FAQ: Fall 2020

Why did the Volunteer Driver Coalition form?
We came together in 2019 over a deep concern for the viability of volunteer driver programs and for the well-being of Minnesotans who count on the essential service these volunteer drivers provide.

Why are volunteer drivers important?
When people are not able to drive, transportation to medical appointments is challenging, especially for people with few family members who live near them. Volunteer drivers provide safe, low-cost transportation across the state, primarily helping older adults and people with disabilities get to healthcare and other critical services. Volunteer drivers are especially essential in rural communities, where there are few or no options for transportation.

What is different during the pandemic?
Organizations that sponsor volunteer driver programs have protections in place and have trained their drivers so that people can ride as safely as possible. There is still some risk, of course, as with any type of transportation.

Do volunteer drivers deliver meals?
Yes, and more adults need home delivered meals during the pandemic as senior dining sites are closed. Home delivered meals are important to help older adults meet their nutrition needs while they are isolated from the community.

Why are volunteer driver programs at risk?
- Engaging volunteers is challenging. They are often asked to contribute a half or a full day to transport passengers who may be physically frail or who have memory loss or other conditions.
- Volunteer driver programs are increasingly threatened by lack of definitional clarity in law for the term “volunteer driver,” leading to pressure on volunteers by insurance companies to pay higher rates.
- Programs are also at risk due to a disincentive in tax law requiring that when volunteers receive mileage reimbursement greater than 14 cents/mile, they must include the amount as income when filing their federal and state tax returns. Taxing volunteers for expense reimbursement is a financial penalty for helping others.

What changes are needed?
We ask the Minnesota Legislature to take the following actions:

1. Define a volunteer driver in statute.
2. Restrict insurance companies from charging higher premiums simply because someone is a volunteer driver.
3. Create an income tax subtraction for volunteer mileage reimbursement.
4. Limit the liability of nonprofit organizations sponsoring volunteer driver programs to align with the liability caps in place for cities.

By the Numbers

77,474 Minnesotans utilize volunteer drivers for medical appointments, grocery shopping, or other essential community services.

1,900 volunteers provided 168,398 one-way trips, driving 9.6 million miles.

These volunteers contributed 500,000+ hours driving their fellow community members.

www.VolunteerDriverMN.org
What can I do to support the Volunteer Driver Coalition’s efforts?

- **Tell the candidates running to represent you in the Minnesota Legislature** that you support the policy changes the Coalition seeks. Inform your local mayor, township board, city council or county board, too. Attend a town hall meeting, send an email or letter, or call.
- **Write or email Governor Walz** in support of the Volunteer Driver Coalition’s legislative platform.
- **Become a volunteer driver.**
- **Donate** to your local volunteer driver program.
- **Use #VolunteerDriverMN** on social media posts.

**Coalition Partners**

- AARP Minnesota
- Age Well Arrowhead
- Aitkin County CARE, Inc.
- Amherst H. Wilder Foundation
- Anoka County Community Action Program
- Anoka County Medlink
- Anoka County RSVP
- ARDC/Arrowhead Area Agency on Aging
- Argyle Hope Program
- Arrowhead Transit-Volunteer Driving Program
- Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC)
- Big Woods Transit/Bois Forte Band of Chippewa
- B’s Homecare Inc. & B’s Adult Day Center
- CARE - Community Action Respecting Elders
- Care Partners of Cook County
- Carver County
- Center for Victims of Torture
- Central Community Transit
- Central MN Council on Aging
- City of Sandstone
- Community Partners
- Como Park/Falcon Heights Living at Home Block Nurse Program
- Dancing Sky Area Agency on Aging
- DARTS
- East Central Regional Development Commission/East Central Regional Transportation Coordinating Council
- East Side Elders
- Faith in Action for Cass County
- GoDakota
- Hamline Midway Elders
- Hastings Family Service
- Headwaters RTCC
- Help At Your Door
- Hennepin County
- Highland Block Nurse Program
- Horizon Health
- Keystone Community Services
- Living at Home Network
- Longfellow/Seward Healthy Seniors
- Metro Meals on Wheels
- Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging
- Mid-Minnesota Development Commission
- Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration
- Minnesota Association of Area Agencies on Aging
- Minnesota Association of Townships
- Minnesota Board on Aging
- Minnesota Community Action Partnership
- Minnesota Council of Nonprofits
- Minnesota Leadership Council on Aging
- Minnesota Public Transit Association
- Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging
- Minnesota Social Service Association
- Neighborhood Network for Seniors Neighbors, Inc.
- North End-South Como Block Nurse Program
- North Shore Area Partners
- Northeast MN Regional Transportation Coordination Council
- Northwest Regional Development Commission
- Northwoods Caregivers
- Paynesville Area LAH/BNP aka R.O.S.E. Center
- Prairie Five C.A.C., Inc.
- Productive Alternatives Volunteer Driver Program
- Rainbow Rider
- Region Five RTCC
- Roseville Area Senior Program
- Scott County - Smartlink
- Semcac
- Senior Services Consortium of Ramsey County
- Seven County Senior Federation
- Southeast Seniors
- Southeastern Minnesota Area Agency on Aging
- The Nokomis Healthy Seniors Group
- St. Anthony Park Area Seniors
- Stephen Living at Home/Block Nurse Program
- Three Rivers Community Action
- Tri-County Action Program
- Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, Inc.
- United Community Action Partnership
- Volunteer Services of Carlton County, Inc.
- Volunteers of America - MN Our Home
- Warren S.O.S.
- WeCAB
- West Central MN Communities Action, Inc.
- Wright County Community Action

www.VolunteerDriverMN.org