

Minnesota's Road to Volunteer Drivers Virtual Forum Series

3rd Stop: Volunteer Driver Recruitment and Promotion

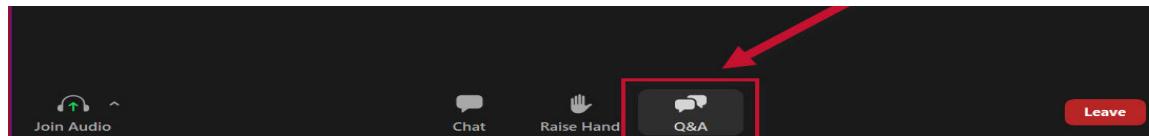
January 20, 2021 | 9:30-11:30 AM

Minnesota Council on Transportation Access (MCOTA)

Welcome! The forum will begin at 9:30.

Housekeeping:

- To view **live captioning**, click the “More” button at the bottom of your screen to select.
- **If you have a question for the speakers:**
 - Use the **Q&A feature** at the bottom of your screen to submit questions at any time. These will be read verbally by the moderator during Q&A time.



- If joining by phone, press *9 to raise your hand. The host will allow you to unmute during Q&A time to ask your question.
- If you have a **tech question** send a Chat to “all panelists.”
- Note to attendees: On your screen you will see the PPT slides & the ASL interpreter.
- A **video-recording** of this forum will be posted to the event webpage following the event.
- An **evaluation** and a **PDH form** (professional development hours) will be emailed to all attendees following the event.

Past Forums

1st Stop: Current State and a Look into the Future of Volunteer Drivers

- 11/18/2020
- 140 attendees

2nd Stop: Policy Issues and Real Life Stories

- 12/9/2020
- 133 attendees

Forum videorecordings and materials are posted on each event's webpage:

www.coordinateumntransit.org/events/volunteerdriverforum/2020-21/

Today's Agenda

1. Introduction

Tom Gottfried, Executive Director, MCOTA



2. Welcome

Tim Henkel, Assistant Commissioner,
MnDOT



3. Research on Greater Minnesota Volunteer Driver Programs in Rural Communities:

- Julie Tesch, President & CEO, Center for Rural Policy and Development
- Whitney Oachs, Researcher, University of Minnesota



