

HIGHLIGHTS

getting there.

A Transportation Initiative of HealthONE Alliance
and Rose Community Foundation



*Analysis of Colorado's
Human Service and
Public Transportation
Networks*

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Introduction

By 2030, one in every five Americans will be age 65 or over. Colorado is no exception. With one of the fastest growing elderly populations in the country, Colorado's over-65 population will triple in the next 25 years.

For the foreseeable future, meeting older-adult mobility needs will be a major challenge for many government, human service and community organizations. When older adults lose their ability to drive, they also risk losing their vital connections to needed services and community involvement—issues as basic as medical appointments, grocery shopping and attending religious services. Studies show that safe, convenient modes of transportation ensure independence and self-sufficiency and delay costly home care or nursing home services while also reducing demand for community and government services.

Two Transportation Networks

Currently, transportation services in Colorado are provided through two networks:

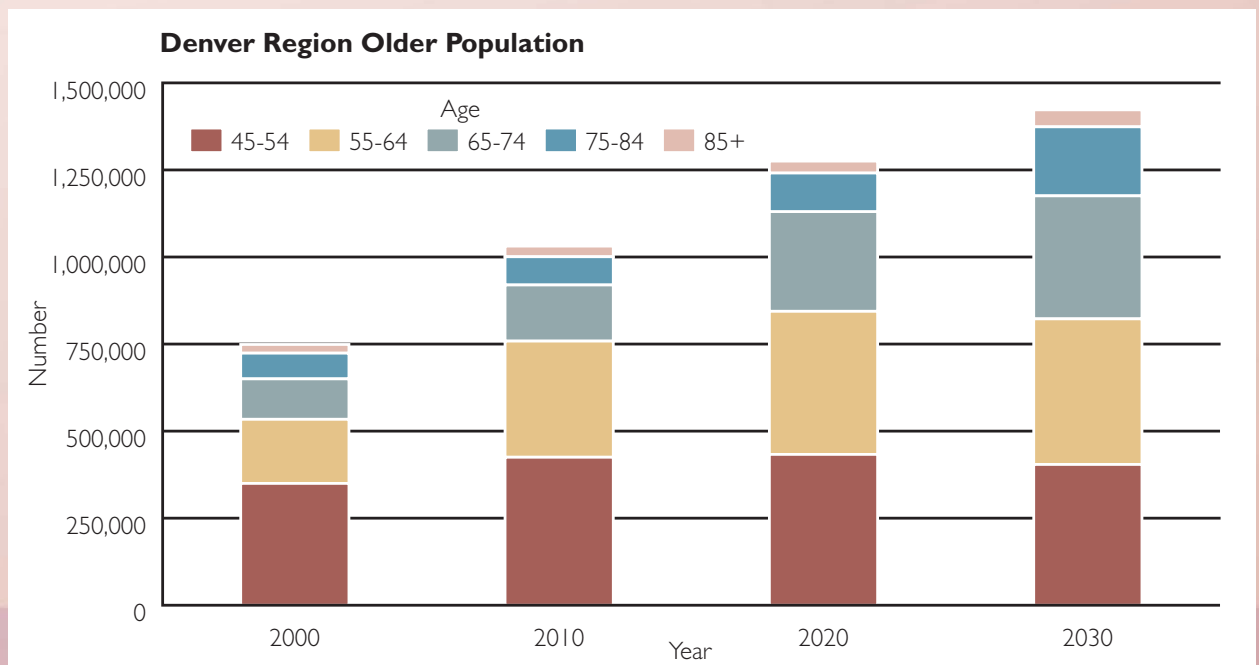
- Public transportation systems serve the mobility needs of the general population

and offer limited specialized services for people with specific mobility impairments.

- Human-services transportation is an ancillary function of agencies that must transport clients to and from the services or programs they offer as part of their mission. Examples include agencies on aging, mental health centers and programs for people with disabilities that operate vans or buses to transport clients from their homes to facilities where programs are located.

This analysis describes both transportation networks in detail. It identifies three key issues:

- Both transportation systems face the dual challenge of mounting need and insufficient funding.
- Transit options for Colorado's older adults are currently inadequate, particularly in suburban and rural areas with higher concentrations of seniors.
- Coordination between these two networks provides the best solution to the mobility challenges faced by Colorado's growing senior population.



