

Ride in Kane serving steadily increasing senior population



Pace uses smaller buses and occasionally cabs to provide rides to qualifying seniors in the ride in Kane program. (Mike Danahey / The Courier-News)

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Ride in Kane is providing 9,000 rides per month around the county and expects to see that number increase as the area's senior population continues to grow.

The program has 6,000 registered clients and 1,000 of those are using the service monthly, said Jennifer Becker, director of planned programming for the Kane County Department of Transportation. Becker works with the Council of Mayors and Ride in Kane's manager.

Ride in Kane uses small buses, minivans and taxis to provide transportation needs, especially trips to the doctor's office, she said. Eligibility is determined by local sponsors but is available for seniors over the age of 65 and people with disabilities.

Operating Ride in Kane costs \$4.6 million, out of which \$2.3 million is from federal funds and \$2.3 million is picked up by sponsors, Becker said. The local cost is spread out among the sponsors, she said. Sponsors include: Kane County Paratransit Coordinating Council (KCPCC) and its partners include the Association for Individual Development, Aurora Township, [Batavia](#) Township, Blackberry Township, Campton Township, City of Batavia, City of [Elgin](#), City of Geneva, City of [St. Charles](#), Dundee Township, Elgin Township, Hesed House, St. Charles Township, Senior Services Association, Two Rivers [Head Start](#), Village of Gilberts and Village of South Elgin.

Dundee Township's program has 150 people on a waiting list for rides, County board member Joseph Haimann said at a recent county Transportation committee meeting.

"The demand is not going away," Becker said.

"There's probably quite a bit more demand across the county for seniors and those with disabilities across the entire Chicago region," said Tom Rickert, Deputy Director of Transportation for the Kane County Department of Transportation. "It is difficult to fully address. Ride in Kane is a unique program. DuPage has a similar program. Other areas in the region are trying to implement programs. Different agencies can't fully address the demand out there."

County board member Drew Frasz said senior facilities in the entire township he represents are overwhelmed by the transportation needs of seniors. Ride in Kane also provides transportation for special needs adults but the large number of rides for seniors is eating into the availability for those with special needs. One constituent's daughter can only get a ride once a week, he said.

He recommends considering a mandate to set aside a percentage of rides for special needs adults, he said.

The population that is continuing to grow throughout the collar counties is seniors, according to [Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning](#) (CMAP). The agency examined results of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2010-2014 American Community Survey. The survey provides five year estimates about things like ancestry, education, income, employment and housing specifically targeting geographic areas, like cities, towns and townships, according to CMAP.

In Kane County, the proportion of residents aged 65 and older in 2000 was 8.4 percent and the figure increased to 10.7 percent between 2010 and 2014, according to the U.S. Census data. In DuPage County, the population in 2000 was 9.8 percent and grew to 12.5 percent in the same four year period, the data shows.

Breaking down the data further, the areas with the largest portion of senior populations are Hampshire Township, Rutland Township and Big Rock Township, according to the data. Each township's

population is between 16 percent and 27.3 percent, the data shows.

CMAP developed a regional plan, GO To 2040, to help the collar counties and communities plan for the increase in the number of baby boom seniors. According to the document, the number of people between the ages of 64 and 84 is estimated to double by 2040. "This phenomenon will have major impacts on future housing, land use and transportation needs," according to CMAP's policy update.

GO TO 2040 recommends communities to plan with an emphasis on improving transit networks, expanded services and changing housing to better support the aging population, it states.

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