

Transportation Proposal for Mini Bus with Wheel Chair Lift

A. Cover page

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NOTE: The **Jackson County Council On Aging** works closely with the Department On Aging and seeks funding on its behalf. The Council On Aging is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

Donations for the Mini Bus made out to the **Jackson County Council On Aging** are tax-deductible.

B. Introduction

The Jackson County Department On Aging is a department of the county government and is the lead agency in Jackson County for Senior Adult Programs and Services. The Department has 6 full time and 18 part time staff persons. The Department operates facilities in 5 areas in the county. These facilities are a Senior Center, Congregate and Home Delivered Meals, Department Offices, Home Safety Repairs, building Wheelchair Ramps, and an Adult Day Care program. The Senior Center offers a variety of social, cultural, exercise, educational, and art programs. The Department offers guidance in the Medicare Part D prescription drug program, and arranges for In-Home Respite for Caregivers of Alzheimer's and dementia relatives. The department provides firewood for seniors whose only heat and cooking source is wood.

Jackson County is very rural with 490 square miles averaging 73 persons per square mile. The county is mountainous between 2,000 and 6,000 feet above sea level. The population is approximately 36,000 persons. An estimated 21% (7,560) of the population is 60 years old or older with 3% (227) of these persons at or below the federal poverty level of income. The ethnic makeup is a mix of Caucasian, Black, Native American, Hispanic, and Asian.

The Department On Aging administered the Jackson County Transit system from 1990 to 1996 when Jackson County Transit became a separate county department. Five of the Department On Aging's staff persons drive county vehicles, jeeps, pick-up truck, 8 and 10 passenger vans. One staff person is a licensed school bus driver. The Senior Center arranges chartered trips to distant points of interest like New York City, Myrtle Beach, Atlanta Aquarium, and Branson, MO.

C. Project Narrative

Statement of Need

Times they are a-changing! But it must be remembered that in very rural counties such as Jackson County, in the past, husbands did all the driving and wives often never learned to drive. Husbands are often the first to die, leaving many wives with no way to drive themselves. Many children leave the county when they grow up because of the limited employment opportunities available to them here. In the more remote areas of the county, as a person gets older, many of their family and friends die off or move away leaving them isolated, without a vehicle, and sometimes homebound because they do not have ready access to transportation. Poor motor coordination, poor eyesight, debilitating diseases, and onset of dementia are other causes that keep a person homebound due to inability to drive. It is estimated that in Jackson County there are 200 or more persons homebound for one or more of these reasons.

The Department On Aging delivers a noontime meal daily to homebound seniors who are unable to cook their own meals. There were 21,614 meals delivered by 110 volunteers this past year to 150 homebound seniors throughout the county. The department is aware of an additional 45 homebound persons, at this time, without personal transportation who could benefit from socialization with other seniors if they had transportation to get to the congregate meal site also operated by the department's elder nutrition program.

Rural counties rely mostly on personal transportation. Jackson County Transit is the public transportation for Jackson County and is a department of the county government. Jackson County Transit provides services from 6:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, except on

County holidays. There are no evening or week-end services. The Transit service has regular routes in the more populated areas of the county and provides services to the more remote areas upon request. The Jackson County Transit **can not** provide transportation to events outside of Jackson County due to NC Department Of Transportation Charter Regulations.

The Senior Center administered by the Department On Aging has evening and week-end events. The Senior Center plans activities outside the county like shopping trips, visits to historical places, festivals, seasonal celebrations, conferences, train rides, and other special events. Transportation needs to be provided to seniors who do not have personal transportation or are wheel chair bound for these events since the Transit system does not operate at these times.

The Senior Center has a staff person who is wheel chair bound. The Jackson County Transit provides transportation for her week days to get to and from work. She needs other transportation with a wheel chair lift for evening and week-end activities outside her home.

An Adult Day Health Center is the next program to be planned by the Department On Aging. The Adult Day Health Center will accept clients with disabilities greater than what is acceptable for the Adult Day Care program. The Adult Day Health Center will accept clients in wheel chairs. Transportation with a wheel chair lift will be an essential need for this program.

Medicaid qualified and persons of low income, especially those living in the more remote areas of the county, can not easily access health and dental care if they have no personal transportation.

