

# Drilling the Significance of Disability Transportation into Community Hearts

*Committee review of applicant eligibility implants service appreciation*

RIVERSIDE, CA, USA, August 29, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The unique design of the TRIP volunteer driver program of the nonprofit Independent Living Partnership in Riverside California



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*Fern Handy-Gibson, Board Member*

is a primary reason for 30 years of continuous success, according to CEO Richard Smith. “The use of a community-based committee to determine applicant service eligibility has built wide understanding of the need for the program and confidence in the integrity of the service, which makes requests for institutional funding very easy”, he says.

From the beginning an Eligibility Determination Committee (EDC) of community members, directors of the nonprofit, representatives of other social services agencies, the staff of elected officials and sources of funding for TRIP have

convened on a regular basis to review applications and determine eligibility for individual applicants.

According to ILP’s Chief Operating Officer, Ivet Woolridge, “We get to know individuals who apply for TRIP transportation assistance through the one-on-one completion of applications by telephone.” She continues, “That way we are able to make detailed presentations to the EDC of the capabilities, needs, and transportation challenges for each applicant.” She says, “We are their advocates, and eligibility approval is then awarded through committee consensus of the validity of our presentations and appreciation for the anticipation of expected outcomes.”

Smith says that the bottom line for each eligibility consideration must be that the applicant is unable to drive, does not have usable and reasonable alternative transportation, and that the transportation needed will not be possible if an applicant is denied requested TRIP assistance.

For example, this presentation was made and approved at a recent EDC meeting:

86-year-old female from a desert city in California is unable to drive due to vision limitations. She lives alone and does not drive. She has asked for TRIP assistance to continue employment at a school that is 6 miles from her home. She needs 5 round trips per week and her co-workers will

be her volunteer drivers. She is unable to use the area bus and access service because their service is unpredictable and inefficient. When she has tried to use the public services, she says they take too long, and she is late. A granddaughter lives nearby but has her own family to take care of and the rider does not want to impose as she requires daily drop off and pick up from work.

In another case, this applicant will be reviewed at an upcoming EDC meeting:

Male, 79 years old, and lives with his roommate/companion, an 81-year-old female. He resides in a rural area and has 68 In-Home Support Service hours per month. The nearest transit bus stop is 14 miles away. He has dementia which does not allow him to travel or be alone. His companion does not drive but is always with him. He once was attacked while using the bus. His medical care, including his primary doctor, his podiatrist, and his eye doctor, are in a city 25 miles from his home. He needs other trips for personal errands and shopping.

Woolridge says that evaluating the transportation needs of individuals means “I think is important to evaluate applicants individually with other EDC members because often people can’t fit in one box.” She says, “Through the case presentations each applicant has the opportunity to express and describe their specific challenges and, by consensus of staff and EDC members, the best and most appropriate eligibility is granted.”

Smith says, “Many of our board members were introduced to ILP through participation in making TRIP service eligibility decisions at an Eligibility Determination Committee meeting.

Kevin Dunlap, involved with the nonprofit for many years, former president, current member of the board, and frequent EDC meeting participant says, “I think it is humbling to hear applicants’ stories and the fact we can offer a little relief in their situation is a feel-good moment.” Smith says, “We have never had a problem getting people to volunteer to serve on EDC panels.”

Board member Fern Handy-Gibson, who was introduced to the critical community importance of the TRIP volunteer driver program through participation in an EDC meeting, says, “Before I began this journey, I had absolutely no idea how many people were completely stuck in their homes without transportation. It gives me joy helping folks to be able to get rides to the doctors. The TRIP Program gives people the ability to visit loved ones, friends and to go shopping. It’s so important to be able for them to have as much normalcy in their lives as possible. I totally appreciate and recognize the need for TRIP”.

For the year of July 2022 through June of 2023, 1,002 people with disabilities in Riverside County, from 4 years old to 97 years of age, received volunteer assisted TRIP transportation for purposes ranging from accessing medical services to meeting subsistence needs, to making visits to the homes of family and friends, whatever was needed.

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. Woolridge says, "The TRIP program 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](https://ILPconnect.org).

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