

**Minnesota Gerontological Society**  
**2007 Conference**  
***Older Adults' Mobility at Home and in the Community:  
Strategies for Safety, Independence and Participation***

Friday, April 27, 2007  
Earle Browne Heritage Center  
Brooklyn Center, Minnesota

**EndNote: *Strategies for Mobility at Home and in the Community: What We Have Learned*, Jane Hardin, Coordinator, Senior Transportation Programs, Community Transportation Association, (CTAA)**

**We Need to Connect**

We need to connect so that we can expand our horizons. We need to connect with other programs and agencies, but above all we need to use our intelligence, our hearts, and our imaginations to connect to other ideas and points of view so that we can look at our own work in fresh ways.

**The name of this conference** A good example of connecting is exactly what you did in planning this conference and choosing its name – “Mobility at Home and in the Community.” By connecting “mobility” with “home *and* community,” you opened up so many new aspects of mobility. You shifted our concern from the individual to the individual in relation to others, to his/her community and environment. The name makes us think of driving and public transportation and community activities. Then you complete the name with “Strategies for Safety, Independence and Participation.” “The word “Strategies” tells us that the planners want us not simply to discuss these important issues but to think of approaches and solutions that will make safety, independence and participation a reality for older Americans – and then to be advocates for our ideas.

**Three Transportation Examples of People Who Used Their Intelligence, Their Heart, and Their Imagination**

- **A transportation planner for a Council of Governments in South Carolina** This man works on program planning and development. He does *not* provide direct service to individuals. Nonetheless he circulated a notice about a special economy service for low-income persons that a local telephone company offers. Distributing that kind of information is *not* part of his regular duties, but he did it because he knows that the telephone is a crucial link – connecting an older person to social services and transportation – and to friends and family.
- **Baseball in Detroit** The Detroit Tigers offer Senior Days when older people are admitted free. To support Senior Days, SMART (Suburban

Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation) offers older people free rides to the ballpark. SMART is a large operation which provides significant transportation services and actively supports numerous community programs – including older driver safety. SMART's baseball trips program is a very small part of its operation, but it demonstrates that SMART's leaders realize that providing quality senior transportation is more than trips for essential services because older people – like people of all ages – want to relax and have fun.

- **Annapolis Transit in Maryland** Annapolis Transit is a small urban public transportation service which focuses on providing good customer service. A few years ago, their director recognized that the frail elderly have special transportation needs that public transportation is not designed to meet. She therefore applied for an AmeriCorps volunteer – and those applications are demanding as a funding request to a foundation – whose sole responsibility was to work with local senior service non-profit agencies to design a transportation service that meets the special needs of the frail elderly.

**Older persons who are *not* former drivers** All of these examples are memorable, but the Annapolis example is particularly apt: a program leader who looked beyond the needs of her own constituents to see a broader need. Most of the discussion about senior mobility understandably centers on providing options for the older person who can no longer drive. We need to expand the senior mobility discussion to look at the needs of the older person who has never driven, who has not had access to a car. This group includes persons with disabilities, but it is made up primarily of low-income older persons.

### **Some Important Connections to Make When We Talk About Senior Transportation:**

1. **WHO** are the older people who need transportation?
2. **WHY** do they need transportation?
3. **WHAT** kind of transportation do they need?

Today 21% -- more than 1 in 5 – older adults 65 and older do not drive?

**Source:** *Aging Americans: Stranded Without Options* by Linda Bailey Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP) Report (April 2004)

### **WHO are they?**

Many are the people who have stopped driving. Many of them, however, have never driven. They are low-income people who cannot afford cars and their families cannot afford cars; and a disproportionate number of them are minorities or immigrants.

We often hear poignant statements from older drivers about how much they depend on their cars – Nina’s keynote this morning included one of those statements. Older people who depend on the bus are, however, often as devoted to public transportation as drivers are to their cars.

In her presentation today Jeannette Aguirre with Western Minnesota CAP used this quote from a rider:

**“My life would be on hold if the bus were not here.”**

At CTAA’s Conference on Senior Mobility two years ago, a rider of OATS rural transit in Missouri expressed a similar feeling:

**“Every day the bus doesn’t come is a day I don’t have a life.”**

We **need** to broaden our discussion about mobility choices for older people to include low-income people who have never driven.

