August 2024

VA VOLUNTEER TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

Rides, Donations, and Program Administration

GAO-24-106983

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Why GAO Did This Study

GAO and others have identified travel to medical appointments as a major barrier to health care for veterans. To help address this barrier, VA administers the Volunteer Transportation Network program. Unlike other VA transportation options, this program does not have veteran eligibility requirements (e.g., they do not need to have a service-connected disability or a low-income level), making it unique in serving a broader veteran population.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, includes a provision for GAO to review the Volunteer Transportation Network program. This report provides information on (1) trends in the number of rides provided through the program, (2) trends in the number of vehicles and volunteers associated with the program, and (3) challenges administering the program.

GAO reviewed VA Volunteer Transportation Network program policies and data for fiscal years 2018 through 2023. GAO interviewed VA officials who oversee the program; and officials from eight VA medical facilities, selected to represent variation in geographic area, among other criteria. GAO also obtained data and interviewed representatives from Disabled American Veterans, a veterans service organization that is the primary source of donated vehicles for the program. Finally, GAO administered a survey to VA medical facility officials and received a response rate of 73 percent, with 90 survey responses from facilities that offer the program. These responses may not be generalizable to facilities that offer the program but did not respond to the survey.

What GAO Found

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers several transportation options to veterans seeking medical care. These options include the Volunteer Transportation Network program that relies on volunteers and on vehicle donations from organizations like Disabled American Veterans to transport veterans. From 2018 through 2023, the annual number of rides provided through the program decreased by more than 50 percent, according to data from Disabled American Veterans. Similarly, VA data show that the total number of program volunteers—primarily drivers—decreased by nearly 50 percent during this period. Officials from the 90 VA medical facilities that responded to GAO's survey and reported offering the program attributed the decrease in rides and program volunteers partly to COVID-19-related disruptions. Although the numbers of program rides and volunteers decreased, survey respondents reported that the number of program vehicles in VA facility fleets remained relatively unchanged from fiscal years 2018 through 2023.

Estimated Total Annual Number of Volunteer Transportation Network Program Rides, 2018-2023
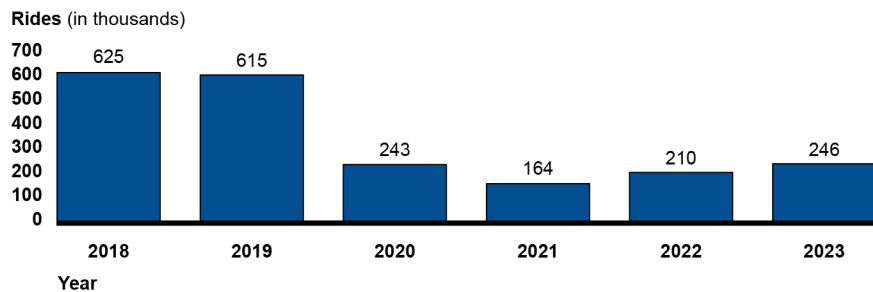
Source: GAO analysis of Disabled American Veterans data. | GAO-24-106983

More than half of survey respondents reported that the two biggest challenges in administering the Volunteer Transportation Network program were recruiting and onboarding program volunteers. Specifically, 91 percent of survey respondents reported that the aging pool of volunteers was a challenge to recruiting and retaining volunteer drivers. In addition, 56 percent of survey respondents reported that onboarding requirements for volunteers—such as obtaining a VA medical examination or a personal identity verification card—were a challenge. GAO was told that onboarding requirements were time consuming and may necessitate multiple trips to the VA facility for potential volunteers. About 70 percent of survey respondents indicated these requirements result in some volunteers not completing the onboarding process.

Although facility officials reported challenges administering the Volunteer Transportation Network program, some facility officials also noted efforts to mitigate them, including streamlining the onboarding process. Furthermore, despite various reported challenges, survey respondents largely agreed that the program plays a critical role in helping them meet the needs of veterans. Sixty-eight percent of survey respondents reported that the veterans they serve would lose access to medical care without the transportation provided by this program.

United States Government Accountability Office

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August 15, 2024

The Honorable Jon Tester
Chairman
The Honorable Jerry Moran
Ranking Member
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
United States Senate

The Honorable Mike Bost
Chairman
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Ranking Member
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
House of Representatives

The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Veterans Health Administration (VHA) provides health care services to over 6 million veterans through its 172 medical facilities and other outpatient sites of care. For some veterans, obtaining medical care depends on the availability of VA-provided transportation. These veterans may not, for example, have a car or access to public transportation. We and others have identified travel to medical appointments as a major barrier to health care for veterans.[1] This is especially true for those living in rural areas, which in fiscal year 2022, included about one-third of veterans enrolled in VHA health care services.

To help veterans obtain medical care, VA administers several transportation programs. One such program is the Volunteer Transportation Network program that provides transportation for veterans seeking services from a VA medical facility or an authorized non-VA facility. This program relies on volunteers to both coordinate and provide rides to medical appointments for veterans. Facilities are encouraged, but not required, to offer the program for their veterans. Unlike other VA transportation programs, the Volunteer Transportation Network program does not have any eligibility requirements for veterans (e.g., they do not

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[1]See GAO, *VA Mental Health: Additional Action Needed to Assess Rural Veterans' Access to Intensive Care,* GAO-23-105544 (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 9, 2023) and Zachary Hahn et al., "Travel Burden as a Measure of Healthcare Access and the Impact of Telehealth within the Veterans Health Administration," *Journal of General Internal Medicine,* vol. 38, supp. 3 (2023): 805-813.

need to have a service-connected disability or a low-income level).[2] This makes the program unique in its ability to serve a broader veteran population. According to VA, without this program, many of the veterans it serves would have no means of getting to medical appointments and obtaining the care they need.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, includes a provision for us to review the status of the Volunteer Transportation Network program, including usage of the program by veterans and vehicles owned by VA for the program. In this report, we provide information on

1. trends in the number of rides provided through the Volunteer Transportation Network program;

2. trends in the number of vehicles and volunteers associated with the Volunteer Transportation Network program, and the estimated value of these donations in 2023; and

3. challenges administering the Volunteer Transportation Network program and any strategies used to mitigate these challenges.

To inform all three objectives, we reviewed Volunteer Transportation Network program policies, guidance, documents, and data. We also interviewed officials from the VA Center for Development and Civic Engagement (the VA program office), which is responsible for overseeing the program. In addition, on December 7, 2023, we sent a survey to all 145 VA medical facilities with a facility-level Center for Development and Civic Engagement office.[3] As of the close of the survey, on February 15, 2024, officials from 106 facilities completed the survey (a response rate of 73 percent). Of these, 90 facilities reported currently offering a Volunteer Transportation Network program. We refer to the officials from these 90 facilities, who went on to answer questions about the program, as "survey respondents." (See appendix I for more information about the survey and responses.)

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[2]Although the Volunteer Transportation Network program does not have any eligibility criteria, veterans need to be ambulatory (i.e., able to get in and out of the vehicle without assistance).

[3]According to VA program office officials, not all VA medical facilities have a Center for Development and Civic Engagement office. We sent the survey to the 145 facilities—including medical centers, hospitals, and health care systems—that VA program office officials identified as having a facility-level Center for Development and Civic Engagement office.

In addition, we interviewed officials from eight selected VA medical facilities that administered the program.[4] We selected these facilities to represent variation in geographic area, a mixture of rural and urban areas, and the presence of special transportation initiatives, such as VA's pilot to coordinate and reimburse rideshare rides for eligible veterans to their appointments. We refer to these eight facilities as "selected VA facilities." We also obtained information from officials at the corresponding seven Veterans Integrated Service Networks responsible for overseeing each of the selected VA facilities.[5] Furthermore, we reviewed program information and interviewed representatives from Disabled American Veterans, a veterans service organization that is the primary source of donated vehicles.[6] Specifically, we reviewed program statistics on the number of vehicles it has donated to the program.

To provide information on trends in the number of rides provided through the Volunteer Transportation Network program, we reviewed annual reports from Disabled American Veterans published from 2018 through 2023. These reports include general information about the program and more specifically, the number of rides provided to veterans by the

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[4]We interviewed officials from the following eight selected VA facilities: (1) Harry S. Truman Memorial Veterans' Hospital (Columbia, Missouri); (2) Mann-Grandstaff VA Medical Center (Spokane, Washington); (3) Fort Harrison VA Medical Center (Fort Harrison, Montana); (4) Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Facility (Iron Mountain, Michigan); (5) Tomah VA Medical Center (Tomah, Wisconsin); (6) James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital (Tampa, Florida); (7) Louis A. Johnson VA Medical Center (Clarksburg, West Virginia); and (8) Batavia VA Medical Center (Batavia, New York). All eight of these selected VA facilities received our survey and provided responses.

[5]There are 18 regional networks, which manage regional markets that deliver health care, social services, and support services to veterans. Each regional network is responsible for overseeing VA medical facilities within a defined geographic region.

[6]Veterans service organizations are groups that offer a range of services for veterans, servicemembers, dependents, and survivors. There are over 100 veterans service organizations in the United States.

Disabled American Veterans also provides stipends for hospital service coordinators who are VA volunteers responsible for scheduling rides at VA facilities administering the Volunteer Transportation Network program. We interviewed representatives from Disabled American Veterans' national headquarters. We also interviewed representatives from two of the organization's local chapters in Washington and Florida, which facility-level Center for Development and Civic Engagement officials identified as playing key roles in the Volunteer Transportation Network program.

We also spoke with representatives of a state chapter of Veterans of Foreign Wars and a county-level veterans service office to obtain additional perspectives on the program. These organizations were identified by either the VA program office or a selected VA facility as a program partner.

program from 2018 through 2023.[7] We reviewed relevant documentation about Disabled American Veterans' data collection process and interviewed the representative from the organization responsible for collecting and maintaining these data. We also compared Disabled American Veterans' data to the data we received from survey respondents. We determined that these data were sufficiently reliable for our purposes. Finally, we obtained information on reasons for trends in the number of rides from survey respondents and from interviews with officials from selected VA facilities.

To provide information on trends in the number of vehicles and volunteers associated with the Volunteer Transportation Network program, we analyzed survey responses and obtained information from selected VA facilities on the numbers of vehicles and volunteers they had from fiscal years 2018 through 2023. To estimate the value of these donations in 2023, we analyzed VA program office data on the number of hours volunteer drivers logged for the program. To estimate the value of volunteer hours donated to the program, we used the minimum hourly wage for the motor vehicle driver position with VA's in-house transportation service. According to VA officials, volunteer drivers are the primary source of volunteer hours. We also obtained and analyzed data from Disabled American Veterans on the number of vehicles purchased and the range in purchase prices for these new vehicles in 2023. In addition, we assessed the value of hospital service coordinators funded by Disabled American Veterans in 2023 using its data on the number of individuals operating within the program and the range in stipends paid to these volunteers that year. We interviewed VA officials and Disabled American Veterans representatives responsible for collecting and maintaining these data and determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for our purposes.

