

## **8. TRANSPORTATION**



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Transportation is one of the key services seniors looking to age in place and individuals with disabilities need to maintain their independence. But finding safe, reliable and free or low-cost transportation can be difficult.

## *The Older Driver*

Driving allows you to maintain your independence and stay connected to your community, but changes in physical, mental, and sensory abilities that can affect driving skills. Sometimes these changes happen so slowly that you are not even aware that your driving safety is at risk. Fortunately, you can cope with many of these changes by learning your limits and adjusting your driving.

### **Are you a safe driver?**

You as a driver are responsible for assuring personal and public safety when operating a vehicle. The following are statements for you to consider as you assess your safety as a driver.

- I forget to buckle up.
- I get lost while driving.
- Other cars seem to appear out of nowhere.
- I have trouble seeing signs in time to respond to them.
- Other drivers drive too fast.
- Other drivers often honk at me.
- Driving stresses me out.
- After driving, I feel tired.
- I have had more “near misses” lately.
- Busy intersections bother me.
- Left-hand turns make me nervous.
- The glare from oncoming headlights bothers me.
- My medication makes me dizzy or drowsy.
- I have trouble turning the steering wheel.
- I have trouble pushing down on the gas pedal or brakes.
- I have trouble looking over my shoulder when I back up.
- I have been stopped by the police for my driving recently.
- People will no longer accept rides from me.
- I don't like to drive at night.
- I have more trouble parking lately.

If you can relate to any of these statements, your safety and the safety of others may be at risk when you drive. Talk to your doctor to have a more detailed and careful driver screen.

Additional resources to consider include:

- ❑ The **National Highway Traffic Safety Advisory Board** has produced a booklet about how to have a productive conversation with older drivers. It can be accessed on-line and is available at <http://www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/olddrive/UnderstandOlderDrivers/>
- ❑ The AARP's article, *What are the warning signs that indicate someone should begin to limit driving or to stop altogether?* Is available on-line at [www.aarp.org/home-garden/transportation/info-05-2010/Warning\\_Signs\\_Stopping.html](http://www.aarp.org/home-garden/transportation/info-05-2010/Warning_Signs_Stopping.html).
- ❑ The **Grand Driver** at [www.granddriver.info](http://www.granddriver.info) provides links to useful information as to what you can do to remain a safe driver.

### ***Adaptive Driving for Individuals with Disabilities***

A wide range of adaptive driving equipment and vehicle modifications are available today. Depending on your disability, an adapted vehicle may include hand controls for braking and accelerating, power assist devices for easy steering, touch ignition pads and gear shifts, adjustable driver's seats, automatic door openers and even joysticks for people with extremely limited hand function.

You may initially want to obtain an evaluation from a qualified driver evaluator, who will assist in determining your basic driving set up, specific modifications and driving equipment to match your needs.

- ❑ To find a qualified evaluator, visit your local Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (**See Appendix I**) or contact the **Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialists**, toll-free at **1-866-672-9466**, or [www.driver-ed.org](http://www.driver-ed.org).
- ❑ The **National Mobility Equipment Dealers Association (NMEDA)** is a trade group of companies that sell adaptive driving equipment. Call toll-free **1-800-833-0427** or visit [www.nmeda.org](http://www.nmeda.org).
- ❑ The **National Highway and Transportation Safety Administration** offers advice on driver training, vehicle selection and modification. Visit [www.nhtsa.gov/cars/rules/adaptive/brochure/brochure.html](http://www.nhtsa.gov/cars/rules/adaptive/brochure/brochure.html).

### **Accessible Parking**

Under New Jersey law, an individual with a disability may obtain either a special license plate or vehicle placard that provides special parking privileges. To obtain a request form that must be certified by a physician or podiatrist, call the **Motor Vehicle Commission** toll-free at **1-888-486-3339** or **609-292-6500**.

### ***Transportation Information and Services***

It may be easier for you to give up driving if you have other ways to get around. The following transportation options will help you make this determination.

