

TCRP

REPORT 82

TRANSIT
COOPERATIVE
RESEARCH
PROGRAM

Improving Public Transit Options for Older Persons

Volume 2: Final Report

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TCRP REPORT 82

**Improving Public
Transit Options for
Older Persons**

Volume 2: Final Report

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Public Transit • Planning and Administration

Research Sponsored by the Federal Transit Administration in Cooperation with the Transit Development Corporation

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WASHINGTON, D.C.
2002
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TRANSIT COOPERATIVE RESEARCH PROGRAM

The nation's growth and the need to meet mobility, environmental, and energy objectives place demands on public transit systems. Current systems, some of which are old and in need of upgrading, must expand service area, increase service frequency, and improve efficiency to serve these demands. Research is necessary to solve operating problems, to adapt appropriate new technologies from other industries, and to introduce innovations into the transit industry. The Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) serves as one of the principal means by which the transit industry can develop innovative near-term solutions to meet demands placed on it.

The need for TCRP was originally identified in *TRB Special Report 213—Research for Public Transit: New Directions*, published in 1987 and based on a study sponsored by the Urban Mass Transportation Administration—now the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). A report by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), *Transportation 2000*, also recognized the need for local, problem-solving research. TCRP, modeled after the longstanding and successful National Cooperative Highway Research Program, undertakes research and other technical activities in response to the needs of transit service providers. The scope of TCRP includes a variety of transit research fields including planning, service configuration, equipment, facilities, operations, human resources, maintenance, policy, and administrative practices.

TCRP was established under FTA sponsorship in July 1992. Proposed by the U.S. Department of Transportation, TCRP was authorized as part of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA). On May 13, 1992, a memorandum agreement outlining TCRP operating procedures was executed by the three cooperating organizations: FTA; The National Academies, acting through the Transportation Research Board (TRB); and the Transit Development Corporation, Inc. (TDC), a nonprofit educational and research organization established by APTA. TDC is responsible for forming the independent governing board, designated as the TCRP Oversight and Project Selection (TOPS) Committee.

Research problem statements for TCRP are solicited periodically but may be submitted to TRB by anyone at any time. It is the responsibility of the TOPS Committee to formulate the research program by identifying the highest priority projects. As part of the evaluation, the TOPS Committee defines funding levels and expected products.

Once selected, each project is assigned to an expert panel, appointed by the Transportation Research Board. The panels prepare project statements (requests for proposals), select contractors, and provide technical guidance and counsel throughout the life of the project. The process for developing research problem statements and selecting research agencies has been used by TRB in managing cooperative research programs since 1962. As in other TRB activities, TCRP project panels serve voluntarily without compensation.

Because research cannot have the desired impact if products fail to reach the intended audience, special emphasis is placed on disseminating TCRP results to the intended end users of the research: transit agencies, service providers, and suppliers. TRB provides a series of research reports, syntheses of transit practice, and other supporting material developed by TCRP research. APTA will arrange for workshops, training aids, field visits, and other activities to ensure that results are implemented by urban and rural transit industry practitioners.

The TCRP provides a forum where transit agencies can cooperatively address common operational problems. The TCRP results support and complement other ongoing transit research and training programs.

TCRP REPORT 82: Volume 2

Project B-19 FY'99
ISSN 1073-4872
ISBN 0-309-06769-3
Library of Congress Control Number 2002113156

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Price \$36.00

NOTICE

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The members of the technical advisory panel selected to monitor this project and to review this report were chosen for recognized scholarly competence and with due consideration for the balance of disciplines appropriate to the project. The opinions and conclusions expressed or implied are those of the research agency that performed the research, and while they have been accepted as appropriate by the technical panel, they are not necessarily those of the Transportation Research Board, the National Research Council, the Transit Development Corporation, or the Federal Transit Administration of the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Each report is reviewed and accepted for publication by the technical panel according to procedures established and monitored by the Transportation Research Board Executive Committee and the Governing Board of the National Research Council.

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The Transportation Research Board of The National Academies, the National Research Council, the Transit Development Corporation, and the Federal Transit Administration (sponsor of the Transit Cooperative Research Program) do not endorse products or manufacturers. Trade or manufacturers' names appear herein solely because they are considered essential to the clarity and completeness of the project reporting.

Published reports of the

TRANSIT COOPERATIVE RESEARCH PROGRAM

are available from:

Transportation Research Board
Business Office
500 Fifth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

and can be ordered through the Internet at
<http://www.national-academies.org/trb/bookstore>

Printed in the United States of America

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FOREWORD

By Dianne S. Schwager
Staff Officer
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TCRP Report 82: Improving Public Transit Options for Older Persons will be of interest to practitioners and policymakers in agencies and organizations that plan, provide, administer, and fund public transit that may serve older persons. The research presents information for public transportation providers and planners to address future transportation challenges generated by an increasingly older society. It describes exemplary transportation services and innovative transportation alternatives that will enable older persons in the United States to maintain the independence they want.