To provide information on challenges administering the Volunteer Transportation Network program and any strategies used to mitigate these challenges, we analyzed survey responses. We also interviewed officials from selected VA facilities.

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[7]According to a representative from Disabled American Veterans, the organization received data from 87 to 90 percent of VA medical facilities on the number of rides provided to veterans through the Volunteer Transportation Network program each year. For the 10 to 13 percent of facilities that did not provide data, the organization estimated the number of rides they provided through the program.

We conducted this performance audit from July 2023 to August 2024 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Background

Since 1987, the Volunteer Transportation Network program has provided transportation to veterans for medical appointments at VA or authorized non-VA medical facilities.[8]

Program Roles and Responsibilities

Those with responsibilities related to the program include the following:

- **VA Center for Development and Civic Engagement program office**. VA program office staff are responsible for overseeing the administration and operation of the Volunteer Transportation Network program.[9] This includes designing policies and procedures, ensuring compliance with directives through auditing and monitoring activities, capturing data on numbers of volunteers and hours served, and reviewing reports to inform program planning.[10]

- **Veterans Integrated Service Networks.** Each regional network has a Center for Development and Civic Engagement liaison who is responsible for disseminating information and guidance for VA's Volunteer Transportation Network to VA medical facilities. The liaisons are also responsible for compiling data regarding the program

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[8]In addition, the program may provide transportation for caregivers (if the caregivers' presence is medically needed) and service animals accompanying veterans to their medical appointments. It also provides transportation to veterans seeking VA benefits.

[9]In addition to the Volunteer Transportation Network program, VA's Center for Development and Civic Engagement oversees all other VA volunteer and donation-based programs. These other programs include Compassionate Contact Corps, which matches volunteers with veterans experiencing loneliness or who are socially isolated; Physician Ambassador Program, through which licensed health care providers donate their time at VA facilities; and Student Volunteer Program, which places students in various support roles at VA facilities. Department of Veterans Affairs, *VHA Directive 1620(2): VA Center For Development & Civic Engagement Program*, (Washington, D.C.: June 16, 2022, amended July 10, 2023).

[10]These reports include the Veterans Integrated Service Network Annual Narrative Report, which describes overarching challenges, successes, and trends for all facility-level Center for Development and Civic Engagement programs within each network, including the Volunteer Transportation Network program.

in its regional network and providing information and guidance about the program to its facilities.

- **VA facility-level Center for Development and Civic Engagement office.** Facility-level staff are responsible for administering the Volunteer Transportation Network program at their facility. Specifically, they are responsible for managing the daily operations of the program, which includes ensuring that volunteer drivers are properly onboarded, trained, and credentialled. Facility-level staff also coordinate the program with other transportation services offered by the facility.

- **VA facility-level volunteer ride schedulers.** Volunteer ride schedulers are responsible for scheduling and coordinating Volunteer Transportation Network program rides for veterans at VA medical facilities. They include hospital service coordinators (individuals registered as VA volunteers who receive a stipend from Disabled American Veterans) and volunteer coordinators (individuals registered as VA volunteers who do not receive any financial compensation from Disabled American Veterans). To obtain a ride through the program, veterans, providers, or caregivers may contact the facility or a ride scheduler directly.

Program Vehicles

Through this program, rides are provided by volunteers who use government-owned vehicles that are donated to VA primarily by veterans service organizations and other external sources.[11] Once donated to the program, vehicles become VA property and facilities are responsible for insuring and maintaining them. VA medical facilities maintain their own fleets of donated vehicles for the program. The type of vehicles donated to the program include new sports utility vehicles and 12-passenger capacity vans.

Program Volunteer Requirements

VA has several requirements for onboarding volunteers, including volunteers for the Volunteer Transportation Network program. Onboarding requirements for all program volunteers include general volunteer orientation, personal identity verification, and training specific to their volunteer role. For program volunteer drivers, the requirements also

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[11]External sources such as veterans service organizations and other organizations, including private companies, may also provide funding or donations to VA medical facilities to purchase vehicles for the program. VA policy prohibits volunteers' personal vehicles and vehicles with a 15-passenger capacity to be used for the Volunteer Transportation Network program. See Department of Veterans Affairs, *VHA Directive 1620(2)*.

include an annual state driver's license and driving record verifications. (See fig. 1.) Drivers also must obtain a medical clearance from VA medical facility occupational health staff, both initially and on a recurring basis (depending on the volunteer driver's age).[12]

Figure 1: VA Requirements for Volunteer Transportation Network Program Volunteer Drivers

General volunteer orientation	Driver verification	Personal identity verification	Training	Medical clearance
• Customer service • Emergency preparedness • Infection control • Privacy and health information overview • Suicide prevention • Volunteer rights and responsibilities (e.g., recording hours volunteered)	• State driver's license verification (during onboarding and annually) • Driving record verification (during onboarding and annually)	• Fingerprinting, if applicable • Background check, if applicable • Issuing personal identity verification credential[a]	• Driver's duties and responsibilities • Fleet credit card use (i.e., approved and inappropriate uses) • Safe driving	• Medical examination (during onboarding and recurring depending on age) • Tuberculosis screening • Vaccine attestations/ documentation

Source: Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) (text); DG-Studio/stock.adobe.com (icons). | GAO-24-106983

[a]A personal identity verification credential serves as documentary evidence of an individual's identity and is used to grant authorization to access facilities, services, or VA information systems. There are three different types of these credentials that facilities may issue, and not all of them require fingerprinting or a background check.

Additional VA Transportation Options for Veterans

In addition to the Volunteer Transportation Network program, VA offers other transportation options for veterans through VHA's Veterans Transportation Program. The Veterans Transportation Program includes

- **Veterans Transportation Service.** VHA provides funding to VHA health care systems to provide veterans with transportation to and from medical appointments. The Veterans Transportation Service is also able to provide rides to veterans who have mobility challenges, such as those using a wheelchair. VHA policy requires VHA to coordinate the Volunteer Transportation Network program with the

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[12]See Department of Veterans Affairs, *VHA Directive 1620(2)*, which states that volunteer drivers are to obtain a special examination in accordance with VA's occupational health service policy. According to VA Handbook 5019/1, volunteer drivers under the age of 55 are examined every 4 years, those between the age of 55 and 65 are examined every 2 years, and those above the age of 65 are examined every year. See, Department of Veterans Affairs, VHA Handbook 5019/1: *Employee Occupational Health Service*, (Washington, D.C.: Aug. 3, 2017).

Veterans Transportation Service to manage veterans' access to care.[13] The transportation is provided at no cost to veterans.

- **Beneficiary Travel Mileage Reimbursement.** VHA reimburses eligible veterans, caregivers, and others for certain costs (e.g., miles driven, tolls, meals, and lodging) to and from VA medical facilities or VA-authorized health care facilities when seeking health care. For the mileage reimbursement benefit, VHA uses a per-mile rate to reimburse eligible veterans, immediate family members, and others for their travel costs when using personal vehicles to attend appointments for VHA-approved care. Unlike for the Volunteer Transportation Network program, veterans must apply for mileage reimbursement and meet one of several eligibility requirements.[14]

- **Beneficiary Travel Rideshare Program.** Through this program, veterans may obtain transportation to their medical appointments from a participating rideshare company, such as Uber or Lyft. The transportation is provided at no cost for eligible veterans—namely, those who qualify for the Beneficiary Travel Program's mileage reimbursement benefit. The Beneficiary Travel Rideshare Program was implemented on May 1, 2024, and as of May 20, 2024, had 80 facilities offering the program as a transportation option for veterans, according to VA officials.

Number of Rides Provided through the Program Decreased from 2018 through 2023

The annual number of rides provided through the Volunteer Transportation Network program decreased from 2018 through 2023, according to our analysis of data provided by Disabled American

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[13]See Department of Veterans Affairs, *VHA Directive 1620(2).*

[14]Veterans are eligible for mileage reimbursement when traveling to receive care from a VA medical facility or VA-authorized medical facility if they meet one of several eligibility requirements, such as meeting low-income requirements, or having a service-connected disability rating of 30 percent or more. For more information about VA's mileage reimbursement benefit, see GAO, *VA Health Care: Additional Assessments of Mileage Reimbursement Data and Veterans' Travel Costs Needed*, GAO-24-106816 (Washington, D.C.: May 28, 2024).

Veterans.[15] (See fig. 2.) Specifically, from 2018 through 2021, the annual number of rides decreased by more than 70 percent. Beginning in 2021, the annual number of rides provided each year began to increase, but in 2023 was still less than half the number of 2018. In total, the program provided an estimated 2.1 million rides to veterans from 2018 through 2023.

Figure 2: Estimated Total Annual Number of Rides Provided by the Volunteer Transportation Network Program, 2018-2023
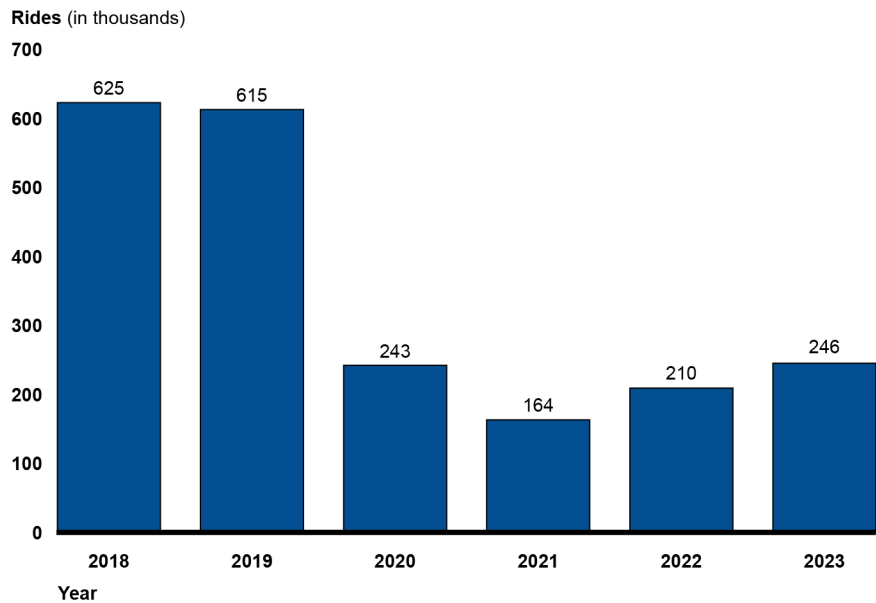
Rides (in thousands)

Source: GAO analysis of Disabled American Veterans data. | GAO-24-106983

Note: Disabled American Veterans is a veterans service organization that partners with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide vehicles and volunteers for the Volunteer Transportation Network program. We reviewed annual reports that Disabled American Veterans published from 2018 through 2023, which include information on the number of rides provided to veterans by the program for those years.

According to a representative from Disabled American Veterans, the organization received data from 87 to 90 percent of VA medical facilities on the number of rides provided to veterans through the Volunteer Transportation Network program each year. For the 10 to 13 percent of facilities that did not provide data, the organization estimated the number of rides they provided through the program.

