

**S.123 Testimony**  
**House Committee on Transportation**  
**Angela Smith-Dieng, Deputy Commissioner**  
**Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living**  
**April 29, 2025**

**Affordability and Transportation for Older Vermonters and People with Disabilities**

Section 8 of S.123, an act relating to miscellaneous changes to laws related to motor vehicles, proposes to decrease the fees for an operator's license for Vermonters who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Income (SSDI). A four-year fee would decrease by \$42 from \$62 currently, to \$20 as proposed, and a replacement fee would decrease by \$14 from \$24 currently, to \$10 as proposed.

**This is a valuable savings of out-of-pocket income for older Vermonters and people with disabilities on SSI or SSDI.**

This change supports:

- **Increased Choice and Independence:** With lower fees, more people are able to access a license, which supports choice, independence, self-determination, social connection, health and employment. This is especially important in rural Vermont where access to public transportation options in most areas is quite limited as outlined in the Agency of Transportation's Public Transit Policy Plan.
- **Affordability:** By saving money on license fees, people are better able to meet basic needs and use their limited income on essentials like healthcare, housing, food and fuel. High costs of basic needs were called out in the most recent State Health Assessment conducted by the Department of Health.

This change aligns with:

- The **DAIL Mission** to make Vermont the best state to grow old or live with a disability – with dignity, respect and independence.
- **Age Strong VT**, Vermont's first multisector plan on aging, which calls for building an age-friendly state, including having more transportation options and transportation access for older adults.

Data to support this change:

In the latest needs assessment survey for the **State Plan on Aging**:

- 68% of respondents said that they drive their own vehicle; 30% said they do not have access to affordable transportation.
- 33% said they have just enough income to pay expenses, while 12% said they do not have enough income to pay expenses and must choose what to pay.

In the **Age Strong VT** needs assessment listening sessions:

- Older Vermonters said a car provides them with convenience, accessibility, and freedom. They can socialize, transport groceries, and take care of pets. The downside, they said, is that car-related expenses are expensive.
- Older Vermonters also shared their worries about financial security. They described costs for everything going up – healthcare, food, fuel, housing, and taxes.

### **Conclusion:**

S.123 provides an important acknowledgement that operator fees can be a barrier to transportation access for older Vermonters and Vermonters with disabilities with limited incomes. By providing discounted fees for those on SSI and SSDI, one barrier is reduced, and every barrier reduced matters. The savings and increased access to licenses can make a real difference both financially and for quality of life for Vermonters.

### **References:**

- State Health Assessment and Improvement Plan [State Health Assessment & Improvement Plan | Vermont Department of Health](#)
- Public Transit Policy Plan [PTPP Final.pdf](#)
- Age Strong VT Plan [hpdp-bh-age-strong-roadmap2024-2034.pdf](#)
- Age Strong VT Listening Session Report [Listening session report 2023](#)
- State Plan on Aging Needs Assessment Report (available upon request)