

# Transportation Needs of Older Adults in Lakeville

## Summary of Survey Results *(Final Draft)*

March 11, 2014

Dakota County Public Health Department's Communities for a Lifetime Initiative collaborated with Dakota County's Community Development Agency (CDA), CommonBond, Fountains at Hosanna, Kingsley Shores Senior Living Residence, Heritage Library, Lakeville Senior Resource Coalition, and the Lakeville Heritage Center to conduct a survey in late 2013 of older adults (65+) living in housing facilities in Lakeville. The purpose of the survey was to better understand the barriers older adults face regarding transportation. Over 150 people responded to the survey, including 13 from people who serve older adults.

### Key Findings

- The majority of the people who responded to the survey still drive their own vehicle.
- Among the respondents who do not drive, 35% are not familiar with the transportation services available.
- 23% of respondents report currently using DARTS/Transit Link.
- Among the options listed, more than two-thirds (70%) of respondents would be most likely to use friends or family members for transportation in the future and least likely to use private cab service, while 41% indicated they would be very likely to use a van or shuttle, such as DARTS/Transit Link; and about a third of respondents indicated they would be very likely to use a car driven by a volunteer driver (32%), a van provided by a church or neighborhood group (30%), a bus service that follows designated routes (33%), and a circulator bus that stops at scheduled locations (36%).
- People report that they would like regular service that doesn't need to be booked in advance, fewer connections, and dependable times for pick up and drop off.
- 15% of respondents indicated that they feel isolated in their home.

### Key Recommendations:

- **Develop a communication campaign to promote services and address concerns**
- **Explore volunteer driver models to fill transportation gaps**
- **Work with the Metropolitan Council and DARTS to explore options for improving DARTS/Transit Link services in Lakeville**
- **Pursue partnerships to meet transportation needs**
- **Pursue new technology solutions, such as Mobility Management**
- **Collect more information from a broader cross-section of older adults, Boomers and other residents who might use transportation options if available**

## Overview of Survey Results

### *Use of transportation services*

About two-thirds of the people who responded to the survey still drive their own vehicle, and about one-third ride in a friend or family member's vehicle.

While Lakeville still has a high number of older adults who drive personal automobiles, there are a significant number who do not drive and rely on other transit options, like DARTS/Transit Link and family and friends, for their transport needs. About one-quarter of respondents stated that they had used DARTS/Transit Link, and less than 6% had used one of the other services, including GAPP, MNET, A S J Transportation, U Ride Transportation Services, and TLC Transportation.

### *Barriers to using transportation services*

Among those who do not drive their own vehicle, approximately one-third said that they were not familiar with available services. Others cited the following reasons for not using transportation services:

- Too many transfers
- Service not available at convenient times
- Service not offered to desired destinations
- Service not provided to area of residence
- Unreliable service
- Too expensive
- Does not feel safe

### *Isolation of Older Adults in their Homes*

- 15% of respondents indicated that they feel isolated in their home.

### *Use of Transportation Options*

Respondents were asked to indicate how likely they would be to use transportation options or services when they could no longer drive. Their responses, which do not total 100% because respondents could give multiple answers, were:

- **54%** reported they were **very likely** to use a **central phone number** to request help with transportation.
- **70%** reported they were **very likely** to use a **car driven by a friend or relative**.
- **32%** reported they were **very likely** to use a **car driven by a volunteer driver**.
- **30%** reported they were **very likely** to use a **van provided by a church or neighborhood group**.

- **41%** reported they were **very likely** to use a **van or shuttle, such as DARTS/Transit Link**.
- **33%** reported they were **very likely** to use a **bus service that follows designated routes**.
- **36%** reported they were **very likely** to use a **circulator bus that stops at scheduled locations**.
- Only **8%** reported they were **very likely** to use a **private cab service**.