Background and Purpose

HealthONE Alliance and Rose Community Foundation are engaged in a multi-year initiative to improve transportation for older adults: the Getting There Collaborative. The initiative and the analysis it commissioned aim to determine the best and most effective ways to provide transportation services, particularly for older adults and persons with special needs. To that end, Getting There has commissioned this transit analysis, including a guidebook with a comprehensive examination of Colorado's human-service transportation and public-transit services.

This analysis was commissioned to create a broad understanding among planners, policy makers, foundations and others about the current transportation systems in Colorado, and to provide a framework for discussing improvements in these systems. Specifically, the objective of the analysis is to provide decision-makers with a tool that can lead to providing services more effectively—making the best use of available resources, and increasing mobility among persons who are dependent on transportation services.



Even before the analysis was commissioned, two factors were apparent: timing and coordination. Months earlier, with the endorsement of the second Bush Administration, four federal departments (Transportation, Health and Human Services, Labor and Education) together introduced a new transportation initiative called United We Ride. The initiative provided incentives and grants to states wishing to initiate or enhance coordinated transportation activities. Colorado received a \$35,000 grant to fund an Interagency Coordinating Council, for which this analysis provides substantial background research. The analysis also includes promising examples of coordination between public transportation systems and human services transportation networks from other states.



The Transportation Analysis

The analysis poses three key questions:

- How are transportation services provided in Colorado?
- What is the role of coordination in improving mobility and how can coordination be increased?
- How can the mobility of older adults and persons with disabilities in the Denver-Boulder metropolitan area be improved?

The report examines and maps transportation boundaries; explores local, state and federal funding for each program; gives an in-depth examination of coordinated services; creates a profile of the older transportation consumer; and provides data to illustrate the projected need and impact for specialized transportation services in the next two decades. The report places greater emphasis on the heavily populated Denver-Boulder metropolitan area.

