

Older Worker Employment Transportation Briefs



Brief #1B: Strategies for Workforce Development Agencies

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The population of America is aging at a more rapid rate than at any other time in U.S. history. This dramatic demographic change is altering the make-up of America's workforce. U.S. Department of Labor projections indicate that by 2014, over 21 percent of the labor force will be comprised of workers age 55 or older.¹ Furthermore, the Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that the percentage of workers over the age of 75 in 2020 will have doubled from the 2000 level.² These changes are even more startling when compared with the projected growth of the labor force as a whole. Overall growth in the workforce between 2002 and 2012 is expected to be 12 percent. During the same period, the number of workers 55 and above is projected to increase nearly 50 percent.³

In many communities, workforce development professionals are already beginning to focus on the anticipated needs of a labor force that will include a greater number of older workers. Indeed, the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), a federal program that helps to place older adults with limited income into jobs, is a mandated One Stop Career Center partner under the Workforce Investment Act.

One issue that workforce development agencies will likely need to address is the availability of reliable, affordable, accessible transportation for older adults to use to travel to work. This brief addresses the types of transportation challenges faced by older workers and outlines several strategies that the workforce development community can implement to ensure that transportation continues to enable older adults to remain in the workforce and reach other quality of life destinations.

Increase in Number of Working Adults Age 55 and Older

Results of a recent study by the Urban Institute, *Enjoying the Golden Work Years*, indicated that nearly half of adults between ages 60 and 64 are currently working, and that about one-third of adults ages 65 to 69 remain in the workforce.⁴ Both social and financial factors appear to be motivating adults to work later. The Urban Institute study found that most working adults over age 70 enjoy their jobs and want to remain actively involved in society. Other older adults are deciding to invest more of their time in volunteer activities as their work demands lessen.

¹ Employment and Training Administration, U.S. Department of Labor. "National Employ Older Worker Week, September 23-29, 2007." http://www.doleta.gov/Seniors/html_docs/NatEmplOldWkr.cfm (accessed October 5, 2007).

² Mitra Toossi. "A New Look at Long-Term Labor Force Projections to 2050," Table 3. Monthly Labor Review, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2006, p. 27. <http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2006/11/art3full.pdf> (accessed October 4, 2007).

³ Mitra Toossi. "Labor Force Projections to 2012: The Graying of the U.S. Workforce," Table 1. Monthly Labor Review, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, February 2004, p. 38. <http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2004/02/art3full.pdf> (accessed October 4, 2007).

⁴ Butrica, Barbara A., Simone G. Schaner, and Sheila Zedlewski. *Enjoying the Golden Work Years*. Urban Institute. May 2006. p. 1.

Older workers who choose to continue working for financial reasons do so because they are uncertain that the resources they have available to them in retirement will be enough to sustain them. According to AARP, in recent years, the “three-legged stool” of a financially secure retirement—Social Security, private pensions, and personal savings—has been replaced by what AARP calls the “four pillars”—Social Security, savings and private pensions, health insurance, and earnings in retirement.⁵ The strength or weakness of each pillar significantly affects the economic security of an older adult.

One financial factor that leads people to work until later in life is a decrease in the value of traditional retirement income. For example, beginning in year 2000 for workers and spouses born in 1938 or later and widows/widowers born in 1940 or later, the eligibility age for receiving Social Security retirement benefits will gradually be delayed, from the current age 65 to age 67 by 2022.⁶ At the same time, defined benefit private retirement pensions (funded by employers) are being replaced by defined contribution pensions (funded by an employee’s savings), which depend heavily on the amount the individual sets aside during his or her working life and financial market conditions. Some employers still offer no retirement-type benefits at all.

The current volatile economic climate also contributes to retirees’ concern that they will not have adequate resources for their later years because it can negatively impact their two major investment vehicles: holdings in the financial markets and the value of their home. Other adults may not have been able to accumulate adequate savings to support themselves once they retire because their incomes have been too low throughout their working lives and/or their employers did not provide pension or retirement plans.

