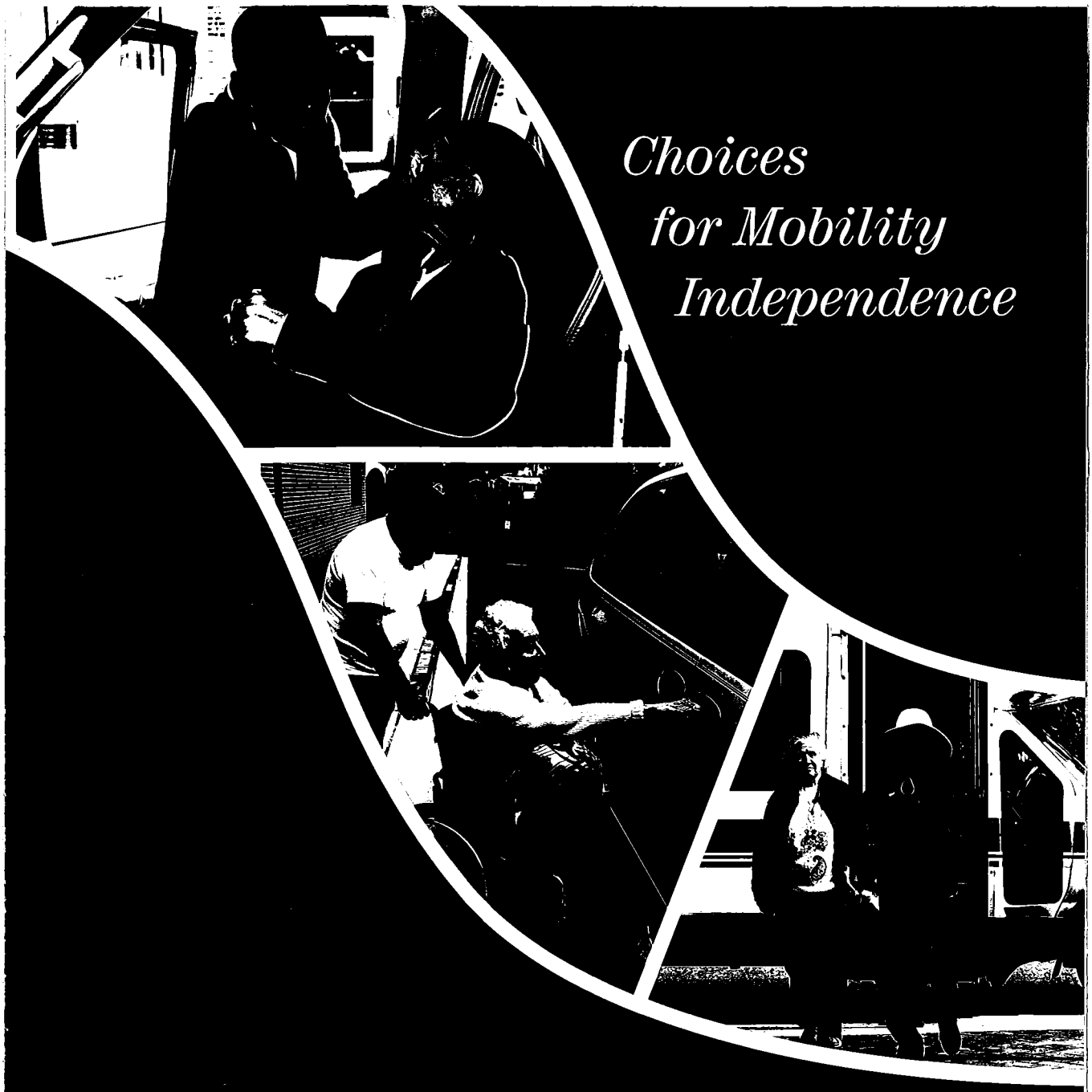

Choices for Mobility Independence

Transportation Options

INDEPENDENT. ACTIVE. CONNECTED. CONFIDENT. IN CONTROL.

Transportation Options
for Older Adults

Have you ever thought about what would happen if the transportation you use is no longer an option? How would you continue to maintain your independence so that you could continue with your daily routines? Who would you turn to for assistance? People often look to friends or relatives to assist with transportation – this may be a good option for you, but it is not always the most convenient for you or for them.

Thinking ahead to alternative transportation options can give you peace of mind should your current means of getting around in your community change in the future. This brochure will assist you to learn about various alternative transportation options and some things to consider to help you make confident decisions about which option would be best for you.

Keep in mind that not all types of transportation are available in every community. Several aging organizations can assist you in learning about the options in your community, such as your local Area Agency on Aging (AAA), Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC), and Indian Tribal Organization. Contact the Eldercare Locator at 800.677.1116 or www.eldercare.gov to identify these resources in your area.

