

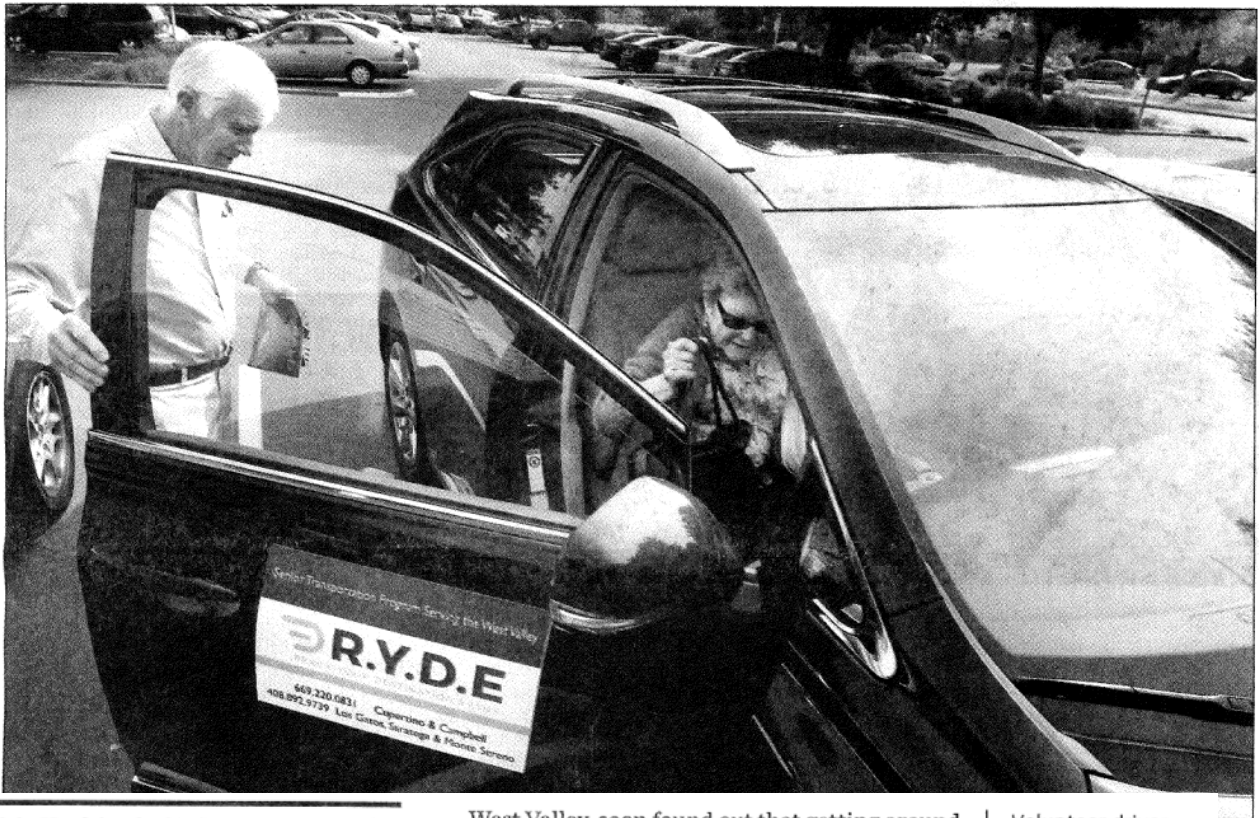
The Mercury News

October 18, 2017

WEST VALLEY SENIORS

NEED A LIFT? CATCH A RYDE

The service will use vetted volunteer drivers to take older residents on errands and to appointments in an area that's underserved by public transit



By Eric Kurhi » ekurhi@bayareanewsgroup.com

SARATOGA » It was right around her 92nd birthday in July that Marilyn White decided it was time to give up her driver's license.

It was her choice.

"I had a good driving record," said the six-decade Saratoga resident and longtime community volunteer.

But "she was getting nervous," said son-in-law Tom Brucker. "She didn't want to be someone who accidentally ran over a bicyclist."

White, like many others without a car in the

West Valley, soon found out that getting around isn't easy. Bus service is minimal, taxis are expensive and ride sharing services can be confusing or tough for aging eyes to navigate on a small cellphone screen.

That, said Santa Clara County Supervisor Joe Simitian, is where a new program called RYDE comes in.

RYDE, short for "Reach Your Destination Easily," offers residents over the age of 55 in Saratoga, Cupertino, Campbell, Monte Sereno, and Los Gatos a cheap ride — nearly free for low-income residents — that is scheduled in advance.

Volunteer driver Kirch De Martini helps Joan Stoye into his car as he picks her up from the Saratoga Adult Senior Center on Tuesday.

PATRICK TEHAN —
STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

(cont. next page)

Ryde

That can be a trip to the doctor's office or a multi-stop shopping outing. It comes with a concierge-like organizing service, via the Saratoga Area Senior Coordinating Council and West Valley Community Services. The partnership includes the county and the West Valley cities as well as the VTA.

"Everyone I talked to said, 'Yes, there is a need for this,'" Simitian said. "Everybody wanted to attack the problem, but nobody thought they could do it alone."