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[15]According to a representative from Disabled American Veterans, the organization received data from 87 to 90 percent of VA medical facilities on the number of rides provided to veterans through the Volunteer Transportation Network program each year. For the 10 to 13 percent of facilities that did not provide data, the organization estimated the number of rides they provided through the program.

Survey respondents and officials from three selected VA facilities reported several reasons why the number of rides their facility provided had decreased during that timeframe, such as COVID-19 pandemic-associated disruptions, an insufficient number of volunteer drivers, and lower demand for rides.[16] For example, officials from two selected VA facilities told us more veterans started using telehealth during the COVID-19 pandemic and have continued to use it since, which lowers demand for rides to in-person appointments.

According to Disabled American Veterans data, although VA medical facilities provided about 1,800 rides on average in 2023, the number of rides provided across facilities varied widely.[17] For example, one facility reported providing 7,319 rides through the program in 2023, while another reported providing 33 rides that year.

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[16]Sixty-seven percent of survey respondents reported they provided fewer rides in fiscal year 2023 than in fiscal year 2018 or 2019. All survey respondents provided data on the number of rides provided for 2018, 2019 and 2023 or provided a response to whether their facility provided fewer rides in fiscal year 2023 than in fiscal year 2018 or 2019.

[17]According to Disabled American Veterans data, the median number of rides provided by facilities in 2023 was 845 rides.

GAO-24-106983 VA Volunteer Transportation Network

Number of Vehicles Has Been Stable and Volunteers Has Decreased; Estimated Value of Donations Exceeded $18 Million in 2023

Facilities Had 12 to 13 Program Vehicles on Average; Most Survey Respondents Reported Having Sufficient Vehicles in 2023

The number of Volunteer Transportation Network program vehicles individual VA medical facilities had remained relatively unchanged from fiscal years 2018 through 2023, according to our analysis of survey responses. On average, survey respondents reported having 12 to 13 vehicles in their Volunteer Transportation Network program fleet each year from fiscal years 2018 through 2023. Over this 6-year period, 58 percent of survey respondents reported an increase or decrease of two or fewer vehicles.[18] In fiscal year 2023, the number of vehicles operated by individual facilities ranged from one to 51, with most survey respondents reporting having 20 or fewer vehicles in the program.[19]

Although the number of vehicles facilities reported having has remained relatively unchanged, the total number of vehicles donated to the program has varied. Data from Disabled American Veterans—the primary source of vehicles for the program—show that the organization donated 597

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[18]Not all survey respondents provided data on the number of vehicles in their Volunteer Transportation Network program fleet (i.e., vehicles used exclusively for the program) for each fiscal year from 2018 through 2023. The number of respondents that provided these data ranged from 58 to 77, depending on the year. The other respondents reported not having data on vehicles for one or more of these years or did not provide a response to the question.

Some survey respondents (about 14 percent) reported that their facility also used vehicles for the program that were shared with other VA transportation programs. We did not include shared vehicles in our reporting of program vehicles.

[19]Not all survey respondents provided data on the number of vehicles in their Volunteer Transportation Network program fleet (i.e., vehicles used exclusively for the program) for fiscal year 2023. Specifically, 77 respondents provided these data. The other respondents reported not having data on vehicles for this year or did not provide a response to the question.

vehicles from 2018 through 2023. The number of donated vehicles ranged from 47 to 152 across these years.[20] (See fig. 3.)

Figure 3: Annual Number of Volunteer Transportation Network Program Vehicles Donated by Disabled American Veterans, 2018-2023
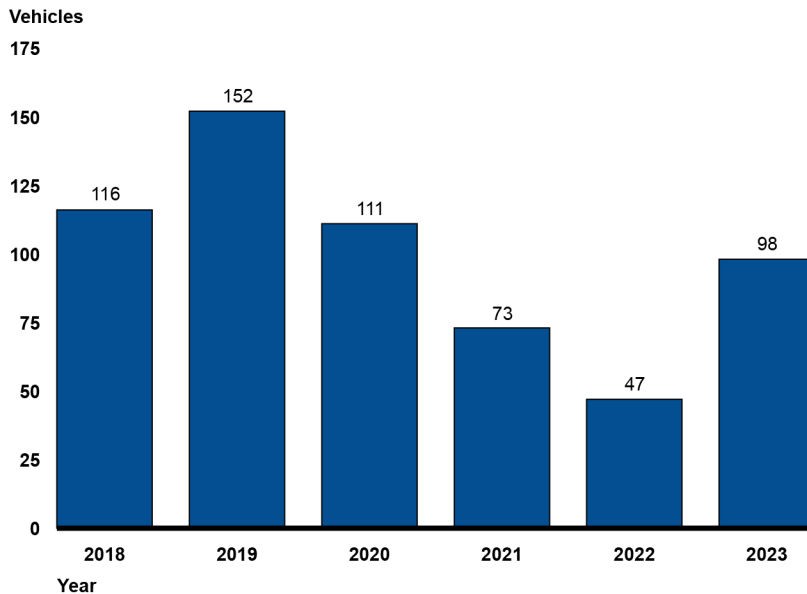
Vehicles

Source: GAO analysis of Disabled American Veterans data. | GAO-24-106983

Note: Disabled American Veterans is a veterans service organization that is the primary source of vehicles for the Department of Veterans Affairs Volunteer Transportation Network program. Veterans service organizations are groups that offer a range of services for veterans, servicemembers, dependents, and survivors.

According to representatives and data from Disabled American Veterans, the number of donated vehicles varied for two reasons. For example, representatives told us that VA medical facilities generally retire a program vehicle after 250,000 miles and at that time may request the organization to replace the vehicle. In addition, annual donations of program vehicles generally decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to Disabled American Veterans data.

[20]Disabled American Veterans reported donating a total of 4,018 vehicles to the Volunteer Transportation Network program from 1987 through 2023.

Eighty percent of survey respondents indicated that their facility had enough vehicles for the program in fiscal year 2023.[21] The other 19 percent of survey respondents reported having an insufficient number of vehicles to meet demand.[22] The most commonly reported reason for insufficient vehicles to meet demand was that vehicles needed maintenance or repair. Twenty-eight percent of survey respondents—including both those reporting sufficient and insufficient number of program vehicles—reported having at least one program vehicle out of service for 10 to 12 months in fiscal year 2023.[23] Officials from two of the eight selected VA facilities we interviewed reported that they have experienced delays in repairing program vehicles, with officials from one facility citing supply chain issues.

Number of Volunteers Has Decreased; About Half of Survey Respondents Reported Insufficient Volunteer Drivers in 2023

The annual number of Volunteer Transportation Network program volunteers—primarily drivers—decreased from fiscal years 2018 through 2023, according to our analysis of VA program office data. Specifically, the total number of volunteers—individuals who recorded time for the program during the given fiscal year—decreased by nearly 50 percent from fiscal years 2018 through 2023. (See fig. 4.) In addition, the average number of hours recorded by a program volunteer decreased from 206 per volunteer in fiscal year 2018 to 163 per volunteer in fiscal year 2023.

[21]All survey respondents provided a response to whether their facility had enough vehicles for the Volunteer Transportation Network program in fiscal year 2023. Seventy-two survey respondents reported that their facility had enough vehicles for their program.

[22]Seventeen survey respondents reported that they did not have enough vehicles for the program in the same year while one survey respondent reported that they did not know if their facility had enough vehicles.

[23]Not all survey respondents provided actual or estimated data on the total number of vehicles that were out of service for 10 to 12 months in fiscal year 2023. Seventy-six respondents provided data and the other respondents reported not having these data or did not provide a response to the question.

Figure 4: Annual Number of Volunteer Transportation Network Program Volunteers, Fiscal Years 2018-2023

Volunteers

Fiscal year
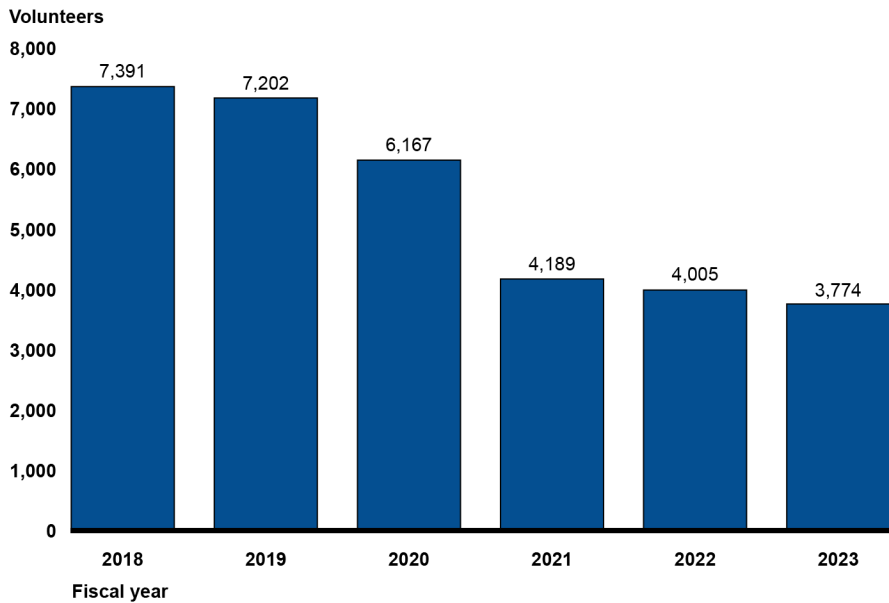
Source: GAO analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data. | GAO-24-106983

Note: The VA Center for Development and Civic Engagement program office is responsible for overseeing the administration of the Volunteer Transportation Network program. The VA program office tracks the number of volunteers for the program using an internal database. The number of volunteers includes individuals who recorded time for the Volunteer Transportation Network program during the given fiscal year, according to program office officials.

Volunteer drivers. The average annual number of volunteer drivers for the program decreased from 61 drivers per VA facility in fiscal year 2018 to 34 drivers per VA facility in fiscal year 2023, according to our analysis of survey responses.[24] (See fig. 5.) Further, 79 percent of survey respondents reported a lower number of volunteer drivers in fiscal year 2023 than in fiscal year 2018.

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[24]Not all survey respondents provided actual or estimated data on the total number of volunteer drivers for the program for each fiscal year from 2018 through 2023. The number of respondents that provided these data ranged from 58 to 75, depending on the year. The other respondents reported not having these data for one or more of these years or did not provide a response to the question.

