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Connecting Veterans and Veterans Organizations to Federal Transportation Assistance

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Many veterans have transportation needs that affect their daily lives. Specifically, veterans often require access to medical facilities for their own care and may not have access to transportation.

More than 9 million veterans are enrolled in the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA's) health care system, and more than 6 million receive health care services through VA's Veterans Health Administration (VHA) medical facilities. However, transportation can be a barrier to care for a variety of reasons, including rurality, lack of access to a vehicle, condition-specific challenges, and the cost of travel. To help veterans overcome these barriers, there are a number of federally supported VA transportation assistance programs. Some—such as the Beneficiary Travel Program (BTP), the VHA-Uber Health Connect, and Veterans Transportation Service—provide reimbursement or direct assistance with rides. Others, including the Highly Rural Transportation Grants, provide funding to organizations transporting veterans.

In addition, other federal agencies offer programs that are not primarily targeted toward veterans but may support veterans, such as the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center, Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility Grants, and Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities—Section 5310.

Locating information about these programs, their availability, and their requirements can be challenging. This report compiles information that congressional offices can use to assist constituents with issues related to veterans' transportation—for individual veterans and organizations that wish to aid veterans. Constituents may also investigate programs administered by state and local governments as well as local volunteer efforts.

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Overview

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Locating information about these programs, their availability, and their requirements can be challenging. This report compiles information that congressional offices can use to assist constituents with issues related to veterans' transportation—for individual veterans and organizations that wish to aid veterans. Constituents may also investigate programs administered by state and local governments as well as local volunteer efforts.

Direct Assistance for Veterans, Caregivers, and Survivors

Several VA programs directly assist veterans with transportation to VA medical facilities. These options may include reimbursement for travel or access to a network of volunteer drivers.² In addition, other federal services help connect veterans to transportation assistance involving destinations outside of VA facilities. This section highlights the major current programs and provides additional sources and contact information.

Beneficiary Travel Program (BTP)

Some veterans are able to schedule and provide their own transportation to VA medical facilities, but they may struggle to pay for their transportation. Such veterans may be able to have their transportation costs (such as mileage and other travel expenses) reimbursed.³ Veterans eligible for the BTP may receive reimbursement for their travel to and from VA facilities. Eligibility criteria

¹ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, *FY 2027 Budget Submission: Budget in Brief*, April 2026, p. BiB-20.

² Veterans visiting VA medical centers are required to have veterans health identification cards (VHIC). Information on obtaining this identification is available at <https://www.va.gov/health-care/get-health-id-card/>.

³ A discussion of what is reimbursed and how much is covered is available at <https://www.va.gov/resources/reimbursed-va-travel-expenses-and-mileage-rate/>.

are detailed on the VA website and within statute and regulations.⁴ Veterans are eligible if they are traveling for care at VA health facilities or for VA-approved care at non-VA health facilities in the community and meet specific disability, service-connection, or income related criteria. Transportation costs may include special modes of transportation (such as an ambulance),⁵ as well as travel by airline and train, under certain conditions.⁶ This program may also pay for transportation, related lodging, and meals for a nonveteran caregiver if the person is a family caregiver under the National Caregiver Program traveling to receive caregiving training or support the veteran's care, the caregiver is the veteran's medically required attendant traveling to support the veteran's care, or the caregiver is the veteran's transplant care donor or support person.

Veterans and caregivers can explore their eligibility, file claims for reimbursement online, find frequently asked questions about filing a claim, and receive more information about VA travel pay reimbursement at:

- “File and Manage Travel Reimbursement Claims,” <https://www.va.gov/health-care/get-reimbursed-for-travel-pay/>.

VHA-Uber Health Connect (VUHC)

Veterans who cannot provide their own transportation may have the option of scheduling rides to their VA medical centers by contacting the VA Medical Center (VAMC) transportation office and requesting rideshares. Since January 2022, selected VA medical facilities have participated in the VUHC, which facilitates the transportation of veterans through the rideshare by scheduling the rideshare reservations.⁷ On May 1, 2024, VA announced that the program was being expanded across VA facilities and would be renamed at the end of 2024 as the Veterans Transportation Program Beneficiary Travel Rideshare Services.⁸ As of the date of this report, a name change has not been issued.

Veterans are not required to download the rideshare applications to participate.