Project Summary

The proposed project has four main components. One component is to provide extended transportation for seniors without private transportation to evening and week-end events sponsored by the Senior Center. A second component is to provide transportation for homebound seniors without transportation in remote areas of the county so they can come to the congregate meal site for a noon time meal and to socialize with other seniors. A third component is to provide transportation to the Public Health Department for health problems, Flu shots, and dental care for low income and Medicaid qualified persons without transportation in the more remote areas of the county that the Jackson County Transit can not serve. And a fourth component is to have transportation with a wheel chair lift for the wheel chair bound Senior Center staff member, and frail elderly participants, some in wheelchairs, at the proposed Adult Day Health program to be able to attend a variety of activities.

These four transportation components can be resolved by the purchase of a nine passenger Mini Bus with a wheel chair lift and with sufficient head room for frail elderly to be able to walk upright with their canes or walkers. The Mini Bus will cost \$ 55,000 to purchase and an additional \$ 5,000 will be operating expenses like insurance, registration, and fuel for the first year or two of operation. The nine passenger Mini Bus can be used for the four components mentioned above.

The Senior Center and its staff already provide van transportation to many out of county locations throughout the year where Jackson County Transit is not allowed to provide transportation. Its evening and weekend activities include monthly dinners for members and

guests, Polar Express train ride, trips to Tennessee for shopping sprees, and transporting its line dancers to a dancing clinic. Getting in and out of the current vans is not easy for frail elderly and not suitable for older adults in wheel chairs. The addition of a Mini Bus with a wheel chair lift will allow the wheel chair bound Senior Center staff person and other older adults in wheel chairs to be transported to out of county, evening and week-end activities as well.

The elder nutrition program Director has already identified 45 home bound persons without transportation who live in more remote and isolated parts of the county who would benefit from socialization at the congregate meal site. The Jackson County Transit does not have funds to add the costs of the many miles to transport these people to the nutrition site and back home again. The mileage for one round trip to pick up the seniors in more remote areas without transportation averages 45 miles. The average driving time round trip is 2 - 3 hours due to road conditions.

At the present time, the Department On Aging has various activities and programs spread out in 4 different facilities. These 4 facilities are separated up to 3 miles distance from each other. The county commissioners have already approved building a new Senior Center that will include and expand upon the space available for the current programs. It is anticipated that ground breaking for the new Senior Center will begin in the Spring 2008. All the programs in the present 4 facilities will be moved to the new Senior Center when it is completed.

An Adult Day Health Center will be a new program for the Department On Aging at the new Senior Center. This program will be available to frail elderly and dementia participants who will need a higher level of supervision and assistance. Some of the participants will be in wheel

chairs. The Mini Bus with a wheel chair lift will be very useful here for transporting the frail elderly with much less mobility to different outings and events, or for medical emergencies.

The Mini Bus will fulfill these transportation components:

- first, increase transportation options for frail elderly and older adults;
- second, simplify frail elderly and older adults access to transportation services; and
- third, increase the quality of transportation services for frail elderly and older adults.

The staff involved in this project is the Department Director, the Director of Elder Nutrition, the Director of the Senior Center, the Director of In-Home Respite and the Director of the Adult Day Care program, plus qualified drivers on their staffs. All these persons are experienced drivers who hold qualified NC Driver Licenses and have driven vans for the Department On Aging from three to seventeen years. All Directors and staff persons are highly qualified for their positions and sensitive to the needs of frail elderly and older adults in Jackson County.

The Department On Aging collaborates with the Area Agency On Aging, the Department of Social Services, the Public Health Department, WestCare Home Health and Hospice, Veteran's Administration, Recreation Department, county Churches, Business Associations, the Senior Center Board of Directors, and the Jackson County Council On Aging Board of Directors.

The Area Agency On Aging holds regular monthly meetings for Department Directors to share information of programs and services available to seniors in our area. The Department Of Social Services refers clients to the Department On Aging who have a variety of service needs within

the Department's purview. The Public Health Department will provide flu shots, health screening and dental care to low income and Medicaid qualified persons that the Department can transport to their facility. WestCare Home Health and Hospice refers clients who need some of the services the Department On Aging can provide. The Veteran's Administration refers veterans or their spouses who have needs of the Department's services or transportation. The Department On Aging and its programs refer clients to these agencies for assistance in their specialty.

