

Beverly Foundation

Fact Sheet Series Vol. 1 (6)

Volunteer Driver Programs

Highlights

- **Volunteer Organizations**
Introduces the volunteer sector in the United States
- **Volunteer Driver Programs**
Provides a brief description of the reason for and profile of volunteer driver programs
- **Organization & Sponsorship**
Describes their service characteristics and sponsorship transition
- **Value and Cost**
Details their special services and provides a cost comparison with a paratransit service
- **Risk and Insurance**
Summarizes the risk concerns and outlines insurance requirements
- **Exemplary Programs**
Includes descriptions of five volunteer driver programs

November, 2008

**For More Information Visit
www.beverlyfoundation.org**



**The Beverly Foundation
Pasadena, CA**

Volunteer Organizations

“America is great because she is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.”¹

It is said the remarkable characteristics of the United States that make it good is its volunteer spirit. This spirit is generated and conveyed by a thousands of volunteers. While national, state and local government entities sponsor many volunteer programs, the non-profit sector also offers a rich array of volunteer opportunities for Americans in and outside the United States. Below is a sampling of organizations that both facilitate and support women and men in many age groups both at home and abroad.

Volunteering Through Organizations

Peace Corps	Freedom Corps
Senior Corps	Pioneers
Youth Service America	Corporation for Nat'l service
Rotary International	Catholic Charities
US Freedom Corps	Habitat for Humanity
Meals on Wheels	US Forest Service
Big Brothers & Big Sisters	Boy Scouts of America

Volunteer Driver Programs

Volunteer driver programs have been providing transportation to older adults for more than sixty years. They are organized for many reasons. (1) Other services are not available. (2) Seniors cannot access services that are available. (3) They are inexpensive to operate. (4) They can provide transportation assistance. (5) They can get seniors where they need to go. This fact sheet discusses these and other issues related to volunteer driver programs. The information in it was gathered in the course of the Beverly Foundation's annual STAR Search surveys from 2000 through 2007.

¹ Alexis de Tocqueville

Volunteer Driver Programs for Older Adults

Many volunteer driver programs are STPs (Supplemental Transportation Programs for seniors) that provide transportation to older adults by involving volunteer drivers, and often volunteer vehicles (owned by the volunteer drivers). They are located in communities across the country; and generally are planned and implemented by local human service agencies or volunteer groups, and sometimes by transportation services. The data in this fact sheet are derived from 543 volunteer driver programs that responded to the STAR Search surveys and provide an indication of the purpose, organization, and services of volunteer driver programs across the country.

Profile of Volunteer Driver Programs

General Information

Represented States **49 + DC+PR**
 Average # Years Operation **17**
 Median Budget **\$23,450**

Senior Passenger Facts

Seniors Only **25%**
 & People w/ Disabilities **75%**
 & People w/ Dementia **26%**

Primary Service Area

Rural **69%**
 Suburban **51%**
 Urban **44%**

Income

Fees **16%**
 Rider Donations **62%**
 Grants **72%**
 Tax Income **12%**
 Other **68%**

Drivers

Volunteers Only **71%**
 Paid & Volunteer **29%**

Vehicles

Owned/Leased **21%**
 Volunteer Owned **91%**

How They're Organized

The involvement of volunteer drivers (and frequently volunteer vehicles) generally results in a low-cost alternative to traditional demand-response services offered by the paid

driver/multi-passenger vehicle methods of public transit, paratransit and community transit services. While they vary greatly in the services they provide and the manner in which they are designed, they tend to have a number of universal characteristics that are critical to their ability to meet the needs of older adults. The accompanying chart identifies several of these characteristics.

Service Characteristics

Supportive Assistance
 Low Cost or No Cost Services
 Travel to Multiple Destinations
 Ability to Cross Jurisdictions
 Customer Oriented Service

Design Characteristics

Sponsorship by Community Group
 Volunteer Drivers to Provide Assistance
 Volunteer Vehicles for Easy Access
 Staff Availability for Information
 Location in Hard to Serve Areas

When Beverly Foundation began its surveys of STPs in America, the participating

Who Sponsors Them

Volunteer Driver Program Sponsors

Public Transit Agencies
 Paratransit Services
 Community Transit Services
 Hospitals and Health Centers
 Aging and Social Services
 Volunteer and Fellowship Groups
 Churches and Interfaith Groups

volunteer driver programs tended to be non-profit organizations sponsored by community-based human service and aging service agencies, although some were sponsored by local government entities. Over the years, the sponsorship mix has changed dramatically and today, a wide range of organizations serve as sponsors of volunteer driver programs. This sponsorship transition results from the fact that volunteer driver programs: (1) are economical to operate; (2) have the ability to provide assistance and support to riders; (3) may

not be constrained by jurisdictional boundaries; (4) can meet the travel and cost requirements needed for providing transportation in rural areas and (5) offer passengers personalized socialization experiences. In other words, volunteer driver programs are increasingly viewed as a legitimate and appropriate means of providing transportation to older adults in America.

The physical and mental limitations that can make it difficult or impossible to drive a car also can make it difficult

Why They Are Important

or impossible to access traditional transportation services. For example, many seniors who do not drive may be unable to get to transit stops, to the curb, in or out of a vehicle by themselves, to travel alone or carry heavy loads, and may be unable to stay alone at a destination. Such limitations pose tremendous challenges for traditional transportation services, especially in meeting needs for providing assistance to passengers.

Assistance Comparison		
	Paid Drivers	Volunteer Drivers
Curb-to-Curb	52%	48%
Door-to-Door	64%	84%
Door-thru-Door	16%	77%
Stay at Destination	20%	78%
Escort	04%	55%

Volunteer driver programs are organized to meet many of the assistance and support challenges and thus are valuable to older adults, their family members, their friends and to public transit, paratransit and community transportation services.