According to VA, the goals of this program include reducing missed appointments, improving the health care transportation experience, and achieving cost savings for VA medical facilities.⁹

⁴ Eligibility criteria are outlined in Title 38, Section 111, of the *U.S. Code* and Title 38, Section 70.10, of the *Code of Federal Regulations*.

⁵ *Special mode of transportation* is defined as “an ambulance, ambulette, air ambulance, wheelchair van, or other mode of transportation specially designed to transport disabled persons (this would not include a mode of transportation not specifically designed to transport disabled persons, such as a bus, subway, taxi, train, or airplane). A modified, privately-owned vehicle, with special adaptive equipment and/or capable of transporting disabled persons is not a special mode of transportation for the purposes of this part” (38 C.F.R. §70.2).

⁶ VA is in the process of changing the rates paid for special transportation services. A discussion of this change is available in the final rule published in the *Federal Register* on February 16, 2023, “Change in Rates VA Pays for Special Modes of Transportation.” The summary of the final rule states, “The new payment methodology will apply in the absence of a contract between VA and a vendor of the special mode of transportation. For transport by ambulance, VA will pay the lesser of the actual charge or the amount determined by the Medicare Part B Ambulance Fee Schedule established by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. For travel by modes other than ambulance, VA will establish a payment methodology based on States’ posted rates or the actual charge.”

⁷ A map of the Veterans Integrated Services Networks (VISNs) participating in the program is available at <https://www.innovation.va.gov/ecosystem/views/vuhc/>.

⁸ See “VHA-Uber Health Connect Initiative,” <https://www.innovation.va.gov/ecosystem/views/vuhc/>.

⁹ See “VHA-Uber Health Connect Initiative.”

Eligibility criteria for this program are the same as for participation in the BTP.¹⁰ Veterans can review eligibility, program requirements, frequently asked questions, and contact information at:

- VA, "VHA-Uber Health Connect Initiative," <https://www.innovation.va.gov/ecosystem/views/vuhc/>.

Veterans Transportation Service (VTS)¹¹

Veterans who are unable to manage either their own transportation or schedule rideshares or are not eligible for the BTP can find assistance with the VTS. VTS is a network of transportation options that assists veterans who are visually impaired, immobilized, elderly, or living in remote areas to travel to their VA health care appointments.¹² A veteran who is eligible for VA health care benefits who has an appointment at a VA medical center may participate in VTS, subject to guidelines for ridership and the capacity of local VA facilities. Each local VA-authorized facility has ridership guidelines based on its capabilities.¹³ Veterans schedule these appointments through the points of contact or online scheduling links provided by each participating VA medical center.

Veterans can identify the points of contact and scheduling guidance at:

- VA, "Veterans Transportation Service Locations," <https://www.va.gov/HEALTHBENEFITS/vtp/map.asp>.

Many VTS locations prompt veterans to request rides through the VetRide Self-Service Portal at <https://ssp.vetride.va.gov/app/>, where veterans may sign in with AccessVA using ID.me, Login.gov, VA.gov, or VetRide accounts.

Volunteer Transportation Network (VTN)

VA's Volunteer Transportation Network serves veterans needing transportation to and from VA or VA-authorized facilities. The program allows volunteers to use "government-owned vehicles, including donated vehicles, county vehicles, Disabled American Veterans (DAV) department (state) or chapter (local) vehicles, public transportation, and contracted transportation."¹⁴ Veterans may also use transportation services provided by volunteer or community transportation providers such as veterans service organizations (VSOs).¹⁵ Individuals can inquire about volunteering at:

- VA, "Volunteer at a Facility," https://www.cdceportal.va.gov/volunteer_at_facility/.

¹⁰ See footnote 4 above.

¹¹ 38 U.S.C. §111A.

¹² More on VTS is available in VHA Directive 1695(1), "Veterans Transportation Services" (amended November 22, 2022) and available for download at <https://www.va.gov/vhapublications/publications.cfm?pub=1>. Eligibility criteria are outlined in Title 38, Section 111A, of the *U.S. Code* and Title 38, Part 70, Subpart B, of the *Code of Federal Regulations*.

¹³ See VA, "Veterans Transportation Services," https://www.va.gov/HEALTHBENEFITS/vtp/veterans_transportation_service.asp.

¹⁴ More on the program is available at <https://www.volunteer.va.gov/VolTransNetwork.asp>.

¹⁵ The homepages of some individual VHA facilities may list these organizations, or local VSOs may provide these contacts.

