian - 96%</p> <p>Driving a Car 50+ Years Driving - 54%</p>	<p>Three Most Frequent Trips Medical, Shopping, Personal</p> <p>Most Common Driver Assistance Door-to-door, Hand-to-Hand, Escort</p> <p>Top Three Reasons for Volunteering Help Others, Give Back Do Something Meaningful</p> <p>Major Challenge: Finding Time to Drive</p>
---	---

Driver Demographics. As Chart 7 indicates, volunteer drivers who responded to the survey had considerable experience in life. However, the chart does not tell the whole story. While the majority (63%) were age 65+, a large number (23%) could be called boomers (56-64), and only a very small number (4%) were age forty and under. While the majority (51%) had graduated from college, the vast majority (91%) also graduated from high school and/or engaged in higher educational opportunities. While the majority (64%) had a household income of \$30,000 or more, 36% had a household income of \$30,000 or below and 19% had a household income of more than \$75,000. The majority (68%) were married, 18% were widowed, 10% were divorced or separated, and 4% had never married.

Driving Experience. The driving experience of those responding to the survey is noteworthy. While 54% had driven fifty or more years, a hefty 80% had driven for forty or more years. The limited percent of people age 55 and under (14%) may account for the fact that only 14% had driven 20-40 years and only 7% less than 20 years. However, in addition to having considerable driving experience, they also indicated that driving meant a lot to them. Chart 8 includes single word response to a question that asked for one word that described what driving meant to them.

Chart 8. What Driving Means To Volunteer Drivers

Most Frequent Responses	Less Frequent Responses	Least Frequent Responses
Independence	Necessity	Flexibility
Freedom	Enjoyment	Satisfaction
Mobility	Social Responsibility	Safety
Transportation	Privilege	Control
Convenience	Fun	Travel

The Typical Driver. Just what type of people volunteer to drive? Chart 9 provides a glimpse at the type of people who volunteer to drive and the type of people targeted by organizations to serve as volunteer drivers.

Chart 9. People Who Volunteer To Drive

Retirees	Employed People	Volunteers
Active retirees	Teachers	Active volunteers
University retirees	Business leaders	Meals on wheels drivers
Retired accountants	People 55+ and employed	Parents
Retired executives	Active military	Stay-at-home parents
Retired truck drivers	Small business owners	Young parents
Retired nurses	Part-time employees	Friends
Retirees moving to town	Self-employed	Friends of riders
Retired teachers	Night workers	Friends of drivers

It would be difficult to say that drivers who responded to the survey represent the typical volunteer driver. Without question, this is the first large sample of volunteers who drive, especially who drive older adults. And, the fact that the survey represents 714 drivers from 40 states and 367 communities may suggest some degree of representativeness in the composite group of respondents. However, characteristics identified in the profile, such as the education background, income level, and ethnic status may reflect the nature of programs with which the drivers were associated and their communities of residence more than the volunteer driver force in general. Thus, caution should be used in generalizing the results of this survey. There is, however, evidence that their roles, activities, contributions and experiences are consistent with what we know of volunteer drivers across the country.

sential element of “senior friendliness” for many older adults, and in many instances the only means of providing it is by involving volunteer drivers and escorts.

Part 4

THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS

Volunteer drivers tend to commit themselves to becoming a driver for a neighbor, a friend, or a complete stranger; and often continue for many years. They are especially important in making it possible for older adults to be part of the community. In urban areas they supplement existing public and paratransit services. In suburban areas they enable community groups to involve local residents in helping their neighbors. In rural areas they are especially dedicated, as each trip may require many miles of driving and many hours of assistance.

Volunteer drivers who responded to the survey, identified many of the specific ways they contributed to the community.

