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**Report of the
Maine SILC Travel Voucher Work Group**

**As authorized by PUBLIC Law, Chapter 452, LD 949
127th Maine State Legislature, Second Regular Session
“An Act To Enact the Recommendations of the Commission on Independent
Living and Disability,” Section 3**

**To Develop a Statewide Transportation Voucher System
for Maine People with Disabilities Seeking Independent Living**

December 28, 2016

To

**Committee On Health and Human Services
Committee On Transportation
Committee On Labor, Commerce, Research and Economic Development**



December 22, 2016

To the Maine Legislative Law Library;

Please accept this report as the final report of the Travel Voucher for Maine People with Disabilities Workgroup led by the Maine Statewide Independent Living Council (Maine SILC) and charged through the legislation of LD 949 of the 127th Maine Legislature in 2016.

A link to the report will be placed on our website at www.mainesilc.org. Any comments or to schedule workgroup member's attendance to a future public hearing can be worked through me.

Thank you for your attention to this matter!

Mike McClellan
Executive Director
Maine SILC

329-6148

Members of the Work Group:

Mike McClellan – Maine Statewide Independent Living Council, Executive Director
Mel Clarrage – Maine SILC, Chair
Mary Lou Dyer – Maine Association for Community Service Providers, Managing Director
Rachel Dyer –Maine Developmental Disabilities Council, Associate Director
Dennis Fitzgibbons – Alpha One, Executive Director
Matt Peterson – Business person, former State Representative
Simonne Maline – Consumer Council System of Maine, Executive Director
James Phipps – The Iris Network, Executive Director
Riley Albair – Disability Rights Maine, Advocate
Dale Crafts – Business person, former State Representative
Eric Dibner – MDOL, State Accessibility and Independent Living Coordinator
Karen Mason – DHHS Office of Aging and Disability Services, Deputy Director
Kelly Arata – MaineDOT, Transportation Planning Analyst

Additional participants at the meetings included:

Charles Woodbury – Community provider
Tom Seekins – Professor of Psychology; Director of the Research and Training Center on
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the 127th Maine Legislative Session, LD 949 directed the Statewide Independent Living Council to convene a working group and develop a proposal for a statewide transportation voucher program for persons with disabilities. Lack of transportation is one of the most persistent barriers experienced by people with disabilities in rural areas. Transportation voucher programs have been implemented in communities across the nation and been successful in extremely rural areas. The Work Group recommends establishing a Maine pilot program to evaluate transportation vouchers in rural areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation A - Voucher Program Pilot Project

A. Travel Voucher Work Group recommends a one-year pilot project to test the viability of the travel voucher model in rural communities of Maine. The pilot project should take place simultaneously in multiple communities (no less than two). Ideal locations for a pilot program will be rural communities with limited transportation infrastructure, a disability service provider presence and high levels of individual car ownership. Aroostook County, Washington County and Western Maine were all viewed as reasonable locations.

While specific program features should be developed at the community and agency levels, basic minimum elements of the pilot should include:

- *Key players which are described in Section III, C. “The Transportation Voucher Model;”
- *Eligibility criteria for riders, including disability and income parameters;
- *Encouragement of a variety of transportation models;
- *Encouragement of a variety of trip purposes, including medical, vocational and recreational;
- *Emphasis of self-direction and individual control for participating riders;
- *A Coordination Plan for developing community support for the voucher pilot, developing partnerships with local transportation providers, and identifying potential volunteer drivers;
- *A plan for program assessment and evaluation throughout the program and its conclusion.

Recommendation B – Request for Proposals

The Travel Voucher Work Group recommends that a State agency or council issue a Request for Proposals describing plans from entities interested in sponsoring a one-year travel voucher pilot program. While local agencies should be encouraged to describe a pilot with unique features

aimed at responding to regional factors, basic elements should at a minimum include those described above in A.

The key elements of the pilot project will be to deliver transportation voucher services to persons with disabilities and to deliver a program assessment to review data collected, consideration of expansion of the pilot (or not), review of funding sources, and other observations.

Recommendation C – Fiscal

To carry out Recommendations A and B, allocate funding for FY 2018 to a designated agency or council in the amount of \$100,000.