Simitian said they split the cost of the \$250,000 yearlong pilot program seven ways between the county, VTA and five participating cities.

There's a \$9 fee for the service for up to a four-mile drive, but that can be slashed to under a buck a ride for low-income seniors.

"We take into account only their income, not their assets," said Tylor Taylor, director of the Saratoga Senior Center. "There might be people with a two, three

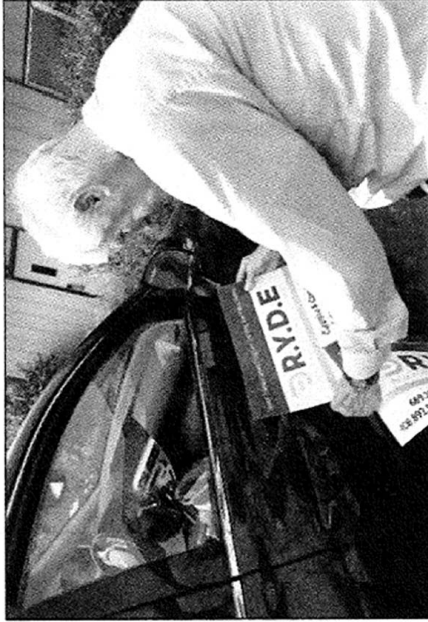
or four-million-dollar home; but their income is still fixed."

Simitian said that he knows of many seniors who are housebound only because there's no way for them to get around.

"Too many folks are feeling trapped in their own homes and it's just not healthy," he said. "For both their physical and mental well-being, we want these folks up and about, out in the community — seeing their friends, having an opportunity to socialize, getting to their doctors appointments, playing an active role in local affairs."

Josh Selo, executive director, of West Valley Community Services, said that seniors who lose their driving ability often feel like they've also lost their independence. He added that's particularly true in the wake of VTA cuts — some of his homeless and low-income clients who need to travel for basic services take four hours to get from Los Gatos to their Cupertino offices.

The \$250,000 will support a trip coordinator and two paid drivers at each operations center. There



PATRICK TEHRAN — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Volunteer driver, Kirch De Martini, places a magnetic placard for R.Y.D.E. on his car.

will be additional volunteer drivers — officials encourage anyone interested to apply — and all will be vetted and complete an online training course to familiarize them with helping older adults who have limited mobility and vision. Drivers can escort clients to and from cars and help with safety belts. Caregivers can accompany seniors at no extra charge.

Clients must be mobile, however — RYDE drivers will use personal vehicles and can't accommodate wheelchairs or motorized scooters.

Simitian said he expects

Contact Eric Kurhi at 408-920-5852.

RYDE FAQs

- Scheduling Rides** — An individual must call 36 hours prior to their requested ride and may book a ride up to five weeks ahead. Riders must be ambulatory (canes and walkers allowed; no wheelchairs or motorized scooters).

 - For Saratoga, Los Gatos, and Monte Sereno residents, call the Saratoga Area Senior Coordinating Council: 408-892-9739 or email RYDEinfo@sascc.org
 - For Cupertino and Campbell residents, call West Valley Community Services: 669-220-0831 or email RYDEinfo@wvcommunityservices.org
- Hours of operation:** 8 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. Reservations can be made until 4:30 p.m. weekdays. Major holidays are excluded.
- Service area:** The city limits of Campbell, Cupertino, Los Gatos, Monte Sereno, Saratoga; Sunnyvale CalTrain Station; El Camino Hospital Mountain View; Kaiser Permanente — Santa Clara; Santa Clara Valley Medical Center; O'Connor Hospital in San Jose; Good Samaritan Hospital in San Jose.
- Billing:** Riders will fund their RYDE accounts in advance. Fees will be deducted from their account as they use the service.
- Subsidized Rides:** Subsidized rides will be offered on a sliding scale based on eligibility. The standard fare for a four-mile ride will be \$9, but an extremely low income resident (\$23,450 annually for an individual), will be charged 90 cents a ride, very low income (\$39,100 annually) \$2.25, and low income (\$55,500 annually) \$4.50.
- To volunteer:** Drivers need a current driver's license, proof of insurance, pass a national background check and drug screening, and complete a training course.

 - In Cupertino and Campbell call 669-220-0831
 - In Los Gatos, Saratoga and Monte Sereno call 408-892-9739

October 24, 2020

Federal Grant to Expand Santa Clara County Transportation Program for Seniors

By Jana Kadah, Bay City News / October 22, 2020



Seniors interested in R.Y.D.E services can sign up at rydesc.org. (Photo via Ryde / Facebook)

A low-cost transportation program for seniors, R.Y.D.E, can now expand its services into Morgan Hill and San Jose after receiving a \$327,000 federal grant, South Bay leaders announced at a Wednesday press conference.

R.Y.D.E, known as “Reach Your Destination Easily,” is a car service that helps seniors 65 years or older go to the doctor, get groceries, meet with friends and vote.

“We have all been dealt a dose of isolation and loneliness by the Covid-19 pandemic but unfortunately this is everyday life for far too many seniors in our area,” said Tylor Taylor, co-operator of R.Y.D.E. “R.Y.D.E. was designed to mitigate that circumstance and to provide independence, dignity and access to older adults who need it.”

