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
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  - 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Veterans in the health care system</td>
<td>8.1 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Veterans treated in FY 09</td>
<td>5.7 million</td>
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<td>Outpatient visits in FY 09</td>
<td>70.5 million</td>
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<td>Inpatient hospital patients (FY 08)</td>
<td>827,808</td>
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<td>Veterans receiving Disability Comp.</td>
<td>3.1 million</td>
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<td>Veterans who were 100% disabled</td>
<td>280,830</td>
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<td>Veterans receiving a VA pension</td>
<td>312,206</td>
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<td>FY 2010 VHA appropriations</td>
<td>$45.1 billion</td>
</tr>
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</table>
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 an 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
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