4. Volunteer Driver Recruitment and Promotion

Martin Lepak, Recruiter,
Arrowhead Transit Volunteer
Driver Program

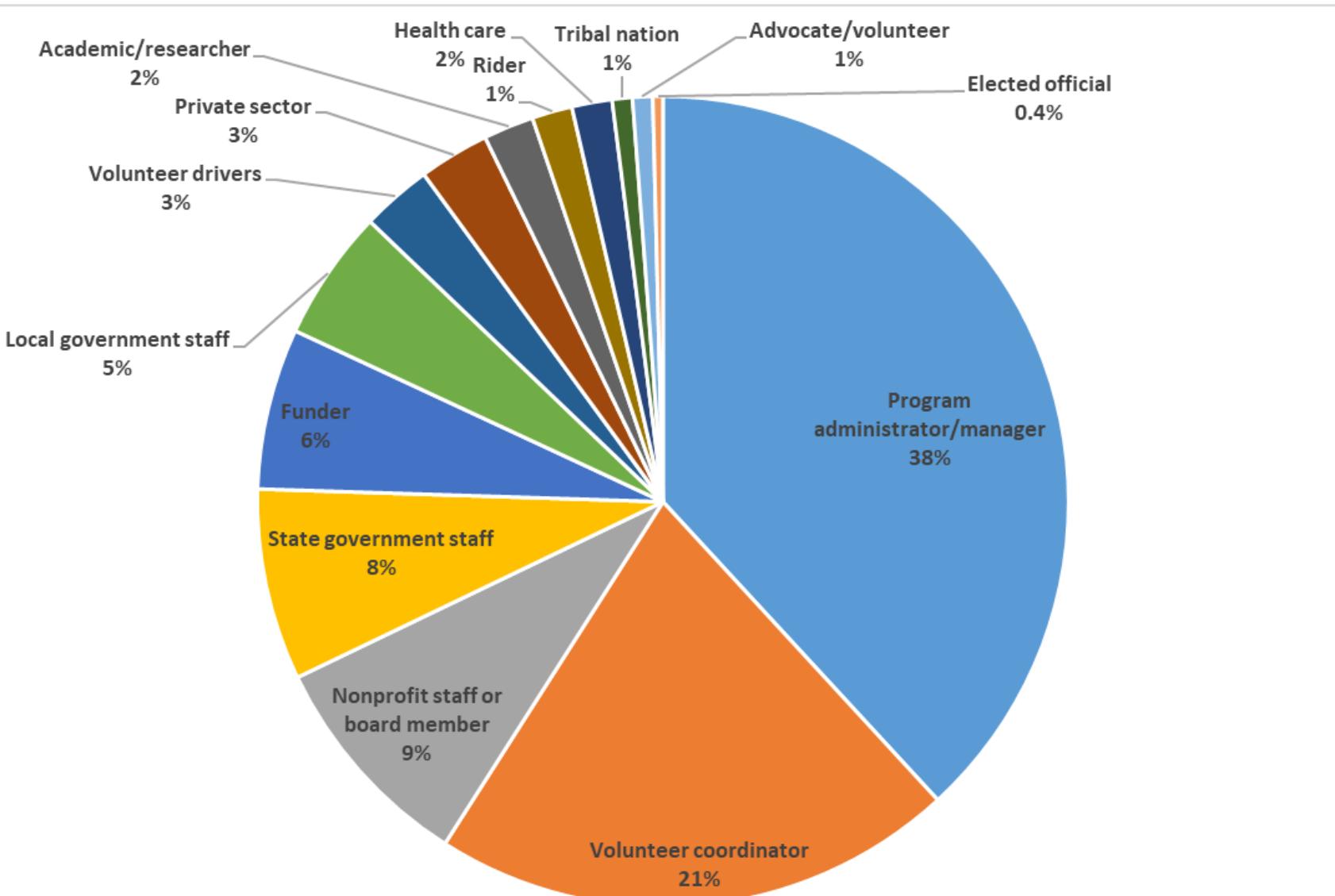


5. Next Stops



Responses from all series registrants regarding “Primary Role in Volunteer Programs”

Percentage of Responses



Primary Role in Volunteer Driver Programs	Number of Responses
Program administrator/manager	95
Volunteer coordinator	52
Nonprofit staff or board member	22
State government staff	19
Funder	16
Local government staff	13
Volunteer drivers	7
Private sector	7
Academic/researcher	5
Rider	4
Health care	4
Tribal nation	2
Advocate/volunteer	2
Elected official	1
TOTAL	249

Responses from all series registrants: “What area/county/counties does your organization represent? Or if you are a rider, what county/area do you live in?”

Hennepin	26
Ramsey	23
Dakota	21
Stearns	21
Pine	20
Mille Lacs	18
St. Louis	18
Scott	16
Isanti	15
Renville	15
Traverse	15
Anoka	14
Chisago	14
Clay	14
Kanabec	14
Kandiyohi	14
Carlton	13
Carver	13
Grant	13
Morrison	13

Pope	13
Sherburne	13
Washington	13
Aitkin	12
Benton	12
Douglas	12
Itasca	12
Lake	12
Meeker	12
Olmsted	12
Otter Tail	12
Stevens	12
Cook	11
Crow Wing	11
Koochiching	11
Rice	11
Todd	11
Yellow Medicine	11
Pipestone	10
Wright	10

Becker	9
Big Stone	9
Cass	9
Chippewa	9
Cottonwood	9
Hubbard	9
Jackson	9
Lyon	9
McLeod	9
Murray	9
Redwood	9
Rock	9
Kittson	8
Lac Qui Parle	8
Le Sueur	8
Lincoln	8
Marshall	8
Nobles	8
Swift	8
Wabasha	8

Wadena	8
Beltrami	7
Faribault	7
Goodhue	7
Polk	7
Roseau	7
Wilkin	7
Blue Earth	6
Brown	6
Clearwater	6
Fillmore	6
Mahnomen	6
Nicollet	6
Norman	6
Red Lake	6
Steele	6
Waseca	6
Dodge	5
Freeborn	5

Houston	5
Lake Of The Wood	5
Martin	5
Mower	5
Pennington	5
Sibley	5
Winona	5
Watonwan	3



Responses from all series registrants (*continued*): “What area/county does your organization represent? Or if you are a rider, what county/area do you live in?”

- **Tribal Nations:**

- Statewide representation overall. Specifically:
 - **Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe:** Aitkin, Crow Wing, Hennepin, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Pine, Ramsey, Chisago, Isanti, & Kanabec
 - **Bois Forte Band of Chippewa:** Koochiching & St. Louis

- **National:**

- Virginia, New York, Wisconsin, & Washington, DC

Welcome Tim Henkel, Assistant Commissioner, MnDOT



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We are pausing a moment to switch ASL interpreters at this time.
Thank you.



