



Rural Montana Transportation Program

Transportation Mission Statement:

To bridge the transportation gap in rural Montana, including Native American reservations, by providing reliable ADA-compliant transportation, enabling access to education, health care, employment, and community, by ensuring their right to mobility and inclusion for aging and disabled individuals.

- Expanding Access Across 18 Counties
- Presented by: Tina Carter, Transportation Coordinator
- Jen Hawkinson-Regional Manager
- Date: 8/19/2025



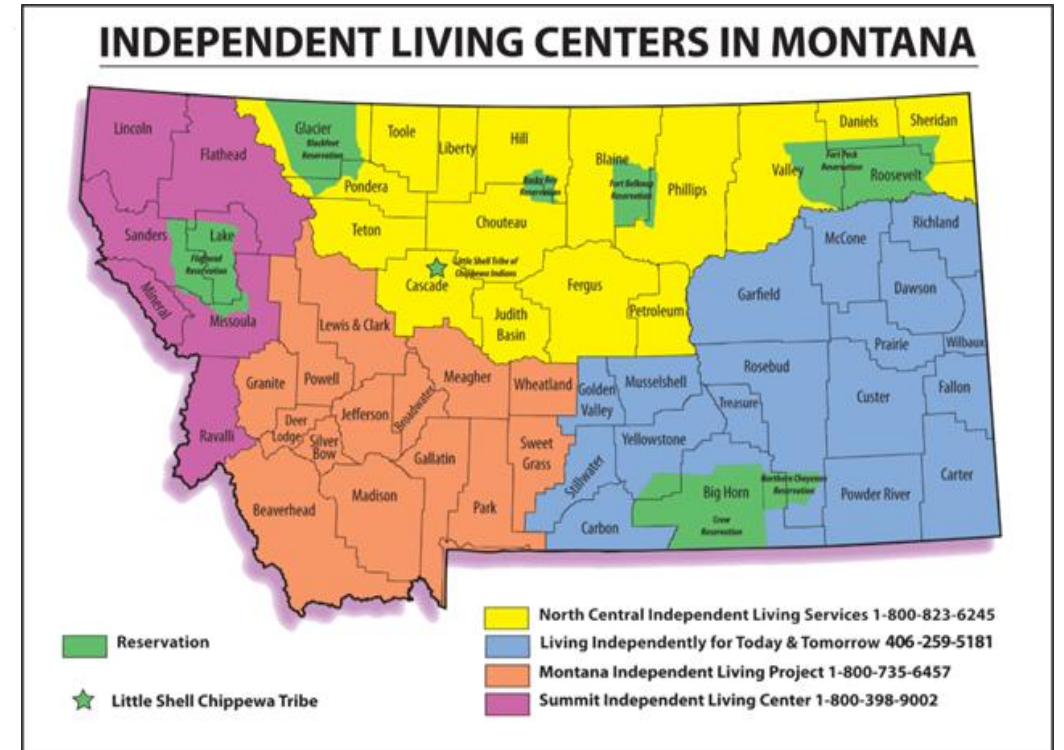
Vastness of Eastern Montana





Service Area Map

Our Service Area Covers:
47,302 sq. miles
Slightly larger than PA &
Slightly smaller than MS





Vision Statement

Empowering aging and disabled individuals to LIFTT themselves above the barriers of life.

Mission Statement

Living Independently for Today & Tomorrow's (LIFTT) mission as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit Center for Independent Living serving Southeastern Montana is to empower aging and disabled individuals to live independently through education, support, and opportunities.

