

Senior Transportation: Driving Alternatives for On-the-Go Seniors

Can a loved one no longer drive safely? Are you a senior who's decided it's time to hang up the keys?
This transition can be overwhelming for everyone involved.

Our ability to slip into the driver's seat of a vehicle and drive off without giving much thought to it is something we can take for granted. But for an increasing number of older adults, routine outings are now monumental challenges.

When we age, health conditions may make driving difficult, and we must find other ways to get around.

In this article, you'll learn:

- How seniors get around without a car
- About a variety of senior transportation services

- Questions to ask when considering senior citizen transportation

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How Do Seniors Get Around Without a Car?

Seniors without a car can utilize local transportation options, including:

- Public Transportation
- Para-transit Services
- Private Ride Services
- Ride-Hailing Services
- Taxis
- Volunteer Programs
- Non-Emergency Medical Transportation
- Senior Community Transportation

8 Options for Senior Citizen Transportation

#1: Public Transportation

Public transportation is the most obvious choice for seniors in good health who don't drive. It is one of the most affordable modes of transportation, and it allows non-drivers to feel relatively independent.

With public transportation, you have fixed ...

- Routes

- Stops; and
- Schedules

... of buses and trains. Generally, larger cities have sophisticated public transportation systems transporting travelers almost anywhere.

Pros and Cons of Public Services for Senior Transportation

Pros: Public transportation may be the quickest, most convenient option for getting around your area — depending on where you live.

Cons: Most people must walk to and from bus stops or train stations, adhere to strict schedules, and wait outside for pickup to use public transportation. As a result, it's not always best for older adults — especially those with limited mobility and/or difficulty following a schedule.

Remember every public bus should have a wheelchair lift, and every train should have a wheelchair-accessible car. It is advisable to inquire about the safety of the stops and stations and ensure

they have an elevator and a working telephone if assistance is needed.

#2: Para-transit Services

Many older citizens are entitled to transportation services under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

A city or town providing public transportation services to residents must also provide complementary or para-transit services for people with disabilities. As part of the ADA, **complementary para-transit services must be available within 3/4 mile of a bus route or rail station** at the exact time and days for no more than twice the fixed route fare.

Many senior citizens qualify for service under the practical definition of disability.

Pros and Cons of Para-transit Services for Senior Transportation

Pros: Para-transit services enable people who can't easily access public transportation to get around. Wheelchair and handicapped accessible vans are generally used as paratransit vehicles. Many

para-transit systems offer curb-to-curb service within their designated complementary routes.

Cons: It is important to remember curbside service is different from door-to-door service. In contrast to door-to-door services, paratransit drivers do not enter seniors' homes to help them get into and out of the vehicle. Paratransit users must be able to navigate their way onto the vehicle or have a family caregiver or hired companion to help them.

Para-transit systems are in such high demand that users should practice patience and flexibility when planning their outings.

#3: Private Ride Services

Often called “door-through-door” services, private companies charge riders for their services. These elderly driving services are similar to taxis, but they cater specifically to seniors and the disabled.

The rider will receive the following assistance:

- Getting from their residence to the vehicle
- Entering and exiting the vehicle; and

- Getting out of the vehicle through the door at their destination.

Assistance can also be provided with:

- Carrying bags
- Loading wheelchairs; and
- Carrying purchases made during the outing.

Pros and Cons of Private Ride Services for Senior Transportation

Pros: Some vehicles are equipped to transport a motorized wheelchair (at an additional charge). There are even vehicles designed for people who have very high medical needs. Plus, private ride service companies offer greater flexibility, often offering on-demand or same-day scheduling.

Cons: The flexibility with private ride services comes at an extra cost. A ride might cost anywhere between \$20 and \$40. In addition, private ride services for seniors are usually only located in urban areas and suburbs.

Among the more widely known private ride transportation services are SilverRide and Gogogramparent.

#4: Ride-Hailing Services

Seniors can also benefit from ride-hailing services.

Ride-sharing apps like Uber and Lyft give seniors access to a car, anywhere if they have a smartphone. If the senior isn't comfortable with a smartphone, **their loved ones can order the ride from their smartphone.**

As well as being convenient, companies like Uber and Lyft are providing a range of accessible vehicles and services to meet the needs of seniors and people with disabilities.

Pros and Cons of Ride-Hailing Services for Senior Transportation

Pros: No need to commit to a regular schedule — call the car whenever you need it. A ride-sharing app shows you the exact distance between the vehicle and you. It also shows the driver's license plate number and name.

