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## Study Shows Risk of Isolation for Older Americans is Growing

*Over half of all non-drivers age 65 and older stay home on a given day*

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Washington, DC – A new study shows that more than half of all non-drivers age 65 and over stay at home on a given day, many because of limited transportation options. This trend is particularly troublesome as the baby boom generation of Americans grows older.

**“Aging Americans: Stranded Without Options,”** released today by the Surface Transportation Policy Project, in collaboration with AARP, concludes that as Americans grow older, our existing transportation network is unable to meet the needs of the nation’s aging population particularly as they become less willing and able to drive.

“We must move aggressively to implement a balanced, multi-modal transportation system, supported by mixed use development. This is how we can ensure that older Americans who are unable to drive are not isolated and cut off from their communities,” said STPP President Anne P. Canby.

The report also finds that isolation of non-drivers affects the rural aging population disproportionately. Older people who live in sparsely populated geographical areas have fewer transportation options, such as regular transit services, than those living in denser geographic areas.

“Today more than six and a half million Americans age 65 and older risk isolation simply because they don’t drive,” said AARP Board Member Byron Thames. “Their numbers will explode after 2025 when boomers enter their 60s, 70s, and 80s. Federal, state and local policy makers must start now to plan for the time when Americans who grew up in cars put down their keys for good.”

Many older Americans do not have options other than driving. Less than one half the population has adequate public transportation available to them. Walking is often difficult or unsafe and not an alternative. Americans age 65 and older make only 8 percent of their trips by walking. Street safety is cited as a

major problem. In a recent STPP poll, 42 percent of Americans reported that dangerous intersections make crossing the street difficult where they live.

“Improving access to public transportation is the best way to lessen the pattern of isolation and provide older Americans with transportation choices,” said American Public Transportation Association (APTA) President William W. Millar. “Increased federal investment in public transportation can help communities meet the growing needs of our aging population for generations to come.”

Among information compiled in the report:

- More than one in five Americans age 65 and older do not drive.
- More than 50 percent of non-drivers age 65 and older, or 3.6 million Americans, stay home on any given day because they lack transportation options.
- For many non-drivers, public transportation is the only alternative to asking for a ride.
- In too many places, public transportation is still not a practical option for older people.

The report recommends providing more public transportation options; increasing funding and flexibility for existing programs to serve older people; better transportation planning with greater coordination with land use planning; improved human service and transportation coordination; and improved street design and safety features.

**“Aging Americans: Stranded Without Options,”** is a report based on new analysis of the National Household Transportation Survey of 2001 by STPP, including information from previous research. To view a full copy of the study, visit [www.transact.org](http://www.transact.org).

**Smart Growth America** is the only national organization dedicated to researching, advocating for and leading coalitions to bring smart growth practices to more communities nationwide. From providing more sidewalks to ensuring more homes are built near public transit or that productive farms remain a part of our communities, smart growth helps make sure people across the nation can live in great neighborhoods. For additional information, please visit [www.smartgrowthamerica.org](http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org).

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