

TRIP volunteer transportation service celebrates 30 years of doing it the way rider's want

2.7 MILLION Free trips provided for people with disabilities since 1993

RIVERSIDE, CA, USA, August 10, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The innovative and successful TRIP (Transportation Reimbursement and Information Project), of the nonprofit Independent Living



Partnership (ILP), has been providing transportation services for people with disabilities for over 30 years. Since 1993 TRIP has supported as many trips as riders needed every day for more than 19,000 riders with transportation limiting disabilities across Riverside County California.”

Richard Smith, CEO

ILP CEO Richard Smith says, “The number one reason that TRIP is unique and different from other disability transportation services is because it was designed by asking people with disabilities and difficulties using

transportation services what they needed and wanted and then using the user identified requirements to create the service.”

Before TRIP began, requirements that would make a service for people with disabilities friendly and usable were identified by potential service users. These dreamers were asked to describe the kind of transportation that could overcome the obstacles that many face with aging, the onset of serious disease, and long-term disabilities. One after another they said what was needed:

- To be picked up at their home without having to wait outside in bad weather
- Transportation in the comfort and luxury of a car
- The ability to make trips whenever they were needed, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, even on the spur of the moment
- Free rides for those on a severely limited income
- An escort who would come to their home and get them, stay with them during the trip, help them at their destinations, even help them put away their groceries when they got back home
- And they wanted the ability to go outside of their immediate area to get special medical treatments if necessary.

Starting with the recommendations of potential service users, ILP staff and board members collaborated with planners from the area aging services office and planners from the regional transportation planning organization to create a workable service. The aging services agency and the regional planning organization agree to commit funds to support the envisioned “consumer friendly” service that would fill existing gaps in services and not replace established transit service.

Essential components were identified and agreed to:

- 24/7 availability
- Highly flexible, adaptable service for those most difficult to serve
- No advance scheduling requirements
- Escort who could stay with and go through-the-door with riders
- No curbside waiting
- Multiple stops possible on a single trip
- Supported travel by personal vehicle
- Trips would be free for riders
- The service must be designed to empower users to become more independent.
- Cooperative relationships with human services organizations, transit agencies, and other supplemental providers would be expanded for the purposes of coordination, outreach and effective referral.
- Program policies and procedures should undergo continual review and modification as operational experiences and staff suggestions for service improvement.
- Application procedures should be interactive with applicants and provide expanded client profile information while simultaneously simplifying the application process and reducing staff workload.

The innovative design to accommodate the wishes of those needing the service and meet the requirements of funding and oversight agencies resulted in Riverside County’s TRIP program. The innovations that differentiate it from other “volunteer driver” services in other communities have endeared it to users as evidenced by a [96.8% approval rating](#) by riders in a recent survey. TRIP has demonstrated a high level of effectiveness as evidenced by the numbers of riders with disabilities served and the numbers of trips it consistently provides. The cost-effective design of TRIP has resulted stable of funding of the service for three decades.

A 2021 article in the [Disability and Health Journal](#) reviewed national survey data about barriers associated with delivering transportation services for persons aging with mobility disability and concluded that many face transportation challenges. The data identified specific inhibiting issues that include lack of service availability when needed, access limitations, requirements for advance planning, difficult waiting times, affordability, destination limitations, and health and stamina limitations. According to Robertson-Ray, “TRIP was proactively designed to overcome the obstacles and limitations cited in the national survey data.”

According to Smith, ILP also conducted a study in 2021 in which TRIP riders were asked to evaluate the [importance of the design elements](#) of the existing TRIP service that they were using. Some examples of rider consensus include:

- 97% think it is important that riders are able to make trip arrangements directly with their volunteer driver without having to call an office to pre-arrange travel.
- 90% think that travel should be provided whenever needed, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, even on the spur of the moment when necessary.
- 95% think it very important to be able to be transported out of the area in which they live to access needed medical services or for other approved purposes.
- 100% think it to be important that they are not charged for the rides they receive.

Other than TRIP, transportation services for people with disabilities are generally not able to provide these accommodations.

Ivet Woolridge, Chief Operating Officer of ILP, says that ILP's cost per one-way trip is lower than the trip cost of other services because "TRIP is a 'rider-centered' volunteer driver service, anchored in strong relationships between riders and volunteers". Detailed records show that the service has provided more than 2.5 million one-way trips and more than 35 million miles of volunteer escorted transportation for mobility challenged riders in Riverside County over 30 years. She says, "The TRIP program design is long established, reliable, proven to be effective and efficient, and well-liked by our riders."

For more information about TRIP and how to operate a similar service, visit [ILPconnect.org](https://ilpconnect.org).

Richard Smith
Independent Living Partnership
+1 951-653-0740
[email us here](#)

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