Successful Aging in Johnson County: Transportation Report

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.17077/uy27-qlgp

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Successful Aging in Johnson County:
Transportation Report

Produced for the Johnson County Consortium
on Successful Aging
Field Problems in Planning II 102:210
Graduate Program in Urban and Regional Planning
University of Iowa
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Acknowledgements

We would like to express our appreciation to the groups and individuals who contributed to the information in this report. The Johnson County Consortium on Successful Aging provided guidance on senior issues and topics relevant to Johnson County. Members of the Consortium include Bob Welsh, Brian Kaskie, Sher Hawn, David Purdy, Mike McKay, Jeude Landhauser, Susan Rogusky, Rod Sullivan, Beverly Jones, Linda Severson and Eve Casserly.

We would also like to thank Paul Hanley, Heather MacDonald and Paul Hanley from the University of Iowa Department of Urban and Regional Planning for their direction and support throughout the project. In addition, we would like to acknowledge the key informants who volunteered their time and energy to provide us with insight on the topic of senior mobility in Johnson County. These informants include, Ron Logsden, John Yapp, Ron Bandy, Tom Brasey, Joni Werle and Dee Vanderhoef.
Executive Summary

Johnson County's elderly population is growing. According to a study from the AARP Public Policy Institute, people over the age of 65 rely on private vehicles for the majority of trips (Houser, 2005). Based on 2000 US Census data, over 23% of Johnson County's citizens over the age of 65 reside in unincorporated, rural areas. For a senior citizen in a rural community who no longer drives and does not rely on family members, friends or caregivers for rides, transportation options are limited. A person's mobility and access to health care, community attractions and loved ones affects his/her quality of life. Communities and organizations within Johnson County should develop strategies to better serve the county's growing aging population and improve the services available. Transportation services should be part of that strategy.

Seniors have access to a variety of transportation modes in Johnson County, including driving, walking, public transit and private transit. The County and communities should evaluate how well these transportation options serve seniors. Many seniors choose to drive; however, a number of safety issues arise as one ages. These issues can be addressed on an individual level as well as through policies and roadway design standards. Seniors who do not drive may have limited transportation choices, especially in rural areas not served by fixed-route transit services, although Johnson County SEATS provides county-wide transit opportunities on a limited basis. Better information about transportation alternatives may also improve senior mobility in Johnson County. Transportation providers should assess their ability to meet the needs of a population that includes many senior citizens. We have developed the following five recommendations to guide local communities and the County towards improving senior mobility.

1. Create and maintain a website with information on local senior services.
2. Improve driving safety among older drivers.
3. Improve pedestrian facilities for senior citizens.
4. Improve public transit services for seniors.
5. Improve private transportation services for seniors.
Table of Contents

Introduction  1
Methodology  2
Evaluation Criteria  3
  Driving  3
  Pedestrian and assistive mobility devices  4
  Mass transit  7
  Private transit  10
Recommendations  11
  Recommendation 1  11
  Recommendation 2  12
  Recommendation 3  13
  Recommendation 4  13

List of Tables

Table 1 - SEATS Schedule  8
Table 2 - Recommendation Matrix  15

Appendices

Appendix A - Annotated Bibliography of Best Practices
Appendix B - Focus Group Notes
Introduction

Most home owners and renters over the age of 45 have a strong preference to live in their current residence, regardless of their self-care needs (Bayer, 2000). In-home services can prolong a senior citizen's ability to live in their own home, but may also isolate them from the community. This is especially true in rural areas where transportation options are limited. According to a study by the AARP Public Policy Institute, people over the age of 65 rely on private vehicles for the majority of trips (Houser, 2005). Based on 2000 US Census data, over 23% of Johnson County's citizens over the age of 65 reside in unincorporated, rural areas. For a senior citizen in a rural community who no longer drives and does not rely on family members, friends or caregivers for rides, transportation options are limited. A person's mobility and access to health care, community attractions and loved ones affects his/her quality of life.

The largest age group in our nation's population is approaching the age of retirement. In 2002, people age 65 and older made up 12.3% of the county population. This is expected to increase to 15.5% in 2020 (Gibson, 2004). Iowa ranks fourth in the nation, based on its proportion of population over age 65 (Kaskie, 2003). Based on 2000 US Census data, we project that the population 65 and older in Johnson County will increase from about 9,000 to over 30,000 by the year 2020\(^1\). Iowa City has been ranked in the top 15 retirement destinations nationwide by AARP (Lichtenstein, 2003). Communities and organizations within Johnson County should develop strategies to better serve the county's growing aging population and improve the services available. Transportation services should be part of that strategy. This report identifies key senior transportation issues, analyzes best practices in senior transportation across the nation, and provides recommendations.

\(^1\) Based on a cohort-component method population projection.
Methodology
Our conclusions are based on the following steps:
- a review of best practices nationwide;
- an analysis of senior transportation needs and resources in the county; and
- focus group and key informant interview.

Our first step was to research best practices for senior citizen transportation options in communities across the nation. We reviewed publications from the AARP Policy Institute, The US Department of Health and Human Services Administration on Aging (AOA), the Aging in Place Initiative and several state and local plans. An annotated bibliography providing a comprehensive list of research materials is included in Appendix A.

To evaluate the transportation needs of Johnson County seniors, we analyzed data from the 2000 US Census, the results of a survey conducted by Johnson County SEATS and a transportation survey of 275 Johnson County senior citizens conducted by the Johnson County Consortium on Successful Aging in 2003. This data provided descriptive statistics identifying areas of need. We supplemented this data with a transportation needs assessment created by the University of Iowa Department of Public Health.

We conducted a focus group meeting with several local transportation professionals to solicit feedback on the feasibility of the implementation options for our preliminary recommendations. We spoke to representatives of JC SEATS, Iowa City Transit, JCCOG, Iowa City City Council, and a driver education provider that specialized in elderly driver education. We also conducted a personal interview with a representative of Mercy Hospital Senior Services. The results of the focus group and interview are summarized in Appendix B. We revised the recommendations based on these discussions.
Evaluation Criteria

Johnson County residents typically travel by driving, walking, transit, paratransit, or private transportation. This report evaluates how each of these options meets the needs of Johnson County seniors.

