

## 1 Introduction

Each year, the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC) publishes a trends report to review significant topics in transportation. Published annually since 2016, the report includes overviews of popular transportation matters, challenges and opportunities of each topic, and examples of how the transportation trend is being implemented in communities across the United States. As in previous years, the Trends Report is divided into stand-alone 'Topic Spotlights' for individual download.

With its mission to increase the availability and accessibility of transportation for older adults and people with disabilities, NADTC recognizes that our work must be grounded in, and respond to, the needs and preferences of the communities and organizations that the center was created to serve. Critical to the center's success is access to information about local communities' efforts to develop accessible transportation, how those developments are received by people with disabilities and older adults, and the reactions of leaders in accessible transportation to developments in the transportation field.

The 2019 trends report reviews:

- **Filling a Need: Hiring Veterans and People with Disabilities in Transit**
- **Travel Training for Older Adults**
- **Procuring Demand Response Transit Technology**
- **Scooter Policies and Accessibility within Shared Pedestrian Space**
- **Mental Health and Transportation**
- **Workforce Development in Transportation Occupations**

These six topics represent a collection of what the NADTC has identified as important issues in 2019 based on requests for information, the provision of technical assistance, conversations and online communication with transit providers and human service agencies, and activity on our website.

Topic 1 reviews the hiring of veterans and people with disabilities in transit. There are many transit agencies that could benefit from the capabilities of and value added by qualified applicants with disabilities. This section guides agencies in understanding the values, skills, and ideas people with disabilities and veterans with disabilities can bring to any organization.

Topic 2 focuses on travel training for older adults. Travel Training can empower individuals with the skills and confidence to successfully navigate community transportation systems. This section of the report provides a review and explanation of travel training terminology,

strategies to assist older adults in independent travel, and examples from local programs in Colorado, Illinois, and New Jersey.

Topic 3 outlines the best methods to procure technology for your agency. Following proper procurement processes will ensure a fair and open competition for those services and net your agency with the product that will best meet its identified needs.

Topic 4 examines scooter policies and accessibility within shared pedestrian space. Dockless e-scooters have changed the way people move through city spaces and as a result, changed the expectations and behaviors of consumers when using such options. This section reviews the challenges and opportunities these devices pose to maintaining accessibility in public spaces.

Topic 5 reviews mental health and transportation. Providing access to mental health services for disadvantaged populations requires coordination of a number of different elements, including transportation providers. This section provides examples of how some transportation agencies are using federal, local and/or state funding to coordinate or provide transportation to mental health services.

Topic 6 addresses workforce development in transportation occupations. The struggle to recruit, train and retain skilled workers, the lack of planning to address workforce exits and the need to stay competitive in a changing work economy are just a few of the challenges transportation managers are currently facing. This section reviews challenges of workforce development and provides resources and examples of organizations involved in improving the transportation workforce.

Explore transportation's trending topics with us through this report! If you have questions about any topic here or have a story to share from your community, reach out to us at (866) 983-3222 or email [contact@nadtc.org](mailto:contact@nadtc.org).

In 2005, then Governor Jim Doyle brought together representatives from the Wisconsin Departments of Transportation, Health Services, Workforce Development, Veterans Affairs, and the Office of the Commissioner of Insurance to consider ways that Wisconsin can better coordinate the variety of public funding sources and programs so that transportation providers and stakeholders can work together to increase cost-effectiveness, capacity, quality, and accessibility of services. This Interagency Council on Transportation Coordination (ICTC) was charged with four tasks:

- Create a state level coordination council;
- Conduct a statewide transportation assessment;
- Develop an action plan for human service transportation coordination; and
- Conduct an inventory of transportation systems.

In its report, which we have attached with this letter, the ICTC recommended that the Governor follow the Wisconsin Model of Coordination that it developed. We recall here the ICTC's primary recommendation to follow and strengthen this Model by reconvening this coordinating council.

*The Model's first strategy, strengthening ICTC as the lead entity for statewide coordination efforts, is necessary for further development of policies to promote and institutionalize transportation coordination in Wisconsin. With a better structure and a clear mandate, ICTC can develop policy proposals, legislative initiatives, and technical tools fulfilling the ideal of transportation coordination: Meeting more needs by using existing resources more efficiently.*

- *Report of the Inter-Agency Council on Transportation Coordination (ICTC) to Governor Jim Doyle (October 27, 2008), p. iii*

Transportation access and affordability are consistently one of the most important concerns expressed by people with disabilities and older adults across the state. It is the linchpin for maintaining and advancing Wisconsin's progress in providing people with disabilities and older adults an engaging life in their community. All our efforts to advance long term care options, end isolation, and promote community integrated employment are limited or frustrated without access to transportation that meets the needs and recognizes the choices of our residents.

