

**FINANCING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES  
IN  
SENIOR TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMS**

**(RESULTS OF A SURVEY OF MEMBERS OF THE STP EXCHANGE)**

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## **FINANCING TRANSPORTATION SERVICES**

### **RESULTS OF SURVEY OF STP EXCHANGE MEMBERS**

**Background** The purpose of the survey was to identify challenges and concerns related to financing transportation services that involve volunteer drivers. The survey was undertaken with members of the web-based STP Exchange. The survey included twenty closed ended questions with opportunities for comments. Members were contacted about the survey via e-mail on December 3, 2009 with an announcement that included a link to the on-line survey which included twenty brief questions. The survey closed on December 15, 2009.

**Survey Respondents** 30% percent of the STP Exchange members that provide transportation to older adults responded to the survey. A profile of the respondents is included on the following chart.

#### **Profile of Survey Respondents**

Number of Respondents <b>(68)</b>	Annual Budget Range:
# of Represented States <b>(28)</b>	\$0 - \$99,999 <b>(50%)</b>
Primary Service Area:	\$100,000 - \$499,999 <b>(21%)</b>
Urban <b>(30%)</b>	\$500,000 - \$999,999 <b>(13%)</b>
Suburban <b>(35%)</b>	\$1,000,000 - \$5,000,000 <b>(12%)</b>
Rural <b>(35%)</b>	\$5,000,000 + <b>(4%)</b>

**Summary of Results** Respondents to the survey offered considerable insight into the funding of transportation services for seniors. Below is a summary of what they said.

- The age at which services consider a persona an older adult: age 60. **(72%)**
- The most frequent method of organizing services: within a menu of services. **(76%)**
- The top service provided to senior passengers: dispatched demand response. **(60%)**
- The top assistance provided to senior passengers: door-to-door service. **(70%)**
- The top source of funding: grants from local government agencies. **(50%)**
- The top challenge in securing funding: getting grants to support operations. **(68%)**
- The top method planned for securing future funding for providing transportation to older adults: charitable donations from individuals **(60%)**
- Organizations considering ways to increase transportation funding for providing services to older adults in the future. **(85%)**
- Organizations that expect to receive increased funding for transportation services for seniors in the next year **(52%)**
- If new funding is received the most frequently identified use of those funds would be increasing the outreach to more seniors as **(73%)**

A summary of recommendations and discussion of the results are included on the following pages of this brief report.

## Summary of Recommendations

All respondents to the survey answered the question: “What recommendations can you make to help senior transportation service providers tap into new funding sources.” While many respondents indicated that they had no advice, if they had any advice they would certainly share it, or they wanted to know what advice might be given; the majority made recommendations that could be grouped as follows:

- Develop partnerships for information sharing and networking.
- Enhance communication and public awareness of services.
- Maintain adequate records and statistics.
- Look to transportation services for funding.
- Change funding policies.

While many of the recommendations suggested fairly general approaches for tapping new funding sources, a number of specific action-recommendations also were made.

- Take a “look outside the box approach” such as targeting local businesses.
- Become a standing line item in municipal and county budgets.
- Get to know the trust officers at the local bank (they can recommend your program to their clients).
- Work closely with congregations that can budget mission support for senior transportation needs.
- Offer to help the employees of corporate and businesses donors remain on the job by providing transportation services for their aging parents.
- Convince health care providers that transportation benefits them and that they need to contribute financial support in addition to referring patients for transportation services.
- Identify ways to use your transportation expertise, facilities and vehicles to bring in additional revenue.
- Track reasons for medical visits to enable the transportation service to collect data on the types of passenger illnesses and use data to apply to foundations addressing those issues (e.g. breast cancer treatment, diabetes, heart disease).
- Check with your AAA to see if they have or will be adding funding opportunities.
- Identify your costs per ride (especially if you are a non profit service) and the costs per ride of other services and, if yours are lower than those of other services, make your case to government agencies.
- Advertise on local TV channels.
- Work with the Chamber of Commerce and Department of Labor to identify senior workforce needs and to make the case that expanded funding to help older adults get to work can ensure that they continue to be independent, tax-paying members of the community.
- Inform the Governor’s Office of services and ask for a letter of recommendation.
- Diversify funding sources to balance the ebb and flow of different sources.
- Refocus how we think about and fund transportation infrastructure to thinking about funding transportation options.

