

# Improving Veteran Mobility in Small Urban & Rural Areas

Center for Urban Transit Research (CUTR)  
Webinar Series  
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## Introduction

- The increasing need for veteran transportation
  - Aging veterans as well as those returning from Iraq and Afghanistan
- 30 percent live in rural areas
- Many travel long distances for medical care
- Rural veterans in poorer health than urban veterans
- Many veterans require mobility assistance for all activities

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## Objectives

Identify veterans living in rural North Dakota, Minnesota, and Montana with mobility needs

Quantify the cost of medical transportation to VA health care centers

Determine the feasibility of a coordination effort between rural public transit agencies and VA health care centers

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## Related Literature

National Perspective


- Approximately 22 million veterans nationwide
- Mostly male and older than non-veteran population
- Almost 30% reside in rural areas
- 41% of veterans enrolled in VA health care system come from rural areas
- VA beneficiary travel expenses have increased from \$373 million in 2008 to \$861 million in 2012

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## Related Literature

### Local Initiatives

- Veterans Transportation and Community Living (VTCLI) grants
- North Dakota Post War Trust Fund created in 1996
- Fargo VA medical center using more telemedicine
- Minnesota Council of Transportation Access (MCOTA) must include the commissioner of veterans' affairs



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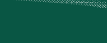
## Veteran Mobility Survey

Designed identical electronic and paper surveys

Online survey distributed to Veterans Service Officers (VSO) and Veterans Affairs representatives in MN, MT, and ND

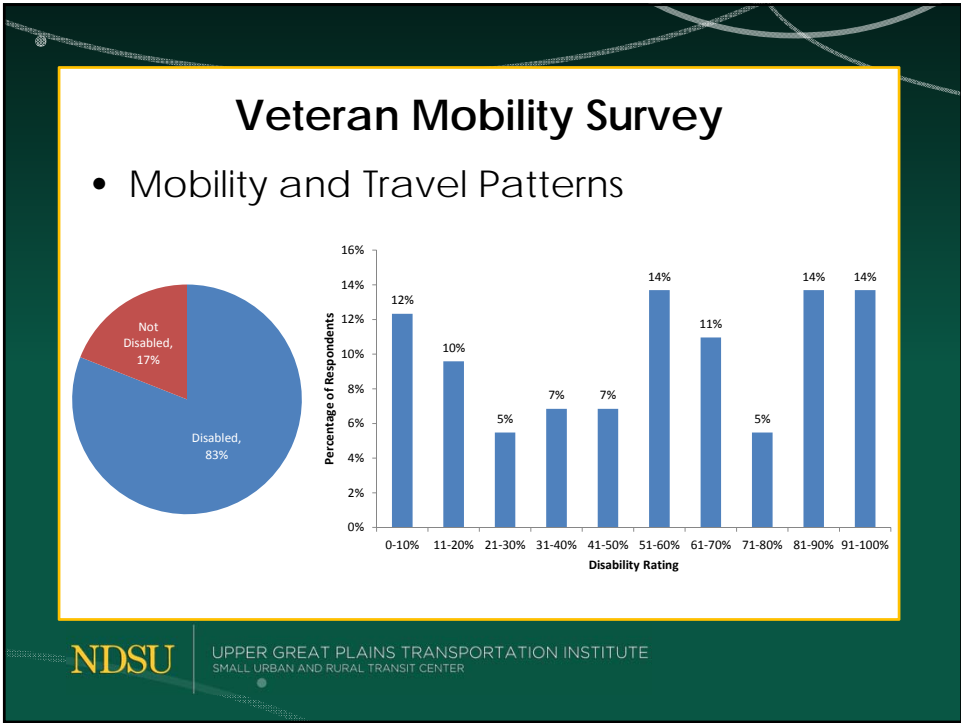
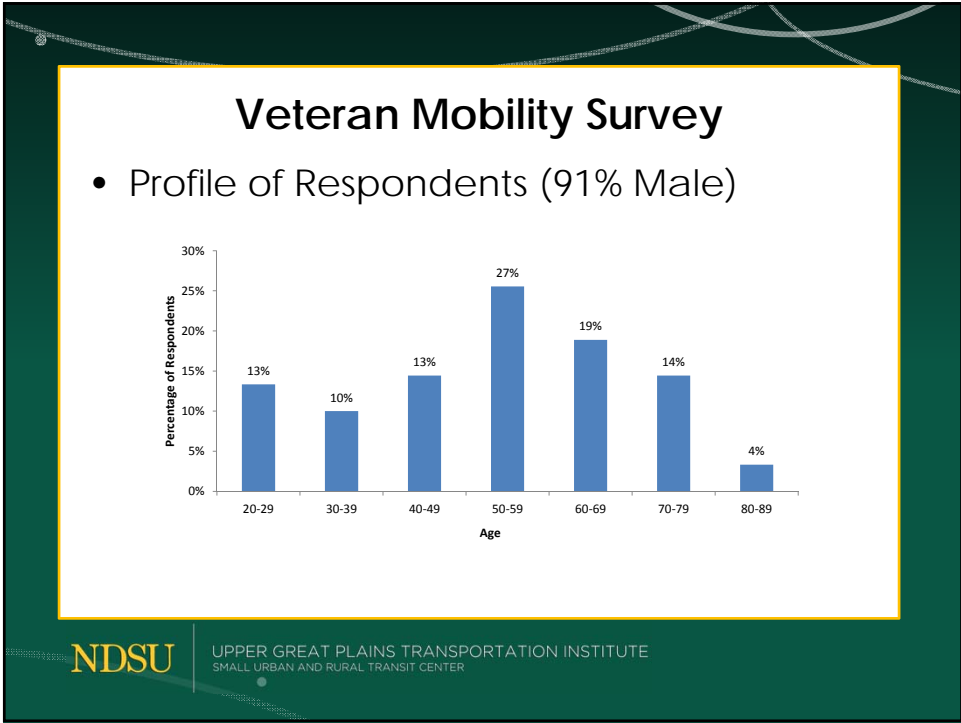
Paper surveys distributed primarily to veterans at Stand Down events that provide services to homeless veterans

