



NVTC Fact Sheet 2015

Volunteer Driver Program Review

The Transportation Family Volunteer Driver Programs Facts and Practices

A broad array of transportation options that may or may not be available are sometimes referred to as the Family of Transportation Services.

Highlights

- **The Family of Transportation**
This family includes a wide range of transportation options, one of which is volunteer driver programs.
- **Volunteer Driver Programs**
Although every volunteer driver program is different, they generally have a lot in common.
- **Program Facts**
The STAR Award Program was initiated in 2000. Data from 2014 and estimates of the performance of 706 programs are provided.
- **Promising Practices**
A report on promising practices was completed in 2014. Types and examples are included in this fact sheet.

For More Information Visit

<http://nationalvolunteertransportationcenter.org/>

***This Fact Sheet was
Adapted from a
2008
Beverly Foundation Publication***

Members of the Transportation Family

- *Family members and caregivers*
- *Friends who help with errands*
- *Neighbors who live nearby and offer rides*
- *Public transit (buses, light rail, subways)*
- *ADA Paratransit (for people with disabilities)*
- *Dial-A-Ride (and other shuttle services)*
- *Private transit
(limousines, taxis & chauffeur services)*
- *Community Transit
(buses, vans, shuttles, autos)*
- *Volunteer Transportation
(community based with volunteer drivers)*
- *NEV's (Neighborhood Electric Vehicles)*
- *Low speed vehicles, golf carts, bicycles*
- *Walking*

Common Characteristics

- Drivers** (paid or volunteer or paid & volunteer)
- Vehicles** (owned or volunteer or owned & vol.)
- Staff** (paid and/or volunteer)
- Ride Scheduling** (staff and/or driver)
- Organization** (menu or free standing)
- Data Management** (high tech, low tech, no tech)
- Insurance** (some, incomplete or no coverage)
- Service area** (defined or flexible)

Volunteer Driver Program Highlights

Variations Volunteer Driver Programs exhibit great variation in the way they are organized and the services they provide to passengers.

*Some provide service in rural areas, others in suburban areas, and others in urban areas.
Some have a large staff, others operate solely with volunteer support.
Some only rely on volunteer drivers, others also hire paid drivers.
Some have no budgeted expenses, others have budgets in the million-dollar range.
Some reimburse volunteer drivers for mileage, others do not.
Some provide rides for specific needs, others provide rides to special destinations.
Some allow escorts to ride free others mobilize drivers as escorts.
Some use passenger vehicles only, others use a mixed fleet of vehicles.
Some provide thousands of rides each year, others provide hundreds of rides.
Some charge fees to passengers, others request donations from passengers.
Some receive tax support, grant funding, or accept donations, others initiate fundraisers.
Some are free standing, others are located within an organization's service menu.*

Organization The manner in which volunteer driver programs are organized and managed and the way they involve volunteers (and often their vehicles) can impact on the costs they incur in delivering those services. For example, programs generally are perceived as being inexpensive to operate. However, in all probability, the operating costs of a volunteer driver program will not be especially low if it has a combination of the following: a large paid staff, high office space rental costs, or fees to other organizations for software applications or membership. Such costs will be exacerbated if it involves paid drivers, owns vehicles and provides only a few rides. When programs incur high infrastructure and operating costs it can be difficult to make the case that it is a low-cost transportation option.

Assistance Although costs are important, they are not the only criteria on which the value of volunteer driver programs should be judged. The vast majority offer door-to-door, door-through-door, and stay-at-the destination assistance. Such assistance is critical to the ability of passengers with physical and/or cognitive limitations to access a transportation service, and difficult if not impossible for transportation services with paid drivers to provide. Volunteer driver programs also are known for flexibility in jurisdictional boundaries, in offering a variety of passenger destinations, in providing passengers with socialization, and in linking programs with the local community through volunteer involvement.

History Volunteer driver programs are not a new phenomenon. One of the first known volunteer driver programs in America was started in 1905 using sleighs and wagons to take older adults to the train depot and to church. Today, there may be more than 1,000 in providing services (using more advanced vehicles) to a wide range of destinations. Interest has increased dramatically in the last several years. The NVTC (National Volunteer Transportation Center) was organized to ensure that both existing and new volunteer driver programs can benefit from the vast experience of long established programs, from informational materials, technical assistance, and raising programs, and from linking relationships with volunteer driver programs across America.

