

2021-22 ILP TRIP Performance and Satisfaction Report

TRIP volunteer drivers, during 21-22, took TRIP riders on travel to needed destinations that would be the distance equivalent to 34 times around the earth. 849,016 miles of volunteer assisted transportation, and 102,772 one-way trips, were provided for 930 individual TRIP clients over the 12-month period from July 1, 2021, to June 30, 2022.

Twenty-four percent of the trips provided were for required medical services. An additional twenty-two percent of the travel for our disabled, non-driving clients was provided to enable them to shop for groceries and other essential items.

The trips in Riverside County were provided at no charge to the client riders. They were paid for by grants through the Riverside County Transportation Commission, the Riverside County Office on Aging, Federal Section 5310, enhanced mobility of seniors and individuals with disabilities, funding through the California Department of Transportation, and with financial assistance for developmentally disabled children through the Angel View non-profit. ILP is proud and grateful to work with these organizations to make usable transportation for our clients who would otherwise not be able to get the transportation they need to successfully live their lives.

A huge amount of the success of the TRIP Volunteer Driver service for all of Riverside County is because of the caring and generous volunteer service of friends, neighbors, and caregivers of our clients. During the 21-22 program year, more than one thousand volunteer drivers donated the equivalent of 4,060 days of their personal time to make the transportation possible! (97,446 recorded hours!)

The performance statistics for the years' service were an average cost per one-way trip of \$8.26 and a \$.48 per mile subsidy to make the rides happen. To put this in perspective, the net national subsidy for public transportation in 2019 was over \$.91 per passenger mile.

The ILP Board of Directors, at a special meeting on August 5th, reviewed our public nonprofit mission to work to provide access to needed human and social services for elderly and disabled persons with the intent of achieving higher levels of independence for them. We believe we are accomplishing our mission and have recommitted ourselves to the importance of our work.

In the fourth quarter of 2021, ILP surveyed current riders to extract their evaluation of the importance of the components of the services operation and found that all of the components of the original design are regarded as very important by most riders. When asked to make suggestions for improvement, some suggestions were made for increased travel allowances, which are generally determined at the time of enrollment by the travel needs stated by applicants, and for payment of increased mileage reimbursements for the volunteer drivers. Our last analysis, based on the average mpg of U.S. passenger vehicles indicated that the current mileage rate paid results in reimbursement for volunteer of \$8.75 per mile of transportation they provide.

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The TRIP Volunteer Driver Program of the Independent Living Partnership was designed and created through the collaboration of the Riverside County Transportation Commission and the Riverside County Office on Aging. The regional transportation agency had been given the responsibility of making sure that usable transportation was available for all residents of Riverside County. The Riverside County Office on Aging had received many calls and recorded comments and complaints from older adults and people with disabilities who had expressed concerns that adequate services were not available for them.

Planners from the partnering agencies conducted listening sessions and focus groups in the early 1990s of “seniors” experiencing transportation challenges. Participants in the studies were asked to describe the characteristics of the program that they thought should be available for mobility challenges individuals. The plan was to design a service that would eliminate the issues that were seen to be limiting transportation for seniors and persons with disabilities.

The consensus of study participants was that:

- Service should be available on a 24/7 basis
- The service should be highly flexible and adaptable for those most difficult to serve
- No advance scheduling should be required
- An escort should be provided who could stay with and go through-the-door with riders
- No curbside waiting should be required
- Multiple stops should be possible on a single trip
- Travel by personal vehicle was the preference
- All trips should be free to the rider
- The resulting program must empower users to become more independent.

Planners from the Commission and the Office on Aging, with additional input from organizations that protect and advocate for the civil and human rights of people with disabilities, outlined a service that could be implemented to meet the requirements specified through the community studies. In order to make the service functional, the planners determined that a monetary incentive should be provided to compensate volunteers for the use of their own vehicles to provide the rides and make them free for the riders.

The Commission and Office on Aging selected the nonprofit Independent Living Partnership, then the “Senior and Disabled Citizen's Coalition”, to further develop and implement the service. The TRIP (Transportation Reimbursement and Information Program) for Riverside County began in the Coachella Valley in 1993 and expanded to service for the entire county by the following year.

Since inception, the service has provided more than 2.5 million one-way trips and more than 35 million miles of volunteer assisted transportation for persons with disabilities who had no other way to access needed care or services, or to improve the quality of their lives and continue to live independently. Mission accomplished.

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During the fourth quarter of 2021, when COVID continued to depress ridership on transit services, and much less so on TRIP Program ridership, we decided we should ask our current ridership to evaluate the operating components of the service. 222 surveys were mailed to, completed, and returned to us by active TRIP riders. Some adjustments of the original design were needed to the service over the years to keep it compliant with government requirements, but all of the original components of the functionality of the service have remained as stipulated by participants in the original studies.

Following is the analysis of the responses from the completed survey:

Q1 I can make arrangements for trips directly with my volunteer driver and not have to call the TRIP office.

93.69% indicated this element of the service to be VERY IMPORTANT

Q2 Travel can be provided whenever needed, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, even on the spur of the moment when my volunteer driver is available.

89.19% indicated this element of the service to be VERY IMPORTANT

Q3 Multiple stops can be made on an outing.

85.14% indicated this element of the service to be VERY IMPORTANT

Q4 You are able to pick your own volunteer driver from friends or neighbors.

92.34% indicated this element of the service to be VERY IMPORTANT

Q5 Volunteer drivers can pick them up at their homes, stay with them during the day's outing, help them as their destinations, even help them put away their groceries when they get back home.

92.79% indicated this element of the service to be VERY IMPORTANT

Q6 TRIP service means that you do not have to wait for your ride in cold, hot or inclement weather.

97.30% indicated this element of the service to be VERY IMPORTANT

Q7 If needed you are able to be transported out of the area in which you live to access needed medical services or for other approved purposes.

95.05% indicated this element of the service to be VERY IMPORTANT

Q8 You are not charged anything for the rides you receive.

97.30% indicated this element of the service to be VERY IMPORTANT

Q9 You are sent a mileage reimbursement check each month to pay your volunteer driver for the miles of transportation that they provide for you.

100% indicated this element of the service to be VERY IMPORTANT

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At the end the short survey we asked respondents to "tell us ways in which the TRIP Program can be made better for you". Some of the respondents did offer suggestions:

- Pay a higher mileage reimbursement rate
- Increase monthly mileage allowed for reimbursement
- Offer on-line travel reporting and submission of requests for mileage reimbursement.

These are all things that we regularly consider making changes to as travel needs change and our technological capabilities and funding levels permit.

Most comments that respondents made were along the lines of "couldn't live without this service". We appreciate knowing that the service is so helpful.

August 23, 2022