

# Community Voice for Change: Transportation

*“Transportation is the center of the world. It is the glue of our daily lives. When it goes well, we don’t see it. When it goes wrong, it negatively colors your day, makes us feel angry and impotent, curtails our possibilities”*

**-Robin Chase**

Dec 2019

Coming Together to Get Ahead  
Community Voice for Change

Neighbors Helping Neighbors

St. Vincent de Paul  
Waukesha County



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## Section 1: A Note from CTGA

Welcome to our fourth, and final, edition of the Community Voice for Change report for 2019. Our team at Coming Together to Get Ahead (CTGA) is grateful for the opportunity to work with you to increase financial stability for individuals and the community.

### **The topic of this report is transportation.**

Full disclosure, having done employment, mental health, and housing as topics, we were a bit worried that transportation wouldn't live up to the previous topics. Wow, were we wrong! Our discussions and exploration on the barriers of transportation in Waukesha County were informative, lively, and full of questions. We looked at the cost, the location, the type, the distance, and all the additional challenges that came with trying to access transportation while dealing with instability. **All of these conversations are captured in the report.**

We began our discussion, as we have with other topics, asking "Is transportation a right?" We looked at state and federal laws on this, while exploring our own feelings on the subject. The consensus was that we all have the right to move - to go from place to place. But there is no protection or guarantee to how we get there. There is no protection to limit the time or cost or feasibility of an individual's transportation. This report includes ideas on how we, as a community, can better support this struggle.

If we were to pick one word to summarize our discussion on transportation in Waukesha County, it would be the word: cars. The more we all spoke, the more it became very clear that Waukesha County is a *Car County*. With limited bus routes and times, and limited employment in walking distance from housing, people in Waukesha feel they need to rely on a car for transportation. We unpack the cost and impact of that in the report.

We hope this report provides you with new information and awareness, a greater understanding for personal challenges with transportation and a motivation to work towards a more financially stable Waukesha County. We are grateful that you have joined us for the first year of CVC and please stay tuned for the exciting next steps coming in 2020.

Thank you for being a part of the change, The CTGA team

### **About CTGA**

For those of you unfamiliar with CTGA, it is St. Vincent De Paul program that has been working on individual financial stability and community change in Waukesha County for the last 5 years. We use the Bridges Out of Poverty model in our work. Bridges is a community engagement model which reduces barriers to success posed by economic class differences among people and groups.

CTGA is dedicated to making a difference. In addition to hosting Getting Ahead Workshops for individuals and Poverty Seminars for community members, we are now hosting Community Voice for Change (CVC) events once a month. CVC is an opportunity for everyone to come to the table and share their experiences, with an eye for change. We polled the community to identify the key barriers in Waukesha County that keep people and the community from thriving. These topics rose to the top of the list: Employment, Mental Health, Housing and Transportation. To read more about the structure of CVC, we invite you to view the CVC overview attachment sent with this report.

## Section 2: Why are We at the Table

While CVC participants came to the table with the idea that location matters in the process of becoming more financially stable, when we finished our conversations, we had new insights into just how important location is for individuals and communities to thrive.

Waukesha County has no location efficient neighborhoods.

*“A location efficient neighborhood is defined as one which is compact, close to jobs and services, with a variety of transportation choices and allows people to spend less time, energy and money on transportation.”*

*“Waukesha County is car dependent with very limited or no access to public transportation. Waukesha County has few high compact neighborhoods and limited walkability.”<sup>1</sup>*

We dug deeper into the idea of location efficient neighborhoods with a quiz activity. We rated Waukesha neighborhoods for job access, variety of transportation and high compact neighborhoods with walkability. It was surprising to everyone that we gave Waukesha high scores in these areas while research found we have no location efficient neighborhoods.<sup>1</sup>

**Did you know that** *“Waukesha County has over 2,917 miles of federal, state, county and local roads” and that “the county has over 373,000 registered automobiles, trucks, semi-trailers and motorcycles”?*

*“Over 78% of road miles in Waukesha County are local, village, town or city roads. This hierarchy of streets and highways provides for the safe, efficient and convenient movement of goods and people by auto transport throughout Waukesha County and the region.”<sup>2</sup> Except when it doesn't.*

We, at the table, concluded that location dictates cost. Time involved with getting to a job can impact one's ability to take care of family. We concluded that not everyone in our community has money or time to spend on adequate transportation and yet to survive they must spend both.

