

An Action Plan for Seniors Transportation in Manitoba: Strategic Priorities

**Gina Sylvestre
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ABOUT THE MANITOBA SENIORS AND HEALTHY AGING SECRETARIAT

The Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat is a department within the provincial government that works with all departments to create an environment within Manitoba that promotes health, independence and well-being of all older Manitobans.

ABOUT THE SENIORS TRANSPORTATION WORKING GROUP

The Seniors Transportation Working Group is a community coalition involved in ensuring that seniors in Winnipeg can access affordable, accessible and appropriate transportation when they need it. The coalition, representing service agencies and interested seniors, was formed in 2000 to respond to concerns about the serious difficulties experienced by older adults in accessing mobility resources.

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE OF URBAN STUDIES

Founded in 1969 by the University of Winnipeg, the Institute of Urban Studies (IUS) was created at a time when the city's "urban university" recognized a need to address the problems and concerns of the inner city. From the outset, IUS has been both an educational and an applied research centre. The Institute has remained committed to examining urban development issues in a broad, non-partisan context and has never lost sight of the demands of applied research aimed at practical, often novel, solutions to urban problems and issues.

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1.0 Introduction

There is growing recognition in Manitoba that the transportation options available to older adults are a crucial factor in aging successfully. Throughout the last decade there have been a range of community efforts to improve the mobility of the oldest members of society both in rural and urban areas of the province. More recently, research has been conducted to evaluate potential options for improvements to transportation and to determine the level of governmental and community engagement that is required to implement identified strategies.

As follow-up to the report *Mobility Options for the Aging Population of Manitoba: An Action Plan for Regional Solutions*, commissioned through the Seniors Transportation Working Group by the Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat in 2007, a one-day workshop was held in Winnipeg on March 20, 2008 (Appendix A). The gathering brought together a group representative of civic, provincial and federal government departments, senior-serving organizations, service providers and researchers (Appendix B.1/B.2). The goal of the workshop was to review the recommendations of the report and to identify strategies that should be prioritized. This report examines the strategic priorities for seniors mobility/transportation in Manitoba that were established at the workshop.

Recommendations are founded on the recognition that seniors' abilities will range along a continuum which spans between independent and dependent mobility. It is imperative that available options range from the most independent form of mobility of driving one's own car to the most dependent mobility resource represented by para-transit services. Based on this continuum, the workshop participants ranked the recommendations from the previous report's action plan into five strategic priority areas by what was seen as "doable".

1. Provincial Support Services to Seniors program
2. Rural Transportation
3. Private Transportation
4. Public Transportation
5. Accessible Design

The participants suggested the need for a coordinated provincial strategy and further contributed to the formalization of refined recommendations (Appendix C) and corresponding action items within each priority area. They also identified relevant stakeholders (Appendix D).

The outcomes of this dialogue formulate the beginnings of a comprehensive, collaborative and multi-sectoral action plan. The priority areas are presented in rank order and specific recommendations for moving forward are followed by suggested next steps. At the forefront of proposed future efforts are intentions of improved coordination and development of partnerships, focus on increased funding and diversification of funding sources, refinement of education strategies, implementation of public awareness campaigns and considerations of health and well-being.



In following with the previous report, and for purposes of efficiency and efficacy, it is essential that these initiatives be carried out as a collaborative provincial effort. The transportation needs of rural seniors must be considered an increasingly urgent matter. The options available to urban seniors require ongoing refinement. Under the auspices of a concentrated focus, these endeavours will better be able to meet the vision of affordable, available, acceptable, accessible, and adaptable transportation options for all Manitoba seniors.



2.0 Provincial Support Services to Seniors

The Provincial Support Services to Seniors program of Manitoba Health/Healthy Living provides funding to senior resource councils and multipurpose senior centres across Manitoba. This program focuses on community care for older adults, keeping seniors living independently.

With improved funding, these groups would be better able to tailor transportation initiatives to suit the special needs within each of their communities by drawing upon local knowledge. This strategic priority focuses upon capacity building using a community development approach.

2.1 Recommendations

- 1) Increase funding to Provincial Support Services to Seniors to augment mobility resources for the aging population
- 2) Diversify fund sources and consider sustainability through creation of an endowment fund

2.2 Next Steps

1) Increase funding to PSSS

- Examine how senior resource councils and senior centres can utilize increased funding to improve mobility resources for seniors
- Explore the feasibility of mandating additional funds for mobility resources
- Ensure equal access to funding in both urban and rural areas
- Consider whether funding should be universal or designated according to need, that is target low-income seniors
- Develop a coordinated system for efficient use of mobility resources
- Examine opportunities for community economic development through the expansion of services, e.g. community engagement through volunteer driving and taxi voucher programs

2) Diversify Funds

- A long term goal geared towards the support and sustainability of initiatives would be to diversify fund sources and secure annual income through the establishment of an endowment fund. Whether this would be best achieved at a community, regional or provincial level would need to be explored.



