



WHITE PAPER #2

BY THE BEVERLY FOUNDATION

STPs: Concepts for Practice

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STPs: Concepts for Practice introduces the background of research activities that have led to the concept and practice of STPs (Supplemental Transportation Programs for Seniors), and discusses several of the new ideas from the research that provides a conceptual foundation to the notion of STPs and to their reason for being.

Research and Results

While the Beverly Foundation began its involvement in senior transportation in 1995, national quantitative and qualitative research undertaken in 1999 and national survey research undertaken in 2000 – 2002 have resulted in the concepts presented in this white paper. The two research efforts were undertaken through a partnership between the Beverly Foundation and the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety.

The 1999 initiative involved a national focus group project to study problems relating to senior transportation and recommendations for priority action. The project produced several findings that are consistent with current research and practice. One example is that seniors dread the time when they can no longer drive their cars. Another is that health and mobility problems that force seniors to stop driving, often make it difficult for them to access traditional forms of transportation.

The 2000, 2001, and 2002 initiatives have identified and promoted community-based supplemental transportation programs for seniors (i.e., the Star Search Awards Project). The STAR Search program has, to date, undertaken three national surveys and has produced considerable data related to Supplemental Transportation Programs for seniors. It has resulted in a comprehensive database that includes more than 300 STPs and provides information on history, location, organization, services, finances, risk management, and the problems and solutions for individual STPs and for the STPs universe as a whole.

The results of the research and data analysis have produced five important concepts relative to practice.

- #1 Seniors and their caregivers face many dilemmas regarding transportation access, and service providers and organizations face similar delivery dilemmas.
- #2 Transportation is a critical need of seniors with respect to both quantity and quality of life.
- #3 While availability to transportation is important, it does not necessarily assure that transportation options are “senior friendly”.

- #4 When communities begin thinking about how to solve the transportation problem of seniors, they should consider ways to adapt existing options as well as ways to create new ones.
- #5 Transportation options for seniors do not necessarily have to be expensive.

What follows is a discussion of each of these concepts and their relevance to senior transportation and to Supplemental Transportation Programs for Seniors (STPs).

The Dilemmas of Senior Transportation

While older adults of all ages may have difficulties with transportation, the problem with transportation can be especially acute for those in the 85+ age group. This age group is more likely than other older adults to be at risk for disability and chronic conditions and have a greater need for medical care, rehabilitation, social services, and physical support. Health and mobility conditions of this age group may not only affect their ability to drive, but may also result in a greater need for transportation assistance and support. In many instances, such conditions also may negatively affect their ability to access public transportation options.

Not only do such difficulties create a number of dilemmas for seniors, their families, and in many instances, their caregivers; they also create a number of dilemmas for organizations and communities.

Seniors and Caregivers

- How to change the view of driving as the key to life
- What to do when you can no longer drive
- Who to go to, to identify options that are available
- How to link with services and transportation to get there
- What to do when you need help with transportation
- How to get to the essentials and fun things

Organizations and Communities

- How to get services and activities to seniors
- How to get seniors to services and activities
- How to inform seniors (and caregivers) about transportation options
- How to assess the array of options
- How to adapt existing options
- Whether to organize specialized options

