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New National Poll: Inability to Drive, Lack of Transportation Options are Major Concerns for Older Adults, People With Disabilities and Caregivers

With More Americans in Need of Transportation and No Single “Go-to” Source for Information, National Public Awareness Campaign Launches to Inform Public About Variety of Transportation Options in Their Communities

WASHINGTON—A new national poll released today finds that older adults and people with disabilities are facing significant transportation-related challenges once they no longer drive. They feel there is a lack of accessible and reliable transportation alternatives, which prevents them from doing the things they need and want to do and leaves them feeling frustrated, isolated and trapped.

With more than 1 in 5 Americans older than age 65 not driving, demand for transportation is steadily increasing as the boomer population continues to grow. Given that 600,000 people stop driving every year, there is no end to the challenge in sight. To address the growing demand for transportation services and the concern that there are insufficient resources and information available to help, the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC) has launched the “Every Ride Counts” campaign, a national effort to increase awareness of local transportation options for older adults and people with disabilities in communities across the United States.

“The results of the survey make clear that many older adults feel that giving up the car keys greatly limits older adults’ access to medical care, grocery shopping and opportunities for socialization, but it doesn’t have to be that way,” said Sandy Markwood, Chief Executive Officer, National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a). “There are excellent transportation programs available and the Aging Network is aggressively advocating for more resources to ensure all communities, including rural areas, are prioritizing transportation services for older adults and people with disabilities. In this day and age, the inability to drive is no reason for a lesser quality of life.”

“Over 80 percent of the young adults with disabilities surveyed stated that they’re often prevented from doing the activities that they’d like to do because of lack of transportation or inability to drive. This is life changing and very different than the experience of their cohorts who do not have disabilities,” said Carol Wright Kenderdine, Co-Director, NADTC, and Assistant Vice President, Transportation & Mobility for Easterseals. “To address this need, particularly in small communities, NADTC recently funded ten community grants to support planning for alternatives, such as volunteer transportation, rideshare options and expanding transit.”

Key findings from the poll include:

- **Older adults and younger adults with disabilities drive themselves or depend on family and friends to get around but they are worried about not being able to drive and believe finding alternative transportation would be difficult:** 74 percent of older adults and 71 percent of younger adults with disabilities who drive have already cut back on driving; 42 percent of older adults and 56 percent of younger adults with disabilities anticipate a time when they are not able to drive; and 68 percent of older adults and 79 percent of younger adults with disabilities say finding alternative transportation would be very difficult or somewhat difficult. Those without caregivers are especially concerned about finding transportation if they stop driving (73 percent of older adults and 77 percent of younger adults with disabilities).
- **Caregivers play a pivotal role in helping older adults and younger adults with disabilities meet their transportation needs and most are happy to help, but find providing or arranging rides to be extremely time consuming:** 39 percent of caregivers spend five to 10 hours or more on the transportation needs of friends or relatives each week; 86 percent of caregivers are concerned about the care recipient's driving; and for 28 percent of caregivers, driving care recipients to where they need to go feels overwhelming.
- **Older adults and younger adults with disabilities who give up driving cannot do the things they need and want to do, leaving them feeling isolated and frustrated:** Eight in 10 non-drivers who have a disability and 40 percent of older adults cannot do the activities or chores they need or like to do because they do not drive. Giving up driving makes older adults and younger adults living with disabilities feel dependent on others (63 percent, 70 percent), frustrated (39 percent, 65 percent), isolated (33 percent, 55 percent), and trapped (30 percent, 54 percent).
- **Older adults and younger adults with disabilities are not using public transportation services:** Only 15 percent of older adults and 32 percent of younger adults with disabilities use public transportation services; most older adults and younger adults with disabilities drive their own vehicle (82 percent and 66 percent) or ride with family or friends (58 percent and 74 percent).
- **Fewer people living in rural areas or small towns say the transportation alternatives available to them are good:** Only 49 percent of older adults and 45 percent of younger adults with disabilities in small towns say they have good alternatives to driving, compared to 62 percent of older adults and 75 percent of younger adults with disabilities in large cities or suburbs.
- **Those who do not drive face many barriers, including access to affordable transportation alternatives:** Access and availability (40 percent older adults, 38 percent younger adults with disabilities) and affordability (12 percent, 20 percent) stand out as barriers, particularly for those without a caregiver; and only about a quarter say they have excellent options.
- **There is no single “go-to” resource for alternative transportation options:** 43 percent of older adults and 48 percent of people living with disabilities rely on family,