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Research on Greater Minnesota Volunteer Driver Programs in Rural Communities:

Julie Tesch, President & CEO, Center for Rural
Policy and Development



Whitney Oachs, Researcher, University of
Minnesota





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Transit for healthcare: Volunteer drivers in aging rural Minnesota

January 20, 2021

MCOTA Volunteer Driver Forum Series

Whitney Oachs & Julie Tesch



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Center for Rural Policy & Development (CRPD)

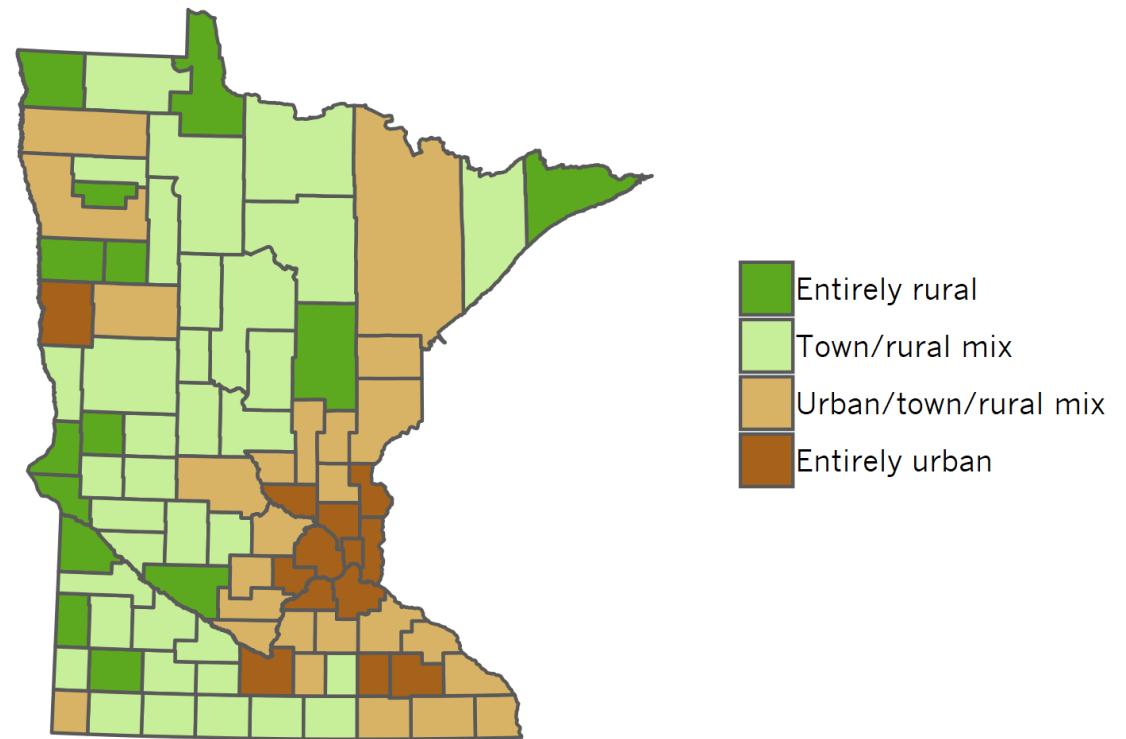
In 1997, a group of rural Minnesota advocates came together to create a rural policy “think tank” that would provide policy makers, rural advocates and concerned citizens with an objective, unbiased and politically unspun examination of today’s rural issues.

- Based in Greater Minnesota, serving Greater Minnesota.
- A non-partisan, non-profit policy research organization.
- Dedicated to providing Minnesota’s policy makers with an unbiased evaluation of issues from a rural perspective.
- 19 Board members
- 3 Staff members in home offices

County categorizations based on rural-urban commuting areas

We take complicated and complex issues and present them in ways that give them meaning and relevance.

Our research is not designed to determine public policy, but instead to inform those making the decisions. We take complicated and complex



Research Agenda

Staff Input



Research Committee



Decision Makers



Annual Survey



Research Agenda: Typically 4 – 6 topics



OUR RESOURCES

UNBIASED RURAL RESEARCH

MCOTA Volunteer Driver Forum Series

January 20, 2021



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Our Latest Research – WWW.RURALMN.ORG



Workforce Dilemma:
Finding Work or Finding Workers?