Figure 5: Average Annual Number of Volunteer Transportation Network Program Drivers Reported by VA Medical Facility Survey Respondents, Fiscal Years 2018-2023

Drivers (average)
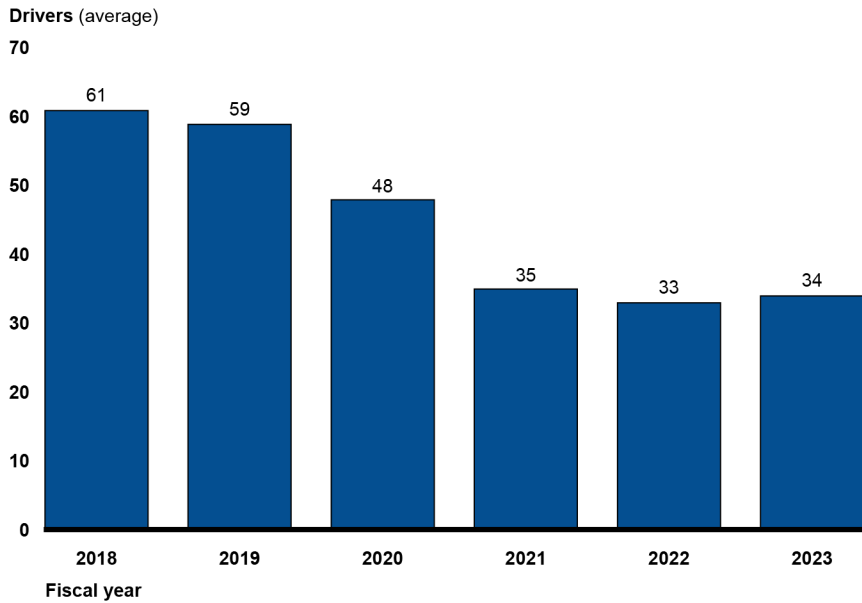
Source: GAO survey of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facilities. | GAO-24-106983

Note: In December 2023, we fielded a survey to all VA medical facilities with a facility-level Center for Development and Civic Engagement office. The office is responsible for administering the Volunteer Transportation Network program along with other facility-level volunteer and donation-based programs. Officials from 90 facilities reported currently administering a Volunteer Transportation Network program at their facility ("survey respondents"). However, not all survey respondents provided data on the number of volunteer drivers for the program at their facility for each fiscal year from 2018 through 2023. The number of respondents that provided these data ranged from 58 to 75, depending on the year. The other respondents reported not having these data for one or more of these years or did not provide a response to the question.

Forty-four percent of survey respondents reported that they did not have enough volunteer drivers for the program in fiscal year 2023 and 63 percent of survey respondents reported that having more drivers was the highest priority need for the program.[25] Specifically, survey respondents' most frequently reported reason for unfulfilled program ride requests was a lack of drivers. Of survey respondents that reported providing fewer rides in fiscal year 2023 than in fiscal year 2018 or 2019, 85 percent

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[25]All 90 survey respondents indicated whether their facility had enough volunteers for the Volunteer Transportation Network program in fiscal year 2023. Six of these survey respondents indicated that they did not know if their facility had enough volunteers for the program in fiscal year 2023. In addition, all 90 survey respondents identified the highest priority need for their facility's Volunteer Transportation Network program.

reported that a decrease in volunteer drivers for the program contributed to the trend.

Officials from five selected VA facilities we interviewed stated that disruptions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to declines in the number of volunteer drivers for the program. Specifically, these officials told us that in response to COVID-19, facilities closed program routes or reduced the number of passengers allowed at a time in vehicles. After a pause in volunteering, former volunteer drivers had to meet certain Volunteer Transportation Network program volunteer requirements, such as obtaining a COVID-19 vaccination and completing training again. VA program office officials said these factors deterred some former volunteers from returning. Additionally, officials from two of the eight selected VA facilities told us they have had challenges recruiting volunteer drivers after COVID-19-related program closures.

Volunteer ride schedulers. Although the total number of program volunteers decreased, the average annual number of volunteer ride schedulers—either hospital service coordinators or volunteer coordinators—remained stable from fiscal years 2018 through 2023, according to our analysis of survey responses. Specifically, 67 percent of survey respondents reported having one to three hospital service coordinators from fiscal years 2018 through 2023.[26] Thirty-two percent of survey respondents reported having one to three volunteer coordinators during this 6-year period.

Although the average number of ride schedulers was stable, some survey respondents reported insufficient resources to adequately coordinate ride requests for the program in fiscal year 2023. Specifically, 22 percent of survey respondents reported not having enough hospital service coordinators or volunteer coordinators or both. More ride schedulers was the second most highly ranked donated resource request for survey respondents, after more drivers. This may be due to a number of reasons, such as ride schedulers volunteering fewer hours or managing transportation for more than one facility. One survey respondent reported having a ride scheduler serving the program at two facilities in their area,

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[26]Not all survey respondents provided actual or estimated data on the number of hospital service coordinators and volunteer coordinators at their facility for fiscal years 2018 through 2023. Sixty-one respondents provided hospital service coordinator data and 59 provided volunteer coordinator data for those fiscal years. The other respondents reported not having the data for one or more of these years or did not provide a response to the question.

and that the ride scheduler's workload was too high. Officials from a selected VA facility we spoke with told us they added a position to its facility-level Center for Development and Civic Engagement office, in part, to accommodate program needs due to an unfilled hospital service coordinator vacancy.

Estimated Value of Donated Vehicles and Volunteer Hours Exceeded $18 Million in 2023

Because the VA program office reported they do not track the total value of donations to the Volunteer Transportation Network program, we estimated the value of the new vehicles and volunteer hours donated to the program.

According to our estimates, VA received a minimum of about $18.5 million in donations for the program in 2023. (See table 1.) Among the types of donations we included in this estimate—namely, volunteer driver hours, vehicles, and hospital service coordinators—our analysis showed that the minimum value of these donations ranged from about $2.7 million to $12.0 million.

Table 1: Estimated Minimum Value of Donations to VA's Volunteer Transportation Network Program, by Donation Type, 2023

Donation type	Total number donated	Minimum value per unit	Estimated minimum value of donation
Volunteer driver hours[a]	575,026	$20.92 per hour	$12,029,544
Vehicles[b]	98	$38,402 per vehicle	$3,763,396
Hospital service coordinators[c]	149	$18,000 per year, per coordinator	$2,682,000
Total estimated minimum value			**$18,474,940**

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Disabled American Veterans data. | GAO-24-106983

[a]The number of volunteer driver hours for the Volunteer Transportation Network program is an estimate based on VA data for the total volunteer hours and the percent of those hours that VA officials attributed to program drivers. VA officials estimated that program volunteer drivers make up at least 90 percent of total volunteer hours. Our analysis used the estimated minimum hourly wage offered to agency drivers for VA's in-house transportation service in 2023, as reported by VA officials, to calculate the minimum value of volunteer hours donated to the program. The hourly wage does not include any additional VA benefits (such as health insurance or retirement plans) that are provided to VA's in-house drivers.

[b]The number of vehicles and their estimated value reflects donations of new vehicles from Disabled American Veterans, the primary source of vehicles for the program. The type of vehicle donated to a VA facility varies in seating capacity and other features that result in a range of prices for donated vehicles, from a minimum of $38,402 to a maximum of $56,045 per vehicle in 2023. Our analysis used the lowest amount that Disabled American Veterans reported paying for a vehicle in 2023 to calculate the minimum value of this donation. Our analysis does not account for any costs that VA may have incurred for maintenance or repairs for these vehicles in 2023.

[c]Hospital service coordinators are individuals registered as VA volunteers who receive a stipend from Disabled American Veterans to assist with ride scheduling for the program at the facility level. Disabled American Veterans reported that stipends paid to hospital service coordinators ranged from $18,000 to $24,000 in 2023. Our analysis used the lowest amount of the pay range for this position in 2023 to calculate the minimum value of this donation. Our analysis does not include hours donated by other volunteer ride schedulers who did not receive a stipend from Disabled American Veterans.

Officials Reported Recruiting and Onboarding Volunteers as the Biggest Program Challenges and Identified Mitigation Strategies

More than half of survey respondents reported that the two biggest challenges they faced in administering the Volunteer Transportation Network program were (1) recruiting program volunteers and (2) the onboarding process for program volunteers.[27] Additionally, survey respondents and some selected VA facilities we interviewed noted other challenges with general coordination of the program, but these were less frequently cited. Officials from VA's program office and some selected VA facilities reported strategies to mitigate these challenges.

Recruiting Volunteers

Seventy-two percent of survey respondents reported recruiting volunteers as one of their biggest challenges in administering the program. Survey respondents and officials from one selected VA facility reported several challenges with recruiting volunteers, including an aging volunteer pool and competing job and volunteer opportunities.[28] Specifically,

- Ninety-one percent of survey respondents reported that the aging pool of volunteers was a challenge to recruiting and retaining volunteer drivers for the program. In addition, officials from one of the selected VA facilities told us that some potential drivers are not able to pass needed medical examinations due to age-related health conditions.

- Forty-one percent of survey respondents reported that the need for potential volunteers to be available during routine work hours (9:00 am to 5:00 pm) was a challenge the program faced in recruiting volunteer drivers. Officials from one selected VA facility we interviewed said that many former volunteers did not return after the COVID-19-related closure of the program, in some cases because they had taken paid jobs and were unavailable to volunteer as drivers.

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[27]Our survey asked facilities to identify the three biggest challenges in administering the Volunteer Transportation Network program. Survey respondents ranked the three biggest challenges from a list of nine challenges we provided. They could also include a challenge not provided in the list. All 90 survey respondents identified the three biggest challenges for their facility in administering the program. Sixty-five of them ranked recruiting among their facility's three biggest challenges and 50 of them ranked the onboarding process for volunteers among the three biggest challenges. There was less consensus among survey respondents on the third biggest challenge.

[28]All 90 survey respondents indicated whether an aging volunteer pool and a need for volunteers to be available during routine work hours were challenges to recruiting and retaining volunteer drivers for the Volunteer Transportation Network program at their facility.

Officials from two selected VA facilities also reported strategies to mitigate recruiting challenges for the Volunteer Transportation Network program. For example, an official from one facility reported having enough volunteers for their program—125 volunteer drivers in fiscal year 2023, the second most reported program volunteers of the eight selected VA facilities. This official attributed the success in recruiting volunteers to a close relationship with county veterans service offices.[29] Specifically, the official told us that when the program is low on volunteers, county veterans service offices help recruit by posting on social media and reaching out to their veteran contacts to recruit volunteers. Officials from another facility told us that businesses and nonprofits have sponsored local radio commercials about the program. According to these officials, the commercials were successful in attracting new volunteers.

Onboarding Program Volunteers

Fifty-six percent of survey respondents reported onboarding volunteers as one of their biggest challenges in administering the program. Officials from four selected VA facilities we interviewed estimated that it takes between 2 weeks and 6 months to onboard a volunteer driver for the Volunteer Transportation Network program.

Survey respondents also identified specific challenges associated with the volunteer onboarding process, and officials from VA's program office and some selected facilities told us about some strategies to help mitigate them.[30] These include:

- **Personal identity verification credentials.** Seventy percent of survey respondents reported that the requirement to obtain a personal identity verification credential contributes to volunteers not completing the onboarding process, and 32 percent of respondents reported that it delays onboarding program volunteers. Officials from four of the eight selected VA facilities told us that obtaining this credential is time consuming. According to officials from one selected VA facility, this credential can take up to 6 weeks to obtain.

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[29]County veterans service offices help veterans with filing VA claims and identifying benefits available from state government, such as reduced property taxes and educational benefits.

