

# **Volunteer Driver TurnKey Kit**

**Planning Implementation Evaluation**



## WHITE PAPER ON VOLUNTEER DRIVERS

### **Introduction**

Volunteer drivers may be the hope of the future in providing transportation for seniors.

### **The Challenge**

America must address numerous challenges in meeting the transportation needs of seniors. Providing assurance to seniors, their caregivers, and the public at large that transportation options will be “senior friendly” is a key requirement. The 5 A’s of Senior Friendly Transportation provide frequently referenced criteria or standards. The 5 A’s Criteria include: a) availability - getting people where they need to go; (b) adaptability - offering assurance of efficiency and effectiveness; (c) accessibility - providing needed support; (d) affordability - delivering service at a reasonable cost; and (e) acceptability – ensuring dignity and self-esteem.<sup>1</sup>

Meeting the “senior friendly” requirement can be difficult for public transportation and 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 and eliminate the availability of quality of life transportation. The inability to adapt schedules and reduce wait times can lead to frustration and annoyance on the part of senior riders. 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. Costs for paid staff, vehicles and equipment, and insurance can dramatically limit the specialized door-to-door or door-thru-door services that are needed. Drivers who treat seniors with insensitivity or rudeness can mean the difference in seniors getting where they need to go and choosing to stay at home.

Providing “senior friendly” transportation is not just a problem today, it also is one of tomorrow. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, in 2000, 35 million Americans, or 12.4 percent of the total U.S. population, were aged 65 and over. The Census Bureau projects that this age group will double to 70 million people by 2030, representing 20 percent of the total population. It also projects that the “oldest of the old” (those aged 85 and older) will increase from 4.2 million in 2000 to 8.9 million in 2030. In 2030 it is expected that one in five Americans will be over age 65 and one in eleven will be over age 85. According to a recent GAO report, those seniors with poor health, a disability, or have a limited income may face more difficulty finding and accessing transportation.<sup>2</sup>



Human service and transportation experts agree that the “old old” population is very likely to be dependent on others for rides due to physical and mental limitations that can make it difficult, if not impossible, for them to drive their cars. These same physical and mental limitations can make it difficult for them to walk, lift, see, hear, climb, or in general to do the activities necessary to independently access a transportation service that is not senior friendly.

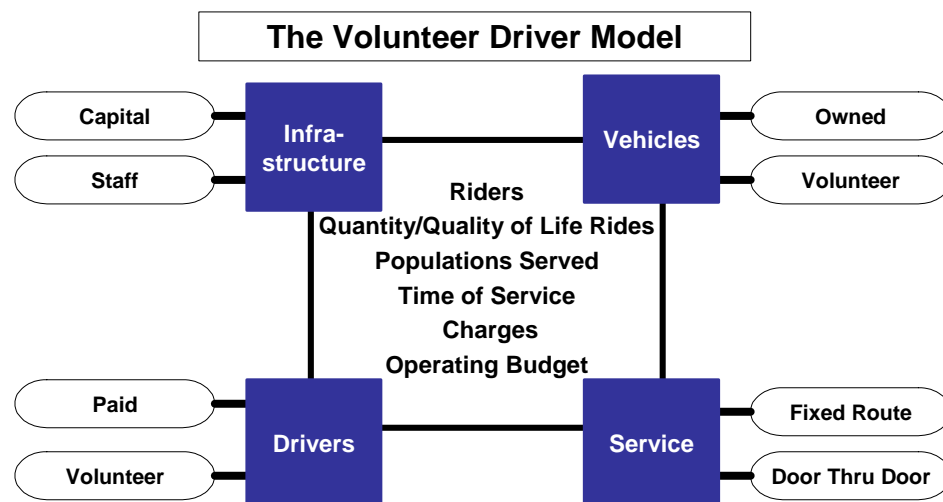
## The Solution

Vehicles used in public and paratransit services generally are driven by paid drivers. The cost of paying drivers to provide transportation that meets the “senior friendly” criteria can be prohibitive. In some services, driver salaries constitute up to fifty percent of the budget. For many human service providers, and some public and paratransit services, involving volunteer drivers is viewed as an important solution to the inability of paid driver programs to meet the financial constraints and service needs of older adults.

Today, volunteer driver programs are included in the tapestry of many community-based transportation options for seniors. Volunteer driver programs supplement the human resource base and address funding constraints. They make it possible for seniors to stop driving when they want or need to. They involve members of the community who are able and willing to provide transportation. They enable older adults to get where they want to go. Volunteer drivers and volunteer driver programs appear to be the hope of the future for ensuring that community-based transportation options can become more “senior friendly” for today’s and tomorrow’s older adults. Now is the time to develop new and innovative methods for attracting and involving volunteers.

