

# Hispanic Elder Transportation Access (HETA) Action Plan



Breaking New Ground  
Grant Awarded By:



Grantee:



**Hispanic Elder**



Central Plains Area Agency  
on Aging / Sedgwick County  
Department on Aging

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***Pictured above, from left to right: Annette Graham, Chris Navarro Alonzo, Lynn Winchell-Mendy, Virginia Dize, and Valerhy Powers.***

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*Valerhy Powers, HETA Project Director*

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## About the Central Plains Area Agency on Aging

The Central Plains Area Agency on Aging (CPAAA) originated in 1980 and is one of eleven Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) organizations in the state of Kansas. Sedgwick County Department on Aging operates the CPAAA and is responsible for administering federal, state, and local funds allocated to provide programs and services to older adults. The CPAAA is responsible for planning, managing and evaluating aging programs that assure all older adults are allowed equitable access to services that enhance their ability to live independently in the community.

CPAAA serves a tri-county region that includes Butler, Harvey and Sedgwick Counties. Of the tri-county area, the majority (approx. 64,000) of older adults (age 60 and older) reside within Sedgwick County, which is the focus area for the HETA project.

Since 1985, CPAAA has been involved in the provision of transportation services and has received recognition and awards at the state and national level for innovation. CPAAA recognizes that transportation to access basic community services and social/recreational opportunities in the community as vital to older adults staying healthy and engaged.

## HETA Project Background

According to the *Surface Transportation Policy Project – Aging Americans: Stranded Without Options (2004)*, nearly 40% of older Hispanic adults do not drive. Using this statistic, that would translate to approximately 1,300 older Hispanic adults in Sedgwick County. With a 78% increase in the Hispanic population in Sedgwick County from the 2000 to the 2010 U.S. Census, the number of older Hispanic adults is expected to continue to grow significantly.

It is not unusual for Hispanic elders to rely on family to provide transportation for them. However, family is often unavailable due to work or conducting other responsibilities and this limits Hispanic elders' mobility and independence. An alternative to family providing transportation is public transportation. In December 2010, four prominent public transportation providers in Sedgwick County reported that elder Hispanic ridership was nearly non-existent.

CPAAA was one of four agencies out of 135 applicants that were awarded a "Breaking New Ground" grant by the National Center on Senior Transportation. The "Breaking New Ground" grant is intended to address mobility needs of culturally and ethnically diverse elders in order to enhance their ability to live independently. The goal of the HETA project is to improve access to public transportation among Hispanic elders in Sedgwick County.

Key partners for the development and implementation of the HETA project include:

- La Familia (a predominantly Hispanic senior/community center)
- Paratransit Council, Inc. (consists of over 20 public transportation providers)
- Wichita Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (WAMPO)
- Wichita Transit

## HETA Alliance Stakeholder Group

The HETA Alliance is a collaborative group of stakeholders that includes organizations, businesses, and public transportation providers that work with Hispanic populations. This group served in an advisory role throughout the development and implementation of the HETA project.

Members of the new collaborative that was formed include representatives from:

- Central Plains Area Agency on Aging/Sedgwick County Department on Aging
- La Familia Senior/Community Center
- Paratransit Council, Inc.
- Wichita Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (WAMPO)
- Wichita Transit
- City of Wichita
- Evergreen Neighborhood City Hall
- Spanish Media Group
- Spanish Horizons
- American Red Cross
- Medical Service Bureau
- MTM, Inc.
- Derby Dash
- Safe Streets Wichita
- Catholic Charities
- Catholic Diocese



*HETA Alliance Stakeholder Group members conducting a team building exercise on May 25, 2011.*

Three HETA Alliance Stakeholder Group meetings were held on:

- Wednesday, May 25, 2011  
1:00 – 3:30 PM  
West River Plaza  
2622 W. Central, Wichita, KS
- Friday, July 15, 2011  
1:00 – 3:00 PM  
West River Plaza  
2622 W. Central, Wichita, KS
- Thursday, September 29, 2011  
11:30 AM – 1:00 PM  
La Familia Senior/Community Senior  
841 W. 21<sup>st</sup> St. N., Wichita, KS



*HETA Alliance Stakeholder Group members meet on July 15, 2011 to plan a community meeting.*

## Public Involvement/Outreach

Outreach was conducted by the HETA Alliance Stakeholder Group to include a significant portion of the region's Hispanic elders and their families. Techniques used included newsletter articles, newspaper articles, radio talk shows, television public service announcements, church bulletin notices and announcements, flyers, surveys, announcements at meetings, and verbal communication by organizations that work with the Hispanic population.

## Survey Summary of Results

HETA Alliance Stakeholder Group members distributed 325 surveys to 10 community based organizations that work with the Hispanic population. A total of 132 surveys were returned, resulting in a 41% response rate. Findings from the survey are indicated below.