[Read More](#)



A brief discussion: Wages can go further in Greater Minnesota

[Read More](#)



Transit for healthcare:
Volunteer drivers in aging rural Minnesota

[Read More](#)



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New Podcast

- Episodes featuring:
 - Artists on Main Street
 - Volunteer Drivers
 - Roseau County Emergency Management
 - Importance of Rural Grocery Stores
 - U of MN Tourism Center
 - League of MN Cities



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Rural Videos



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Minnesota?

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YouTube: Center for Rural Policy & Development



FY21 Research

- Research reports
 - Volunteer Drivers
 - Cost of Living in Greater Minnesota
 - COVID-19 impacts on rural workforce
 - Childcare in rural areas
 - Agriculture land values impact on the rural infrastructure
 - Pandemic response in immigrant, refugee and Native American populations
 - Rural Healthcare Access



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Transit for healthcare: Volunteer drivers in aging rural Minnesota

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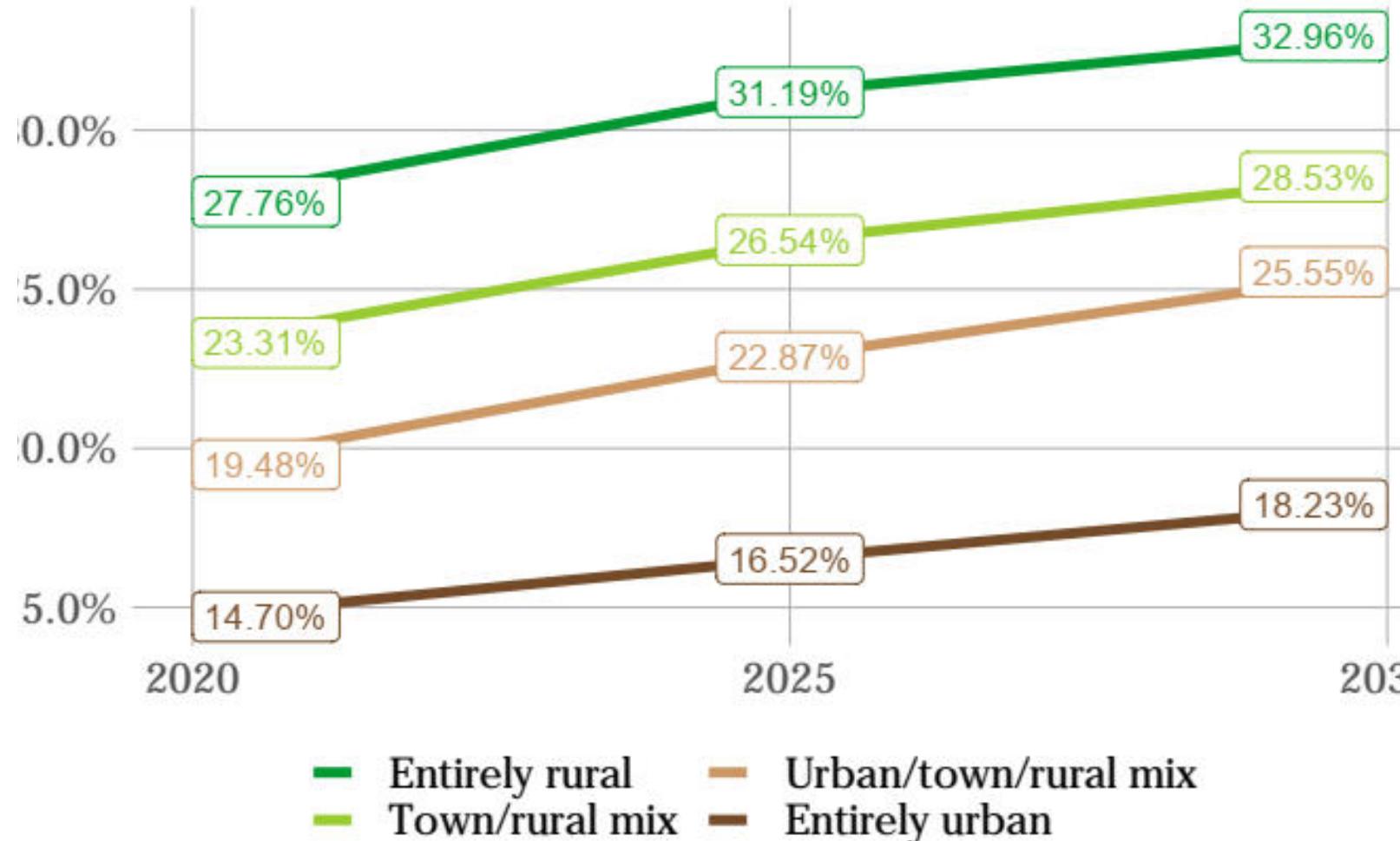
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Transit for healthcare: Volunteer drivers in aging rural Minnesota