[30]Our survey asked facilities to indicate whether certain challenges resulted in delays in onboarding volunteers or contributes to volunteers not completing the onboarding requirements. All 90 survey respondents indicated whether the challenges resulted in delays to onboarding volunteers or contributed to volunteers not completing the onboarding process. Our survey did not ask facilities to quantify the extent of delays or the resulting proportion of volunteers not completing the onboarding process.

A personal identity verification credential serves as documentary evidence of an individual's identity and is used to grant authorization to access facilities, services, or VA information systems. According to VA, the requirement for volunteers to obtain a personal identity verification credential reflects a federal identification standard to help ensure the safety and security of federal buildings.[31] However, VA officials also told us that VA provides some flexibilities to facilities for program volunteers.[32] For example, there are three different types of these credentials with varying levels of requirements and, according to VA program office officials, facilities may determine which credential is appropriate for their volunteers.[33]

- **Medical examinations.** Sixty-eight percent of survey respondents reported that the requirement to complete medical examinations only at VA medical facilities contributes to volunteers not completing the onboarding process. Thirty-two percent of survey respondents reported that this requirement contributes to delays in onboarding volunteers. Officials from both the VA program office and three selected VA facilities reported challenges with the medical examination process. According to VA program office officials, medical examinations for volunteers, even across facilities, have been inconsistently used to evaluate volunteers. For example, they found that one facility had 20 volunteer applicants who did not pass this facility's medical examination, which they described as unusual and inappropriate. In addition, officials from two of the selected VA facilities stated that program volunteers are considered lower priority than VA staff for onboarding processes, like medical examinations. As such, they may experience additional delays in completing the medical examination process. Officials from another selected VA facility reported that they have one occupational health staff person to conduct volunteer medical examinations, which contributed to volunteers' frustration.

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[31]*Homeland Security Presidential Directive 12: Policy for a Common Identification Standard for Federal Employees and Contractors* (Washington, D.C., Aug. 27, 2004).

[32]See Department of Veterans Affairs, *VHA Handbook 0735: Homeland Security Presidential Directive 12 (HSPD-12) Program* (Washington D.C.: Mar. 24, 2014).

[33]For example, the credential with the lowest level of requirements, referred to as a flash badge, provides access to common areas of a facility with no background investigation or fingerprint check required. The credential with the highest level of requirements—the personal identification verification card—provides access to common areas as well as to sensitive records and other areas, and requires a background investigation and fingerprint check.

According to VA program office officials, medical examinations for volunteer drivers must be conducted by facility occupational health staff because of the specific requirements for program drivers, and as a safety precaution for drivers and veterans. To improve the medical examination process across facilities, VA program office officials reported that they worked with VA's occupational health office to create standardized medical examination forms so that program volunteer drivers' medical information was consistently collected across facilities and evaluated using the same standards. The standardized medical examination form was implemented in March 2021 and discussed at a team meeting with facilities in August 2023.

In addition, two selected facilities told us they began taking steps to help mitigate challenges with the medical examination process. Specifically, officials from these facilities told us that they began offering volunteers the option to complete medical examinations at VA community-based outpatient clinics in addition to their medical centers. Officials said the clinics are more convenient for some program volunteers to access.

- **Need to travel to a VA medical facility multiple times.** Seventy-two percent of survey respondents reported that the need for volunteers to make multiple trips to a facility during the onboarding process contributed to volunteers not completing the onboarding process, and 39 percent said it contributed to delays in this process. For example, a volunteer may need to make multiple visits to a facility to complete various aspects of the onboarding process, such as obtaining the required medical examination, providing fingerprints and other documentation for background investigations or checks, and completing any necessary training, among other things.

Officials from one selected VA facility reported that they were able to reduce the number of times a prospective program volunteer needed to come to their facility from five to two times by having volunteers complete multiple steps of the onboarding process in the same visit to the facility.

Other Challenges

Survey respondents and some selected VA facilities we interviewed also noted other challenges with administering the program, but these were less frequently cited. For example, survey respondents identified challenges with general coordination of the program, including with educating veterans about transportation options and scheduling rides. Although these challenges were ranked by fewer survey respondents as being among the most significant to administering the program, they were

also highlighted as challenges by some selected VA facilities we interviewed. Officials from two selected VA facilities described scheduling challenges when coordinating with the Veterans Transportation Service—a VA transportation option that uses VA employees to drive veterans to VHA-approved care.[34]

- Officials from two selected VA facilities stated that communication issues between the Volunteer Transportation Network program and the Veterans Transportation Service contributed to cases in which veterans were incorrectly scheduled for a ride in both transportation options for a medical appointment.

- Officials from one selected facility described instances where Veterans Transportation Service drivers were available, but underutilized because rides were being scheduled through the Volunteer Transportation Network program more frequently than through the Veterans Transportation Service. According to VA program office officials, facilities should use the transportation option that best meets the needs of the veteran while considering available resources and other factors, such as veterans' preference.

Officials from two selected VA facilities told us they have taken steps to help mitigate these coordination challenges. For example, officials from one facility told us that they recently switched to a centralized call-in number for the Volunteer Transportation Network program and the facility's Veterans Transportation Service. The officials told us this change is intended to improve the ease of use of these transportation options by veterans, increase the efficiency of scheduling across these transportation options, and reduce the scheduling of duplicated rides across the options. An official from another facility stated that the facility has instituted a Microsoft Teams chat that they use to coordinate ride appointments for the two transportation options to try to increase communication and reduce scheduling errors. In addition, this official told us that they have their VA appointment schedulers note in the veteran's medical record that the veteran needs rides from the Volunteer Transportation Network program. According to this official, this helps ensure that the veterans' appointment is scheduled during hours when there are available volunteer drivers.

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[34]Although the Veterans Transportation Service generally provides rides to veterans with mobility challenges and the Volunteer Transportation Network program generally provides rides to veterans without these challenges, there may be overlap between the two transportation options.

Despite these various reported challenges, survey respondents largely agreed that the Volunteer Transportation Network program plays a critical role in helping them meet the needs of veterans. Sixty-eight percent of survey respondents reported that the veterans they serve would lose access to medical care without the transportation provided by this program.

Agency Comments

We provided a draft of this report to VA for review and comment. In its comments, reproduced in appendix II, VA stated that the agency has made efforts to promote the Volunteer Transportation Network program and recruit volunteer drivers.

We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and other interested parties. In addition, the report is available at no charge on the GAO website at https://www.gao.gov.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-7114 or SilasS@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made key contributions to this report are listed in appendix III.

Sharon M. Silas
Director, Health Care

Appendix I: GAO Survey of VA Medical Facilities: Methodology and Results

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) administers the Volunteer Transportation Network program, which provides transportation for veterans seeking services from a VA medical facility or an authorized non-VA facility. VA's Center for Development and Civic Engagement program office is responsible for overseeing the administration and operation of the Volunteer Transportation Network program.

To obtain information about the program, we sent a survey to all 145 VA medical facilities with a facility-level Center for Development and Civic Engagement office.[1] We administered the survey between December 7, 2023, and February 15, 2024. In all, officials from 106 facilities completed the survey (survey respondents), a response rate of 73 percent.[2]

In the survey, we asked whether the facility currently offers a Volunteer Transportation Network program. For the 90 survey respondents that reported currently offering a Volunteer Transportation Network program, the survey requested general information about the facility's program as well as for specific data about it, such as the number of program volunteers and vehicles for fiscal years 2018 through 2023.[3] For the 15 survey respondents that reported not currently offering a Volunteer Transportation Network program, the survey asked why the facility does not offer the program and whether the facility had it in the past, among other things. We do not have information about the Volunteer Transportation Network program for facilities that did not respond to the survey but that may offer the program. Thus, the survey results may not be generalizable to these facilities. Further, for some survey questions, results only represent the point in time the survey was completed. We did not independently verify information provided by facilities to our survey.

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[1]According to VA program office officials, not all facilities have a Center for Development and Civic Engagement office. We sent the survey to the 145 facilities—including medical centers, hospitals, and health care systems—that VA program office officials identified as having a facility-level Center for Development and Civic Engagement office.

[2]For the 39 facilities for which we did not receive a response to our survey, we found no evidence of nonresponse patterns that could result in bias in terms of rurality or complexity.

[3]In addition, the survey asked a limited number of open-ended questions to which survey respondents provided narrative answers, and also provided an open-ended text box for questions where "other" was a potential answer. For some of these questions where survey respondents provided narrative answers, we conducted a content analysis to determine how, if at all, to recode the responses (i.e., recoding into a newly created categorical answer). The survey results in this appendix reflect the results of this content analysis.

To provide a more complete understanding of survey respondents' experience with the Volunteer Transportation Network program, in this appendix we present summary information on the 106 VA medical facilities' responses to categorical questions and data provided. We do not include respondents' narrative responses elaborating on survey questions in this appendix. For example, for facilities that selected "Other" in response to a question and then provided a narrative response to explain, we do not include the narrative responses or a summary of them.

Q1. Please indicate which of the following transportation programs your facility currently offers veterans to get to and from medical appointments (both VA and authorized non-VA facilities). (select one response per row)

Type of transportation	Yes	No	I do not know	Total respondents
Volunteer Transportation Network (VTN)	90 (84.9%)	15 (14.2%)	1 (0.9%)	**106 (100.0%)**
Veterans Transportation Service (VTS)	84 (79.2%)	17 (16.0%)	5 (4.7%)	**106 (100.0%)**
VA travel pay reimbursement (Beneficiary Travel or mileage reimbursement)	103 (97.2%)	2 (1.9%)	1 (0.9%)	**106 (100.0%)**
Third-party transportation –rideshare (e.g. Uber/Lyft/Uber Health Pilot)	63 (59.4%)	30 (28.3%)	13 (12.3%)	**106 (100.0%)**
Third-party transportation – taxis	40 (37.7%)	39 (36.8%)	27 (25.5%)	**106 (100.0%)**
Other (please specify)	21 (19.8%)	45 (42.5%)	40 (37.7%)	**106 (100.0%)**

The following questions were asked to those who responded 'Yes' to currently offering a Volunteer Transportation Network program in Q1:

Q2. How long has your facility operated a VTN? (select one response)

Time frame	Number of respondents
1 year or less	0 (0.0%)
More than 1 year but less than 3 years	0 (0.0%)
3 years or more but less than 5 years	2 (2.2%)
5 years or more	84 (93.3%)
I do not know	4 (4.4%)
Total respondents	**90 (100.0%)**

Q3. Please check the days that your VTN provides rides (check all that apply)

Operating days	Number of respondents	Total respondents
Monday	88 (97.8%)	90 (100.0%)
Tuesday	88 (97.8%)	90 (100.0%)
Wednesday	90 (100.0%)	90 (100.0%)
Thursday	88 (97.8%)	90 (100.0%)
Friday	84 (93.3%)	90 (100.0%)
Saturday	3 (3.3%)	90 (100.0%)
Sunday	1 (1.1%)	90 (100.0%)

Q4. What percentage of veterans served by your facility's VTN live in rural or highly rural areas?