At our table, we discussed what transportation changes were necessary to give everyone the opportunity to work for themselves and their families and contribute to the life of our community. Leaving the conversations, the participants were much more aware of how location and transportation barriers play a role in individual and community success. Participants knew change was needed.

<sup>1</sup> Center for Neighborhood Technology at CTN.org

<sup>2</sup> SEWRPC South East Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission.



## Section 3: How is Our Table Unique

We engage those in poverty, the middle and wealth class to share their experiences with transportation over dinner. We do this knowing that many people in poverty are problem solvers and people in the middle and wealth class help set up structures and are decision makers.

*“The Bridges Out of Poverty model is not a program. Bridges concepts are used to help prevent poverty, support people in transition and create communities where everyone can live well.” (Bridges Out of Poverty) <sup>1</sup>*

We use the Bridges model to look at four different causes of poverty:

**Individual Behaviors and Circumstances**

**Community Conditions**

**Exploitation**

**Political and Economic Structures**



As with our previous topics of employment, mental health and housing, the four causes of poverty are important to understand the barriers with transportation. Often, when looking at the causes of poverty, people identify either side of the spectrum as the cause. For transportation, on the individual end it could be *“they just need to get a reliable car”* to the other end of the spectrum, with political and economic structures it could be *“our transportation isn’t working on a state and national level.”*

