The TRIP model

An overview of the *Transportation and Reimbursement Information Project*, and considerations for Tompkins County

Way2Go

Take Charge of Your Transportation

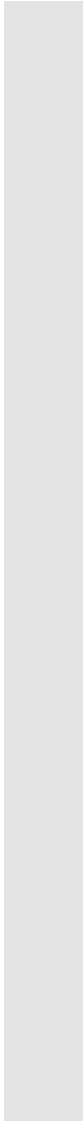**Way2Go**
Take Charge of Your Transportation

A program of Cornell Cooperative Extension Tompkins County (CCETC)

Way2Go is Tompkins County's transportation information and learning hub.

We connect riders with transportation options, and we facilitate new community solutions.

Way2Go serves all of Tompkins County with an emphasis on outreach to people with limited English proficiency, disabilities, and/or limited income, as well as seniors, rural populations, and newcomers.

Way2Go was asked to investigate the TRIP model for helping people find volunteer rides in Tompkins County.

The TRIP model was created by the Independent Living Partnership (ILP) of Riverside, CA

- **TRIP is a self-directed mileage reimbursement transportation service that complements public transportation by encouraging volunteer friends and neighbors to transport older adults and people with disabilities to access medical services and for other purposes where no transit service exists or when the individual is too frail, ill or unable to use public transportation for other reasons.**

- **TripTrak** is the software developed by ILP, for volunteer driver management.

- Started in 1993

- A collaborative partnership between
  - the Independent Living Partnership
  - the local Area Agency on Aging
  - the Riverside County Transportation Commission

Model Process Overview

1. **The rider is referred to the TRIP program by a partner agency.** No self-referral.

2. **A qualification process is followed.** Qualification is not immediate.

3. **Riders arrange trips with their drivers.** The program does not schedule rides or dispatch drivers.

4. **Riders submit trip information monthly.** E.g., trip mileage, reason for travel, etc.

5. **Riders are reimbursed the following month, and pass along reimbursement to their driver.**

ILP funds its work, in part, by selling TripTrak software as a service

- ILP is a nonprofit serving the aged, those with low incomes and people with disabilities in Riverside, California.

- Their funding sources include (among others)
  - Federal
    - 49 USC, Section 5310 : The Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Public Transportation grants program
    - 42 USC, Chapter 35, Subchapter 3, Part B of the Older Americans Act
  - Funding to help kids with special needs
  - The Riverside County Transportation Commission, a subdivision of the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

- ILP offers 2 levels of support for a TRIP model
  - Both include a license or licenses for **TripTrak**, the database that houses volunteer information and ride data, and is the source for reimbursement checks.

ILP offers TripTrak support at 2 levels

Full Support

- $9,600/year
  - = $800/month

- Plus $21 per reimbursement per check mailed (US Postal Service, from CA)
  - Direct deposit or debit cards can be used, but that's more complicated

- ILP takes referrals, maintains the database, verifies mileage and issues reimbursement checks

Limited Support

- $1195 (or $1215?) for Year 1
  - = $920 subscription + $295 per license

- After Year 1, subscription is $200/year

- 2 users allowed per license - but only one person at a time can use TripTrak

- No administrative support beyond supporting the availability of TripTrak

TripTrak is a dedicated, independent database, backed up daily and accessible 24/7 through a secure Virtual Private Network (VPN).
To get started, a not-to-exceed contract could be written with ILP.

What does "full support" mean?

- *"You refer the clients you want served and we take care of the rest!"*
  - An over-simplification
  - The TRIP program must "belong to" a local agency
  - Actual services would have to be agreed upon and a contract with ILP would be needed.

- Types of organizations that are appropriate to operate a TRIP Model service:
  - Transit agencies
  - Consolidated Transportation Service Agencies (CTSAs)
  - Government health and human services agencies
  - Government community services and transportation departments
  - Nonprofit community services
  - Medical services organizations
  - Religion based organizations

- In some cases, new TRIP programs required the creation of new nonprofits

With limited ILP support, what would the user have to provide?   Part 1 of 2

Staff: Estimated at **1.5 full-time equivalent (FTE)** to administer the program

- Answer phones, qualify riders, or refer elsewhere
    - The Riverside program also has an Eligibility Determination Committee. Time commitment unknown.
- Match riders with drivers if the rider cannot find a driver on their own – optional
- Maintain the data in the database, including verifying reported mileage
    - Google Maps is integrated with TripTrak – not sure what that means…
- Track details of funding sources
- Print and mail checks
- Conduct outreach with partners and the public
- Organize volunteer recognition events - optional, but proven to help retain drivers
- More… depending on how the program is set up

With limited ILP support, what would the user have to provide?   Part 2 of 2

Equipment + Other

- Computer
- Printer
  - Possibly a specialized "chain printer" for checks
- Reliable internet access
- Associated phone lines, office space, office supplies
  - Staff might be able to work remotely - ?
- Training
  - ILP provides video training on TripTrak
  - 1:1 training is available for an additional cost

Questions so far?

What is required of the **riders**?

- Per ILP CEO, "The riders have to do a lot of work."

