

Survival Coalition: Transportation survey shows critical needs for people with disabilities and older adults statewide

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People can't work; get to medical appointments; get where they need to go
The Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations recent statewide survey of older adults, people with disabilities, and their family members reveals major transportation gaps in Wisconsin communities. The Coalition conducted the survey in July and August of 2018. 500 people from across the state responded.

Survey results underscore how transportation is a critical—and largely unmet—need that impacts every aspect of people with disabilities and older adults' lives.

"People with disabilities and older adults are forced to choose where they go and what they can do based on whether they can get a ride," said Beth Swedeen, Survival Coalition co-chair. "Access to transportation is limiting quality of life for people who are not able to drive and/or own their own vehicles."

Survey respondents report lack of transportation options as well as the limitations and challenges associated with existing transportation options impacts their ability to keep or get a job (54%), live where they would like (50%), get to medical appointments (61%), stay connected to their families (58%), get around and

participate in their communities (83%), eat healthy (38%), vote (37%), and find care providers who can get to their homes (27%).

More strikingly, the survey found that:

72% of respondents have trouble finding transportation at least 30% of the time they need it. 45% of respondents can't get where they need to go 50% of the time. 15% of respondents can't get where they need to go 70% of the time. 70% of respondents indicated the transportation they currently depend upon, whether it be family

member rides, current bus service or other options is fragile and if something in their life changed unexpectedly, they would likely be left sitting at home with no ability to get anywhere at all.

"Many families are struggling to make sure their loved ones are included in the community and have opportunities to work, pursue their interests, and be as independent as possible," said Lisa Pugh, Survival Co-Chair. "Too often transportation is the limiting factor, and families are unable to provide all the transportation that is needed themselves."

Almost 70% report routinely having to rely on family or friends for rides. Public transportation (40%), paratransit/specialized transit services (27%), transportation provided by Family Care or IRIS (23%), NonEmergency Medical Transportation (15%), volunteer drivers (13%), county human service/ADRC transportation programs (12%), and shared ride services (8%) were able to be routinely used by some respondents.

Ironically, at least as many or more respondents reported that individual transportation options do not exist in their community. 43% do not have access to public transit systems, 44% do not have volunteer driver programs operating in their area, 38% have no ride share services available, 28% reported they do not have access to county human service/ADRC transportation programs, 24% do not have access to paratransit, 24% did not feel Non-Emergency Medical transportation was available, and 24% reported no access to transportation provided by Family Care or IRIS.

"These survey results highlight the transportation challenges that advocates consistently hear about from families and people with disabilities and give a clear indication of the policy problems that need to be addressed," says Kit Kerschensteiner, Survival Co-Chair. "Large areas of the state have limited transportation options. And survey respondents are telling us that many of those

transportation options don't exist at all in their communities, are unaffordable, unreliable, unavailable at times they need them, or do not go where people need to go."

A sampling of quotes from survey respondents across the state (see next page) illustrate common themes echoed by many survey participants. Full survey results are available online at <http://www.survivalcoalitionwi.org/wpcontent/uploads/2018/09/wi-transportation-survey-infographic.pdf>

These survey results show that the administration and legislature must immediately prioritize and invest in regional approaches that increase transportation options and capacity, initiatives that expand access to transit and other modes of transportation at affordable prices, and pilot projects that address challenges faced by people with disabilities and older adults. Additionally, Survival Coalition requests dedicated appropriations to increase transportation access in communities where public transit does not exist.

In their own words: how transportation is affecting the daily lives of people with disabilities and older adults.

Arranging rides for everything I need (not what I want!) is hard, expensive and gives me almost no emergency options if a ride doesn't show up. I have a great family and thankfully my parents are semi-retired and do a lot of my transportation but if something happened to them I would probably loose my job, my apartment and my ability to live an independent life.

-Julie from Brookfield

Dan and I — both 80+ — can still get around with car, and we both also use public transportation. Bus stops near our home, but to get most places, we need to transfer to three buses, even for locations less than 15 min by bus. Our daughter, 44, lives in a group home because of her various disabilities. She has long used Paratransit, which is not always dependable in terms of pick-up and drop-off times; is not always reliable; does not always work on weekends or after hours; does not cross county lines; and is very costly. Given our ages, we know what we might be experiencing in a few years.

-Jacqueline from Brown Deer

Currently living with my family and have difficulties getting home when I need to. Unable to go to things at night because there isn't transportation available to get home. Limits work, education, socializing, and volunteering.

-Brenda from Platteville

My current transportation to and from my job cost me almost as much as I earn there.

-Nick from Cross Plains

My son relies on family and older (retired) adults to get him where he needs/wants to go. I have worked part time only so I can give my son rides when he needs them. If he had other transportation available, it would give me more flexibility in the type of job I can have, and it would give my son more options to live with friends in a different town if he wanted to do that.

-Pat from Prescott

Attempting to work, go to school full-time, volunteer and be active within the community is

tremendously difficult. There are many opportunities I have had to miss out on. I can't take night classes and I have very limited employment opportunities (only Monday-Saturday first shift is an option). The lack of transportation makes my life tremendously stressful and has a very negative impact on my mental and physical health. I have to spend hours traveling on the bus what could be accomplished in a 10 minute car ride. I feel exhausted and left out of my community.

-Andrew from Oshkosh

Access to rides on weekends severely limited, and cost-prohibitive. Community events and friend visits often foregone because no funding for "non-essential" trips. Fixed route bus system only in small city vicinity. Connecting cab rides so unreliable people have lost jobs. If needing accessible transportation in our town, better plan your whole life from 6:30 a.m.- 6:30 p.m. weekdays, within City Limits.

-Marelene from Amhurst Junction

Currently the bus service in the area does not operate on weekends or does not reach

destinations such as my doctors office or work location. The other options are not always

available or affordable.

-Lisa from Schofield

