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Downeast Community Partners Announces Difficult Decision to Close Transportation Services by September 30

(September 4, 2025) Ellsworth - After significant efforts to find a pathway forward, Downeast Community Partners (DCP) Transportation Services program will be phased out by September 30, 2025. This marks the end of a long-standing and vital service that has connected thousands of residents in Washington and Hancock Counties to essential resources for decades.

For years, DCP Transportation has been a lifeline for older adults, veterans, individuals with disabilities, and those without access to reliable transportation. The program has enabled access to medical appointments, grocery stores, social services, and more—helping people maintain their independence, dignity, and connection to community.

In 2018, DCP provided 72,390 rides, covering more than 2 million miles. At its peak in the early 2000s, the program was supported by nearly 70 drivers, the vast majority of whom were volunteers.

By **July 2025**, the program had delivered only **861 trips covering approximately 35,696 miles**, highlighting the significant drop in both capacity and demand in recent years.

In **2022**, the number of active volunteers had already dropped to **9**, and as of 2024/25, only **2 volunteers** remained.

Unfortunately, **the significant and ongoing decline in volunteer drivers, made worse during the pandemic, was a contributing factor that** has made it difficult to maintain a sustainable level of service. Non-emergency medical transportation—which historically made up the **largest volume of rides provided**—was especially hard, forcing partners to seek other providers to take on the rides DCP was unable to fill.

This trend is part of a larger challenge faced by rural transportation programs across Maine. Despite **increased outreach efforts and enhanced mileage reimbursements**, DCP has been unable to reverse the driver shortage or restore ride volumes.

In recent months, officials from **DCP and Aroostook County Action Program (ACAP)**—currently collaborating to form a **new three-county Community Action Agency**—have explored every viable option to preserve transportation services. These efforts were supported by **Waldo Community Action Partners (Waldo CAP)**, headquartered in Belfast, in the hopes of stabilizing the program.



Despite **best efforts from all involved**, including extensive evaluation of operational models and fiscal projections, **no financially sustainable path forward** was identified. Ultimately, it was determined that continuing the program would pose an unacceptable financial risk.

The **financial and operational challenges** that have led to this difficult decision have also been part of recent media reports about broader fiscal pressures facing DCP. The DCP Board and leadership team worked diligently to explore alternatives but concluded that the transportation program could not continue without jeopardizing the stability of other essential services.

DCP is now working closely with **another transportation provider in the region**, RideSource, who has been absorbing rides previously offered by DCP over the past few months.

RideSource has indicated they will make every feasible effort to provide services as DCP winds down its rides, and add volume to support people in Washington and Hancock Counties moving forward. They are encouraging anyone with questions or concerns to call their Ellsworth Regional Office at 207-812-5357.

Additionally, RideSource is welcoming both past and present DCP Drivers and Volunteers who are interested in exploring driving opportunities to e-mail Jobs@RideSourceMaine.com or call 207-812-5357.

The priority is clear: to ensure that the **most vulnerable residents of Washington and Hancock Counties** continue to have access to **reliable, affordable transportation**.

The Agency is extending its deepest gratitude to staff and volunteers, past and present. Their **commitment, compassion, and resilience** sustained the program for far longer than circumstances might have allowed. They navigated complex schedules, built deep relationships with riders, and responded to emergencies with grace.

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