

Mille Lacs County Veterans Transportation Program

The Mille Lacs County Veterans Transportation Program has grown significantly over the years, as has the time involved in administering this program. In an effort to provide better service to our veterans, management of the Veterans Transportation Program is being transferred effective January 1, 2010. The County Board of Commissioners approved a service contract with Timber Trails Public Transit to manage the Veterans Transportation Program. The Mille Lacs County Transportation Policy, requirements, and schedule will remain the same. This program is funded with grants, donations from local service clubs and individuals, and county funds. All donations are appreciated and will continue to fund the transportation program now and in the future. **There is no charge to the veteran for this service.** The main change in having Timber Trails manage the program is that they will now schedule and dispatch the rides. Rides can be scheduled by calling Timber Trails at 1-888-217-5222 or 320-983-2494.

Timber Trails Public Transit is a non-profit organization that also operates the Kanabec County Veterans Transportation Program, as well as multi-county volunteer driver and public transit systems. They are publicly funded by Minnesota DOT public transit funds and fares for the public transit and local entity contracts, such as Mille Lacs and Kanabec County volunteer and veteran's transportation programs.

This change will free up time in the County Veteran Services office to enable staff to assist more veterans with benefits and other ongoing programs, such as the annual Veterans Event and Town Hall meetings. As many of you are aware, staff time is a precious commodity and by contracting with Timber Trails Public Transit to manage the transportation program, as that is what they do, it will allow our staff to do what they do best and help our veterans.

As mentioned, the current policies will remain in effect regarding locations and rides will continue to be provided to both the Minneapolis and St. Cloud VA Medical Centers for our veterans. Currently our vans go to Minneapolis every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, as well as every other Tuesday and Thursday. They run to St. Cloud every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. General requirements for this service include:

- Veterans must call at least 3 working days in advance in order to schedule a ride.
- Veterans must have a scheduled appointment between the hours of 8 am and 2 pm, and need to be ready to leave by 3 pm for the return trip.
- Only veterans who can provide proof of medical necessity will be allowed to have someone accompany them to appointments.
- Drivers are **not** authorized to schedule rides.
- Veterans must be ambulatory, and able to get in and out of the vehicle with minimal assistance.
- We will only transport bagged oxygen for riders.
- Riders are responsible for meeting the driver at the specified pick-up sites and times as indicated in this policy.
- Riders who schedule a ride and then fail to meet the driver at the appointed time may be refused service in the future.
- We will not schedule an extra trip to pick up a veteran who missed their ride.
- Drivers have the right to refuse any veteran a ride when the veteran appears to be intoxicated or is abusive, violent, or disrespectful.

To schedule a ride, veterans can call 1-888-217-5222 or 320-983-2494. Thank you for your support and understanding during this transition.