The elderly population in the United States will increase significantly by the year 2030. Mobility will be critical to this population's continued independence and quality of life. Many older persons are projected to continue to reside in their current suburban or rural communities (which seldom have good public transit service). Most older persons will have been automobile drivers for many years and can be expected to demand high levels of mobility and high-quality transportation services from all travel modes that they use. In the future, there may be a greater number of older persons who have mobility or income limitations. There may be substantial numbers of frail and poor older women living alone at a low level of independence. Decreasing family ties may lead to a greater focus on non-family sources of travel assistance. The combination of these factors is expected to pose substantial challenges for public transportation providers who wish to capture a significant proportion of the trips of tomorrow's older persons.

Under TCRP Project B-19, "Improving Transit Options for Older Persons," the research team of Westat, in association with Creative Action, Inc., and Christopher Mitchell, conducted the research project. Preparation of *TCRP Report 82* involved an in-depth literature review, analyses of various large-scale databases, focus groups with older persons, focus groups and expert interviews with transit industry representatives, case studies of the best practices from transportation programs designed to improve travel opportunities for older persons, and identification of opportunities for further innovations.

The research results are presented in three products: a color brochure, a research Final Report, and a Handbook. The color brochure allows readers to quickly grasp the key issues and findings of the research. The brochure, which is included in the Final Report also, is available separately. The research Final Report includes four sections: (1) Trends and Prospects, (2) Transit System Characteristics That Better Serve the Travel Needs of Older Persons, (3) Strategies for Implementing Better Transportation Services for Older Persons, and (4) Conclusion: Stepping Up to the Challenges to Better Transportation Services for Older Persons. The Handbook describes how to improve public transit services to make them more attractive to older persons. The Handbook provides a menu of choices regarding paths to better transit services for older persons. Many choices are available; some communities will find certain options more attractive or more feasible than other options. To make significant improvements, most of the options will need to be used in combination with other options.

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AUTHOR ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The research for this Final Report was performed under TCRP Project B-19 by Westat, Creative Action, Inc., and Christopher G.B. Mitchell, private consultant. Jon E. Burkhardt, senior study director at Westat, was this project's principal investigator. Jon Burkhardt and Adam T. McGavock of Westat, Charles A. Nelson of Creative Action, Inc., and Christopher G. B. Mitchell were the key authors of this Final Report. They were assisted by Robert Ficke, Beth Rabinovich, and Jan Orlansky of Westat, and by Vincent Antenucci and Anton Yackmenev of Creative Action, Inc.

We would like to thank many people for substantial contributions to this project. Our TCRP project officer, Dianne S. Schwager, deserves many thanks for her dedicated and professional direction of the project panel's efforts in a cooperative working relationship, as well as her support and encouragement throughout the project. We are grateful for the guidance and assistance provided by the members of our project panel. We sincerely appreciate the time and insights given to us by many older travelers and public transportation operators who worked with us in our focus groups and interviews.

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1 OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

SECTION 1: Trends and Prospects, 3

5 CHAPTER 1 Demographic Projections Regarding Older Persons

- Population Changes Among the Elderly, 5
 - Number of Older Persons, 5
 - Age Distribution, 6
 - Proportion of the Population That Is Older, 6
 - Changes over Time, 7
 - Gender Differences, 7
 - Life Expectancy, 8
- Geographic Distribution of Changes, 8
 - Regional Differences, 8
 - Aging in Place, 10
- Increasing Diversity, 12
 - Dispersion of Characteristics, 12
 - Cultural Diversity, 12
 - Income Distribution, 14
- Health Status Variations, 15
 - Aging, Disability, and Health, 15
 - Mobility Limitations, 16
 - Current Levels of Mobility Limitations, 17
 - Implications for Transportation Services, 17
 - Trends in the Prevalence of Disabilities, 19
 - A Current Example of the Travel Implications of Health Status, 20
- Settlement and Activity Patterns, 20
 - Residential and Activity Patterns, 20
 - Urban/Rural Differences, 21
- Changes in Family Structure, 23
 - Living with a Spouse, 23
 - Living with Children, 24
- Retirement Status, 24
- Conclusion, 24

25 CHAPTER 2 Current Travel Patterns of Older Persons

- Travel Mode, 25
 - Overall Patterns, 25
 - Driving, 26
 - Public Transit, 29
 - Overall Transit Use Patterns, 29
 - Characteristics of Older Transit Users, 29
 - Effects of Health Limitations, 33
 - Older Persons Not Using Public Transit Because of Health Reasons, 33
 - Older Persons Not Driving Because of Health Reasons, 36
 - Overall Results, 36
 - Older Persons Who Are Neither Drivers Nor Transit Riders, 37
- Travel Frequency, 38
- Mobility Changes: Their Meaning for the Elderly, 39
 - Mobility Declines Associated with Driving Cessation, 39
 - Mobility Improvements Associated with Specialized Transportation Services, 40
- Conclusion, 41

