



FTA'S NEW FREEDOM PROGRAM CASE STUDY

SUBRECIPIENT

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BACKGROUND

JCA is a non-profit organization that helps older adults in the Greater Washington, D.C. region by providing community-based programs. JCA has a long and successful history of providing transportation programs to seniors and people with disabilities.

As part of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board's (TPB) fiscal year 2012 solicitation for applications, JCA received \$273,791 (\$219,033 Federal) in U.S. Federal Transit Administration (FTA) New Freedom funding for Village Rides. In 2016 Village Rides received additional reallocated New Freedom funding to extend the program through 2017.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

VillageRides is a program that coordinates transportation using volunteer drivers for Villages and nonprofit organizations serving seniors and people with disabilities in Montgomery County, Maryland. The rides provided through the program offer important access to medical and social appointments for those who are unable to drive.

Participants include:

- Bannockburn NAN
- Bikur Cholim
- Burning Tree Village
- Gaithersburg HELP
- Olney Home for Life
- Potomac Community Village
- Silver Spring Village
- Village of Takoma Park
- Villages of Kensington

The benefits of participating in the VillageRides program include village-specific marketing and outreach materials – brochures, volunteer ID badges, magnetic signs for driver vehicle doors – with a recognizable, shared motif.

There is also a shared, web-based software program (RideScheduler) that makes program administration more efficient and encourages coordination between villages when a ride need cannot be met. Software training is provided as part of a volunteer driver orientation. The orientation includes sensitivity training for working with people with disabilities and older adults and JCA

VillageRides reimburses Villages for volunteer driver background checks, and has negotiated a better monthly licensing fee for RideScheduler thanks to economies of scale.

The program is evaluated through pre and post surveying of participants and volunteers. Information gleaned from the surveys and from Advisory Council input guides program improvement.

While one village has pursued donations from local businesses for volunteer appreciation, most villages have applied for grants to support their various needs towards sustainability. In 2017 VillageRides will revisit how village specific grants, among other sources, may be used for program components currently supported by VillageRides.

IMPACT

Through 2016 participating villages provided on average 1,200 rides per quarter; this increased to 1,500 in the first quarter of 2017. While rides were primarily to medical appointments they also included rides for shopping, social and educational events, and places of worship.

The project has already resulted in increased transportation options for seniors and people with disabilities, reduced wait time for a needed ride, and increased socialization for the riders.

Another goal of the project is to analyze data from participating villages to identify gaps in service and help to resolve them.

A participating village reported that the program has been a “HUGE asset to our Village ...They have helped us in so many ways to include marketing, finding a member of our village a ride from another village, training our new volunteers, and more.”

What may be VillageRides’ largest impact? Sharing lessons learned and successes with other villages throughout the region. The model can be replicated. In fact, JCA was approved by the Transportation Planning Board to receive a Federally-funded Enhanced Mobility grant for a Volunteer Driver Resource Center in Montgomery County and expanding into Prince George’s County, Maryland.

NEXT STEPS

A final program evaluation of VillageRides and use of lessons learned and best practices will be used in the implementation of the Volunteer Driver Resource Center. If successful, the project could lead to a regional Volunteer Driver Resource Center.

MORE INFORMATION

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) served as the designated recipient for the New Freedom program in the Washington DC-VA-MD Urbanized Area. The National Capital Transportation Planning Board (TPB) at COG solicited and selected projects that aimed to improve mobility for transportation-disadvantaged groups. Currently, COG helps administer the Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities grant program in the region.

For more information about this project or future solicitations, contact:

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