- The Problem
 - The number of rural volunteer drivers are falling as the elderly population rises
 - Fixed-transit is unable to accommodate the needs of elderly and disabled transit users in Greater Minnesota

Percentage of population 65 or older



Demand

What we know

- Volunteer drivers are the most **cost-effective** means of providing essential rural transit
- More than **half of transit providers do not have enough drivers** to meet demand
- Senior **volunteers are concerned about reimbursement** and its effect on social security benefits

Who are volunteer drivers?

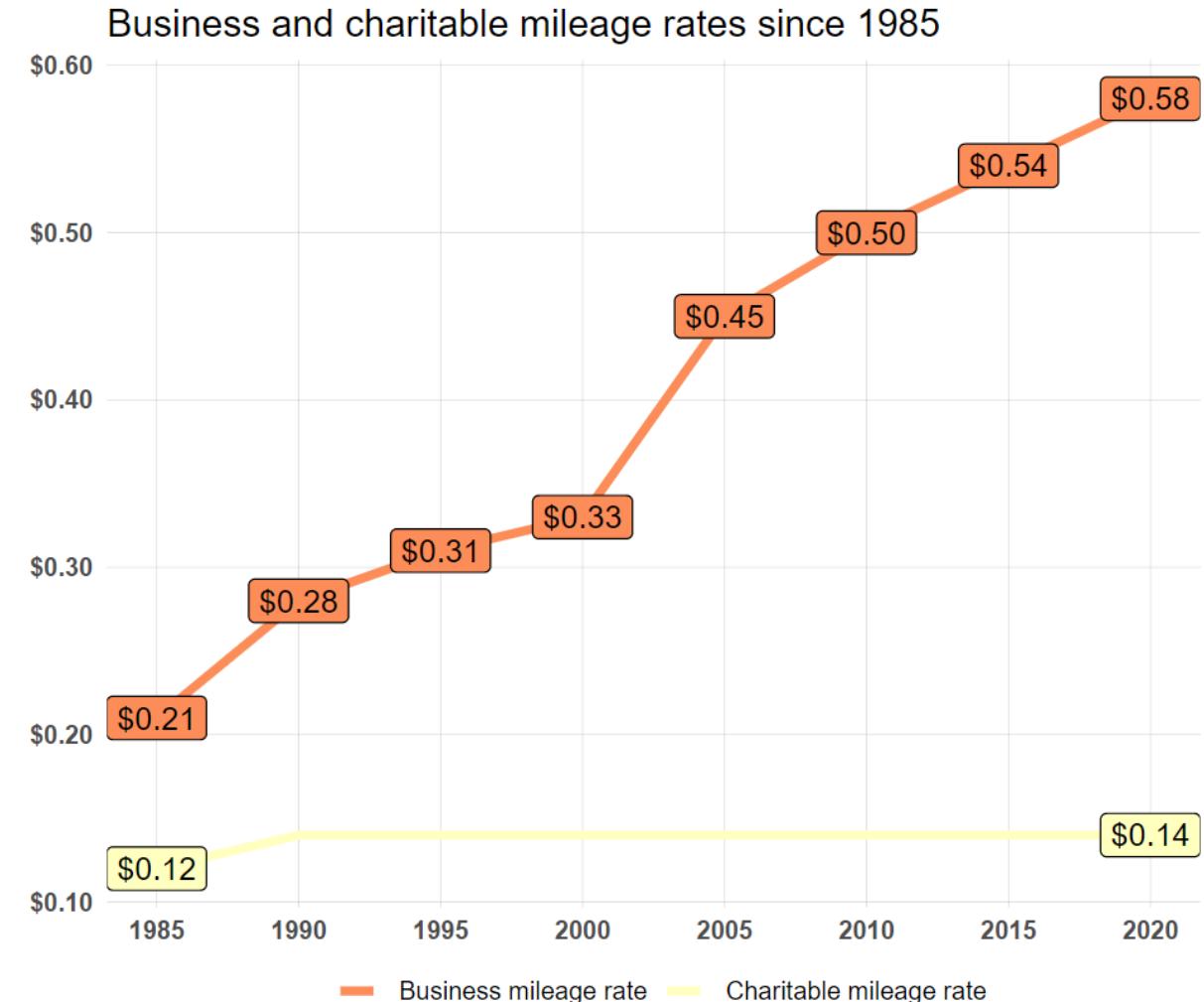
- People who want to give back to their community
- More than half of are retired individuals drawing from social security benefits

What's driving the deficit?