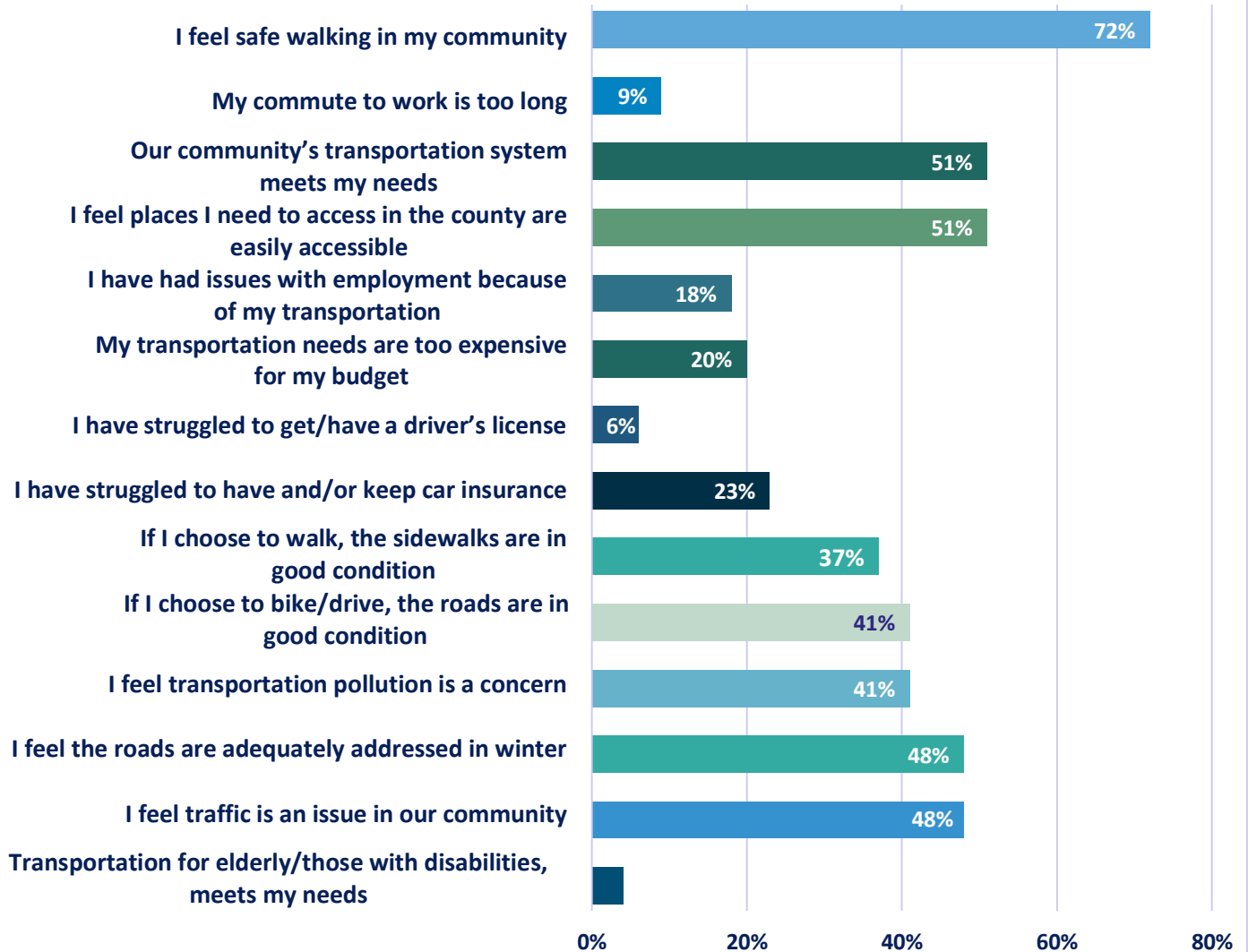
To explore this deeper, we set up an activity at the CVC event, that we call the Poverty Post-It Activity. During this activity, we gave groups different scenarios around transportation and asked each group to assign it to the “correct” cause of poverty category. Having done this activity for the last 3 topics, we challenged this group to try and find a way it was ALL FOUR causes for each example. A few examples include *“Mark lives in a rural area and can’t find transportation to get into town for work”* and *“Jessica missed her bus and was late for work.”* The justifications for individual behaviors and circumstances came pretty easy - *“didn’t manage money well, forgot to pay a bill, mismanaged time, didn’t prioritize”* etc. But for the other categories, the groups explored the location of affordable housing and employment, bus routes and schedules, assessible sidewalks, federal programs to assist the elderly and disabled, and unfair rates for cars and insurance. All of this brainstorming highlighted the fact that all four causes of poverty can contribute to barriers with transportation.

1. Ruby K. Payne, Ph.D., Philip E. DeVol, Terie Dreussi Smith. Training Supplement for Bridges Out of Poverty

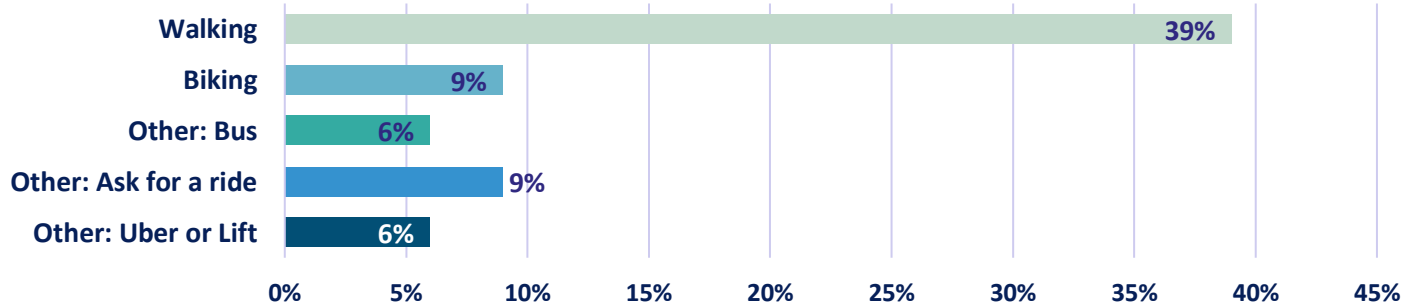
## Section 4: Who's at the Table

Everyone who attended a CVC event on the topic of transportation completed an anonymous survey at the end of each evening. The survey items are designed to capture the range of experiences with transportation “in the room”.