Driving

Driving gives people a sense of independence and freedom; this can be especially valuable for older people as they begin to depend on others more. The percentage of the population over the age of 65 is expected to grow in the nation and the state of Iowa. If roadway design standards are controlled by 85th percentile performance requirements, the ‘design driver’ for these standards will, by the year 2020, be over the age of 65 (Staplin et al, 2001). Iowa ranks second only to Florida, in number of drivers over the age of 85 (Iowa SMS, 2002).

In general, older drivers have different limitations and safety needs than other drivers. In fact, the number of older drivers involved in fatal crashes increased 33 percent nationwide in 1998 and 1999 while overall fatalities actually decreased nine percent (Iowa SMS, 2002). Older drivers may experience impaired vision, decreased attention, lessened cognition, diminished memory, decline in physical abilities, or lack of risk or hazard perception. These issues can be addressed by educating drivers and by improving roadway design.

The State of Iowa Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) requires drivers over the age of 70 to renew their license every two years, rather than every five years, so that the DMV can evaluate their abilities over time. The Iowa DMV also allows physicians, optometrists, police and family members to report any driver they believe may have difficulty meeting the license requirements. The driver may then be subject to a road test in order to maintain their licensed status (NHTSA, 2003). Based on key informant interviews, the DMV often refers older drivers to driver education programs if they have driving violations or incidents on their driving record. Voluntary driver education sessions are available for seniors in Johnson County through the Johnson County Senior Center, private driver educators, and AARP as well as through the Iowa State Patrol’s Safety and Education Office’s “Older and Wiser Driver” and “Senior Safe Driver” programs. These programs, along with proactive reporting of potential driving concerns from physicians and family members, are important in allowing seniors to continue to drive safely and to recognize problems that may prevent them from doing so.
Roadway design issues that affect older drivers include lighting, signage, sight distance and speed-distance judgments (often at intersections). Currently, the Iowa DOT utilizes recommendations in the Older Drivers Highway Design Handbook published by the Federal Highway Association (FHWA). Johnson County Council of Governments (JCCOG) transportation engineers and planners have been educated by the DOT on older driver concerns and on how to improve roadway design to better address the limitations and needs of older drivers. Based on key informant discussion, although Iowa City currently uses the guidelines, most rural communities do not. Many rural communities do not have a transportation department or the funds to improve existing roadway conditions to meet the guidelines. The guidelines may be even more important in rural communities for two reasons: 1) older citizens in these areas do not have as many mobility options and rely on driving and 2) low-traffic rural highways are more likely to have obstacles and poor lighting that increase risks to drivers.

Technological enhancements and devices within the vehicle such as swivel seats, warning indicators and enhanced lighting can also improve driver safety for older adults. More information is available at http://www.aarpmagazine.org/lifestyle/reinventing_wheel.html.
Pedestrian and assistive mobility devices

In urban parts of Johnson County, walking is a practical way to get around, and a good form of exercise. However, most people, including seniors, will only walk if it is more convenient than any other mode of travel.

A “walkable distance” is usually defined as between a quarter mile or a half mile; however, for some seniors this may be shorter. For walking to be a feasible transportation alternative, destinations should be within walking distance of senior citizens’ homes. Some of Johnson County’s largest senior-specific housing, Ecumenical Towers and Capitol House, are located in downtown Iowa City. They are within easy walking distance of shopping, entertainment, open space, community facilities and a wide range of other destinations. Most other senior living complexes are located in areas with only a few destinations within walking distance. Walkability will also vary for owner-occupants, depending on neighborhood characteristics.

The majority of Johnson County’s urban neighborhoods feature wide sidewalks with attractive landscaping. However, rural areas and long commercial strips often lack sidewalks. Many commercial strips are designed for automobile travel. In most rural areas, the average distance between homes and destinations is more than many people would care to walk. Some urban neighborhoods lack adequate sidewalks because of the substantial costs of retrofitting older, built-out neighborhoods. In most Johnson County communities, sidewalk quality is
regulated by ordinance; however, the responsibility for maintaining sidewalks falls on the land owner. Different levels of maintenance – especially snow and ice removal – may make them more difficult routes for pedestrians. Snow removal ordinances are very difficult to enforce.

Safety is another important consideration. In Iowa in 2004 there were over 500 traffic related pedestrian injuries and 21 fatalities, with seniors being one of the age cohorts most affected by fatalities (Iowa Department of Public Safety, 2005). Abundant street lighting, well marked pedestrian crossings, low traffic speeds and signals timed to allow easy crossing can add to the safety of pedestrian routes. In 2001, the FHWA released a guidebook supplement for communities interested in improving the safety of pedestrian routes for seniors. Iowa City and JCCOG use this to guide pedestrian planning decisions.

While “pedestrian” usually refers to walkers, it is important not to forget the needs of seniors who use assistive mobility devices such as walkers, wheelchairs or scooters. These technologies may help some seniors to overcome some of the above issues, such as the distance they are willing to travel or the amount of time it takes to cross an intersection. However, if these are to be a practical travel alternative, pedestrian routes need to accommodate these devices. Curb ramps are crucial. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that when streets or sidewalks are newly built or altered, they must have ramps wherever there are curbs or other barriers that prevent entry to the walkway. In addition, cities should also install curb ramps in locations of high demand (US Department of Justice, 2000).
Mass transit

Those unable to drive must rely on friends, family, taxis, or public transit for the majority of their trips. Public transit provides a fairly inexpensive alternative that still gives a person who cannot drive a sense of independence. Johnson County has two fixed-route, public transit operations – Iowa City Transit and Coralville Transit. The University of Iowa operates a free Cambus service in parts of Iowa City and Coralville. Though it is available to the public, the main purpose of Cambus is to serve the University of Iowa. Both Iowa City and Coralville Transit include accessible busses and discount, off-peak fares for senior citizens. Johnson County SEATS card holders (see below) may also ride Iowa City transit for free during off-peak hours (Monday-Friday 9am to 3:30pm and after 6:30pm and all day Saturday) (Johnson County SEATS, 2006). The routes serve the University of Iowa Hospitals Coral Ridge Mall, and downtown Iowa City. Transfers can be made between bus lines. Based on key informant discussions, additional Iowa City bus routes will begin within the year and will serve retirement communities that are not currently served.