See additional recommendations on page 7.

## General Discussion of Results

In addition to providing a brief organizational profile, survey respondents completed seventeen multiple choice and two open ended questions. They also were offered an opportunity to identify or list other issues that they deemed important. Many of their supportive comments are also included in the discussion below.

### 1. What are the top sources of funding for transportation services?

Respondents were given fifteen possible responses. The top three sources they identified are: #1 grants from local government agencies (50%), #2 grants from state government agencies (43%), #3 grants from federal government agencies (43%). Six additional sources of funding included donations from foundations (35%), charitable donations from individuals (32%), fund raising events (28%), donations from community groups (21%), and fees from passengers and passenger donations (10%) each. Interestingly, one respondent commented that their service received 1/10 of the funding in 2009 that it had received in previous years and thus it has been a grim year for foundation funding.

### 2. What is the major source of funding for transportation services?

An open ended question asked the major source of funding for transportation services. Several key responses are included below. The responses confirmed that government grants provided the major sources of funds. These included state, local, county and federal funds including funds from transit and aging, from sales tax and mill levy, from Medicaid contracts, and New Freedom grants. At the same time local donations from civic groups, individuals, and local foundations were also identified as major sources of funding. Also mentioned were special events (an auction and a golf tournament) and proceeds from sales (a thrift store). One respondent mentioned its work on a community endowment campaign to sustain the program in perpetuity.

### 3. What are the challenges services face in securing funding?

The respondents were asked to select (from a list of 10) their top three challenges in securing funding to provide transportation to older adults. The responses emphasized the grant orientation and local donation emphasis of the transportation services. For example 68% identified "getting grants to support our operations". At the same time, 56% identified "getting charitable donations from private individuals", 41% identified "getting businesses to contribute to our program, and 37% identified "getting community groups to contribute to our program. Additional comments included: **competition** from a government funded program in one county we serve; **collecting** fees from those who cannot pay the fare; **shrinking** local and sales tax revenues; and **service providers** who don't want to ask for donations. One respondent suggested the possible difficulty securing funding from transportation services with the following comment: "Getting any sort of funding from the transit authority is not 'a challenge', it is completely unimaginable. In which parallel universe would this occur? Certainly not in this one."

**4. Do transportation services experience time lags between when they incur staff and program costs and when they receive payment from funders?**

69% of the respondents said they did not experience such time lags. Those 31% of respondents who said they did experience such time delays made a variety of comments.

*"Since individual contributions play such a huge role, we have no idea if money is really going to be forthcoming on a regular basis."*

*"County funding requires spending the money first and then invoicing them."*

*"The lag can be greater than six months causing anxiety with the county board of supervisors."*

*"We have cash flow problems due to 45-60 day reimbursement payments."*

*"FTA New Freedom grant is a reimbursement grant administered by a local transit entity with a poor reputation for prompt processing and payment to contractors."*

**5. With what organizations do transportation services work most closely in preparing funding applications?**

41% of the respondents identified the Area Agencies on Aging as the organization with which they worked most closely. This response may be related to the fact that only 18% of the respondents identified themselves as a public, paratransit, or community transit service while 82% identified themselves as human service, aging service, faith based or volunteer driver programs.

**6. What opportunities for improving or expanding transportation services for older adults has resulted from new or increased funding in 2009.**

Many respondents indicated that they had received no new funds in 2009.