***Suggestions from respondents to Improve Transportation for Older Adults in Lakeville/Metro***

More than a few respondents wanted:

- Same day or next day service instead of having to call 3-4 days in advance
- More seamless connections between transit services
- Fewer transfers with DARTS/Transit Link
- DARTS/Transit Link needs a more dependable pick-up/return time and more time given to board the bus
- More education on how transit options work

Others respondents wanted:

- An easier way to claim lost items on DARTS/Transit Link buses
- Allow a caregiver to ride DARTS/Transit Link bus without an additional charge
- Metro Mobility to serve Lakeville
- Keep technology simple—not everyone uses a cell phone or computer
- Door-to-door transportation—due to weather conditions
- DARTS/Transit Link to operate on evenings and weekends—so people can attend church on Sundays
- More kindness from transit operators
- Transportation from Dakota County CDA buildings at a minimal cost
- A fixed-route bus or circulator bus a few times a week from housing facilities (to clinics, grocery stores, and link to metro transit options), especially in the winter when driving is more difficult
- Express bus to St. Paul
- Free bus service to Heritage Center

## **Discussion**

### ***Demographic changes in Lakeville***

- Based on 2010 U.S. Census data, the number of older adults in Lakeville is going to increase. In 2010, 5.8% of the population was age 65 and older and Boomers (age 49-67) made up 18.9% of Lakeville. According to an AARP study, more than 90% of older adults stay in their home County, likely remaining in their hometown—aging in place and in community. Lakeville can expect more than 20% of its population to be older adults in the coming decades.

### ***Ridership and subsidies for transit programs in Dakota County***

- Transportation services are not cheap, and there are significant subsidies that support transportation in Dakota County. Of the 34,746 one-way trips made by DARTS/Transit Link in 2012, the average cost per trip was \$24.04 and the average one-way fare was \$2.03, with an average subsidy per one-way trip of \$22.02. The public is usually not aware of the large subsidies that make transportation possible and should be further educated.

### ***Same day or next day transit service***

- While same day or next day service is desirable by most people who are accustomed to using their personal vehicle, it may not be possible for DARTS/Transit Link (Metropolitan Council) to accommodate, which provides transit services across the County and metro area. Volunteer driver models may be able to provide the level of flexibility that is needed for shopping, errands, or visiting family and friends. (These models could be explored further: [www.WeCab.org](http://www.WeCab.org); Independent Transportation Network America/Twin Cities; Hastings Family Service, Just Friends program.)

### ***Consider evening and weekend transportation***

- Options for evening and weekend transportation need to be explored to support residents during these times. Faith communities could offer a volunteer driver program, utilizing a church's volunteers to pick up members that want to attend services on Sunday, for example. This service could also be extended to the larger community.

### ***Explore a Circulator Bus model***

- A Circulator Bus—that stops at scheduled locations and comes back to pick passengers up—could be further explored as a future option in Lakeville. Housing facilities and faith communities could partner with DARTS and local businesses to pursue funding opportunities to support a circulator bus route in Lakeville. However, this model is not within the experience of those that have been dependent on personal automobiles and takes considerable education and time for people to get accustomed to the model. (West St. Paul is currently pursuing a circulator bus and Hastings had a circulator bus in operation.)

## ***Insights from those who serve older adults***

Below is a summary of their suggestions:

- Transportation to the Veterans Administration (VA) is greatly in need.
- A central phone number to request help is a good idea, but the person needs to be able to communicate well with older adults and their caregivers and be sensitive to their particular issues.
- Rides need to be more flexible with timing, to accommodate older adults.
- Less expensive rides—many older adults are low income and can't afford transportation.
- Churches could assist with transportation, even if it is just for their members—people trust their church.
- Volunteer drivers would have to be trained to help riders to safely get in and out of the vehicle.
- Private cab service is nice, but for low income older adults it is usually out of the question.