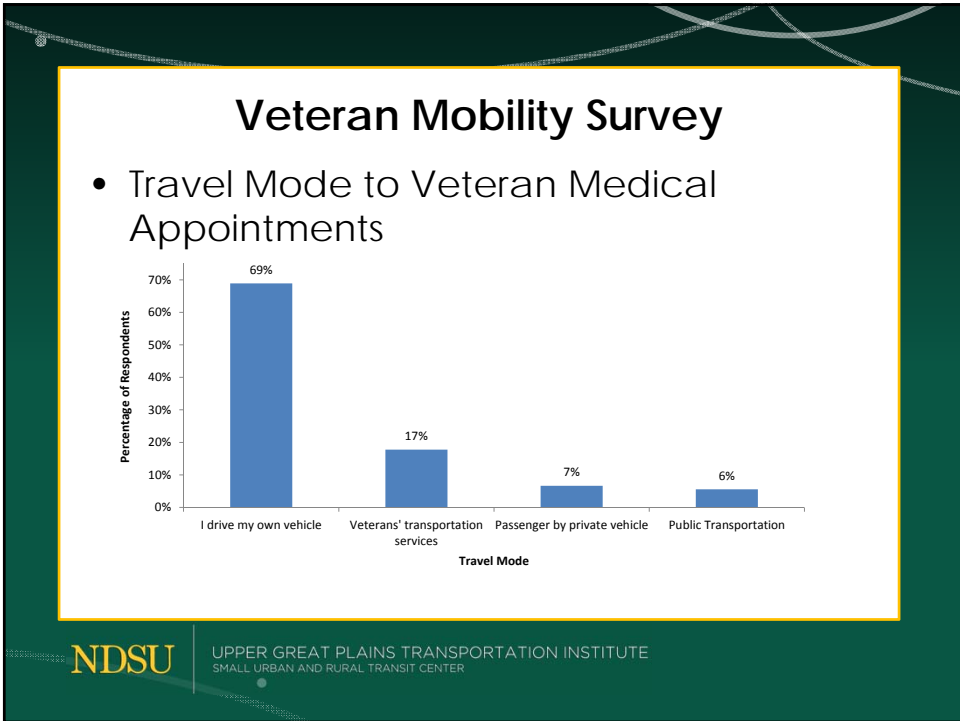
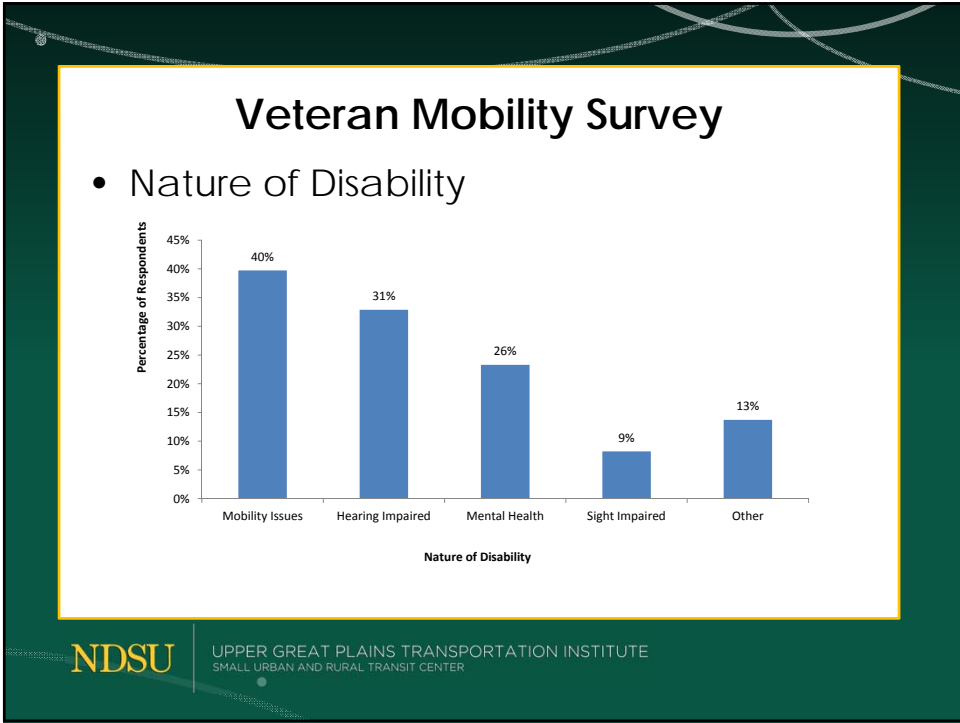
- 140 viable surveys received (107 electronic and 33 paper)
- Received numerous unusable paper surveys
- Several veterans were apprehensive and refused to complete surveys



