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CONTACT: Richard Smith 951-653-0740 rsmith@ILPconnect.org
Ivet Woolridge 951-653-0740 iwoolridge@ILPconnect.org

LA County Volunteer Driver Project Ends

525 clients received 873,230 miles of assisted transportation

Riverside, CA – June 30, 2019 – Five hundred and twenty-five clients of Los Angeles County Workforce Development Aging and Community Services (WDACS) received 83,514 needed trips by a volunteer driver of their choice from August of 2017 until the end of May. Most of the transportation provided was for medical purposes or for grocery shopping, but travel for other reasons was also permitted.

The nonprofit Independent Living Partnership (ILP) had been selected through a competitive grant process to administer the project. ILP invented its TRIP Model service twenty-seven years ago and has been providing the elderly, sick, disabled and alone residents of Riverside County with volunteer driver mileage reimbursement service for all of that time. When the opportunity came up for ILP to administer a similar program for WDACS in LA County, ILP applied and was awarded the contract.

Clients were referred by WDACS Mobility Staff to ILP, which then enrolled and supported client participation in the service, processing their requests for reimbursement, interfacing with them by phone, and issuing monthly mileage reimbursement checks for them to give to their volunteer drivers.

TRIP is a rider-centered volunteer program that includes rider responsibilities that enable them to get the transportation they require. They are able to recruit their own volunteer drivers from among friends and neighbors. If there is a problem getting a volunteer, TRIP staff coaches them on effective ways to ask people who they may have overlooked.

The design of the volunteer service includes the payment of mileage reimbursement for people who volunteer to drive for neighbors and friends. According to Woolridge, “The payment of mileage reimbursement makes it much easier for our riders to request transportation assistance because asking for help is more like a business transaction than asking for charity.” A typical conversation between a rider asking for a ride and a potential volunteer often is something like “When you go to the store next week, can I come with you? I can help pay for the gas.” According to Woolridge, “The payment of a mileage reimbursement for volunteer drivers also helps cement the assistance relationship of drivers with their rider.”

Almost sixty percent of WDACS clients in the project were seventy years of age and older and nearly eighty percent were not any longer able to drive themselves. When asked to comment about the project in a satisfaction and outcomes survey, riders wrote things like “This program was amazing. I felt more independent and was able to help

myself more.” Project clients also said they were unhappy that it ended and hoped it would be available to them again.

In response to survey questions, ninety-five percent said they were completely satisfied with the service and ninety-eight percent said they would recommend the service to someone that needed assisted transportation.

When asked about the best qualities of what WDACS called their New Freedom Volunteer Driver Program, clients agreed that one of the best qualities of the service was the freedom and flexibility they enjoyed. Other highly rated qualities of the service included the ability to select their own volunteer driver, rides being free, feeling safe, not having to make advance reservations and the reliability of getting a ride when needed.

The use of the innovative TRIP Model to deliver escorted transportation service for WDACS clients was highly cost-effective. The average cost of each one-way trip to WDACS was \$4.86. To put it another way, 20.6 one-way trips were able to be provided for each \$100 spent by WDACS for the service. The cost per passenger mile of the service for the term of the contract was forty-seven cents, which compares very favorably to the average national cost per passenger mile for a city bus of \$1.09, as reported in the National Transit Database for 2015.

In addition to administering the recent WDACS project, ILP’s TRIP Program in neighboring Riverside County has been quietly helping thousands of residents without other transportation alternatives since 1993. ILP also supports the operation of independent TRIP Model programs in other transit and community service agencies.

Visit the ILP-TRIP website at ILPconnect.org.



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