Percent rural/highly rural	Number of respondents
20% or less	17 (18.9%)
21% to 40%	9 (10.0%)
41% to 60%	13 (14.4%)
61% to 80%	12 (13.3%)
81% to 100%	16 (17.8%)
I do not know	23 (25.6%)
Total respondents	**90 (100.0%)**

Q5. How does your facility's VTN define a 'ride' for purposes of collecting data or tracking the program's services? (select one response)

Definitions	Number of respondents
One way/per veteran = one ride (the drive from a single veteran's home [or designated meeting place] to the VA medical center (VAMC) [or an authorized non-VA facility])	15 (16.7%)
Roundtrip/per veteran = one ride (the drive from a single veteran's home [or designated meeting place] to the VAMC [or an authorized non-VA facility] and back to the single veteran's home [or designated meeting place])	39 (43.3%)
One way/multiple veterans = one ride (the drive, including all veterans transported during the trip [from a single location or multiple pick-up locations], to the VAMC [or an authorized non-VA facility])	0 (0.0%)
Roundtrip/multiple veterans = one ride (the drive, including all veterans transported during the trip from a single location or multiple pick-up locations, to the VAMC [or an authorized non-VA facility] and back to each veteran's home or designated meeting place.)	32 (35.6%)
Other (please specify)	2 (2.2%)
I do not know	2 (2.2%)
Total respondents	**90 (100.0%)**

Q6. For fiscal year (FY) 2018 – FY2023, please provide the following data on your facility's VTN. Please list the number of rides provided to veterans. Please define rides based on the definition you chose in the previous question. If you do not track the data, if reasonable, please estimate the numbers. Enter the requested numbers for each column and then use the associated 'source of data' dropdown menu to indicate if the number provided is based on actual data or an estimate. If you do not have data and cannot estimate the number please leave the number column blank and select 'no data' in the associated 'source of data' dropdown menu.

	Descriptive statistics			Source of data		
Fiscal year	Minimum	Average	Maximum	Number reporting actual data	Number estimating data	Number reporting no data
Number of rides requested						
2018	8	5,903	20,000	13 (14.4%)	19 (21.1%)	58 (64.4%)
2019	45	5,889	18,000	14 (15.6%)	20 (22.2%)	56 (62.2%)
2020	0	3,612	31,123	15 (16.7%)	21 (23.3%)	54 (60.0%)
2021	0	2,474	20,943	18 (20.0%)	21 (23.3%)	51 (56.7%)
2022	0	2,672	16,574	19 (21.1%)	21 (23.3%)	50 (55.6%)
2023	0	4,987	68,975	19 (21.1%)	26 (28.9%)	45 (50.0%)
Number of rides provided by VTN						
2018	8	3,933	19,669	49 (54.4%)	6 (6.7%)	35 (38.9%)
2019	33	4,152	17,913	48 (53.3%)	7 (7.8%)	35 (38.9%)
2020	0	2,365	31,123	49 (54.4%)	10 (11.1%)	31 (34.4%)
2021	0	1,649	20,943	49 (54.4%)	9 (10.0%)	32 (35.6%)
2022	0	1,929	16,574	56 (62.2%)	9 (10.0%)	25 (27.8%)
2023	0	3,292	68,975	58 (64.4%)	13 (14.4%)	19 (21.1%)
Number of requests not fulfilled through VTN						
2018	0	1,455	12,709	4 (4.4%)	12 (13.3%)	74 (82.2%)
2019	0	903	5,019	3 (3.3%)	12 (13.3%)	75 (83.3%)
2020	0	755	4,108	3 (3.3%)	11 (12.2%)	76 (84.4%)
2021	0	569	2,502	5 (5.6%)	12 (13.3%)	73 (81.1%)
2022	0	360	2,500	9 (10.0%)	12 (13.3%)	69 (76.7%)
2023	0	787	5,000	8 (8.9%)	15 (16.7%)	67 (74.4%)
Number of rides referred to another service						
2018	0	1,273	12,709	6 (6.7%)	8 (8.9%)	17 (18.9%)
2019	0	1,539	12,000	6 (6.7%)	9 (10.0%)	16 (17.8%)
2020	0	1,209	10,000	6 (6.7%)	9 (10.0%)	18 (20.0%)
2021	0	902	10,000	7 (7.8%)	10 (11.1%)	18 (20.0%)
2022	0	384	2,500	11 (12.2%)	9 (10.0%)	15 (16.7%)
2023	0	460	4,187	10 (11.1%)	11 (12.2%)	15 (16.7%)

Q7. Do you track the number of unique veterans who received rides through your VTN? We use the term 'unique veterans' here to mean that you can identify an individual veteran and you can say how many rides they have received in a given period of time. If you only track the number of rides and do not retain information on individual veterans, then you do not track the number of unique veterans and should check 'no.' (select one response)

Response	Number of responses
Yes	21 (23.3%)
No	61 (67.8%)
I do not know	8 (8.9%)
Total respondents	**90 (100.0%)**

Q8. How does your facility's VTN define hours driven by volunteer drivers? (select one response)

Definitions	Number of responses
From the time that the volunteer leaves their home to pick up a VTN vehicle to when the volunteer returns to their home	18 (20.0%)
From the time that the volunteer starts driving the VTN vehicle to when the volunteer drops off the VTN vehicle	61 (67.8%)
From the time that the volunteer picks up the first veteran to when the volunteer drops off the last veteran at the veteran's home (or designated meeting place)	3 (3.3%)
Other (please specify)	8 (8.9%)
I do not know	0 (0.0%)
Total respondents	**90 (100.0%)**

Q9. Based on the number of rides reported in question 6 for FY2018-FY2023, please provide the following data about those rides provided by your facility's VTN. Please define hours based on the definition you chose in the previous question. If you do not track the data, if reasonable, please estimate the numbers. Enter the requested numbers for each column and then use the associated 'source of data' dropdown menu to indicate if the number provided is based on actual data or an estimate. If you do not have data and cannot estimate the number please leave the number column blank and select 'no data' in the associated 'source of data' dropdown menu.

| | Descriptive statistics | | | | Source of data | | |
Fiscal year	Minimum	Average	Maximum	Total	Actual data	Estimated data	No data
Number of miles driven							
2018	6,254	163,441	455,378	4,739,777	38 (42.2%)	2 (2.2%)	50 (55.6%)
2019	121	160,689	658,295	8,998,596	54 (60.0%)	2 (2.2%)	34 (37.8%)
2020	0	79,742	377,828	4,545,303	55 (61.1%)	3 (3.3%)	32 (35.6%)
2021	0	78,811	547,402	4,571,027	56 (62.2%)	3 (3.3%)	31 (34.4%)
2022	0	89,433	582,880	5,723,690	61 (67.8%)	3 (3.3%)	26 (28.9%)
2023	0	85,271	478,935	5,968,944	65 (72.2%)	6 (6.7%)	19 (21.1%)
Number of hours driven							
2018	255	8,950	33,789	250,592	35 (38.9%)	2 (2.2%)	24 (26.7%)
2019	33	35,454	986,771	2,020,860	55 (61.1%)	2 (2.2%)	14 (15.6%)
2020	0	15,037	516,222	887,191	56 (62.2%)	4 (4.4%)	14 (15.6%)
2021	0	18,997	681,406	1,158,841	57 (63.3%)	5 (5.6%)	14 (15.6%)
2022	0	15,527	676,499	1,009,235	60 (66.7%)	6 (6.7%)	13 (14.4%)
2023	0	18,066	673,101	1,282,719	65 (72.2%)	7 (7.8%)	11 (12.2%)
Total number of veterans transported							
2018	73	3,999	20,331	127,962	36 (40.0%)	4 (4.4%)	50 (55.6%)
2019	44	4,822	21,582	265,225	47 (52.2%)	8 (8.9%)	35 (38.9%)
2020	0	2,183	11,303	124,449	47 (52.2%)	11 (12.2%)	32 (35.6%)
2021	0	1,631	10,987	92,966	48 (53.3%)	10 (11.1%)	32 (35.6%)
2022	0	1,997	12,979	129,819	55 (61.1%)	10 (11.1%)	25 (27.8%)
2023	0	1,856	11,274	129,925	58 (64.4%)	12 (13.3%)	20 (22.2%)
Number of unique (i.e. individual) veterans provided rides							
2018	150	387	623	773	1 (4.8%)	2 (9.5%)	18 (85.7%)
2019	44	2,472	6,559	17,302	3 (14.3%)	4 (19.0%)	14 (66.7%)
2020	10	1,787	3,971	10,722	3 (14.3%)	3 (14.3%)	15 (71.4%)
2021	0	1,174	4,653	9,394	4 (19.0%)	4 (19.0%)	13 (61.9%)
2022	0	1,308	6,142	14,386	6 (28.6%)	5 (23.8%)	10 (47.6%)
2023	8	1,159	5,667	12,750	6 (28.6%)	5 (23.8%)	10 (47.6%)

Only respondents who indicated in Q7 that they track unique veterans were asked to provide the number of unique veterans in Q9.

Q10. Please select the top three reasons that ride requests could not be fulfilled for FY2023.

	Number of respondents that ranked reason				
Reason	#1	#2	#3	Not Ranked	Total
Did not have enough drivers	55 (61.1%)	8 (8.9%)	10 (11.1%)	16 (17.8%)	89 (100.0%)
Did not have enough ride coordinators/schedulers	4 (4.4%)	17 (18.9%)	1 (1.1%)	67 (74.4%)	89 (100.0%)
Did not have enough vehicles	2 (2.2%)	17 (18.9%)	10 (11.1%)	60 (66.7%)	89 (100.0%)
Did not have the funds to provide the rides	2 (2.2%)	1 (1.1%)	1 (1.1%)	85 (94.4%)	89 (100.0%)
The ride to and from the veteran's appointment is too far to ask of a volunteer driver	2 (2.2%)	8 (8.9%)	14 (15.6%)	65 (72.2%)	89 (100.0%)
The veteran requesting the ride lives outside of the area covered by your facility's VTN	7 (7.8%)	20 (22.2%)	14 (15.6%)	48 (53.3%)	89 (100.0%)
The veteran was not eligible for a ride	5 (5.6%)	7 (7.8%)	12 (13.3%)	65 (72.2%)	89 (100.0%)
Other (please specify)	11 (12.2%)	7 (7.8%)	14 (15.6%)	57 (63.3%)	89 (100.0%)
I do not know	1 (1.1%)	4 (4.4%)	13 (14.4%)	71 (78.9%)	89 (100.0%)

One respondent did not respond to Q10.

