

Senior Mobility Action Council

SMAC meets the 4th Monday of the month in the Bodega Bay Room, 2nd Floor at 300 Ellinwood Way Pleasant Hill, CA

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Remembering Susanne by Mary Bruns



Photo by Eddie Caravalho

Susanne was one of our long-time, very appreciative Lamorinda Spirit Van shoppers who went with us to several shopping and errand destinations every Lafayette shopping day. She walked very slowly with a cane, and later a walker, due to her age and physical condition, and the drivers were very patient. She was well loved because she was positive, upbeat, and appreciative. If you took her somewhere, she wanted to give you something too. Out would come a chocolate treat for you to take home.

Susanne used to tell us that she walked 3,000 steps every day for exercise. It was her attempt to keep herself able to walk and prolong her independence. The Spirit Van drivers, staff, and Susanne's friends were all worried that she would fall down the steps in her two-story town home. Eventually with the prodding of friends, she moved into a lovely

apartment in a beautiful independent living facility that also had "assisted" living floors. Although this was a very beautiful facility, Susanne was not happy about leaving her home of many years. After moving, she spoke of those of us who lived on the "outside" and those who lived on the "inside," giving the impression that she lived in an institution instead of a lovely apartment. It is important to "hear" Susanne's underlying message because it expresses the heart of older adults' desire to live at home and age in place. It also brings home the importance of doing our best to remain or become physically fit so that we can walk as we age. Walking 3,000 steps a day is good, but additional exercises are necessary to build the important thigh muscles that support us in sitting down without falling into a chair and standing back up again. Those thigh muscles help us safely walk up and down steps and navigate uneven pavement.

There were two things that Susanne treasured – visits from her friends and the taste of well-prepared food and good coffee. She loved to be out and about – to go out to lunch with one of her friends and experience the vibrant energy of the places she would visit. She commented on the physical changes in Lafayette as we drove to Uncle Yu's for lunch. She enjoyed seeing pictures of grandbabies and reminded me to "make sure they got enough food."

When we went clothes shopping, it was important that shoes were comfortable and could be slipped on and off. (Cont. on page 3)

West County Tri-City Travel Training Program By Vicky Voicehowsky

On November 6th, 2014, the cities of Richmond, San Pablo, and El Cerrito submitted a collaborative grant application for the FTA Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities funding opportunity. This

is a first-time collaboration among the three cities and hoped to be the first of many. The City of Richmond led the efforts; and although three valuable projects were proposed (a travel training program, a shuttle to Martinez in

light of Doctor's Hospital possible closure, and funds to support already established non-profit volunteer driver programs), only one component was granted funds. The City of Richmond, San Pablo, (Continued on page 2)

SMAC Mission: To address transportation barriers and gaps in service experienced by Contra Costa older adults through education, advocacy and the promotion of effective coordination of services and mobility management that enhances the autonomy and independence of older adults in Contra Costa County.

Public Transit Training at Antioch Senior Center by Ken Gray

On most Tuesdays at the Antioch Senior Center, from 10-11:30 AM, a program titled "Public Transit Training" is held. The Instructor is Michael Daugelli, a retired school teacher, who teaches seniors how to use public transit. Michael has offered this program for the past five years, teaching people how to get around Northern California (not just in-city) and how to plan trips and utilize low cost opportunities.

Michael's trip advice has included getaways to Carmel, San Francisco, and more, using only public transportation. The trip plan-

ning includes rail, Bart, bus lines and ferries. Michael is the "go to answer man" for fun, efficient and economical trip planning.

Michael shared that seniors can ride free on bus lines in Walnut Creek, Emeryville, and San Leandro. He can show how to plan/book passes online, use Clipper Cards to get senior discounts, and how to ensure you are getting the best rate for your trip. He also frequently leads day trips just for the opportunity to get seniors "out and about" on mass transit.

If you want to learn more about this program or would like to talk to Michael about your specific needs, he is usually at the center on Tuesdays; but you can call and leave a message anytime, and he will call you back as soon as possible. His phone number at the Antioch Senior Center (located in the Nick Rodrigues Community Center), is (925) 778-1158.

Michael Daugelli is a Board Member Alternate on Tri Delta Transit when Contra Costa County Supervisor Mary Nejedly Piepho is unable to attend meetings.

Mobility Management Center by Elaine Welch

In January 2015, Senior Helpline Services began serving as the Mobility Management Center for Contra Costa County. Mobility Management is the broad mix of service delivery and support strategies that are directed primarily at the travel needs of seniors, persons with disabilities, and low-income individuals. These strategies often integrate with and support other public service solutions provided to the larger public transit and paratransit rider populations. Mobility Management is a toolkit of solutions that are tailored to the service needs of the special population groups. Stay tuned to hear exciting news that Mobility Management will bring to Contra Costa County.