They Are Available. As Chart 10 indicates, driver availability to provide rides is much greater in the daytime and on weekdays than in the evenings and on weekends. That such a low percentage of the respondents to the survey drive in the evenings and on weekends implies that older adults who are dependent on volunteer drivers for their transportation could find it difficult to participate in evening activities. And, although many of those surveyed drive for interfaith groups, Chart

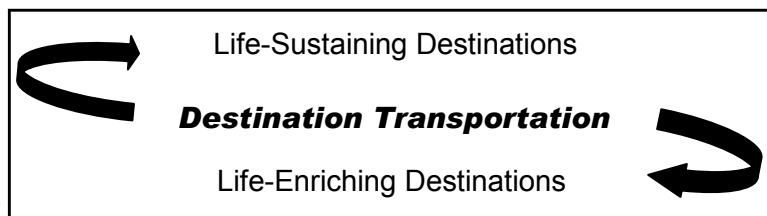
Chart 10. Availability to Provide Rides

Daytime (99%)	Weekdays (99%)
Evenings (32%)	Saturdays (37%)
24/7 (10%)	Sundays (27%)

10 indicates that only a small percent provide transportation on Sundays. According to program administrators, Sunday transportation services often are not necessary, because churches generally provide transportation for older adults in their congregations.

They Go To Many Destinations. Volunteer drivers say their most frequent trips are related to medical services. While some programs only provide transportation to non-emergency medical services, others take their passengers grocery shopping, to the pharmacy, to the library, to the bank, to visit a friend, to volunteer activities, to church, and even to the barber shop and hairdresser. What is important is that volunteer drivers make it possible for older adults to travel to a variety of life-sustaining and life-enriching destinations, and quite often such destination travel is only

Chart 11. Destinations



possible because of the assistance and support provided by volunteer drivers.

They Assist Passengers. It appears that perhaps the greatest challenge faced by transportation services is providing the assistance needed by the older adults who so

desperately need them to navigate the community. When driving older adults, quite often volunteer drivers' most important role is to provide physical assistance. Sometimes they even stay with the passenger at the destination. As Chart 12 indicates, a very high percentage of respondents to the Beverly Foundation survey provide assistance through the door and at the destination, while an even higher percentage provides important physical assistance to and from the vehicle. The assistance provided by volunteer drivers is often the very reason for the existence of volunteer driver programs. Why? Because public and paratransit services, and taxi and private services generally cannot make these types of labor intensive and time consuming assistance available due to real and perceived risk and liability.

Chart 12. Assistance and Support

Door-to-door (93%)	Stay-at-destination (77%)
Hand-to-hand (89%)	Door-thru-door (67%)

They Give Their Time. The vast majority of respondents to the survey (85%) reported their age as 56 or more which suggests that people who volunteer to drive tend to do so in their middle and later years. Also there is evidence that their length of service is substantial. For example, only 13% of the survey respondents had volunteered to drive for less than 1 year, while 33% had volunteered for 1-3 years, 24% had volunteered for 4-6 years, and 30% had volunteered for 7 or more years.

Not only do they continue for many years, they also contribute considerable time. For example, when asked their time commitment per week, 55% said they committed 1-5 hours, 19% 6-10 hours, 10% 11-20 hours, and 6% more than 20 hours. Also, 10% indicated they committed less than one hour per week, were on call, or contributed on a weekly or monthly basis.

They Loan Their Vehicles. While some volunteer drivers use program owned vehicles, the majority drive their own vehicles. Potential liability and the need for insurance coverage for the driver, the passenger, and the automobile are often points of discussion for prospective volunteer drivers. While programs that field volunteer drivers generally purchase an umbrella policy to provide coverage in the event of property damage or bodily injury, the volunteer driver's automobile insurance policy generally is the first line of coverage. And, although some people express concern that the automobile insurance rates will increase when people volunteer to drive, insurance is based on miles driven and not on who is riding in the automobile. Therefore, insurance rates only increase if volunteer driving adds substantial number of miles to a driver's annual miles driven.

They Socialize With Their Passengers. While the topic of socialization was not addressed directly in the survey, responses to various questions reveal how socialization is a main ingredient of the volunteer driving experience. As a group, respondents ranked "getting to know riders" as the third greatest satisfaction that volunteer driving provided them. Also several respondents described what it meant to drive a person with words such as "interesting people", "conversations", "friendship", and "outreach".

