



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

EFFECTIVE ALTERNATE TRANSPORTATION MAY PREVENT DISABILITY OF THE ELDERLY

A briefing was held by AARP on community living arrangements for the elderly. Presenters at the forum were representatives from State legislators, a State department of transportation, a housing advisor, metropolitan planner, and a policy specialist related to livable communities.

Summary There is a need to provide affordable transportation for people who are elderly so they can access community services and activities. Of Americans over 65, 21% do not drive, or lack access to a vehicle, and 50% of non drivers do not leave their homes on most days and have 59% fewer shopping trips. Between 2005 and 2010, 3.5 million rural residents lost access to scheduled intercity transportation. In addition to community access to transportation by the elderly, there are fiscal concerns related to transportation. Those in transit friendly communities pay less than half for transportation than car dependent families. In the U.S., people age 65 or older make just 10% of their trips by bicycle or by foot on trips less than one mile from their homes. In Germany, 55% of all trips by people over 55 are made by foot or bicycle.

Disability Prevention Issues There are several social determinants of health related to transportation for the elderly in communities that can compromise the elder's health which may contribute to disability. Some of these aspects of social determinates of health are risky travel in automobiles, lack of opportunities for physical activity in low cost recreational facilities, poorly designed streets for pedestrians and alternative vehicles to the automobiles. For instance, forty percent of communities report lack of sidewalks, and safe crossings, bicycle lanes or safe places to catch the bus near their homes. In addition, older people are involved in more vehicle fatalities and are 61% more likely to die in a vehicle accident than the non-elderly. There are barriers to opportunities to physically active lifestyles through travel for the elderly in the U.S. which can contribute to chronic health conditions. For instance, in Germany, 55% of all trips in the community by people over 55 are made by foot or bicycle.

Activity There is on-going study of initiatives that plan, design and maintain transportation thoroughfares in the community to accommodate the safety and convenience of all users regardless of age and ability. Some of these initiatives involve addressing problems of rural transportation that include ride sharing, van pooling or senior shuttles to communities. There is study of research protocols to change behavior of the elderly to maximum function in specific communities that enhance self sufficiency with measures such as the livable community index.

Principle Elderly people should have access through alternative transportation modes to community activities and services.