

G7: Make impactful investments in transportation in rural and urban Vermont

Objective G7



Among the barriers that threaten food access for different communities in Vermont, transportation-related barriers are significant.

Constrained transportation options mean constrained choices to create food security, especially for older populations, people with disabilities, low-income Vermonters, rural Vermonters, and Vermonters without driver's licenses. Barriers include Vermont's rural landscape and built environment, uneven personal vehicle ownership, inadequate public transportation, and sparse availability of culturally responsive foods for specific populations. The optimal government response to transportation-related barriers to food security will be collaborative and involve financial support for individuals, guidance from those most impacted by transportation barriers, investment in and improvement of transit service, and holistic planning for food access that takes these transportation barriers into consideration.

Keep in Mind

Solutions that do not center the needs, requests, and capacities of affected populations will not be sustainable or practical in the long term. Relying on short-term infusions of resources, technologies people will not be able to utilize, or over-taxed volunteers should be avoided.

Strategies

STRATEGY G7.1

Establish regular state-level communication and collaboration among relevant partners and offices to address gaps in transportation. Build durable relationships and partnerships across health, transportation, housing, agriculture, and other sectors, all of which are eager to work together to tackle the complexity of both rural and urban transportation barriers. ❗

STRATEGY G7.2

Provide low-barrier, financial support for transportation such as vouchers, gas cards, or other items people request. This may also include financial support for personal transportation needs: shoes, snow tires, car inspections, repairs, no-interest loans, subsidies for cars, or other items. This strategy can also be adopted by communities. ❗

STRATEGY G7.3

Increase investment in on-demand public transportation options, micro-transit models, flex-route transportation, and rideshare services. Build models that do not rely on volunteers. Expand rural transportation options to include more pickup and drop off locations, while coordinating schedules to ensure routes line up with the operating hours of these locations.

STRATEGY G7.4

Ensure the safety, comfort, and dignity of those using public transportation systems. Outreach that highlights effective safety protocols and enforcement may then increase Vermonters' willingness to use public transportation.

VOICES OF VERMONTERS

"There is an incredible amount of driving that has to be done in order to get food. My family has to think really carefully about how much we drive and when, given gas prices. It's not necessarily a bad thing to have to be thoughtful about it, but some folks who may be an hour away from a grocery store or market or may not have a reliable vehicle or money for gas, may be doing without. How can communities work together to cut down on the need to drive far away for food."

"The high cost of transportation: auto, repairs, and tires make it hard to own a car. Inspections are challenging, too."

"I don't feel safe in a cab, so I won't take a ride from people I don't know or trust."

"Obviously, transportation is a huge issue. I mean, if you're in a rural area, you don't really know what you're going to do if you don't have transportation."