Cons: The driver may be different each time, so the quality can vary.

#5: Taxis

The main difference between ride-hailing and taxi services is ride-hailing trips are booked through apps and have pooling options. Taxis offer private transportation and are not typically pooled.

A taxi is most appropriate for seniors who require occasional travel and minimal assistance but cannot use public transportation.

Pros and Cons of Taxis for Senior Transportation

Pros: Rural residents without public transportation or drivers who must travel late at night or during rush hour can take advantage of using a taxi.

Cons: Many seniors are on a fixed income, and taxis are more expensive than they used to be. In addition, availability may be limited, depending on the senior's location.

#6: Volunteer Programs

Volunteer transportation programs are free senior transportation services in which volunteers provide door-to-door assistance to seniors and the disabled.

Many local nonprofits keep a list of volunteers who will drive seniors door-to-door for errands and appointments. Typically, volunteer drivers use their vehicles and cannot transport motorized wheelchairs. The driver, however, is usually able to assist their riders from their homes and through the door at their destinations due to the small number of passengers.

See if there is a Volunteer Driver Program near you — you can find a list of programs in your state by [visiting this map](#).

Pros and Cons of Volunteer Programs for Senior Transportation

Pros: It's free and offers a social outlet and transportation.

Cons: The availability of volunteer drivers depends on your location.

#7: Non-Emergency Medical Transportation

The Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) Program provides transportation to older adults who need assistance getting to and from:

- Medical appointments
- Dentist appointments
- Therapies
- Exercise programs
- Testing; and
- Other health-related appointments

The NEMT is widely known for serving Medicaid beneficiaries, and these transportation services were built into the Medicaid program when it began in 1966.

NEMT providers must:

- Transport to and from the appointment
- Choose the most appropriate mode of transportation; and
- Provide coverage for all transportation-related expenses.

Pros and Cons of Non-Emergency Medical Transport for Senior Transportation

Pros: There is little to no-cost to and from medical appointments.

Cons: Provider networks can vary, which can result in late pickups, over-scheduling, and lack of transportation availability.

#8: Senior Community Transportation

Transportation services can be arranged through a concierge program in many senior communities.

Additionally, some communities offer handicap accessible buses for residents to get to their appointments, shopping trips, etc.

Transportation services costs are generally included in the monthly fees of most senior living communities.

When searching for a community and evaluating transportation options, keep in mind that most communities do not offer one-on-one support during a doctor's appointment or a shopping trip. The bus driver will be available to assist residents getting in

and out of an office or a store, but they may not be available to stay throughout the time.

Pros and Cons of Senior Community Transportation for Seniors

Pros: Since this is often included in the monthly fee, no additional payment is usually needed.

Cons: Transportation times are often scheduled in advance, and one-on-one assistance may be unavailable during the outing.

The majority of Seniors Services of America's managed communities include a wide range of services in the base rent — *including scheduled transportation.*

Learn more about everything you'll find at your [nearest community](#) today.

6 Questions to Ask When Considering Your Options for Senior Transportation Services

#1: Do They Offer Convenient Pick-Up Times and Locations?

You should not assume a transportation service will be convenient for you or a loved one. Make sure they offer convenient pick-up times and locations.

Additionally, it would be best to clarify where pick-up will occur. For example, a service coming to your door is more convenient than going across town before being picked up.

#2: What Is the Cost?

Since transportation companies set their prices, they have different costs and fees. So make sure you're aware of the prices of services you're considering before securing a ride.

#3: How Long Has the Company Been In Business?

Is it better to work with a long-established transportation company or a relatively new one? It's a personal decision.

Nevertheless, if this is extremely important to you, don't be afraid to ask before scheduling an appointment.

#4: Is the Vehicle Clean and Comfortable?

Cleanliness and comfort are personal preferences; however, if you feel it is important to you, make sure to ask.

#5: Do Drivers Undergo Background Checks and Drug Testing?

Although most transportation services conduct background checks on their drivers, drug testing is not as standard.

Please be sure to ask the transportation company you are considering if this is important to you.

#6: What Do Online Reviews Say?

You can get an impression of a transportation service by reading reviews left by previous customers. Most customers are honest in their reviews, so it's an excellent way to learn about any company or driver.

Senior Services of America: Promoting Independence and Quality of Life

We encourage our residents at Senior Services of America communities to maintain as much independence as possible and live meaningful and purposeful lives.

Our goal is to help residents stay engaged in life:

- Mentally
- Physically; and
- Emotionally
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