The Work Group discussed the need for funding as well as the various methods that might be available to fund a Travel Voucher program. An appropriate use of federal funds for transportation vouchers could be Federal Transit Administration grants for rural transportation. Currently, Maine uses such funds, but none are allocated for voucher programs. Without taking from current programs, a separate State allocation will be required.

The workgroup was in agreement in concept that the recommendation here is for the Maine Legislature to appropriate funding to be utilized for this pilot project and that we do not recommend taking monies that are currently within departments and budgeted for other uses. Recommendation C has the support of all non-State Agency Work Group members.

INTRODUCTION

The Maine Legislature is in the midst of a series of efforts to examine the status of Independent Living for Maine people with disabilities. These discussions have drawn interest and participation from many individuals and organizations who firmly believe in examining and bolstering current efforts to empower people with disabilities to live fully integrated, meaningful lives of substance and influence.

In recent years, the Legislature and citizen volunteers have looked at Independent Living both broadly and as defined by federal law. Prior to 2014, Independent Living in Maine had not been studied for nearly 30 years. Representative Matt Peterson began an effort that led to the establishment of a Blue Ribbon Commission to study the issue. The Commission was established by Joint Order H.P. 1361 of the 126th Legislature. The Blue Ribbon Commission reviewed several facets of Independent Living in our state, including transportation, employment, education, and housing. The Commission concluded by producing eight recommendations in these key Independent Living areas.

In the 127th Maine Legislative Session Representative Michael McClellan submitted legislation to enact the eight recommendations of the study listed above. The bill, LD 949, was sent to the Maine Health and Human Services Legislative Committee and enjoyed many work sessions over the two-year period of the 127th Maine Legislature. The collaborative effort of Legislature, Legislative staff, Maine Departments and the Maine community led to some of the recommendations being resolved. LD 949 was amended to reflect three final recommendations which became law. See that document at:

http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/display_ps.asp?id=949&PID=1456&snum=127

The final bill as enacted included three sections. Section 3 directed the Statewide Independent Living Council to convene a working group and develop a proposal for a statewide transportation voucher program for persons with disabilities. The duties of the working group were set out in the final law and include the following:

“Statewide Independent Living Council to convene a working group and develop statewide transportation voucher program. The Statewide Independent Living Council, established pursuant to 29 United States Code, Sections 796 to 796f and administered by the Department of Labor, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, shall convene a working group to develop a proposal for a statewide transportation voucher program for persons with disabilities. Members of the working group must include representatives from the Department of Transportation, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Labor and a statewide agency administering centers for independent living. The working group shall examine the flexibility of federal funding and matching funds sources, consult with the University of Montana Research and Training Center on Disability in Rural Communities for assistance in developing the proposal and submit its findings and recommendations to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over transportation matters, the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over health and human services matters and the joint standing committee of the Legislature

having jurisdiction over labor, commerce, research and economic development matters no later than December 15, 2016. The joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over health and human services matters may report out a bill regarding this subject matter to the First Regular Session of the 128th Legislature.”

This written report is produced accordingly. While the interest in the issue of transportation was clearly high, there was not a match in terms of assigning this study to a Maine Legislative Department. In a quest to continue the discussion, the Maine Health and Human Services Legislative Committee unanimously asked the Maine Statewide Independent Living Council (Maine SILC) to lead the work group. The legislation did not define the composition of the work group other than the specification that it would include three Maine State Departments: Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Maine Department of Labor and Maine Department of Transportation. In filling the committee spots, we thus looked to the original Independent Living legislative study group organized by Representative Matt Peterson and attempted to bring back as many participants as possible.

The Transportation Voucher Work Group that was convened pursuant to LD 949 included representation from people who have disabilities, organizations and agencies which support independent living, State of Maine Departments, and the Legislature. Staff for the Work Group was Mike McClellan of Maine SILC. All the members and participants are listed above (page 2).

The committee met ten times beginning in June 2016. A location for minutes, reports, and literature was stationed on the Maine SILC website: www.mainesilc.org. This website is open to the public. The Work Group relied heavily on the knowledge and experience of the Work Group members, literature and studies of travel voucher systems nationally. We heard presentations from key researchers and individuals. In the initial meeting of the full Work Group it was determined that all potential options were to be considered. Below is more detail into this effort and the all-important recommendations we present to you, the 128th Maine Legislature.

