

Home Delivery and Mobile Services

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At the STAR facilitated discussion at APA on aging in small town and rural communities, one of the challenges that came up was how to provide services to seniors at home. Small town and rural communities often lack efficient public transportation or struggle with a costly and underutilized paratransit system. As seniors become more physically frail, it is challenging for them to get to hospitals, grocery stores or other services. Mobile services are one alternative for service provision. It may be time to bring back the milkman and the book mobile!

Planners suggested there might be a market niche for the return of home delivery businesses, for example: groceries, mobile clinics and pharmacies. These ideas came up in several discussion groups, as a number of communities are already moving in this direction. For example, 10 counties in Atlanta are working with farmers and have community food buses go around their communities every week to deliver fresh fruit and vegetables to homes and community locations. This helps address the issue of food deserts. In another rural community, the hospital has a CAT scan that travels from town to town on an 18 wheeler.

To make mobile services more cost-efficient, planners noted that partnerships across agencies are beneficial. If healthcare centers, hospitals, pharmacies, grocery stores, post offices and schools work together they could set up a joint-service delivery system that operates multi-service vans to travel around communities delivering an array of services. Such mobile services will reduce costs and energy use and promote full service availability to seniors in their homes.