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INDEPENDENT TRANSPORTATION NETWORK®

Description:

Each year more than one million Americans aged 70 and older stop driving and become dependent on others to meet their transportation needs. And, their numbers are growing almost as rapidly as the population is aging. At the most recent White House Conference on Aging, mobility was ranked the third highest issue for older people—ahead of Social Security and Medicare. Today, people remain active and independent into their eighties and beyond, outliving their decision to stop driving by as much as a decade.

The Independent Transportation Network® (ITN) is an affordable alternative transportation solution that allows seniors and younger-aged adults with vision impairment to maintain their independence and their dignity. An ITN program does not compete with a community's public transportation or paratransit systems, but supplements them both. ITNs are community-based nonprofit organizations affiliated with a national parent organization, ITNAmerica®, which is the first and only national nonprofit transportation network for America's aging population.

ITNs provide rides with door-to-door, arm-through-arm service. Features of this alternative solution include:

- The ITN model is consumer-oriented.
- Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.
- Available for any type of ride within the service area, with no limitations on ride purpose.
- Rides are provided in private automobiles by a combination of trained volunteer and paid drivers.
- People 60 years and older and visually impaired adults are eligible to join.
- Rides may be booked at any time.
- No money is exchanged in the cars because members have Personal Transportation Accounts™ from which fares are debited.
- Members can choose to save money by scheduling rides in advance or sharing a ride.

Members' rides can be paid for through a variety of strategies:

(1) The member can deposit money into a Personal Transportation Account,[™] from which fares are deducted electronically;

(2) Family members or others may contribute to a member's Personal Transportation Account;[™]

(3) Members may donate their cars for tax credits, or trade them for rides through the CarTrade[™] program;

(4) Community residents' cars may be donated to the ITN affiliate for tax credits through the car donation program, or exchanged for ride credits which can be donated to an ITN member;

(5) Volunteer drivers may earn mileage credits for their own future use through the Transportation Social Security[™] program;

(6) A volunteer driver may donate mileage credits to friends, loved ones, or low-income seniors through the Road Scholarship Program;[™]

(7) Local businesses can help subsidize members rides through the Ride & Shop or Healthy Miles programs;

(8) Gift certificates are available.

The ITN model marries the power of information technology and the strength of local, grassroots support. There are several ways for a community to launch an ITN affiliate effort, including: a sponsoring public agency (e.g., a mayor's office); at another not-for-profit organization (e.g., a senior services agency); from a faith-based organization; with a single concerned citizen; or with a small private group. ITNAmerica[®] provides community-based affiliates with customized software, a business plan, and marketing materials and programs designed to develop community involvement, including site visits, training for software use, and budget and staff development—all geared toward helping the affiliate reach sustainability.

The ITN model is well-suited to both suburban and urban areas. ITNEverywhere, a solution applicable to rural areas and to people of all ages, is currently being developed.

Benefits:

For older adults and younger individuals with vision impairment:

- ITN members continue their chosen activities, improving their quality of life, and contributing to the health of their communities.
- ITN members stay connected to family, friends, and community.

- Older people and people with visual impairments can retain a sense of competence and personal control when no longer needing to depend solely upon friends and family for needed mobility.
- The door-to-door, arm-through-arm aspect of ITN transportation allows seniors and younger people with vision impairment to go to medical and other destinations without the need for much more costly specialized transportation services.
- The flexibility of the program's availability, as well as its non-fixed-route nature, responds to the differing, sometimes unpredictable mobility needs of older people, which are not met by conventional transportation systems designed to meet the routine "schedule and route" needs of the greatest number of people.
- Even where public transportation is available, many older adults cannot reach the bus stop, climb the stairs, wait in the sun or rain for the bus to arrive, or carry their packages. ITN drivers pick up members at their homes, and offer assistance with packages, walkers, etc.
- The "personal-car" aspect of ITN is a much more usable, comfortable, and accessible option for frail older people and people of all ages who have vision impairments.