Of those who **did** receive increased funding:

The #1 opportunities for expanding service identified by respondents were for:

- *Increased mileage reimbursement (or incentives) for volunteer drivers.*
- *payment for taxi rides.*
- *expansion of service capacity or service area.*
- *development of travel training program.*
- *hiring new staff (including mobility manager).*

The #2 opportunities for expanding service identified by respondents were for:

- *volunteer support.*
- *service and service area expansion.*
- *software upgrades and development.*
- *hiring new staffing*
- *Purchase of vehicles.*

The #3 opportunities for expanding service identified by respondents were for:

- *diversification of funding sources by seeking major gifts and planned giving.*
- *translation of materials for non-English speakers.*
- *hire a part-time travel ambassador.*
- *development of raining and educational materials.*
- *overall organizational support.*

**5. Are services considering ways to increase funding in the future for the transportation they provide to seniors?**

85% of the respondents indicated they were considering ways to increase funding for the transportation services they provide to seniors. The most frequently identified methods which respondents said they were planning to implement are:

- *Charitable donations from individuals (60%)*
- *Donations from foundations (43%)*
- *Grants from local government agencies (43%)*
- *Donations from community groups (42%)*
- *Grants from state government agencies (40%)*
- *Fundraising events (40%)*
- *Grants from federal government agencies (26%)*
- *Passenger donations (23%)*
- *Contracts for providing passenger services (23%)*
- *Contributions from service sponsors (21%)*
- *Fees from passengers (17%)*

The three funding opportunities that received the lowest response rate were: fee for services with businesses, soliciting donations of automobiles for resale, and sale of products to support services.

**6. Do services expect to receive increased funding for providing transportation to older adults?**

*Expectations for increased funding were fairly evenly divided:*

*52% indicated that “yes” they did expect to receive additional funding.*

*48% indicated that “no” they did not expect to receive additional funding.*

*In the event increased funding is received, the top five items for which respondents said they would use funds are:*

*To increase outreach to more seniors (73%)*

*To recruit more volunteers (59%)*

*To pay mileage reimbursement for volunteers (46%)*

*To hire additional staff (32%)*

*To hire drivers (25%)*

*Interestingly, when respondents added comments or identified funding options beyond those included in question, said they were not actually sure they were going to receive funding, but lived with the “hope” they would, and if they did, they would use it:*

*To build capacity within the organization*

*To support expanded hours of service*

*To support expanded days of service*

*To support expanded miles of service*

*To increase destinations to which services is provided*

*To expand to un served areas*

*To pay for travel training*

## **7. What recommendations do respondents have to help senior transportation service providers tap into new funding sources? (Continued from Page 3)**

### **Develop Partnerships**

- Share information with similar programs.
- Join local special needs transportation planning groups.
- Work with the Chamber of Commerce and Dept of Labor .
- Work with others who have developed transportation services.
- Network with transportation people such as DOT.
- Network with other service providers, local planners, and elected officials.

### **Enhance Communication**

- Create a public awareness campaign about needs of aging population to get places safely that elevates perceptions to recognize relationship between assisted transportation and the ability to maintain independence at home and delay life in an institutional setting.
- Make Governor's Office aware of services and ask for recommendation.
- Advertise on local TV channels.
- Convince health care providers that transportation benefits them.
- Motivate more family members of seniors to donate funds.
- Make sure the service is visible in the community so that local businesses will be encouraged to support it.
- Tell the story of the people using the service and the impact on their lives.

### **Do Research**

- Develop GOOD DATA (not anecdotes) about your community's senior transportation needs. Educate yourself and your community about what is already out there and what is needed.
- Make sure to have good records and statistical information for grant apps.
- Track business and medical provider destinations and solicit destinations.
- Know about the best search engines and websites for new funds.
- Know the names of local foundations that fund topics related to aging and/or transportation.

### **Look to Transportation Services**

- Look beyond the aging network to transportation services as funding sources
- Work with your local transportation provider, not against them.
- Engage in more collaborations and advocacy among senior transportation providers
- Form viable partnerships with transit.

### **Change Policies**

- Refocus how we think about and fund transportation infrastructure to thinking about and funding transportation options.
- Encourage legislation to support senior transportation on an on-going basis.

### **Other Action Recommendations**

- Read and Heed Information about Funding from sources such as the FTA, NCST, grant.gov. the Beverly foundation, and the STP exchange.
- Ask, ask, ask. Ask every group. Don't assume no one is giving because of economic challenges. Take creative approaches.