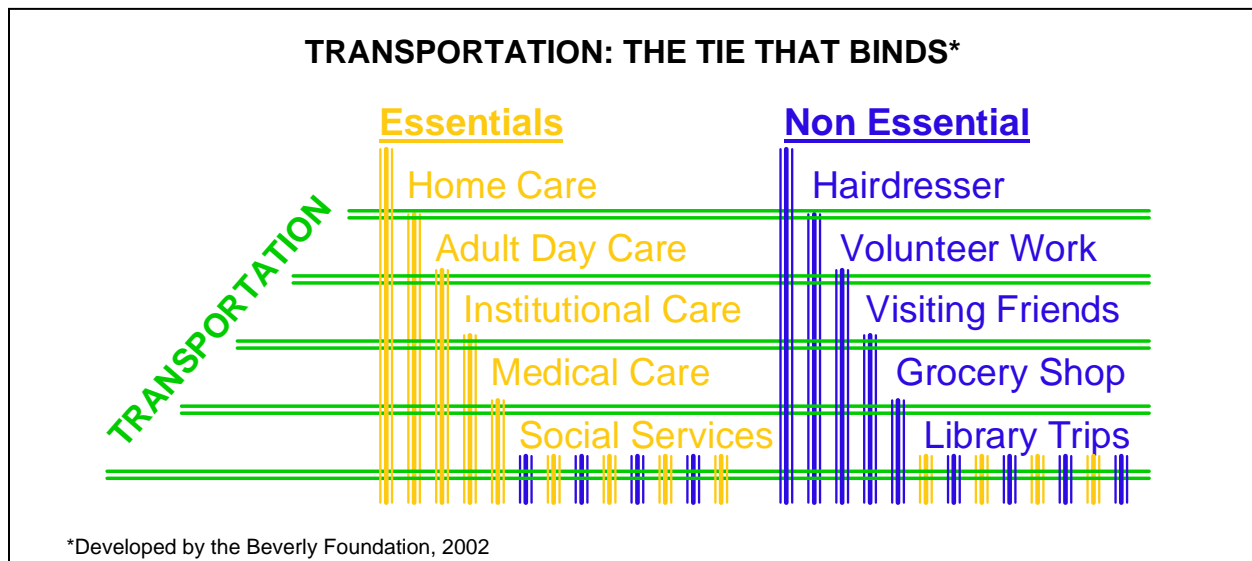
Research suggests that it is important to be cautious about how these dilemmas are addressed. Certainly, driving an automobile is the method of choice for mobility. However, there is a reality that not all older people can or should drive, and in fact many do not want to drive. For those seniors who no longer drive, delivering services to the home can be an option, but it also can create problems of isolation, loneliness, and even depression. Additionally, while many older adults need care and support, many others have the ability to be involved, to contribute and to participate in the community.

The focus group inquiries as well as the STPs survey research have confirmed that individuals and communities throughout the country are facing these dilemmas. For this reason, they are looking for alternatives to the automobile, for adaptations to traditional transportation options and for ways to develop and implement specialized transportation for seniors in the form of STPs.

The Tie That Binds

While some service providers view transportation as the avenue for getting services to seniors, transportation is in fact a two-way street that also enables people to get where they need to go. The senior mobility side of the street can both enable and prevent seniors from accessing quantity and quality of life experiences.

From the standpoint of mobility, transportation is “the tie that binds”. It binds seniors to the essentials of life (the doctor, the pharmacy, the social service program, the grocery store). It also binds seniors to the fun things in life (the movie, the hairdresser, the home of a friend, volunteer activities, education programs).



As a binding experience, transportation is more than an issue of convenience for seniors. Rather, it is a necessity of life. When older people, particularly the “old-old,” have to depend on family or friends or traditional transportation options, they often find that those options only provide access to services and support and not to the fun things. Both are important to the health and well being of seniors and ultimately to their communities. In other words, transportation for seniors often dictates their ability to meet their quantity of life needs and to enjoy their quality of life opportunities.

Transportation as “the tie that binds” provides a rationale for facilitating STPs for older adults, especially older adults who no longer drive and cannot access traditional forms of transportation. Without such an option, it may be necessary for many of them to make some hard choices related to their ability to continue living in the community.

The 5 A’s of Senior Friendly Transportation

Seniors who no longer drive have many options from which to choose: public transit, paratransit, health and social service transit, transit for activity programs, and sometimes even taxi voucher programs. Considerable effort is being made to ensure that transportation options meet the needs of the disabled, which in many instances includes seniors. For example, many communities provide low floor busses and busses that kneel, paratransit programs that come to the door, ADA funded transit that

offer services to severely disabled seniors, and taxi voucher programs that give special senior-oriented sensitivity training to drivers.