43 CHAPTER 3 Travel Implications of Trends and Changes in the Older Population

- Summary of Expected Trends, 43
- Key Travel Trends for the Future, 44
- Conclusion, 44

SECTION 2: Transit System Characteristics That Better Serve the Travel Needs of Older Persons, 47

49 CHAPTER 4 Measures of Transportation Service Quality

- The Role of Quality Assessments, 50
- Quality of Service Measures for the Transit Industry, 50
 - Total Quality Management, 51
- Transit Assessment Measures for Older Riders, 53
 - Transit Service Quality for Older Persons: The Research Perspective, 53
 - Transit Service Quality, as Seen by Older Riders, 54
- Conclusion, 56

57 CHAPTER 5 Mobility Preferences Reported by Older Persons

- Focus Group Details, 57
- Characteristics of Focus Group Participants, 58
- Differences Between Focus Group Participants, 59
 - Transit Riders and Non-Riders, 59
 - Site-to-Site Variations, 59
- Current Travel Patterns, 59
 - Travel Modes for Transit Users, 59
 - Travel Modes for Non-Transit Users, 60
- Advantages and Disadvantages of Various Modes of Travel for Older Persons, 61
 - Assessments of Specific Modes, 61
 - Automobile Driver, 61
 - Automobile Passenger, 61
 - Transit, 62
 - Paratransit, 63
 - Taxis, 64
 - Walking, 64
 - Overall Assessments, 64
- Driving as an Option, 66
- Features of Ideal Transportation Services, 67
 - Site-by-Site Assessments, 67
 - New York City, 67
 - Suburban Maryland, 67
 - Akron Suburbs, 68
 - Geauga County, Ohio, 68
 - Overall Assessments, 68
- Findings from Other Focus Groups, 70
- Conclusion, 71

73 CHAPTER 6 Transit Industry Perspectives on the Mobility Preferences of Older Persons

- Travel Needs of Older Persons, 74
 - Personal Circumstances, 74
 - Weather, 75
 - Accessibility, 75
 - Safety and Security, 75
 - Transition from Driving, 76
 - Socialization, 76
 - Service Area and Travel Patterns, 76
- Perceptions of Seniors' Preferred Travel Attributes, 77
 - Key Service Attributes, 77
 - Other Transportation System Features for Older Travelers, 78
 - Industry Perspectives on Specific Service Attributes, 78
 - Acceptability, 78
 - Accessibility, 80
 - Adaptability, 80
 - Availability, 80
 - Affordability, 80
 - Alternatives, 80
- Conclusion, 80

**83 CHAPTER 7 Public Transit Improvements That Would Better Serve
Older Persons**

- Preferred Travel Attributes: Both User and Operator Perspectives, 83
- Near-Term Recommendations for Improving Public Transit Services, 84
 - Consensus Near-Term Transit Improvements, 84
 - Recommendations from Particular Focus Groups of Older Persons, 85
 - Maryland: Higher Income, Suburban Metro Area Residents, 85
 - New York City: Moderate- and Low-Income Center City Residents, 85
 - Akron: Moderate- and Lower-Income Small Metro Suburban Residents, 86
 - Geauga County: Moderate- and Lower-Income Rural Residents, 86
- Long-Term Improvements to Public Transit, 86
 - Strengths and Weaknesses of Current Transit Services, 86
 - Long-Term Improvement Objectives, 89
- Conclusion, 91

**93 CHAPTER 8 Industry Perspectives on Challenges to Offering Better Transit
Services for Older Persons**

- Transportation System Challenges, 94
 - Funding, Resources, and Priorities, 94
 - System and Service Constraints, 95
 - Overall Service Designs, 95
 - Equipment and Resources, 95
 - Access to Services, 95
 - Consumer Education and Travel Training, 96
 - Community Needs, Laws, Policies, and Regulations, 96
 - Collaboration and Partnerships, 96
 - ADA Requirements and Their Impacts on Service Development, 97
- Challenges of the Older Consumers' Travel Market, 97
 - Customer Preferences, 98
 - Provider Perspectives on the Travel Preferences of the Elderly, 98
 - Provider Perspectives on the Elderly Transit Market, 99
 - Special Needs of Older Travelers, 99
- Conclusion, 99