Many would agree with the volunteer driver who wrote that “the best part of being a volunteer driver is the experience of meeting new and different people”. Of course volunteer drivers are not the only ones who benefit from the opportunity to socialize because elders are the main beneficiaries. In fact, many older adults say that the journey is often more important than the destination.

They Save Money. In addition to contributing their time rather than money, their contributions also save money. It is said that paid driver salaries often comprise as much as 50% of the budget of a transportation service. While it also is said that “volunteers are not free”, transportation programs that involve volunteer drivers have greatly reduced operating costs, even when they are reimbursed for mileage. For example, in 2006, a paratransit service in the northeast reported a per trip cost of \$37.94 for its demand response paratransit service and a per trip cost of \$7.73 for its volunteer driver transportation service.

They Fill The Gaps. Most traditional transportation and paratransit services were designed to address system and destination needs rather than human service needs. Many were not organized to provide service across jurisdictional boundaries. Few were designed to provide assistance and support to passengers. Existing service systems that provide point-to-point and even curb-to-curb transit often cannot be accessed by seniors with physical limitations or memory loss. Additionally, costs for paid staff, vehicles and equipment, and insurance can dramatically limit the specialized door-to-door or door-through-door services that may be needed.

In sum, gaps in transportation services are the reason volunteer drivers are becoming an increasingly important resource for older adults, their families, and their communities. Their contributions fill many transportation gaps across the country because...

...they offer their services at a variety of times of the day and week.

...they provide rides to many locations.

...they assist passengers who have physical and mental limitations.

...they often use their own vehicles without reimbursement.

...they offer important socialization.

...they not only contribute time...they also save money.



PART 5

THEIR MOTIVATIONS AND SATISFACTION

Not only do volunteer drivers make major contributions to the older adults they drive and consequently to the communities in which they live, their success as volunteers is related to their ability to meet challenges, to their fulfillment of purpose, and to the satisfaction they receive.

Prior Volunteer Involvement. In responding to a question about prior volunteer involvement, 63% of the volunteer drivers indicated that they had volunteered prior to becoming a volunteer driver. Of that group, 35% had volunteered for a few years, 45% had volunteered many years, and 20% had been lifelong volunteers. In a separate question related to their tradition of volunteering, 58% indicated they had a tradition of volunteering with their church, and 51% indicated they had a tradition of volunteered with their family and community respectively.

Driving Challenges. In order to identify challenges faced by volunteer drivers in providing transportation to older adults, the survey asked respondents to rate six specific challenges from 1 (least difficult) to 5 (most difficult). Chart 13 indicates their mean ratings for all six challenges. In addition to their ratings, the drivers also identified other challenges in providing transportation services such as passenger aggressiveness; helping people use wheelchairs; not getting enough personal information; and passengers who need help beyond transportation. The results of both questions would suggest that the rated or identified challenges were not so severe that they caused respondents to stop volunteering to drive.

Chart 13. Challenges with People....

who are incontinent (3.32)
with dementia (3.23)
with cognitive limitations (2.64)
who require assistive devices (2.05)
who have difficulty carrying loads (2.00)
who have limited visual acuity (1.86)

Motivations For Volunteering To Drive. Volunteer drivers surveyed provided transportation to older adults in conjunction with a human service agency or transportation service. Not only did they say why they volunteered to drive, they also indicated why they thought people did not volunteer to drive.

Why They Volunteer to Drive While some drive short distances for short periods of time, others drive many miles and spent many hours with their passengers. Regardless of where they went or how long they drove, volunteer drivers said they drove because it gave them the opportunity to meet wonderful people, to have interesting experiences, to contribute time rather than money, and to give back to the community. Chart 14 provides their top five responses to a multiple choice question about their reasons for volunteering to drive. Their responses reinforce the notion that volunteer-

ing is more about doing something for others than for personal gain. Interestingly, only 12% of those responding to the survey associated their volunteer driving with “a sense of duty”. While many gave somewhat similar responses in a separate open-ended question, a large number of volunteer drivers indicated that they drove for a variety of personal reasons such as being tired of being bored, because they had time on their hands, because they enjoyed driving, and because they wanted to do something worthwhile in retirement.