While emphasis often is placed on making public and paratransit available to seniors, *availability* of public or paratransit does not necessarily assure that the transportation needs of seniors will be met.

Why? Because seniors who do not drive, frequently cannot walk to a bus stop, cannot get into a van, cannot get to a physician's office without an escort, or cannot afford a taxi. In other words, special equipment, individualized services, and specialized driver training may not address the real needs of seniors.

What can make transportation more "senior friendly"? Rather than emphasizing a single factor such as *availability*, seniors, caregivers, and professionals in aging say that transportation also needs to be *accessible, acceptable, adaptable, and affordable*. These criteria have been identified as *The 5 A's of Senior Friendly Transportation*.

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.

Those working in transportation and aging need to know if the options that are available actually meet the special needs of seniors. It can be difficult, especially for those in the "old old" population, those who have major mental or mobility problems, and those who need the assistance of escorts. These are seniors who need special care and support, but at the same time, they also need to have quantity as well as quality of life experiences.

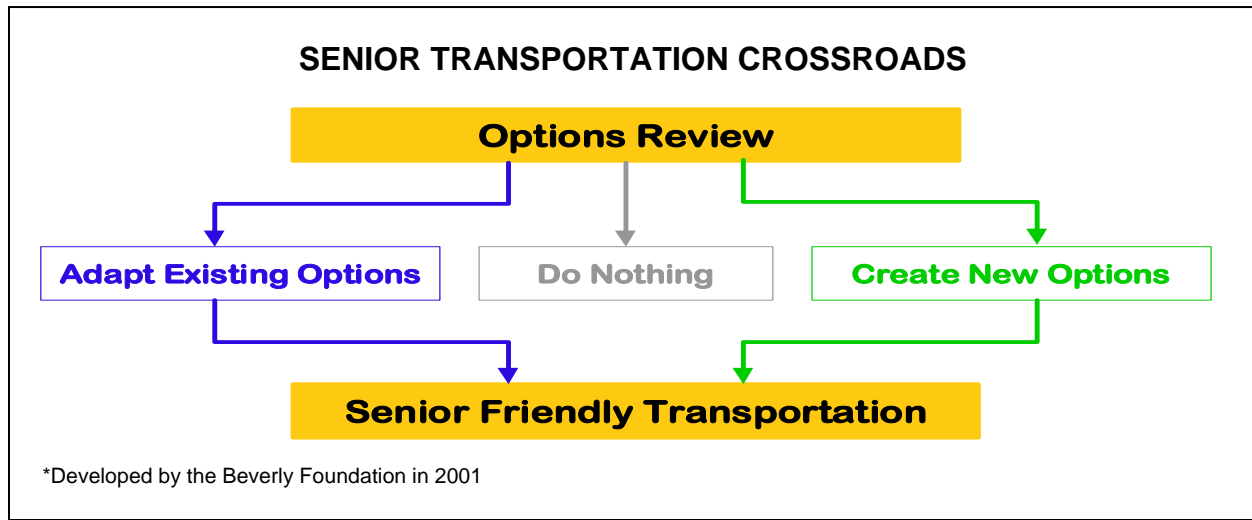
Whether communities are considering the adaptation of existing transportation options or the creation of new ones in the form of STPs, *The 5 A's of Senior Friendly Transportation* can provide some guidance in making decisions about how to best meet the needs of seniors for transportation.

Looking At Options

Policy, structure and process make it difficult if not impossible for traditional transportation services to be what might be considered "senior friendly". Seniors often complain that travel is point-to-point

rather than flex route or need-oriented. They say they have difficulty walking to the bus stop or even the curb to access public and paratransit. They believe the need for advance scheduling and long waits can be humiliating, especially when they have lived for 70 or 80 years with the independence of driving their own cars. They are embarrassed when drivers are insensitive to their needs. They may not be able to travel when they have physical limitations that necessitate a transportation escort to assist them.