Together We Stand — by Leigh Shughrou

To Contact Meals On Wheels / Senior Outreach Services (MOWSOS), call (925) 937-8311 or email us at staff@mowsos.org

On Monday, March 16, 2015, dozens of community leaders in Contra Costa helped to raise awareness of senior hunger and isolation in Contra Costa County through the nationwide Meals on Wheels America "March for Meals" campaign.

Concord Mayor, Tim Grayson, and Pleasant Hill Mayor,

Ken Carlson, among many other community leaders, helped MOWSOS volunteer drivers deliver meals with a friendly smile to frail, homebound seniors.

As many as 25,000 seniors in Contra Costa County are hungry or isolated, and the number is growing. By 2030, the number of seniors

will double, and we must take a stand to promote and support legislation that will provide critical aid to those in need.

For more information on the March for Meals campaign, please contact:

Leigh Shughrou at lshughrou@mowsos.org or 925-937-8311 x133.

West County Tri-City Travel Training Program (cont.)

(Cont. from page 1)

and El Cerrito are very happy to announce that we are partnering with the Center for Independent Living to implement the West County Tri-City Travel Training Program in the next year. Travel training programs give seniors and individuals with disabilities the ability, freedom, and confidence to travel on public transportation. Travel Training programs also help seniors and individuals with disabilities to remain active and involved members of their communities. Travel training also offsets the high cost of paratransit services. The Center for Independent Living will develop and implement individual and group travel trainings for all three cities in 2016. The program will also feature a 'train the trainer' component in which existing staff will be trained to provide individual and group training after the project is completed. This will give community volunteers the opportunity to become travel ambassadors to help sustain the West County Tri-City Travel Training Program for years to come. Stay tuned for further developments.



So What is Paratransit—By Peter Engel

Having been asked to write an article about the Contra Costa Paratransit Coordinating Council (PCC), an advisory committee to the Contra Costa Transportation Authority, it seems appropriate to start with paratransit and what that really means. The etymology of the word is simple: para- meaning “alongside of” plus transit; alongside of transit, or a service complementary to fixed route transit. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, Paratransit is a “transportation service that supplements larger public transit systems by providing individualized rides without fixed routes or timetables.” Dictionary.com defines it as “public or group transportation, as by automobile, van, or minibus, organized to relieve the congestion of mass transportation.”

Part of the changing definition of paratransit or paratransit service is a result of changes in federal law over the past forty plus years.

Before passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), paratransit was provided by non-profit human service agencies and public transit agencies in response to the requirements specified in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibited the exclusion of the disabled from “any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.” The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) defined requirements for making buses accessible or providing com-

plementary paratransit services within the public transit service areas.

Most transit agencies did not see fixed route accessibility as desirable and opted for a flexible system of small paratransit vehicles operating parallel to a system of larger, fixed-route buses. The expectation was that the paratransit services would not be heavily used, making a flexible system of small vehicles a less expensive alternative for accessibility than options with larger, fixed-route vehicles.

With the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Rehabilitation Act was extended to include all activities of state and local government. Its provisions were not limited to programs receiving federal funds and applied to all public transit services, regardless of how the services were funded or managed. Title II of the ADA also more clearly defined a disabled person’s right to equal participation in transit programs, and the provider’s responsibility to make that participation possible. In revisions, the Federal Transit Administration defined the combined requirements of the ADA and the Rehabilitation Act for transit providers. These requirements included “complementary” paratransit to destinations within 3/4 mile of all fixed routes and submission of a plan for complying with complementary paratransit service regulations.

Under the ADA, complementary paratransit service is required for passengers who are 1) unable to navigate the public bus system, 2) unable to get to a point from which they could

access the public bus system, or 3) have a temporary need for these services because of injury or some type of limited duration cause of disability. In the United States, paratransit service is now highly regulated and closely monitored for compliance with standards set by the FTA.

I think one of the misunderstood issues associated with paratransit service since the inception of the ADA is that seniors perceive that paratransit service is meant to be an on-demand service for seniors and people with disabilities to provide independence and mobility. In actuality it is a service that is mandated by the ADA, which is a civil rights law, protecting all people’s access to public transit. It doesn’t promise independence because you are a senior or a disabled person; it protects a senior or disabled person’s access to public transit or the fixed route service within a particular service area as being equal to anybody else’s access. To put it another way the ADA paratransit regulations are there to make sure the bus service does not discriminate against people with disabilities. It’s a fine distinction but an important one to make.