"It is our choices. . .that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities."
~J.K. Rowling~

Transportation Options

Depending upon your destination and physical needs, transportation choices in your area might include buses, vans, taxis, or even volunteer drivers from human service organizations. Listed below are descriptions of transportation resources and services for you to think about and explore as you look ahead:

- **Volunteer Driver Programs:** Local faith-based and nonprofit organizations frequently have a network of volunteers who offer flexible transportation for shopping, doctors' appointments, recreation, and other activities. One-way, round-trip, and multi-stop rides are usually available; reservations are needed. These programs are provided free, on a donation basis, through membership dues, or for a minimal cost.

- **Paratransit Service:** Public transit, aging organizations, and private agencies provide door-to-door or curb-to-curb transportation using mini-buses or small vans (vehicles for less than 25 passengers). Paratransit service often requires users to make advanced reservations but still offers a degree of flexibility and personalization in scheduling. **Curb-to-curb** service provides for passenger pick up and delivery at the curb or roadside; **door-to-door** service offers a higher level of assistance by picking up passengers at the door of their homes and delivering them to the doors of their destinations. Paratransit and van services offer reduced fares for older adults and persons with disabilities, and some providers may operate on a donation basis.

- **Door-through-Door (Escort) Service:** Private agencies provide drivers or escorts who offer personal, hands-on assistance by helping passengers through the doors of their residences and destinations, as needed. This type of service includes several levels of assistance from opening doors and providing verbal guidance, to physical support. Persons with severe physical or mental disabilities typically use this service. Contact your local aging organizations to find out if this service is available in your area.

- **Public Transit/Fixed Route Service:** Public transit agencies provide bus and rail services along established routes with set schedules on a non-reservation basis — also referred to as "public transportation" or "mass transit". Reduced rate fares and additional transportation services are available for older adults and persons with disabilities. Information about routes, schedules, fares, and special services are available through your public transit agency.

- **Travel Training:** Public transit agencies and local aging organizations provide free, hands-on instruction to help older adults and persons with disabilities learn to travel safely and independently within public transit systems. Topics discussed include the best routes to take to reach various destinations, hours of service, the cost of the trip (including available discounts), and how to pay for services (such as fare cards or tokens). Demonstrations on how to ride public buses and trains also are provided.

- **Taxi Service:** Passengers activate this service by calling a dispatcher to request a ride between locations of their choice. Trips usually can be scheduled in advance or on the spot. Some taxis are wheelchair accessible and meet ADA standards; inquire with your local taxi providers. Fares are charged on a per-mile or per-minute basis on top of a base charge for each trip, and may be payable through a transportation voucher program.

- **Transportation Vouchers Programs:** Area Agencies on Aging, Aging and Disability Resource Centers, and other social service organizations often provide fare assistance programs that enable qualified persons (usually economically disadvantaged older adults or persons with disabilities) to purchase vouchers for transportation services at a reduced rate. The vouchers are then used to pay for services from a participating transportation provider that can include public transportation, volunteer programs, or taxis and other private companies. Applications for these programs are required. Participants are responsible for reserving and securing the services they need.

In addition to the services described above, some communities have **mobility managers** who can guide you through the transportation resources and services that are available. Mobility managers know the community-wide transportation service network and understand how it operates. Their main focus is to assist consumers in choosing the best options to meet their individual travel needs. Contact your local aging organization or public transit agency to determine if a mobility manager is available in your area.

Key Considerations

Depending upon your lifestyle, one or more transportation options can keep you connected to all of your activities. Evaluate what your transportation needs are now or might be in the future — including necessary as well as social activities. When investigating transportation options, there are a few things to consider in order to make a confident decision about which options are best for you. Consider the following questions based on type of transportation provider:

Eligibility:

- What, if any, requirements are there to qualify for the service?
- Is any evaluation needed prior to using the service?
- Are rides provided for wheelchair users or other persons with disabilities?
- If needed, can a family member serve as an escort?

Affordability:

- What is the cost of the service?
- Are discounts available?
- How are costs calculated?
- Is there a membership fee?
- Is my income a factor for using this service?
- Can an account be set up in advance with the service?
- Will my insurance pay for rides by this service provider?

Accessibility:

- What is the service area?
- What times does the service operate?
- Are door-though-door, door-to-door, or curb-to-curb services provided?
- Is a reservation needed, and how far in advance?
- Are rides provided in the evenings, on weekends, or on holidays?
- Are rides provided to social as well as medical or shopping appointments?
- Will driver provide assistance with packages and other carry-ons?
- Are vehicles wheelchair accessible?
- If other passengers will be riding at the same time, what is the maximum length of time of the ride while others are being picked up or dropped off?

"A goal without a plan is just a wish." ~Antoine de Saint-Exupery~

Resources

Transportation options vary from community to community. Your community might offer additional options that are not included in this brochure and, as the need for alternative transportation grows, new options continue to be developed. Find out about the transportation options in your own community by contacting the two key resources listed below. Don't delay – call or visit a website today!

eldercare locator

Connecting You to Community Services

800.677.1116 www.eldercare.gov

866.528.NCST (6278) www.seniortransportation.net