Iowa City transit locates bus shelters at high-ridership stops but riders may also recommend new locations of bus shelters. Shelters can improve the experience of public transit use, but are costly. Iowa City transit also conducts informational sessions at the Johnson County Senior Center.

In addition to traditional transit, Johnson County has a paratransit service for elderly and disabled residents, Johnson County SEATS. SEATS offers flexible route, door-to-door transportation. The ADA requires transit authorities with fixed-route transit service to provide paratransit service within ¾ mile of the fixed routes and to any small areas enclosed by those routes (Iowa DOT Office of Public Transit, 2005). However, SEATS goes beyond these requirements to provide paratransit service to all areas of the county, contracting with Iowa City Transit and Coralville Transit to meet service requirements for the two communities. In 2004, JC SEATS provided over 86,000 rides to eligible riders annually (Keehn et al, 2004).

To qualify for SEATS service, residents of Iowa City, Coralville, or University Heights must be certified by their city of residence as being unable to use the available fixed route bus service. Any resident of Johnson County who lives outside one of these cities can ride JC SEATS. In addition, companions or personal care attendants may accompany any eligible
SEATS rider. SEATS encourages riders to make reservations 24-hours in advance. Same-day rides will only be honored when there is extra availability. In cases where advanced reservations are overbooked, SEATS will pay local taxi companies to provide rides to qualified individuals at equal cost. A key informant explained that the costs to private transportation companies to meet federal paratransit guidelines (driver screening, drug-testing and training) prohibit long-term collaboration with SEATS. By law fares may not exceed twice the fare charged for fixed-route transit (Iowa DOT Office of Public Transit, 2005). Fixed-route transit in Johnson County is highly subsidized at $0.75 per trip. SEATS service can therefore charge a maximum of $1.50 per trip. Paratransit trips that have origins and destinations within Iowa City are only charged $0.75 and a personal-care attendant who accompanies a SEATS card-holder rides for free (Johnson County SEATS, 2006). Based on key informant interviews, one fixed-route trip costs approximately $2.18 while one paratransit trip costs $15, and consequently requires large amounts of subsidy. SEATS operating hours vary between communities, as can be seen in Table 1. This schedule can accommodate most medical appointments, shopping and business needs, and social trips for Iowa City, University Heights and Coralville residents. However, other areas of Johnson County receive only limited service.

Johnson County SEATS offers a group trip program in which one eligible rider can subscribe for a routine trip for a number of participants. Lantern Park residents use this service for weekly grocery trips. However, key informants indicate that no other groups currently take advantage of this offer.

Table 1 - SEATS Operating Hours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Operating Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iowa City, University Heights, Coralville</td>
<td>M-F 6 am – 10:30 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sat. 6 am – 7:30 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sun. 8 am – 2:30 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosgrove, Oxford, Tiffin, NW JC</td>
<td>T/Th 8:30 am – 4:30 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hills, Lone Tree, Southern JC</td>
<td>M/WWF 8:30 am – 4:30 pm when senior dining in Lone Tree is open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Liberty, Solon, Swisher NE JC</td>
<td>M/T/Th 8:30 am – 4:30 pm when senior dining in Swisher or Solon is open</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SEATS riders must also have a flexible time schedule, as there is a half an hour window for being picked up and rides can take up to one hour, depending on distance and the number of riders with different destinations.

Getting around can be quite difficult for seniors in small towns and rural areas who are unable to drive, cannot afford taxis, and do not have others they can depend on for rides. While SEATS does provide a way to get to scheduled appointments or weekly shopping, it does not provide much flexibility for social, cultural or other trips. For example, someone who wanted to take classes, work or volunteer five days a week would not have access to consistent, reliable transportation. Local cultural events, which often take place on weekends, would also be inaccessible. Also, SEATS must serve different areas of the County on different days to maximize efficiency, which means that a senior in Oxford could never use SEATS to visit a friend in Lone Tree. Consequently, some seniors may feel isolated or dependent. It is important for seniors to understand the public transit system as it provides a fairly inexpensive, efficient and safe alternative to driving. It is also important for public transit planners to understand the needs of seniors and to include them in planning for a transit service that meets their needs.

Picture Source: www.johnson-county.com/SEATS
Private transit

For those who do not have access to a vehicle or public transit, private transit is necessary. For the purpose of this report, private transit includes taxi service, shuttles provided through community organizations and senior living facilities and carpooling. Although convenient and reliable, taxi service can be very expensive. In addition, taxi services utilizing automobiles are not required by ADA to purchase accessible vehicles for their fleet. Thus, few seniors use taxi service on a regular basis. Based on a survey of 275 Johnson County seniors conducted by the Consortium on Successful Aging, less than 3 percent of respondents use taxis on a weekly or even monthly basis.

Shuttle services are often provided by faith-based organizations, medical centers, senior centers and senior living communities or nursing homes. Though some senior living facilities provide transportation, not many shuttle services exist within Johnson County. In addition, shuttle service is often limited to residents of a facility or members of a particular organization, or for specific purposes. Isolated seniors that need transportation the most are not served.

Some seniors rely on family and friends to provide them with occasional transportation. Seniors may not turn to friends and family consistently for their transportation needs if they feel they are intruding on the person or losing their independence. In other cases, seniors may not have anyone to rely on. Private taxis or shuttle services are another transportation option for seniors. This option can be very expensive. Additionally, small fleets such as those in Johnson County, are not required to have accessible vehicles. As a result of the above issues, some seniors may be isolated, especially those who do not drive and have limited transit access.
Recommendations

After assessing the current senior transportation situation in Johnson County and reviewing best practices from across the nation, we have developed four recommendations to improve transportation for seniors in Johnson County.

