

Safe Routes to Age in Place Toolkit



Background

Older adult traffic fatalities and serious injuries continue to rise year after year. It is imperative that as the population ages, older adults and other transportation disadvantaged communities are included in transportation planning and funding considerations so that as individuals are no longer able to drive, or no longer interested in driving, they have accessible, affordable and acceptable transportation options in their community.

In order to provide older adults with options that meet these requirements outside of driving themselves, communities must build knowledge through infusing the expertise of older residents into the ideas and insights of public and private partners.

Historically, older adults, individuals with disabilities, individuals with limited English proficiency and those with low incomes have been hard-to-reach populations. However, they are the same groups that experience transportation and mobility challenges at higher rates.

Safe Routes to Age in Place (SRTAIP) is a systematic way to collect information from hard-to-reach populations that can lead to data-driven interventions including: knowledge of transportation challenges and options in your community, knowledge of targeted infrastructure improvements needed in your community and pilot programs that provide new potential solutions.

Completing a Safe Routes to Age in Place program in your community ties your work to an emerging network of interdisciplinary professionals working to increase participation of hard-to-reach populations in transportation planning, programming and other advocacy efforts. It increases connections among community members and builds the rapport needed to mobilize around short- and longer-term challenges.

In particular, having resident voices can help your community inform the prioritization of infrastructure improvements that support motivation to consider transportation outside of the car. For example, crosswalks, curb cuts and leading pedestrian intervals have all been shown to increase feelings of safety, a commonly stated barrier to walking, biking or taking the bus.

Benefits of Conducting Safe Routes to Age in Place in Your Community

- ✔ Builds community relationships with hard-to-reach populations that can be engaged for recruitment for surveys, focus groups, walk audits and other opportunities to inform transportation planning and equitable funding investments
- ✔ Provides a baseline understanding of transportation barriers and facilitators in your community, important destinations for older adults in your community and uncovers potential, new scalable programs through nonprofits and other organizations
- ✔ Blends the expertise of older residents with public and private sector knowledge
- ✔ Identifies specific areas to fund infrastructure improvements that support alternative transportation
- ✔ Gauges community readiness for pilot projects

Safe Routes To Age in Place Concept

The chart displays the Safe Routes to Age in Place concept, displaying various modes of transportation – alternative transportation, neighborhood circulators, public transit and paratransit, vehicles for hire (such as taxis), e-hail (such as Lyft and Uber) and driving a privately-owned car.

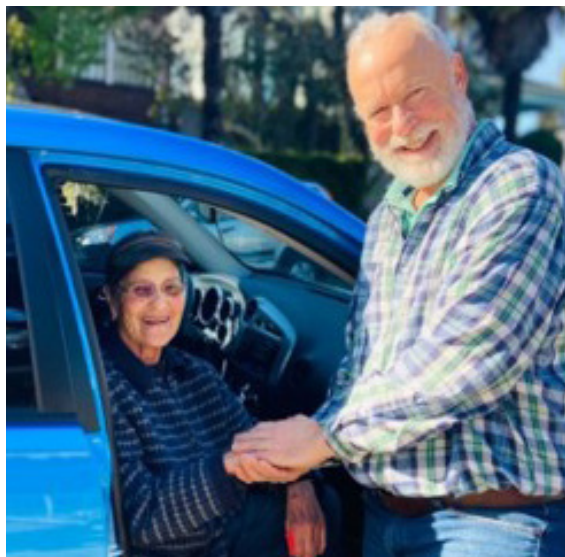


Purpose

This toolkit is designed to provide a broad overview of how to conduct a Safe Routes to Age in Place project. Specific details of implementation will vary depending on factors such as geographic location, type of community and resources available.

Introduction and Project Overview

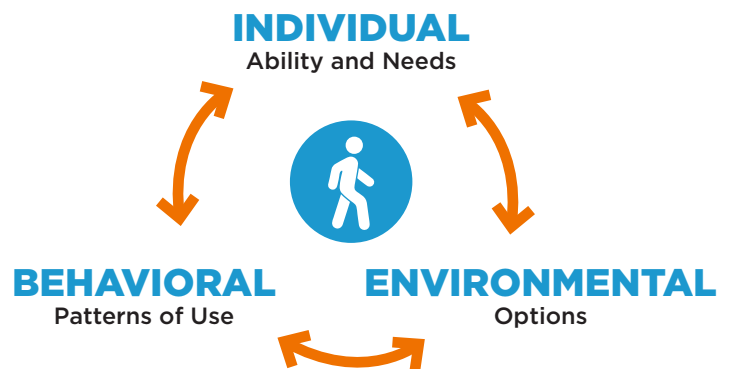
Safe Routes to Age in Place uses the principles of community-based participatory research (CBPR) and the social cognitive theory. It involves collaboration with older adults, as well as municipal leaders, and is informed by key indicators of a community's transportation landscape - including areas of high older adult density, the locations of bus stops, paratransit routes, sidewalks and bike, car, pedestrian and intersection crash data. SRTAIP identifies transportation patterns, barriers and facilitators that older people experience.



