

## REFERENCES

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## Abridgment

## Identifying and Serving the Elderly and Handicapped in Rural Areas

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Transportation of the elderly and handicapped is supplementary to the main objectives of urban transit but fundamental to rural public transit. In urban areas, the major purpose of public transportation is to provide journey-to-work travel along corridors of high-density residential population to a central area of intensive employment. Beneficial side effects are produced, such as reduced rush-hour traffic congestion in central areas by the substitution of transit for automobile travel and increased accessibility to specific locations for purposes of high-density urban development. The same scale of effects is not possible (and not necessarily desirable) for rural public transportation.

Conventional mass transit for journey-to-work travel is not feasible in rural areas because places of employment are widely dispersed and residences of workers are even more widely scattered. Experience shows that the rural transportation-disadvantaged commonly use carpools and other shared-ride concepts for journey-to-work between several residences and individual places of employment. Job-centered van pools for employees of a single industrial plant or business enterprise are a good possibility for rural public transportation. School-bus-sized operations with fixed-route service from each passenger's home to a single place of employment might work if enough employees could be persuaded to ride. These are even more useful models for effective transportation of the elderly and handicapped in rural areas.

Given that the focus of rural public transportation

is on the elderly and handicapped, it is necessary to identify the elderly and handicapped. Not all rural elderly and handicapped are transportation disadvantaged. However, those without access to an automobile are probably disadvantaged.

In 1974, 18 percent of the households in non-metropolitan areas did not own an automobile, compared with 25 percent in metropolitan areas (1). Even more dramatically, almost 40 percent of households whose head of family was over age 65 owned no automobile, but fewer than 20 percent of all other households owned no vehicle. The relative transportation disadvantage of elderly households is compounded by the high incidence of such households in rural areas. Fully 21 percent of all households in rural areas have a head of family who is over age 65; as many as 27 percent of households in areas under 2500 population are headed by elderly persons (2).

Unlike the data on the elderly, no definitive data exist on handicapped individuals. It is believed that the incidence of automobile availability in households of handicapped people is probably greater for handicapped persons than for elderly people. Those handicapped persons without access to an automobile are individuals who need to be identified.

Local social service and welfare agency data can provide the necessary details of this primary target group. Data on hospitals, clinics, and senior citizens are available to offer specific information on the physical, economic, and other characteristics of their clients. Detailed address data will help

Table 1. Illustrative list of data sources.

Agency or Institution	Residential Address	Economic Data	Social Data	Health Data	Trip Frequency	Ongoing Transport Services
Social service agency	X	X	X	X	X	X
Health center	X		X	X	X	X
Neighborhood center	X		X		X	X
Senior citizen housing	X		X		X	X
Senior citizen center	X		X		X	X
Hospital and clinic	X	X	X	X	X	X
Vocational center	X	X	X	X	X	X
Rehabilitation center	X	X	X	X	X	X
Employment center	X	X			X	X
Reduced-fare card (transit authority)	X	X				X
Private organization (Red Cross, Easter Seals)	X		X		X	X

determine travel requirements by origin and destination, may contain historical trend information of trips, and can provide an important source for surveying potential system users. Table 1 is an illustrative list of some of the agencies that can be canvassed and the information they may provide.

In addition to addresses and other information maintained by these organizations, supplementary data can be obtained from direct survey of the primary target group. Interviews of elderly and handicapped individuals will determine whether they own automobiles and to what extent they need public transportation. A very efficient, and less costly, method of identification is to correlate elderly and handicapped social service clients' names with automobile registrations and operator's license holders to find those who do not own or operate vehicles. This will identify the most fundamental target group for rural public transportation of the elderly and handicapped. Special effort may be necessary to implement this efficient method of identification, working with the state department of highways or transportation to achieve the cooperation of the motor vehicles bureau.

Undoubtedly, there will be other rural inhabitants besides the elderly and handicapped who do not own automobiles, who could benefit from rural public transportation, including those who are not social service clients and may own automobiles but prefer not to drive. Also, the very young, who cannot operate vehicles, and others who would desire to use public transportation could be identified. It may be preferable to identify the fundamental client group of elderly and handicapped households who do not have private vehicles available, and then, as system capacity is developed, permit self-identification of supplementary passenger groups.

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