Both urban and rural communities are at a crossroads in helping older adults access transportation. Essentially, they have three choices: (1) to modify or adapt existing options; (2) to create new options; or (3) to do nothing.



While some communities opt to doing nothing, the consequences can result in a number of detrimental outcomes for older adults such as an increase in traffic fatalities, inability to access necessary services, isolation and decline in the quality of life. It also can have a negative impact on business and on the overall well being of the community.

Adapting or Modifying Options. There are numerous ways that communities can adapt existing transportation equipment and programs to meet the needs of older adults. Examples include altering or modifying routes, changing pick-up and delivery locations, making physical adaptations, linking with volunteer groups, offering driver training, providing financial incentives, and recognizing the importance of non-essential as well as essential rides. It is possible, for example, to purchase buses that kneel. Paratransit programs can provide door-to-door (in addition to curb-to-curb) service. Public transit programs can develop flex route and demand response services. ADA funded transit programs can link with volunteer groups to provide transportation escorts. Taxi voucher programs can develop driver sensitivity training programs to improve the relationship between taxi drivers and older adults. And, a non-emergency medical care transportation program can be expanded to include “quality of life” in addition to “quantity of life” rides.

However, not all communities are willing or able to make such adjustments and expenditures, and even when they do, older adults may still face problems related to transportation. Additionally, in many instances such adaptations will not make the vehicle or the program “senior friendly”.

Creating New Options. During the course of the focus group project (mentioned earlier) seniors and their caregivers discussed transportation problems as well as community-based solutions. Many of the

solutions involved specialized transportation programs that communities had developed “just for seniors”. These are often referred to as STPs.

There are countless illustrations of these new options that are being developed in communities throughout the country. Hospitals often organize transportation services for helping seniors access health care services. Senior centers develop transportation programs for a variety of purposes, one of the most important is getting seniors to nutrition programs. Parks and recreation programs provide transportation services to enable seniors to participate in their activity programs. Churches initiate transportation programs to help seniors get to religious services. Shopping centers and grocery stores create transportation services to enable seniors to participate in the economy.

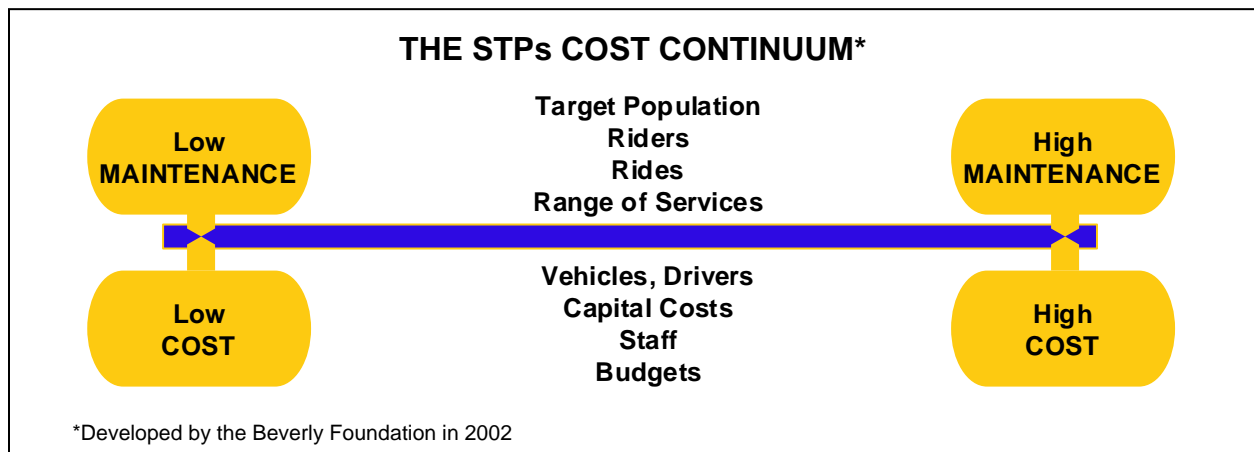
The database of STPs includes more than 300 community based programs that reflect the particular physical, social and cultural nature of the community and the population of seniors that is served. The difficult task for most communities is to understand the needs of seniors and to find criteria for assessing the options in terms of their ability to meet those needs.

