

# WHEELS TO WELLNESS

## A Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland Initiative

*Wheels to Wellness is a coordinated effort between local transportation providers and area hospitals to provide access to preventative care for those who need it*

## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

- The Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA) was passed in 1986, and it ensured that hospital emergency departments would treat every patient who came in and requested a medical exam - and rightfully so!
- The transportation challenges of Southern Maryland residents caused many patients to delay preventative care until it was too late - and then they'd call the ambulance with a real emergency to take them to the hospital.
- Patients would be treated at the hospital, but without a way to get back, they'd often miss their appointments until there was another medical emergency.
- This cycle would continue until all patients could get reliable transportation, or, unfortunately, died from a treatable illness. Through the Regional Transportation Coordination Committee at the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland, a plan was devised to help Southern Maryland patients get to their appointments by using underutilized drivers from local nonprofits. Luckily, these drivers were busy early in the morning and later in the evening, which left them open and willing to assist during prime doctors' office hours.
- The program is grant-funded through RMC and MDOT, though the need exceeds the available funding.

## UP TO ONE IN FIVE APPOINTMENTS MISSED

- More than one in five adults with limited public transit access forgo healthcare because of transportation barriers, according to the Urban Institute in a 2023 analysis of survey data. Southern Maryland's urban sprawl around small town centers means that most, if not all, Southern Marylanders would say they have "limited public transit access."
- With 168,698 people in Charles County, 114,468 in St. Mary's County, and 93,928 people in Calvert County according to 2021 Census Data, that means as many as 75,418 people may be forgoing medical appointments!
- As many as 345 residents use paratransit services daily in the Tri-County area!
- Transportation is a known social determinant of health, as lack of access to healthcare professionals can hinder everything else.



## WHAT WE DO:

**WE GET PEOPLE TO PREVENTATIVE HEALTHCARE APPOINTMENTS, WHEN NO ONE ELSE CAN!**

## HEALTH CARE SAVINGS

- **State Patient Health Information as of July of 2022 indicates healthcare costs per patient went down by \$1,468.00 dollars after the first month, an 11% reduction in costs.**
- **After 12 months, there was a savings of \$4,648.00. or a 63% reduction in charges per patient. Charges per visit dropped \$2,280.00 dollars after the first month, or 30%, and remained lower at \$1,653.00 dollars less after 12 months, a reduction of 36%.**

## CONTACT

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# WHEELS TO WELLNESS



## WHO WE SERVE:

Residents of the Tri-County area who do not qualify for other transportation services need interim transportation while waiting to qualify for another service, or who need the kind of specialized care that Wheels to Wellness is able to provide.

## WHAT WE DO:

We provide free preventative care transportation to healthcare facilities in the region.

## WHERE WE GO:

Within Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's County, with occasional trips out of region to Southern Maryland or Anne Arundel.

## WHEN WE GO:

Monday through Friday, during typical medical appointment hours.

## WHY WE DO IT:

Because health outcomes are better when people have access to preventative care. When patients feel like they can only see the doctor if there's a medical emergency, things are more likely to end poorly. Frequent check-ins for patients with chronic conditions keep them healthier, and longer.

## HOW WE DO IT:

Through partnerships with The ARC and the Center for Life Enrichment, our three area hospitals, and with generous funding from The Maryland Department of Transportation, State Highway Administration, and the Rural Maryland Council, we have been able to provide transportation for many of Southern Maryland's in-need residents.

### TRANSPORTATION IS STILL A SERIOUS PROBLEM FOR SOUTHERN MARYLANDERS & IT'S AFFECTING THEIR HEALTH

Wheels to Wellness only solves a small part of the problem, and you can help us do better!  
Help us advocate for transportation innovations and health equity by sharing your thoughts with local officials and administrators!

YEAR	MILES	PATIENTS	FUNDING
2019	20,243	102	99,184
2020	13,152	120	95,615
2021	13,152	130	76,265
2022	9,308	107	70,912
2023	20,367	163	180,009



STATE HIGHWAY  
ADMINISTRATION



**RMC**  
Rural Maryland Council