Chart 14. Reasons for Volunteering

To help others (89%)
To do something meaningful (73%)
To give back (52%)
To stay active (29%)
Because I was asked (20%)

Why People Do Not Volunteer to Drive While it is difficult to know why people do not do things, the volunteer drivers surveyed appeared to think that *not having time* and *being too busy* were the major reasons people do not volunteer to drive. They also cited other reasons such as family and health-related issues, a lack of awareness, and a lack of interest. A large number of respondents also suggested that some people do not volunteer to drive because they do not want to be involved, because they fear commitment, because they are shy or selfish, because they lack compassion, or because they are *takers* rather than *givers*.

Satisfaction They Receive. The reason volunteer drivers continue their involvement for long periods of time, and contribute so many hours may be related to the satisfaction they receive. The areas of satisfaction in Chart 15 were identified in volunteer

Chart 15. Greatest Satisfaction

Helping people (89%)
Feeling Needed (89%)
Getting to Know Riders (60%)
Donating Time Rather Than Money (39%)
Appreciation and Recognition (21%)

driver responses to a list of 14 choices on satisfaction. Interestingly, they are similar to the what volunteers in general identify as satisfying. The possible satisfaction that volunteer drivers seldom identified were related to personal habits and logistics such as having a regular schedule, being able to drive personal vehicle, getting out of the house, passengers being

on time, and learning new driving skills. It is likely that the satisfaction from volunteering to drive is the reason volunteer driver program managers say...

“Volunteer drivers are the hardest volunteers to recruit,
but once you’ve got them, you’ve got them.”

Clues To Their Success. In an open-ended question that asked what they believed was the key to their success in being a volunteer driver, respondents identified links with their motivations and their satisfaction. However, their most frequent responses related to outlook about being able to drive, their attitude or behavior toward their passengers and their methods of performing logistics. Chart 16 identifies their most frequent responses in each of the three categories identified above.

Chart 16. Clues to Volunteer Driver Success

Outlook (about volunteering to drive)

Ability
Willingness
Enjoyment

Behavior (toward passengers)

Friendship
Patience
Listening
Kindness
Cheerfulness

Method (performance of logistics)

Being on time
Being dependable
Being a safe driver

In summary, not only do volunteer drivers take passengers from point A to point B, provide them with considerable assistance, and encounter a variety of challenges, they play a variety of other roles such as friend, listener, communicator, and advocate. In addition, they bring considerable volunteer experience and driving expertise to their task and are able to tie their motivations for driving to the satisfaction they receive from their contributions. Little wonder that volunteer drivers often are referred to as “the heart and soul” of any transportation service in which they are involved.



Conclusion

Volunteer drivers play an important role in the lives of older adults who are dependent on community transportation to get them where they need and want to go. They not only are solutions of today, they may be the hope of the future in providing transportation to older adults. The conclusion will review the results of the discussion and identify prospects for the future.

They supplement what others cannot do.
They promote the tradition of volunteerism.
They bring considerable experience to their job.
They make a variety of contributions.
They receive considerable satisfaction.
Prospects for the future.

They Supplement What Others Cannot Do. The discussion in **Part I** pointed out the importance of mobility to older adults, the special health and mobility conditions of the “old-old”, and the challenges they present to traditional transportation services. It also discussed the enormous challenges faced by our nation’s public and paratransit services, and even ADA paratransit services, in providing transportation to the general public and to people with major disabilities. Although senior transit riders are often grouped with people who have disabilities, their limitations may make it impossible for them to use public transportation but may not warrant their use of expensive demand response services.

Volunteer drivers offer a community-based solution by providing low-cost assistance and support that generally is beyond the scope and budget of most other transportation services in a community. In this way volunteer drivers both complement and supplement traditional transportation services in a community and thus offer a transportation solution for today and tomorrow.

