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



**NCSL Legislative Summit**

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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



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# So yes, veterans' transportation is ...





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## 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



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# 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.