Indeed, the need for money and concern over the expense of non-employer-subsidized health insurance are among two of the three top reasons people cited for continuing to work in a 2005 survey conducted by AARP.⁷ More than 75 percent of workers ages 50–65 who indicated they plan to continue working after age 65 cited the need for money as a major reason to remain in the workforce.⁸

All of these factors combined are expected to lead to an increasing number of older adults facing the risk of falling into poverty. In 2004 alone, more than 9 percent (3.4 million) of adults age 65 or older met poverty guidelines and 15.6 percent (5.6 million) lived in near poverty.⁹ To compensate for their precarious financial state, many of these adults may be forced to continue working past the age at which they might otherwise have retired.

The following is a brief discussion of some of the transportation challenges older workers face and approaches that the workforce development community may implement to effectively meet the employment transportation needs of their older clients.

⁵ Grist, John, Carlos Figueiredo and Mitja Ng-Baumhacki. *Beyond 50: A Report to the Nation on Economic Security Research Report*. AARP, 2002. Available at: http://assets.aarp.org/rgcenter/econ/beyond_50_econ.pdf (accessed September 26, 2007).

⁶ Social Security Administration. Definition of “Full Retirement Age.” <http://www.ssa.gov/glossary.htm> (accessed January 16, 2008).

⁷ Brown, S.K. *Attitudes of Individuals 50 and Older Toward Phased Retirement*. Washington, D.C., AARP, 2005, p 8. Available at: http://assets.aarp.org/rgcenter/post-import/phased_ret.pdf (accessed September 20, 2007).

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁹ DeNavas-Walt, Carmen, Bernadette D. Proctor, and Jessica Smith. *Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the U.S.: 2006*. Table 3. U.S. Census Bureau, 2007, page 12. Available at: <http://www.census.gov/prod/2007pubs/p60-233.pdf> (accessed October 2, 2007).

Transportation Challenges Faced by Older Workers

Many older workers already take advantage of a variety of public transportation services to commute to work and other destinations. For example, some may choose to use the bus, vanpool, or carpool arrangements to reduce the stress and time delays associated with single-vehicle commutes along congested roadways. Others may use community transportation services because they cannot afford to own and maintain a car. Many more, however, continue to travel by private vehicle and do not consider taking public and other forms of community transportation until circumstances steer them toward a decision to do so. For example, they may be forced to begin relying on shared transportation options because of physical constraints, such as changes in vision or other health concerns that impede their ability to drive.

For older adult workers to successfully use the community transportation system on a regular basis, the system must accommodate their destinations and schedules and be affordable. One challenge for older adults can be the mismatch between available commuter services and services needed to match their job and volunteer schedules. For example, data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics indicate that more than 44 percent of older workers work part time.¹⁰ This means that they are likely to travel outside of peak commuting times, when commuter services run less frequently or do not run at all. Still other older adults may live in suburban or rural communities where transportation services are limited. Another challenge can be affordability: for workers on a limited income, even the regular fare on a bus or train may be cost-prohibitive.



Some of the difficulties older adults may encounter in trying to arrange transportation to work are listed below:

- Finding bus, train, or vanpool fares cost prohibitive
- Not being able to afford to own and maintain a car or to do without a second car in a two-driver household
- Having difficulty balancing the complexities of coordinating multiple transportation services and schedules
- Living in suburban or rural communities where public transportation service is limited
- Requiring more specialized transportation (e.g., wheelchair accessible) as they age and continue to work
- Being new to using public transportation and needing assistance navigating transportation information and services

A recent publication by the Community Transportation Association, *One Stop Centers: Key Partners in Finding Solutions to Employment Transportation Needs*, identified the myriad

¹⁰ Personal communication from Karen Kosanovich, Office of Employment and Unemployment Statistics, Bureau of Labor Statistics, November 5, 2007.

services provided by One Stops and Workforce Investment Boards in meeting the transportation needs of their customers, whether younger or older.¹¹ They include

- Providing information on bus, train, and paratransit schedules
- Providing vouchers or passes
- Helping to defray the costs of owning and insuring an automobile
- Providing gas debit cards or allowances
- Providing personalized training on the use of community and public transportation
- Funding bus and van services
- Helping to organize carpools

Steps Workforce Development Agencies Can Take to Assist Older Workers Find Transportation

Faced with a growing number of older customers in need of employment transportation, the workforce development community may consider the following recommendations and practices to effectively assist older workers in assessing the most effective means of traveling to employment-related destinations.