1) Create and maintain a website with information regarding local senior services

Johnson County has a wide variety of services for seniors with different needs. However, there is no central source of comprehensive information about all options. To organize easily accessible information, we recommend creating and maintaining a comprehensive senior service website. This website should include the following:

- driver safety;
- senior shuttle information;
- bus schedules and maps;
- information regarding benefits of riding the bus during non-peak hours (e.g. less crowding, fare reduction, more attention from driver);
- information about senior-friendly features on public transit vehicles (e.g. lifts, removable seats);
- information regarding JC SEATS service;
- information on group trips with JC SEATS.
- information about assistive mobility devices;
- information regarding mobility options to local events and attractions;
- information regarding senior housing options and services;
- listing of in-home service providers;
- listing of supportive service providers;
- community and faith-based organizations; and
- local events and enrichment opportunities.

Informational call centers, such as 211, can use the information on this website to allow operators to better assist and direct callers. This website could also be used as a promotional tool. Readily available information about transit, services and amenities available to senior citizens will educate potential in-migrants about living in Johnson County.

One way to reach a wider audience is to distribute this information in a hard copy format periodically. The expense of such an approach may limit its distribution. One alternative to reduce the cost would be to provide the hard copy at libraries, senior centers, local businesses and other public places.

Anoka County Minnesota has a comprehensive website for seniors and caregivers at http://www.co.anoka.mn.us/external-url.asp?ID=70
2) **Improve driving safety among older drivers**

Both drivers and transportation engineers/planners should be educated about driver safety among older adults. Johnson County and its communities should review roadway design standards and update them as necessary using FHWA guidelines for senior driving safety. These updates could include:

- more visible signage and pavement markings;
- more street lighting in problem areas;
- paved shoulders;
- removal of obstructions along roadways;
- rumble strips on shoulders and along center-line; and
- turning-lanes at busy intersections.

Driver education programs should be available to all Johnson County seniors. Influencing seniors to participate in these programs can be difficult because it is a sensitive subject, especially if the senior fears losing their license. The following programs and incentives can be used to increase participation in driver education programs:

- AARP sponsored, risk-free older driver education programs through senior centers and community organizations;
- insurance discounts for those that attend an approved accident prevention course; and
- physician, family member and caseworker screening and reporting to the DMV regarding potentially unsafe senior drivers.

Currently, Raydon is developing the Virtual Trainer, a driving simulator that can simulate various driving conditions and is a risk-free way for driver’s to evaluate their abilities. These machines will be available for purchase Fall, 2006, but will cost upwards of $25,000 per simulator. Source: www.virtualdriver.net
3) **Improve pedestrian facilities for senior citizens using FHWA guidelines**

Walking is a form of exercise and allows senior citizens without cars some independence. It is important to consider the needs of senior citizens and those with disabilities when designing pedestrian facilities. Local communities should evaluate their existing pedestrian facilities. For example, Iowa City is currently evaluating the quality of its sidewalks through a neighborhood sidewalk inventory. When assessing sidewalks and designing new facilities, communities should make sure they consider the needs of senior citizens. Recommendations to improve pedestrian facilities could include:

- sufficient resting areas along sidewalks and paths (e.g. benches);
- crosswalks with medians, bulb-outs or pedestrian bridges at long or high-traffic intersections;
- pedestrian walk signals timed for seniors and those with disabilities;
- crosswalk countdowns to allow for better judgment at crossings;
- sidewalks separated from roadways with planting strips;
- sufficient street lighting along busy pedestrian areas; and
- paved surfaces on highly traveled pedestrian routes, including sidewalks and trails.

In addition, planners and developers should also consider other land use decisions that can improve walkability such as mixed-use development, short block lengths, rear parking, and buildings oriented toward the street.

One limitation to this recommendation is the high cost of retrofitting or constructing new sidewalks. Communities should prioritize high traffic routes that connect residents with commercial and public areas. All new senior-specific housing developments should include sidewalks that connect with adjacent routes.

4) **Address public transit issues relative to senior needs**

A number of public transit options exist for seniors in Johnson County, including Iowa City Transit, Coralville Transit and Johnson County SEATS. Some minor but important changes may improve fixed-route transit services for seniors:

- install bus shelters or benches at bus stops with high rates of senior ridership;
- improve walkability to bus stops as mentioned in Recommendation 3; and
- train transit drivers, customer service agents and dispatchers to better serve senior citizens.
Johnson County SEATS serves many senior citizens and is an essential service for seniors with few transportation options. It provides transportation for important routine trips including physician's visits and grocery shopping, and also prevents isolation. Although SEATS requires large amounts of funding, we feel this program should continue to serve eligible residents in all areas of Johnson County. One way to increase service to seniors without requiring additional resources is through the use of group trips to and from high demand locations. Though SEATS currently offers group trips, it may be more widely used with increased marketing. One way to market the group trip option would be to offer informational sessions at senior centers or senior-specific living facilities.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Recommendation 1</th>
<th>Recommendation 2</th>
<th>Recommendation 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JCCOG</td>
<td>1) Build and host comprehensive senior service website.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1) Incorporate pedestrian facility guidelines &amp; design standards that address</td>
<td>1) Assess needs for shelters and benches at stops with high senior ridership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) Maintain links to other relevant sites.</td>
<td></td>
<td>senior mobility issues.</td>
<td>2) Assess transit needs of senior-specific living facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Transportation Engineers and Planners</td>
<td>Provide information about local pedestrian routes on website.</td>
<td>Incorporate roadway design standards that address senior driving issues.</td>
<td>3) Provide educational programs at senior-specific living facilities.</td>
<td>3) Include senior needs in driver training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed-route Transit Planners and Directors</td>
<td>Provide links to/from website on your website if applicable.</td>
<td></td>
<td>4) Include senior needs in driver training.</td>
<td>4) Include senior needs in driver training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JC SEATS</td>
<td>Provide links to/from website on your website if applicable.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Increase marketing of group trip option. Continue to serve rural communities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agency</td>
<td>Recommendation 1</td>
<td>Recommendation 2</td>
<td>Recommendation 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Private Transportation Providers</td>
<td>Provide links to/from website on your website if applicable.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Insurance Providers</td>
<td>1) Provide links to/from website on facility you if applicable. 2) Provide senior specific driving information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Driver's Education Providers</td>
<td>1) Provide links to/from website on facility you if applicable. 2) Provide senior specific driving information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physicians / Case managers</td>
<td></td>
<td>Identify and educate seniors about how to improve driver safety.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caregivers/ friends / family</td>
<td></td>
<td>Identify and educate seniors about how to improve driver safety.</td>
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</table>
References Cited


Iowa Department of Public Safety - Governor’s Traffic Safety Bureau. 2004. “Pedestrian/Bicycle Fact Sheet.” Available at http://www.state.ia.us/government/dps/gtsb/fact-6pedestrianbicycle.pdf


Appendices
Appendix A – Annotated Bibliography of Best Practices


This is a four year comprehensive plan addressing the needs of seniors and people with disabilities in the northwest region of Washington State. The plan includes service priorities, issue areas, and funding and staff strategies.