COMING IN SPRING 2026



Outreach & Promotion

Media Campaigns:

- **Lee Enterprises/Amplified Digital** deployed a campaign for LIFTT using transportation grant funds in January 2025. The campaign includes tactics such as Meta ads (Facebook/Instagram) and Google paid search.
- (Pay-Per-Click), premium impressions on the Billings Gazette's website (billingsgazette.com).
- Partner Posts on the Billings Gazette's Facebook page.
- The campaign is currently pacing at 122.9% to plan, which is slightly up from the last reporting period.
- Local C7 TV Show
- Extensive Grassroots Outreach
- Flyers



**Lillian R. Patterson
Roe Carpenter & Mark Fuller
Dawson County Senior Center**



**Johanna Brutlag & Myrna
Athans
Grandview Retirement Home,
Glendive, MT**

- **521 Surveys collected from the 18 counties we serve to assess transportation needs.**

- **Age Range 65+ 209 people**
- **Disability 255 people**
- **Target Population:**
- **50 & Up 335 people**

Survey & Focus Group Insights

Key Findings from 7 Focus Groups on Rural Transportation Needs

Most Pressing Transportation Challenges:

- Limited Mobility for Elderly Residents: In rural areas with low population density, elderly individuals without personal vehicles face significant barriers to mobility.
- Access to Essential Services: Transportation difficulties hinder access to critical services such as medical appointments and grocery shopping.
- Glendive-Specific Issues: Residents in Glendive struggle to obtain necessities, highlighting the broader transportation challenges in similar rural communities.

Survey & Focus Group Insights, cont.

Key Findings from 7 Focus Groups on Rural Transportation Needs

Desired Service Improvements

- Accessible Transit System: Participants expressed a strong need for a dedicated transit system tailored to the needs of the elderly and disabled.
- Focus on Essential Destinations: The proposed service should prioritize transportation to medical facilities, grocery stores, and other essential locations.

Challenges, Successes, & Failures

- **Main Challenge:** Difficulty in getting participants for focus groups.
- **Initial Success:** Many people were encountered during the survey phase.
- **Reluctance to Participate:** Despite initial contact, people were hesitant to join focus groups.
- **Scheduling Efforts:** Eight focus groups were scheduled with a total of 40 participants.
- **Attendance Issues:** Some focus groups had to be canceled due to low turnout.
- **Outcome:** Completed the focus groups and received valuable feedback.
- **Goal Achievement:** The original goal was five focus groups, and this was exceeded despite the challenges

Challenges, Successes, & Failures

Biggest Success: Completion of the ADA Accessible Transportation Program surveys.

- **Target:** 300 surveys.

- **Actual Completed:** 521 surveys — **221 over the goal.**

- **Key Contributors to Success:**

- Nurses, Caregivers, Hospitals, Managers of assisted living and retirement homes

- **Reason for Strong Response:** These contributors recognized the importance of the initiative and actively encouraged participation.

Failures of Non-Existence Transportation

(From Jen Hawkinson, Regional Manager)

- Critical Need:** A man required transportation from Glendive to Miles City (75 miles 1 way) for dialysis **three times a week**.
- Lack of Options:** He was **unable to find a ride**, highlighting a major gap in transportation services.
- Life-Threatening Consequence:** As Jen Hawkinson emphasized, *"Without dialysis, he dies."*
- Catalyst for Change:** This case became a **key motivator** for the creation of **LIFTT's transportation program**, underscoring the urgency and importance of accessible medical transportation.

Failures of Non-Existence Transportation

•(From Monica Anderson, LIFTT Outreach Specialist)

•**Urgent Medical Need:** A resident of an assisted living facility in Ekalaka needed to travel to Billings (3 ½ hours, 1 way) for a specialist appointment.

•**No Transportation Available:** The lack of transportation options prevented him from making the trip.

•**Tragic Outcome:** His condition worsened, and he **ultimately passed away**.

•**Preventable Loss:** Monica Anderson emphasized that this death **might have been prevented** with timely access to care.

•**Program Justification:** This case further highlights the **critical need** for LIFTT's transportation program.

Next Steps

- Secure a location & build our transportation facility
- Coordinate with local transit providers
- Develop a scheduling system tailored to rural needs
- Launch pilot routes with ADA vans
- Secure Sustainable Funding



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"We would like to extend our sincere thanks to the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center for their strong support in helping us secure this grant. This is a tremendous opportunity for Eastern Montana and will undoubtedly have a positive and lasting impact on many lives."