## **County Coordinated Senior/Disabled Transportation Programs**

The County Senior/Disabled Transportation Programs provide services to senior citizens (age 60 and older) and individuals with disabilities. Most counties provide transportation on weekdays, with limited evening and weekend service. All 21 counties offer wheelchair accessible transportation and require advance reservations for rides, varying from one day to fourteen days or more. Most counties provide no or only limited out-of-county transportation.

Services may vary by county but most offer transportation for non-emergency medical appointments, dialysis, physical and mental therapies, employment, grocery shopping, nutrition sites, post-secondary education, Medicaid services, veterans' services, social and recreational activities, mall shopping and personal business – such as hairdresser, banking, etc. It should be noted that priority is given to transportation for dialysis and medical appointments, and limits apply.

- For specific transportation information and service guidelines or to schedule a ride, contact the transportation program in your county (See **Appendix P**).
- You may also find helpful information at the **New Jersey Council on Special Transportation's** website at [www.njcost.com](http://www.njcost.com).

## **Access Link**

Access Link is a public transportation service developed to comply with the Paratransit regulations of the Americans with Disabilities Act. It is for the aged and individuals with disabilities who are unable to use the local fixed route bus. Access Link service is provided by **NJ Transit** and offers a curb-to-curb service. In order to use Access Link, you must first apply for eligibility. Eligible customers and companions will be charged a comparable fare based on the bus fare and number of zones they will be traveling.

### **Access Link's Service Area**

The Access Link service area is limited to pick-up and drop-off points located within a ¼-mile radius of an eligible bus route. Access Link shadows local fixed route buses. The bus routes defined as commuter routes are not included in the Access Link service area.

### **Eligibility - Applying for Access Link**

All persons interested in applying for Access Link service are required to attend an in-person transportation assessment interview at a participating assessment agency. If you require transportation to the assessment agency, round-trip service on Access Link may be provided. Please make this request when scheduling your transportation assessment interview.

- To arrange for a transportation assessment appointment, contact **NJ TRANSIT** by dialing **1-800-955-2321 (TTY 1-800-955-6765)** between the hours of 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. You can also contact **NJ TRANSIT Accessible Bus and Train Information Service** at **1-973-275-5555** or **(TTY) 1-800-772-2287**. Their website is **www.njtransit.com**.

### **Additional Transportation Options:**

**New Jersey Find A Ride** - This website, **www.njfindaride.org**, was designed to be an information resource about accessible transportation options available to individuals with disabilities and others in New Jersey who don't have easy, reliable access to private automobile transportation.

**NJ Transit Reduced Fare Program** - Provides senior citizens 62 years of age or older and individuals with a disability, greater traveling freedom and lower fares when riding with NJ Transit (buses, trains, and light rail vehicles). Many private bus companies operating in the state also participate.

You can save one-half or more of the regular one-way fare on most intrastate bus and rail lines, and most interstate bus and rail routes to and from New York and Pennsylvania from 9:30 AM to 4:00 PM and 7:00 PM to 6:00 AM weekdays, and all day on weekends and holidays. Personal assistants ride for free when the individual with a disability presents proper identification.

If you require a personal assistant, the physician must certify this as well so that your Reduced Fare ID Card can be stamped accordingly. People with visual impairments can also contact the NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired. A Commission representative will fill out, certify and mail an application to NJ TRANSIT.

- For more information contact the **NJ TRANSIT Reduced Fare Program**, 180 Boyden Avenue, Maplewood, NJ 07040, telephone **973-378-6401**. For information on lift-equipped buses call **973-275-5555** daily, 6 a.m. - 9 p.m. Hearing impaired persons should call **1-800-772-2287**.

### **Alternative Options**

If you can't go out to get something you need, have it come to you. Many stores will deliver their products straight to your door, such as grocery stores and pharmacies. Catalog and Internet shopping could also be used as an alternative. You can buy almost everything you need from catalogs or over the Internet.