Aging Well, Living Well: Transportation Fact Sheet. Department of Health and Human Services Administration on Aging. Available at: www.aoa.gov/proff/transportation/transportation_pf.asp

This fact sheet gives information about seniors and driving safety. It also lists some alternative transportation services available to seniors to avoid driving.


This article identifies and analyzes examples of eight communities where some or all transportation resources are coordinated in order to provide services to a broad range of riders. The report explores the framework for coordination, discusses issues surrounding coordinating diverse services, describes the systems and services, and shows the outcome of coordinating transportation in the specific locales. The report concludes with implications for policy. The goal of the report is to provide examples that can assist policymakers in their consideration of ways to improve transportation opportunities for older persons.


This article reports the findings of a series of focus groups for older drivers and non-drivers. Specifically, it describes how drivers and non-drivers age 75 and older regard their transportation options and how they stay connected to their communities.


In this article, the author explains the ‘quiet crisis’, the aging of a large population and the longer lifespan of Americans. The author explores
various social services that will be affected including housing, transportation and leisure/cultural services. The author also describes the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging’s 18 month process to improve the services and better equip communities to make them more desirable and easier for a retiree to reside in.


This article describes the increased responsibilities of grandparents and the rise in the number of grandparents acting as caregivers to grandchildren. It illustrates census data. The author also addresses some of the current funding and policies in response to this issue.

*Developing Coordinated Transportation Services for Older Americans*. National Association of State Units on Aging for the Community Transportation Association. Available at: http://www.aoa.gov/prof/transportation/transportation.asp

This is a national report giving guidance on how to implement more senior-friendly, coordinated community transportation systems. It explains the differences between brokerage and mobility management transportation coordination, addresses the challenges of coordinating transportation and highlights its importance.


This report describes the issues in Minnesota, which has a growing retiree population that is expected to continue to grow. It discusses initiatives and plans to improve human services for this growing population through the year 2030.


This article is geared toward recently retired seniors looking to move. It accompanied “The 15 Best Places to Reinvent Your Life” article, and list factors seniors should consider when choosing a community to retire in.

Appendix A – Annotated Bibliography of Best Practices

Development”. The Beth Johnson Foundation; Staffordshire, England. Available at: http://intergenerational.cas.psu.edu/Docs/InterCommunityDevelopment.pdf

This practice guide developed through the Beth Johnson Foundation explains problems and issues with intergenerational community development. It describes the issues affecting both the young and elderly populations in communities including stereotypes and providing services. It describes approaches that can be taken in order to better plan for all ages and includes a case study in the United Kingdom.


This article list Iowa City as one of the top 15 places for baby-boomers approaching retirement to reinvent their lives. Cities were picked based on availability of jobs, affordable housing, culture and entertainment, outdoor recreation, safety, nearby college or university, sense of community, healthcare, quality of public schools, and transportation access.


In her article, Sandy Markwood discusses the issues that may arise when the baby boom population begins to retire. She mentions that communities will experience a fast growth in the senior citizen population and as a result, many of the different agencies will need to adjust policies and programs. In particular she mentions the role of the Older Americans Act (OAA) and funding from the Federal government.


This community work program was developed by the two entities, Partners for Livable Communities and National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) to assist communities in creating an environment to better serve the senior citizen population. It discusses an 18 month approach in which the agencies provide assistance to local communities. The process is divided into four phases as follows: Phase I – Strategic Organizing, Phase II – Expanding the Circle, Phase III – Defining a Multiple Year Game Plan, and Phase IV – A National Aging in Place Blueprint.

This site provides information about the Senior Grants Program operations and funding, activities & program highlights, implications, and background. There is also a synopsis of the Iowa Senior Smiles Project, which receives funding through this grant program.


This planning document was submitted by the Executive Office on Aging to the US Administration on Aging and describes five overall goals of the State of Hawaii regarding its aging population. It describes the growth of the aging population in the State and addresses needs and goals for the State to improve the services to this population. It also addresses funding and expenditures expected during the four year period from 2004 to 2007.


International Communications Research (ICR) of Media, Pennsylvania, conducted a telephone survey among a national, stratified sample of 2,422 adults age 50+. Respondents were asked about their health and disability status, driving status, modes of transportation they use, problems with transportation use, their social interaction, and overall satisfaction with their mobility. This report details the methodology and results of that survey in order to provide information transportation developers and coordinators about how seniors connect to their community.

Total Aging In Place Program 2003. Available at: http://www.totalaginginplaceprogram.com/

This non-profit organization is located in Amherst, New York and provides elderly care for citizens of Western New York. The program is a managed long-term care plan for citizens over the age of 55 that are nursing home and Medicaid eligible. A Care Team designs and coordinates a care plan for members including home services. A day center is also available for recreation activities.

In her article, Peg Tyre describes the circumstances for many retirees. She states that many retirees that can afford to do so are choosing to move out of the suburbs and into larger cities. Reasons for this move include, less need for driving, cultural amenities, single story apartments, and proximity to health services. Cities cited include Philadelphia, Austin, San Francisco, Providence and Hoboken.