They Promote Volunteerism. **Part 2** noted the local nature and organizational emphasis of formal volunteer opportunities; the income and education levels of volunteers; the most frequent types of activities in which volunteers engage; and many benefits that accrue to society and to the individual. Special emphasis was placed on volunteer involvement on the part of boomers and older adults.

Volunteer drivers provide local service through local, community-based organizations, many of them religious in nature. Their educational and income levels are exceptionally high; and in addition to dedicating considerable time, they frequently dedicate their automobile. Although boomers involvement is limited, older adults are involved in great numbers in this important volunteer activity. In this way, volunteer drivers represent many of the organizational and social underpinnings of volunteerism.

They Bring Experience and Expertise. The discussion of experience included in **Part 3** provides a profile of volunteer drivers. In addition to education, income, and marital experience, they also bring extensive life experience and many years of driving experience to their volunteer job. While it is difficult to know at what age they began volunteering to drive, it is clear that a very large number either begin or continue as volunteer drivers after they reach age 65. Perhaps one of the reasons they volunteer to drive is because they enjoy driving and the ability to drive holds intrinsic value for them with respect to independence, freedom, mobility and convenience.

Volunteer drivers bring a certain level of expertise gained from many years of driving their cars. Not only do they dedicate many hours and drive for long periods of time, they continue to drive in their Medicare and retirement years. In this way, volunteer drivers bring life experience and volunteer expertise to their volunteer job.

They Make A Variety of Contributions. **Part 4** identified eight types of volunteer driver contributions. While they often determine the nature of their contributions, in large part many contributions they are able to make are dependent on the organization and design of the program in which they volunteer. Examples include their time of availability, the destinations they serve, the type of assistance they provide to passengers, whether they contribute their vehicles, and ultimately how much money they save compared to the cost of other transportation services.

Volunteer drivers make a variety of contributions to their passengers. When they volunteer to drive in formal, organized volunteer driver programs and services, their contributions are documented and publicized so that, in addition to passengers getting where they need and want to go, the organization receives credit and the community is aware of the importance of their contribution. Thus, volunteer drivers can compound their contribution if they become involved in formal organizations that provide transportation.

They Receive Considerable Satisfaction. The discussion in **Part 5** included both motivations and satisfaction. It is interesting to note that their reasons for driving reflected a desire to do something worthwhile (help others, do something meaningful, give back). However, in addition to helping people, two of the reasons they were satisfied related to their volunteer activity of driving (feeling needed, getting to know the riders). Perhaps the best measure of compensation is the fact that volunteer drivers continue their involvement for a long period of time.

It is clear that volunteer driver compensation is the satisfaction they receive from their unpaid job of volunteering to drive. Thus, transportation services that involve volunteer drivers can benefit from ensuring that they understand what it is that motivates people to become volunteer drivers and what satisfies people who already drive and ensure that avenues are available for meeting volunteer expectations and creating satisfying volunteer experiences.

Prospects For The Future. In **Part 2**, five actions were outlined for advancing volunteering by all Americans. Similar actions are worth considering for advancing volunteer driving in America.

- (1) Ensure that volunteer driver opportunities are interesting and satisfying to older adults in order to encourage greater involvement, and contribute to their recruitment and retention as volunteers.
- (2) Identify ways to involve boomers as volunteer drivers in order to ensure their long term involvement for the earlier a person begins volunteering, the longer they will continue to volunteer.
- (3) Expand the involvement of transportation service providers including public and community transit, senior transit, and specialized transit as well as new organizations in creating volunteer driver programs for the majority of volunteer activities occur within organizations at the local level.
- (4) Promote public policy and private funding initiatives at the national and state levels to promote the message of volunteer driving and mobilize organizations and individuals to the agenda.
- (5) And finally, ‘the ask’ will be important to involving people as volunteer activities. Although, volunteer drivers did not identify “because I was asked” as a reason for volunteering, research by the Beverly Foundation indicates that volunteer drivers view the “personal ask” as the most effective avenue for their recruitment.

