

The Transporter



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Transportation Information for Business Executives & Elected Officials in Northern New Jersey & Monmouth County



NJ Transit Provides EZ Ride with Five Minivans

NJ Transit has awarded EZ Ride five handicap accessible minivans under the Section 5310 Program that is designed to improve mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities.

For more than ten years, EZ Ride has been providing subsidized transportation services for seniors and riders with disabilities. Typically, EZ Ride provides subsidies for seniors and riders with disabilities. Today, we serve more than 1,000 seniors and 100 riders with disabilities. The minivans will help reduce EZ Ride's operating costs and increase the number of riders that we could serve.

The federal Section 5310 program provides formula funding to states for the purpose of assisting private nonprofit groups in meeting the transportation needs of older adults and people with disabilities when the transportation service provided is unavailable, insufficient, or inappropriate to meeting these needs. Funds are apportioned based on each state's share of the population for these two groups.

For more information about our transportation services for seniors and riders with disabilities, please contact:

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Krishna Murthy, EZ Ride Executive Director with members of the Montclair Senior Bus Roundtable (L to R): James Eason, Susan Craig, Susan Singer, Ellen Madyun and Katie York, Director of Senior Services in Montclair at the trial run of the Montclair Senior Shuttle.



Township of Montclair Selects EZ Ride to Operate Senior Shuttle

EZ Ride will soon be operating the senior shuttle in Montclair – our first senior shuttle service. The cost of operating the shuttle will be paid for by the town and the service will be provided free of cost to Montclair senior residents.

The shuttle is scheduled to start service in early 2017. Service will be provided on weekdays from 8:30 am to 4 pm and will follow a fixed route and schedule. The current shuttle route is designed to depart from the Edgemont Memorial Park at 8:30 am, 10:30 am, 12:30 pm and 2:30 pm. It connects with multiple locations in town including local shopping centers, Mountainside Hospital, post office, residential complexes and the senior center.

Katie York, Director of Senior Services in Montclair says, "EZ Ride provides shuttle

services for more than 1,000 residents in Essex County. They also operate a volunteer-driven senior transportation program. We are pleased to work with EZ Ride as they have expertise in shuttle operations and serving seniors, and they value their riders input."

EZ Ride staff will be meeting with the seniors in Montclair on a regular basis to ensure the shuttle meets their needs. The routes and schedules may be modified to reflect changing needs. As with all our other services, the shuttle will be ADA compliant and equipped with GPS, in-vehicle cameras and mobile data terminals.

For more information, please contact:

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Communities on the Move...



Building a Culture of Health in Plainfield

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Thanks to a grant from the New Jersey Healthy Communities Network (NJHCN), the EZ Ride Safe Routes to School (SRTS) team was able to partner with the City of Plainfield, the Board of Education (BOE) and a host of other stakeholders to launch a number of initiatives to build a culture of health in Plainfield. They ranged from bike and pedestrian programs to walkability assessments and partnering with local Bodegas to stock healthy food options.

Stakeholders Develop Plainfield District School Travel Plan

The EZ Ride Team conducted pedestrian safety presentations at three elementary schools that were attended by approximately 800 students. The kids were delighted by our efforts to explain the four safety rules in Spanish. We also attended Back to School Night at Evergreen Elementary School and provided information about pedestrian and bike safety.

EZ Ride, Plainfield Police Department, Voorhees Transportation Center (VTC) and community stakeholders conducted a walkability assessment and reviewed multiple walking routes that students use to go to the seven schools in the District. They identified the lack of sidewalks, faded, broken, uneven, or cracked sidewalks, and other obstructions that made walking or biking to school a challenge. The findings were used to develop the District School Travel Plan that proposed 29 recommended actions to resolve these issues. The plan will be an important part of the town's Safe Routes to School infrastructure grant application.

Bodegas Partner to Provide Access to Healthy Food

In some areas, the local bodega is the primary source for purchasing food for residents as well as afterschool snacks for children and the EZ Ride Team launched an initiative to partner with them to ensure access to healthy food options.

The team identified six stores near the elementary schools and the Plainfield Health Department provided contact information about the store owners. The Food Trust provided a Spanish speaking staff member who accompanied the team to talk with the managers at the bodegas to gauge their interest in stocking healthy foods. Additionally, a Spanish speaking SNAP-ED educator also helped to explain our goals and to recruit the Bodegas. Two Bodegas have already agreed to participate in our healthy corner store initiative and we expect more to follow.

In addition to training the store owners and/or managers to select healthy food items, the team provided attractive baskets to display healthier foods and fresh produce. Identification decals for the refrigerator cases and shelf talkers have been placed in the two stores. We are planning to hold tasting programs in the stores with our SNAP-ED dietician partner to help families and students choose healthier snacks and to cook healthier affordable meals with items that can be purchased at the store.