This summary published by the Aging in Place Initiative, discusses the service of the Ohio Miami Valley referred to as the Wellness Connection. This organization provides health services mainly dealing with early detection and education of bodily issues affecting the elderly. It also provides a facility for health care services and exercise. The non-profit organization also provides a traveling service that not only educates the elderly but also provides services such as on-site testing and screenings.
Johnson County Consortium on Successful Aging
Transportation Recommendations Review
Date: Feb 10 2006
Location: JC Public Health Conference Room

In Attendance:
Kristen Diehl – UI Urban and Regional Planning
Bob Welsh
Brian Kaskie – UI Public Health
Sher Hawn – JC Public Health
Linda Severson - JCCOG
Mike McKay – Systems Unlimited
Jeude Landhauser – Heritage Area Agency on Aging
David Purdy – Elder Services
Janice Frey – UI Social Work

Kristen Diehl discussed the recommendations provided to the attendees prior to the meeting and stated that she intended to receive feedback from the members on the recommendations presented and to be included in the final report.

Recommendation 1
Brian Kaskie asked if everyone was in agreement with having a transportation section as part of website, and everyone agreed with no further comment.

Recommendation 2
Mr. Kaskie asked if we knew how many people actually attend driver safety courses. David Purdy said he thought about 20 per session. Someone said that in Illinois her parents received points on their insurance for attending classes, and Ms. Diehl highlighted the portion of recommendation 2 that discusses insurance incentives. Mr. Kaskie said it would be good to talk to someone from AAA locally about this.

Mr. Kaskie asked about the simulator in Coralville, and Bob Welsh said it was a good way to get drivers to assess their safety. Mr. Kaskie recommended contacting someone at the simulator. Mr. Welsh and Mr. Kaskie both thought we should leave state licensing recommendations out of this report. Mr. Kaskie thought there may be a way to do something locally, with the Johnson County DMV. He suggested checking into a California policy that has a local, informal test that triggers a reevaluation, without using age discrimination.

Linda Severson said she would look into local and county roadway design standards, and get back to Ms. Diehl. Mr. Kaskie thinks Coralville should pay to paint their roads with reflective paint, and he said he did not think it was state jurisdiction or that it would cost that much.
Recommendation 3
Ms. Diehl explained the concept of ride-sharing. Mr. Kaskie said that UIHC should have a volunteer driver; he isn’t mentioning this in his health report but thinks it would fit here. Mr. Purdy, Mr. Kaskie and Mr. Welsh asked about using church vans for this activity, and Mr. Welsh highlighted St. Andrews. Ms. Hawn brought up using a point system – people bank points by doing volunteer work and then can use up the points to get favors such as this driving service. Janice Frey also mentioned the 1000 hours program. Mr. Kaskie said to tap into the James Gang, a local non-profit organization to get volunteer drivers. Ms. Severson asked about liability issues and Mr. Kaskie there was some way to get around it like they did in Minnesota – as long as individual drivers have insurance it was OK.

Recommendation 4
Brian Kaskie said he didn’t think there was much to do with this recommendation. Ms. Hawn mentioned that a focus group in North Liberty brought up issue of snow removal (road plows push snow onto sidewalks making it difficult for seniors to walk around). Mr. Kaskie said sidewalks are a private-owner issue, but Ms. Hawn said it was also city problem because of their plows. She also said sidewalk quality was an issue there with cracks etc. Ms. Severson said that the thing to look into would be city sidewalk ordinances. Mr. Kaskie and Ms. Hawn had some disagreement as to how important it was to include sidewalk quality complaints in this report.

Recommendation 5
Bob Welsh asked why we did not include Cambus in our recommendations, and Brian Kaskie said that based on his surveys, he didn’t think a lot of older adults used Cambus. Janice Frey said they might use it coming and going to Hospital, and Mr. Kaskie said to highlight only certain routes then.

Bob Welsh said that the problem with JC SEATS is that by federal law they cannot prioritize certain routes, but that if some portion of SEATS were not federally funded, that portion could prioritize, and that this would be helpful. Both he and Mr. Kaskie said biggest priority should be to and from Healthcare appointments, and that we could address this with Recommendations 3 and 5. Linda Severson said that Iowa City Transit was looking to expand their bus service, and also thought North Liberty was looking into contracting with Coralville for bus service. Mr. Kaskie said it would be good to try to help move that along.

Recommendation 6
Mr. Welsh and Mr. Purdy thought that SEATS had talked to some cab companies, but they were not sure what happened with the talks. Mr. Kaskie said to look for voucher programs as examples. Mr. Purdy explained that Senior Living Trust has some funding that goes for this and that his organization does accept taxi cab vouchers in Jonson County, but that they are distributed through
case management programs, and not widely available. Mr. Kaskie suggested that this would be a good Lions club or Rotary club fundraiser.

Other comments
Mr. Kaskie said that the recommendations that jump out as the best are the volunteer driver service and the website. Others also asked about checking with Coralville Mall and Hyvee about senior shuttles to their businesses.
Transportation Report Key Informant Focus Group
Location: Iowa City Manager’s Conference Room
Date: 2/23/06
Time: 3:30 pm – 5:00 pm

In attendance:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organization</th>
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<tr>
<td>Kristen Diehl</td>
<td>University of Iowa, Urban and Regional Planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Erin North</td>
<td>University of Iowa, Urban and Regional Planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ron Bandy</td>
<td>Driver Education</td>
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<td>Tom Brase</td>
<td>Johnson County SEATS</td>
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<td>Ron Logsdien</td>
<td>Iowa City Transit</td>
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<td>John Yapp</td>
<td>Johnson County Council of Governments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Linda Severson</td>
<td>Johnson County Council of Governments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dee Vanderhoef</td>
<td>Iowa City City Council</td>
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Notes:
Kristen Diehl and Erin North began the meeting as representatives for the JC Consortium on Successful Aging by describing the history of the project and the transportation report that will be the outcome of this portion of the project. They mentioned that the purpose of this focus group is to receive the members' expert opinions of the recommendations provided to them prior to the meeting and that information regarding the implementation and feasibility of these recommendations is especially helpful. They explained that they would first give a brief overview of each recommendation then ask specific questions and receive feedback from the members and allow the members to discuss each recommendation.

