

**TRANSPORTATION NEEDS OF ELDERLY AND DISABLED  
IN THE RAPPAHANNOCK-RAPIDAN REGION**



Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional  
Commission  
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## The Challenge

While transportation in a rural region presents challenges for many residents, the problems encountered by our most vulnerable populations often arise from different circumstances and require a different type of community response. Low-income residents, older adults and disabled residents in the Rappahannock-Rapidan region who are not able to drive themselves, or who are restricted in their driving, currently have limited options for transportation. Community leaders and key stakeholders in the region have demonstrated a readiness to address this challenge.

For our most vulnerable citizens, many services and opportunities depend on affordable, accessible transportation to locations outside of their homes. Without effective transportation, many residents cannot access medical services, shop for necessities, get to work, and may be isolated in their homes. This condition presents health and safety risks for some, and may result in seniors or disabled residents being forced from their homes before they need to be, solely because of the lack of transportation.

Like many other rural regions, the Rappahannock-Rapidan region has limited public transit and few providers of special needs transportation. Services that do exist are often volunteer-based programs that limit service to small target groups of consumers; for example, churches that serve their own congregations. For this reason, collecting and disseminating information about existing transportation resources is also a challenge, and part of a larger need for effective information and referral services.

While human service providers and citizens of this region have a good record for collaboration and innovation, the human service transportation problem is so complex, and seemingly intractable, that community-wide solutions have been elusive. In the past year, however, new collaborative efforts have been initiated to begin addressing special needs transportation.

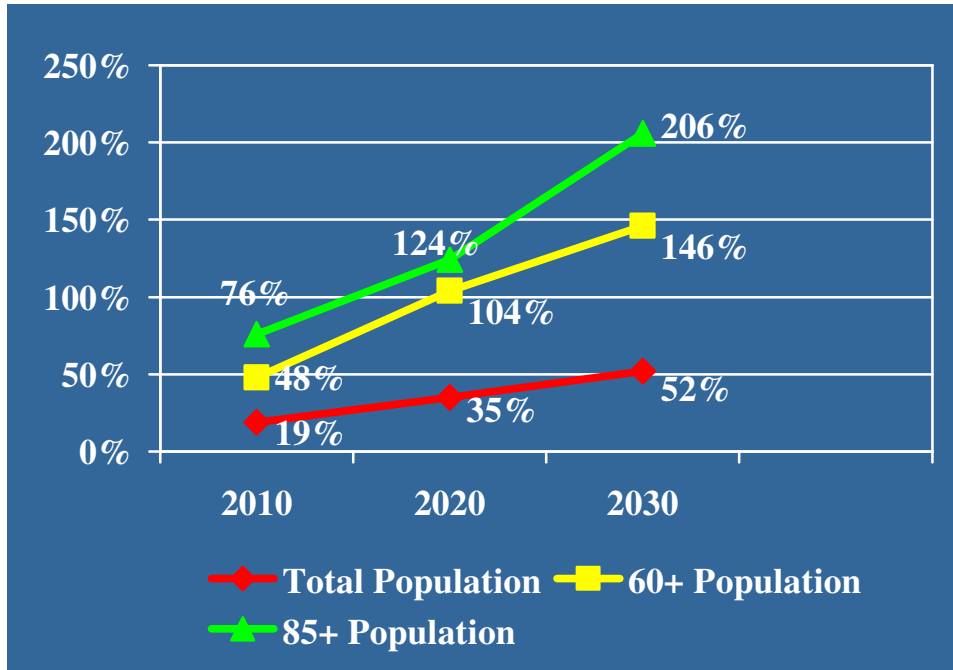
In 2006, Aging Together, the regional eldercare partnership, produced a strategic plan for aging services in the Rappahannock-Rapidan region. Data collection for this plan involved surveys of over 1,000 older adults and Community Conversations on Aging involving more than 500 participants. Transportation was identified as one of most serious unmet needs in all five counties and a top priority for regional action.

The three Disability Services Boards that cover the five counties of the region also completed triennial needs assessments in 2006. Each of these reports identified the need for affordable, accessible transportation for the physically and sensory disabled as a top priority.

These reports provide the starting point for coordinated regional action.

