A mobility plan is an assessment of what you will need to maintain connection to your community (including shopping and social activities) and a specific, defined path that will lead you to it. The plan should include all of the places you need and want to go, and how you can get there without driving. You mobility options might include walking, cycling, using public transportation, as well as individuals or groups that offer rides.

Additional Considerations

At some point it will likely become necessary to give up the keys. Most women outlive their ability to drive by 10 years, men by about seven years. Consider these actions:

- Develop a mobility plan that includes a list of available transportation options that might meet your needs. Planning now will result in safety, savings and peace of mind in the future.
- Try out some of the options – such as riding the bus or using a taxi - now. You might find that you enjoy letting someone else do the driving.
- Invest time and money in resources such as one of the programs described above. A Driver Rehabilitation Specialist may hone your driving skills and keep you safely on the road longer.

Additional Resources

Transportation Options: Eldercare Locator, to link to local AAA and Title VI programs, 1-800-677-1116
Refresher: www.aarp.org/home-garden/transportation/driver_safety
Evaluation: www.seniordrivers.org/home/tappage.cfm
Reaction: drivesharp.positscience.com/about-drivesharp.php
Assessment: www.aota.org/olderdriver or http://aded.net
New car: www.AAA.com
Medical conditions: www.nhtsa.dot.gov

If you are completely comfortable in all driving situations, that is good news. However, you might know older drivers who are too hesitant, slow or just unable to continue driving. It can happen and, no doubt, you want to be sure this does not happen to you.

It is critically important that older drivers are as safe as they can possibly be because they will be driving on the nation’s roads in increasing numbers. As the number of older adults in the United States increases dramatically in the coming decades, so too will the number of older drivers on the roads. In fact, the 29 million older drivers now will almost double, reaching 57 million in about 20 years.

Certain changes related to the aging process may make the highly complex skill of driving a car increasingly difficult. These include changes in vision, hearing, flexibility and strength. However, these changes are not consistent from one individual to another, and they do not happen at the same age in each person.
There are steps you can take to assure your ongoing safety as a driver. These include:

- Doing a self-assessment of your driving
- Taking a driver refresher course
- Making adjustments in your automobile
- Changing your driving habits
- Getting an objective driving evaluation
- Consulting with a Driver Rehabilitation Specialist

Self-Assessment

It goes without saying—we should all monitor physical changes as we age. Regular eye exams, hearing exams and physical check-ups are advisable for everyone—as well as remedial actions to respond to any problems identified. How are these changes affecting your driving? A candid self-assessment is appropriate to identify immediate adjustments that you can make.

Vision is particularly important because it is the primary sense used in driving. About 90 percent of the driving takes place in the participant’s peripheral vision. How about changes as we age? Regular eye exams, hearing exams and physical check-ups are advisable for everyone—as well as remedial actions to respond to any problems identified. How are these changes affecting your driving? A candid self-assessment is appropriate to identify immediate adjustments that you can make.

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Driver Refresher Course

At this point, you might decide to enroll in a driver refresher course, such as the one offered by AARP, the Driver Safety Program. Learn more about the course at www.aarp.org/home-garden/transportation/driver_safety. This information is available for all drivers 50 years of age or older, either in a classroom setting or online. Your local Area Agency on Aging (AAA) may be able to suggest other resources in your community, such as the local Auto Club (the AAA).

Medical conditions can affect driving. First, talk with your doctor. Perhaps a simple medication change can positively affect your driving. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has a series of publications that address “Driving When You Have…” The “haves” include arthritis, cataracts, diabetes, macular degeneration and many other conditions. To obtain a copy of any of these booklets, go to: www.nhtsa.dot.gov; click on “Senior Driving,” then go to the right-hand column, “Additional Resources.” Click on “Driving when you suffer from…” This gives you a list of conditions, each linking to the appropriate brochure.

Driving has changed a lot since you first learned. This is a chance to catch up with new laws and strategies, as well as changing conditions: bigger roads, increased traffic congestion, changes in vehicle and road design. Participation in a driver refresher course could have other positive benefits, such as reduced automobile insurance premiums.

Your Car and You

You can make adjustments for your own driving safety. A program called CarFit—offered through the local Auto Club, the American Occupational Therapy Association and AARP—offers an evaluation of the “fit” between you and your car. Something as simple as a cushion on the driver’s seat could make a big difference in your safety. To learn about safe driving programs scheduled near you, visit www.carfit.org or contact your local Area Agency on Aging or Auto Club.

If you decide that there is no adjustment that will make you feel safe in your car, consider purchasing a new car. If you decide that there is no adjustment that will make you feel safe in your car, consider purchasing a new car. The “haves” include arthritis, cataracts, diabetes, macular degeneration and many other conditions. To obtain a copy of any of these booklets, go to: www.nhtsa.dot.gov; click on “Senior Driving,” then go to the right-hand column, “Additional Resources.” Click on “Driving when you suffer from…” This gives you a list of conditions, each linking to the appropriate brochure.

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