

ITNAMERICA

COMMUNITY BASED RURAL & TOWN TRANSPORTATION

Country: United States of America

OVERVIEW

Short description of the Good Practice Case:

ITNAmerica is a national non-profit making senior transportation network. This umbrella organisation develops 'community-based transportation solutions designed to address the challenge of senior mobility'. ITNAmerica undertakes a series of actions including research, policy development, education, delivery of programmes and the provision of transportation services. The organisation states that 'this multi-pronged approach makes ITNAmerica unique: Research feeds policy feeds programs...Innovations can be developed, implemented and evaluated seamlessly, without barriers or hurdles. Nowhere else is senior transportation research, policy and programming approached so coherently, so comprehensively'.

ITNAmerica has affiliate programmes in 13 communities across 12 American states. ITNAmerica has a programme called ITNCountry that allows locals to build solutions that 'connects vehicles, drivers and riders with businesses, healthcare providers and families'.

Main aspect/issue addressed by the good practice

- Poor public transport options in rural Portland.
- Additional limitations of the elderly with respect to driving (e.g. confidence, night time driving, etc).
- Social and economic isolation of people with visual impairments in rural areas.
- Needs of the elderly to access healthcare, shopping, leisure and other facilities or activities.



Figure 1. ITNAmerica, 2018

This allows local initiatives to have access to ITN's training portal, their ride coordination software, administrative and communication templates, branding as well as marketing and web tools. With assistance from ITNCountry, local programs can be run using volunteer and/or paid staff.

Main objectives of the good practice

- ITNCountry services are targeted to the needs of rural / small town based seniors who require access to transport. They help with the transition for seniors from driving their own vehicles to utilising alternative means of transport.
- Specifically, ITNPortland's mission is 'to provide a community-based, and community supported, economically viable and consumer-oriented, quality transportation service for seniors and visually impaired adults'.
- ITNPortland is the founding programme for ITNAmerica and has possibly heavily influenced the good practice objectives of other affiliate programmes and transportation networks.

DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

Region

13 communities across 12 American states. This includes Portland, Maine, which is the focus of this paper.

Target area

The aim is to provide transportation services to seniors and people with visual impairments within a 15 mile radius of Portland, Maine.

Population

The number of people in the rural area of Portland, Maine was not identified. However, according to US Census data, the number of senior citizens (65 years or older) in the city of Portland made up 13.0% of the population (approx. 8,700 people).

Population density

Unknown.

Other

ITNPortland predominantly operates in the rural area of Portland, Maine. However, Portland has a significant urban area. Portland is the most populous city in the state of Maine.

This city is located, approximately 59 km from Lewiston, the second most populous city in the state.



Target user groups and needs

The target group of users are elderly people living in small towns or rural areas requiring a transition from driving their own vehicles to seeking other forms of transport. It is understood that under the ITN program a driver with good daytime sight but poor night-time sight could, for instance, volunteer during daylight hours and be an ITN rider at night. ITN uses private vehicles, rather than buses to transport people. No exchange of money (including tips) is undertaken at the time of a ride.

According to ITNPortland, the service has given 329,043 rides to 613 riders.

ITNPortland's services are geared towards older / senior users. The service does not discriminate on what ITNPortland's services should be used for as it intends to foster social inclusion for a range of activities, including access to leisure.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE

Timeframe(s)

ITNAmerica was established in Portland, Maine in 1995. However, the various affiliate programs and transport networks were founded at different times.

Bodies involved

ITNPortland's stakeholders include ITNAmerica (the umbrella organisation), AARP (an organisation dedicated to empowering older people to choose how they live as they age), Liberty Mutual (an insurer), Portland Stage Company and Portland Symphony Orchestra (stakeholders for ITNPortland's Fine Rides for Fine Arts program), volunteer drivers, members, council of advisors, local businesses and healthcare organisations that are connected to the various programmes such as Ride & Shop or HealthyMiles.

Mobility services provided/addressed

The ITNPortland good practice relies on the availability of private vehicles made available to use rather than buses to transport people. This is under organisational values to facilitate and maintain the independence and dignity of seniors using the service. The service is available daily (24 hours a day).

The good practice is not related to an innovative mobility service, but rather the use of private vehicles and the deliberate replication of the convenience of private car ownership. ITNPortland also utilises a suite of programmes that can be applied to the local context as provided by ITNAmerica.

The service is met through the use of donated private vehicles and trained, volunteer drivers. There are no set routes.

Cost and Financing sources

ITNPortland currently receives resources through donations (volunteer credits), corporate partnerships (for example Regeneron Pharmaceuticals is a corporate sponsor), and through time and assistance volunteered by people willing to drive vehicles. Further to the above, ITNPortland also has a membership scheme (e.g. \$50 for an annual individual membership or \$60 for a family). ITNPortland's users can also add credit to their online

personal transportation account as monetary exchange is not accepted during rides. Discounts are applied for shared rides.

It could not be ascertained whether ITNPortland is in receipt of subsidies or grants from official sources to provide their services.