## The Elderly and Disabled Populations

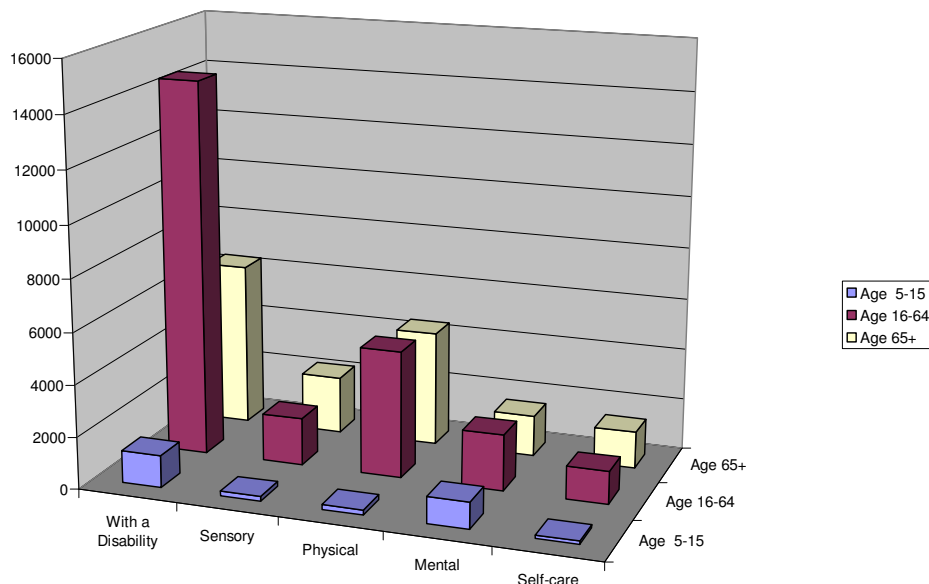
By the year 2020, one in four residents in this region will be age 60 or over and the total number of older adults will be double what it was in 2000. The regional elder needs survey reported that 24 percent of respondents live alone, 15.8 percent live on farms, 36% live in small towns, and 20 percent have lived in the county less than ten years. Of those surveyed, 13.6 percent cannot drive themselves and 60.8 percent predicted they will need help with transportation at some point in the future.



**PROJECTED POPULATION GROWTH RATES FOR THE RAPPAHANNOCK RAPIDAN REGION**

	Total	60+
• Fauquier	63,255	9801
• Culpeper	40,192	6166
• Orange	28,970	6748
• Madison	13,134	2799
• Rappahannock	<u>7,171</u>	<u>1542</u>
• Total	152,722	27,056 (17.7%)
<i>Growth since 2000</i>	13.3%	15.6%

**2004 POPULATION ESTIMATES BY COUNTY**



**DISABILITY BY AGE AND TYPE**  
(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000)

## Overview of Transportation Resources for Elderly and Disabled

### Public Transit Systems

All of the transit systems in the region, which are available to the general public, are operated by Virginia Regional Transit (VRTA.) Independent systems serve the towns of Culpeper (Culpeper Connector), Orange/Gordonsville (TOOT), and Warrenton (Circuit Rider.) The systems are generally limited to the towns and their immediate environs, with varying levels of demand response. The Culpeper County Express operates routes throughout Culpeper County and connects to the in-town Culpeper Connector. Buses are equipped with wheel chair lifts and tie downs. None of the systems provides service outside of its own county.

### Volunteer Transportation Programs

*Rappahannock Rapidan Community Services Board and Area Agency on Aging (RRCSB/AAA)* operates a transportation program primarily for the purpose of transporting consumers to RRCSB/AAA programs. These programs include congregate meal sites for seniors, an adult daycare center and MR/MH/SA day programs. In addition, RRCSB/AAA offers transportation through a volunteer program staffed by seniors in the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). Service is usually limited to driving seniors to medical appointments. Volunteer drivers who are enrolled in RSVP are eligible to receive reimbursement for their mileage, although many do not request it. For the month of April 2006,

RRCSB/AAA reported that 197 senior citizens who asked for nutrition site service did not receive the full service requested because of transportation limitations.

*Other volunteer transportation programs* are operated by Piedmont United Way's (PUW) First Call for Help, and several area churches. First Call for Help does not have its own volunteer force, but takes calls for assistance and makes referrals to RRCSB/AAA or church programs. Some of the churches limit their services to members of their own congregations.

Almost all volunteer transportation programs are limited to medical appointments or emergencies, and most vehicles driven by volunteers cannot accommodate wheelchairs. The services are fragmented and difficult to access, even by trained case managers and social workers. There is no central dispatch service or resource listing of volunteer transportation programs.

Medicaid Transportation Service in this area has been, and continues to be, problematic for many residents. Service is reported to be unreliable and unavailable in certain remote areas. There is no coordinated monitoring of unmet Medicaid transportation need in the region.

#### Private Transportation Providers

*Taxi Service* - Private taxis in the region are very limited. Informal surveying revealed that taxi service is unreliable and mostly unavailable, even for individuals able to pay for the service.

*Ambulance Service* – Private ambulances provide stretcher service to transport patients to and from medical treatments. Many accept Medicaid and other forms of insurance.