## The Volunteer Driver Model

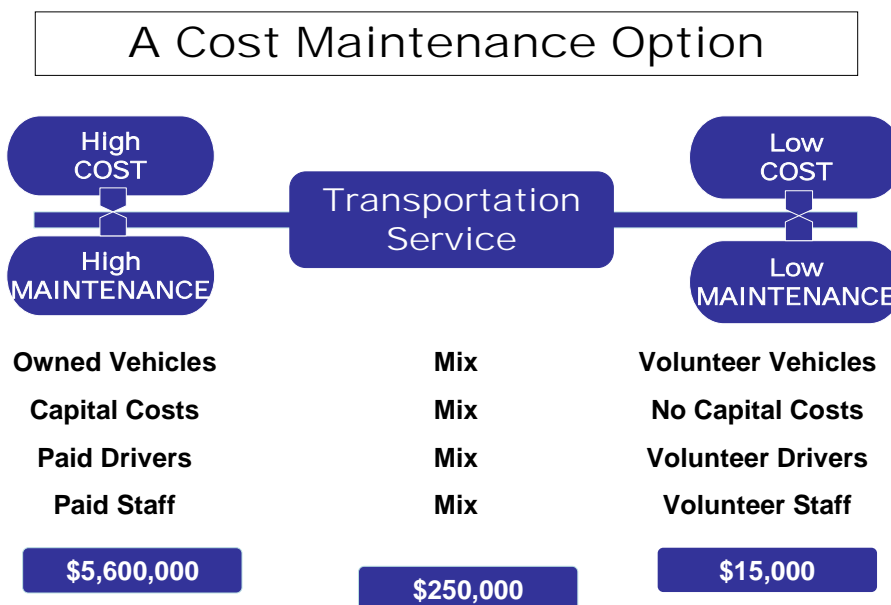
The volunteer driver model, like most transportation services includes four primary elements: infrastructure, drivers, vehicles, and services. The infrastructure, in turn, serves riders, provides rides, organizes a schedule, serves an area, and operates within a budget.





What is important to realize is that each of the elements of the model can vary according to how the volunteer driver program is organized. For example, a program may decide not to hire paid drivers, not to purchase vehicles, not to have paid staff or not to provide door-through-door or escort service. It also may decide to serve seniors and others, to provide both essential and non-essential rides, to provide service 24/7, to provide rides beyond the county boundaries and to operate within a budget without charging a fee.

Volunteer driver programs vary greatly with respect to cost of operation and maintenance. To a large extent, the differences are related to the number of rides and the nature of service provided. However, the differences also can be related to the way the program is organized. For example, capital costs, vehicle costs, and paid staff and driver costs all can affect the costs and maintenance (and budget) of a transportation service.



### Representative Programs

What do we know about community-based programs that recruit and support volunteer drivers? The following ten volunteer transportation programs represent a variety of methods of organizing and delivering transportation services to senior riders.

- West Austin Caregivers (Austin, TX)
- Encinitas Out and About Senior Transportation Program (Encinitas, CA)
- RSVP of Central Oklahoma (Oklahoma City, OK)
- COAST (Colfax, WA)
- Keowee Cares (Salem, SC)



Effingham County FISH Service (Effingham, IL)  
Looking Glass Community Services (Laingsburg, MI)  
Barton County Interfaith Volunteers in Action (Great Bend, KS)  
TRIP (Riverside, CA)

These and many other examples of volunteer driver programs can be found in the Beverly Foundation directory of STPs (Supplemental Transportation Programs for seniors) in the Beverly Foundation Resource STORE.<sup>3</sup>

### **Volunteer Driver Data**

What do we know about volunteer driver programs and the work of volunteer drivers? The Beverly Foundation's annual STAR Search surveys have produced considerable information on both the programs and their volunteer drivers.

STAR Search 2000 – 2003 produced the data included in a recently published report, Supplemental Transportation Programs for seniors (STPS) in America.<sup>4</sup> According to the report, volunteer driver programs tend to use the vehicle of the volunteer driver; typically provide door-to-door, hand-to-hand, and to a lesser degree, door-thru-door services; and generally do not charge rider fees. They tend to receive a large percentage of their funding from grants; emphasize medical transportation (but many also provide general purpose transportation); and because of the assistance they provide, may identify drivers as transportation escorts.

