

Purpose

The primary purpose of the Senior Transportation Needs Assessment (STNA) was to determine the service needs, gaps, and barriers facing seniors and/or caregivers living independently in AAA1.

Service Need: A transportation requirement which supports senior independence

Service Gap: No existing service, procedure, or plan that can meet a new or previously existing need

Service Barriers: Something that obstructs or prevents the ability of a senior to use an existing service.

Council on Aging’s Senior Transportation Needs Assessment is the first step in its strategic plan to help address transportation needs, gaps and barriers. The assessment is unique among transportation studies because it focuses on the experiences and opinions of older adults.

Transportation is a pivotal element that affects the independence of seniors living in our communities. Access to transportation options are required if COA is to achieve its mission of assisting seniors to remain independent and in their own homes for as long as possible. By administering programs with federal, state and local funds, the non-profit agency is a significant transportation resource for seniors in southwestern Ohio. In 2008, Council on Aging programs provided more than 265,000 trips for seniors to medical appointments, shopping, and recreation. Still, these trips meet only a fraction of the need and much of the funding goes to disabled seniors who are enrolled in COA’s home care programs. Beyond this group are thousands of other older adults who no longer drive but aren’t disabled enough to qualify for special programs.

Methodology

The Transportation Workgroup made a commitment to ensure that the primary voice heard through this process would be from seniors. The Senior Transportation Needs Assessment (STNA) obtained information from seniors living in the community, transportation providers, and care management professionals using surveys and focus groups. The assessment includes results from seniors residing in the five counties that make up Ohio Area Agency on Aging #1, (Butler, Clermont, Clinton, Hamilton, and Warren Counties).

Seniors

Community Survey	2508 participants
Focus Groups	59 participants

Transportation Providers

Survey	14 agencies represented
Focus Groups	14 agencies represented

COA Program Professionals

Survey	19 care managers from 4 county levy programs
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Summary of Results

Service Needs

- Non-medical transportation needs of seniors are not being met in all 5 counties.
- **Seniors most often identified employment and education sites as top destinations they find hard to get to (90 percent).** More than 80 percent of respondents also reported finding it hard to get to social service appointments, shopping, senior centers, and religious functions. And despite medical transportation programs that exist in our region, transportation to medical appointments was cited by 75 percent of seniors as problematic.
- **Nearly one-third reported they would simply end up missing their trip if their primary means of transportation became unavailable.** In focus groups, older adults said family members frequently drive them, but they don't like being a burden, especially when family members are forced to miss work. Service expansion Door to Door, Standby, Through Door, Evening/weekend service is needed.
- There is a significant unmet need for same day and next day transportation which is currently not being met.
- **One-third reported the need for mobility assistance** such as the use of a cane or a walker, assistance getting to and from or in and out of a vehicle.
- **39% self-limited their driving.** Night time driving was the most common reason for imposing a self-limitation, followed by the cost and ability to drive.
- Provider fleets are rapidly changing and/or require significant equipment updates.

Service Gaps

- 40% of seniors believe they have insufficient knowledge of transportation resources.
- 33% of seniors reported a need for cross-county transport.
- Seniors identified the need for a transportation system that is user friendly.
- Seniors also identified that there is a lack of cab services that can accommodate wheelchairs and insufficient public transportation options.

Barriers to Service

- 39% of seniors reported they had quit or limited their driving in the last six months.
- Advance scheduling requirements prevent same day and/or next day service.
- Transportation systems are not coordinated to meet the needs of seniors.
- Seniors do not use public transportation they fear they may be abandoned.

A comprehensive analysis is available at www.help4seniors.org.

Questions and comments may be directed to:
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About Council on Aging

Council on Aging of Southwestern Ohio (COA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for older adults and their families.

Since 1974, COA has been designated by the state of Ohio as the Area Agency on Aging for Butler, Clermont, Clinton, Hamilton and Warren counties. COA plans, coordinates, funds and administers programs for an area that is home to more than 252,000 adults age 60 and older.

COA promotes choice, independence, dignity and well-being of older adults through a range of services that help them remain in their homes for as long as possible.

One call to COA links people to the wide variety of agencies, information and programs that serve older adults.

For Answers on Aging:

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