3.0 Rural Transportation

A third of the province's population is located in rural areas. Seniors comprise a growing proportion of that group, with the percentage over age 65 being well over 11% (up to over 19%) in most regions.

Transportation is an issue of increasing importance in rural Manitoba. There remains a large knowledge gap with respect to the varying levels of need and access in different areas. As a result, seniors are largely unaware of mobility options available to them.

3.1 Recommendations

- 1) Develop a network of stakeholders
- 2) Create a province-wide inventory of mobility resources available to seniors
- 3) Establish integration and coordination of mobility resources, including the Mobility Disadvantaged Transportation Program
- 4) Promote comprehensive policy to improve affordability of transportation for rural seniors

3.2 Next Steps

1) Network Development

- Establish transportation for seniors as a priority item on the agenda
- Partner with existing rural groups to ensure dialogue on transportation
- Build and foster community relationships that will facilitate the improvement of mobility resources for older adults

2) Resource Inventory for Rural Manitoba

- Create an inventory of all government and community programs and services that assist seniors with transportation
- Examine funding structures for all mobility resources

3) Integration and Coordination

- Establish integration and coordination of mobility resources amongst rural communities
- Review and ensure consistent application of the guidelines for the Mobility Transportation Disadvantaged Program, including a consistent fee structure applied province-wide
- Consider cost-effective, user friendly, community appropriate alternatives to operationalize the Mobility Transportation Disadvantaged Program

4) Affordability & Policy

- Address issue of cost to travel to Winnipeg for medical care



4.0 Private Transportation

Private transportation remains a common form of travel for independent seniors. Being able to drive is not only a matter of convenience, but is more often related to independence, self esteem, well-being and contributes to an important sense of locus of control.

Whether through the operation of a private automobile or as the passenger of a volunteer driven vehicle (where the drivers are often seniors themselves), it is essential that older drivers are supported through education to improve safety and confidence on the road. An older driver education program is of great value, especially where there are few alternatives to driving such as in rural areas of Manitoba.

Nobody wants to endanger others on the road, but often a scarcity of mobility resources inhibits the ability of older adults to rely on appropriate alternatives. As levels of independence change, drivers need to be aware of existing mobility options. It is best if the transition to these other forms of travel can begin before they become necessary. This subject is often a sensitive one that can become emotionally charged, especially if broached by family members. A peer model, reducing the stigma of making this change and bringing this topic to light in a non-threatening, supportive manner could help ease the stress due to this transition.

Taxis are regarded to be a critical source of mobility for seniors, while offsetting the increasing demand for para-transit services. In Manitoba, there are many barriers that reduce the viability of taxis as an option. Increasing accessibility through affordability and coordination, as well as improving communication through education for both seniors and drivers, will be essential in creating a senior-friendly taxi climate.

4.1 Recommendations

- 1) Support drivers by prolonging personal vehicle use through driver education
- 2) Ease the transition from driving through public education and awareness building
- 3) Support taxis as alternatives by considering driver training, insurance liability, senior-friendly designation as well as passenger affordability and education

4.2 Next Steps

1) Safe Driving

- Ensure an older driver education program is available in all Manitoba communities
- Promote the older driver education program as a non-threatening, non-evaluative, refresher course and a tool for building and regaining confidence
- Include information about the older driver education program with license renewals/bills
- Promote the older driver education program with discounts for, or free, classes at select ages
- Ensure the older driver education program is accessible in terms of affordability, length of class time, and includes an in-vehicle training component



- Research the impact of graduated licensing that allows seniors to maintain independence but avoid high risk situations

2) Promote Alternatives

- Ensure a solid, accessible continuum of mobility resources in all Manitoba communities
- Embark on a comprehensive advertising campaign to raise awareness of existing mobility resources at a community-based level, through different media outlets
- Provide education to seniors, their families and service providers (e.g. medical professionals) of alternate mobility resources
- Use a peer-led speakers bureau model to disseminate information in a non-threatening, supportive way, on making the driving transition
- Develop a package/presentation for medical college to provide doctors with information about the older driver education program, as well as existing mobility resources, to facilitate the transition from driving
- Support efforts to recruit volunteer drivers