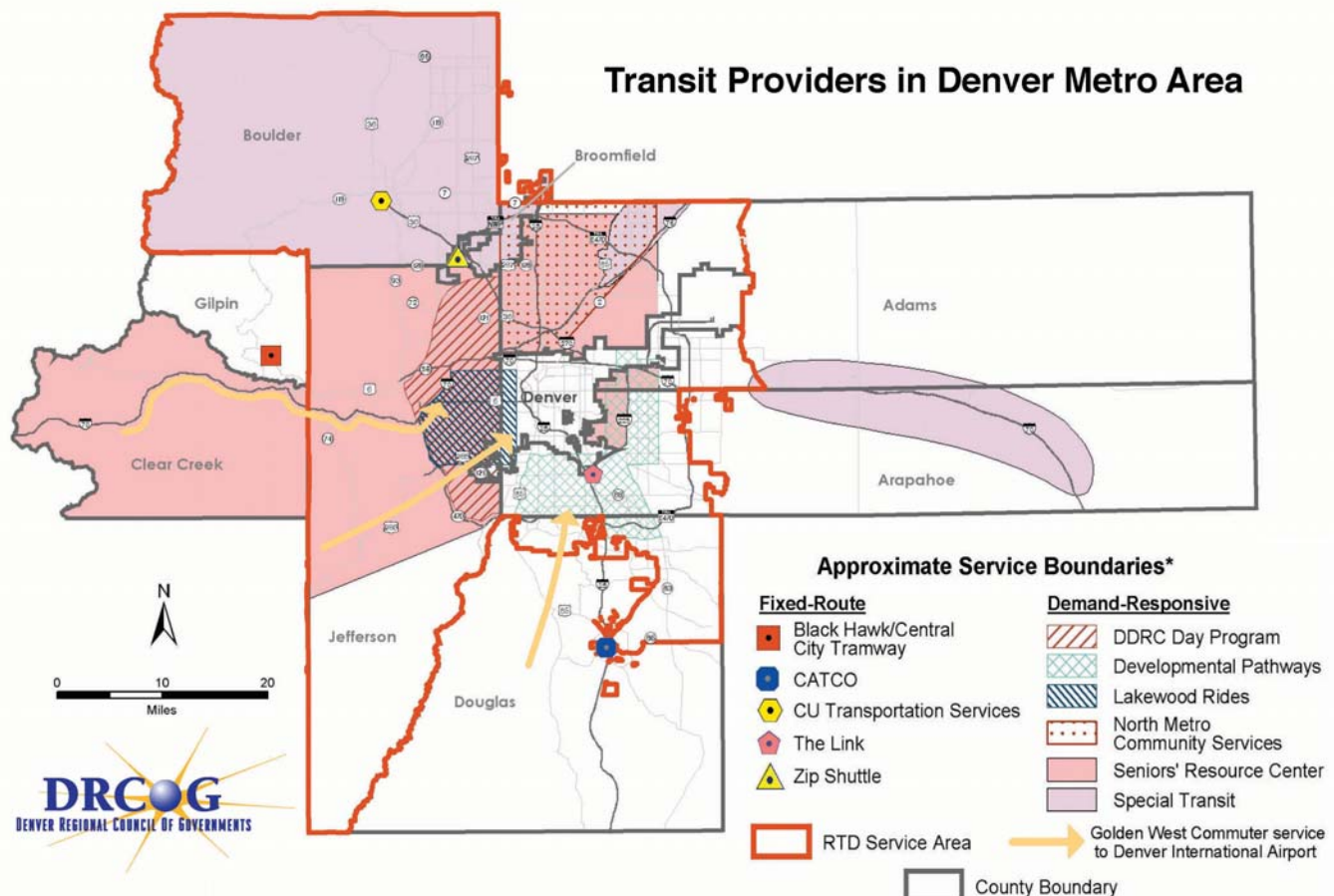
Key Observations

1. Successful cost-effective transportation systems coordinate resources and offer a variety of user options.

Coordinating resources saves money and provides greater choices. By consolidating administrative services and fully utilizing vehicles continuously throughout the day, systems can operate at higher service levels and provide riders with more options. “User friendly” environments are paramount as well; older adults will take public transportation if they can safely walk to a bus stop and easily get information about travel options and schedules.

“Coordinating transportation services is the best way to stretch scarce resources and improve mobility for everyone.”

Ohio Department of Transportation



*Current as of April 2004. Providers of more than 40,000 annual trips. Service areas subject to change. This map represents generalized areas of residential pick-up. Eligibility and destinations may be limited.

Coordinate for Success

For many years, Adams County, The Seniors' Resource Center and Special Transit have worked successfully to coordinate transportation services in the north Denver metro area, while demonstrating resiliency in adapting to political, demographic and funding changes. This county and two nonprofit agencies have taken different approaches to their human-service transportation needs. Adams County identifies the service gaps and available funding sources and then develops policies for service provision. In a coalition with municipalities, each pays a share of the service costs and participates in the funding decisions. Seniors' Resource Center and Special Transit are nonprofit agencies with somewhat different structures but each has built a coalition of stakeholders who recognize the value of providing specialized transit services in their communities. The result in each agency has been a solid base of local financial support, improved public confidence and a stable transportation program responsive to community needs.

In rural areas of the state, both Weld County and Northeast Colorado Association of Governments are models of successful coordination. In Weld County, the Human Resource Division operates transportation for all human-service programs and operates the Mini Bus public transit service between small towns in the county. All trips are dispatched out of a single location and passengers traveling between like locations can be combined in a single vehicle. The Northeast Colorado Association of Governments operates a network spanning five counties and provides transportation for non-emergency medical trips to Greeley, Fort Collins and Denver. This coordinated system provides transportation for human-service programs, operates general public transit and is the region's Medicaid broker. They also operate a unique subscription service in partnership with Banner Health, a nonprofit health care provider, allowing others who are not clients of Banner Health to ride.

2. Barriers to coordination of transportation services exist and can be overcome.

Many challenges exist in developing a coordinated transportation system. No single entity can solve this problem; responsibility and decision-making authority is dispersed among many entities. Several reasons emerge as to why agencies are not successful in coordinating their resources:

- Service area boundaries differ between the human-service programs and public transportation providers.
- Tight budgets often result in riders being transferred to agencies with a legal responsibility to carry them, rather than placing riders with the most cost-effective means.
- Regulatory constraints by federal and state transportation funding agencies often make coordination and funding efforts difficult.

The analysis demonstrates that the best way to deal with these and other challenges is through local coordination among human-service and public-transportation networks. It offers success stories from communities across the country showing how government entities have worked within regulatory constraints to successfully implement efficient, cost-effective programs serving the needs of older adults and transit-dependent people.