*Other private providers* – At least one privately-owned company, located in Fauquier County, provides a fee-based transportation service, along with other personal services, to seniors.

## **Current Efforts to Address Special Transportation Needs**

Aging Together is a partnership of more than one hundred organizations and individuals in the Rappahannock-Rapidan region who are working together to find solutions for issues of long-term care and supportive services for older adults. The Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission (RRRC) is a partner in this effort and is represented on the Core Leadership. With the help of funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's *Community Partnerships for Older Adults* program, Aging Together has developed a strategic plan for supporting older residents of the region, and is beginning implementation of priorities identified in the plan. One of those priorities is transportation.

Because of the similarity between the needs of older adults and the disabled, the local Disability Services Boards are partners in Aging Together. Plans to improve special needs transportation will include the needs of persons with disabilities, regardless of age, as well as senior citizens.

The strategy for transportation improvement, under Aging Together's strategic plan, is threefold:

- 1) Establish and maintain a database of existing resources, and use a variety of tactics to disseminate information about resources to the public.
- 2) Expand volunteer transportation capacity by building a strong volunteer network that is centered on existing regional programs and strengthened through efforts of Aging Together's county teams.
- 3) Work with RRRC to identify and implement long-term solutions for special needs transportation. Establish a permanent regional workgroup that includes transit providers, consumers, human services providers, businesses and local government representatives.

The first two components are being implemented by Aging Together staff and partner organizations. Key participants are the Rappahannock Rapidan Community Services Board and Area Agency on Aging (RRCSB/AAA), which operates the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) and provides transit services for seniors and behavioral health consumers; Piedmont United Way (PUW), which operates the Piedmont Volunteer Center and the regional information and referral service; and county teams in each of the PD 9 counties, which offer local expertise and grassroots contact with target populations.

The third component of this strategy will broaden the focus of the effort and result in a comprehensive human service transportation plan for the region. In addition to the elderly and disabled, this plan will incorporate other social service transportation needs, including job access for low-income workers. This coordinated plan will comply with requirements of Federal SAFETEA-LU legislation and will serve as the basis for applications for new competitive funding, as well as support current funding received by partner organizations.

## **Key Issues and Preliminary Recommendations**

A list of issues and recommendations related to transportation for seniors and the disabled was compiled during the Aging Together planning process. Some of these are being addressed as part of the volunteer network project; others will be explored in more depth during development of the coordinated plan. This list will be expanded as the project progresses.

- There is a need for a central dispatch function to maximize the effectiveness of Aging Together's volunteer network. There are various cadres of volunteers ready to provide transportation and many seniors and disabled residents in need of that service, but there is no central contact point where riders and volunteers can be connected. There are several scenarios for establishing such a function, but all of them require new funding to hire staff and purchase dispatch software. A detailed proposal will be established as part of the Coordinated Plan.
- While medical transport is a high priority, it is also important for the physical and mental health of frail seniors and the disabled to offer transportation for personal and social purposes.
- Planning will address the needs of residents who are able to pay all or part of the cost of transportation, as well as those who cannot afford to pay.
- Consideration will be given to initiating a program to promote alternative transportation as a socially acceptable choice for older adults, so they may gracefully stop driving when appropriate.
- This transportation planning will benefit from a comprehensive survey and GIS mapping application that identifies locations of residents who need transportation, along with their desired destinations and schedules, and then compares that information with existing public transit routes. Funding will be sought for this purpose.
- The comprehensive human service transportation plan will utilize national research and models, and available technical assistance from government and private organizations. Some of these resources are the United We Ride program, the Beverly Foundation, the Community Transportation Association of America, the Administration on Aging, and the AARP.
- Planning will include on-going mechanisms to monitor transportation needs of older adults and disabled citizens and to evaluate current efforts.

The community has demonstrated a readiness to address this issue on a regional basis. Long-term strategies will be phased in and tested over time. The ultimate solution is expected to be a tapestry of public and private programs, coordinated through a regional collaborative effort.

Aging Together is a partnership of over one hundred organizations and individuals committed to improving the lives of older adults in Virginia's Rappahannock-Rapidan region. The Rappahannock Rapidan Community Services Board and Area Agency on Aging (RRC SB/AAA) serves as fiscal agent and lead agency for the partnership.

Aging Together is supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation through its *Community Partnerships for Older Adults (CPFOA)* program. CPFOA seeks to foster community partnerships that are improving long term care and supportive services systems to meet the current and future needs of older adults.



The contents of this report reflect the views of Aging Together and its partner organizations. Aging Together is responsible for the facts and the accuracy of the data presented herein. The contents do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the US Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, or Virginia Department of Transportation. This report does not constitute a standard, specification, or regulation.