



Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources, Inc.

Beyond the White LINES

A Major Award!

GWAAR received the 2014 Outstanding Partner award from WI Rural & Public Transit Association (WURTA). The Aging Network has been working with transit agencies across the state to advocate for increases in public transportation funding – both public transit and specialized transportation. These systems work together to create our transportation network throughout the state that is and will continue to be vital for older adults. This partnership is important because of the number of aging units who are pursuing public transit grants or working more closely with transit to leverage state and federal funding to expand all transportation options. Serving people beyond older adults and people with disabilities diversifies funding sources and creates a comprehensive system that works for everyone and contributes to the economic development of a community.

Federal transportation bill update

Just before the surface transportation bill was set to expire on 7/31, the House and Senate passed a stop-gap funding measure until Oct. 29, 2015. The House went on recess following the passage of the extension. The Senate however, passed the Drive Act, a bipartisan 6-year bill with 3 years-worth of funding before passing the extension and going on recess. The House will not consider a bill until after recess when it is expected they will create their own bill. One of the major stumbling blocks is how to pay for the bill. The Republicans and the Administration continue to be against raising the gas tax despite diverse and often opposing sectors imploring them to do so. Your legislators are in your districts in August. Visit them and let them know how important transportation options are to your community!

Tale of Two Transit Systems

Northwoods Transit program

Oneida, Vilas and Forest Counties' Aging Unit Directors have been working together for several years to create a tri-county transportation program. These 3 counties have a history of working together on a variety of initiatives so it was a natural fit to also explore transportation options. The coordination planning process that WisDOT began in 2006 was helpful in determining the direction of the transportation system in the three county area. Several studies were conducted over a number of years and it was decided to create a public transit system. Recently, Oneida and Vilas Counties decided to move forward. As of the beginning of 2015, there is an active transit commission and they are on their way to beginning public transit service.

Beyond the White Lines is a publication of the Greater WI Agency on Aging Resources, Inc. dedicated to transportation, mobility and livable communities.

For more information, contact Carrie Porter, carrie.porter@gwaar.org, 608-228-8092

Upcoming Training

MN/WI Transportation Conf. Oct. 19-21, 2015
Duluth, MN. Register [here!](#)

Rural Transportation Assistance Program RTAP - FREE driver training, Oct. 20-22, 2015. Click [here](#).

August 2015



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Northwoods cont...

The need for additional transportation for the community was the driver for this project. One question often asked is why aging units/ADRCs should get involved in *public* transit. The 85.21 funding for specialized transportation is limited and hasn't kept pace with the growth of older adults and the subsequent needs for service. By leveraging the 85.21 funding with public transit funding, it makes the 85.21 funds go further, expanding service to everyone, including older people and individuals with disabilities who are often the primary users. The fear with any change in service is how existing customers will continue to be served. The largest percentage of rural transit passengers are older people and individuals with disabilities so by blending funding with public transit, it increases transportation options for current customers as well! An important benefit to establishing transit service is the ability to hire a transportation professional. This person will be able to continually refine, adjust and expand the system to meet the needs of residents of the Northwoods. Good luck to the Transit Commission as they continue work on this important service!

Richland County cont...

Angela Porter, Transportation Coordinator for Richland County, oversees this program with direction and approval by the Transportation Coordinating Committee. This formal committee includes elected officials, providers and other stakeholders and approves all program changes and grant applications for this program. With the support of the TCC, the program runs buses with any number of riders – sometimes even 1. Angela emphasizes the importance of this policy to ensure growth and cautions that if too many trips are cancelled due to a minimum level of passengers, people stop calling for rides. She recently developed a presentation that is given to local groups by bus drivers and volunteers. The results of all the marketing and route adjustments over the years has been a doubling of trips from 2013 to 2014. In 2015, the program received a 5310 operating grant for the first time to further expand the bus transportation. The 5-year regional plan includes stakeholder input to enable expansion of the bus route to include commuters and others needing bus service outside current bus schedules and routes.

The Richland County Public Transportation Program is vital infrastructure that connects communities in the county. The program enables people to have access to reliable transportation, to get where they need to go, and to age in their community.



Richland County Public Transportation Program bus

Richland County Public Transportation Program

Richland County is a very rural county of about 17,000 people. In 2012, Richland County started a bus service not previously available to the residents in the county. This service was based on survey results conducted when the county was in the transportation coordination planning process. The surveys asked where people want to go, what they want to do and what destinations they are coming from or going to. From the start, this program was marketed as public transportation, not just for older people or people with disabilities despite using state only 85.21 funds. It was branded in a way to encourage everyone to ride. (see picture above) Despite being marketed as public transportation, the majority of their customers are in fact older adults and individuals with disabilities.