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Senate Transportation Committee

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Most of us take our mobility for granted. We grab our keys and head out to work, buy groceries, run errands and go to social outings—all without a second thought. Transportation policy and the infrastructure investments of the past 100 years have resulted in tremendous mobility for many Vermonters. But they have also left many isolated.

One-third of US residents do not drive. This number includes: children, many people with incomes too low to afford the upkeep of a personal vehicle, more than one in five people over the age of 65, many people with a disability, and others who, for a variety of reasons, choose not to drive.

For many of these individuals, accessing transportation can range from a minor inconvenience to an insurmountable barrier especially in rural parts of our state, where transportation has long been a seemingly intractable problem.

Reduced mobility has a direct and often debilitating effect on older Vermonters' independence. More than 50 percent of non-drivers over age 65 normally do not leave home most days, partly because of a lack of transportation options, those in rural areas or remote suburbs are most likely to be affected by this dynamic.ⁱ

Transportation impacts our daily lives:

- Health
- Quality of Life & Independence
- Economic Prosperity
- Climate / Environment

Overview of Transportation Modes:

One of the most important factors affecting the range and accessibility of transportation choices is the built environment. Transportation networks have been built mainly to accommodate movement of personal cars and cargo traffic as quickly as possible. This not only creates unsafe and unwelcoming conditions for other modes of travel, but reduces transportation options and increases injuries and fatalities. Many barriers exist, especially for older adults, to walk, bike or take public transit. Streets may be too wide to cross safely, or a lack of sidewalks may hinder a walk to the store or bus stop.

Many people are expected to outlive their driving years—men by 7 years and women by 10, on average.ⁱⁱ

Travel Behavior – According to the 2016 Statewide Transportation Public Opinion Survey, Vermonters travel primarily by automobile - 91% reported they drive a personal vehicle frequently (multiple times per week or month), and 88% of workers reported driving alone or carpooling as their primary mode of transportation to work. Walking is also a popular means of transport, with 45% responding they walk frequently, followed by biking (14%) and public transit (8%)ⁱⁱⁱ.

Vermonters since 2007 have curtailed their driving habits more than the average American, reducing their vehicle miles traveled between 2007 and 2013 by 8.4 percent compared to the nationwide drop of just 6 percent over the same time period.^{iv}

Public Transit - In SFY 2017, Vermont's public transit systems provided over 4.6 million trips. A little over half of those rides are provided in the Chittenden County region, and the remainder is spread throughout the rest of the State. There are many types of transit riders -- from those needing one-on-one volunteer rides to medical appointments to commuters riding coach buses.

Although older non-drivers predominantly rely on family and friends for transportation, their share of trips on public transportation is significantly higher than that of drivers, the majority of their transit trips are taken on specialized transportation.

Walking and Biking -- As we drive less, the use of other transportation modes such as riding a bus, walking or using a bicycle have increased.

- Biking rates among people between the ages of 60 and 79 are soaring, an analysis of federal data shows. New trips by seniors account for 22 percent of the nation's growth in adult biking. And because biking among children is actually falling, these seniors' new trips are equivalent to more than a third of the overall gain in biking.^v
- Between 1995 and 2009, the most recent year for which [National Household Travel Survey data](#) is available, the rise in biking among people ages 60-79 accounted for 37 percent of the total nationwide increase in bike trips.

In addition to public transportation, local communities must focus on accommodating more trips by walking. Walking provides the link that connects an older adult at home with the public transportation system.

- Crumbling or absent sidewalks, poorly marked intersections, inadequate time to cross large intersections and a lack of benches for resting presents significant challenges to older Vermonters who want to walk in their community.
- Without a safe and supportive space that enables people to walk, older adults will struggle to reach public transportation stops and other destinations.

AARP's Livable Community Program

Older adults overwhelmingly want to live in their own homes and communities, even when they no longer drive. Livable communities are great places for people of all ages, and in fact studies show more people of all ages desire such communities. They include safe, walkable streets; age-friendly housing and transportation options; access to needed services; and opportunities for residents of all ages to participate in community life. **Our transportation policy should favor mobility options that minimize energy consumption and carbon emissions, discourage sprawl, maximize economic opportunity, and foster livability.**

- Community Investments – mini grant program to support local initiatives
- Workshops, Audits and Resource Guides
- Demonstrations and Pilots Projects

Building Blocks for Transportation Options

The transportation sector is experiencing major disruption; in fact, it's only the beginning. And, autonomous vehicles are just one potential disruptor in a shift involving the entire transportation system. Change, however, can either unfold haphazardly with negative consequences, or we can harness it through sound policy and planning to realize a desired vision.

