

# The Role of Transportation in Addressing Social Isolation in Older Adults: Additional Transportation Program Examples by Region

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## Eastern United States

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### **Connect-A-Ride, NV Rides, Village Rides, Jewish Council on Aging**

**Location:** Maryland (and Northern Virginia)

**Description:** The Jewish Council on Aging (JCA) recognizes that "transportation is a common challenge for older adults and their families," particularly in congested areas, and they seek to provide transportation options for older adults to improve "their health, vitality and independence." These services include Connect-A-Ride, NV Rides, and VillageRides. Destinations include medical appointments, social or community events, and places to run errands.

Connect-A-Ride is a resource center that connects older adults and disabled individuals to area transit options, including training to ride public transit. The slogan for NV Rides and VillageRides is "the gift of a lift." Both programs support neighborhood volunteer transportation; the former in Northern Virginia and the latter in Maryland. The "backbone" of NV Rides is its easy-to-use Ride Scheduler software program. It also offers outreach materials and assistance to organizations seeking volunteer transport services. The JCA also connects area residents to handicap-accessible bus rentals and escorted transportation options for low income individuals who are unable to travel alone.

**Fee:** Connect-A-Ride, NV Rides, and Village Rides are free services. Escorted transportation users pay a fee based on their income.

**Eligible Population/Use:** Older adults (age not specified), individuals with disabilities

**Service Area:** Montgomery County, Maryland; Arlington and Fairfax Counties in Virginia; and the Virginia cities of Alexandria, Fairfax and Falls Church

**Transportation Type:** V Demand-response with advanced reservations; trips are delivered using volunteer drivers and accessible buses

**Partners/Funding Sources:** JCA is a member of United Way and the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington. NV Rides is supported by Fairfax County, with additional support from the Community Foundation for Northern Virginia. VillageRides has a number of partners and notes on its webpage funding is provided in part through a grant from the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government's through the Federal Transit Administration's Enhanced Mobility program. Funding also comes from donations and some rider contributions.

**Contact:** Nancy Cooper, Mobility Specialist, [ncooper@accessjca.org](mailto:ncooper@accessjca.org)

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## Dial-A-Ride and Road Runner – Crosstown Connect

**Location:** Massachusetts

**Description:** CrossTown Connect is a Transportation Management Association (TMA) in which participants "join together to reduce traffic congestion, air pollution, and improve transportation mobility options in a region." In addition to the commuter services that it offers, Crosstown Connect provides shuttle services for seniors and individuals with disabilities. One of their services is a Dial-a-Ride van service for residents of Acton, Boxborough, Littleton, and Maynard counties ages 60 and over as well as residents with disabilities. This population can also use a curb-to-curb shared van service called the Road Runner vans. These two services run on slightly different schedules during the work week.

**Fee:** Both services cost riders \$1 per ride.

**Eligible Population/Use:** Older adults (age 60+), individuals with disabilities

**Service area:** Acton, Boxborough, Concord, Littleton, Maynard, Sudbury, and Westford

**Transportation Type:** Demand-response with advanced reservations; trips are delivered using small buses, vans

**Partners/Funding Sources:** CrossTown Connect is a "public-private partnership between the Massachusetts communities [served] and businesses located therein." Local senior centers and Councils on Aging are partners in the curb-to-curb service.

**Contact:** Scott Zadakis, Director, CrossTown Connect, [Director@CrossTownConnect.org](mailto:Director@CrossTownConnect.org)

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## TRIP Metro North - Mystic Valley Elder

**Location:** Massachusetts

**Description and Fee:** The TRIP Metro North program, an opportunity provided by the non-profit Mystic Valley Elder Services, helps support community members and friends who provide transportation to older adults and individuals with disabilities. Drivers and riders work together to track mileage traveled to fulfill an older adult's transportation needs, and the TRIP Metro North program reimburses the driver's mileage monthly. The goal of this program is to keep program participants in control and support the "the wellbeing, dignity and independence of elders, adults living with disabilities, and caregivers."

**Fee:** This is a free service.

**Eligible Population/Use:** Older adults (age not specified), individuals with disabilities

**Service Area:** Chelsea, Everett, Malden, Medford, Melrose, North Reading, Reading, Revere, Stoneham, Wakefield, and Winthrop

**Transportation Type:** Demand-response with advanced reservations; trips are delivered using volunteer drivers and personal vehicles

**Partners/Funding Sources:** Mystic Valley Elder Services partners with area senior housing

facilities to coordinate services. They receive the majority of their funding from federal, state, and local government agencies, and also receive funds from the Older American Act. They are also supported by donations from the community and service users.