Become familiar with existing transportation resources in your community

The first step is for the workforce development professional to contact the local public transit agency to determine what types of services they provide and the cost of those services to older adults. In addition, the local Area Agency on Aging (located via Eldercare Locator at <http://www.eldercare.gov/Eldercare/Public/Home.asp>) may already have collected information on existing public and private transportation options for older adults in the region. Other sources of information are the local metropolitan planning organization, council of government, regional transportation authority, or regional planning commission, and nonprofit organizations such as the Red Cross and United Way.

Available transportation services may include

- Fixed-route and ADA-complementary paratransit service
- Demand-response (also called dial-a-ride) service, including those provided by community- or faith-based organizations or disability service groups
- Taxis
- Passenger rail
- Shuttle services (including those provided by employers)
- Intercity buses
- Volunteer driver programs
- Ridesharing programs (e.g., vanpools, carpools)

Incorporate the employment transportation needs of older workers into community business discussions

Including representatives from the older worker community on workforce development boards, provides a voice for older adults to educate employers about needed transportation alternatives.

¹¹ Baker, John D. *A Report on One Stop Centers and Employment Transportation*. Washington, D.C.: Community Transportation Association of America, 2005. Available at: http://www.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/articlefiles/one_stop_final.pdf (accessed October 26, 2007).

For example, in Maryland, Maintaining Active Citizens, Inc., the regional parent agency for SCSEP is represented on the Lower Shore Workforce Alliance Board. The board is a participating partner of the regional Tri-County Council, which has taken an active role in addressing the employment transportation needs of the area's older residents.

Emphasize the economic benefits of redesigning transportation services to providers and the community

Workforce development boards have access to information about changing demographics, the regional labor market, and business locations and can use this information to recommend expanding or redirecting transit routes to address local circumstances. In addition to benefiting workers who are older and may have limited income, the results of such efforts may lead to an increase in ridership on public transit overall, resulting in increased revenue for providers and an even more attractive business climate.

Identify available funding sources to help older workers afford transportation

A variety of funding options, both short and long term, are available to help older adult workers pay for transportation:

- Reduced fare programs for eligible older workers and adults with disabilities offered by transit agencies
- Commuter choice pre-tax programs offered by employers to employees who travel to work via transit or vanpool
- Federal assistance for establishing new transportation routes through the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) program, supplementing local and regional funding for transportation through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), and subsidizing transportation through SCSEP.¹²

Help older adults plan travel and become comfortable using various travel means

There are several ways to do this. Your agency or community may have a mobility manager (also called travel navigator, travel concierge, or a similar title) who knows the transportation resources in your region and can help older adults plan out travel. The transit provider may also provide travel training services, in which a transit staff person accompanies a new rider on a test journey to their intended destination to ensure they are confident in using the transit system.

Other older adults who are already familiar with the local transportation system are also good resources for new riders. In Eugene, Oregon, for example, the Lane Transit District works in conjunction with local senior centers to match new riders with "Bus Buddies," who are riders experienced in using public transportation. (See description of this program below.)

Other activities to assist older workers in finding transportation

Other activities the workforce development community can engage in to facilitate older workers in using all available mobility options include the following:

¹² For detailed information on funding opportunities to support employment transportation for older workers, see Friedman, Pamela, and Amy Conrick. *Forming Community Partnerships to Respond to Senior Employment Transportation Needs*. Washington, D.C., Community Transportation Association of America, January 2008. Available at <http://web1.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/anviewer.asp?a=119&z=39>. Also see the *Federal Investment Guide*, Washington, D.C., Community Transportation Association of America, 2005. Available at <http://web1.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/anviewer.asp?a=136&z=39>.

