

# TRIP is an innovative transportation service for people with disabilities

*Riders have their own volunteer driver and arrange for their own ride scheduling*

RIVERSIDE, CA, U, August 16, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- CEO Richard Smith of the nonprofit Independent Living Partnership in Riverside California, says, "Our TRIP service was designed by

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*Richard Smith, CEO*

people with disabilities to provide the transportation told us that they needed and wanted.” According to Smith, TRIP supported 109,499 free, volunteer escorted trips for 1,002 riders with transportation limiting disabilities across Riverside County. Smith says, “The cost to our organization for each trip was \$8.91, which is very low!”

Smith continues that the reason for the low cost per trip is the different way that the service design shifted its attention from vehicles and routes to the existential

importance of getting each trip needed for the rider and empowering the rider to take control over arranging and making their own trips. Early on it was recognized that volunteer drivers would need to be critical partners for the riders in making this happen.

To make this happen it was decided that there needed to be an incentive for volunteer drivers to want to commit to providing the rides in their own vehicles. The obvious solution was money. But, instead of hiring drivers and taking on employer responsibilities including driver salaries, the idea was to combine interpersonal relationships between riders and volunteers and leverage volunteerism with the non-taxable payment of mileage reimbursement payments. Last year 1,002 volunteer drivers received \$569,444.51 in mileage reimbursement payments for 109,499 trips requiring 105,808 hours of volunteer time.

To make the volunteer model work, volunteer drivers had to “work” directly for service riders, so TRIP asks riders to solicit their own volunteer from among friends and neighbors with the promise that the volunteer will receive mileage reimbursement for the travel they provide.

According to Ivet Woolridge, Chief Operating Officer of ILP, “TRIP is a ‘rider-centered’ volunteer driver service, anchored in strong relationships between riders and volunteers”. The close relationship between riders and volunteers, and the ability of the rider to directly schedule needed trips with their volunteer, expands the capability of the service. Because trips can be

made whenever the volunteer is available, travel can occur any day and any time of day as mutually agreed.

Smith says, "The rider is in control and empowered to be more independent. Rider empowerment increases the flexibility and adaptability of the service." The rider and volunteer can make multiple stops on each trip without time and availability constraints imposed by other volunteer programs.

TRIP has demonstrated a high level of effectiveness as evidenced by the numbers of riders with disabilities served and the numbers of trips it consistently provides. The cost-effective design of TRIP has resulted stable of funding of the service for three decades.

The innovations that differentiate it from other "volunteer driver" services in other communities have endeared it to users as evidenced by a [96.8% approval rating](#) by riders in a recent survey.

A 2021 article in the Disability and Health Journal reviewed [national survey data about barriers](#) associated with delivering transportation services for persons aging with mobility disability and concluded that many face transportation challenges. The data identified specific inhibiting issues that include lack of service availability when needed, access limitations, requirements for advance planning, difficult waiting times, affordability, destination limitations, and health and stamina limitations.

According to Smith, ILP also conducted a study in 2021 in which TRIP riders were asked to evaluate the importance of the design elements of the [existing TRIP service](#) that they were using. Some examples of rider consensus include:

- 97% think it is important that riders are able to make trip arrangements directly with their volunteer driver without having to call an office to pre-arrange travel
- 90% think that travel should be provided whenever needed, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, even on the spur of the moment when necessary
- 95% think it very important to be able to be transported out of the area in which they live to access needed medical services or for other approved purposes
- 100% think it to be important that they are not charged for the rides they receive.

Other than TRIP, transportation services for people with disabilities are generally not able to provide these accommodations.

Detailed records show that the service has provided more than 2.5 million one-way trips and more than 35 million miles of volunteer escorted transportation for mobility challenged riders in Riverside County over 30 years. She says, "The TRIP program design is long established, reliable, proven to be effective and efficient, and well-liked by our riders."

For more information about TRIP and how to operate a similar service, visit [ILPconnect.org](http://ILPconnect.org).

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