Community-Based Participatory Research Process For Safe Routes to Age in Place



Social Cognitive Theory Applied to Mobility/Transportation of Older Adults





Goals of Safe Routes to Age in Place

The goal of Safe Routes to Age in Place is to understand the transportation patterns of older adults in a given community and to inform community-wide changes that improve transportation use and accessibility, and thereby enhance the well-being of older adults. SRTAIP is accomplished through:

1. Engaging and building relationships with older residents
2. Identifying target locations with older adults, municipal leaders and existing community data
3. Gathering and analyzing resident experiences in order to understand their mobility challenges and ideas for solutions
4. Advocating for improvements

It is also important to gather comprehensive transportation information for a given community at the start of a Safe Routes to Age in Place project. There are various publicly-available data sources that can be used to inform this work. For example, data on pedestrian crashes, car crashes and older adult population density can help illuminate the transportation needs of older adults in the community.

For the SRTAIP pilot study, data from the following sources were used: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC), the Central Ohio Transit Agency (COTA) and local planning and public service departments. In addition, older adult vulnerability was informed by the index created by The Kirwan Institute and The Ohio State University College of Social Work (<http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/ki-tcf-senior-study.pdf>)

Steps for Conducting Safe Routes to Age in Place

Building Community Partnerships

Safe Routes to Age in Place requires building on existing relationships, or creating new relationships, with older adults, municipal leaders, business leaders and other community members with the goal of gaining an understanding of the community. It can be beneficial to work with agencies such as [MPOs](#), [transit agencies](#), [Area Agencies on Aging](#), departments of aging at cities and towns, local community centers and senior centers.

Community-Based Participatory Research

Safe Routes to Age in Place is informed by the principles of community-based participatory Research (CBPR). The CBPR method involves working with study participants as experts in the community. Within this approach, it is important to engage community stakeholders during every step in the process. CBPR is a reciprocal process – it views community members as equals and facilitates a reciprocal transfer of expertise between the research team and the community. The CBPR framework helps ensure that the work reflects the values of the community members themselves and is a successful model for engaging underserved populations.



Travel Diary

Travel diaries provide information on participants' transportation patterns. A core aspect of Safe Routes to Age in Place is collecting information about where people go, how they get there and how these factors impact their mood. Doing so provides insight into the daily transportation habits of older adults in the community. Depending on your team's specific needs and resources, you might use a digital transportation diary such as the MyAmble app, a digital travel diary. Though it is not publicly available for download at the time of writing this document, MyAmble will be available in the future for free in the Google Play store and Apple App Store. Contact Noelle Fields (noellefields@uta.edu) to talk about ways that your team might use MyAmble. However, a pen-and-paper travel diary will also work. Here are two examples: [Flagstaff Travel Diary](#) (page 68), [Wisconsin Department of Transportation one day travel diary](#).



Focus Groups

Focus groups are a key component of the STRAIP model as they offer the opportunity to gather in-depth information that a survey or travel diary might not capture. There are many important steps for conducting a successful focus group and many ways to achieve those steps. One tool available is the AARP ["Community Listening Session Toolkit."](#) The qualitative data collected through the focus groups provides an important context through which the remaining pieces of data can be interpreted.

STUDY PARTICIPANT

“ There’s physical reasons why you might not be able to drive, but then there might be financial reasons why. If driving’s your primary mode, your car breaks down, you can’t fix it, then what would you do? It’s not a physical change, but some other change that means you can’t drive. What are the options? ”

Walk Audit

The purpose of the walk audit is to collect data and deepen relationships with residents, while exploring a particular area within a community. Performing a walk audit allows for the assessment of specific features of the area, such as walkability, safety, traffic and public transportation accessibility. The walk audit is an opportunity to take a “deep dive” into the assets and limitations in a specific geographic area.

Walk audits should involve participants and community partners. There are various tools that can be used in conducting a walk audit. Here are links to some examples: [AARP Walk Audit Tool](#), [CDC Worksite Walkability Audit Tool](#), [Toolkit for the Assessment of Bus Stop Accessibility and Safety](#), [Safe Routes to Parks Walk Audit Toolkit](#).

Analysis and Outcomes

The Safe Routes to Age in Place project involves collecting quantitative and qualitative data. The principal source of quantitative data is the travel diary – reports of where participants travel, their mode of transportation and other details of their trips. It is also important to collect demographic information from participants.

The focus groups provide qualitative data. Depending on the means of data collection, there may be also other forms of qualitative data. For example, the MyAmble app contains a feature called “Travel Buddy,” which allows participants to send text messages back and forth with the study team. The goal of analyzing qualitative data should be to summarize the themes and patterns that arose within participants’ responses.

Combined, these data will allow you to better understand details of the participants’ transportation and mobility patterns, barriers and facilitators. The findings will in turn inform potential community-wide changes that can enhance older adult quality of life through improving transportation use and accessibility.

Recommendations and Next Steps

The Safe Routes to Age in Place project provides information that is critical in advocating for key community transportation improvements. Once you have collected and analyzed your findings, create a professional document that provides a clear overview of the challenges and potential solutions. Suggestions can be made regarding infrastructure, programs and services. Based on the information collected, your team can work with local planning and transportation agencies to use community voices in their plans for prioritizing funding.

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