Availability, eligibility, and guidelines for using the VTN are determined by each VA facility, and information is available on each VA facility website. Rides are scheduled by contacting the VTN coordinator and the local facility.¹⁶ A directory of VA medical facilities by state is available at:

- VA, “Find VA Locations,” <https://www.va.gov/find-locations>.

Veterans Burial Allowance and Transportation Benefits

Survivors of a veteran may be eligible to receive burial allowances for needs related to the veteran’s burial and funeral, such as transportation. Only survivors of veterans who were receiving VA pensions or VA disability compensation, or who were receiving military retired pay in place of VA compensation, are eligible, and only specific survivors may apply for this benefit.¹⁷ The burial allowance amounts differ based on the date of death and whether the death was service-connected or nonservice-connected.

For more information on criteria and the application process, along with the current burial allowance amounts, see:

- VA, “Veterans Burial Allowance and Transportation Benefits,” <https://www.va.gov/burials-memorials/veterans-burial-allowance/>.

Automobiles and Adaptive Equipment for Disabled Veterans and Service Members¹⁸

VA provides an automobile allowance and adaptive equipment for veterans with service-connected disabilities¹⁹ for those with covered conditions.²⁰ VA is not permitted to give the automobile allowance directly to veterans but rather provides the allowance to the sellers of the vehicles.²¹ VA may provide the adaptive equipment allowance to either the veteran or the seller.²²

¹⁶ The DAV provides a directory of the VA centers in which they operate. See DAV, “Hospital Service Coordinator Directory,” <https://www.dav.org/wp-content/uploads/HSCDirectory.pdf>.

¹⁷ Eligibility criteria are outlined in Title 38, Section 2308, of the *U.S. Code* and Title 38, Section 3.1709, of the *Code of Federal Regulations*.

¹⁸ See 38 U.S.C. Chapter 39, “Automobiles and Adaptive Equipment for Certain Disabled Veterans and Members of the Armed Forces,” <https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title38/part3/chapter39&edition=prelim>.

¹⁹ The definition of *service-connected disability* is specified in Title 38, Section 1151, of the *U.S. Code* and explained on VA’s website at <https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/special-claims/1151-claims-title-38/>.

²⁰ Covered conditions include loss or permanent loss of use of one or both feet, or loss or permanent loss of use of one or both hands, permanent decreased vision in both eyes (20/200 vision or less in the better eye with glasses or greater than 20/200 vision but with a visual field defect that has reduced peripheral vision to 20 degrees or less in the better eye), a severe burn injury, and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ankylosis in one or both knees or hips. (This qualifies a person only for an adaptive-equipment grant.) See VA, “Automobile Allowance and Adaptive Equipment,” <https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/special-claims/automobile-allowance-adaptive-equipment/>.

²¹ More information is available at VA, “M21-1, Part XIII, Subpart i, Chapter 2, Section A—Automobile and Adaptive Equipment Allowance Under 38 U.S.C. Chapter 39,” https://www.knowva.ebenefits.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_ssnew/help/customer/locale/en-US/portal/55440000001018/content/554400000173638/M21-1-Part-XIII-Subpart-i-Chapter-2-Section-A-Automobile-and-Adaptive-Equipment-Allowance-Under-38-USC-Chapter-39, under “Notifying Claimants of Automobile and Adaptive Equipment Allowance Eligibility.”

²² See VA, “M21-1, Part XIII, Subpart i, Chapter 2, Section A,” under “Eligibility for Automobile and Adaptive Equipment Allowance.”

More information on this program, eligibility,²³ and the application process is available at:

- VA, “Automobile Allowance and Adaptive Equipment,” <https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/special-claims/automobile-allowance-adaptive-equipment/>.
- The current automobile allowance rate is provided at VA, “Current Special Benefit Allowances Rates,” <https://www.va.gov/disability/compensation-rates/special-benefit-allowance-rates/>.

Additional Transportation Resources for Individuals

The transportation programs noted above focus on options for veterans, caregivers, and survivors—primarily those visiting VA facilities. Additional programs and services that can support transportation to locations beyond VA facilities may be available for veterans (and others) who meet eligibility criteria. The resources below provide guidance regarding locating these transportation options that may be available for veterans and may also be available for those meeting other eligibility criteria (such as those who are older adults, those with disabilities, or those living in particular locations). CRS reports are publicly available at <https://crsreports.congress.gov>.