- Approximately one-third of the survey respondents indicated that they resided in the zip codes of 67204 and 67214.
- The average age of the respondents was 70, with only two under the age of 60.
- 61% of the respondents indicated Hispanic only ethnicity.
- 36% of the respondents indicated two or more races/ethnicity.
- Relatively few of the respondents use public transportation. Most either drive or rely on family (respondents checked all that applied):
  - 36% solely rely on family for transportation
  - 33% solely drive themselves
  - 22% use multiple resources
  - 9% drive and rely on family
  - 10% use mass transit
- The most common reasons for the respondent not using public transit include:
  - Not aware of what is available
  - I drive myself
  - Family provides transportation
  - Need someone to go with me
  - Do not speak English
  - Do not read English very well
- Of the individuals who rely solely on family for transportation, most often cited barriers to public transportation were:
  - Do not speak or read English (43%)
  - Need someone to go with me (32%)
- Newspapers and radio announcements were selected as the best ways to learn about public transportation.

## Focus Groups

Focus group meetings were held to gain input from stakeholders and assist in identifying barriers faced by Hispanic elders in accessing public transportation. These meetings were held primarily at churches in meeting rooms immediately following services and an announcement

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by the head of the church. Developing trust is important in interactions with the Hispanic population hence the connection with churches and entrusted individuals. Over half the Hispanic population is not Catholic and one Christian church participated; there were attempts to include others. It should be noted that as many as 70% of the Hispanic population in the area are estimated to be undocumented, which contributes to lack of trust issues. A total of 122 individuals participated in one of seven focus group meetings conducted in June – July, 2011. It is estimated that the majority of focus group participants were at or below 200% of the federal poverty level.

Focus group meetings were held on:

- Sunday, June 19, 2011  
2:00 – 3:00 PM  
St. Patrick Catholic Church  
2007 N. Arkansas, Wichita, KS  
(Attendance – 1)
- Saturday, July 9, 2011  
3:15 – 4:15 PM  
St. Margaret Mary Catholic Church  
2701 Pattie, Wichita, KS  
(Attendance – 7)
- Sunday, July 10, 2011  
6:15 – 7:15 PM  
Casa de Luz, a ministry of Central Christian Church  
1441 E. 37<sup>th</sup> St. N., Wichita, KS  
(Attendance – 78)
- Monday, July 11, 2011  
12:15 – 1:15 PM  
La Familia Senior/Community Senior  
841 W. 21<sup>st</sup> St. N., Wichita, KS  
(Attendance – 23)
- Saturday, July 23, 2011  
7:30 – 8:30 PM  
Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church  
2351 N. Market, Wichita, KS  
(Attendance – 7)
- Sunday, July 24, 2011  
1:30 – 2:30 PM



*Participants of focus group conducted at St. Margaret Mary Catholic Church on July 9, 2011.*



*Pictured above, from left to right: Chris Navarro Alonzo – La Familia Senior Center/Community Center, Pastor Edwin Ojedis – Casa De Luz Christian Church, and Valerhy Powers – CPAAA.*

Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception Catholic Church  
(Held at Lord's Diner across street due to church renovations)  
520 N. Broadway, Wichita, KS  
(Attendance – 2)

- Friday, July 29, 2011  
12:30 – 1:30 PM  
La Familia Senior/Community Senior  
841 W. 21<sup>st</sup> St. N., Wichita, KS  
(Attendance – 4)

A community meeting was held in August attended by approximately 60 persons including Hispanic elders, family members, community based organizations providing service to the Hispanic population and public transportation providers. At this meeting, barriers and possible solutions identified via the survey and focus groups were presented, and the group provided some additional input and prioritized solutions. This community meeting was held on:

- Wednesday, August 3, 2011  
6:30 – 7:30 PM  
La Familia Senior/Community Senior  
841 W. 21<sup>st</sup> St. N., Wichita, KS



*Stakeholders attend the community meeting held on August 3, 2011 at La Familia Senior/Community Center.*



*Mariachi band entertains attendees of the community meeting.*

## **HETA Action Plan**

Figure 1 below illustrates how public transportation barriers identified by the HETA Alliance Stakeholder Group and by participants of the survey, focus groups and community meeting were addressed by one of six strategies:

**Figure 1 – Barriers Addressed by Action Plan Strategies**

	Hispanic Mobility Manager	Volunteer Escort (Attendant) Programs	Language Barriers	Education	Bus Shelters	Public Transportation Service Improvements
Information line to call.	X		X			
Information in the media.	X		x	X		
Information in church bulletins or newsletters.	X		X	X		
Announcements at church, community centers.	X		X	X		
Schedules and maps at places frequented.	X		X	X		
Instructional video on how to ride the bus.	X		x	X		
Group training through community centers.	X		X	x		
One-on-one training.	X		x	X		
Training through churches.	X		X	X		
Training through ESL classes.	X		X	X		
Need someone to go with me.		X				
Make One-Half Fare ID cards easier to obtain.	X		X			
More frequent service.						X
More direct routes instead of transferring.						X
Extended hours in the morning and evening.						X
Sunday service.						X
More bus shelters.					X	
More helpfulness and courtesy.	X		X	X		
More bilingual staff and drivers.	X		X			
Neighborhood-based services.						X

Out of the twenty barriers listed in Figure 1, eleven were identified at the community meeting in August as the highest priority: information in the media, schedules and maps at places frequented, instructional video on how to ride the bus, group training on how to ride the bus through community centers, make One Half Fare ID cards easier to obtain, more frequent service, more direct routes instead of transferring, extended hours in the morning and evening, more bus shelters, more helpfulness and courtesy, and more bilingual staff and drivers.

## Needs & Strategies

### Hispanic Mobility Manager

- **Need: Bi-lingual individual who can provide information and assistance regarding transportation options, community education, and training.**
  - Survey participants identified a need for information on public transportation. Focus group participants identified a need for an information line or centralized place to call where the person answering the phone could speak Spanish and discuss transportation options and issues with them. Participants also identified that having a bi-lingual individual who can provide community education and training events/opportunities on public transportation would be helpful.
  
- **Strategy: Create a bi-lingual Hispanic Mobility Manager position that would be housed at a Hispanic friendly location.**
  - The position would be responsible for identifying needs and gaps in public transportation services; conducting educational outreach activities and disseminating information (including bus schedules and maps) to locations commonly frequented by Hispanic elders; providing presentations at churches, community centers, city halls, libraries, businesses, English as Second Language classes); providing individual trip planning and assistance with connections to resources (including helping seniors obtain One-Half Fare identification cards); coordinating training and volunteer escorts/attendants; and, providing translation of resource materials and interpretation.
  
- **Potential Responsible Parties:**
  - Wichita Transit
  - La Familia Senior/Community Center
  - Central Plains Area Agency on Aging

### Volunteer Escort (Attendant) Program

- **Need: Hispanic seniors needing bi-lingual individuals to go with and/or assist them when using public transportation.**
    - A barrier identified through the survey, focus groups and the HETA Alliance Stakeholder Group was there is a significant portion of the Hispanic elder population that will not travel alone (and someone isn't available to go with them). This can be due to a variety of reasons, but a common reason identified was that this is a normal tendency of the Hispanic culture. It can also be due to lack of
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comfort/proficiency in English, or needing help understanding what health professionals say and medical terminology they use.

- **Strategy: Create a volunteer escort program and recruit bi-lingual individuals.**
  - By creating a volunteer escort program, elderly Hispanic individuals would have someone available to assist them with using public transportation services through translating conversations and written materials, providing a sense of security, and assisting the individual with getting in and out of the vehicle.
  
- **Potential Responsible Parties:**
  - Wichita Transit
  - La Familia Senior/Community Center
  - Central Plains Area Agency on Aging

### Language Barriers

- **Need: More bi-lingual employees or volunteers of public transportation providers.**
  - Focus group participants identified language barriers as one cause of the elderly Hispanic population's reluctance to use public transportation.
  
- **Strategy: Advocacy for bi-lingual Spanish and English being a preferred skill of drivers on job postings.**
  - By including bi-lingual Spanish and English being a preferred skill of drivers on job postings, it may increase the number of applicants with these skills applying for a job that may associate with elderly Hispanic riders.
  
- **Potential Responsible Parties:**
  - HETA Alliance Stakeholder Group

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- **Need: More information in Spanish through written and verbal means of communication.**
    - Focus group participants and the HETA Alliance Stakeholder Group indicated that having information available in multiple means of communication would benefit the elderly Hispanic population due to potential literacy limitations some may have.
  
  - **Strategy: Develop information in Spanish through various methods (i.e. newspapers, flyers, radio announcements, instructional signage for buses, etc.).**
    - The Hispanic Mobility Manager will work with members of the HETA Alliance Stakeholder Group and others to increase the availability of media communications to the elderly Hispanic population. This can be accomplished through an increase in public service announcements (such as on Fiesta! Radio and Univision TV), as well as in print through newspapers (such as Tiempos
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Newspaper). Radio announcements and newspaper ads were identified as the best ways to obtain information on public transportation by survey participants.