**Contact:** Lauren Reid, Director of Community Programs, [lreid@mves.org](mailto:lreid@mves.org)

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## Ride Provide

**Location:** New Jersey

**Description:** Ride Provide, a "community based non-profit transportation service" of the Greater Mercer Transportation Management Association (TMA), offers older adults and the visually impaired door to door ride service to help keep them "safe, engaged, independent and active when they were no longer capable or comfortable driving." With the help of volunteer drivers, riders can schedule services between 8am and 5pm Monday through Friday by calling two days in advance to set up the trip. Ride Provide members may travel as often as they like to destinations such as the grocery store, hair salon, restaurants, malls, doctor's office, or a family member's home. Ride provide offers members some flexibility to ride outside of regular operating hours if the need arises. Greater Mercer TMA also offers public transit training and transportation technology training to older adults in the area to increase their transit options.

**Fee:** Users pay an annual membership fee of \$40 for an individual and \$60 for a family. Riders then set up a pre-paid account that pays for the ride fares, which range from \$8 to \$17 for longer distances. Discounts are available for sharing rides. Some trips to medical appointments are free.

**Eligible Population/Use:** Older adults (age 65+), individuals with a visual impairment

**Service Area:** Mercer County, Plainsboro, south Montgomery, NJ

**Transportation Type:** Demand-response with advanced reservations; trips are delivered using volunteer drivers

**Partners/Funding Sources:** Ride Provide partners with Princeton's Crosstown service, Hopewell Valley Rides, the University Medical Center of Princeton at Plainsboro's senior transportation program, and the Greater Mercer Public Health Partnership ride program to fill their transportation needs. The Greater Mercer TMA is funded in part by federal funds through NJ TRANSIT and receive local matching funds through NJ DOT. They also collect membership fees. Local hospitals support trips to medical appointments

**Contact:** Carol Staats, Program Manager, [cstaats@gmtma.org](mailto:cstaats@gmtma.org)

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## Volunteer Transportation Center

**Location:** New York

**Description:** The Volunteer Transportation Center (VTC), a non-profit based in Watertown, NY, provides rides to "health, social and other destinations for residents of Northern New York who have no transportation alternative." Riders register for services and call for rides with 48 hour

notice. VTC created a software that tracks vehicle location and trip details and facilitates communication with volunteer drivers. It also uses trip optimization to chart the best routes available to a destination. Trip optimization and ride tracking allows VTC to group riders together to maximize shared rides, track distance driven without a passenger in the vehicle, identify areas with low ridership, and extend financial resources further.

**Fee:** Ride services are offered regardless of ability to pay. VTC shares its software with interested organizations free of charge

**Eligible Population/Use:** Eligible groups include older adults (age 60+), persons with disabilities, the visually impaired, and anyone without access to medical transportation

**Service Area:** Northern New York, Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence Counties

**Transportation Type:** Demand-response with advanced reservations; trips are delivered using volunteer drivers

**Partners/Funding Sources:** VTC is a member of United Way and partners with Northern New York Community Foundation and number of other organizations according to its 2017 brochure. Much of VTC funding comes from community donations and fundraising events.

**Contact: Sam Purington** Executive Director, [sam@volunteertransportation.org](mailto:sam@volunteertransportation.org)

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## **Bus Buddy Program - Green Mountain Transit**

**Location:** Vermont

**Description:** Through the bus buddy program, riders are paired with a knowledgeable volunteer who acts as a travel companion while participants learn about public transit. Since 2017, potential riders are directed to call GMT's call center to set up a ride. Bus Buddy volunteers are available to riders as many times as needed until riders feel comfortable with riding the bus. Bus Buddies provide information on schedules, fares, and other transit policies, and teach the dos and don'ts of public transit use.

**Fee:** This is a free service.

**Eligible Population/Use:** Anyone interested in becoming more familiar with public transit can use the Bus Buddy program. Unfortunately while supply of Bus Buddies has been stable, demand for rides has been low. As a result, Bus Buddies are being used on more popular GMT shopping shuttles

**Service Area:** Chittenden County, VT

**Transportation Type:** Fixed-route buses, trains

**Partners/Funding Sources:** Green Mountain Transit, Neighbor Rides; United Way of Northwest Vermont

**Contact:** Green Mountain Transit Mobility Management Coordinator, [jposner@RideGMT.com](mailto:jposner@RideGMT.com)

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## Midwestern United States

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### **Prairie Hills Transit**

**Location:** South Dakota

**Description:** Prairie Hills Transit offers a transportation service with direct pick-up and specific-destination delivery in clean, comfortable, handicap-accessible buses complete with seat belts and a calmer atmosphere

**Fee:** Riders pay a per-ride fare, with older adults making a per-ride voluntary donation.

**Eligible Population/Use:** Persons of all ages are eligible, including those who require specialized services

**Service Area:** Butte, Custer, Fall River, Lawrence, Meade, and Pennington Counties, South Dakota

**Transportation Type:** Demand-response with advanced reservations; uses buses

**Partners/Funding Sources:** Federal Transit Administration formula funding. Also, in 2011, Prairie Hills Transit received funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

**Contact:** Barb Cline Executive Director, [bkcline@prairiehillstransit.com](mailto:bkcline@prairiehillstransit.com)

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### **Make the Ride Happen - Lutheran Social Services (LSS)**

**Location:** Wisconsin

**Description:** Make the Ride Happen (MRH) is a call center and mobility management system available to older adults and individuals with disabilities in Outagamie, Calumet and Winnebago counties in Wisconsin. This area has a variety of transportation options, but these services have various requirements and navigating through them can be complicated. MRH helps users find the best transportation options for their needs. MRH also coordinates a Bus Buddy program and travel training for new public transit users. Destinations include medical appointments, grocery shopping, day programs, hair salons, banks and pharmacies.