Recommendation 1 – Create and maintain a comprehensive website for senior services: Ron Logsdien and Tom Brase both mentioned that they feel that their agency could benefit from being listed on such a website and suggested providing links to their respective websites on the comprehensive website in order to provide more detailed information. They also mentioned that it may be more useful and easier to use and locate if links to the comprehensive site were provided on each of their sites as well as other sites for senior specific agencies and providers. They feel their agencies would benefit more from being provided with the raw data from senior surveys rather than annual reports so that they may use the data specific to their needs (local housing officials and providers showed the same sentiment). They mentioned, as well as the other members of the group, that many seniors currently do not utilize the internet and are often intimidated by the technology so that this type of site may be more useful to 211 operators, caregivers, and social services but that it would still be a useful tool.

Recommendation 2 – Improve older driver safety: John Yapp mentioned that Iowa City currently includes many of the design standards mentioned to improve
senior driving safety in their codes including larger signs with more readable fonts; LED traffic signals, which are easier to see; and higher visibility pavement markings. He also mentioned that the Iowa DOT has and continues to educate metropolitan areas about senior and younger driver transportation issues and how to improve safety through designs. He provided two booklets which have been distributed by the Iowa DOT to metropolitan areas regarding these issues. However, he did mention that in many, though not all, unincorporated rural areas in Johnson County, the methods mentioned to improve driver safety have not been implemented because of a lack of funding. Some rural areas have begun to provide paved shoulders and other efforts to improve driver safety but more efforts go into the metropolitan areas. This is an issue because many rural areas have high population of senior citizens. Mr. Yapp and Ron Bandy also mentioned that there needs to be a balance because having too much signage causes clutter which is unsightly and may cause confusion.

Dee Vanderhoef mentioned that one senior citizen issue that communities and transportation officials do not consider is peripheral vision. She mentioned that the Iowa DOT is doing some research on this topic. Many senior citizens experience drooping eyelids which affects their sight and may cause them to drive out in front of oncoming vehicles. She mentioned that in her own experience, having surgery to correct this helps the problem greatly and that the surgery is often covered by health insurance and Medicare. She mentioned that educating seniors about this issue and the options available to them regarding corrective surgery can easily help the problem.

Mr. Bandy mentioned that there are many programs available for driver education, and in his experience seniors do participate but sometimes it is difficult to find volunteers to teach the AARP and other courses available. He mentioned that one way to allow more seniors to participate would be to offer a private simulator at a neutral location such as the library, so that seniors can assess their own driving skills without actually taking a test or class, which may make them feel threatened or at risk of losing their driving privileges. Ms. Vanderhoef mentioned that a simulator did exist at the University of Iowa Hospital but she was not sure if it was still in that location. Mr. Brase mentioned the simulator at the Oakdale campus but Ms. Vanderhoef mentioned that it is used for specific research and you had to pass certain criteria depending on the types of drivers needed. She also mentioned that often seniors may feel threatened by this type of research and recording of their driving.

Mr. Bandy mentioned that physicians do often refer older drivers to him for an assessment and education. He and Linda Severson both mentioned that the DMV currently has a program in which senior drivers may lose some privileges based on doctor referral and assessment or past driving history. Mr. Bandy stated that this program may need improvement but that it is a very sensitive subject. He also later mentioned that the use of certain technologies within vehicles can help older drivers and they should be made more aware of these
technological improvements. Ms. Diehl mentioned that these types of technology can be included on the comprehensive website described in Recommendation 1.

Recommendation 3 – Ride-sharing: All members agreed that there are some issues with a ride-sharing program that would need careful consideration and that if it were organized through some trusted agency some of these issues may be resolved. Ms. Vanderhoef and Mr. Brase mentioned the insurance issues involved with the volunteer drivers. Mr. Logsdon also mentioned the importance of feeling safe and secure for senior citizens and that taking a ride with a stranger may seem to be a large risk for them and deter them from such a program. He mentioned that if it were a group of regular volunteers that the seniors got to know better this may be resolved. Mr. Bandy also mentioned that this program may not be utilized by many seniors because they want to feel a sense of independence and would not want to rely on a person they do not know on a personal basis for transportation.

Recommendation 4 – Improve pedestrian facilities: Mr. Yapp again mentioned that many metropolitan areas are already implementing pedestrian friendly design standards for new neighborhoods but he mentioned that the largest problem areas are older neighborhoods that would need to be retrofitted to include better pedestrian facilities. For example there is currently a study regarding walkability on Muscatine Avenue but that in such instances a cost-benefit analysis needs to be completed in order to decide if it is financially feasible to retrofit an area with high costs in vegetation removal and developed land consumption. Ms. Vanderhoef agreed with this and also mentioned that in some areas residents do not want sidewalks because of the maintenance involved (snow removal and regular maintenance is the residents’ responsibility).

Mr. Yapp mentioned some of the pedestrian friendly designs currently implemented in Iowa City and other metropolitan areas in Johnson County, including the countdown pedestrian crossings (longer walk times at intersections with many seniors and children) and bulb-outs at intersections to decrease the distance to cross. Mr. Bandy mentioned that it seems sidewalks should be wider. Mr. Yapp mentioned that the current standard is 4-feet but that ADA is recommending 5-feet to allow room for two wheelchairs. Mr. Bandy also mentioned that education is important in this topic especially regarding the use of electric wheelchairs on the local trail system. Mr. Yapp also mentioned that there is a need for education regarding crosswalks because many people do not realize that it is necessary to push the walk button in order to activate the walk signal at some crosswalks. Ms. Vanderhoef suggested that some form of a sign be placed at these crosswalks informing pedestrians that they need to press the button.

Recommendation 5 – Public transit improvements: Mr. Logsdon mentioned that Iowa City Transit installs shelters and benches wherever they may be requested and where there is high ridership. So if a rider would like a shelter at their bus
stop they may call IC Transit or tell the driver and request one. Ms. Diehl and Ms. North asked if seniors were aware of this. Mr. Logsden mentioned that it has been done so some riders are aware of it and even if they are not aware, they usually contact IC Transit anyway in order to recommend their stop get a shelter. He also mentioned that these shelters are very expensive (over $6,000 not including construction costs) but that in some cases ADA grants are used to make upgrades.

