

## Managing Mobility

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Access and Mobility. It can be as simple as getting into your car and driving to the grocery store to get some milk. Or a little more complicated like taking the train to the Fern Rock Train Station, changing to the Broad Street Subway in order to arrive at the Linc to see the Eagles.

But access and mobility can be difficult if you don't or are unable to drive. In addition, events happen that can shut down our infrastructure such as a major snowstorm or the upcoming visit of Pope Francis. These challenges can be daunting but there are solutions to our region's access and mobility issues.

The Partnership Transportation Management Association (PTMA) is a non-profit organization that collaborates with public and private sector partners to ease traffic congestion, enhance transportation options, educate and engage the community on the issues of land use, the environment and healthy lifestyles. As one can imagine over the past several months, the PTMA has been working with SEPTA, PennDOT, employers and local municipalities on the issues surrounding the arrival of visitors for the World Meeting of Families and Pope Francis. This includes publishing "Pope Alerts" an email communication that provides the latest information on train and bus schedules, road closures and preparation tips. As we draw even closer to the event, the PTMA is working with employers to provide alternative ways for their employees to get to work in order to continue operations.

But this visit is a once in a lifetime event. The bigger access and mobility challenge that we face is individuals in our community that cannot access the necessities of life. One of the goals of the many non-profits in our region is to have older adults remain in their homes for as long as possible. While this is an admirable goal, without some form of access and mobility it is not an easy or realistic one to achieve. So the PTMA, with the assistance of the Bucks-Mont Collaborative Access Committee, has developed a Volunteer Driver's Program.

The Volunteer Driver Program is designed for riders that do not have any transportation options available to them. They cannot have access to a vehicle – either their own, relatives or families. Riders must be unable to access or ride public transportation and are not covered by programs offered by Transnet such as Shared Ride or Medical Assistance. For example, if an individual's spouse has a vehicle and is able to drive the rider but only during the evening, that individual would not qualify to participate in the Volunteer Driver Program.

The program would offer transportation services to anyone 18 years and older that resides within the North Penn, Souderton and Wissahickon School Districts. Children, under 18 years of age, can be transported only if they are accompanied by an adult and secured by a seat belt or in a

proper car seat by the adult rider. The proper car seat will be supplied by the rider and the child needs to be properly secured in the seat.

In the beginning the program will operate Monday through Friday from 9 am to 4:30 pm. When the volunteer pool of drivers increases, the program will consider expanding hours and days of service. Those in need of service, would fill out an intake form, sign the appropriate waivers and eventually be matched with a volunteer driver.

The drivers are the key to get this program working and we have been hard at work trying to recruit them. Drivers fill out an application that requires them to have a current driver's license, liability insurance equal to the minimum limits required by Pennsylvania law, a criminal background check and attend a drivers' orientation. At the orientation they will receive driver's policies and procedures and sign the final waiver and indemnification form. Drivers can decide the times they would like to drive and the distance they would like to travel.

But this program can only make a difference, if we have the drivers to do it. For more information on the Volunteer Drivers' Program or to sign up for our Pope Alerts, call the PTMA's toll free Mobility Hotline at 866-507-4857.