

Enhancing wellness through transportation.

How one Innovate Memphis program enhanced healthcare access by providing transportation to medical resources, uplifting community well-being.



How can enhanced transportation access transform healthcare for vulnerable populations?

When limited transportation access is a barrier to proper healthcare, especially for seniors and those with disabilities, it leads to the escalation of health conditions that later require emergency medical intervention.

According to [EMS Healthcare Navigator](#), nearly 25% of all EMS calls were classified as non-life threatening upon dispatch. In 2019, the Memphis Fire Department identified 35,000 EMS calls as requiring the lowest level of care. As a result, those calling 911 with non-emergency issues experienced higher costs and longer waiting times for care, while first responders had less capacity to prioritize the most urgent cases needing ambulance transportation and ER visits.

To confront these problems, Innovate Memphis partnered with the City of Memphis and MATA to develop a wellness transportation pilot, [901 Ride Choice](#). Inspired by the success of [One-Call/One-Click \(1C-1C\) models](#) in various cities nationwide, this program operates as a [mobility management solution](#). By making non-emergency transportation more accessible, older adults and individuals with disabilities can get vital healthcare services and manage their well-being more effectively.

Core Objectives:

- Minimize the number of trips to the Hospital ER and reduce excessive calls to healthcare facilities, ensuring more efficient use of healthcare resources.
- Decrease situations where the City doesn't have an ambulance available when needed, ensuring quick emergency response.
- Increase accessibility to essential primary care and health services for older adults and individuals with disabilities.
- Create a seamless caller experience when navigating medical transportation services.
- Nurture a sense of independence among seniors and people with disabilities.

How 901 Ride Choice Works:

All 901 Ride Choice programs share a phone number, connecting riders to a dedicated dispatcher. Riders provide destination and eligibility details, and the dispatcher assists in choosing a transportation provider and scheduling trips. Leveraging grant funding, the program makes the cost of rides less expensive and often free to eligible riders.

Development and Implementation:

After assessing community transportation needs, exploring possible solutions with stakeholders, and tackling logistics and finances, Innovate Memphis launched the following programs under 901 Ride Choice.

901 Ride Choice (2019-2023) We established a call center to serve as a contact point for information and referral to transportation providers, developed a trip planning website and platform, and secured resources to pay for free rides for eligible constituents.

Rides to Vaccines (2021) When the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, we saw the need for vulnerable populations to get to vaccination appointments, and so we secured resources to provide rides through the 901 Ride Choice program.

Rides to Wellness (2022-2023) We offer up to 50 on-demand rides each month for seniors, those with disabilities, and people with low to moderate income to get to non-emergency medical and wellness services. The Memphis Crisis Center handles calls and scheduling, and MedHaul serves as our transportation provider.

Rides to Resources (2023) Open to all adults within Shelby County, with a focus on residents with low to moderate income, this phase of 901 Ride Choice offers free trips to a wider range of wellness resources beyond traditional health care including recreational, behavioral and food access services.

Outcome:

Since its launch, the 901 Ride Choice program has completed over **3,000 rides**. Zip codes with the highest number of riders included 38127, 38109, and 38116 in the northwest and southwest corners of Memphis, which contain **low and moderate income neighborhoods located several miles from health and wellness facilities**. 901 Ride Choice helped close the gap to care by providing more affordable, easy-to-navigate transportation for Memphians who need it the most.

901RideChoice is powered by Innovate Memphis and funded by the City of Memphis, Uber Health, and LISC. Other partners include Memphis Crisis Center, MedHaul, and MATA.

For more information about Innovate Memphis, visit innovatememphis.com.