**SECTION 3: Strategies for Implementing Better Transportation Services
for Older Persons, 101**

**103 CHAPTER 9 Addressing User Preferences and Expectations Regarding
Transit Service Attributes**

- Introduction, 103
- Reliability, 103
 - Technological Innovations, 105
 - Advanced Public Transit Applications in Cape Cod, Massachusetts, 106
 - Arrowhead, Minnesota, 106
- Flexibility, 107
 - Extended Service Hours, 107
 - Increased Trip Chaining, 108
 - Service Routes, 108
 - Initial Tests in the United States, 109
 - Community Circulator Service: Cleveland, Ohio, 109
 - Rider Request Service: Fort Worth, Texas, 111
 - Service Routes in Sweden, 112
 - Contracted Services, 112
 - Collaborative Relationships and Contracting in Fort Worth, Texas, 113
 - Taxi Services, 113
 - Other Innovative Services, 115
 - Shared Services, 115
 - Informal Services, 115
- Comfort, 116
 - Travel Training, 116
 - Some Successful Travel Training Techniques, 116

- Travel Training for Older Persons at the Fort Worth Transit Authority, 117
- Travel Training in Eugene, Oregon, 118
- Passenger Training in Edinburgh, Scotland, 119
- Driver Training, 120
- Shelters, 121
- Conclusion, 121

123 CHAPTER 10 Meeting User Needs and Limitations

- Introduction, 123
- Physical Accessibility Issues, 123
 - Improvements to Transit Vehicles, 123
 - Low-Floor Buses, 125
 - Improvements to Pedestrian Access, 127
 - Pedestrian and Wheelchair Routes to Support Bus Services, 128
 - Independent Mobility, 129
 - Door-to-Door Service, 129
- Financial Limitations, 130
 - Co-Payment Sources, 130
 - Pennsylvania's Transit Programs for Seniors, 130
 - Governmental Subsidies in Local Areas, 131
- Lack of Travel Information, 131
 - General Strategies, 132
 - Marketing Techniques, 132
 - Applied Marketing Techniques in Great Falls, Montana, 133
- Conclusion, 134

135 CHAPTER 11 Making Fundamental Improvements to Public Transportation

- Introduction, 135
- Expanding Services, 135
 - Increasing the Levels and Types of Services Available, 137
 - Expanding Flexibility to Permit Trip Chaining, 137
- Addressing Financial Issues, 138
 - Overview on Funding Sources, 138
 - Dedicated Funding Sources for Transit, 139
 - Dedicated Lottery/Gambling Funds, 139
 - Piggyback Sales/Utility Taxes, 141
 - Millages, 143
 - Fare Revenues, 144
 - Fare Payment Concepts, 144
 - Transaction Types and Media, 144
 - Alternatives to Cash Payments, 144
 - Controlling Costs by Using Volunteer Drivers or Aides, 145
 - Portland, Oregon, 145
 - The Transportation Reimbursement and Information Project (TRIP) in Riverside County, California, 146
 - Voluntary Driver Programs in England, 148
- Improving Administration and Management, 149
 - Offering Coordinated Transportation Services, 149
 - Coordination in Portage County, Ohio, 150
 - Coordination Through Contracting in Broward County, Florida, 151
 - Coordination Through Cooperation in Central Virginia, 151
 - Coordination Through Consolidation in Sweetwater County, Wyoming, 152
 - Focusing on Mobility Management, 152
 - Grand Rapids Transit Authority (GRTA), 152
 - Lynx, Orlando, Florida, 153
 - Implementing Quality Control Measures, 153
 - Improving Service Quality Through Driver Sensitivity Training, 153
 - Improving Customer Satisfaction by Reducing Trip Denials, 154
 - Quality Bus Partnerships and Contracts, 154
 - Highlights of England's Quality Partnerships, 155
- Improving Community Relations, 156
- Conclusion, 157

159 CHAPTER 12 Finding Inspiration for the Future in Recent Innovations

Short-Run Improvements, 160

New Perspectives, New Paradigms, 160

A Full Range of Services: The Family of Services Concept, 162

Service Components, 163

Accessible Public Transit, 163

Service Routes, 163

Paratransit, 163

Taxis, 163

Pedestrian Travel, 163

The Family of Services Concept in Europe, 164

The Family of Services Concept in Mesa, Arizona, 164

The Family of Services Concept in Big Stone Gap, Virginia, 165

A Family of Services Operation in Uppsala, Sweden, 166

Family of Services Operations in London, 167

Comprehensive Examinations of Overall Services, 168

Comprehensive Service Restructuring: Fort Worth, Texas, 168

Elderly Mobility Initiative: Phoenix, Arizona, 170

A Broad-Spectrum Approach to Satisfying the Needs of Older Travelers, 171

Conclusion, 173

**SECTION 4: Conclusion: Stepping Up to the Challenges to Better
Transportation Services for Older Persons, 175**

Approaches to New Service Patterns, 175

Several Inspiring Examples, 177

Conclusion, 177

181 REFERENCES

187 LIST OF ACRONYMS

189 APPENDIX

Executive Summary