The Travel Voucher Work Group looked at examples of travel voucher programs across the nation, case studies, literature, and research on rural transportation for people with disabilities. We learned that a recent Maine Department of Transportation ten-year strategic planning process for the state resolved with a goal to achieve 20% of the theoretical demand for transit in Maine. The Travel Voucher Work Group sought to find ways to help achieve this goal.

We believe the recommendations listed later in this document are reality based, reasonable and achievable. Funding barriers, system constraints and many other practical concerns are a reality which must be taken into account. However, this report is meant to be positive, looking to opportunities that are available and seeking to be collaborative. While we make recommendations, we realize there are multiple options and in the end we simply seek to move independent living opportunities for Maine people with disabilities forward through transportation solutions that give individuals personal control and greater options.

The Work Group had many discussions which ultimately led to several areas of agreement. The recommendations below are endorsed by each of us. We look forward to meeting and providing

further information and discussion to the legislative community who takes up this report. After much study, it is clear that a travel voucher system offers great potential and opportunity for supporting individuals with disabilities in order to reach independent living goals. We look forward to collaborating with the Maine Legislature and all interested parties to that end.

BACKGROUND

Transportation

One of the greatest challenges for people living with a disability in Maine is obtaining reliable, accessible transportation. Given our geographic diversity and dispersion, public transportation is available in only a limited number of rural areas, so most communities and individuals in rural areas are largely unserved. The automobile remains the primary mode of transportation for all Maine citizens, and access – both to reliable services and usable vehicles – is difficult for many Maine citizens with a disability, particularly in small towns and rural areas.

The 2014 Final Report of the Commission on Independent Living and Disability, a legislatively created Blue Ribbon Commission, recommended that the state undertake further work to allocate a portion of the transportation or other resources to fund a voucher program that will provide transportation for people with disabilities throughout the state. Such a program has already been operating successfully in many states.

Establishing a successful pilot program would involve:

- describing an operational area;
- creating a network of volunteer and other qualified drivers / vehicles that can provide accessible transportation;
- setting rates;
- securing payment mechanisms, including potential public supports;
- recruiting riders;
- creating the application and linkages between riders and providers, and;
- evaluating outcomes to insure sustainability and replicability.

Previous Reports and Plans

- *From the Maine Department of Transportation Strategic Transit Plan 2025*

Based on national studies, models and experience, it was determined that meeting 20% of the theoretical demand for transit was an acceptable level of service for transit in Maine. The report describes how the 20% level of service was set (it is based on the trip needs of no-vehicle households). While this may seem like a small percentage of demand to meet, to advance the statewide percent of demand met for given geographic areas ranges from 0% of demand met (no public transit service) to 31%, the costs to meet the 20% average level can be formidable. With a statewide average of 17%, boosting the average to 20% will require additional funds and/or substantial increases in the efficiency and effectiveness of existing service providers. Estimates of additional annual operating and administrative costs to achieve the 20% goal range from \$7.4 million, based on lowest best current cost expenditures, to \$14 million based on current average cost expenditures. In addition, it is projected that another \$1.1 million (for lowest current cost services) to \$2.1 million (for current average cost services) for capital expenditures are needed to meet 20% of the theoretical demand. In total, it would cost between \$8.5 million and \$16.2 million more per year to meet 20% of theoretical demand. The Steering Committee concluded that addressing 20% of the

theoretical demand would also help better meet the transit needs of the elderly, the disabled, and Maine's low income population.

Maine is in the lowest quartile of states providing state funding for public transit and during the most recent reporting period for which data is available for all states, provided 40 cents per capita compared to a seven state peer group (Idaho, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Vermont, West Virginia and Wyoming) weighted average of \$2.82. Persons with disabilities in Maine and elderly persons in Maine who need help with transportation so they can live in their own homes and stay in their communities face a similar set of circumstances: a large, rural state in which needed services are sometimes difficult to obtain.