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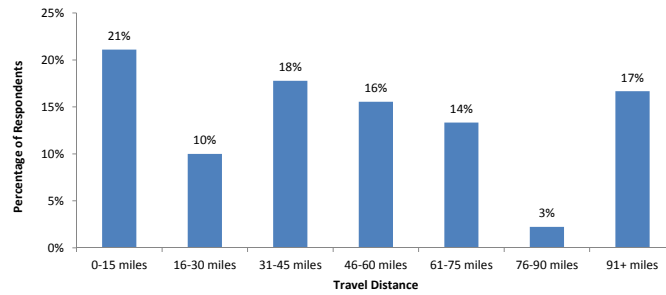
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## Veteran Mobility Survey

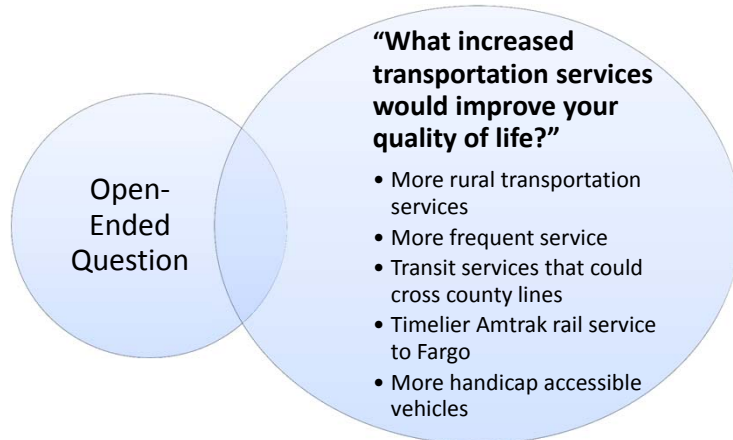
- Travel Distance (One-Way) to Veteran Medical Services



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## Veteran Mobility Survey



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## Veteran Mobility Simulations

- Focused on the feasibility of transit agencies coordinating with VA health care centers for veteran medical transportation
- Cost-effective for public transit?
- Each veteran trip is unique and based on personal preferences
- @Risk simulations used to account for uncertainty in travel behaviors and costs

## Veteran Mobility Simulations

- Essential Simulation Variables

State	Operating Expense/mile	Fare Recovery	VA Travel Reimbursement
MN	\$3.46	16.1%	41.5 cents/mile
MT	\$2.91	6.7%	41.5 cents/mile
ND	\$3.28	9.4%	41.5 cents/mile

Rural National Transit Database (2011)

## Veteran Mobility Simulations

- VA Travel Reimbursement Requirements
  - They have a service-connected (SC) disability rating of 30% or more, or
  - They are traveling for treatment of a SC condition, or
  - They receive a VA pension, or
  - Their income does not exceed the maximum annual VA pension rate, or
  - They are traveling for a scheduled compensation or pension examination.