3) Taxis

- Educate seniors on how to use taxis, i.e., when is a cab a cost-effective transport option?
- Provide awareness to seniors that they can request larger vehicles, provide comments on service and express their concerns
- Design and promote senior sensitive/friendly training for professional drivers
- Promote the English as an Additional Language course for drivers
- Examine viability of off-peak taxi rate reductions through dialogue with stakeholders
- Explore the most efficient means to administer a subsidy program for seniors, e.g. card system to bill older person, transportation supplements, taxi coupon savers
- Investigate how to implement and promote senior friendly designation and recruit taxi cab companies to acquire this designation
- Examine how to address insurance/liability issues around the provision of door-to-door service



5.0 Public Transportation

Public transit currently provides many seniors with opportunities for mobility. Public transit systems exist in Brandon, Flin Flon, Thompson and Winnipeg, in addition to 65 rural communities who access the Mobility Disadvantaged Transportation Program. While all public transit systems are funded by Manitoba Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade, each community is responsible for the development and administration of priorities for the program.

Public transit service can be improved to further accommodate the needs of seniors. Through the operation of community shuttles, fare reduction strategies, fine tuning of accessibility, senior sensitivity training, public awareness campaigns, and the coordination of stakeholders lending services to demand responsive transit, public transit can play a pivotal role in delivering high quality transportation options to the aging population.

In suburban/urban areas, bus travel can provide regular access to services essential to seniors' well-being. By fostering a climate of age-friendly travel, trained drivers can ease the stress of accessing public transit. Furthermore, rural programs such as the Mobility Disadvantaged Transit Program, open the door for many otherwise housebound seniors to interact with their community and their peers.

5.1 Recommendations

- 1) Address accessibility to public transit for older Manitobans
- 2) Coordinate Community Shuttles
- 3) Expand Winnipeg Transit DART
- 4) Improve efficiency of Handi-Transit

5.2 Next Steps

1) Address Accessibility

- Consider low-cost annual/seasonal/daily public transit passes
- Address pedestrian access to bus stops by minimizing the impact of winter conditions through strategic sidewalk snow clearing; promoting communication systems to report on needed sidewalk cleaning; improving bus shelters; and ensuring benches are in place where needed
- Address entry/exit access issues with low floor buses, allowing seniors to sit before starting, and allowing enough time for seniors to exit
- Improve bus signage so that everyone can see what bus is coming
- Include door-to-door service where required
- Support Transit on age-friendly initiatives including GPS technology
- Consider partnering with groups that raise awareness and promote greater accessibility to public transit
- Use advertising on buses to raise awareness of the mobility needs of seniors to the general public



- Promote driver training to sensitize bus drivers to the needs of seniors
- Expand Transit's program that teaches seniors how to use public buses
- Work with Provincial Support Services to Seniors program to develop a buddy system that provides en-route support for seniors
- Consider intergenerational volunteer programs with high schools to provide assistance to senior bus riders
- Consider the effectiveness of integrating seniors mobility needs with the school bus system

2) Community Shuttles

- Approach Transit to examine the possibility of community shuttles that would be provided in alternate areas of the city and thereby ensure access to services and shopping on a regular basis
- Partner with businesses to increase accessibility of seniors to services
- Consider options to make shuttles truly door-to-door service instead of pick-up at seniors housing
- Coordinate service with senior resource councils
- Reduce staff administration time and duplication of service within Winnipeg of community shuttles by partnering with existing experts, coordinating and streamlining processes

3) DART

- Approach Winnipeg Transit to examine the possibility of expanding the curb-to-curb service provided by the DART system in other neighbourhoods with high concentrations of seniors and disabled persons

4) Handi-Transit

- Examine policy development to address eligibility requirements and encourage regular use of Transit whenever possible
- Provide increased resources in winter, or explore a system where resources were increased, or only available, in winter



6.0 Accessible Design

Ensuring that seniors are able to move comfortably and safely from their homes to their mode of transportation must be embedded in planning and decision-making. Accessibility is of great benefit to all. It extends to the community at large and impacts mobility challenged people of all ages.

On a small scale, considerations of walkability, winter conditions, vehicle design and policies related to personal assistance are immediate concerns with fairly straight forward solutions. On a larger scale, policies connected to community design and follow through of goals geared towards livable communities must be prioritized.