### **WHY do older people need transportation?**

Although medical needs and grocery shopping are usually listed as top priorities, older people need transportation for essentially the same purposes as all ages – they want to attend to all the matters that keep life running smoothly – errands and appointments. They also want to go out to enjoy themselves. They also want to travel to get to work. **Employment transportation** – transportation to work – is becoming another high priority.

More than six years ago an AARP study reported that the requirements for an economically secure retirement have changed.

The old **three-legged stool** that most of us learned of:

- Social Security
- Private pension; and
- Personal savings

has been replaced by the **Four Pillars**:

- Social Security
- Personal savings and private pension combined into one category because most pensions today are based on personal savings
- Health insurance; and
- **Employment earnings during retirement**

### **WHAT kind of senior transportation?**

**Specialized human services transportation** The frail elderly and persons with disabilities will need specialized human services transportation that includes an assistant or escort to accompany them, and often door-through-door

transportation – someone to help them to prepare for their trip and to return to their home.

**Public transportation for the general population** with some accommodations and service design can meet the transportation needs of most people age 65 and over. Their preferences and destinations are very similar to the needs of the general adult population.

This point was a major finding in a report by Jon Burkhardt in 2002, but I found out this morning at Margaret Donohoe's breakout session that a number of Minnesotans have figured it out on their own.

The main focus of attention to and advocacy for senior transportation needs to be on public transportation for the general population (rural and urban) – expanding it and making it more senior-friendly.

The challenge we face is huge – at the same time we are working for public transportation for the general public, **we cannot forget the special transportation needs of the frail elderly because *they have no one else but us* to be their advocates. The need for non-emergency medical transportation is going to continue to grow and, given the changing structure of health-care delivery, likely to become even more complicated.**

### **Strategic Advantages in Advocating for More Public Transportation**

We will have numerous allies in this approach. Transportation providers, environmentalists, advocates for livable communities, and a broad spectrum of the population – people of all ages, but especially older drivers, who want to have public transportation as an option to complement their driving. Although most older people do want to continue driving as long as they safely can, they do not necessarily want to drive on the freeway or to unfamiliar destinations, at night, or to unfamiliar destinations. In other countries, Australia, Canada, and European countries, "elderly car drivers make up a meaningful percentage of transit users." Source: Sandi Rosenbloom, *Study for the Brookings Institution Series on Transportation Reform* (July 2003)

**Example:** The option of public transportation can help two-earner households to save on the expense of a second car if one person can use public transportation to get to work. Being able to save the expense of a second car will also be attractive to older couples managing retirement budgets.

### **Challenges for the Future**

The conference asked me to prepare challenges – immediate, short term, and long term – for the Society as an organization, for individuals as members and as private citizens. The subject of these challenges will not be startlingly news – they arise from the topics we have discussed today.

## **Challenges for the Minnesota Gerontological Society (MGS) as an organization**

### **Immediate challenges:**

- Connect by publicizing the range of today's conference and its success. Let other organizations and people working in aging know that this conference on mobility options in the home and the community was a success
- Canvass everyone who attended to ask how he or she wants to follow up on the conference.

**For example:** a woman, a former pedestrian planner, came up to me and said she wanted to help with advocacy for pedestrians and asked me which local groups she could contact. I didn't know, but some of you here do. The MGS can help to connect people who are motivated by the conference to an organization where they can continue working on the issues raised today.

### **Short term challenges for MGS as an organization:**

- Planners for next year's conference should include transportation sessions building on what has gone on here today
- Connect even more with the Minnesota Public Transportation Association, and with AARP, human service transportation providers and other advocates for senior transportation and mobility
- Connect with your public transportation provider to explore how you can work together

**Example:** This morning during Nina's keynote the issue of older people with undiagnosed dementia who are using public transportation came up. Explore this issue with public transit and offer the expertise of your members in developing information and training for transit personnel on how to deal with passengers with dementia.

- Work with health and social service providers so that they will see transportation as a vital link in the delivery of service.

**Discussion:** Gary Barnes in his morning session raised the issue in a somewhat different context: Some health and social service agencies do not yet see transportation as a vital link between their service and their clients. Instead they see transportation as an expense that drains their program budget. This misconception is a significant barrier to improving human service transportation for older people and we all need to work to getting rid of it.