### Survey Responses:



### I have other options besides a car as my primary mode of transportation:



## Section 5: Sharing Our Experiences

Community Voice for Change participants shared their experiences with transportation as it affects getting ahead, being financially stable and thriving in Waukesha County.

### Looking at transportation, what is working in Waukesha County?

#### Convenience

*“At this point Waukesha Metro Transit system goes to markets, restaurants, churches, libraries shopping centers, college etc.” “With transportation I feel it is adequate and does give thorough information about destinations stop and start. I try to find things I need on the routes closer to me.” “I’m always taking the bus to go to college/work etc. Which is really helpful.” “I never go anywhere without checking google maps for the best route around construction. Having a car makes it very easy to get from point A to point B.” “The bus gets me really close to my home and I don’t have to wait long... It’s very convenient that I can catch the bus and get really close to where I need to be.”*

#### Reliability and Options

*“Own a car so have ready transportation as it is reliable. Medicare van goes to rural areas. Some automotive places offer rides when are is in for repairs – though you might have a long wait.” “Having a working car! I would have no other possibility except Uber or Lift or a neighbor.” “The Waukesha Metro Lift bus has been helpful getting my friend to her monthly church meeting.” “Carpooling saves on gas, better for environment. Insurance that is there for reliable assistance. Having dependable friends or relatives for assistance with transportation.” “Taxi service, shared ride availability, car pools and intercounty bus lines.” “I could afford good transportation, gps, dependable vehicle, afford other alternative transportation (car, bus, uber etc.).” “Public bus system works well most of the time during their scheduled hours – the cost is fairly minimal.” “I have a reliable car and I am able to afford to use it.”*

#### Access and Upkeep

*“There are many places to get gas.” “I am physically able to move/drive from one place to the next within 30 minutes and rarely sit in traffic. The roads are clean and look well kept.” “Good roundabout, safer roads during winter.” “I like the streets, roads, the city makes an effort so they can be in perfect (almost) conditions.” “Good roads, quality and upkeep. Available parking and good location. Police presence and cooperation, protection and understanding.” “Good roads, good repair services, available gas, oil etc. Choice of car insurance.” “Paths, bike paths, pedestrian crosswalks, many direct routes to business and social services.” “Access to public destinations: lakes, preserves, habitats and other quality of life experiences. Many good car repair services businesses. Snow cleaning. Excellent services for senior living establishments.” “Roundabouts! Wisconsin Transportation Department does a great job w/freeway. Park and Rides. Police presence. Giving room to stopped vehicles.” “Parking downtown and 3 public structured parking fairly economical.” “The Town of Waukesha has reduced the amount of salt they put on the roads by salting mainly hills and intersections after snowfall. This does cause me to drive more slowly on certain sections of roads, but I have never felt unsafe.”*



## Sharing Our Experiences (continued...)

### Looking at transportation, what isn't working in Waukesha County?

#### Costs and Expenses

*"The costs of gas, maintenance (car payment) up keep all together is expensive – also insurance and other fees." "To own a car is very expensive! You have to pay for insurance, license plates and repairs." "Agree, purchase, upkeep, registration, mileage, every time you drive - there's an expense." "Low income means not being able to afford a car." "Sometimes you have a job that does not pay you enough to keep up with your transportation expense." "Larger portion of take-home pay goes for travel. Driving is unpaid yet there are all the expenses." "Difficult to travel, cannot afford gas." "Getting a car is not easy, especially because you have to have some money for it, then you'll have to pay interest on the car and depending on how high it is, it'll determine your monthly payment."*