**Fee:** This is a free service

**Eligible Population/Use:** Older adults (age not specified) and individuals with disabilities

**Service Area:** Outagamie, Calumet and Winnebago Counties

**Transportation Type:** Does not provide direct transportation, but helps riders find appropriate transportation services

**Partners/Funding Sources:** LSS is a member of the United Way, and MRH is funded in part by the Federal Transit Administration 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities

**Contact:** Holly Keenan Mobility Manager, [holly.keenan@lsswis.org](mailto:holly.keenan@lsswis.org)

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## Southeastern United States

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### Sunshine Bus

**Location:** Florida

**Description:** The Sunshine Bus Company is a county-wide deviated fixed route bus system that provides a public transportation option for residents of St. Johns County. It was developed by the County Council on Aging to expand transit options beyond door-to-door paratransit, which is only available to users with mobility needs. The Sunshine bus offers nine routes traveling to "a wide range of known origins/ destinations necessary for everyday living."

**Fee:** Depending on qualifications, riders pay either full price or discounted fares for one way trips (\$1-\$2), day passes (\$2-\$4), and monthly passes (\$15-\$30).

**Eligible Population/Use:** While the Sunshine Bus is available to all residents, older adults (age 60+), persons with disabilities, Medicare and Medicaid card holders, and students can all receive discounted passes

**Service Area:** St. Johns County, FL; offer connecting services to Putnam and Duval County transit systems.

**Transportation Type:** Buses

**Partners/Funding Sources:** The Sunshine Bus system is operated through the COA - a private not-for-profit agency partially funded by the State of Florida Dept. of Elder Affairs through C.C.E. and O.A.A. programs, administered by the Area Agency on Aging and ElderSource with support from the United Way of St. Johns County, St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners and private donations

**Contact:** George Hesson Sunshine Bus Manager Phone: 904-209-3716

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## Southwestern United States

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### Cimarron Public Transit Program - United Community Action Program, Inc.

**Location:** Oklahoma

**Description:** The program's mission is to provide safe and reliable public transportation to all members of their community that enhances quality of life. Cimarron transports people to education and employment opportunities. The program values a culture of safety and customer oriented service.

**Fee:** Riders pay a fare for each ride

**Eligible Population/Use:** All community members are eligible

**Service Area:** Creek, Kay, Osage, Washington, and Pawnee Counties

**Transportation Type:** Demand-response with advanced reservations; uses vans

**Partners/Funding Sources:** Partners include Oklahoma Department of Transportation, Transit Programs Division; Head Start OK; OK Department of Human Services Aging Support Services; among other partners. This program receives federal funding through the 5311 grant program.

**Contact:** Laura Corff Transit Director, [lcorff@ucapinc.org](mailto:lcorff@ucapinc.org)

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## Western United States

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### Ride Connection

**Location:** Oregon

**Description:** Based in Portland, Ride Connection is a private nonprofit that seeks to "offer independence, health, and inclusion" by connecting individuals in need with ride services. Ride Connection and its partner agencies provide rides for any purpose including medical, meals, shopping, recreation, and volunteering or work. Rides are requested by phone, by speaking with a Travel Options Counselor, or an online form. The program employs its own or volunteer drivers. Ride Connection's door to door ride service picks up at a user's chosen location, takes them where they need to go, and picks them up when they're ready to return home. In some cases, Ride Connection drivers may be able to offer more assistance and help with bags. Ride Connection also offers information and referral services, travel training, and a deviated fixed route bus service for general public use. The goal of these services is to "bring together friends and family, prevent social isolation, alleviate financial stress and create new connections that strengthen our community."

**Fee:** This is a free service, though Ride Connection accepts donations

**Eligible Population/Use:** Older adults (age 65+), people with disabilities, low-income individuals, underserved communities. During the 2017-18 fiscal year, Ride Connection and its affiliates provided 532,300 trips to area riders. Nearly half of these rides were to medical appointments and other support services. The remaining trips were to recreational activities, school, work, volunteering, and grocery stores or other nutrition services.

**Service Area:** Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington Counties

**Transportation Type:** Demand-response with advanced reservations; uses buses and vans

**Partners/Funding Sources:** Ride Connection partners with a variety of service providers (listed on its website) including Metropolitan Family Service, Impact Northwest, to coordinate rides. Ride Connection is primarily supported by federal and state grants (administered by TriMet via the FTA and the Oregon Department of Transportation) and contracts, but also receives donations from community members.

**Contact:** Julie Wilcke Pilmer Chief Executive Officer, [jwilcke@rideconnection.org](mailto:jwilcke@rideconnection.org)