6.1 Recommendations

- 1) Improve conditions for walkability
- 2) Create livable communities through accessible design

6.2 Next Steps

1) Walkability

- Use GIS analysis to identify where seniors are located
- Develop snow clearing awareness
- Prioritize certain areas for snow clearing based on concentrations of seniors
- Initiate public awareness campaign regarding snow clearing and needs of seniors

2) Promotion of Universal Community Accessibility

- Partner with relevant stakeholders to ensure seniors voices are heard
- Establish a central liaison to coordinate partnerships
- Partner with the Age-friendly Manitoba Initiative to prioritize mobility issues
- Promote commitment to a seniors transportation strategy within Plan Winnipeg, and ensure it considers accessibility issues from an aging perspective
- Consider long-term strategy to promote livable communities that provide seniors with accessible residential options that are close to services and transportation resources
- Partner with initiatives that promote visibility, i.e. accessible homes



7.0 Stakeholders

Moving forward will require the recruitment of key stakeholders for the creation of partnerships and collaboration on pertinent actions. The majority of agencies and groups identified during the workshop were represented at the table. Now that there is general consensus from the groups currently involved on who needs to participate in the advancement of the priorities established herein, it will be necessary to act within strategic time frames.

Appendix D illustrates the breadth and depth of recommended stakeholder involvement. Governmental agencies and senior serving organizations make for natural partnerships in this process. They are the agencies whose participation is most strongly recommended for the majority of action items in this document, revealing their influence in advancing the agenda. However, keeping peripheral players informed and engaged is of great value to producing more inclusive outcomes.



8.0 Conclusion

Mobility options must be flexible, responsive, effective, accessible and efficient regardless of a person's level of independence. The approach of a coordinated provincial strategy will:

- Require bringing together stakeholders to share in a vision of a comprehensive approach to seniors transportation that is consistent throughout the province
- Promote greater collaboration amongst players through the creation of partnerships and coordination of actions to the advancement of existing plans and identified goals
- Ensure a continuum of mobility resources for all older Manitobans in all areas - rural and urban
- Highlight the need for greater funding to ensure both the sustainability and affordability of mobility options for seniors
- Designate long-term funding for transportation for seniors and ensure equal access to funding resources
- Link transportation to the social determinants of health by establishing clear links between health, isolation and transportation
- Improve education and training for both the providers and the users of transportation/mobility resources
- Promote public awareness of seniors transportation/mobility issues and resources

Some actions can be carried out in relatively short timelines as they are administrative in nature and require minor and known alterations within existing frameworks. Other actions will require greater policy and structural changes before they can be realized. It must be recognized that these are set as long term goals to work towards for optimal mobility options. These recommendations, while put forward to improve transportation availability for seniors, benefit all citizens.



Appendix A
Workshop Agenda – March 20, 2008

**Mobility Options for the Aging Population of Manitoba:
An Action Plan for Regional Solutions**

March 20, 2008

**Clarion Hotel, Winnipeg Airport/Polo Park
1445 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg**

AGENDA
(9:30-2:15 pm)

9:30 am	Refreshments & Registration
10:00	Opening Remarks Honourable Kerri Irvin-Ross, Minister responsible for Seniors
10:15 – 10:45 am	Seniors Transportation: Potential Solutions Gina Sylvestre, Institute of Urban Studies, U of W
10:45 – 11:30 am	Break-Out Groups: Priorities <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Rank the six recommendations in order of priority.2. Rank the six recommendations in order of what is most doable.
11:30 am – 12:00 noon	Reporting Back Questions and Discussion
12:00 noon – 12:45 pm	Lunch Provided
12:45 – 1:00 pm	Moving Forward: Priorities and Partnerships
1:00 – 1:30 pm	Break-Out Groups: Moving Forward <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Who should be involved in the priority under discussion; what are the natural partnerships?2. What are some foreseeable next steps for that priority?3. What specific actions can be taken?
1:30 – 2:00 pm	Reporting back Questions and Discussion
2:00 – 2:15 pm	Wrap Up