#### Work

*"Generally, we have to travel long distances to either work or to our clinic visits." "Losing staff members because of lack of transportation." "If there is no transportation there is no job access. But transportation is very costly." "Inability to get to work." "Since our major source of transportation is cars, anyone who can't afford a car has trouble getting to work." "You cannot easily move from a job to a better one without a vehicle. Cannot (community) get workers to increase, environment to grow." "Without transportation, many individuals are prevented from working." "Unable to find a good job." "Jobs available in the community are mostly minimum wage jobs, some people have to commute for better paying jobs." "We can't keep good staff at our health clinic facility because many live in Milwaukee and can't cobble together reliable rides to work. We hate to lose them." "No buses outside the Waukesha Area (city) I mean outskirts, so it is a huge problem for people who don't have a vehicle and has no way to get sometimes to work if it is in a faraway area or another town."*

#### Unaffordable Necessity

*"In Waukesha County is essential to have an auto and all costs that go with it. Overall, cannot do without a vehicle." "It is an obligation to be able to transport from one place to another, especially to one's job and other important places. We have to sacrifice a large amount of our income for this expense as it has now become a necessity to own a car." "Transportation is vital when considering employment – the means to afford all expenses." "My thoughts are (for some people) it could be half their income. It is a necessary commodity to survive for most households." "Tells me, car and busses are necessary." "Distances are further. Gas more expensive. Need to use cars." "We need transportation for everything." "We need to be able to take ourselves from one place to another."*

## Sharing Our Experiences (continued...)

### Environment and Infrastructure

*“Winter time: High snow areas at bus stops – difficult to climb to enter/exit bus. In winter, sidewalks are not (salted) de-iced/shoveled earlier enough or even at later times (after work hours).” “Handicap rider has difficulty getting a bus when needed once driver drops her off in a wheelchair at the end of a long gravel driveway. Traffic congestion and backups often due to construction. No sidewalks to walk where I live. Often, one person in a car.” “All the one-way roads and roads that change name in the middle of the route. Sitting at a stop light without traffic in cross lanes. TRAINS!” “Two lane roads at night are concerning. Wild life (deer) cross the road unexpectedly (can cause damage to car or self). A lot of road work/construction, roads being closed. Roads are a complete maze, if you don’t know where you are you don’t know where you are going and can drive around hitting dead end roads.” “Construction! Pull over cars sometimes causes more havoc. No parking areas. Inattentive drivers and reckless drivers.” “Construction making it hard to find alternative routes.” “It seems like road construction companies take on too many jobs resulting in street closures that last forever.” “Snow plows that block driveways over and over again during heavier snows. A pain, but probably necessary.” “If it is cold, we use the heater more which then uses up more gas.”*

### Travel Time and Losses

*“When I’m out of time, I have to wait an hour to take the next bus if for some reason I miss the first one. I can be extremely late if I’m waiting for a bus and it’s out of the current schedule (which happens sometimes). It’s kind of expensive when I don’t have a ride or when the bus is coming late because I need to pay for an uber.” “Travel time affects everyone, not only those in poverty.” “Time spent in a car means lost time, no pay even though you are going to work. Leaves no time for anything else.” “Takes away from family and/or parenting time. Takes away time for household tasks. Leaves kids vulnerable.” “Higher driving times increases need for gas.” “Less time to work! Less time with family.” “Less time to work. Less time to spend with children.” “Time spent driving to work is not paid, in fact you are losing (investing) money to get to your job.” “Takes time away from other activities.” “The longer the commute the less time to work and make money.” “May lose opportunity, overtime.” “Increases stress level. Decreases quality of time spent with family. More childcare needed. Not enough time to get to resources. Unrealistic time.” “One would spend more time traveling than making money at work.” “No jobs or good paying jobs in area. Gas to get to job outside of their community.”*