For caregivers:

- Adult children who have assumed caregiver responsibilities for older family members find relief from the daunting and complex problem of meeting on-going transportation needs.

For the community:

- Variety in transportation options, reflecting the differing needs of a community's diverse population groups, is a critical feature of a livable community. An ITN system helps a community achieve "livability."
- Businesses retain their valuable customers. The economic impact of a mature ITN affiliate to a local community is between \$300,000-\$500,000 annually.
- Productivity increases when working caregivers have a viable alternative to leaving work to drive a parent to a medical appointment or other destinations. (Caring for an elderly parent has replaced childcare as the number one reason for employee absenteeism.)
- When communities provide an alternative, consumer-oriented, affordable mobility option for elderly drivers, communities reduce property damage, injuries, and fatalities by lowering the risk of collisions, improving overall safety for all residents.

Impediments or barriers to development or implementation:

- Some communities have had to overcome public policy barriers to establish an ITN affiliate. In some cases, state or local laws had to be modified, or clarifying language had to be put in place, to allow an affiliate to operate. ITNAmerica® recommends that each community's organizers research thoroughly the laws associated with all aspects of the ITN business model, and especially those related to:
 - Offering nonprofit rides, using volunteer drivers, for reimbursement (i.e., livery);
 - Accepting donated or traded cars, and liquidating them (i.e., car dealership);
 - Insurance availability for both paid and volunteer drivers (e.g., liability coverage).
- While an ITN affiliate is likely to be a new and unique way to provide service for seniors and people with visual impairments, most communities will have laws that govern certain aspects of the ITN affiliate's operation. For example, the ITN service may be interpreted as a taxi service, and could be considered in violation of an ordinance. If a restriction is identified, a local government can either grant an exception, or otherwise modify language which allows an ITN to operate freely.
- It is possible that a state agency might regulate the number of cars that can be traded, such that an ITN could be determined under the law to be a "Used Car Dealer," thus subjecting it to specific regulations, taxes, or fines. If this problem arises, a legislator may introduce legislation to eliminate this "unintended consequence" of existing regulations.
- Automobile insurance is another important area to research, both for paid drivers and volunteer drivers. In all cases, an ITN affiliate must protect itself as well as its members, volunteers, and employees from liability associated with collisions and other roadway hazards.

Resource—examples:

Any senior transportation program requires several kinds of resources, including funds, drivers (staff and volunteer), management, vehicles, and all sorts of support for accounting, administration and marketing. The ITN model is particularly focused on the management of resources—both in terms of planning and acquiring them, as well as in efficiently using finite, and sometimes scarce, resources. Ultimately a key to sustainability of any human enterprise is to identify all the resources available, and to consume them carefully. Below are a series of examples that can provide insights into how various communities gathered and used resources to establish their own ITN affiliates.

- ITN*Bluegrass*, 436 Georgetown Street, Lexington, KY, 40508; Gale Reece, Executive Director, (859) 252-8665—planning initiated by a retired professional and the director of the Fayette County Office of Aging Services. For history and extensive information on the program, including costs for rides:
<http://www.ITNBluegrass.org> .