Q11. Did your facility's VTN provide fewer rides in FY2023 compared to either FY2018 or FY2019? (select one response)

Response	Number of respondents
Yes	33 (60.0%)
No	4 (7.3%)
I do not know	18 (32.7%)
Total respondents	**55 (100.0%)**

Q11.a. Please indicate which, if any, of the following factors contributed to fewer rides in FY2023 compared to either FY2018 or FY2019? (select one response per row)

	Number of respondents				
Factors	Yes, contributed	No, did not contribute	I do not know	No response	Total
A decrease in the number of coordinators to schedule rides	9 (27.3%)	21 (63.6%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (9.1%)	**33 (100.0%)**
A decrease in the number of VTN vehicles owned by the facility	4 (12.1%)	25 (75.8%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (12.1%)	**33 (100.0%)**
A decrease in requested rides from eligible veterans	19 (57.6%)	3 (9.1%)	6 (18.2%)	5 (15.2%)	**33 (100.0%)**
A decrease in volunteer drivers	28 (84.8%)	5 (15.2%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	**33 (100.0%)**
A decrease in available vehicles due to delays in needed repairs or maintenance	6 (18.2%)	21 (63.6%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (18.2%)	**33 (100.0%)**
A lack of veterans' awareness of the VTN or how to use the VTN	10 (30.3%)	11 (33.3%)	9 (27.3%)	3 (9.1%)	**33 (100.0%)**
An increased use of telehealth services	17 (51.5%)	5 (15.2%)	9 (27.3%)	2 (6.1%)	**33 (100.0%)**
Other (please specify)	9 (27.3%)	1 (3.0%)	5 (15.2%)	18 (54.5%)	**33 (100.0%)**

Q11.a. was a follow-up question for survey respondents who reported 'Yes' to whether they provided fewer rides in FY2023 compared to either FY2018 or FY2019 in Q11.

Q12. Did you have enough VA paid staffing for your facility's VTN for FY2023? Paid VA staff would be any VA employer or contractor that provided administrative support, acted as a coordinator, or provided other support to the VTN program on a full-time, part-time, or occasional basis. (select one response).

Response	Number of respondents
Yes	41 (45.6%)
No	42 (46.7%)
I do not know	7 (7.8%)
Total respondents	**90 (100.0%)**

Q13. During FY2018-FY2023, how many non-VA staff worked with your facility's VTN? Non-VA staff include volunteers as well as any individuals providing services for the VTN whose salary is paid by DAV or another organization. Enter the requested numbers and then use the associated 'source of the data' dropdown menu to indicate if the number provided is based on actual data or an estimate. If you do not have data leave the number column blank and select no data.

| Fiscal year | Descriptive statistics | | | | Source of data | | |
	Minimum	Average	Maximum	Total	Actual data	Estimated data	No data
Volunteer drivers							
2018	1	61.0	314	3536	47 (52.2%)	11 (12.2%)	32 (35.6%)
2019	0	58.7	336	3519	49 (54.4%)	11 (12.2%)	30 (33.3%)
2020	0	48.3	293	3044	54 (60.0%)	9 (10.0%)	27 (30.0%)
2021	0	35.4	241	2301	57 (63.3%)	9 (10.0%)	24 (26.7%)
2022	0	32.7	228	2388	63 (70.0%)	10 (11.1%)	17 (18.9%)
2023	0	34.5	209	2587	65 (72.2%)	10 (11.1%)	15 (16.7%)
Hospital Service Coordinators (HSC)							
2018	0	1.0	3	59	60 (66.7%)	2 (2.2%)	28 (31.1%)
2019	0	0.9	3	60	62 (68.9%)	2 (2.2%)	26 (28.9%)
2020	0	0.9	3	59	65 (72.2%)	2 (2.2%)	23 (25.6%)
2021	0	0.8	3	56	64 (71.1%)	2 (2.2%)	24 (26.7%)
2022	0	0.9	3	60	67 (74.4%)	2 (2.2%)	21 (23.3%)
2023	0	0.9	3	60.5	68 (75.6%)	2 (2.2%)	20 (22.2%)
Volunteer coordinators (not HSCs)							
2018	0	3.6	25	222	53 (58.9%)	8 (8.9%)	29 (32.2%)
2019	0	3.5	25	214	55 (61.1%)	7 (7.8%)	28 (31.1%)
2020	0	2.9	25	190	59 (65.6%)	7 (7.8%)	24 (26.7%)
2021	0	3.1	25	200	59 (65.6%)	6 (6.7%)	25 (27.8%)
2022	0	2.7	23	185	63 (70.0%)	6 (6.7%)	21 (23.3%)
2023	0	2.8	23	198	63 (70.0%)	8 (8.9%)	19 (21.1%)
Other roles							
2018	0	1.1	10	37	32 (35.6%)	3 (3.3%)	55 (61.1%)
2019	0	1.1	10	38	33 (36.7%)	3 (3.3%)	54 (60.0%)
2020	0	0.9	10	36	35 (38.9%)	3 (3.3%)	52 (57.8%)
2021	0	1.2	10	46	35 (38.9%)	4 (4.4%)	51 (56.7%)
2022	0	1.2	10	48	39 (43.3%)	3 (3.3%)	48 (53.3%)
2023	0	1.3	11	54	40 (44.4%)	3 (3.3%)	47 (52.2%)

Q14. Did your facility have enough non-VA staff to operate the VTN for FY2023? Non-VA staff include volunteers as well as any individuals providing services for the VTN whose salary is paid by DAV or another organization. (select one response)

Response	Number of respondents
Yes	40 (44.4%)
No	44 (48.9%)
I do not know	6 (6.7%)
Total respondents	**90 (100.0%)**

Q14.a. Which non-VA staff positions did your facility's VTN not have enough of in FY 2023? (check all that apply)

Non-VA staff positions	Number of respondents
Volunteer drivers	40 (90.9%)
Hospital service coordinators	19 (43.2%)
Volunteer coordinators (including from veterans service organizations)	20 (45.5%)
Other volunteers (please specify)	10 (22.7%)
Total respondents	**44 (100.0%)**

Q14.a. was a follow-up question for survey respondents who answered 'No' to whether they had enough non-VA staff positions in FY2023 for Q14.

Q15. Please indicate which, if any, of the following challenges your facility's VTN faces in recruiting and retaining volunteer drivers. (select one answer per row)

Challenges	Number of respondents			
	Yes, a challenge	No, not a challenge	I do not know	Total respondents
Potential volunteers must be available during routine work hours (e.g., 9 to 5)	37 (41.1%)	50 (55.6%)	3 (3.3%)	90 (100.0%)
Frequency of required medical exams	47 (52.2%)	41 (45.6%)	2 (2.2%)	90 (100.0%)
Potential volunteers are unaware of the VTN	28 (31.1%)	55 (61.1%)	7 (7.8%)	90 (100.0%)
Requirement for volunteer medical exams to be conducted at the VA facility (e.g., volunteers are not permitted to receive exams through a personal physician)	56 (62.2%)	32 (35.6%)	2 (2.2%)	90 (100.0%)
Long hours of driving veterans to and from their appointment	35 (38.9%)	53 (58.9%)	2 (2.2%)	90 (100.0%)
Volunteer onboarding process is complex and time consuming	65 (72.2%)	25 (27.8%)	0 (0.0%)	90 (100.0%)
Pool of potential volunteers is aging	82 (91.1%)	7 (7.8%)	1 (1.1%)	90 (100.0%)
Driver safety concerns (e.g., communicable diseases or poor passenger conduct)	19 (21.1%)	65 (72.2%)	6 (6.7%)	90 (100.0%)
Rides start too early or end too late for volunteer drivers	26 (28.9%)	59 (65.6%)	5 (5.6%)	90 (100.0%)
Amount of meal stipend or lack of meal stipend	14 (15.6%)	72 (80.0%)	4 (4.4%)	90 (100.0%)
Lack of volunteer recognition (e.g., awards)	8 (8.9%)	77 (85.6%)	5 (5.6%)	90 (100.0%)
Other challenges (please specify)	26 (28.9%)	24 (26.7%)	24 (26.7%)	90 (100.0%)

Q16. Please indicate which, if any, of the following contributes to delays onboarding volunteers or contributes to volunteers not completing the onboarding requirements? (check all that apply)

Challenges	Number of respondents		
	Contributes to delays onboarding volunteers	Contributes to volunteers not completing the onboarding process	Total respondents
Requirement to have a COVID-19 vaccine	54 (60.0%)	38 (42.2%)	90 (100.0%)
Frequency of or length of time for required training	29 (32.2%)	37 (41.1%)	90 (100.0%)
Requirement to complete background checks	31 (34.4%)	50 (55.6%)	90 (100.0%)
Requirement to complete medical exams	29 (32.2%)	51 (56.7%)	90 (100.0%)
Requirement to complete medical exams at a VA facility	29 (32.2%)	61 (67.8%)	90 (100.0%)
Requirement to obtain a Personal Identity Verification (PIV) card	29 (32.2%)	63 (70.0%)	90 (100.0%)
The need for volunteers to make multiple trips to a VA facility	35 (38.9%)	65 (72.2%)	90 (100.0%)
Other challenges	24 (26.7%)	24 (26.7%)	90 (100.0%)

Q17. For FY2018-FY2023, please provide the total number of vehicles used for your facility's VTN. Enter the requested numbers and then use the associated 'source of the data' dropdown menu to indicate if the number provided is based on actual data or an estimate. If you do not have data leave the number column blank and select 'no data.'

	Descriptive statistics				Source of data		
Fiscal year	Minimum	Average	Maximum	Total	Actual data	Estimated data	No data
Vehicles exclusively used for the VTN							
2018	0	12	52	718	45 (50.0%)	13 (14.4%)	32 (35.6%)
2019	0	13	50	775	49 (54.4%)	12 (13.3%)	29 (32.2%)
2020	0	13	49	805	49 (54.4%)	15 (16.7%)	26 (28.9%)
2021	0	12	48	814	50 (55.6%)	16 (17.8%)	24 (26.7%)
2022	0	12	46	894	62 (68.9%)	11 (12.2%)	17 (18.9%)
2023	0	13	51	996	67 (74.4%)	9 (10.0%)	14 (15.6%)
Vehicles shared by the VTN and other VA programs							
2018	0	1	39	60	49 (54.4%)	8 (8.9%)	33 (36.7%)
2019	0	1	22	44	51 (56.7%)	8 (8.9%)	31 (34.4%)
2020	0	1	17	41	52 (57.8%)	9 (10.0%)	29 (32.2%)
2021	0	1	17	45	54 (60.0%)	8 (8.9%)	28 (31.1%)
2022	0	1	16	55	56 (62.2%)	10 (12.2%)	23 (25.6%)
2023	0	1	20	69	57 (63.3%)	10 (12.2%)	22 (24.4%)
Total number of passenger seats in all VTN vehicles							
2018	1	75	503	3,961	31 (34.4%)	22 (24.4%)	37 (41.1%)
2019	1	77	503	4,291	32 (35.6%)	24 (26.7%)	34 (37.8%)
2020	1	75	483	4,420	33 (36.7%)	26 (28.9%)	31 (34.4%)
2021	0	75	483	4,473	32 (35.6%)	28 (31.1%)	30 (33.3%)
2022	4	72	483	4,719	37 (41.1%)	29 (32.2%)	24 (26.7%)
2023	4	68	483	4,643	40 (44.4%)	28 (31.1%)	22 (24.4%)

Q18. How many VTN vehicles were out of service for maintenance or repairs in FY2023, and for how many months were they out of service? Please provide the number of vehicles for each applicable time frame. Enter the requested numbers and then use the associated 'source of the data' dropdown menu to indicate if the number provided is based on actual data or an estimate. If you do not have data leave the number column blank and select 'no data.'

