



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 4, 2023

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Shapiro Administration Highlights Helpful Resources the Commonwealth Offers for Older Driver Safety

Mechanicsburg, PA –Today, the Shapiro Administration kicked off Older Driver Safety Week by highlighting the resources the Commonwealth provides older drivers to address the unique challenges they face. A quarter of Pennsylvania's licensed drivers are 65 years of age or older, underscoring the critical need for these resources.

Pennsylvania has a network of shared-ride service providers dedicated to keeping older adults mobile, safe, and engaged in their community. This free transportation program allows citizens aged 65 or older to ride for free on a local, fixed-route service whenever local public transportation is operating. During FY 2022-23, there were more than 2.2 million Senior Shared Rides.

"Mobility is essential to quality of life at any age," said **Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) Secretary Mike Carroll**. "While many older drivers have a lifetime of valuable driving experience to draw from, PennDOT continually seeks to balance the safety of our roadways with the need for independence and autonomy."

Approximately 25 percent of Pennsylvania's 9.1 million licensed drivers are 65 and older. In 2022, there were 20,590 crashes involving at least one driver aged 65 or older that resulted in 287 total fatalities. This represents 17.7% of all crashes and 24.3% of all fatalities. Older drivers

generally have fewer crashes per driver than the national average – but they have more crashes per mile of driving.

“As Pennsylvania’s aging population continues to grow, the Shapiro Administration is committed to ensuring that older adults have the resources they need to remain active in and connected to their communities,” said **Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Aging (PDA) Jason Kavulich**. “Driver safety is an important part of how older adults navigate in our community but what is equally important is working with our partners to provide accessible and flexible transportation alternatives to older adults. Pennsylvania is fortunate that our lottery proceeds help to fund alternative services in transportation for its older citizens.”

Additionally, working with the PA Department of Human Services and transit agencies, PennDOT developed an online tool called Find My Ride that allows older drivers to access free ride services online. The app allows transit agencies to process applications more efficiently, so users can access benefits more quickly. The app can be found at: findmyride.penndot.pa.gov, or at www.penndot.pa.gov by clicking on Travel in PA, then Public Transit Options.

“Along with the unique challenges already faced by older drivers, seasonal factors such as winter weather conditions, longer nights, and heavy holiday traffic create challenges for drivers of all ages,” said **Lieutenant Adam Reed, Director of the Communications Office with the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP)**. “Before getting behind the wheel, older drivers should ensure that their eye exams are up-to-date and understand how prescribed medications could affect their driving. It’s also important for all drivers to remember to buckle up every time!”

Representatives from PennDOT, PDA, PSP, AAA and AARP manned information booths to share advice and methods for helping The Manor at Oakridge residents safely extend their years on the road. Advice ranged from knowledge of current and less emphasized laws to recognizing signs that it may be time to give up driving. For example, one program discussed was CarFit, an educational program created by the American Society on Aging and developed with AAA, AARP, and the American Occupational Therapy Association. CarFit is designed to help older drivers find out how well they currently “fit” their personal vehicle, to learn how they can improve their fit, and to promote conversations about driver safety and community mobility.

“We remind all our older Pennsylvanian drivers that auto insurance is an important financial protection and that there are ways to reduce the cost of it,” said **Jodi Frantz, Chief of Staff for the Pennsylvania Insurance Department**. “Older drivers can get a break on their insurance rates. If all drivers on your policy are 55 or older, you can take a PennDOT approved mature driver class and qualify for at least a 5 percent discount. We also encourage these Pennsylvanians to talk to their agent or insurance company if they are driving less or if they think there are coverages that they no longer need.”

A list of approved [mature driver courses](#) available can be found online on PennDOT’s [Mature Driver Improvement Courses](#) page.

While every person ages differently, aging typically brings certain -- sometimes subtle -- physical, visual, and cognitive changes that could impair an older person’s ability to drive safely. Older drivers and their families should work together to identify potential issues that may affect driving, outline courses of action to assist the older driver, and plan for when it’s time to hang up the keys.

Signs that can indicate it may be time to limit or stop driving altogether include:

- Feeling uncomfortable, fearful, or nervous when driving;
- Unexplained dents/scrapes on the car, fences, mailboxes, or garage doors;
- Frequently getting lost and frequent “close calls” (i.e. almost crashing);
- Slower response times, particularly to unexpected situations;
- Difficulty paying attention to signs or staying in the lane of traffic; and
- Trouble judging gaps at intersections or highway entrance/exit ramps.

The Shapiro Administration encourages older drivers and their loved ones to review PennDOT’s Seniors Driving Safely publication series, which can be downloaded for free from the [PennDOT Driver and Vehicle Services website](#). These publications help older drivers assess their abilities and offer guidance on next steps if their medical condition is reported to PennDOT. The series also includes a publication designed to guide family and friends of older drivers in what can sometimes be difficult conversations about deciding to stop driving, as well as information for healthcare providers on PennDOT’s medical reporting program.

The following safe-driving habits, which should be routine at any age, are especially useful to older drivers:

- Plan ahead: lengthy car trips should be made during daylight hours. Morning may be best because most people aren’t as tired as they are in the afternoon.
- Don’t drive in rush-hour traffic if you can avoid it. Plan trips after 9:00 AM or before 5:00 PM. Know what roads near home are most congested and avoid them.
- When driving long distances, especially in winter, call ahead for weather and road condition updates.
- Look ahead. Good drivers get a jump on trouble by looking far down the road and making adjustments before encountering problems that may involve other vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists or animals.
- Maintain a safe speed. This depends on what the road is like, how well the driver can see, how much traffic there is and how fast traffic is moving.
- Keep a safe distance from the vehicle ahead of you. The PA Driver’s Manual advises that you should always keep a 4-second gap between you and the vehicle in front of you.

Pennsylvanians with insurance questions can contact the Insurance Department Consumer Services Bureau [online](#) or at 1-877-881-6388.

Additional information on older driver safety and mobility resources is available at both [PennDOT Driver and Vehicle Services](#) and the [Department of Aging](#) websites.

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