Taylor, who is also the Saratoga Area Senior Coordinating Council executive director, said seniors who have lost their ability to drive or do not live near a public transportation option are often cut off and isolated from society. He shared that some hadn't left their homes for over a year.

(cont. next page)

R.Y.D.E started as a pilot program three years ago in the city of Saratoga in collaboration with nonprofit West Valley Community Services before expanding to multiple neighboring cities in the South Bay.

“Over these past three years R.Y.D.E has proven itself time and time again in these five West Valley cities,” Santa Clara County Supervisor Joe Simitian said.

It operated in Saratoga, Cupertino, Monte Sereno, Campbell and Los Gatos before its most recent expansion into San Jose and Morgan Hill.

The extension will be particularly noticeable in Morgan Hill, Morgan Hill Mayor Rich Constantine said. “Morgan Hill is known as a transportation desert and what that means is that we don’t have great access to mass transit ... so you could pay double the costs even if you live next to the bus stop,” Constantine said.

Morgan Hill has had a senior transportation program, Get’n Around Town, that would provide rides to the city’s Centennial Recreation Senior Center, but now with the expansion and re-branded transit program, seniors have the ability to go elsewhere.

“Merging with R.Y.D.E means additional funding, marketing, and a supportive network of two caring organizations aligned with our goal of keeping older adults connected to the community,” said Debbie Vasquez, a Centennial Recreation Senior Center supervisor.

During the pandemic, R.Y.D.E has served as a lifeline for many South Bay seniors.

“We are not transportation specialists; we are social service agencies,” Taylor said. “We have a combination of paid and volunteer drivers, and all of them get to know our riders, listen for cues that indicate a need, and are able to respond with resources.”

Even before Covid-19, drivers helped connect riders to senior meal programs and other social services. When ridership fell during the shelter-in-place orders, the program shifted efforts and began delivering services.

For riders, Covid-19 precautions including pre-ride temperature taking, health screenings, plexiglass dividers, masks and gloves were also implemented.

Laurel Perusa, a longtime Saratoga resident, has been using R.Y.D.E for more than two years because her age-related dry macular degeneration impairs her driving.

“I am very involved in the Saratoga community and R.Y.D.E has allowed me to continue my volunteer work and be engaged in my community,” Perusa said. “I know many seniors who use R.Y.D.E and it has changed the lives of many.”

(cont. next page)

Lisa Oakley, board president of the Saratoga Area Senior Coordinating Council and a volunteer driver at R.Y.D.E, held back tears as she explained the significance of the ride-share program.

“It is bigger than just giving a ride,” Oakley said. “This is about providing people the opportunity to be social with each other, for generations to bridge a gap between each other, and to share family stories and build a connection with each other.”

Seniors interested in R.Y.D.E services can sign up at rydescc.org and book rides as early as a month in advance. Fees are based on the number of miles traveled and a trip can range from 90 cents to \$18. Financial assistance is also available.

SARATOGA NEWS

November 19, 2021

TRANSPORTATION

More ride share access

Funding makes more RYDEs available for local seniors.



Reach Your Destination Easily, or RYDE, has received funding to expand the senior transportation program into more areas of Santa Clara County. RYDE is a joint effort of the Saratoga Area Senior Coordinating Council, West Valley Community Services and the office of County Supervisor Joe Simitian.

(cont. next page)

SANTA CLARA COUNTY

Funding makes more RYDEs available for the local seniors

By Anne Gelhaus

agelhaus@

bayareanewsgroup.com

The Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors recently approved an agreement with the Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) to provide funding for a senior transportation program to expand into more areas of the county.

Reach Your Destination Easily, or RYDE, currently provides curb-to-curb transportation for adults ages 65 and older in Saratoga, Campbell, Cupertino, Los Gatos and Monte Sereno, as well as Morgan Hill and parts of San Jose. With the new funding, RYDE will be offered in six new ZIP codes: 95118, 95119, 95122, 95123, 95139 and 95037.

Funding for RYDE will come from 2016 Measure B grant funds through a revenue agreement with VTA. In addition to expanding RYDE's service area, the agreement calls for the county's Social Services Agency to hire a RYDE program manager.

RYDE launched in October 2017, an effort spearheaded by County Super-

visor Joe Simitian and the nonprofits Saratoga Area Senior Coordinating Council and West Valley Community Services. The program is designed for older adults in areas of Santa Clara County where public transportation is less accessible.

Josh Selo, executive director of West Valley Community Services, said in a statement that transportation has long been a "pain point" for many older adults in the county.

"The RYDE program has enabled older adults to remain connected to their community and their social safety net," he added.

According to Tylor Taylor, executive director of the Saratoga Area Senior Coordinating Council, "RYDE has continued to provide service throughout the pandemic, not only providing transportation to vaccine appointments but also delivering much-needed food and essential items to older adults sheltering in place."

RYDE fees run anywhere from 90 cents to \$18, depending on a rider's income and destination. To schedule a ride, email RYDE@sascc.org or call 408-892-9739.