- Disability Information Access Line (DIAL, <https://dial.acl.gov/home>): Provides information about services such as transportation, housing support, and disability rights through an online chat, an American Sign Language chat, and phone or text options (1-888-677-1199). A user can also search to identify local resources by entering a specific address, city, state, and/or zip code.
- Eldercare Locator (<https://eldercare.acl.gov>): Connects older adults and caregivers with local resources, benefits, and services—including rides to medical appointments, home- and community-based long-term services and supports, caregiver training, health insurance counseling, legal services, elder abuse prevention, meals, housing, and adult protective services—through an information and referral service and hotline (1-800-677-1116).
- State/Territory Benefits (<https://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/Benefit-Library/State/Territory-Benefits>): Provides a directory of state and territory specific benefits. States and territories can offer transportation options for veterans through their affiliation with local VSOs. Calling the state office or visiting its web portal can provide access to this local information. A directory of state veterans affairs offices is also available at <https://discover.va.gov/external-resources/>. State benefits may have a different definition of *veteran* than the one used by VA.
- CRS Report R47605, *Connecting Older Adults to Information on Benefits and Services*.
- CRS Report R48191, *Connecting Constituents to Health Information and Services: Resources for Congressional Offices*.

²³ Eligibility criteria are outlined in Title 38, Section 3901, of the *U.S. Code* and Title 38, Section 17.156, of the *Code of Federal Regulations*.

Federal Assistance for Organizations

Nonprofit organizations may seek federal funding to support veterans with transportation, either to VA facilities or to other locations. The following federal programs and funding options may be available to these organizations. Many of these programs are broad and are not targeted specifically to veterans' transportation needs. Individual organizations would need to confirm their eligibility and the availability of these funding opportunities. Absent from this list are inactive programs, such as the Veterans Transportation and Community Living Initiative (VTCLI), which was initiated in 2011 as part of a collaboration among the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), Department of Defense,²⁴ Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Department of Labor, and VA. The grant supported nonprofits that helped “veterans, military families, and others connect to jobs and services in their communities by improving access to local transportation options.” It is currently listed in DOT’s list of expired programs at <https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grants/grant-programs/expired-grant-programs>.

Highly Rural Transportation Grants (HRTG)²⁵

Managed by VA, HRTG provides funding to accredited VSOs and state veterans service agencies to transport veterans in eligible counties to VA or VA-authorized health care facilities.²⁶ Also referred to as the “Grants for Transportation of Veterans in Highly Rural Areas program,” HRTG provides transportation programs in counties with fewer than seven people per square mile.²⁷ For this program, eligible veterans are those who served in the active military, naval, or air service and were discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable.

For more information, see the following:

- A list of current grantees—including selected counties in Alaska, California, Idaho, Maine, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Washington State, and Wyoming—is available at https://www.va.gov/HEALTHBENEFITS/vtp/highly_rural_transportation_grants.asp.
- Information for applicants is available at https://www.va.gov/HEALTHBENEFITS/vtp/grant_applicants.asp. Definitions of *highly rural* and guidance for eligibility are available in the *Code of Federal Regulations*, Title 38, Section 17.700–17.730.

Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility Partnership Grants

Managed by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Access and Mobility Partnership Grants seek to improve access to public transportation through partnerships among health, transportation, and other service providers. The program provides funding in support of innovative projects to

²⁴ The Department of Defense is “using a secondary Department of War designation” under Executive Order 14347 dated September 5, 2025.

²⁵ Enacted by P.L. 111-163, §307.

²⁶ For more information on accredited VSOs, see CRS Report R46412, *Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs): Frequently Asked Questions*. Eligibility criteria are provided in Title 38, Section 17.170, of the *Code of Federal Regulations*.

²⁷ The program was last reauthorized by P.L. 116-159, although it has continued to operate.

improve the coordination of transportation services and nonemergency medical transportation services.

- Information on eligibility, along with examples of programs recently funded, is available at <https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grants/grant-programs/access-and-mobility-partnership-grants>.

Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities— Section 5310

Managed by the FTA, the Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities—Section 5310 is a formula grant to assist states, local government, and nonprofit organizations in meeting the transportation needs of older adults and those with disabilities. Funding is apportioned to each state’s Department of Transportation or a designee chosen by the governor, which then selects subrecipients for funding. Subrecipients may include states or local governments, nonprofit organizations, or operators of public transportation. Funds may be allocated to “traditional” projects—which are defined as capital projects in Title 49, Section 5302(3), of the *U.S. Code*—or “nontraditional” projects, which may include alternative transportation to serve older adults and people with disabilities.