- [From *Disability in Maine: 2002*, prepared by Monroe Berkowitz and Todd Honeycutt, Rutgers University, New Jersey](#)

Maine's population of persons with disabilities is expected to increase 27% during the years 2000 to 2025 while the general population is expected to increase by 12%. The report attributes this increase to the Baby Boomer generation as that population group moves into older age groups in which the prevalence of disability is greatest and the demand for services increase.

- [From the *State Plan for Independent Living \(SPIL\)*](#)

The *(SPIL) for Maine for 2017-2019* was prepared by the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) in collaboration with the Center for Independent Living (Alpha One) and the Designated State Entity, the Maine Department of Labor - Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in 2016. The purpose of the plan is to:

“Ensure the existence of appropriate planning, financial support and coordination, and other assistance to appropriately address, on a statewide and comprehensive basis, the needs in the State for:

- The provision of State independent living services;
- The development and support of a statewide network of centers for independent living;
- Working relationships between programs providing independent living services and independent living centers, the vocational rehabilitation program established under Title I, and other programs providing services for individuals with disabilities.”

The Maine Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) collaborated with other disability related organizations including: Maine Developmental Disabilities Council, Disability Rights Maine, the Advocacy Initiative Network of Maine, Speaking Up for Us of Maine, the Maine Center on Deafness, the IRIS Network, NAMI Maine and other groups. The primary goal of the SILC is to improve the lives of people with disabilities in Maine, focusing on six core areas identified by people with a disability through public forums and an online/paper survey. An area needing improvement is mobility. Individuals with disabilities have identified transportation as a major impediment to living independently. [Other major areas identified are: housing, emergency planning and preparedness, community-based living, economic self-sufficiency, and assistive technology.]

- *The 2012 State Plan on Aging*

Maine is not only the state with the oldest population by median age in the nation; it is also the most rural. Citing data from the 2010 U.S. Census, the plan notes that 15.9% of Mainers are age 65 or older and 61.3% of Mainers live in rural areas. Due in part to one of the largest concentrations of baby boomers in the country, Maine's population is also aging faster than that of any other state. During the past 20 years, Maine's median age rose by almost 9 years, from 33.9 to 42.7 years of age. (Maine Office of Aging, 2012, p. 3)

Independent Living Philosophy

The Work Group was guided in its duties by the tenants of the independent living movement and the independent living philosophy which is "founded in the belief that people with disabilities, regardless of the type of disability, have a common history and a shared struggle." The independent living philosophy emphasizes the following principles: consumer control; the understanding that people with disabilities are the best experts on their own needs; and that the individual living with a disability has a valuable perspective in determining how they live, work and participate in their communities.

Demographic Information

According to the U.S. Census Bureau 2012 report, about 56.7 million people had a disability in 2010 and 41 percent of those age 21 to 64 with any disability were employed, compared with 79 percent of those with no disability who were employed.¹ Data from the U.S. Census Bureau shows that, in addition to lower employment levels, individuals with disabilities have a higher likelihood of experiencing persistent poverty (continuous poverty over a 24-month period).² In addition, the Census Bureau report also included the following demographic information:

- People in the oldest age group (80 and older) were about eight times more likely to have a disability as those in the youngest group;
- Roughly 30.6 million had difficulty walking or climbing stairs, or used a wheelchair, cane, crutches or walker;

The Transportation Voucher Model

Lack of transportation is one of the most persistent barriers experienced by people with disabilities in rural areas. Transportation voucher programs have emerged in rural communities across the country as one potential solution to this problem.

¹ United State Census Bureau, *Americans With Disabilities: 2010, Current Population Reports, Household Economic Studies* (P70-131), Matthew W. Brault, July 2012.

² United State Census Bureau, *US. Census Bureau News, Profile America Facts for Features, Anniversary of Americans with Disabilities Act: July 26*, report number CB14-FF.15, May 28, 2014.

