

Beverly Foundation

Fact Sheet Series

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The 5 A's of Senior-Friendly Transportation

Highlights

- **Introduction** The 5 A's were first introduced by the Beverly Foundation in 2000
- **Availability** alone is not the solution to transportation challenges for older adults
- **Acceptability** suggests senior passenger criteria of comfort and convenience of service
- **Accessibility** means that passengers must be able to access the vehicle and the service
- **Adaptability** calls for the service to meet the assistance needs of older adults
- **Affordability** not only aims for transportation to be affordable to passengers but also to transportation services
- **5 A's Calculator** enables the reader to calculate the senior friendliness of a transit service

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For More Information Visit
www.beverlyfoundation.org



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Albuquerque, NM

History

Transportation options can be critical to the ability of older adults to get where they need to go, especially when they have limited their driving or have stopped driving altogether. However, seniors and their caregivers often say that the transportation options that are available to them do not meet their needs.

Today, there is increasing awareness that it is the degree of "senior friendliness" that determines whether older adult passengers are able to use community-based transportation options. In recent years, research conducted by the Beverly Foundation on their special transportation needs identified

The 5 A's

Availability

Acceptability

Accessibility

Adaptability

Affordability

the 5 A's of Senior-Friendly Transportation.*

The 5 A's methodology is accepted by many national, state, and local policy and program initiatives of government and non-profit agencies as criteria for assessing the usability of transportation options by senior passengers.

This fact sheet discusses each of the 5 A's with respect to their importance to seniors and to transportation providers alike. The Senior Friendliness Calculator on page 4 can be used by transportation services and by community groups to identify ways to improve existing services as well as to plan the development of new services.

**The 5 A's of Senior Friendly-Transportation methodology was first reported in the Beverly Foundation's 2001 publication Supplemental Transportation Programs for Seniors. The publication and the project from which the 5 A's was originally developed were undertaken in partnership with the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. A subsequent 2004 GAO Report to the Chairman, Special Committee on Aging, U.S. Senate*

Availability

Public and community transportation systems, and private taxi and limousine services generally are designed as destination services and require passengers to get to a transit stop to access the bus or get to the curb to meet the shuttle, the dial-a-ride vehicle, or the taxi. While their availability in a community may meet the needs of the general public, they may not meet the needs of senior passengers. The reason is that the same limitations that make it difficult or impossible for seniors to drive also can make it difficult or impossible for them to get to the transit stop or the curb, or even to get on or off a vehicle without assistance.

Just as seniors face challenges, transportation services also face challenges in meeting the needs of senior passengers. Such challenges are difficult to resolve because traditional services generally are not designed to meet the expectations and requirements of many senior passengers. Nevertheless,

it is important for transportation providers to be aware of what the senior population wants and needs with respect to transportation options or seniors will not want to or be able to use their services. This means that, although transportation options may be available, availability alone does not offer a transportation solution for many senior passengers. The accompanying chart identifies several of the service challenges transportation options face when working to meet the needs of older adults.

10 Availability Challenges

- Providing demand response services
- Making multiple stops
- Ensuring seniors know about service
- Making sure seniors can reach service
- Picking passengers up at their door
- Crossing jurisdictional boundaries
- Traveling to desired destinations
- Offering service evenings & weekends
- Offering on-time pick up and delivery
- Providing assistance to passengers

Seniors who have driven an automobile for forty or fifty years are used to the comfort and convenience of getting where they need to go, when

Acceptability

10 Acceptability Challenges

- Going where seniors need to go
- Going to destinations any time
- Offering satisfactory vehicles
- Offering well maintained vehicles
- Offering a comfortable ride
- Ensuring a convenient service
- Ensuring vehicle cleanliness
- Ensuring minimal wait times
- Ensuring ease of scheduling
- Training drivers to be senior sensitive

they want to go, in the vehicle of their choice. Seniors often identify the loss of a license to drive as a loss of freedom, independence, and control. Such losses feed into a variety of fears: the fear of being a burden; the fear of being dependent; the fear of not being able to get to activities. In other words, the loss of the drivers license can have a devastating impact on the psychological well-being as well as the quality of life of an older adult. An additional consequence is that a “retired” driver can find it difficult to make the transition to another transportation option.

Interestingly, even the most admired transportation services may not be viewed as acceptable by older adults because they often are judged by the comfort and convenience criteria of people who have not been on a bus since their school days or have only ridden a shuttle when traveling to the airport. Transportation services need to be aware of these and other criteria by which they are judged. The accompanying chart identifies ten acceptability challenges.

Accessibility

Older adults say that limitations which make it difficult or impossible for them to drive also can make it difficult if not impossible for them to access public transit as well as many community, human service, and senior transportation options. Although the most frequent access solution is to provide training on how to use transportation services, what can be even more important to older adult passengers is assistance and support. In other words, while destination-oriented transportation may not meet their needs; the solution to senior access requirements can be the provider that takes services to passengers, and offers them assistance and support prior to, during, and following their travel. This often is referred to as door-to-door, door-through-door, and at-the-destination assistance.