friends or colleagues for information and many (24 percent and 31 percent) search on the computer. Organizations that serve older adults or people with disabilities and transportation agencies are less frequently consulted.

- **The majority of older adults (66 percent) and younger adults with disabilities (54 percent) expect transportation options to stay the same or get worse, but many would be comfortable with various transportation options, including public transit, if it was readily available:** 50 percent of older adults and 40 percent of younger adults with disabilities say they would be comfortable using public transportation.

“One of the key themes emerging from this research is that an individual with a disability, their family and friends, or a caregiver may not know who to call or how to find out about transportation services available,” said Angela F. Williams, President and CEO, Easterseals. “Accessibility is as much about access to information as it is about whether a bus or van has an accessible ramp. One is as important as the other. The survey results reinforce the role that disability organizations can play in increasing the availability and knowledge of accessible transportation options.”

“Access to transportation is key to support the health and well-being of older adults and ensure their ability to age in place and have a high quality of life in their community,” said Virginia Dize, Co-Director, NADTC and Transportation Program Director, National Association of Area Agencies on Aging. “Yet this survey reveals that access to transportation that meets their needs is clearly a major challenge. While local transportation options do exist, older adults and people with disabilities do not know about them or have access to them. The goal of our ‘Every Ride Counts’ campaign is to vastly change that.”

Methodology

KRC Research conducted national quantitative surveys of three audiences from October 19 to November 5, 2018. A 20-minute survey was conducted among 509 adults age 60 and older (309 online, 200 telephone); 513 adults age 18-59 living with one or more disabilities that limit physical activities, seeing and/or hearing (413 online, 100 telephone); and 627 caregivers age 18 to 84 that provide and/or arrange transportation for an adult family member or friend (all conducted online). The sample of 509 older adults included 33 percent living with a disability that limits physical activities, vision and/or hearing. The samples of older adults and younger adults with disabilities were weighted to be demographically representative based on U.S. Census data. The caregiver sample included 390 caregivers of older adults and 237 caregivers of adults living with a disability.

For more information on the Every Ride Counts campaign, visit www.nadtc.org/everyridecounts.

About The National Aging and Disability Transportation Center

The National Aging and Disability Transportation Center is funded through a cooperative agreement of Easter Seals, the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging, and the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration, with guidance from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living. NADTC’s mission is to increase accessible transportation options for older adults, people with disabilities and caregivers nationwide.

About The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging

The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) is a 501(c)(3) membership association representing America's national network of 622 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and providing a voice in the nation's capital for the 256 Title VI Native American aging programs. The mission of n4a is to build the capacity of its members so they can better help older adults and people with disabilities live with dignity and choices in their homes and communities for as long as possible. Visit www.n4a.org for more information.

About Easterseals

For nearly 100 years Easterseals has been the indispensable resource for people and families challenged by disabilities. We offer hands-on, vital programs through our network of affiliates to help people of all ages reach their full potential through development and life skills learning, workforce training and placement services, and fun, healthy recreation programs for children, adults, and caregivers. To learn more about Easterseals and services in communities nationwide, visit www.easterseals.com.

About KRC Research

KRC Research is a global consultancy that employs high-quality quantitative and qualitative opinion research methodologies to measure public opinion, identify and segment audiences, and identify opinion drivers to inform decisions, optimize communications, and evaluate impact. KRC has conducted research in over 50 countries and in 30 languages. KRC's research and insights are sought by corporations, governments, and not-for-profit organizations. KRC's work is regularly reported by news outlets like *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, and *USA Today*.