Appendix B.1
Workshop Participants by Agency – March 20, 2008

Agency	Title
Active Living Coalition for Older Adults in Manitoba & Wellness Institute	Healthy Aging Project Coordinator
Age & Opportunity	Project Coordinator
Canadian Centre for Disabilities Studies	Executive Director
Canadian National Institute for the Blind	Orientation & Mobility Instructor
City of Winnipeg - Access Committee	Access Coordinator
City of Winnipeg - Planning, Property and Development	Transport Planner
Creative Retirement Manitoba	Executive Director
FAFM, la Fédération des aînés franco-manitobains	President
Federal Superannuates National Association	Manitoba Provincial Advocacy Officer
Gwen Sector Seniors Centre	Program & Volunteer Coordinator
Handi-Transit Policy Advisory Committee	Committee Member
Institute of Urban Studies	Research Associate
Institute of Urban Studies	Research Assistants
Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade	Statistical Officer
Interlake Regional Health Authority	Support Services to Seniors Specialist
Manitoba Association of Multi-Purpose Senior Centres	Coordinator President
Manitoba Council on Aging	Representative
Manitoba Health	Consultant
Manitoba Public Insurance - Road Safety Department	Vulnerable Road User Issue Specialist
Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat	Consultant
Manitoba Society of Seniors	Executive Director President
Norman Regional Health Authority	Seniors Team
Partners Seeking Solutions for Seniors	Project Coordinator
Provincial Support Services to Seniors	Senior Representatives
Public Health Agency of Canada	Consultant
Rupert's Land Care Giver Services	Project Coordinator
Safety Services Manitoba	Director of Industrial and Road Safety
Seniors Health Resource Team – River East	Occupational Therapist
Seniors Transportation Working Group	Co-Chairs
Society for Manitobans with Disabilities	CEO - Clearing House
St. James Assiniboia Seniors Centre & Mayor's Seniors Advisory Committee	President
Two Rivers Seniors Resource Council Inc.	Senior Resource Coordinator
Winnipeg Regional Health Authority	Community Development and Seniors Specialist
Winnipeg Transit	Community Relations
Winnipeg Transit - Handi-Transit	Occupational Therapist Supervisor



Appendix B.2
Workshop Regrets by Agency – March 20, 2008

Agency
Active Living Alliance for Canadians with a Disability
Association of Senior Resource Coordinators
Manitoba Committee for Seniors
Manitoba Housing Authority
Manitoba Taxicab Board
Middlechurch - Community Services Program
South Eastman Health Authority
Winnipeg River Senior Service Inc.



Appendix C

Strategic Priority Recommendations

Provincial Strategy

It is essential that these initiatives be carried out as a collaborative provincial strategy. This will require a concentrated focus to develop a comprehensive approach to seniors mobility/transportation - one that is consistent throughout the province.

Strategic Priority 1 – Provincial Support Services to Seniors

- 1) Increase funding to Provincial Support Services to Seniors to augment mobility resources for the aging population
- 2) Diversify fund sources and consider sustainability through creation of an endowment fund

Strategic Priority 2 – Rural Transportation

- 1) Develop a network of stakeholders
- 2) Create a province-wide inventory of mobility resources available to seniors
- 3) Establish integration and coordination of mobility resources, including the Mobility Disadvantaged Transportation Program
- 4) Promote comprehensive policy to improve affordability of transportation for rural seniors

Strategic Priority 3 – Private Transportation

- 1) Support drivers by prolonging personal vehicle use through driver education
- 2) Ease the transition from driving through public education and awareness building
- 3) Support taxis as alternatives by considering driver training, insurance liability, senior-friendly designation, as well as passenger affordability and education,

Strategic Priority 4 – Public Transportation

- 1) Address accessibility to public transit for older Manitobans
- 2) Coordinate Community Shuttles
- 3) Expand Winnipeg Transit DART
- 4) Improve efficiency of Handi-Transit

Strategic Priority 5 – Accessible Design

- 1) Improve conditions for walkability
- 2) Create livable communities through accessible design



Appendix D
Proposed Stakeholders and Area(s) of Involvement Per Recommendation
Strategic Priorities 1: PSSS, 2: Rural, 3: Private Transportation, 4: Public Transportation
and 5: Accessible Design

Stakeholder Name	Strategic Priority Area															
	PSSS	PSSS	Rural	Rural	Rural	Rural	Private	Private	Private	Public	Public	Public	Public	Design	Design	
	<i>Recommendation</i>															
	1	2	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	1	2	
Age-Friendly Manitoba Initiative															x	
Association of Manitoba Municipalities	x		x		x	x									x	
Canadian Centre for Disability Studies															x	
City Administration			x		x	x				x	x	x	x	x	x	
Chamber of Commerce															x	
College of Physicians and Surgeons								x								
Disability Sector			x	x	x	x				x	x	x	x		x	
Faith-based communities	x															
Institute of Urban Studies				x												
Manitoba Health/Healthy Living	x		x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x			
MB Infrastructure and Transportation									x							
MB Intergovernmental Affairs			x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x			
Manitoba Public Insurance							x	x								
MB Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Private Transportation Companies									x							
Provincial Support Services to Seniors	x		x				x			x	x	x	x			
Public Health Agency of Canada			x		x	x									x	
Regional Health Authorities	x		x		x	x				x						
Rural Working Group on Older Manitobans	x		x	x	x	x										
Safety Services Manitoba							x	x								
Senior-serving organizations (e.g. ALCOA-MB, CRM, MSOS, SHRT & health-based organizations)	x		x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		
Seniors Transportation Working Group	x		x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Taxi Cab Board	x								x							
Winnipeg Transit										x	x	x	x			