- Create a transportation center within your One Stop that includes written materials on and possibly Web access to local transportation websites
- In collaboration with transit agency, establish a transportation navigator position within your agency
- Establish regular communications between the transportation and workforce sectors
- Invite transportation providers to display their information at job fairs
- Hold job fairs at transportation hubs

Program Examples

The following program descriptions highlight innovative approaches taken by the workforce development community to meet the employment transportation needs of their older adult customers. Programs range from regional planning activities to employment transportation initiatives serving many different populations (e.g., people with a disability or with limited income) to ones geared specifically to older workers.

Department of Aging SCSEP Programs, Maryland

The Maryland Department of Aging (MDOA) has been a SCSEP sponsor since 1972. Currently the program serves 166 participants across 13 rural counties in Southern and Western Maryland. Transportation to work can be difficult in each of these rural communities. To address these challenges, the Allegany County Department of Social Services (DSS) distributes transportation vouchers to customers that they can use on public transit to access work, childcare, or job training sites. Vouchers are available on an interim basis and subsidized on a sliding scale tied to the worker's income level until the employee is able to secure longer-term transportation assistance. To further assist older workers with needed transportation to and from work, the Maryland Department of Aging is exploring local partnerships with transportation entities and DSS for older worker transportation solutions. For more information, contact Karen Curran Fields, Senior Employment Program, Maryland Department of Aging, Baltimore, Maryland, 800-243-3425, kcf@ooa.state.md.us.

Lane Transit District Bus Buddy Program, Eugene, Oregon

For the past 11 years, the Lane Transit District has operated the Bus Buddy program, a one-on-one training initiative designed to introduce older passengers to public transit. Although housed at Lane Transit, the program is considered to be and is marketed as a community-wide effort. It was initially developed when transit district representatives partnered with local senior centers to address the needs of older adults transitioning from driving to other types of transportation. One of the program's goals is to get people acclimated to using fixed-route transit as an alternative to less convenient demand-response bus services, which require advanced planning.

The program teaches older adults who are unfamiliar with the public bus system to ride with confidence. Bus Buddies help their partner plan trips and navigate routes. They ride the bus together, allowing the new rider to learn how to pay the fare and safely enter and exit the bus. Afterward, the Bus Buddy answers any remaining questions about using the transit system. In exchange for volunteering, each Bus Buddy receives a free pass for each month they provide assistance. Their efforts are also recognized at an annual event.

Marketing representative Cosette Rees says the program has made a significant difference in the lives of participants and credits the program's success to the dedication of the volunteer trainers, most of whom have been involved since the program's inception. She also stresses the importance of marketing the program as a community resource, not as just a transportation

agency service. Lane Transit is currently exploring options to include the Department of Motor Vehicles and local employers as partners. For further details on this project, contact Cosette Rees, Marketing Representative, Lane Transit District, Eugene, Oregon, 541-682-6143, Cosette.Rees@ltd.org.

People to Jobs, Connecticut

Located in Southwestern Connecticut, People to Jobs is a partnership of the Connecticut Departments of Social Services and Transportation, the Federal Transit Administration, and WorkPlace, Inc., Southwestern Connecticut's Regional Workforce Development Board. With input from local transit operators, the People to Jobs Regional Transportation Task Force decides where new and expanded service is needed to enable workers to access jobs and job training. Bringing transit operators to the table gives them first hand experience of what the community needs and enables them to address those needs more effectively.

Another project of WorkPlace, Inc. is Maturity Works, a SCSEP program that provides training and job search assistance to people age 55 and older. Program staff are currently designing a transportation initiative to help older workers who are seeking employment or need assistance getting to work.

The People to Jobs website also provides a trip planning tool for public use (<http://www.peopletojobs.org>). In addition, a pocket guide to employment resources, *Getting There*, is available on-line and at local libraries, transit information centers, social service agencies, and One Stop Centers. Further information on this initiative is available from Debbie Venditti, Program Manager, People to Jobs, 203-610-8544, dvenditti@workplace.org.