Toucher programs are operated by agencies that negotiate with public and private transportation providers to accept vouchers, recruit and train eligible participants, and help riders identify volunteers and transportation providers who will accept vouchers. Riders are provided a voucher book (similar to a checkbook) with a provision of miles or dollars from the agency, and are responsible for scheduling and securing rides. The agency reimburses transportation providers who submit the vouchers. Transportation voucher programs have been introduced in at least 16 states throughout the United States, primarily in rural communities.³

Voucher Program general elements:⁴

- **Sponsoring Agency:** an entity who provides basic administration and operation of the voucher program
- **Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC):** an individual designated by the sponsoring agency who provides day-to-day management of the voucher program, including identifying and working with riders, distributing vouchers to eligible program participants, identifying and working with transportation providers, and convening community partners
- **Bookkeeper:** an individual, typically working for the sponsoring agency, who collects, redeems and records vouchers used by participants, processes payments to local service providers, and invoices the primary funding source for voucher reimbursement
- **Riders:** individuals who enroll in the voucher program. Riders are responsible for locating and choosing their volunteer drivers or providers (although the CTC may provide information and assistance connecting individuals to available options), and for maintaining their own mileage balances and not exceeding their allocations.
- **Transportation Providers:** may include public or private systems such as local paratransit, service agency vans, volunteer drivers or taxi services.

Voucher programs are compatible with the Independent Living philosophy, which emphasizes community integration for people with disabilities in addition to maximizing individual control.

See Appendix for further information on transportation voucher programs, including voucher program studies, research, program descriptions, and toolkits reviewed by the work group.

³ Harstaad, Cathy. "Transportation Voucher Programs: Facilitating Mobility in Rural Areas." North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities, Minot State University on behalf of the Community Transportation Association of America, 2008.

⁴ From "Toolkit for Operating a Rural Transportation Voucher Program," Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living. See Appendix.

Transportation and Independent Living Organizations and Programs in Maine

The following is an overview of organizations and state agencies in Maine that provide transportation services or independent living support and services to individuals with disabilities.

- **Independent living organizations:**
 - **Maine Statewide Independent Living Council:** The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 mandates that each state have a statewide independent living council (SILC) to advance independent living efforts through advocacy and systems reform. The federal law requires the SILC to implement the State Plan for Independent Living, which identifies transportation and mobility as a focus area. However, SILC does not deliver direct services to individuals. For more information: <http://mainesilc.org/>.
 - **Alpha One** is Maine's consumer-directed Center for Independent Living (CIL) with three statewide offices that assist individuals with disabilities to live more fully and more independently in all aspects of their lives. Alpha One provides services, such as information and referral, peer support, personal assistance services, assistive technology financing, access design, recreation, and IL skills instruction. Alpha One's programs do not include direct services for transportation. For more information: <http://alphaonenow.org/>.
- **State agencies and local programs:**
 - **Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS):** BRS programs help provide access to employment, as well as increase independence and community integration for all people with disabilities. It assists individuals with disabilities who face challenges in finding or retaining employment and helps develop plans that may include transportation, and it assists blind persons with mobility and orientation skills. Transportation is not provided as a direct service.
 - **Maine Department of Health and Human Services:** DHHS is not a transportation provider, except for services specifically for Members of the MaineCare program. Non-Emergency Transportation: MaineCare provides transportation to non-urgent, medically necessary services through regional brokers and transportation providers. MaineCare Friend & Family Driver Program: A mileage reimbursement program for people who transport themselves or have a friend/family member who will provide a ride.
 - **Maine Department of Transportation:** MaineDOT addresses transportation needs through a statewide planning process and oversight of transportation

funding used locally and regionally. The State Management Plan is developed statewide. See <http://maine.gov/mdot/planning/passenger/>. Services under regional management plans include fixed route buses and complementary paratransit, which largely serve urbanized areas. Flex route and demand responses are provided in rural areas. Due to lack of funds, only a limited amount of transportation needs is met.

Transportation vouchers are an eligible expense under the Federal Transit Administration's 5310 (Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program) and 5311 (Formula grants for Rural Areas) programs. However, MaineDOT and its transit providers must follow the State Management Plan to determine eligible expenses under the FTA program. The State Management Plan has not been able to fund all rural transportation needs for people with disabilities.