Quite often, the drivers and support staff are the key to passenger access. Driver training in senior sensitivity, concierge and escort programs, passenger assistance, and volunteer driver programs can and often do resolve passenger access challenges. The accompanying chart lists ten accessibility challenges that services need to be aware of when they provide transportation to seniors.

Adaptability

Older adults who need transportation options may find them difficult to use because they lack flexibility. Passengers may not be able to trip chain or make multiple stops; go beyond their immediate neighborhood, city, or county to access activities;

10 Adaptability Challenges

- Offering multiple-stop services
- Offering door-through-door service
- Offering transportation escorts
- Accommodating assistive devices
- Accommodating passengers' pets
- Adapting procedures to rider needs
- Linking passengers with other services
- Recruiting and organizing escorts
- Offering special destination services
- Offering transit beyond usual hours

or to link with more appropriate or less expensive services. Plus, the

transportation options that are available may not be able to accommodate the use of walkers or service animals.

While service adaptations may be desirable, they can be expensive to implement and operate. For example, additional staff may be required for linking passengers with other, more appropriate services; and new methods of ride-scheduling may be required for enabling passengers to make multiple stops. It also can be expensive and time-consuming to recruit and train escorts. The accompanying chart identifies ten adaptability challenges.

10 Accessibility Challenges

- Assistance to and from vehicles
- Assistance into and out of vehicle
- Assistance opening doors
- Help with coats, shoes, and boots
- Help in and out of chairs
- Help carrying packages
- Help with assistive devices
- Assistance at destinations
- "How to" training for passengers
- "How to" training for drivers

Research tells us that it can cost between \$5,000 and \$7,500 a year to own and operate an automobile. However, when older adults can no longer drive, they rarely convert savings in automobile ownership to funds which they can use for another transportation option. Those seniors who go to the trouble to do the math, may discover that they could purchase as many as 3,000 one-way rides from a transportation service that charges \$2.00 per ride. Unfortunately, they may not do the math or accept the premise that money saved from giving up their car could be used to pay for one or more community-based transportation options.

Affordability

It should also be mentioned that passengers are seldom knowledgeable about the actual cost of many community-based transportation services. For example, the \$2.00 or \$5.00 "senior" ride may actually cost the service \$10, \$20, \$30, or even \$40. Unfortunately, senior passengers may not be aware of the cost of the service to the provider or the community. From the standpoint of transportation affordability, it is important that: (1) the services are provided at the lowest possible cost; (2) the services provided are affordable to senior passengers; (3) the services provided are affordable to the community; and (4) seniors are aware of the true cost of the transportation services they receive. The accompanying chart identifies ten affordability challenges.

10 Affordability Challenges

- Creating awareness of actual transportation costs
- Maintaining and operating vehicles
- Maintaining and supporting a driver pool
- Organizing for least expensive operations
- Offering reasonably priced transportation services
- Providing necessary assistance and support
- Ensuring affordability for senior passengers
- Linking passengers with less expensive services
- Ensuring affordability for community donors
- Conveying cost information on vehicle ownership

A SENIOR FRIENDLINESS CALCULATOR FOR PUBLIC AND COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

The 5 A's of Senior-Friendly Transportation are criteria which can be used by transportation services to make a judgment as to their senior friendliness. To initiate your review, check each of the factors below that are represented within your public or community transit service. Each check equals one point. When you have completed your review, add up your score and look at the scoring key at the bottom of the page to know where you are on "the road to senior friendliness."

Availability : The Transportation Service....

- _____ provides transportation to seniors
- _____ can be reached by the majority of seniors in the community
- _____ provides transportation anytime (day, evenings, weekends, 24/7)
- _____ can take riders to destinations beyond city & county boundaries
- _____ maintains organizational relationships with human service agencies

Acceptability: The Transportation Service...

- _____ uses vehicles that are easy for seniors to access
- _____ offers "demand response" with no advance scheduling requirement
- _____ provides driver "sensitivity to seniors" training
- _____ adheres to narrow "window of time" for home and destination pick up
- _____ ensures cleanliness and maintenance of vehicles

Accessibility: The Transportation Service...

- _____ can accommodate the needs of a majority of elders in the community
- _____ has information program for improving senior transportation knowledge
- _____ can provide "door-thru-door" transportation when needed
- _____ can provide services to essential and non-essential activities
- _____ can link seniors with "more appropriate" transportation options

Adaptability: The Transportation Service...

- _____ will provide transportation escorts when needed
- _____ can provide multiple stop trips for individual passengers
- _____ can access vehicles that accommodate wheelchairs and walkers
- _____ maintains a policy of "adapting the system to meet needs of seniors"
- _____ undertakes annual senior customer survey for service improvement

Affordability: The Transportation Service...

- _____ offers reduced fares (or free transportation) to senior passengers
- _____ secures funding specifically to support senior transit services
- _____ offers opportunity to purchase monthly pass instead of paying cash
- _____ offers options for purchasing tickets by mail or the internet
- _____ uses volunteer drivers to reduce costs for providing "extra" services

Total _____ (Possible Score = 25)