- ITN*CentralCT*, 381 Main Street, Middletown, CT, 06457; William Wasch, Co-Chair, Board of Directors, (860) 346-RIDE (7433)—this program, started by St. Luke's Eldercare Solutions of Central Connecticut, stemmed from an ITN discussion first initiated by West Hartford's Deputy Mayor, which grew into what eventually became the first statewide initiative in the country to fund local groups interested in building local ITN affiliates. For history and extensive information on the program, including costs for rides: <http://www.ITNcentralct.org>.
- ITN*CharlestonTrident*, 6296 Rivers Avenue, Suite 303, North Charleston, SC, 29406; Jim Ledbetter, Executive Director, (843) 225-2715—initiated by the Trident Area Agency on Aging. For history and extensive information on the program, including costs for rides: <http://www.ITNCharlestonTrident.org>.
- ITN*Chicago*, 1747 W. Roosevelt Rd., Suite 110, Chicago, IL 60608; Mina Radia, Executive Director, (312) 744-6681—planning initiated by a discussion between the Commissioner of the City of Chicago Department of Senior Services and the Mayor of Chicago. For history and extensive information on the program, including costs for rides: <http://www.ITNChicago.org>.
- ITN*GreaterLA*, 11901 Santa Monica Blvd. Suite #431, Los Angeles, CA, 90025; Jane Bensussen, Executive Director, (310) 451-1343—started by the Center for Healthy Aging. For history and extensive information on the program, including costs for rides: <http://www.ITNGreaterLA.org>.
- ITN*NorthCentralConnecticut*, P.O. Box 448, 99 Main Street, Suite 8, East Windsor, CT, 06088; Margaret Smith-Hale, Executive Director, (860) 758-7833—planning initiated by Allied Rehabilitation Centers, Inc., and the Enfield Housing Authority following a community forum organized by Pamela Brown. For history and extensive information on the program, including costs for rides: <http://www.ITNNorthCentralCt.org>.
- ITN*Orlando*, 988 Woodcock Road, Suite 200, Orlando, FL, 32803; Kimber Threet, Executive Director, (407) 228-7761—planning initiated by AARP, the Senior Resource Alliance (Area Agency of Central Florida, Inc.), the Winter Park Health Foundation, and the Florida Department of Elder Affairs following a presentation by a national expert on senior mobility issues. For history and extensive information on the program, including costs for rides: <http://www.ITNOrlando.org>.
- ITN*Portland*, 90 Bridge Street, Westbrook, ME, 04092; Mark Sundermann, General Manager, (207) 854-0505—began as a graduate school project at the Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service in Portland, Maine—inspired by personal experience when her son was hit by an 84-year old driver, ITN's founder Katherine Freund realized that crashes are not the problem—they are the symptom. For history and extensive information on the program, including costs for rides: <http://ITNPortland.org>.

- ITN*QuadCities*, 1035 West Kimberly Road, Davenport, IA, 52806; John Rushton, Chair, Board of Directors, (563) 386-1626—planning initiated by a grassroots group of individuals as a leadership project hosted by the Bettendorf Chamber of Commerce in conjunction with St. Ambrose University. For history and extensive information on the program, including costs for rides: <http://www.ITNQuadCities.org>.
- ITN*SanDiego*, 4305 University Avenue, Suite. 110, San Diego, CA, 92105; Kim Gibbens, President, Board of Directors, (619) 282-0073—started by a retired high school administrative secretary whose husband died in a car accident involving an 82-year old driver who lost control of her car. For history and extensive information on the program, including costs for rides: <http://www.ITNSanDiego.org>.
- ITN*Sarasota*, 2688 Fruitville Road, Sarasota, FL, 34237; Tanice Knopp, Executive Director, (941) 364-7530—initiated by a collaborative grass-roots effort following a community assembly on aging hosted by Sarasota County Openly Plans for Excellence (SCOPE). For history and extensive information on the program, including costs for rides: <http://www.ITNSarasota.org>.

Resource—written and web:

- ITN*America*,[®] national parent organization of ITN affiliates, 90 Bridge Street, Westbrook, ME, 04092, (207) 857-9001: <http://www.ITNAmerica.org>.
 - Liberty Mutual insurance company, a partner of ITN*America*[®] is promoting a sustainable, community-based transportation solution for older adults.
 - Brief descriptions of major aspects of an ITN program: <http://www.itnamerica.org/content/FAQ.php>.
- Katherine Freund (July, 2008). "Dignified Transportation for Seniors," *CCQ Capital Commons Quarterly: The Dynamics of Aging and Our Communities*. Vol. 2, No. 2. A description of the Independent Transportation Network.[®] <http://media.itnamerica.org/media/ITNAmerica/CCQJuly2008.pdf>.

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