- Find drivers, maintain communications with drivers
    - Riders may have multiple drivers
    - If they cannot find a driver, the program administrator may consider matching them with a driver

- Keep track of rides
    - Dates, destinations, purposes, drivers, etc.

- Pass along payment to driver when received

Who would qualify to ride? To drive?

<u>Rider qualification</u> criteria is a critical piece and must be determined locally, before committing to the TRIP model. Qualification may or may not be limited to those eligible for other federal or state programs.

TripTrak includes a template qualification form, but ILP does not set the qualification policy

Some considerations:

- Purpose for travel – limited, or wide open?
- Trip distance limit
- Miles per month limit

<u>Driver qualification</u> is determined by the rider. This removes some liability but does not allow for driver screening.   ILP holds liability insurance.

TRIP Riverside does not allow family members or members of the same household to be drivers – except in limited circumstances. Tompkins would have to create policies.

What about mobility as a service (MaaS) integration?

Tompkins County is actively participating in a federal program to develop and pilot a MaaS solution. Ideally, the system will allow riders to choose their best option, in the moment, from all available mobility providers in the County, including volunteer driver services.

TripTrak is **NOT** a vehicle tracking system. It is a volunteer management system.

There is no real-time information tracked with TripTrak.

So, TripTrak would not support Tompkins County moving to a **fully-integrated** MaaS system.

Local insight from David Moore, Mobility Manager for Schuyler County

- Schuyler County adopted the TRIP *model* but developed their own forms and database. TripTrak is NOT used.

- "Recommended, but –"

- "Hit or miss" enrollment, low involvement
  - Schuyler plans to do more marketing soon.
  - Lack of self-enrollment is a barrier.
  - No one doing it now with COVID.
  - A worthwhile program, "could" work if more people used it.
  - There isn't much work for partners to do (not confirmed by Way2Go)

- ARC (an agency serving residents with disabilities) pays the mileage reimbursements, through a workforce grant (that may have been just at the start…?) Dave does the paperwork, turns it in, ARC writes the checks.

- Must work with partners prior to launch, to define program parameters, rider and driver qualifications; agree on application form and format

- Must talk to case workers, not only to administrators

Information from the CEO of the Independent Living Partnership (ILP)

- The cost of one, one-way trip in the Riverside, CA TRIP program averages $5-$7.
  - Method: Total cost of your operation (funds paid as mileage reimbursement, personnel expense, lease expense, utilities, supplies, postage, everything) divided by the number of one-way trips provided during the period.
  - The client determines reimbursement rate, not ILP.

- The program can be "hard to commit to" and would be "an uphill climb"
  - It can be hard to find drivers (a perennial problem)
  - It can be hard for riders to keep track
  - Funding can be complicated

- The Riverside program has a close relationship with the local Department of Social Services
  - Some drivers are performing community service

- The TripTrak operator must be thoughtful, logical and organized. When learned and used properly TripTrak will save hours and hours of tedious task repetition.

Is TRIP an improvement over existing services?

- TRIP could support riders who currently use FISH, and possibly RED School Rides

- Disabled American Veterans' (DAV), Gadabout & Love Living at Home services would not directly benefit from TRIP
  - But – these organizations would have a place to refer riders to who don't qualify for their services
.

- TRIP isn't a strong match for RED School Rides service
  - RED School Rides is quite simple. Not much data is needed, or produced

- TRIP - with adequate and appropriate funding - could allow for non-medical rides, with no minimum age limit, at no cost to the rider. TRIP could close a gap in need.

Some open questions…

- In concept, FISH could operate like TRIP
  - **If someone wanted to volunteer as a FISH driver but only drive certain passengers… would they be allowed to?**
  - **Does FISH need all the data that TripTrak would provide?**
  - **Is that data that FISH needs that TripTrak doesn't capture?**

- TRIP drivers are independent of the organization. They only have a relationship with the rider.
  - *However - TRIP Riverside still maintains liability insurance*
  - **Is this independent relationship desirable?**
    - From Way2Go's experience, Tompkins Co. volunteer driver organizations *want* to have relationships with their drivers

More open questions

- **Can the system change to meet the community's needs? Can it keep up with the pace of change in technology? Will ILP continue to support TRIP and TripTrak?**

- TRIP sends reimbursement checks to the rider, to protect riders from county services, Medicare, Medicaid or Social Security counting recurring pass-through of mileage reimbursement as income that might affect the earned benefits they are receiving not to the driver.
  - **Is this acceptable?**

- **How soon will riders expect to be reimbursed?**

- **What is the local, unmet demand for rides for Medicaid recipients?**
  - The Medical Answering Service (MAS) for New York state will allow mileage reimbursement to associates of a person on Medicaid. (It is *not* easy to navigate, however!)
  - TripTrak is not configured to record whether a rider is a Medicaid recipient

- TripTrak can produce various reports
  - **What reports are needed for a centralized volunteer driver program?**

Link to ILP's website

ILPCONNECT – Empowering People to Remain Independent

- Select "Start TRIP Service" from the top menu to see FAQs, success stories and more

Thank you.

Peg Engasser, Transportation Educator, **Way2Go**

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