

## Senior Mobility – The Challenge of a Lifetime

James, a decorated hero in the Korean War, now faces challenges he never imagined. Although his mind is as sharp as it ever was and his wisdom is greater than ever before, James faces the reality of an aging body that creates mobility challenges.

Some projections show a demographic shift from 10% of the population being 65 and older to 20% within the next ten years. With this shift, mobility challenges for seniors, which come in many different forms, have to be addressed. How difficult it is for so many to give up the car keys. Hearing and sight impairment, slowed reaction time, and memory challenges are just some of the realities that seniors as well as families struggle with in order to balance safety with mobility. The fact is that loss of mobility can lead to isolation, which can lead to depression and more serious illness.

Laws in some states revoke driving privileges upon the diagnosis of Alzheimer's. It is reported that some seniors are delaying diagnosis and treatment that can improve the quality of life simply to avoid losing the ability to drive. Some seniors strive to hold onto their mobility and independence with statements like, "I am only a little forgetful" "I am only a little hard of hearing" "My arthritis isn't too bad, I just can't move my head like I used to" "I just need a little more time". Social mobility is essential to everyone in this day and age. That need does not and should not diminish for those over 65 years of age.

Senior mobility is one of the main reasons I am on the Lee's Summit Livable Streets Advisory Board. Advocating for Livable Street elements only furthers the mission of ensuring senior mobility. How? Well I'm glad you asked. If you were not aware the following Livable Streets concepts directly affect senior mobility:

- Sidewalks and crosswalks
- Wheelchair ramps and curb cuts
- Bicycle lanes and mixed-use paths
- Bus stops and parking facilities
- Driving lanes for cars and buses
- Paved shoulders
- Public transportation accessibility
- Pedestrian facilities such as benches

Oh, if you are not a senior, it is so easy to be angry at that big car going slowly down the road with nothing but silver hair and knuckles showing. But I must ask you to remember, just wait you will be there someday. That is providing you have the privilege of living long enough to contribute to society the way our seniors do everyday.

Conquering the hurdles of senior mobility takes cooperation between our political, government and private industry leaders. Coming together to ensure senior mobility is a responsibility that touches us all. Each time we solve a problem we truly impact a loved one or a friend and eventually ourselves.



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