3. Excellent models of coordination exist in several Colorado communities.

Several excellent models of coordination exist in Colorado in both the urban and rural portions of the state. Colorado communities with effective coordination share some common characteristics:

- Local funding support for services and coordination
- Determination to address the problems of limited mobility
- Identified champions for the effort

4. Local funding of transportation is critical in Colorado.

It is not widely known that the State of Colorado does not provide matching funds for transit. Therefore, local funding is critical. Advocacy programs are needed to alert policymakers about the serious funding challenges this poses in the long term. For the short term, funding for coordinated transportation activities must come from the local level or through savings realized by reducing transportation costs in human-service programs. Because responsibility to match federal transit dollars is left to local governments, communities that have taken on this responsibility have the ability to develop strong and effective transportation systems.

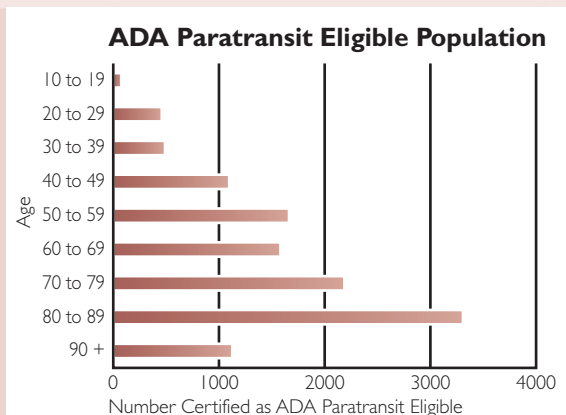
The Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) reports that the combination of increasing numbers of older adults and the expected rise in the cost of delivering services will increase the cost of service provision by more than 154% from 2004 to 2020. The cost of providing transportation services alone is predicted to increase from \$1.6 million currently to about \$4 million in 2020.

5. Transit services are currently lacking in suburban and rural areas. Large numbers of older adults will need services in these areas in the future.

Land use patterns will have a major impact on the mobility of those that require specialized transportation. For example, many hospitals and other facilities have moved from the downtown core to suburban locations that often have limited transit service.

6. The need for paratransit services will grow dramatically and will require tremendous resources.

The need for specialized transit service increases with age. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires agencies that operate fixed-route transit services to provide paratransit services for those people whose disabilities prevent them from using a fixed-route bus. The size of the ADA-eligible population is expected to grow by 94 percent by 2030, with a necessary diversion of resources to paratransit services.



R E C O M M E N

The report includes a discussion of mobility strategies, all of which begin with an understanding and commitment among local community leaders, elected officials and transportation managers that meeting the transportation needs of older adults and disabled persons is critical.

The city of Pittsburgh reported a 46 percent cost reduction with their coordinated transportation system.

General recommendations:

- Adopt a multi-faceted and comprehensive approach to increasing mobility for older adults and those with special needs. Involve human-service agencies, public transit operators, cities and counties.
- Starting with the Colorado Interagency Coordinating Council, build strong collaboration between state and local entities, with state- and local-level councils that have distinct responsibilities.
- Identify and pursue strategies to increase funding for specialized transportation at the local level. Help communities apply for and receive matching funds.
- Identify underserved communities and regions. Replicate successful programs currently operating in similar Colorado communities.

Detailed recommendations listed in the analysis include:

I. Improve Coordination.

In almost all cases, states implementing coordination have seen improvements both in cost-efficiency and service quality. The report outlines the following initial activities to improve coordination:

- Participate in the Colorado Interagency Coordinating Council, tasked with establishing state policies to create an environment supportive of coordination. Through the Council, state agencies can update programs, enhance coordination, review how services are provided and consider incentives to coordinate.
- Identify the methods and costs of providing access to services. Ask such questions as, “Does the method support a coordinated approach to transportation? Are all entities paying the fully allocated costs of agency trips? Does one agency rely on others to provide transportation services? Can effective networks be created?”

D A T I O N S F O R A C T I O N

- Provide information, training and awareness activities. Inform employees, commissions and volunteers about the cost savings and benefits of coordinated programs and the critical and urgent need for strategic changes.

2. Increase Awareness in Local Governments for Coordination and Funding.

While the study identified the critical role of local governments in providing transportation services, it also recognized that this role is not well understood.