While we do not abandon the call for additional public funding for transportation to get people where they want to go, we strongly believe that existing resources can be better coordinated and promoted to increase access to transportation options – particularly for those most in need of transportation support.

We urge you to take this important step to advance transportation coordination, access, and affordability for all Wisconsinites, particularly people with disabilities and older adults by issuing an Executive Order that convenes a Transportation Coordination Council, consisting of Secretaries or their designees from the Departments listed above and adding representatives from the Departments of Administration, Safety and Professional Services, and Public Instruction, the Governor's Council for People with Disabilities, the State Independent Living Council, the Wisconsin Aging Advisory Council, and the Association of Wisconsin Regional Planning Commissions. In addition, we specifically ask that a person with disabilities and an older adult who utilize a publicly supported transportation program be included on this Council.







## Volunteer Driver Programs: A vital part of Wisconsin's Transportation Network

Wisconsin has a network of over 60 volunteer driver programs. Almost every county of the state is in the service area of a volunteer driver program. Volunteer drivers are an economical (but not FREE), efficient use of private resources for public good. Volunteer drivers provide a high level of service, door through door in most cases, to some of the state's most vulnerable citizens. These include individuals who cannot navigate a typical system, those with dementia, dialysis patients who need early morning or Saturday treatments. Volunteer driver programs also fill the gaps between other transportation programs by going where buses don't, taking trips long distances that are too expensive by other modes, and offering service outside regular business hours.

### Volunteer Driver Statistics in WI

The Greater WI Agency on Aging Resources, Inc. conducted a survey in 2019 to identify volunteer programs in the state and how many volunteers are in each program. The survey identified volunteer driver programs operated by Aging Units, Aging & Disability Resource Centers, Community Action Programs, Independent Living Centers, transit agencies and Faith in Action programs. In many areas, the volunteer driver program is the only transportation service available to those who cannot or choose not to drive.

### *Funding*

Volunteers are not free and volunteer driver programs need operating funds to recruit, retain and manage volunteers, reimburse for mileage, and pay other overhead costs associated with running a program - conducting background checks, processing paperwork, writing grants, tracking and reporting rides and training volunteers. While there are some common funding sources used by many programs including the County Elderly and Disabled Transportation Assistance to Counties, State 85.21 funds and Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities, Federal 5310 matched with State 85.22 funding - these programs usually operate with a patch-work of funding. This makes identifying and tracking statewide volunteer driver program data and impacts to riders difficult.

### *Reimbursement*

Collectively, there are over 2,600 volunteers in these programs. These volunteers are often reimbursed for their mileage, but not for their time or other expenses. All but 5 programs indicate they reimburse their drivers for mileage. The rate of reimbursement varies, the majority of programs reimburse at a rate equal to the IRS business rate.

### *Double Duty*

In 35% of volunteer driver programs (22), the volunteers deliver meals and drive people to their appointments. This makes a policy of changing the mileage rate only for meal delivery problematic and potentially detrimental to volunteer driver programs overall. If the mileage rate is changed for one and not the other, the volunteers will be treated differently under the tax code and these disparities can lead to fewer volunteers driving people where they need to go. This survey excluded data from volunteer driver programs that exclusively deliver meals.

Volunteers spend countless hours accompanying and waiting for riders at doctor's appointments, stopping to get prescriptions, helping riders get into the building to their appointment, and are sometimes the only contact that rider has with another person that day, week or month. The connection between the driver and rider often develops into a friendship that is beneficial to the rider *and* the driver.

## Programs are struggling

Many volunteer driver programs are struggling. Unlike the common misconception that volunteer drivers are risky, the data shows that this is not the case. With appropriate screening and verification of licensing and insurance, there are very few recorded incidents with these programs. There are however, real barriers impacting volunteer drivers related to the charitable driving reimbursement rate, vehicle insurance and liability.

### *State issues*

Since the majority of volunteer drivers are using their own vehicles, a continuing issue for volunteer drivers is the misinterpretation or lack of clear standards related to insurance coverage for their personal vehicle. Volunteer drivers do not make a profit on their rides. They are not Transportation Network Companies (like Uber and Lyft) or a livery service, they are volunteers operating through a non-profit or governmental body. These agencies have their own requirements and screening of volunteers and policies and procedures to ensure the safety of the passenger and correct application of regulations. Differing insurance riders and interpretations by insurance agents, creates uncertainty and makes potential volunteers leery of providing their services.

