



MOVING AN AGE-FRIENDLY DC

Transportation for All Ages



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE DISTRICT'S POPULATION IS AGING.

In the next 25 years, the number of Americans aged 65 and over will double. By 2030, one of every five Americans, or about 72 million people, will be considered an older adult. The driving forces behind this reality are increased life spans and the aging of the baby boomer generation — those born between 1946 and 1964. Baby boomers in DC, who are an estimated 17 percent of the District of Columbia's population, represent a growing older cohort. Both their presence and well being are important to sustaining vibrant and inclusive neighborhoods. The potential contributions to our neighborhoods by older residents are undermined without forward-thinking planning to address the growing and unique needs of our oldest residents.

OLDER ADULTS WISH TO AGE IN THEIR OWN HOMES OR NEIGHBORHOODS, AND REQUIRE ADEQUATE TRANSPORTATION TO DO SO.

As DC residents age, many are likely to do so either in their home or their neighborhood, surrounded by familiar faces and places.

Residential options range from single-family homes to multifamily buildings that offer elevators and single-level living. Access to safe, efficient, and affordable transportation — to ensure older adults can get where they are going and that their friends and family can reach them too — is a crucial factor for older adults when deciding among available residential options.

AGE-FRIENDLY TRANSPORTATION IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR RESIDENTS OF ALL AGES TO START AND KEEP HEALTHY TRANSPORTATION HABITS THAT INCREASE MOBILITY AND REDUCE ISOLATION.

Sensory and mobility loss commonly associated with aging can make it difficult for older adults to drive, but also make it harder to access and use transit. This report focuses on transportation policy and planning for the aging population in the District of Columbia. More specifically, it examines how to better target investments and coordinate services that will both benefit older adults, and make communities more pedestrian and transit-friendly for all residents. By addressing age-friendly transportation, our communities also acknowledge related public

AGE-FRIENDLY DC

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Growth

health issues, strengthen the local economy, and promote universal design that is accommodating to all users, regardless of age and ability.

This report addresses age-friendly transportation by focusing on how to improve three key areas of transportation: the pedestrian environment; public transit; and coordinating paratransit, community transportation, and private transportation services.

CREATING PEDESTRIAN-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENTS

Every trip starts and ends with a walk trip, made either on foot or aided by a mobility device. With that in mind, cities with complete streets policies that accommodate all pedestrians are the foundation of an age-friendly city. According to Kathy Sykes, Senior Advisor of the EPA's Aging Initiative, "Making sure that there is adequate time to cross intersections, good lighting for visibility and safety at night, and having connected sidewalks for those who use canes or wheelchairs are some of the key things that communities can provide." These best practices contribute to walkable, inclusive, and safer

neighborhoods. Together, these improve safety and move the city toward a vision of zero traffic fatalities.

DC Findings

The District of Columbia recognizes pedestrians as a policy priority and has made significant strides to improve pedestrian safety. Measures like streetscape enhancements, improving safety at crossings, using automatic enforcement to reduce collisions and decrease speeding, and increasing the number of bike lanes, have continued to improve the pedestrian environment for many. However, for DC to be truly age-friendly there is still work to be done to maintain sidewalks, fill sidewalk gaps, improve data collection and reporting, and provide appropriate public amenities.

Key Recommendations

- Dedicate adequate funding for sidewalk maintenance and repair in every fiscal year budget to ensure consistently safe streets and prevent further backlog in repairs.
- Collect and use data on collisions involving

- pedestrians and bicyclists to identify high-risk intersections, and make quarterly updates available to the public.
- Create an interagency team with DDOT, the Office of Planning, Department of Public Works, Department of Parks and Recreation, and the National Park Service to work with the Office on Aging and the Age-Friendly DC Initiative on increasing the number of senior-friendly public amenities, including sidewalk seating, quality lighting, and public restrooms.

ENSURING ACCESSIBLE AND USABLE PUBLIC TRANSIT

For older adults who cannot drive (or choose not to), fixed-route public transit is a valuable daily service. Whether a trip to the doctor, the grocery store, or a friend’s house; reliable, usable, and accessible transit helps older adults retain their independence.

To be considered accessible, fixed-route public transit, including transit stops and stations, should be close to the homes of older adults and the places they visit. The sidewalks and travelways seniors use to reach transit should be well-maintained and free of tripping hazards like tree roots or potholes. Usability of public transit is measured by factors like the accessibility of transit vehicles, how much trips cost, and the customer’s confidence in being able to use the system. Ideally, the most accessible and usable fixed-route transit system would serve the widest range of riders, drawing customers who could otherwise opt to drive, as well as those who have previously relied on specialized transportation services in lieu of fixed-route transit.

DC Findings

Best practices for age-friendly fixed-route transit dictate that both the form and function of systems must be accessible and usable by older adults. To provide senior-friendly public transit that fits these criteria, DC must continue to focus on ensuring that seniors live within one quarter mile of transit, that the public agencies and services they use are also within one quarter mile of transit, that all transit vehicles are accessible, that routes to transit are safe and well-maintained, that service is frequent, and that while the system expands to provide increased coverage and better customer service, bus stops are retrofitted for accessibility and trips remain affordable.

Key Recommendations

- Encourage the development of affordable senior and age-friendly housing, as well as buildings housing senior services, in close proximity to transportation (within one quarter mile of public transit).
- Secure funding for Metro Momentum, a capital improvement plan that will increase transit coverage, accessibility, and affordability for older adults and riders with special needs.
- Make 100 percent of bus stops in the District accessible (an increase of 69 percent), starting with the 28 stops that WMATA has identified as priority stops based on feedback from MetroAccess customers. These stops are a high priority because of the potential they have to transition an eligible portion of MetroAccess customers to fixed route service.

COORDINATING PARATRANSIT, COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION, AND PRIVATE TRANSPORTATION

Although a more accessible fixed-route transit system will bring down transportation costs for a broader population, some customers will still require specialized services. Many older adults who are frail require door-through-door assistance or escorted transportation service. For older adults and other transportation-disadvantaged people, the alternatives to traditional fixed-route transit are human services transportation, paratransit, and supplemental transportation programs.

These programs, which serve customers with physical or financial limitations, are important to ensure transportation equity. Establishing a mobility management program in conjunction with traditional transit (within a local government, or in some cases across jurisdictions) is an established best practice to provide more affordable and efficient service. Mobility management programs coordinate between existing fixed-route transit options, specialized transportation programs, and private transportation options like taxicabs to lower costs, reduce duplicated services, and arrange more efficient partnerships and programs.

DC Findings

In order to provide paratransit, community transportations programs, and private transportation services that are more innovative, coordinated, and efficient, the city must focus on establishing a mobility management system, encouraging private sector innovation and participation in specialized transportation, and improving the quality of existing services.



Photo credit: Luca Moglia

Key Recommendations

- Establish a mobility management staff position within an existing office in the District of Columbia.
- Complement a mobility management system with a one-call/one-click center to aid District residents in navigating options for transportation and mobility assistance.
- Incentivize the purchase and operation of accessible taxicabs in Washington DC. The goal should be increasing the accessible fleet share from less than 1 percent to over 5 percent, as has been achieved in San Francisco and Arlington.