Volunteer Driver Program Facts

By the end of 2014, the [National Volunteer Transportation Center](http://nationalvolunteertransportationcenter.org) included 706 volunteer driver programs in its data base, most of which were identified in the Beverly Foundation's STAR Award program in 2012 and 2013. 190 duplicated and unduplicated volunteer driver programs were identified and by the NVTC Star Award program in 2014.

When the STAR Award program (initially called STAR Search Survey) was begun in 2000, it very little was known about volunteer driver programs. Although the program emphasized transportation to older adults (and was called STAR Search), many programs that applied for a STAR Award included volunteer drivers. Some were independent, free-standing organizations that only included volunteer drivers, although some included both volunteer and paid drivers. Many programs were located in human service organizations and included both paid and volunteer drivers. None of the applicants were traditional transportation providers.

All volunteer driver programs that have applied for a STAR Award (and have a website) are listed on the Map of Volunteer Driver Programs in America. The map is located at....

<http://nationalvolunteertransportationcenter.org/>

Each year, STAR Award applicants include considerable data in their applications. Questions include topics such as area served, passengers served, number and type of drivers, number and type of vehicles, number of rides, number of miles driven by volunteer drivers and hours contributed by driving passengers, method of organization, levels of assistance, training needs, and communication methods.

In 2014 alone, 190 volunteer driver programs that applied for the Center's nationally acclaimed STAR Award Program were located in 30 states. They were in operation an average of 19 years; and although 30% of their budgets ranged from \$100,000—\$500,000, 64% of the programs operated on budgets of less than \$100,000. This 190 programs:

- Were located in 30 states
- provided 1,348,512 one-way rides,
- totaled 16,197,620 miles from volunteer driving trips,
- counted 1,680,620 volunteer driver hours, and
- and valued volunteer hours at \$37,884,776.

As a group, the 706 volunteer driver programs in the database were estimated on an annual basis to:

- provide almost 5,000,000 one-way rides,
- involve almost 55,000 volunteer drivers,
- mobilize almost 50,000 volunteer vehicles,
- total almost 60,000,000 miles from volunteer driving trips,
- count more than 6,000,000 volunteer driver hours, and
- value volunteer hours at approximately \$1,400,000,000.

Promising Practices

Hundreds of promising practices were collected from STAR Awards program applicants in 2010 through 2014. A report on a selection of the promising practices that were submitted is included on the NVTC website. What follows is a list of ten types of promising practices that are described.

- Sponsorship of volunteer driver programs
- Multiple services involving volunteer drivers
- Location in urban and rural areas
- Passenger assistance
- Volunteer driver training
- Volunteer driver recruitment and reimbursement
- Volunteer driver program management and funding
- Coordination and collaboration
- Extra effort services
- Special initiatives

Two examples (an extra effort service and a special initiative) are below.

Extra Effort Service: Taxi Services When Volunteers Are Not Available

For over 20 years, this transportation program has matched seniors with volunteers who provide escorted door through door transportation for medical rides and basic needs. Volunteers use their own vehicles and generally cover their own costs. If no volunteer is available, taxi service is provided to ensure needs are met. The program serves a mix of urban and rural small towns covering 834 square miles, dedicated to providing volunteer transportation services with no fees for service. ***The Center for Volunteer Caregiving - Cary, North Carolina***

Special Initiative: Time Exchange

This non-profit organization provides volunteer transportation and other services to support older adults who are aging in place. Volunteers can bank the time they spend providing services. For example, when a volunteer spends 10 hours providing transportation, he or she can store that 10 hours of credit in the organization's Timebank. They can use banked time in meeting their own future needs or can donate banked time to someone who needs help. This Timebank appears to work especially well because its focus is on volunteer activities in a single area and because the organization offers many services, thus enabling people to bank their volunteer hours for providing rides as well as handy-man services, financial services, light housekeeping, shopping etc. Volunteers find it a way to save time credits so another volunteer can help them meet future needs or so they can double their volunteer contribution by donating their time credits to someone else. ***Partners in Care - Pasadena, Maryland***

See <http://nationalvolunteertransportationcenter.org/> (resources)
for Volunteer Transportation Programs And Their Promising Practices