Prince George's County SCSEP Program, Maryland

The SCSEP program in Prince George's County, Maryland has been in operation for over 10 years. The program serves 60 participants, most of who rely on public transportation to reach their work assignments. Many program participants live in areas of the county where public bus service is limited and the subway does not run, making it difficult to reach host agencies. As a result, 3–5 percent of participants leave the program in any given month. Program Director Jamescha Johnson has taken a proactive approach to addressing these challenges. Among them are:

- Working with the county Department of Public Works and Transportation to identify and arrange transportation options for SCSEP program participants
- Securing SCSEP placements at agencies served by the county bus system, known as The Bus, so that participants who do not drive are able to reach their work assignments
- Arranging for SCSEP passengers to receive a county ID card so that they can ride for free to reach any destination, not just work, for the duration of their SCSEP training
- Using Metro Access, the disability service provider, to transport participants who live outside of The Bus' service area
- Developing a voucher program for use by SCSEP participants throughout the county, and
- Working to build a stronger partnership with Workforce Investment Act (WIA) representatives in the county by educating them about the specific employment needs of older workers, including transportation

Johnson believes that when public transportation providers become more attuned to the specific needs of older riders, such as the need for more buses during mid-day when most older adults

travel, services will improve. More information can be obtained from Jamescha Johnson, SCSEP Director, Prince Georges County, Camp Springs, Maryland, 301-265-8487, jejohnson2@co.pg.md.us.

Shore Transit and the Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore Maryland

Communities along the lower eastern shore of Maryland have expanded efforts to connect older workers to jobs as many younger residents have chosen to leave the area. The Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore plays an active role in addressing those needs. In 2003, the Lower Shore Workforce Alliance, which provides policy and oversight for Workforce Investment Act funds and programs, and Shore Transit, the local transportation provider, joined forces under the auspices of the Council to provide transportation assistance to older community residents.

Maintaining Active Citizens, Inc., which is the regional parent agency for SCSEP and advocates on behalf of older adult community members, is represented on the Alliance board. Under the direction of one agency, Shore Transit was able to consolidate seven different transit operators in the three counties, eliminating duplication of services and allowing riders to make use of one bus with better demand-response service. The network also runs feeder routes across state lines to connect with public transit in Delaware and Virginia. Bus routes incorporated stops at apartment buildings that are home to a large number of seniors, providing them with transportation access to work and to training opportunities at the local community college. Furthermore, the transit agency is located in a One Stop Center, allowing it to partner with workforce and human service agencies to provide on-site transportation assistance for clients. For more information, contact Margaret (Peggy) Bradford, Executive Director, MAC Inc., Area Agency on Aging, Salisbury, Maryland, 410-742-0505.

State of Franklin Health Council, North Carolina

The State of Franklin Health Council's SCSEP program covers the 16 far western counties of North Carolina, which also includes the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation. The Health Council coordinates transportation assistance for participants in all counties. Case management activities include acclimating SCSEP participants to all available county transportation services. In addition, SCSEP participants usually receive relevant transportation assistance during their initial orientation to the program; over 20 percent of participants require such assistance to reach their jobs.

The Health Council is currently working on website access that will list services for each of the 16 counties along with appropriate links more specific information. Work is also under way to secure additional funds from Senior Service America to support SCSEP activities and create a model that other SCSEP grantees can follow. Health Council Executive Director Bettie Seay accredits the program's successful coordination efforts to an emphasis on how partnering is a win-win situation for all parties involved. For further details, contact Bettie Seay, Executive Director, State of Franklin Health Council Inc., stateoffranklin@aol.com.

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Additional Resources

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The Joblinks Employment Transportation Initiative is a partnership of the Community Transportation Association, the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration and the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration. Joblinks assists communities in addressing challenges associated with accessing affordable and reliable transportation to work and related destinations. For more information, visit
<http://web1.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/anmviewer.asp?a=52&z=39>.

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