Ms. Severson mentioned that seniors should be educated about off-peak ridership incentives. Mr. Logsden mentioned that seniors do take advantage of these benefits and that his agency does an educational demonstration each year at the senior center in order to educate seniors about how to use transit and includes the off-peak incentives in his discussion. Ms. Vanderhoef suggested that this program be included at some other agencies and senior housing facilities that are nearby stops.

Mr. Brase mentioned that SEATS does not often get overbooked, only in cases of same-day-rides which cause some scheduling problems. He said that he is surprised that there is not more demand for SEATS in rural areas, but that higher prices than in Iowa City and the service times may affect this. He mentioned that some senior living facilities in Solon and Lonetree utilize the service a lot and that there may be a need to expand service times to these areas. Mr. Brase also mentioned that Lantern Park currently participates in a once a week grocery trip for its residents and that it seems to work well. However, Ecumenical Towers tried to implement such a service but there were no residents to sign up for the service so it was not put into service. Ms. Vanderhoef mentioned that some senior specific living facilities have their own vehicles and provide their own service similar to this idea. Mr. Brase mentioned that it may be useful to educate seniors about such a program because only one eligible rider is needed and any number of other riders can use the program once it is set up. SEATS tried to work with grocery stores to provide incentives to seniors to use such a service such as coupons but the grocery stores were not willing to do so.

Mr. Brase mentioned that JC SEATS is not able to do special events charter trips for a couple of reasons, one is that they are not federally permitted and may lose federal funding if they do so and another is that it is difficult for them to compete with private bus companies.

Regarding the training of drivers, Mr. Brase mentioned that all drivers participate in quarterly training and upon hiring are provided with a training manual which has been updated using the Certified Basis for Training that was created in Milwaukee. Mr. Logsden mentioned that his drivers do not go through senior-specific training but that they are trained on how to use the lifts; however, they cannot assist seniors to the extent SEATS drivers can. Also, the drivers participate in sensitivity and passenger relations training, which helps them to better serve seniors. He also mentioned that IC Transit acquiring low-floor
busses, which have a portion of their seating at ground level, meaning fewer steps for seniors who utilize public busses. In about one to one and a half years they will have 6 of these busses and as other busses need replacement they will be replaced with low-floor of buses.

Mr. Logsdon mentioned they IC Transit will soon be providing more routes to serve more senior specific housing areas, but that the location of these developments can affect the cost and availability of transportation to seniors. He mentioned that for future developments, this needs to be considered. Ms. Vanderhoef mentioned that this can be influenced by zoning. She also mentioned that public transportation is very heavily subsidized. Mr. Brase stated that a cost for paratransit is about $15 per trip while JC SEATS is only legally permitted to charge a maximum of two times the cost for a public transit trip ($1.50). Mr. Logsdon mentioned that a fixed route trip costs about $2.18, though not as high as a paratransit cost, it is still heavily subsidized. Mr. Brase said it is important for paratransit to keep a low cost to riders while still providing curb to curb service as regulated by the ADA. He also mentioned that JC SEATS goes beyond this and provides door-to-door service to better serve its riders.

Recommendation 6 – Improve private transportation for seniors: Members were unaware of any ADA standards in Iowa City or the County that require private taxi companies to have at least one accessible vehicle in their fleet and they mentioned that they are not aware of any local companies having accessible vehicles. Mr. Brase mentioned that there is not a high demand for SEATS to provide airport trips because it is more difficult and involves crossing county lines but also that many private companies provide this service. Mr. Bandy mentioned that many private shuttles have been started but that they do not have accessible vehicles as far as he knows.

Mr. Brase mentioned that SEATS occasionally uses a voucher system for seniors to utilize private taxis in cases where they are overbooked but that this only occurs once every 2 or 3 weeks on average because of the liability and extra paper work involved. Mr. Logsdon mentioned that IC Transit was at one point going to provide a private company with an accessible vehicle to provide trips but that the company did not follow through with the plan.

Mr. Brase mentioned that JC SEATS has explored collaborating with private transportation companies but that in order to receive the federal funding the private companies would have to perform federal drug and alcohol testing which would be very expensive to them considering the high turnaround rates for drivers. As a result, this recommendation should be removed from the list. Ms. Vanderhoef mentioned that in April the East Central Iowa Council of Governments will decide how to better use the monies available through the United We Ride program. She mentioned that many rural areas are unaware of the funding available and would benefit from education about them.
No other comments were made by those in attendance so the meeting was closed. Ms. Diehl and Ms. North mentioned that if those in attendance had any additional comments later, that they could email their comments to either Ms. Diehl or Ms. North.
Joni Werle – Personal interview Thursday, February 9, 2006 11 am

- Joni mentioned that there are currently many transportation options available to seniors in JC but that rural residents do not have access to many options.
- She mentioned that Mercy goes to some rural communities and offers traveling clinics to perform basic medical services and testing but that some of the residents even have a difficult time finding transportation to the clinics, which are usually held in churches, senior centers or other community centers.
- She mentioned that in some cases, it may be less expensive for a doctor to open a small clinic than to provide transportation for rural residents to medical facilities.
- She also mentioned that there are many agencies and volunteer groups in JC that provide medical transport.
- She mentioned that the hospital does not see a large number of seniors using private taxi services.
- She mentioned that the hospital case workers do not address issues with elderly driving because it is a very personal matter. She did mention that in some cases, upon the physicians discretion, the physician may address the issue privately with the patient.
- She does not feel that it would be realistic to schedule group trips for medical appointments because many seniors have different medical schedules and need to see different doctors at different times. It would take a lot of coordination with staff and physicians as well as patients which is unrealistic in her opinion. She also mentioned that in emergencies, seniors need to get to the hospital at different times and can not schedule transportation in advance in such circumstances.
- She mentioned that seniors mostly rely on family and friends for transportation when they can no longer drive themselves so it is important that friends, family and caregivers are given the information and resources regarding senior transportation.