- Guidance concerning the grants is available at <https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grants/enhanced-mobility-seniors-individuals-disabilities-section-5310>.
- Regional offices managing the program are listed at <https://www.transit.dot.gov/about/regional-offices/regional-offices>.

Formula or Block Grants with Flexible Funding

The following federal programs have broader eligible-use provisions and are not specifically geared toward (or limited to) transportation-related projects or services for veterans, but organizations may *potentially* use them for transportation services for veterans. The programs include the following:

- Senior Centers and Supportive Services for Older Adults (also known as “Home and Community-Based Supportive Services”) is a formula grant administered by the HHS Administration for Community Living. It supports a range of services and may be used to fund transportation. Funds are distributed through state and area agencies on aging. Information on the program is available at <https://acl.gov/programs/community-inclusion-integration-and-access/senior-centers-and-supportive-services-older>. State agencies are listed and linked at <https://www.hhs.gov/aging/state-resources/index.html>. Area agencies on aging may be identified through the Eldercare Locator at <https://eldercare.acl.gov/>.
- The Social Services Block Grant (SSBG)²⁸ is a formula grant administered by the HHS Administration for Children and Families. It awards funds directly to states, which then determine how they will be used based on local needs. SSBG funds are used to support a variety of initiatives for children and adults and may include services such as transportation (see <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/law-regulation/ssbg-legislation-uniform-definition-services>). More information on SSBG is available at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/programs/ssbg/about>. Contact

²⁸ See CRS Report 94-953, *Social Services Block Grant: Background and Funding*.

information for state agencies that administer SSBG funds is available at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/contact-information/ssbg-grantee-contact-information>.

- The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)²⁹ is a formula grant administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Funding can be used for a range of community development activities, including public services such as transportation.³⁰ Information is available at <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/cdbg/>. Contact information for state and local communities that administer CDBG funds is available at <https://www.hudexchange.info/grantees/contacts/>.

Additional Resources for Organizations

The following resources and CRS products provide information on specific funding sources or support in identifying funding sources for organizations serving veterans (although some sources may also be helpful for organizations serving other populations as well). This list is not comprehensive. CRS reports are publicly available at <https://crsreports.congress.gov>.

- The Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility Program Inventory identifies examples of federal programs that provide funding for human services transportation for older adults, persons with disabilities, and/or persons with low income. A spreadsheet listing programs is linked from <https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-guidance/ccam/about/ccam-program-inventory>.
- Individual state governments may offer assistance to organizations to support veterans. Organizations can consult the state grants pages or the state veterans affairs offices listed at <https://discover.va.gov/external-resources/> to inquire if such funding is available.
- The “Transportation Funding” page from the Administration for Community Living’s Accessible Transportation Resource Center lists resources on finding grants and funding for accessible transportation for older adults and people with disabilities at <https://acl.gov/TransportationCenter/TransportationFunding>.
- The National Aging and Disability Transportation Center’s (NADTC) Resource Guide (2022), *Federal Funding for Transportation Programs Serving Older Adults and People with Disabilities*, provides “an inventory of federal grants that could serve the transportation needs of older adults and people with disabilities” and is available at <https://www.nadtc.org/resources-publications/resource/federal-funding-for-transportation-programs-serving-older-adults-and-people-with-disabilities/>.³¹
- CRS Report RL34012, *Resources for Grantseekers*.
- CRS Report RL34035, *Grants Work in a Congressional Office*.

²⁹ See CRS Report R43520, *Community Development Block Grants and Related Programs: A Primer*.

³⁰ See “Categories of Eligible Activities” in HUD, *CDBG Guide to National Objectives and Eligible Activities*, <https://www.hudexchange.info/sites/onecpd/assets/File/CDBG-National-Objectives-Eligible-Activities-Chapter-2.pdf>.

³¹ The center’s cooperative agreement expired on September 30, 2025, but this resource guide may still be useful (see <https://www.nadtc.org/>).

- For guidance on identifying grant programs, congressional staff can consult the “Grants and Federal Assistance” page on the CRS.gov website at <https://www.crs.gov/Resources/Grants>.

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