- **Other Transit Providers:** A listing of local and regional transit in Maine is at: <http://www.apta.com/resources/links/unitedstates/Pages/MaineTransitLinks.aspx>. Shortcomings of these services include geographic limitations and (for some) availability for non-medical trips, eligibility requirements, and a need for more accessible vehicles. Private providers are available, such as Uber, Lyft and taxis. These businesses serve certain urban areas and some rural, and they would be logical partners in a transit voucher program.
- **mPower Loan Program:** The Kim Wallace Adaptive Equipment Loan Program, also called mPower Loans, provides loans to individuals and businesses to purchase or install equipment that allows people with disabilities to become more independent within the community including mobility and transportation. Loans up to \$100,000 may be made to qualifying Maine residents or businesses. The loans may assist with adaptive equipment, such as an adapted vehicle or a lift on a van, but mPower does not cover costs of operating the vehicle. For more information: www.mpowerloans.org.

STATE and FEDERAL LAWS

Please see the full report of the Commission on Independent Living and Disability, <http://legislature.maine.gov/legis/opla/IndependentLivingandDisabilityrpt.pdf>, for a complete discussion of the federal statutes related to independent living. The Commission looked to the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Fair Housing Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) the Maine Human Rights Act, and the Maine Rehabilitation Act as the basis for pursuing the eight recommendations in the 2014 report. The recommendations regarding transportation, which is the subject of the current report, is based on several overarching requirements for non-discrimination and program accessibility.

- **Americans with Disabilities Act:** The ADA, 42 U.S.C. §§12101 et seq., provides civil rights protections to individuals with disabilities to ensure equal access and opportunity for individuals with disabilities in employment, public accommodations, transportation, State and local government services, and telecommunications.

The ADA requires that public entities, such as the State of Maine or local jurisdictions, operate their programs in a manner that does not discriminate against persons with disabilities. State and regional planning efforts must consider inclusion of people with disabilities who are unable to obtain transportation from the existing transportation network of programs.

- **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act:** IDEA, 20 U.S.C. §§1400 et seq., requires public schools to make available to all eligible children with disabilities a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment appropriate to their individual needs. Transportation provided to students must be equally available for students with disabilities. Such services do not extend beyond the activities of the school.
- **The Rehabilitation Act:** In the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. §791 et seq.), Section 504 prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in programs receiving Federal financial assistance. Each Federal agency has its own section 504 regulations that apply to its own programs, such as transportation. Requirements include program accessibility, and similar to the ADA, State and regional planning efforts must consider inclusion of people with disabilities who are unable to obtain transportation from the existing transportation network of programs.
- **The Maine Human Rights Act (MHRA)** (5 MRSA §§ 4551, et seq.) prohibits discrimination on the basis of, among other categories, physical or mental disability in public accommodations, which covers transportation services and facilities.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FINDINGS

During the course of the Work Group's work, the following themes emerged which guided the Work Group's recommendations.

1. Transportation freedom is a key element of independence for Maine people with disabilities.
2. Given the rural nature of our state, Maine poses unique transportation challenges for people with disabilities. These unique challenges require unique solutions which take into account the reality of rural living.
3. Existing programs and transportation services do not adequately address the need for independent travel for people with disabilities, who may lack access to a vehicle or driver, who are distant from fixed route transit, and who have limited income.
4. Existing programs often are limited in their schedules, geographic reach, eligibility requirements, or purpose.
5. Travel voucher programs have been implemented in communities across the nation, with examples of startling success in extremely rural areas. Accordingly, our recommendations seek to test voucher (also known as "purchase of transportation service") program ideas in rural areas.
6. In order to support Independent Living goals, a successful voucher program must emphasize individual control, choice, and responsibility.
7. Coordination between individuals, agencies, and communities is key to transportation program success. System change is difficult, and funding is a challenge. While the transportation voucher model has much potential, it will take the efforts of many entities and individuals to collaborate and be flexible.
8. Specific features of a voucher program should be developed at the community level. Our work group examined multiple existing models of managing a travel voucher program. We provide information and recommendations about the general shape of a program here. However, we determined that voucher programs may require different approaches in different communities in order to best respond to varying regional circumstances and factors. As a result, our recommendations aim to preserve flexibility in local responses by focusing on general elements.
9. A successful voucher model should allow for recreational, medical and vocational travel. While we wholeheartedly see the need for transportation resources in order to access health appointments and employment, we agree that for this proposed system to truly embrace the independent living model, the use of the transportation voucher must be decided by the individual (within system criteria and guidelines).