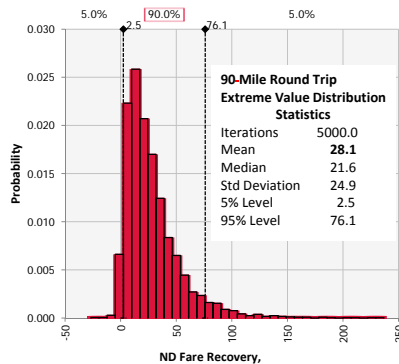
Department of Veteran Affairs (2013)



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## Veteran Mobility Simulations

- @Risk Example, ND Fare Recovery for 90-mile round trip



@Risk Variables  
 Transit operating expense/mile  
 RiskExtValue(3.28,1.55)  
 Transit fare recovery rates  
 RiskNormal (0.094, 0.028)  
 \$297 Total Trip Cost  
 9.5% Fare Recovery Rate

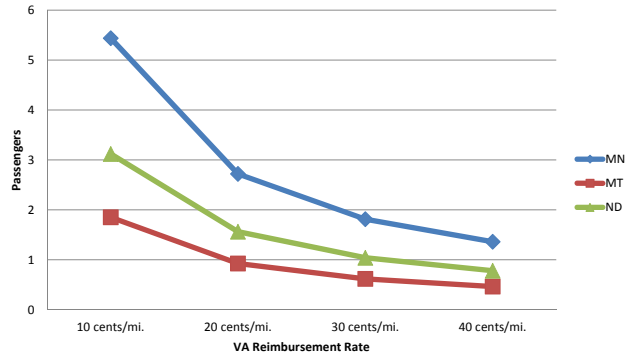


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## Veteran Mobility Simulations

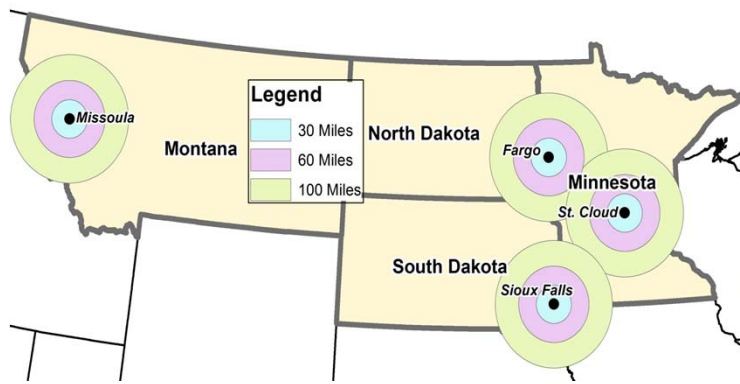
- State Level Simulations, 90-mile round trip



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## Veteran Mobility Simulations

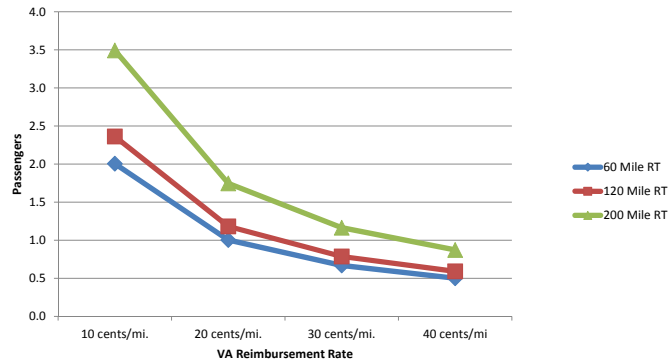


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## Veteran Mobility Simulations

- Fargo, ND, veteran health care simulations



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## Key Findings

Transit agencies can increase ridership and VA health care centers can lower beneficiary travel costs if they coordinate services.

This is an optimal time to talk about strategies for rural transit to transition aging veterans from personal vehicles to public transit.

Results can serve as a great planning tool for rural transit agencies.

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## Thank You

### **Del Peterson**

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