- No-Load Miles
- 1099 Reimbursement “Income”
- Charitable Mileage Reimbursement Rate



The business mileage rate has continued to increase while the charitable mileage reimbursement rate hasn't budged since 1986



Social Security Concerns

- Reimbursement ‘income’ above the charitable mileage rate may lead to a reduction in social security benefits for retired volunteers
- Several Transit coordinators across Minnesota noted that ‘fear’ of reduced benefits was a greater deterrent than an actual reduction

	Monthly	Annually
Income from Social Security	\$1,500	\$18,000
Income from a job	\$2,000	\$24,000
Income before Social Security reduction		\$42,000
Earned income above annual limit of \$18,240 (\$24,000 - \$18,240)	\$480	\$5,760
Amount Social Security income is reduced by	\$240	\$2,880
New Social Security payment	\$1,260	\$15,120
Total annual income		\$39,120

In this hypothetical, a volunteer driver's annual SS benefits are reduced by almost \$3,000 due to reimbursement 'income.'

Why Invest in Volunteer Drivers?

- Volunteer drivers are by far the most cost-effective means of providing essential transit in rural Minnesota
- Volunteer drivers contribute to the strength of a community
- The elderly in Greater Minnesota depend on them



Moving Forward

The State Can:

- Utilize MnDOT for community outreach and volunteer recruitment
- Clarify car insurance requirements for volunteer drivers
- Consider reimbursing transit organizations for volunteer miles driven without a client in the car (No-Load Miles)

Moving Forward

Federal Level

- Volunteer Driver Tax Appreciation Act (*HR2072*) is currently waiting to be heard in the Ways and Means Committee in the U.S. House
 - This policy would increase the charitable mileage reimbursement rate from \$0.14 to \$0.58 per mile



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We are pausing a moment to switch ASL interpreters at this time.
Thank you.



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Volunteer Driver Recruitment and Promotion

Martin Lepak, Recruiter, Arrowhead Transit Volunteer Driver Program



Volunteer Recruitment

Presented by
Martin Lepak
Transportation Advocate



Purpose

- Arrowhead Transit has volunteer drivers available throughout Northern Minnesota.
- The program assists individuals who are unable to drive or lack transportation to medical appointments.
- All rides provided are at the request of the insurance providers.



Market Strategy

- Digital advertising
- Newspaper ads
- Radio ads - targeted audience
- Public service messaging
- Billboards
- Personal contact
- Public information events
- Posters/flyers at public buildings
 - Senior centers
 - Social service centers
 - Restaurants
 - Car washes
 - Automotive repair facilities



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Modernized Approach

- Digital Advertising
 - Variety of tactics
 - Banner ads
 - Pre-roll video
 - Connected TV
 - Google Ad words
 - Social media
 - Target by demographics
 - Age
 - Gender
 - Income
 - Education
 - Target by zip code or specific address



Personal Contact

- Personally, meet with different groups & organizations
 - Service clubs
 - Civic groups
 - Religious groups
 - Local boards or committees
- Take advantage/public gatherings
 - Swap meets
 - Lake association gatherings
 - Neighborhood picnics
 - Sporting events
 - Auctions
 - Garage and yard sales
 - Art and craft shows
 - Weddings
 - Coffee shops and cafes



Public Information Events



- Booths or displays at:
 - Home shows
 - Job fairs
 - Community connect events
 - Local craft shows
 - Senior advocate & wellness events
 - Carnivals

Essential Tools

- Program description
 - Easy to read, colorful, pamphlet
- Business cards preferably with photo
 - Easy to discern contact information including:
 - Name
 - Telephone number
 - Email
 - Website
- Willingness to discuss & describe program on a one-to-one conversation