The accompanying assistance comparison chart compares the type of assistance provided by paid driver programs (many of which are traditional transit services and volunteer driver programs). The paid driver assistance data is from the 2008 STAR Search survey.

What Makes Them Low Cost

Transportation services say that paid driver salaries constitute between 30 and 50 percent of their operating budget;

and vehicle purchase, operation and maintenance constitute another 20 to 30 percent. Obviously, involving volunteer drivers and volunteer vehicles results in considerable savings. Other factors such as volunteer staff, and in-kind contributions of space and equipment also result in substantial cost savings. The accompanying chart provides a comparison of the cost per 1-way ride of a demand response paratransit service and a volunteer driver program that is sponsored by that same service. Little wonder that transitional transit services are increasingly interested in organizing or at least linking with volunteer driver programs.

Cost Comparison		
Factors	Paratransit	Volunteer Driver
Budget	\$5,000,000	\$460,450
Cost Per Ride	\$37.94	\$7.73

Providing transportation will always pose risks related to

Risk Concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be a crash. • The driver and/or passenger will be injured. • Property will be damaged. • Someone will initiate a lawsuit. • Sponsor's reputation will be damaged. • Financial assets will be jeopardized. • Insurance premiums will increase.
or
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The driver will be accused of abuse related to passenger assistance.

When Risk Is A Concern

property damage and bodily injury for the service and its drivers and customers. And, providing transportation assistance, especially door-through-door assistance, will increase the normal exposure to potential liability. Although there is no evidence of frequent, or even infrequent, vehicle crashes or transportation assistance causing property damage or bodily injury, such concerns can pose a major barrier to a volunteer driver program.

While it is possible to limit risk by eliminating risky activities (e.g. door-through-door assistance); by modifying procedures (e.g. improving driver training); or by sharing the risk (e.g. linking with another service to perform risky activities) it may be necessary to retain risk. Whatever method is used, it is necessary for volunteer driver programs to purchase two types of insurance: (1) general liability coverage, personal property coverage, and coverage for officers and directors; and (2) coverage specific to the transportation service (organizational coverage and volunteer driver coverage including excess auto liability, accidental driver insurance, and volunteer liability insurance).

Five Exemplary Volunteer Driver Programs

The examples below present a variety of volunteer driver program approaches

Ride Connection - Portland, OR Ride Connection was created by TriMet, the public transit system serving Portland Metropolitan area, in the 1980s to meet the needs of seniors and people with disabilities, by coordinating transportation services provided by local social service agencies and volunteer programs. Today, it also provides system-wide training and safety programs, mobilizes volunteer ambassadors to assist public transit users, develops and secures financial, volunteer, and equipment resources, and acts as a liaison between funders and community agencies. In 2007 with a budget of \$6,500,000 it provided 374,000 rides to more than 10,500 enrolled riders through the services of more than 600 volunteer drivers. Ride Connection serves an area of 3,699 sq. mi. www.rideconnection.org

YCCAC Transportation Program - Sanford, ME The York County Community Action Corp. formed the YCCAC Transportation Program in 1969 with one van for dialysis transit. It has a service area of more than 1,000 sq. mi., 90% of which is considered rural, and operates routes with a fleet of 17 buses, 4 vans, and 2 mini-vans. In the 1980s YCCAC created a volunteer driver program to complement its regular services. In addition to being a low-cost alternative, the volunteer driver program provides the assistance needed by senior passengers and has the ability to cross city, county and even state jurisdictional boundaries. Today YCCAC's volunteer driver program has a budget of \$460,450, involves 110 volunteer drivers, averages 40 miles per one-way trip, serves 3,324 riders, and provides 59,529 rides per year. www.yccac.org

Neighbor Ride - Columbia, MD In the early 2000s when transportation was identified as one of the two main challenges faced by older adults, a local grassroots coalition, Transportation Advocates, formed a work group, and started collecting the best practices in providing transportation services to older adults. These were matched with the particular characteristics and resources of Howard County, and the result was Neighbor Ride, which started operations in 2004. Neighbor Ride involves 125 volunteer drivers, provides rides to all types of destinations to more than 750 riders, and offers door-to-door and stay-at-destination assistance. In 2007 it had an operating budget of \$137,500. www.neighborride.org

Faith in Action Caregivers - Austin, TX In 2000 eight caregivers programs in the Austin area joined together to form a collaborative to serve the Austin metropolitan area. Originally called Partners in Caregiving, it was later renamed Faith in Action Caregivers (FIAC). The role of FIAC is to foster collaboration in outreach, fundraising, volunteer recruitment, and service delivery. The eight members share the common mission of enhancing the independence of older adults which they fulfill by providing personalized transportation, the most frequent service request of older adult clients. FIAC involves 1590 volunteer drivers, provides 25,237 one-way trips per year to 2,226 enrolled drivers with a budget of \$510,552. www.faithinactioncaregivers.org

Peninsula Shepherd Senior Center - San Diego, CA Peninsula Shepherd Senior Center was organized in 1985. It is a faith-based organization and a member of Shepherds' Centers of America, and offers an "Out and About Senior Transportation Program" as part of a menu of services with a budget of \$15,000. Its major sources of funding include funds from sponsoring churches, grants, and rider donations. Peninsula Shepherd Senior Center involves two paid drivers and 30 volunteer drivers, all of whom use their own vehicles to provide rides to seniors, people with disabilities, and adults in general. It provides curb-to-curb and door-to-door as well as escort services in a service area that is suburban in nature. In 2005, Peninsula Shepherd Senior Center provided 2,500 rides to 100 passengers. **(no website available)**