## **Recommendations**

### **1. Develop a communication campaign to promote services and address concerns**

The survey indicates that older adults and their families are not aware of existing transit options and how those options work. A challenge is getting the public's attention when there is not an immediate need for transit services and to have information readily available and understandable once a transit need does arise. In addition, respondents to the survey expressed concerns about the services that could be addressed through communications. Specific strategies might include:

- Provide information through the Chamber of Commerce, housing facilities, public/community buildings, and through media venues. Faith communities could also help educate their members about transportation options.
- Provide travel training opportunities that would enable older adults to experience transit options and help potential riders feel more comfortable with other forms of transportation.
- Educate the public and community leaders on transit costs and why transportation options may be limited in certain areas.

### **2. Explore volunteer driver models to fill transportation gaps**

- Work with nonprofit organizations and faith communities to fill transportation gaps in Lakeville by utilizing church-owned vehicles and volunteers or by creating a volunteer driver program to provide transit to people who no longer drive.

### **3. Work with the Metropolitan Council to explore options for improving DARTS/Transit Link services in Lakeville**

- Meet with the Metropolitan Council transit staff to discuss how DARTS/Transit Link services can be improved to have more dependable pick up times and to make transfers and connections more user-friendly.

### **4. Pursue partnerships to meet transportation needs**

- Work with DARTS, the City of Lakeville, and Dakota County to implement a shared shuttle bus service funded through a grant from the Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging.
- Explore partnership options to organize a circulator bus that would stop at scheduled locations.
- Discuss options for expanding transportation services to Community Development Agency (CDA) buildings, such as a volunteer driver program, shared shuttle bus, or circulator bus.

### **5. New Solutions: Mobility Management and Technology**

- DARTS has a new pilot project called Mobility Management that will assist riders through a website (and by phone) designed to illustrate and map out the best transit options available in a rider's area. The project could better inform the public about their options and assist in coordinating transit providers. [Currently, DARTS offers a hotline that can assist callers with information about various services and assist with transportation.]
- The use of Smartphone technology and other internet applications, for example, can be used to track the location of transit vehicles, plan trips, and secure rides. Many current older adults and Boomers are technologically proficient, and transit solutions utilizing technology should be pursued. However, not all older adults or their family members are users of technology and there is still a need for paper-based information and central phone numbers to access information.

### **6. Collect information from a broader cross-section of older adults, Boomers and other residents who might use transportation options if available.**

- This survey was limited to older adults living in predominantly housing facilities, with varying ages and abilities, including those that drive and do not drive. Therefore, a broader cross-section of older adults, Boomers and other residents could be surveyed to gain a wider perspective on the transportation needs in Lakeville...

### **7. More needs to be done to reach out to older adults who may be isolated in their homes.**

- With 15% of respondents indicating that they feel isolated in their homes, more can be done to identify isolated older adults and provide them with interaction, activities, and transit options.

## About this survey

The surveys were distributed to older residents of Lakeville's housing residences, including the Heritage/Senior Center. Additional outreach was done through the City's newsletter. A total of 143 surveys were completed by older residents. Additional information about transportation needs was provided by 13 people who serve older adults.

### ***Respondent characteristics***

21% were 85 and older. About one-quarter of respondents were age 75-84. More than a third of respondents (37%) were age 65-74. 16% were under 65, including 2% who were age 45-54.

Nearly one-half of respondents (48%) have lived in Lakeville for five years or less. 21% have been residents for 11-20 years, 19% for more than 20 years, and 12% for 6-10 years.

More women (79%) took the survey than men (21%).

About one-third of respondents were from Main Street Manor or Winsor Plaza, both Community Development Agency (CDA) buildings. Other respondents were from Crossroads Commons (CDA), Fairfield Terrace, Fountains at Hosanna, Kingsley Shores Senior Living Residence. Other respondents were reached through the Heritage/Senior Center.

### ***For more information***

For more details about the survey or this report, contact Jess Luce, Communities for a Lifetime Initiative, Dakota County Public Health Department (e-mail: [Jess.Luce@co.dakota.mn.us](mailto:Jess.Luce@co.dakota.mn.us) or by phone: 651-554-6104).

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