Martin Lepak
Transportation Advocate

Mailing Address:
702 3rd Avenue South
Virginia, MN 55792

218-410-9755

Email: martin.lepak@aeoa.org
Website: arrowheadtransit.com

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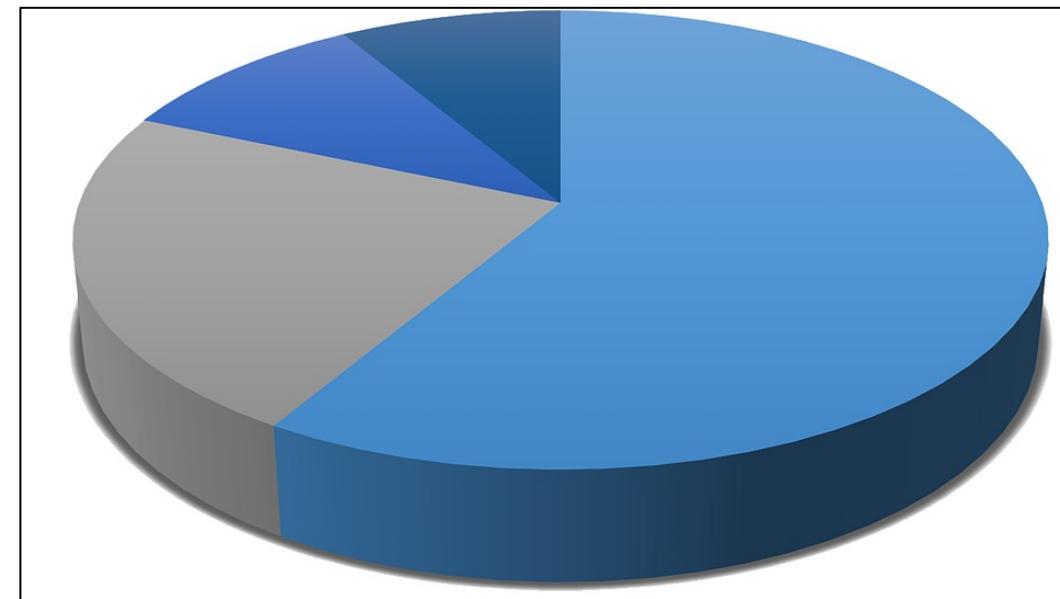


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Effectiveness of media & local events

- Printed media including local paper, flyers, pamphlets, etc. ... 15%
- Radio & television ... 20%
- Digital advertising ... 10%
- Personal contact at home shows, job fairs, etc. ... 15%
- Auctions, swap meets, yard and garage sales ... 20%
- Personal meetings & referrals ... 20%



Recruitment & Preparedness



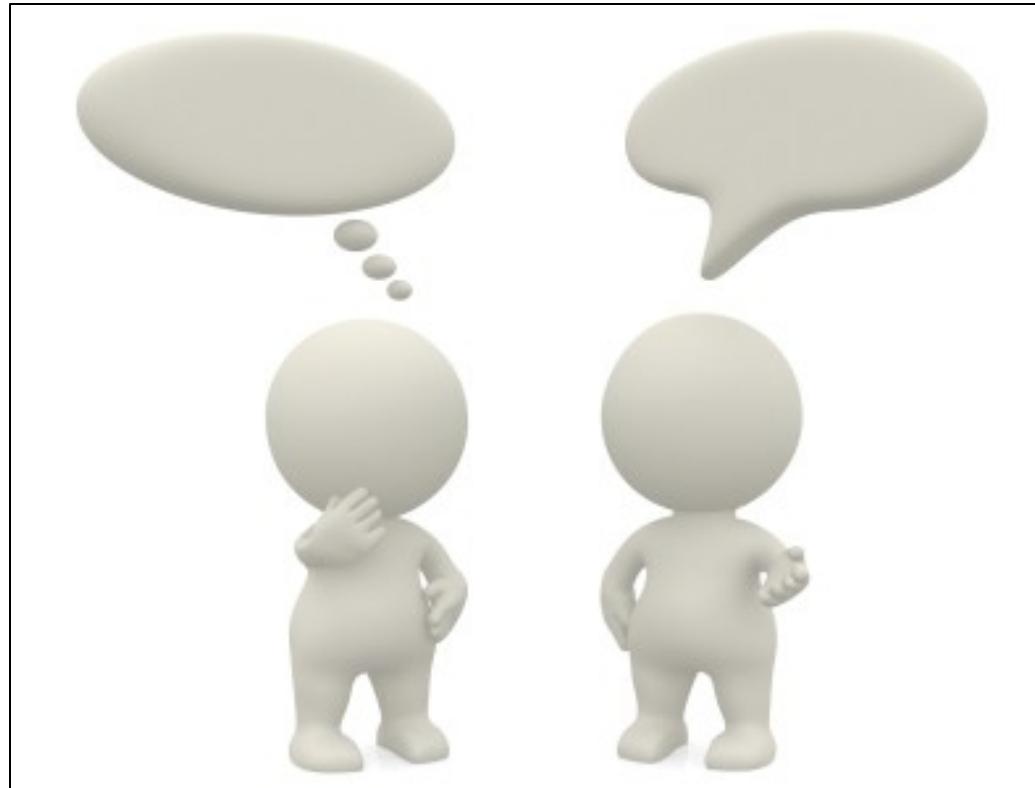
- Recruitment advocate must have:
 - Phone number
 - Email
 - Website
- Advocate should have willingness to take calls after hours & weekends
- Return calls promptly!
 - Missed call = missed opportunity
- Schedule face-to-face interview with potential driver on initial conversation
- Allow prospective volunteer driver to determine location of meeting