Time out of service	Number of VTNs with vehicles out of service	Number of vehicles out of service	Source of data			
			Actual data	Estimated data	No data	Total respondents
Less than a month out of service	47	209	57 (63.3%)	16 (17.8%)	17 (18.9%)	90 (100.0%)
1-3 months out of service	25	44	55 (61.1%)	13 (14.4%)	22 (24.4%)	90 (100.0%)
4-6 months out of service	16	30	57 (63.3%)	10 (11.1%)	23 (25.6%)	90 (100.0%)
7-9 months out of service	11	20	56 (62.2%)	9 (10.0%)	25 (27.8%)	90 (100.0%)
10-12 months out of service	25	45	59 (65.6%)	9 (10.0%)	22 (24.4%)	90 (100.0%)

Q19. Did you have enough vehicles for your facility's VTN for FY2023? (select one response)

Response	Number of respondents
Yes	72 (80.0%)
No	17 (18.9%)
I do not know	1 (1.1%)
Total respondents	**90 (100.0%)**

Q19.a. Please check the reasons why your facility's VTN did not have enough vehicles to meet demand. (check all that apply)

Reasons	Number of respondents
Inability to obtain a donated vehicle	8 (47.1%)
Lack of funding to maintain vehicles or to purchase fuel	4 (23.5%)
Number of vehicles that are in need of repair or maintenance	9 (52.9%)
Other	0 (0.0%)
Total respondents	**17 (100.0%)**

Q19.a. was a follow-up question for survey respondents who responded 'No' to whether they had enough vehicles to meet demand in Q19.

Q20. Has your facility assessed or estimated how much it would have to spend for transportation services through another method if the VTN was not available? Other transportation services could include Veterans Transportation Service, rideshares, or taxis. (select one response)

Response	Number of respondents
Yes	18 (20.0%)
No	37 (41.1%)
I do not know	35 (38.9%)
Total respondents	**90 (100.0%)**

Q21. Has your facility assessed veterans' level of awareness about the VTN from FY2018 through FY2023 using any of the following methods? (check all that apply)

Actions taken to promote VTN	Number of respondents
Yes, we collected data from facility staff (e.g., VTN coordinators, patient advocates, scheduling clerks)	12 (13.3%)
Yes, we collected data from DAV or other organizations' representatives	9 (10.0%)
Yes, we conducted a survey of veterans	3 (3.3%)
Yes, we used other methods (please specify)	2 (2.2%)
No, we did not assess veterans' level of awareness	47 (52.2%)
I do not know	30 (33.3%)
Total respondents	**90 (100.0%)**

Q22. What actions, if any, has your facility (not DAV or other veterans service organization representatives) taken to promote the use of the facility's VTN among veterans from FY2018-FY2023? (check all that apply)

Actions taken to promote VTN	Number of respondents
Including information about the VTN in facility brochures, appointment cards, presentations, etc.	50 (55.6%)
Presenting about the VTN at local events	53 (58.9%)
Promoting the VTN through local media	42 (46.7%)
Promoting the VTN through veterans service organizations	67 (74.4%)
Other (please specify)	24 (26.7%)
None	4 (4.4%)
I do not know	12 (13.3%)
Total respondents	**90 (100.0%)**

Q23. Please indicate the top three challenges to operating your facility's VTN.

	Number of respondents that ranked challenge				
Challenges	**#1**	**#2**	**#3**	**Not selected**	**Total respondents**
Educating veterans on how to use the facility's VTN	9 (10.0%)	9 (10.0%)	8 (8.9%)	64 (71.1%)	**90 (100.0%)**
Lack of individuals to accompany veterans after their appointments or procedures	2 (2.2%)	1 (1.1%)	7 (7.8%)	80 (88.9%)	**90 (100.0%)**
Minimal demand/demonstrated need for the facility's VTN	1 (1.1%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.1%)	88 (97.8%)	**90 (100.0%)**
Obtaining VA staff to manage the facility's VTN	11 (12.2%)	7 (7.8%)	2 (2.2%)	70 (77.8%)	**90 (100.0%)**
Obtaining vehicles	6 (6.7%)	10 (11.1%)	5 (5.6%)	69 (76.7%)	**90 (100.0%)**
Onboarding non-VA staff, including volunteers	17 (18.9%)	20 (22.2%)	13 (14.4%)	40 (44.4%)	**90 (100.0%)**
Recruiting non-VA staff, including volunteers	31 (34.4%)	22 (24.4%)	12 (13.3%)	25 (27.8%)	**90 (100.0%)**
Scheduling rides for veterans	1 (1.1%)	8 (8.9%)	12 (13.3%)	69 (76.7%)	**90 (100.0%)**
Time needed to complete maintenance or repairs for vehicles	4 (4.4%)	5 (5.6%)	7 (7.8%)	74 (82.2%)	**90 (100.0%)**
Other (please specify)	3 (3.3%)	5 (5.6%)	9 (10.0%)	73 (81.1%)	**90 (100.0%)**
I do not know	2 (2.2%)	1 (1.1%)	4 (4.4%)	83 (92.2%)	**90 (100.0%)**

Q24. Has your facility surveyed VTN riders at any time from FY2018-FY2023 about whether they would have been able to go to their appointment without the VTN? (select one response)

Response	**Number of respondents**
Yes	12 (13.3%)
No	52 (57.8%)
I do not know	26 (28.9%)
Total respondents	**90 (100.0%)**

Q25. If you could have more resources for your facility's VTN, what would be your top three priorities?

	Number of respondents that ranked resource				
Resources	**#1**	**#2**	**#3**	**Not ranked**	**Total respondents**
More coordinators	17 (18.9%)	18 (20.0%)	20 (22.2%)	35 (38.9%)	**90 (100.0%)**
More drivers	57 (63.3%)	21 (23.3%)	6 (6.7%)	6 (6.7%)	**90 (100.0%)**
More funding for vehicle maintenance	0 (0.0%)	8 (8.9%)	5 (5.6%)	77 (85.6%)	**90 (100.0%)**
More vehicles	5 (5.6%)	20 (22.2%)	13 (14.4%)	52 (57.8%)	**90 (100.0%)**
More funding for transportation costs (gas, driver meal stipends, tolls, etc.)	3 (3.3%)	8 (8.9%)	12 (13.3%)	67 (74.4%)	**90 (100.0%)**
Other (please specify)	8 (8.9%)	7 (7.8%)	15 (16.7%)	60 (66.7%)	**90 (100.0%)**
I do not know	0 (0.0%)	2 (2.2%)	7 (7.8%)	81 (90.0%)	**90 (100.0%)**

Q26. What non-VA organizations provided resources for your VTN from FY2018-FY2023 (e.g., donating
funds, vehicles, or non-volunteer staff time)? (check all that apply)

Non-VA organizations	Number of respondents
Disabled American Veterans (DAV)	88 (97.8%)
Other veterans service organization (please specify)	18 (20.0%)
Local or county veterans service officers	22 (24.4%)
Other (please specify)	12 (13.3%)
I do not know	1 (1.1%)
Total respondents	**90 (100.0%)**

Q27. Based on your experience, what is the VTN's most valuable contribution to your facility and/or
the veteran population it serves? (select one response)

VTN contributions	Number of respondents
VTN provides rides to veterans who would not be able to attend their VA-approved appointments without VTN	61 (67.8%)
VTN provides rides to veterans that could not have been provided by other transportation options (e.g. because of the rural location of the veterans' home)	14 (15.6%)
VTN saves the facility money on veteran transportation to medical appointments	4 (4.4%)
VTN improves access to benefits for veterans	7 (7.8%)
VTN provides social connection for veterans during their rides	1 (1.1%)
Other (please specify)	3 (3.3%)
Total respondents	**90 (100.0%)**

The following questions were asked to those who responded 'No' to currently offering a
Veterans Transportation Network in Q1.

Q2. Which, if any, of the following explain why your facility does not operate a VTN? (check all that
apply)

Reasons	Number of respondents
No Disabled American Veterans presence in the area	1 (6.7%)
Challenges associated with starting a VTN (e.g. acquiring vehicles, recruiting volunteers)	8 (53.3%)
Challenges associated with operating a VTN (e.g. vehicle maintenance, volunteer retention)	6 (40.0%)
Other transportation options at the facility are sufficient	3 (20.0%)
Other (please specify)	6 (40.0%)
I do not know	3 (20.0%)
Total respondents	**15 (100.0%)**

Q3. Did your facility operate a VTN at any time from FY2018-FY2023? (select one response)

Response	Number of respondents
Yes	8 (53.3%)
No	7 (46.7%)
Total respondents	**15 (100.0%)**

Q4. Is your facility considering starting a VTN in the next 5 years? (select one response)

Response	Number of respondents
Yes	6 (40.0%)
Maybe	5 (33.3%)
No	2 (13.3%)
I do not know	2 (13.3%)
Total respondents	**15 (100.0%)**

Appendix II: Comments from the Department of Veterans Affairs

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON

July 24, 2024

Ms. Sharon M. Silas
Director
Health Care
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. Silas:

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has reviewed the Government Accountability Office (GAO) draft report: *VA VOLUNTEER TRANSPORTATION NETWORK: Rides, Donations, and Program Administration* (GAO-24-106983).

VA appreciates GAO's review of our Volunteer Transportation Network (VTN). The 50% decline in volunteers to drive Veterans to appointments is an area of concern, and one where we are placing a significant effort. The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has conducted outreach to promote the VTN program and to recruit volunteer drivers as well as volunteers in all areas of service across VHA. The VA Center for Development and Civic Engagement will continue its work with the field to assess and grow our volunteer network to ensure we are meeting the needs of our Veterans.

VA appreciates the opportunity to comment on your draft report.

Sincerely,

Margaret B. Kabat, LCSW-C, CCM
Chief of Staff

Appendix III: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact	Sharon M. Silas, (202) 512-7114 or SilasS@gao.gov.
Staff Acknowledgments	In addition to the contact named above, Janina Austin (Assistant Director), Brienne Tierney (Analyst-in-Charge), Helen Young (Analyst-in-Charge), Lingrong Guo, Laura Elsberg, Julianne Flowers, Jacquelyn Hamilton, Deborah Healy, and David Jones made key contributions to this report.

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Congressional Relations	A. Nicole Clowers, Managing Director, ClowersA@gao.gov, (202) 512-4400, U.S. Government Accountability Office, 441 G Street NW, Room 7125, Washington, DC 20548
Public Affairs	Sarah Kaczmarek, Acting Managing Director, KaczmarekS@gao.gov, (202) 512-4800, U.S. Government Accountability Office, 441 G Street NW, Room 7149 Washington, DC 20548
Strategic Planning and External Liaison	Stephen J. Sanford, Managing Director, spel@gao.gov, (202) 512-4707 U.S. Government Accountability Office, 441 G Street NW, Room 7814, Washington, DC 20548