## Section 6: Stats That Make Us Think

### **The mean travel time to work in Waukesha County is 24 minutes.<sup>1</sup>**

At first glance, this statistic didn't present any glaring issues to us. Our average commute time is very similar to state and national averages. And the reality is that people from all economic classes (poverty, middle class, and wealth) can experience long commute times. So, we dug deeper to see how commute time can specifically impact those in poverty, as they are often the ones experiencing the barriers the most. The group was very engaged in looking at many different ways it could impact those in poverty, ranging from time and money, to stress and lost opportunity with employment. So, while long or challenging commute times are something all economic classes experience, it is important that we look at how it impacts those in poverty and look to create housing and employment opportunities that are accessible by all.

### **Over all US households spend \$9,503 on transportation annually.<sup>2</sup> In Waukesha (including Milwaukee and West Allis) the annual transportation cost is \$13,160.<sup>3</sup>**

Those gathered for the CVC transportation discussion had varied reactions to these statistics. Some were surprised; some were not. "I'm surprised. People need to get to work! How can they get ahead?" And "no surprise. The costs of gas, maintenance, car payments, upkeep all together is expensive". The group did agree that "transportation is vital when considering employment – the means to afford all expenses".

### **Transportation is typically a household's second largest expense.<sup>4</sup>**

These thoughts offered by Joe Chestnut, Research Associate for the Institute for Transportation & Development Policy, highlight the effect of spending a large piece of household income on transportation. "In the US, there is a narrative that if people work hard, then they can get out of poverty, but we have built cities that make this narrative impossible. For households making less than \$20,000 per year reliable cars are a pipe dream: a huge expense they can't afford. Without adequate transit, they will remain stuck in place."

### **What did CVC participants think?**

When the CVC participants thought about cost, they noted that, in Waukesha, everything is further away which means more miles, more gas, more wear and tear on your car. In short more cost. In Waukesha despite the cost, cars are the primary way to get around. The group discussed cost of transportation as a barrier to individual getting ahead and to the community thriving. "A huge part of a family's budget is needed for transportation. People spend so much on transportation that they don't have much for other things." "The cost of transportation is a barrier because it costs more than food, money that could be used to pay down debt or buy a house or increase savings."

The CVC participants discussed what can be done about the costs of transportation in Waukesha County. A range of possibilities were offered, many with limitations. "We need more public transportation, but the county is so diverse in terms of concentration of people." "A first step might be to encourage businesses to provide transportation for their employees with possible tax incentives for companies for doing so." "Good internet connection might allow people to work from home." Other ideas were carpooling and some type of co-op to assist in transporting people. Finally, "we must make this topic relevant to those who have influence."

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/waukeshacountywisconsin#>.

<sup>2</sup> US Bureau of Labor Statistics 2015.

<sup>3</sup> American Community Survey US Census 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) Affordability Index.

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## Section 7: Stories of Transportation

We asked people to share their own personal stories about transportation. These stories highlight the impact that the lack of adequate transportation has on our ability to thrive. The stories make the point that transportation is a necessity and without it, one can experience many difficulties in reaching any stability.

### **On Bus Limitations**

*Looking at the Waukesha transportation system in general, the bus system really needs to expand. I have been saying that until I am blue in the face. It needs extended hours and bus drivers willing to work them and be paid well for them. Right now I can only rely on it for certain hours and certain days of the week. That makes it really hard to find work. When the job is far away and by the time I get off at night, there's no bus. I've only been able to work a week or two at jobs because transportation becomes too hard. There is a solution to extend hours but we need people to care about it.*

### **On Determination**

*Mark (named changed for privacy) was one of our regular homeless guests who used Hope Center services for more than one year. He was struggling for a cure with alcohol which he had struggled with for more than he could remember. Mark tried so very hard to overtake the disease and was successful of and on over many years.*