The Recreation Department manages the Senior Games in this county in cooperation with the Senior Center. The Senior Center and Senior Games participants raise funds to transport local Senior Games winners to Raleigh for the State and National Competitions. The county churches, business associations, and the Board of Directors of the Senior Center and Council On Aging assist in volunteer activities, referring elders with special needs, and fund raising as needed.

It is estimated that in the first two years of operation the proposed project with the Mini Bus will provide various transportation needs for an estimated 200 more frail elderly and older adults than are now being served. This translates to approximately an additional 200,000 miles of transportation service. The Mini Bus service will be free to all clients in Department On Aging programs.

Coordination

Personal transportation, taxi service, car rentals, Jackson County Transit and various agency vehicles are the modes of transportation in Jackson County. Taxi service and car rentals are

expensive for low income seniors without personal transportation, or not convenient for frail elderly and disabled older adults in wheelchairs.

Jackson County Transit is the primary public transportation available in the county. The Transit service operates weekdays, except holidays. The Transit service does not operate evenings and week ends. The Transit service has some Home and Community Care Block Grant funds for transporting the elderly. These funds are primarily used for trips for various health needs, filling prescriptions and shopping. The Department On Aging supplements transportation services for older adults during evening and week end times, to destinations outside of Jackson County and trips not ordinarily covered by the Jackson County Transit's funds for low income older adults.

Marketing and Outreach

The Department On Aging and its programs inform older adults, caregivers, and entities that serve older adults about its projects and proposed service in a variety of ways. At monthly meetings of Boards and Committees, the members are encouraged to spread the word among their contacts. Public Service Announcements are sent to radio stations, television, and newspapers throughout western North Carolina. A monthly newsletter is sent to all program participants, volunteers, agencies, and caregivers. Flyers, direct mailings, and telephone calls to interested parties are also used as outreach.

Outcomes and Evaluation

The outcome of the intended project is the purchase of a nine passenger Mini Bus to supplement Jackson County Transit's transportation availability for 200 or more older adults during evening

and week-end times. The Mini bus will also be used as needed by the Department On Aging's various programs for older adults, frail and disabled elderly. The evaluation process for determining if the outcomes are achieved are sign-in sheets for all transportation activities using the Mini Bus at the various programs. These will be collected and tabulated at the main office.

Sustainability

The service after the purchase of the Mini Bus is easily sustained. The Department On Aging has adequate staff persons and volunteers to operate the Mini Bus. The county government has a Central Garage for the maintenance and repair of the Mini Bus. Continuing operating expenses after the first year can be included in the county government budget for the Department On Aging. The Senior Center receives state funding for the operation of its programs. The Department receives Home and Community Care Block Grant funding for the operation of some of its programs. Client donations, and donations from churches, businesses, and individuals also assist in the funding needs for operating expenses.

D. Mini Bus Project Budget

Expenses for the project:

- Mini Bus purchase	\$ 55,000	
- Tax	1,650	
- Title and Tag	71	
- Insurance	1,500	
- Signage on Mini Bus	300	
- Gas	4,293	
- Salaries (hourly rate & benefits \$17.80)	24,902	
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Total Expenses		\$ 87,716

Income for the project:

From various donation sources -	\$ 60,000	
Church and Local Donations -	2,814	
County Government (Salaries already in budget)	24,902	
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Total Income		\$ 87,716

The Expense budget items are:

- a. the purchase of a Mini Bus
- b. the costs of registering the Mini Bus – Tax, Title, Tag, and Insurance
- c. sign painted on the vehicle identifying the Mini Bus as a county vehicle
- d. gas expense for operating the vehicle for one year
- e. salaries related to the time a county employee is engaged in driving the vehicle

The Income budget items are:

- a. amount received from various grant sources for the project
- b. donations from county churches, businesses, and individuals
- c. budgeted amounts for employee salaries already in this year's county budget

NOTE: The Jackson County Department On Aging has over 300 volunteers in all of its programs. Not included in the budget is In-Kind service from the volunteers who assist in providing services for the frail elderly and older adults on trips.