(Continued on page 4)

ADA Paratransit Regulations protect seniors and disabled persons’ access to public transit.

Remembering Susanne (Continued from page 1)



Out and About with Friends
Susanne (middle)

Photo by Eddie Caravallho

She had definite tastes in clothes. She loved to smell the perfumes as we walked through Nordstrom’s and McCaulou’s. She purchased clothes that were comfortable and could be put on easily, clothes that could be laundered.

As time went on, it was harder to take Susanne places as her walking became extremely slow and a little precarious. Her friends sometimes took a wheelchair for her which she really appreciated. Over time, Susanne’s hearing became severely diminished; and it was hard to communicate with her so I began sitting with her and writing notes, asking her how she was doing...did she need anything...was she getting enough help in personal care. Then she could chat, and I could hear what was needed. Of course, what she needed and wanted most was lots more company, visiting, and getting out and about. Susanne passed away before she was moved to the assisted living floor, striving to be independent until the very end. She exemplifies how important it is to older adults to remain independent and for friends and family to make time for the older adults in their family and community.

The California Senior Legislature by Shirley Krohn

The California Senior Legislature (CSL) is an organization of 120 robust advocates from around the State, which researches and writes legislative proposals impacting our aging population. The CSL has been around for 35 years and has had close to 200 Bills signed into law by the Governor covering issues around elder abuse including financial, healthcare, caregivers, Ombudsman programs, and generally Bills having to do with enhancing the quality of life for our rapidly expanding aging population. The CSL is in dire need of funding. Unlike other state agencies, it does not receive any funding from the State. The CSL relies on tax deductible contributions that are received via the State Tax Form 540, listed under "Contributions" as the "California Senior Legislature Fund - Line 427." We need to do everything we can to keep this organization funded! We urge you to make a tax deductible donation on your 2015 tax form.

So What is Paratransit? (Continued from Page 3)

So what about senior buses that provide day trips, access to senior centers, access to meal programs, etc.? Well, those are non-ADA paratransit services. They are generally provided by non-public transit operators such as non-profit agencies or cities, and they can exist as long as the ADA requirement is already met by another agency. As an example, in Contra Costa County some cities provide senior bus services which pick up seniors and provide rides for shopping, medical appointments, and trips to the senior center without having to be in compliance with all of the ADA requirements as long as the fixed route bus provider that services those same cities provides the ADA service, which they all do. Richmond, El Cerrito, and San Pablo all have city operated non-ADA paratransit services because AC Transit, which provides fixed route bus service in those communities, is required by the FTA to provide the ADA mandated service as a complement to the fixed route service.

So what's the issue? Well, funding of course. When the ADA was enacted it was an unfunded mandate meaning you have to do it, but you have to do it without additional funding. So state and local funding that was once provided to cities to support their paratransit services was shifted away to the transit operators to help offset the cost of the ADA mandate.

Fortunately, in 1988 voters approved Measure C, and subsequently Measure J in 2004, which provide funding for senior and disabled transportation programs in Contra Costa County. This funding has helped subsidize many of the non-ADA programs and keep them on the road. It has also helped offset some of the ADA costs to transit operators allowing them to keep additional fixed route services intact. The Contra Costa Transportation Authority (CCTA) is the agency that oversees the spending of these sales tax funds and ensures that they are spent in accordance with what the voters voted for in the Transportation Expenditure Plan.

New Technology to Take the Driver License Exam By Rosemary Robles

The California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) is moving into the future with an automated touch screen version of the driver's license exam. The Touchscreen test replaces the traditional pencil and paper exam. The Touchscreen machines are now available in 120 field offices across the state. All field offices will have the new technology installed by June 2015.

"The Touchscreen system reduces test time and improves field office wait times, reduces fraud by randomizing the test questions and answers, and provides easier maintenance of test questions currently done manually," said DMV Director Jean Shiimoto. While using the Touchscreen monitor, customers are guided through the testing process and given immediate feedback if a question is answered incorrectly.

Customers can take the basic driver's license (Class C), the Commercial, and the motorcycle driver's license tests on the Touchscreen terminals. Once the customer completes the test, the screen will show either a pass or fail notification. If an applicant fails the test, they can retake the test the same day. Applicants under the age of 18 must wait one week before retaking the test. The Touchscreen test is currently available in English and Spanish (public service announcement viewable on the DMV You Tube site), but it will be available in other languages in the near future.

Members of Senior Mobility Action Council (SMAC)
Photo by Scott Danielson

For information about SMAC, call:
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