Organizational set-up

ITNAmerica is an umbrella organisation that provides support to transportation partners and affiliate services in providing transportation solutions to meet the needs of senior travel. ITNAmerica has a suite of programmes that transportation partners or affiliate services can adopt according to their needs. These include: 'Personal Transportation Accounts' (which allows for users to earn credits or cash in exchange for their vehicle. They can also be provided by co-payments from participating merchants, healthcare providers and other stakeholders), 'Ride & Shop' (partnerships with local businesses to keep the costs low for seniors needing access. Payment is electronically integrated into ITN's technology to keep the scheme paperless), 'Healthy Miles' (partnerships with healthcare providers to ensure that seniors are able to travel to their appointments on time), 'Road Scholarship' (helps low income seniors access rides irrespective of their ability to pay), and 'Car Trade' (allows seniors to use their vehicles in exchange for rides).

ITNAmerica is run by a board of directors, many of whom have a background in transportation, ageing and/or the delivery of public policy. The board of directors is informed by a council of advisors (including the former US Secretary of Transportation). ITNPortland is also run by a board of directors who are informed by a local advisory council.

Supporting technologies

ITNAmerica has a suite of technology tools to allow for cashless payments (i.e. payments are not taken at the time of a ride). For example, the ITNRides technology allows for digital transactions to keep the system paperless. Details of how ITNRides functions could not be ascertained, but it is understood to be used for:

- 'dispatch, membership, volunteer management
- complete and contemporary PC and web based
- training and technical support'

INNOVATION ASPECTS

ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

ITNPortland is run by a board of directors who are informed by a council of advisors. The service also heavily utilises volunteer drivers.

LEVEL OF PUBLIC SECTOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

ITNPortland is an affiliate of ITNAmerica, which states:

'ITN affiliate communities may use up to 50 percent public funds in the first 7 years of service. Because ITN does not want to compete with public transportation for scarce tax payer dollars, we seek to supplement public transportation by working directly with seniors, their families, and their communities to access private resources'.

INTERCONNECTIONS BETWEEN SHARED AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES

This practice aims to replicate the comfort and convenience of the private car by senior citizens and the visually impaired, rather than providing a specific connection to public transport.

ICT CONNECTIONS AND IMPACTS OF THE TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS IMPLEMENTED

ITNAmerica provides support through ITNRides software. Staff at ITNAmerica provide support to affiliates to get their programmes running.

OTHER (E.G. SOCIAL INNOVATION, ETC.)

ITN Portland aims to encourage mobility to different facilities. This includes enabling access to locations showing the fine arts. ITN Portland has joined with Portland Stage Company and Portland Symphony Orchestra to engage senior people to attend concerts and plays.

ASSESSMENT

Ridership and other key metrics/results (through key-indicators, where applicable)

A strong point of the good practice is the transferability and ready network of affiliates and transportation networks that can utilise the suite of tools and the experience that ITNAmerica has. However, a weakness of the good practice in Portland specifically is that it does not appear to strongly connect to public transport services. This may be due to considerable challenges in the delivery of sufficient public transport services to allow for it as a practical journey stage in most journeys to/from rural areas of Portland.

Reduced population density limits the provision of adequate public transport provision in rural Portland. This has the effect of limiting the potential for social mobility. In addition, it is understood that rural Maine has a relatively high senior population proportion. The use of private cars to transport seniors and the visually impaired is to retain the 'dignity' of service users. However, the main aim of the service is not to supplement nor compete with public transport.

The scheme has proven potential for transferability which is demonstrated through the roll out of ITN programs throughout the United States.

The ITNAmerica programme shows no outward sign of abating. ITNPortland is supported by the umbrella organisation and has managed to deliver a functioning programme that utilises a team of volunteers and receives financial revenue through donations, partnership and membership.

Good Governance

This good practice measure does demonstrate new solutions for improving accessibility in rural areas by allowing people to trade their personal vehicles for credits to use the service. This ensures that the vehicle is better utilised as part of the ITNPortland service provision.

ITNPortland benefits from the experience of the board of directors (which includes a retired bus driver, a financial services manager and a former director of planning) as well as the council of advisors. ITNPortland is also able to call on the advice of ITNAmerica as needed.

Success factors/strengths

The initiative relies heavily on volunteers which strengthens the community aspect of ITNPortland.

The scheme provides support to seniors on low incomes who might otherwise face social exclusion because of their limited mobility options.

As the scheme uses private vehicles rather than buses, users are able to maximise their service flexibility without having to follow set routes.

ITN particularly benefits from the roll out of tools, software, etc. and the knowledge of the umbrella organisation, ITNAmerica.

Difficulties encountered/weakness

Not identified. However, the scheme is somewhat reliant on volunteer drivers to keep the initiative running.

FEATURES THAT ARE CONSIDERED TO BE GOOD PRACTICE (LESSON(S) LEARNT)

The transferability of the network and the support network of other affiliates have helped the programme run successfully.

REFERENCES FOR FURTHER DETAILS

Contact of the operator and of relevant stakeholders

Organization: ITNPortland

Person contact: Patrycja Fortula-Kohn (Secretary)

Email / Mobile: 001 207 854 0505 or www.itnportland.org/contact

Key references

- ITNAmerica Promotional Sheet: www.tccoordinatedplan.org/uploads/3/1/4/7/3147084/itnamericaintro.pdf
- VolunteerMatch: www.volunteermatch.org/search/org186698.jsp
- AARP (Updated: July 2016). 5 Questions for Katherine Freund. www.aarp.org/livable-communities/getting-around/info-2015/interview-Katherine-Freund-ITN-America.html
- ITNAmerica (2017). 2017 Annual Report. www.itnamerica.org/assets/images/docs/annual-report-2017-pdf.pdf

Websites

- ITNPortland website: www.itnportland.org
- ITNAmerica website: www.itnamerica.org