



THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON

May 9, 2011

The Honorable Ray LaHood
Secretary of Transportation
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Thank you for contacting me regarding the Veterans Transportation and Community Living Initiative proposal. I value the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) role on the Federal Interagency Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM) and believe that member agencies are working together effectively. I support and concur with this effort to improve the lives of Veterans and military families and am pleased that this initiative is progressing in VA. Although VA's participation must focus on improving access to benefits for Veterans, the quality of life for all of our Nation's heroes and their families belongs in the forefront of our efforts.

Beginning last year, VA funded an initiative entitled Veterans Transportation Service (VTS), which has been greatly influenced by the concepts and principles championed by CCAM and United We Ride. VA views itself as a joint provider of transportation to Veterans and as a partner in improving mobility services. We are pleased to collaborate on improving the ability of VA medical centers and staff to utilize community-based transportation services. VA will commit \$3 million over a 3-year period to hire VA staff who will be trained as mobility managers and to fund training of existing staff. VTS is training staff to use 21st century state-of-the-art transportation ride scheduling software.

In addition, VTS is an important part of our access to care initiative, Enhancing Veterans Experience and Access to Healthcare. To improve access, VTS seeks to establish a network of community transportation service providers, including Veteran Service Organizations; community and commercial transportation providers; Federal, state and local government transportation services, as well as non-profits. It is our hope that VA's participation in the Veterans Transportation and Community Living Initiative will improve Veterans' access to transportation services.

VA especially recognizes the transportation problems for Veterans who are visually impaired, elderly, or immobilized due to disease or disability, particularly those living in remote and rural areas. Participation in the Veterans Transportation and Community Living Initiative and VTS aligns with Administration priorities related to independent living for persons with disabilities.

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The Honorable Ray LaHood

We appreciate your efforts and look forward to partnering with you on this important initiative. Thank you for your support of our mission.

Sincerely,



Eric K. Shinseki