Wisconsin State Statute 181.0670 provides civil immunity for volunteers, except if damages arise from the operation of a motor vehicle or other malfeasance. This legislation mirrors the Federal Volunteer Protection Act (FED-VPA) which excluded volunteers operating a motor vehicle because it was thought volunteer drivers could easily obtain personal auto insurance coverage. The FED-VPA statute's own preamble explains the intent of the protections and states that "Congress finds ... that ... due to high liability costs and unwarranted litigation costs, volunteer and nonprofit organizations face higher costs in purchasing insurance, through interstate insurance markets, to cover their activities..." 42 U.S.C. s 14501(6). In reality, the insurance related problems facing charities also confront their volunteers who drive for volunteer driver programs.

Striking this exception from the Wisconsin statute provides volunteers protections more consistent with the intent to remove barriers to volunteering. This change does not exempt volunteer drivers from repercussions if they engage in willful misconduct, unlawful behavior or negligence in their duties.

### *Federal issues*

Current Federal law allows for reimbursement of volunteers, on a nontaxable basis, up to \$.14/mile. Alternatively, volunteers are permitted to deduct their "out of pocket" expenses incurred in providing donated services up to \$.14/mile, when those expenses are not reimbursed. Any reimbursement received exceeding \$.14/mile is considered taxable income or is not eligible for deduction on their Federal taxes. Unlike the business and medical/moving rate which are regulated by the IRS and adjusted to account for the increasing cost of operating a vehicle, the charitable rate can only be changed through the legislative process. The charitable mileage rate has not been adjusted since 1997 despite escalating prices in vehicle ownership and fuel costs over the last two decades.

These volunteers drive others in an increasingly expensive and uncertain environment. The current tax regulations are a disincentive for those willing to volunteer their time and personal resources so others can get where they need to go. Volunteer driver programs are in jeopardy and need us to work collectively to address these issues at the state and federal level.

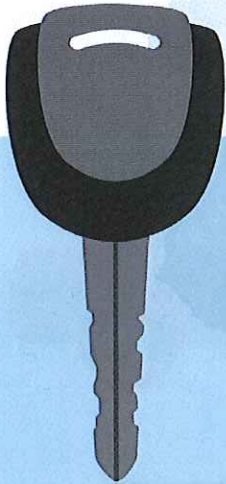
We outlive our driving ability by 7-10 years. That's a long time to be without transportation options, especially one as efficient and effective as volunteer driver programs.



# Volunteer Driver Programs

## Supporting independence. Promoting access.

Wisconsin's volunteer driver programs provide a statewide network of transportation services for older adults and persons with disabilities.



### Volunteer drivers:

- use their own resources to provide public transportation.
- average 67 years old.
- are often the only transportation service available.

Wisconsin has more than:

**60** Volunteer Driver Programs.

**2,600**  
Volunteer Drivers.

**95%** of Wisconsin's older adults and persons with disabilities have access to a Volunteer Driver Program.\*

**35%** of volunteer drivers provide rides to appointments *and* for meal delivery.

A patchwork of Federal, State and local funding supports volunteer driver programs. These programs are effective yet require investment to operate.



Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources, Inc.

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# Volunteer Driver Programs

## Drivers experience barriers to volunteering.

Vehicle insurance issues and low reimbursements rates create issues for Wisconsin's volunteer drivers.

### Vehicle Insurance

- In 32% of programs, volunteer drivers experience personal vehicle insurance issues.



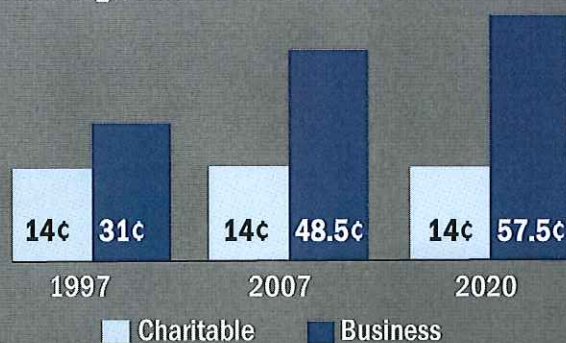
### Driver Reimbursement

**92%**

of volunteer drivers receive mileage reimbursement for driving their own vehicles.



#### Driving Reimbursement Rates/Mile



Despite the increasing costs to operate a vehicle, the charitable driving reimbursement rate has not been increased in more than 20 years.

\*Source: U.S. Census, 2013-17 American Community Survey, Table B18101. Other data from the Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources, Inc., 2019 Volunteer Driver Program Survey. Graphics from the Noun Project: car insurance by Adrien Coquet, funding by Gregor Cresner.