### **Long term goals for MGS as an organization:**

- ***Include a transportation/mobility track in every annual conference.***
- Keep on connecting with other organizations and advocates interested in senior transportation -- your public transit provider, human service transportation providers, AARP, and area agencies on aging to make transportation senior-friendly.

**Example:** Connect your public transit provider and local senior organizations, so that they can together plan and implement Travel Training programs to introduce older persons to public transit

- Keep on working to educate health and social service agencies on the value of transportation for their clients.
- Concentrate on expanding discussion of senior transportation and mobility options to include the needs of low-income and older minority and immigrant older persons.

## **Challenges for conference participants as members of Minnesota Gerontological Society (MGS)**

### **Immediate challenges:**

- You probably have heard and met some new people today; people who work in different fields from yours: exchange emails with them **now**. Get the discussion started.
- Write up your impressions of this conference and email them to coworkers. If you have an employee newsletter, get an article in it. Let people know how you benefited from the MGS's Conference on Mobility at Home and in the Community.
- I just recommended that the Society do a canvass of all participants to find out how they want to follow up on today's discussion: Volunteer to help with the canvass.

### **Short term challenges as individual members:**

- Think about mobility topics you want to hear more or on which you want to present and forward your ideas to the planners of next year's conference.
- Think about ways you can help the Society present transportation as an integral part of home- and community-based care.
- Think about how you can help the Society to address the mobility needs of older persons who are immigrants and who are members of minority groups.

### **Long term challenges as individual members:**

- I repeat the short-term challenges: keep on working to meet them.

## **Challenges for conference participants as professionals**

### **Immediate challenges:**

- Think of professional publications, email newsletters, list serves on which you can post a brief report of today's conference.
- Begin to think about new ways of looking at your subject area of work based on what you have learned today – especially the need for professionals working on aging issues to see transportation as an integral part of home- and community-based care, and the special mobility needs

of low-income older persons, especially those who are immigrants and minorities.

- Discuss with colleagues what you have heard and listen to their reactions.

### **Short term challenges to professionals:**

- If your organization is already providing senior transportation or working with agencies that do, think about new ways to distribute information about these services – (an email to every conference participant), articles, presentations at conferences and meetings – so that more people working in aging will know about successful programs and can learn the how to's and what not to do's.
- Invite someone you heard or met at this conference to speak to staff at your agency.
- Continue to think about the diverse mobility needs of older persons and new ways your program can work on them.
- Continue thinking about how to educate aging services network on transportation as an integral part of delivery of home- and community-based care.

### **Long term challenges as professionals:**

- Continue to work on the immediate and short terms challenges; and
- Think of new challenges for yourself.

## **Challenges for conference participants as private citizens/community residents**

### **Immediate challenge:**

- In the next few days look at your neighborhood and think about how an older person without a car would get along. Are their sidewalks? Stores within easy walking distance? Bus stops? If there are bus stops, are they within easy walking distance? Do they have places to sit down? Are they protected from the weather? Where do the buses go? And how often?

### **Short term challenge:**

- If there are no bus stops or you need to learn more about bus schedules, fares, and accessibility, think about where you would look to find the phone number or web site, you need to call to get information about senior transportation.
- Think about how you would get to and from work, if you did not have a car. What number or web site would you use to learn about transportation alternatives?
- Find out whether the same number/web site which furnishes information on senior transportation?

**Long term challenge:**

- Continue to think about the issues from today's conference and how they apply to you and where you live – your house, your street, your neighborhood, and community.

**Challenge to the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA)**

I have offered a lot of challenges to you so I think it is only fair that I offer a challenge to CTAA and myself.

We are certainly generally aware of the good transportation programs and the good work that goes on in Minnesota, and we connect with a number of organizations, but we can do more and better. **Example:** I have known about the Humphrey Institute and some of its activities, but have not made a serious effort to be in contact to exchange program information and ideas.

- Our challenge is that we will be more active in seeking out Minnesota people and organizations so that we can learn about them and work together more closely on transportation advocacy and joint project– to provide technical assistance when you want it, to learn more about your programs so that we can work together on our common goals.

**NOTE:** I agree to be the point person at CTAA to get the process moving.

Thank you for inviting me. I have enjoyed and benefited from being here and meeting you.