

IMPROVING MOBILITY FOR VETERANS

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Presentation Outline

- **Veterans today: numbers, features**
- **The caretaker: the Department of Veterans Affairs**
- **DVA and VHA travel eligibility**
- **Veterans' transportation options**
- **Roles of community transportation programs**
- **Summary**
- **Contact information**

TCRP Project J-6, Task 74

Improving Mobility for Veterans

- **Began September 1, 2009; available December 2010 ?**
- **Other research staff**
 - **Joohee Yum, Westat**
 - **Joseph Rubino, J.M. Rubino Consulting**
- **Transportation Research Board personnel and others**
 - **Dianne Schwager, TCRP Senior Program Officer**
 - **Lyn Hellegaard, Missoula Ravalli TMA, Panel Chair**
 - **9 other Panel members**
- **Some of the information in this presentation comes from materials accessed for Project J-6, Task 74**

Veterans Today

- **Numbers:** 23.1 million veterans [Feb. 2010]
- **65 +:** 9.2 million [39.9%]
- **Receiving services:** 8.0 million [mostly health care]
- **Key considerations regarding transportation services:**
 - Veterans are overrepresented in rural areas [VT]
 - Physical and mental injury rates are rising
 - Long distances often required to reach health care
 - 22 Veterans' Integrated Service Networks (VISNs)
 - 153 VA Medical Centers (VAMCs)
 - 731 Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs)
 - USA: 3,537,438 square miles

Transportation Offered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) [1]

- DVA offers transportation assistance
 - to eligible veterans
 - to medical care facilities
 - operated by the *Veterans Health Administration (VHA)*
 - and others

Transportation Offered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) [2]

- **VHA, “the nation’s largest integrated health care system,” determines eligibility for transportation for medical care based on**
 - **Degree of impairment**
 - **Length of service**
 - **Financial status**

Recent VHA Health Care Statistics

➤ Veterans in the health care system	8.1 million
➤ Veterans treated in FY 09	5.7 million
➤ Outpatient visits in FY 09	70.5 million
➤ Inpatient hospital patients (FY 08)	827,808
➤ Veterans receiving Disability Comp.	3.1 million
➤ Veterans who were 100% disabled	280,830
➤ Veterans receiving a VA pension	312,206
➤ FY 2010 VHA appropriations	\$45.1 billion

VHA Travel Eligibility Considerations

- **Veterans with a Service Connected (SC) disability of 30% or more: travel for all conditions**
- **Trips related to SC conditions if less than 30% SC disability**
- **Veterans receiving VA pension benefits: all conditions**
- **Low-income veterans: all conditions**
- **Trips for Compensation and Pension (C & P) exams**
- **Certain emergency situations**
- **Certain other situations**

“Beneficiary Travel” Expenses

➤ Veterans Medical Care Benefits Expenditures

- FY 2001 (GAO) \$127 million
- FY 2004 (Lasfargues, CTAA) \$170 million
- FY 2009 (VHA) Beneficiary Travel **\$629 million**
- FY 2010 (Westat) Ben Tr + Auto Ass't **\$900 million**

➤ Other programs

- Medicaid (FY 2006 estimate) \$1.2 billion
- Head Start (FY 2006 estimate) \$663 million
- FTA S. 5311 (FY 2010 appropriations) \$438 million
- FTA S. 5316 (FY 2010 appropriations) \$175 million

Veterans' Transportation Choices

- **VHA determines eligibility, administers benefits**
 - Trips for medical purposes [and not much else]
 - For drivers: \$0.415 per mile
 - Other ambulatory: volunteer transportation [DAV]
 - Non-ambulatory: Special Mode Transportation
 - Automobile Assistance [adaptive equipment]
- **Community transportation providers**
 - For multiple purposes
 - In concert with other eligibilities: aging, ADA, etc.

Recap: Veterans' Travel Options

- **DVA / VHA provides financial and other assistance, but only to those veterans who qualify as per DVA / VHA standards, and primarily for medical trips [and a very few other kinds of trips]**
- **DVA/VHA very seldom directly operates transportation**
- **Most veterans drive**
- **Some veterans ride with volunteer services [e.g., DAV]**
- **Some veterans qualify for Special Mode Transportation [typically contracted services]**
- **Community transportation services often provide non-medical trips to veterans [as general public riders]**

Veterans Transportation Today

- **Transp for veterans = 2nd largest special population Federal transportation expense**
 - 69% growth FY 2008 – 2009
 - 500% growth from FY 2001 to FY 2009
- **Population dynamics are changing:**
 - Veterans overrepresented in rural areas
 - Physical and mental injury rates are rising
- **Long distances often required to reach health care**
 - 153 VAMCs; 731 Community Based Outpatient Clinics
 - USA: 3,537,438 square miles: average 4,002 sq mi @
- **DVA operating in its own world**
 - Rural hospitals closing; transportation services available
 - How to reintegrate veterans? Health care focus

Issues, Concerns, and Challenges

- **Some veterans report problems accessing med care**
- **Missed medical appointments lead to many problems**
- **Transportation problems are more acute for veterans living in rural communities [e.g., Vermont]**
- **Veterans' transportation services are not often coordinated with local public transportation services**
- **More veterans may need travel assistance soon**
- **Some of the volunteer-based transportation services for veterans have funding and recruitment problems**
- **Dramatic growth in costs for veterans' transportation**
- **Need more info / discussions re issues and options**

A Strength and a Weakness ?

The passion that veterans have for helping other veterans

- **An astounding level of commitment to provide assistance and care**
- **But does the “*We take care of our own*” passion run the risk of ignoring other community resources?**

Some Enlightened Approaches

- **Ocean County, NJ** Transit offers adv scheduled out of county trips to VAMCs
- **Indianapolis** Competitive contracting; taxis serve veterans w disabilities
- **Montrose, Colorado** All Points Transit dispatches DAV vans in 2 counties
- **Des Moines** Transit and paratransit serve the local VA hospital
- **Washington State** S. 5311 system provides feeder service to DAV vans
- **Little Rock, AR** Taxis transport passengers and make deliveries

Other Enlightened Approaches

- **Minnesota** Free travel for disabled veterans on all of the state's fixed route transit services
- **San Francisco** Reduced fares for disabled veterans, free BART rides for active duty soldiers, accessible taxis
- **Orlando, FL** Unlimited-use transit passes for veterans; VanPool vehicle assigned to VA clinic; veterans involved in transportation planning

Other Enlightened Approaches

- **Angelina County, TX** **Foundation funds purchased over-the-road coach for long-distance trips to Houston VAMC**
- **Martinsburg, WV** **VA contracts with public transit for trips to rehab center not at the VAMC**

Strategies for Transp Providers

- **BE PROACTIVE:** Get to know the veterans' agencies and providers
- **See where you can assist**
 - Veterans with disabilities
 - Long distance trips
 - Scheduling trips
- **Help train, maintain, facilitate**
- **Coordinate transportation with medical schedulers**
- **Develop plans that include all modes and providers, including volunteer services**
- **Plan for future transportation needs**

Summary

- **Big population, big needs, big expenses**
- **Little coordination at this time with community transportation providers**
- **Big opportunities for community transportation providers**
- **Some outstanding efforts offer insights into possible approaches**
- **Increased efforts needed at all levels**

Contact Information

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