

# Transportation for People with Disabilities Gets Another Welcome Boost

Some go without, but reliable and predictable funding is needed for all volunteer driver services

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**Independent Living Partnership →**

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RIVERSIDE, Calif., May 18, 2021 /PRNewswire/ -- The non-profit Independent Living Partnership (ILP) has been awarded a 1.5 million dollar grant for the next three years, by the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC), to continue to provide "TRIP" volunteer driver services through 2024. According to Richard Smith, CEO of ILP, "The newly awarded grant will supplement other grants to ensure continuation of TRIP services for people with disabilities across Riverside County."

The TRIP volunteer driver service for older adults, persons with disabilities, sick and chronically ill, isolated and homebound, low-income residents has been provided for residents of Riverside County since 1993. Recommendations from the Riverside County Department of Public Services, Riverside County Office on Aging, Congressman Takano (California 41), and Congressman Ruiz (California 36) supported the application.

Smith says, "Over the years, ILP's critical TRIP service has had to be funded through a constant stream of grant applications to various funding organizations." He says, "The constantly overlapping grants, with different start and end dates, from different sources, has created operational uncertainty and has been difficult to manage." Smith adds, "We have been lucky to be successful with grant funding that has been on-going for so long, while we know that many non-profits that rely on grant funding for similar services have not, and this funding challenge needs to be corrected."

ILP also advises other organizations on start-up and operation of volunteer services like TRIP. Smith says, "We are often contacted by people who would like to provide volunteer assistance for unserved seniors and disabled in their area, but more often than not they are unable to get needed

funding."

According to Debbie Toth, President and CEO of the nonprofit Choice in Aging, "The difference between independence and institutionalization or radical reduction in quality of life and health, is transportation." In an address to California's new Disability and Aging Community Living Advisory Committee of the California Health and Human Services Agency, she continued "We MUST have a legislative and budget fix...to build needs-based accessible transportation systems."

Ivet Woolridge, Chief Operating Officer of ILP says we know there are people with disabilities and elderly and others for whom transit, paratransit, Lift and Uber do not work because they are our ILP-TRIP clients. In every community there are older adults, persons with disabilities, sick and chronically ill, isolated and homebound, low-income residents who are not well-served by alternatives that they are expected to rely on for daily transportation needs.

"Reliable, accessible, affordable, convenient, cost effective service, sufficient to support user needs, should be available for those who cannot receive adequate transportation in other ways", says Smith. There should be reliable and predictable funding for this type of service that does not require unending grant application submissions, instability and future uncertainty for the service organizations or their clients.

ILP's TRIP volunteer driver, mileage reimbursement service is innovative. Woolridge reports, "Each day TRIP provides an average of 375 free, escorted trips, for thousands of Riverside County residents who would not get where they need to go in any other way." She says, "We provided for most of the needs of our clients and I believe this type of service should be everywhere as a reliable part of community transportation alternatives."

TRIP is a "rider-centered" volunteer driver service, anchored in strong relationships between riders and volunteers, that has operated successfully since 1993. For more information about TRIP, visit [ILPconnect.org](http://ILPconnect.org). Smith began directing the TRIP Program shortly after it began. The mission of the Independent Living Partnership is to ensure the independence and dignity of the elderly and persons with disabilities, their families and caregivers through education and access to empowering services and resources.

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