The Low Cost/Low Maintenance Approach

While structural changes and personal support can enable transportation programs to be “senior friendly,” the organizational purpose, structure and relationships of STPs often determine whether they are created, whether they are successful and even whether they survive. Because each program reflects the physical, cultural and social context of its community, STPs take many forms.

Some are organized by small non-profit groups, while others are programs within a large and complex organization. Some have no budgeted expenses while others have budgets in the million-dollar range. Some have a large staff while others operate solely with volunteer support. Some own vehicles while others depend on the vehicles of volunteers. Some serve a large area and provide a large number of rides to a large number of riders while others serve a small area and provide a small number of rides to a small number of riders. And, some provide only essential rides while others provide both quantity and quality of life rides.

The illustration below indicates the continuum of (from low cost/low maintenance to high cost/high maintenance) and the major variables, the combination of which will determine the location of a specialized transportation program along the continuum.



A variety of decisions must be made during the planning and start up of an STPs. They include decisions about vehicle type and cost, rider and driver recruitment and driver training, the range of

services, the target population and costs of service and delivery. Obviously one of the most critical decisions is related to vehicles.

The purchase of a vehicle will automatically place an STPs at the high cost/high maintenance end of the continuum. Why? Because not only does it result in capital costs, it probably creates expenses for on-going maintenance, and may create needs for paid drivers, paid schedulers, and paid administrative support. Alternately, a volunteer program that includes volunteer drivers, volunteer owned vehicles, volunteer staff and limited or no reimbursement for volunteer expenses would undoubtedly fall at the low cost/low maintenance end of the continuum.

Communities considering the development of such programs would find it helpful to consider the STPs continuum when making their decisions.

Summary

The topics discussed in this paper not only relate to the agenda of STPs, they also relate to each other. And, not only do they contribute to the concept and practice of Supplemental Transportation Programs for seniors (STPs), they also contribute to the field of senior transportation as a whole.

Topic #1. Indeed, seniors and their caregivers as well as service providers and service organizations face a number of dilemmas regarding transportation. While the discussion may start with questions of senior driving and giving up the keys, it is impossible to address them adequately without considering the options that are available in the community and whether those options meet the needs of seniors.

Topic #2. Transportation is a tie that binds the community to seniors and seniors to the community with respect to quality and quantity of life. At the same time transportation systems and services cannot expect to help accomplish this agenda if it does not make services available, as well as ensure that they are acceptable, accessible, affordable and adaptable.

Topic #3. While transportation options need to be “senior friendly” it is not always necessary to reinvent the wheel. The possibility of adapting existing options should be considered prior to, or in concert with, the planning the development of new options.

Topic #4. Although existing options may be at the high cost/high maintenance end of the continuum, adapting them to meet the needs of seniors may be at the low cost/low maintenance end of the continuum. For example, a demand response system may link with a volunteer group to provide transportation escorts.

Topic #5. The discussion of dilemmas, the ties that bind, the 5 A’s and options review eventually evolve into questions related to costs. How much does it cost for a senior to drive or to give up the keys? How much does it cost to provide quality of life transportation? How much does it cost to provide senior friendly transportation? How much does it cost to create new options? These are not merely operational questions. They are social questions as well. With some adaptation, the cost continuum might one day be used to assess the human costs of providing or not providing transportation that meets the needs of seniors.

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**The STPs Mobilizer Project is a
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