Data from the Beverly Foundation's STAR Search 2004 survey (which targeted volunteer driver programs and volunteer drivers) indicate that volunteer drivers usually drive their personal vehicles; generally commit one to five hours per week; and are available to drive mostly on weekdays (although almost half are available to drive in the evenings and on weekends). Their major concerns are finding time to drive, liability in case of an accident, and handling disabled passengers. Volunteer drivers indicate that helping people, feeling needed, getting to know the riders, and being able to donate their time rather than money gives them the greatest satisfaction in their driving experiences. The majority of the drivers in the study were age 55 and over and many acknowledged that one day, they might become riders. While reimbursement for expenses was important to them, recognition was just as important.<sup>5</sup>

These and other data tell us that transportation services provided by volunteer drivers offer many advantages in that they: (a) tap into the human resources in a community; (b) offer the flexibility to provide supportive services; (c) provide added joy to the rider; (d) enable the driver to "give back" to the community; and (e) can expand service and save money. However, in order to be successful in organizing and maintaining a volunteer driver program, it is necessary to: (a) eliminate concerns about liability; (b) secure insurance at a reasonable cost; (c) recruit and retain volunteer drivers; (d) provide effective volunteer driver



management; and (e) raise funds to support program operations and volunteer driver reimbursement or recognition.

## **Key Questions**

What do we need to know about the experience of volunteer driver programs and the rationale for volunteer driving? The following questions may be helpful in developing strategies for expanding the involvement of volunteer drivers and the programs that support them.

### Volunteer Transportation Programs

- What liability concerns do organizations express?
- Are those concerns real or perceived?
- How can those concerns be addressed?
- What are the insurance issues and the viable insurance solutions?
- What constitutes risk management and what are the central factors in practicing good risk management?
- What are the important considerations in recruiting, training, and evaluating volunteer drivers?
- What are important considerations in reimbursing them for expenses?
- What are the important considerations in coordinating volunteer transportation programs with other transportation systems and services?

### Volunteer Drivers

- Why do volunteer drivers drive?
- What kinds of services do they provide?
- Who are volunteer drivers?
- What are their expectations?
- What satisfaction do they receive?
- Is support for the costs they incur important to them?
- What liability concerns do potential and active volunteer drivers express?
- Are those concerns real or perceived?
- How can those concerns be addressed?
- What are the insurance issues and the viable insurance solutions?

The answers to many of these questions can be found in materials included in the TurnKey Kit and in other information located on the Beverly Foundation website: [www.beverlyfoundation.org](http://www.beverlyfoundation.org)



## References

- (1) Kerschner, H. & Aizenberg, R. (2001). *The 5 A's of Senior Friendly Transportation*: Supplemental transportation for seniors: Washington, D.C.: The Beverly Foundation and the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety.
- (2) General Accounting Office 04-971 (2004). *Transportation-disadvantaged seniors: efforts to enhance senior mobility could benefit from additional guidance and information. Report to the Chairman, Special Committee on Aging, U.S. Senate.*
- (3) Beverly Foundation website, [www.beverlyfoundation.org](http://www.beverlyfoundation.org)
- (4) Kerschner, H. & Westphal, E. (2004). *Supplemental transportation programs for seniors: A report on STPs in America*: Washington, DC: The Beverly Foundation and the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety.
- (5) Kerschner, H. & Pang, E. (2005). *Volunteer drivers: The hope of the future. Report on STAR Search 2004*. The Beverly Foundation: Pasadena, CA.
- (6) Kerschner, H. (2005) *Volunteer Drivers: Stories from the Road*. The Beverly Foundation, Pasadena CA.

### **THE 5 A'S OF SENIOR FRIENDLY TRANSPORTATION\***

- Availability:** Transportation exists and is available when needed (e.g., transportation is at hand, evenings and/or weekends).
- Accessibility:** Transportation can be reached and used (e.g., bus stairs can be negotiated, bus seats are high enough, van comes to the door, bus stop is reachable).
- Acceptability:** Deals with standards relating to conditions such as cleanliness (e.g., the bus is not dirty); safety (e.g., bus stops are located in safe areas); and user-friendliness (e.g., transit operators are courteous and helpful).
- Affordability:** Deals with costs (e.g., fees are affordable, fees are comparable to or less than driving a car, vouchers or coupons help defray out-of-pocket expenses).
- Adaptability:** Transportation can be modified or adjusted to meet special needs (e.g., wheelchair can be accommodated, trip chaining is possible).

\* Developed by the Beverly Foundation in 2000.