In summary, volunteer drivers are important today, however they may be even more important tomorrow. Population projections indicate a dramatic expansion in the older adult population, especially those in the “old-old” age group. It is a population with considerable needs for transportation assistance and support that are seldom available within traditional transportation services, and it is unlikely that they will be able to provide such assistance and support. One reason is that it is unlikely that funding will be available to provide it to the extent it will be needed. Another reason is that most traditional transit services were not designed to provide it. Therefore....

*the involvement of volunteer drivers
and the organizations that enable them to provide transportation services
may be the solution of today
and the hope of the future
for meeting the transportation needs of older adults.*

Resources

References

1. Foley, D. J., Heimovitz, H. K., Guralnik, J. M., Brock, D.B. (2002). Driving life expectancy of persons aged 70 years, *Research and Practice*, 92(8), 1284-1289.
2. Kerschner, H. & Aizenverg, R. (1999). *Transportation in an Aging Society. Focus Group Project*. www.beverlyfoundation.org
3. Neugarten, B. (1974). Age Groups in American Society and the Rise of the Young-Old. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 415 (1), 187-198.
4. US Census Bureau, National Population Projections www.census.gov/populationprojections/usinterimproj/natprojtab02a.xl
5. Lawton, M.P. and Brody, E.M. (1969). Assessment of Older People: Self-Maintaining and Instrumental Activities of Daily Living, *Gerontologist*, 9, 179-186.
6. Rosenbloom, S. (2003). The Mobility Needs of Older Americans: Implications for Transportation Reauthorization, *The Brookings Institution Series on Transportation Reform* www.brookings.edu
7. Independent Sector (2001). *Giving and Volunteering in the United States*, www.IndependentSector.org
8. Independent Sector (2008). *The Dollar Value of Volunteer Time*, www.IndependentSector.org
9. Corporation for National Service (2007). *Facts and Figures about Volunteering in America: 2007 City Trends and Rankings*. www.nationalservice.gov
10. AARP (2003). *Multicultural Study. Time and Money: An In-Depth Look at 45+ volunteers and donors*, www.aarp.org
11. Corporation for National Service (2006). *Volunteer Growth in America: A Review of Trends since 1974*, www.nationalservice.gov
12. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2007). *Volunteering in the United States*, www.bls.gov/cps
13. Corporation for National and Community Service (2007). *Keeping Boomers Volunteering*, www.nationalservice.gov
14. Independent Sector (2000). *America's Senior Volunteers*, www.IndependentSector.org
15. Beverly Foundation (2006). *Stories from the Road, Stories from the Heart*, www.beverlyfoundation.org

Other Resources

- Fried, L. et al. (2004). A social model for health promotion for an aging population: Initial evidence on the Experience Corps model. *Journal of Urban Health*, 81, No. 1.
- Hinterlong, J. & Williamson, A. (2007). The effects of civic engagement of current and future cohorts of older Americans. *Generations*, 30, No. 4. pp. 10-17.
- Johnson, R.W., & Schaner, S.G. (2005). The effects of volunteering on the physical and mental health of older people. *Research on Aging*, 27 (1): 31-55.
- Morrison, E. K. (1983). *Working with volunteers*. Fisher Books, AZ.
- Morrow-Howell, N., et al. (2003). Effects of volunteering on the well-being of older adults. *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences* 58B (3): S137-145.
- Musick, M.A., Herzog, A.R. & House, J.S. (1999). Volunteering and mortality among older adults: Findings from a national sample. *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences* 54B (3): S173-180.
- Rozario, P. (2007). Volunteering among current cohorts of older adults and baby boomers. *Generations*, Vol. xxx, No. 4. pp. 31-36. Winter 2006-2007.
- Stenzel, A. & Feeney, M. (1976). *Volunteer Training and Development*. N.Y. Seabury Press.
- Experience Corps (2003). *Fact Sheet on Aging in America*, www.experiencecorps.org
- Experience Corps (2007). *Leading with experience: an Experience Corps tool kit*, www.experiencecorps.org.
- STP Exchange: www.stpexchange.org





Located in Pasadena, CA, 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 volunteer drivers please visit
www.beverlyfoundation.org