- Conduct a public information and awareness campaign aimed at residents, public officials and transportation professionals with the goal of building public support for specialized transportation services. Emphasize the financial and social impact of mobility on people and communities. Use the success stories of Colorado communities to build support.
- Create local agency initiatives to both develop policies and deliver services. Activities at the local level include establishing a local coordinating council, identifying direct and indirect funding streams that fund transportation, and finding ways to blend them.
- Initiate a dialogue among local and state officials, and agency representatives about the value of providing transportation services and sharing costs across jurisdictional lines.

The Denver-Boulder metropolitan area currently spends more than \$25 million annually on specialized transportation. Partnering with FasTracks now to include the needs of adult and persons with disabilities is a vital strategic consideration.

3. Expand the Availability of Transit, Paratransit, and Specialized Transportation Services.

Population growth and other demographic predictors demonstrate the critical need to prepare for the future with increased use of low-floor buses, expansion of specialized transportation services and transferring riders to the appropriate lowest cost mode for their travel needs.

Specific actions require:

- Develop strong partnership between RTD and local jurisdictions in the Denver metropolitan area so that programs can be coordinated and boundary issues minimized.
- Increase funding for specialized transportation services at the local level.
- Build an advocacy base throughout the public, private and government sector to create policy and funding changes.

4. Address the needs of a growing older-adult population.

- Help older adults continue driving safely for as long as possible, thus reducing the need for costly paratransit services. Establish driver wellness classes and encourage volunteer driver programs.
- For non-drivers, provide information, choice and flexibility among low-cost transportation options, including volunteer drivers, fixed-route options and pedestrian friendly routes.

5. Improve Mobility in the Denver-Boulder Metro Area by Partnering with FasTracks.*

The Denver-Boulder metropolitan area has an unparalleled opportunity to improve older adult mobility through the FasTracks build-out. With planning and foresight, strategic opportunities include:

- Mixed-use land development featuring housing and services for older adults and people with disabilities near rail stations
- Transfer of costly long-distance trips to the FasTracks network
- Promotion of pedestrian activity through infrastructure improvements



* FasTracks is the Regional Transportation District's 12-year transit plan to transform transportation throughout the greater Denver area. FasTracks will build 119 miles of new light rail and commuter rail, 18 miles of bus rapid transit service, add 21,000 new parking spaces at rail and bus stations, and expand bus service throughout the entire metro area.

Investing in Coordination

The investment of time and thought at the state, local and regional level will result in lower costs of individual trips. This will in turn provide more trips to more persons at more times and to more places. Increased mobility increases independence and thus improves the quality of life for all citizens.



Acknowledgements

The Getting There Collaboration wishes to thank Nelson/Nygaard Consulting Associates who conducted this analysis, and to the following individuals who participated on the advisory committee for the development of the full report.

Janet Vigil, Adams County Community Development
Barb Martig, Boulder Area Agency on Aging
Irene Lopez Wessell, Bright Mountain Foundation
Jeanne Erickson, CASTA
Elena Wilken, CASTA
Tom Mouser, Colorado Department of Transportation
Houston Elam, City of Centennial
Peggy Jones, City of Lakewood
Jeannette Hensley, Colorado Dept Human Services, Aging and Adult Services
Nancy Smith, Colorado Department of Human Services, Vocational Rehabilitation
Carol Reider, Colorado Dept of Health Care Policy and Finance
Margi Ness, Colorado Mobility Coalition
Valerie Robson, Douglas County Human Services
Marsha Meyer, Douglas County Human Services
Carol Murphy, Douglas County Human Services
Steve Cook, Denver Regional Council of Governments
Bonnie Kelly, Denver Regional Council of Governments
Rob Andresen, First Transit, Inc.
Steven Feist, Logisticare
Bill Elfenbein, Regional Transit District Board of Directors
Jeff Becker, Regional Transit District
Jane Barnes, Saint Anthony's Hospital
Jane Yeager, Seniors' Resource Center
Lenna Kottke, Special Transit
Kathy Nelson, City of Aurora Recreation Division
John Looney, AARP



The Full Report

To receive copies of the report, "Analysis of Colorado's Human Service and Public Transportation Networks," please contact HealthONE Alliance at 303.953.3600 or Rose Community Foundation at 303.398.7400. The reports are also available online at www.health1.org and www.rcfdenver.org.

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