1. **Embrace a Universal Mobility as a Service framework.** In its most basic form, Mobility as a Service describes a shift away from personally owned modes of transportation (i.e., car ownership) and toward mobility solutions that are consumed as a service. Universal Mobility as a Service expands this concept to offer customers a single platform through which they can identify all available transportation options, evaluate their cost in terms of dollars and time, schedule a ride, and even pay for a trip. Fixed-route and demand-responsive public transportation as well as private on-demand options—including ridesourcing, ridesharing, carsharing, and bikesharing—are available to serve everyone in the community. The ideal outcome of this approach is that while services tailored to the needs of particular populations will be available, they will be part of a single, coordinated system, which if designed well has the potential to meet the needs of everyone in the community, regardless of income, geographic location, disability, or age.
2. **Adopt a strong commitment to equity.** Our existing transportation system has not served our most vulnerable well. All Vermonters, regardless of income, location, race, disability, and age, must be able to conveniently access the transportation system to meet their travel needs. This era of disruption offers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to address the inequalities of our transportation system and expand mobility options. AARP supports the recommendation from the Pathways from Poverty Council to fund a comprehensive study of transportation needs and assets in Vermont.

3. **Commit to universal design.** Universal design is the design of buildings, vehicles, environments, products, services, and user interfaces that are broadly accessible to people with disabilities, older people, young children, and everyone else. It is a rejection of the notion that things should be designed for the “average” person, which too often results in separate facilities for people with disabilities—for example, a ramp set off to the side of a stairway. Universal design provides one solution that can accommodate all. Our transportation system needs to go beyond the accessibility requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act and offer full access to people with disabilities throughout the system.

4. **Foster transportation system efficiency and access through Complete Streets.** Streets and sidewalks should be designed for all users and give priority access to system use in alignment with livability sustainability goals. Put in place a transparent system to measure impacts, both positive and negative. Transportation is a means, not an end, and can be used to help communities achieve a variety of quality-of-life goals. An ideal Complete Streets policy includes the following:
 - **Vision and intent:** Includes an equitable vision for how and why the community wants to complete its streets.
 - **Diverse users:** Benefits all users equitably, particularly vulnerable users and the most underinvested and underserved communities.
 - **Commitment in all projects and phases:** Applies to new, retrofit/reconstruction, maintenance, and ongoing projects.
 - **Clear, accountable expectations:** Makes any exceptions specific and sets a clear procedure that requires high-level approval and public notice prior to exceptions being granted.
 - **Jurisdiction:** Requires interagency coordination between government departments and partner agencies on Complete Streets.
 - **Design:** Directs the use of the latest and best design criteria and guidelines and sets a time frame for their implementation.
 - **Land use and context sensitivity:** Considers the surrounding community’s current and expected land use and transportation needs.
 - **Performance measures:** Establishes performance standards that are specific, equitable, and available to the public.
 - **Project selection criteria:** Provides specific criteria to encourage funding prioritization for Complete Streets implementation.
 - **Implementation steps:** Includes specific next steps for implementation of the policy.

ⁱ AARP Public Policy Institute analysis of the National Household Travel Survey.

ⁱⁱ D. Foley et al., "Driving Life Expectancy of Persons Aged 70 Years and Older in the United States," American Journal of Public Health, Vol 92, No. 8 (August 2002).

ⁱⁱⁱ VTrans, Existing Conditions and Future Trends, 2017 Report.

<https://vtrans.vermont.gov/sites/aot/files/planning/documents/planning/Existing%20Conditions%20%20Future%20Trends%206-7-17.pdf>

^{iv} The Decline of Driving, Navigating Vermont without a Car. 2015 Legislative Report.

https://tboard.vermont.gov/sites/transboard/files/pdfs/2015TransReport_Jan21.pdf

^v [National Household Travel Survey](#). *Vertical scale measures share of all trips taken by bicycle.*