- **Potential Responsible Parties:**
  - HETA Alliance Stakeholder Group

## Education

- **Need: Stronger presence of information and educational outreach efforts to encourage the use of public transportation.**
  - Focus group participants and the HETA Alliance Stakeholder Group identified the need for a visual educational tool on how to ride the bus that would put Hispanic elders more at ease by eliminating some unknowns for those who have never ridden the bus and increase the likelihood of utilizing public transportation.
- **Strategy:**
  - Produce instructional videos in English and Spanish versions that demonstrate how to ride the bus and provide a copy to the Hispanic Mobility Manager who can provide group and individual training.
- **Potential Responsible Parties:**
  - Wichita Transit
  - Spanish Media Group
  - La Familia Senior/Community Center

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- **Need: Improve customer service specific to the Hispanic culture.**
    - Concerns were expressed by focus group participants regarding actions of drivers and office staff as barriers to elderly Hispanic individuals using public transportation. Courtesy and helpfulness were the main areas of concern. Actions that may be perceived as appropriate to some cultures may not be in other cultures. Some cultures may even find those actions as offensive.
  - **Strategy: Provide Hispanic sensitivity training to public transit staff.**
    - Develop and provide training for public transportation staff that offers practical tips on interpersonal communications with Hispanic individuals. The training should include how to show respect and build trust, which are important to positive customer relations and help reduce some communication barriers.
  - **Potential Responsible Parties:**
    - Wichita Transit
    - Spanish Horizons
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## Bus Shelters

- **Need: Having bus shelters and seating available for Hispanic elders waiting to ride the bus.**
  - Elderly Hispanic individuals expressed the need for more bus shelters that include seating due to health related issues that prevent them from standing for lengthy periods and needing shelter from inclement weather.
- **Strategy: Additional bus shelters with seating.**
  - Provide input from the Hispanic community on prioritization of future bus shelter locations including seating options for riders waiting to ride the bus.
- **Potential Responsible Parties:**
  - Wichita Transit
  - HETA Alliance Stakeholder Group (prioritization)

## Public Transportation Service Improvements

- **Need: More frequent service, direct routes, extended service hours, and Sunday services available in public transportation.**
  - Concerns identified by focus group participants and the HETA Alliance Stakeholder Group; all identified these as barriers that can be improved upon to encourage the use of public transportation. More frequent service is needed to reduce wait times; more direct routes are needed to reduce or eliminate transfers; service needs to start earlier in the morning and provided later in the evening; and Sunday service is needed.
- **Strategy: Advocate for the development of a neighborhood based service that can supplement options of public transportation available.**
  - Advocacy for the development of a neighborhood based transportation service that would be based in a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood serving the public residing in that area. Interest has been expressed by the private sector; however, funding to start this type of service is a concern.
  - Provide information on suggested service improvements to Wichita Transit to be considered in future planning efforts.
- **Potential Responsible Parties:**
  - HETA Alliance Stakeholder Group
  - Wichita Transit

The action plan is broad in scope and involves a wide array of transportation services including: fixed route transportation, paratransit services, taxi services, volunteer transportation, mobility management, attendant/assisted services and travel training.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the work of the HETA Project brought public transportation issues concerning Hispanic elders to the forefront in Sedgwick County, Kansas. Challenges and barriers were identified regarding access to public transportation among this population through the HETA Alliance Stakeholder Group, seven focus groups and community meeting and solutions were developed. These solutions will result in permanent change in public transportation in our community. This change is enhanced access to public transportation for Hispanic elders—what we set out to do.

Access to public transportation among Hispanic elders has been improved through a plan of action that can be replicated in other communities and includes:

- A bi-lingual Hispanic Mobility Manager housed at a Hispanic friendly location that provides information and assistance on public transportation options, community education and training.
- A Volunteer Escort (Attendant) Program coordinated by the Hispanic Mobility Manager who recruits and trains bi-lingual volunteers who would go with and/or assist Hispanic elders when using public transportation.
- Advocacy for more bi-lingual employees and volunteers of public transportation providers.
- Providing more public transportation information in Spanish through written and verbal means of communication.
- Production of instructional videos in English and Spanish versions that demonstrate how to ride the bus as a tool for individual or group training.
- Making Hispanic sensitivity training available to public transportation staff to improve customer service.
- Input from the Hispanic population on prioritization of future bus shelter locations.
- Advocacy for the development of a Hispanic neighborhood based transportation service that could supplement options of public transportation available.

The HETA Alliance Stakeholder Group will continue the valuable work begun under the HETA Project and will be involved in various components and stages of action plan implementation. If funding is acquired, it is anticipated that a Hispanic Mobility Manager, Volunteer Escort Program, and a neighborhood based service could potentially be implemented in 2012. Video production and development of sensitivity training are underway. Other action items (advocacy for more bi-lingual employees and volunteers, more information in Spanish through written and verbal means of communication, and prioritization of future bus shelter locations) would be ongoing efforts.