

FAQ: Fall 2020



volunteer driver
COALITION

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.

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