10. Finally, while the Work Group's specific charge was to study transportation opportunities for Maine people with disabilities, it is clear that travel voucher programs would easily provide benefit to other populations, including senior citizens.
11. The Maine Council on Aging (MCOA) strongly recommends a significant increase in state support for transportation for Maine seniors. We endorse their efforts.

The Work Group's efforts were guided by the principles that are embodied in the independent living philosophy. This philosophy advocates for consumer control and the recognition that individuals with disabilities are the best experts on identifying and finding quality of life solutions that fit their own needs. This philosophy embraces efforts at the federal, state and local level that promote systemic change to overcome barriers that prevent people with disabilities from living independently.

The ability to access personal or public transportation is critical for people with disabilities in order for them to connect with employment opportunities, health and medical services, educational services and their communities. The independent living philosophy supports efforts that provide individuals with disabilities with equal opportunities to decide how to live, work and participate in community life and efforts that enhance their independence by removing barriers that impede individual freedoms and choices in civic participation, transportation, recreation, communication, employment, education, health services, housing and public accommodations.

The transportation voucher model is consistent with the Independent Living philosophy and offers a potential solution for furthering Independent Living in Maine.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation A - Voucher Program Pilot Project

- A. Travel Voucher Work Group recommends a one-year pilot project to test the viability of the travel voucher model in rural communities of Maine. The pilot project should take place simultaneously in multiple communities (no less than two). Ideal locations for a pilot program will be rural communities with limited transportation infrastructure, a disability service provider presence and high levels of individual car ownership. Aroostook County, Washington County and Western Maine were all viewed as reasonable locations.

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Recommendation C – Fiscal

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APPENDICES

Rep. Peterson Bill (2014) Blue Ribbon Commission on Independent Living,
[http://www.mainelegislature.org/LawMakerWeb/summary.asp?ID=280051288.](http://www.mainelegislature.org/LawMakerWeb/summary.asp?ID=280051288)

Final Blue Ribbon Council on Independent Living Report (2014),
<http://www.maine.gov/legis/opla/IndependentLivingandDisabilityrpt.pdf>

LD 949,
http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/display_ps.asp?id=949&PID=1456&snum=127

LD 949 Final, Passed (2016).
<http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/getPDF.asp?paper=HP0652&item=3&snum=127>

Information considered by the Blue Ribbon Commission:

Transportation Voucher Programs: Facilitating Mobility in Rural Areas
http://web1.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/articlefiles/Rural_Voucher_Programs.pdf
[Final Report: Transportation Services for People with Disabilities in Rural and Small Urban Communities](#)

Transportation Services for People with Disabilities in Rural and Small Urban Communities
<http://www.nadtc.org/resources-publications/transportation-services-for-people-with-disabilities-in-rural-and-small-urban-communities/>

Rural Transportation Voucher program for People with Disabilities: Three Case Studies
<http://ntl.bts.gov/lib/9000/9000/9095/4bernier.pdf>

Final Report June 30, 2015 Maine Strategic Transit Plan 2025,
<http://www.maine.gov/mdot/planning/docs/FinalStrategicPlan.pdf>

The Supported Volunteer Rural Transportation Voucher Program, by Brad Bernier, Tom Seekins and Kitty Herron. Sponsored by the Research and Training Center on Disability in Rural Communities, University of Montana Rural Institute.
http://scholarworks.umt.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1026&context=ruralinst_independent_living_community_participation

This site provides a how-to handbook for starting a Supported Volunteer Rural Transportation (SVRT) Voucher Program.

Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL) Transportation Voucher Project. The Voucher Toolkit available for \$20.00 from APRIL.
<https://www.april-rural.org>

This site provides information about transportation voucher programs at ten sites located

throughout the United States. While the voucher programs discussed are oriented to people with disabilities, much of the information included is applicable for transportation voucher programs in general.

NOTE: Most of these resources may be viewed on the Maine State Independent Living Council website at www.mainesilc.org at the Travel Voucher tab.