*Finally, he was able to win his battle with real determination and will power. He was able to secure employment about 4 or 5 miles way from Waukesha. He liked the job very much and liked himself even more that he could move forward with his life. Because of his determination to succeed Mark would walk to work every day rain or shine.*

*After first paycheck he bought a bicycle which cut his travel to and from work considerably. He rode his bike every day to work even in the winter thru rain or snow and very cold winter weather and never missed a day of work. Within one year, he was able to save enough to find a place to live (Hope Center provided the security deposit). As time went on he was able to buy a used auto.*

*His success is something special given a little help, but it was his self-determination that made his life long struggle complete.*

### **On the Daily**

*My experience with Waukesha's public transportation system has been good since it allows me to reach the places I usually go daily, for example school and work. It is always clean and meets with the stipulated schedule unless I am running late which means I must catch a later bus. Also, each destination takes at least an hour to get there, and it is more time consuming if you have to transfer to other busses. Sometimes it forces me to organize my time and take uber if I don't get to the bus stop on time. Personally, I feel that having your own car is a necessity to live in Waukesha, but sometimes public transport works very well.*

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## Section 8: Program Spotlight

We talked to a local non-profit in our community that was identified by the group as being important to our work on transportation.

### ADRC Transportation

The Aging and Disability Resource Center of Waukesha County (ADRC) is a single access point for older adults; caregivers; adults with disabilities; and adults with mental health or substance use concerns. Among other services, they offer Specialized Transportation.

We have two programs, one is the Shared-Fare Taxi program and the other is the Rideline program. Majority of the information regarding the two programs can be found on our website. One program change that is happening January 1, 2020 is we are lowering the age of eligibility from 65 to 60.

#### Shared-Fare Program

With the Shared-Fare program we work with 9 different taxi companies throughout the county. Clients must be able to get in and out of the taxi vehicle with little or no assistance. If the client is under the age of 65 (60 as of January 1, 2020) they must attach a disability designation form. The county will pay \$5.25 of the fare one-way for the client. Each taxi company that we work with sets their own rates and service area. The client would need to call the taxi company in their area to find out the specific rate. The Menomonee Falls/Lannon area unfortunately does not have a taxi service, so those clients are enrolled with the Rideline program.

#### Rideline Program

The Rideline program is more for clients that have difficulties getting in and out of vehicles or use a mobility aide (walker, cane, wheelchair, scooter etc.). The rates for this program are on a sliding fee scale so based on ability to pay. The Rideline program strictly stays within Waukesha County, however, it will go into an adjoining county for a service that is not duplicated in Waukesha County like the VA.

For more information you can visit their website:

<https://www.waukeshacounty.gov/HealthAndHumanServices/adrc/specialized-transportation/>

Or you can contact Stephanie at 262-548-7928.



## Section 9: What's Next

We discuss options on what you can do to further the conversation on transportation and invite you to our next topic on transportation.

This report is being distributed to over 700 individuals and organizations in our community, including non-profits, churches, businesses, schools, and elected officials.

### What can you do?

- Continue the conversation and share this report. Use this report for awareness and understanding. Share it with those close to you and those in your community.
- Learn more about your local, elected officials and their take on these issues. Engage them to work with us for change. Vote!
- Work for change. In your own life. In your own family and friends. In your community.
- If this issue, and report, sparked something for you – look for ways to get involved.

### What's Next for CVC

Based on surveys, previous CVC nights, community needs, and extreme interest.

2020

## Housing First

“It all starts at home.”

Wednesday, January 15<sup>th</sup>  
Every third Wednesday of the month!

**Join us for dinner and discussion as we work on all the pieces of housing to help Waukesha County thrive.**

To join us for any/all of these evenings, or if you have any questions, please contact our office at 262-547-0654 or [ctga@svdpwaukesha.com](mailto:ctga@svdpwaukesha.com)