For more information, please contact:

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Improving Health in Fanwood-Scotch Plains with Walking, Biking and Gardening

Funding from the New Jersey Healthy Communities Network (NJHCN) helped us to partner with the Township of Fanwood-Scotch Plains to develop a school travel plan for the Terrill Middle School and to launch a community garden initiative.

School Travel Plan – Terrill Middle School

A Walkability Assessment was conducted for Terrill Middle School by the EZ Ride Team, HCN grant group, and community stakeholders who reviewed several walking routes used by students to go to school. The assessment identified the lack of sidewalks, broken, uneven, or cracked sidewalks, faded crosswalks, and other obstructions that made walking or biking to Terrill Middle School less inviting. The assessment was used to craft a School Travel Plan which is an important part of the town’s Safe Routes to School Infrastructure Grant application.

Additionally, over the year, the EZ Ride Team conducted 14 Pedestrian Safety Presentations that were attended by 1,800 school kids and 360 Middle School students participated in 15 different Walk to School Days.

Community Gardens & Access to Healthy Food

The Scotch Plains Township has a thriving community garden to increase access to fresh produce for its residents. The NJHCN grant funds were used to build two raised beds that would focus on nutritional education for children with a healthy “Pizza Garden” bed and a

“Tops and Bottoms” bed. While the Pizza Garden yielded peppers, Swiss chard and a lot of green tomatoes, the Tops and Bottom will provide rooted vegetables like turnips, broccoli rabe, radishes and beets in the fall.

Volunteer and Master Gardener, Wanderlan Silva says, “I am amazed every time I walk into our community garden. Life loves life and there is magic there. All plants love the place we chose for them. The two new beds were a success and I hope to plant them again earlier in the season in 2017. The two 10x4’ beds can feed a lot of people”. The two beds alone yielded more than 50 pounds of produce which was donated to El Centro Hispanico Americano, an organization that helps Hispanic migrants in Plainfield, our neighboring town.

EZ Ride also provided funds to buy vertical hydroponic gardens. These gardens use no soil, require 98 percent less water, and are mobile as they can be moved using a simple dolly. The vertical gardens were first installed at the Fanwood – Scotch Plains YMCA over the summer to introduce them to the children who attended the summer programs. They yielded a bounty harvest of tomatoes, cucumbers, basil, and peppers. The goal is to provide them to every school in town.

For more information about our program in Fanwood-Scotch Plains contact:

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VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



MICHAEL MEKJIAN

“I volunteer with EZ Ride because helping seniors is a perfect fit for me” says volunteer driver Michael Mekjian.

Mike is retired and has been providing rides for our seniors for about a year. He had a rewarding career working in retail management and spent a lot of time in Saudi Arabia helping to upgrade military hospitals. He has traveled all over the world, lived in California for 20 years, but is proud to call New Jersey home. Mike enjoys reading, fishing and spending time outdoors; driving is a great addition to his favorite activities.

He volunteers with EZ Ride three days a week, driving from Irvington to Short Hills and everywhere in between. “There is a lot of beauty to be seen everywhere” he says and adds “I enjoy volunteering because I get paid a lot more with big smiles and a heart-felt thank you.”

Love to Drive? Contact:
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Comments? Suggestions?

Feel free to forward
your thoughts on
improving the

The Transporter

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Service Updates



U B E R

EZ Ride Partners with Uber to provide Senior Transportation

EZ Ride's senior transportation program was launched in 2008 with seed funding from the National Center for Senior Transportation. To ensure quality and control costs, EZ Ride provided the vehicle, insurance and gas, and volunteer-drivers provided the rides. Ridership has grown over the years and today we provide more than 1,000 rides a month. The continued growth in ridership and a shortage of volunteer drivers resulted in exploring a possible partnership with Uber to better serve our seniors. The pilot program will be launched in early 2017.

The Uber transportation program requires a smart phone to request a ride and not all seniors have access to one. Therefore, EZ Ride will continue to be the point of contact for requesting rides and for billing purposes. Uber fares will apply and that could be higher than EZ Ride's current rates. Additionally, there would be a \$1 administrative fee for every ride provided. To ensure the costs are affordable, EZ

Ride will provide a subsidy for qualified seniors. All payments will be based on credit cards and our riders will be required to have access to one. The cost of providing the ride will be charged to the client's credit card account.

The partnership with Uber will allow us to tap into the large network of drivers and vehicles managed by Uber. It will ensure that we do not deny rides due to the limited number of volunteer drivers. Rides can be provided with no requirements for advance reservation and the hours of service could be expanded.

For more information about our pilot program with Uber, please contact:

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Freebies galore...

Free Transit Displays

Meadowlink is an advocate for public transportation with a 'transit-first' policy. Our displays provide information about NJ TRANSIT bus and rail services. They are available free of charge for your worksite.

We will customize the displays and set them up at your worksite at your convenience.

Each display holds all relevant commuter brochures, together with information regarding carpool and vanpool services.

For your FREE display, please contact:

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