Meeting Locations for Interviews

- Home of potential volunteer driver
- Local coffee shop or restaurant
- Advocates office or workplace
- Local library
- Any public building where table & chairs are available



Interview Conversation Topics



- Request potential volunteer driver bring following to the interview:
 - Copy of current driver's license
 - Copy of insurance card with effective dates
 - Void check or letter from bank with account & routing information
- Basic requirements
 - Reliable vehicle
 - Clean driving record
 - No DUI's or suspended license within the past 3 years
 - No Felonies
- Photo for identification badge

Interview

- BE ON TIME!
 - If delayed call & notify individual
- Wear name badge to be easily identified
- Provide business card immediately at time of meeting
- Provide of information about the program
- Make sure the potential volunteer driver is comfortable
- Ask them questions regarding themselves & their knowledge of the program
- Allow volunteer to volunteer information about themselves
- Find out what are their immediate questions or concerns



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Questions?

- Does Anyone have any questions before I discuss Arrowhead's driver's packet.



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Thank you.



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Volunteer Driver Registration Checklist

- Medical questionnaire
- Enrollment agreement
- Code of conduct
- Authorization to release driving record
- Informed consent
- Service policy handbook
- Copy of driver's license
- Current proof of insurance



Volunteer Driver Forms

- Complete ALL paperwork
 - Have volunteer applicant complete application
 - Collect copies of driver's license & insurance card
 - Take photo of the applicant for ID badge
 - Collect a void check or other authorized direct deposit information
 - W-9
 - Fraud, Waste, and Abuse training



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Volunteer Driver Correspondence

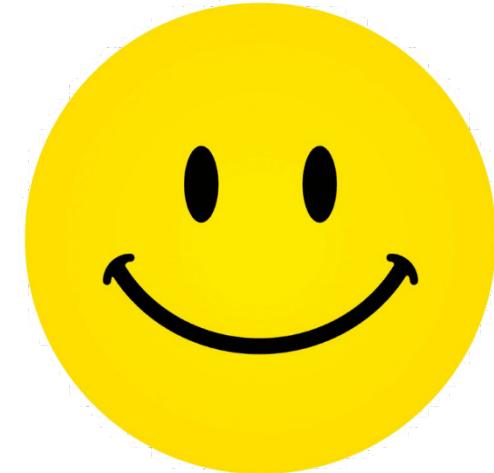
- Make sure applicant retains organized file containing:
 - Mileage reimbursement forms
 - Policy handbook
 - Vehicle accident report form



All Arrowhead correspondence is available by pdf

Thank you for your time!

- Any questions???
- Contact Martin Lepak at:
 - (218) 410-9755
 - Email: martin.lepak@aeoa.org
 - www.arrowheadtransit.com



Q&A

- Questions?

- Use the Q&A feature at the bottom of your screen to submit questions.
- If joining by phone, press *9 to raise your hand. The host will allow you to unmute during Q&A time to ask your question.
- Unanswered questions and their responses will be posted on the event webpage with the slides and videorecording.

www.coordinateumntransit.org/events/volunteerriverforum/2020-21/jan20



Wrap Up

- An electronic evaluation will be emailed shortly.
- Any unanswered questions from this forum will be answered offline and posted on the event webpage with the recording.
- Contacts: Tom Gottfried tom.gottfried@state.mn.us, Whitney Oachs oachs012@umn.edu, Julie Tesch jtesch@ruralmn.org, Martin Lepak martin.lepak@aeoa.org

- **Next forum: Wednesday, February 17th: 4th Stop: How to Start a Volunteer Driver Program**
- Note: Your registration is effective for all forums. No need to register again.
- For more information: www.coordinateumntransit.org/events/volunteerdriverforum/2020-21/