A MISSION TO SERVE: State Activities to Help Veterans Access Transportation

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NCSL's Research Project

- Goal: To provide a broad analysis of state-level actions—especially through statute, regulation or legislation—that facilitate access to transportation for all veterans, for all purposes
- Under a cooperative agreement with FTA and the U.S. Department of Labor
- Based on survey data from all 50 states, D.C., Northern Mariana Islands and Puerto Rico
A Snapshot of Veterans' Mobility Issues

- Aging WWII and Korean War veterans
  - Affects their mobility
  - Decreases core volunteer base for peer-to-peer veterans' transportation programs
  - Require transportation to ongoing medical care
- Younger veterans are surviving battlefield injuries that were previously fatal and require transportation to ongoing therapeutic care
A Snapshot of Veterans' Mobility Issues

- Veterans are more at risk for:
  - Unemployment
  - Homelessness
  - PTSD, major depression and suicide

- Require transportation to jobs and training, social services, mental health care and social activities

- 40 percent of veterans live in rural areas where transportation and other services can be scarce
So yes, veterans' transportation is ...
But it also is …
All Levels of Government Help Veterans Access Transportation

- **Federal: Nationwide leadership and programs**
  - VA reimbursement and new Veterans Transportation Service (VTS) program
  - Veterans Transportation and Community Living Initiative (VTCLI) discretionary grants
  - National Online Dialogue (May/June 2012)

- **Local: Direct service issues**
State Roles in Helping Veterans Access Transportation

- **Coordination**
  - Include veterans’ interests in coordination efforts related to transportation (11 states)
  - Include transportation stakeholders in coordination efforts related to veterans’ services (Calif. and N.J.)
  - Interagency task forces to address veterans’ transportation specifically (Colo., Mass., Ore.)
More State Roles

- **Funding**
  - Special funds or trust funds that can support veterans' transportation (13 states and V.I.)
  - Fund transportation through other means such as legislative appropriations and departmental budgets (14 states and P.R.)

- **Transportation programs**
  - Contracting or providing transportation services (e.g., Md., N.J., N.D.)
Even More State Roles

- Reduced fees and taxes
  - Drivers license fees (7 states)
  - Vehicle registration charges (31 states)
  - Vehicle taxes (16 states)
  - Fees for veterans' license plates (27 states)
  - Fees for disability placards (4 states)

- In at least 9 states, surviving spouses can receive one or more of these benefits
And Even More…

- Ensuring free or reduced transit fares
- Toll waivers
- Special parking privileges
- State-level advocacy
- Encouraging veterans' participation in local transportation coordination activities
- Studies
- Participation in multi-state initiatives
Stakeholders' Recommendations

- Working across transportation and veterans agencies is like working across cultures; learn each other’s languages and ways

- Outreach to veterans’ organizations can help build trust and overcome communication barriers

- Bring as many state, local and private agencies to the table as possible to see how they can help

- States can provide much needed leadership and resources, even if not the "face" of an initiative
Stakeholders' Recommendations

- **Use technology** to centralize and coordinate services, and make them more reliable (e.g., one-call one-click centers)

- **Using existing community-based services** can be a better use of resources, rather than necessarily creating veteran-specific programs

- **A state coordinating body or task force on veterans transportation** can attract leadership at the state level
Contact Details and Resources

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The final report is planned for release in September 2012. A link to the free online PDF will be sent to the Task Force.

NCSL is always seeking public and private funding partners for collaborative research and outreach initiatives that serve the needs of state legislatures.

We also offer no-cost technical assistance to state legislative entities upon invitation.

Please contact us if you're interested.