



Insider

News and information to help Florida's aging road users



September 2019

The Safe Mobility for Life Coalition honors September as "Impact of Aging" Month. Specific skills such as vision, memory, strength, flexibility, and quick reaction time decline as we age, but how this happens varies from person to person. Learning more about how specific changes can affect safe driving skills will help you prepare to achieve safe mobility for life.



Understand



Be Proactive



Plan



To request outreach materials: Safe Mobility for Life Resource Center
Phone: (850) 644-8426, Email: Contact@SafeMobilityFL.com



Learn How the Natural Aging Process Can Affect Driving Skills

As we age, many of us might notice a change in some important skills needed for safe driving, such as vision, memory, strength, flexibility, and reflexes. Though these natural, age-related changes do not affect all drivers at the same age or in the same way, we need to understand how aging affects our ability to drive, learn how to identify changes in our driving behavior, and know what to do to address these changes.

Changes in cognition, for instance, may affect thinking, sensory perception, attention, learning, memory, thought, visual processing, reading, and problem-solving. Driving is a very complex activity that requires many of these skills, and any decline may cause distraction or disorientation, problems maintaining control of the car, trouble recognizing changes in traffic conditions, and more.

A short self-assessment featured in Chapter 2 of **Florida's Guide to Safe Mobility for Life** can help you determine if these changes are affecting your ability to drive safely. Sometimes, minor adjustments such as avoiding rush hour traffic and only driving during the day are all that are needed to make you a more comfortable driver.

To order your free copy of **Florida's Guide to Safe Mobility for Life**, visit fdot.tips/orderform.



Be Proactive

Steps You Can Take to Boost Safety and Comfort Behind the Wheel

There are some easy steps you can take to be proactive and stay safe as a driver. Simple hobbies such as writing in a journal, completing crosswords and reading act as brain workouts and help keep your mind sharp. You can incorporate light exercise and stretching to help slow down the loss of flexibility and relieve joint stiffness, two common ailments that can make driving painful.

You can also attend a CarFit event to learn how to improve the “fit” between you and your car, keeping you comfortable and safe. These checkups are free, fun and do not take up much of your time. Trained volunteers will help you learn:

- The clear line of sight over your steering wheel
- The safe distance between you and your airbag
- The proper position of your seat and all mirrors
- The proper use and fit of your safety belt

CarFit safety events are held throughout the year in many communities across Florida. To learn if there is a scheduled event near you, visit car-fit.org.





Planning is the Key to Safe Mobility and Independence for Life

There are many factors that contribute to the decision to no longer own and operate a personal vehicle. Car ownership can be expensive and transportation is often the second-largest expense in a household budget. That is why one of the most compelling reasons not to own a car is financial.

The AAA publication, “Your Driving Costs,” can help you understand how much it is costing you to own a car. You also can use the Car Cost Worksheet in **Florida’s Guide to Safe Mobility for Life** to add up your annual car-related expenses.

The benefits of not owning a car go beyond saving money. Physical activities, such as walking and bicycling, can have a positive impact on your physical and mental health by improving your strength, balance, and reaction time. Plus, spending more time outdoors can improve your connection to neighbors and your community.

As you begin thinking about a life beyond the driver’s seat, consider your personal transportation needs:

- Where do you want to go and how often?
- What are your other options to get there besides driving?
- Are the places you want to go within a half-mile from where you live?
- Are there accessible sidewalks and walking paths to your destinations?

What are the available transportation options? Can you walk, ride a bike, ride public transit, ride source or rideshare, use community-specific transportation options or ride connected and autonomous vehicles?

With an understanding of your transportation needs and some research on what is available, it is possible to get where you need to go without driving a car. With the tips and resources listed in **Florida’s Guide to Safe Mobility for Life**, you can develop your plan, put it into action and commit to practicing it every day.





Beyond the Driver's Seat:

Build Your Transportation Plan

Envisioning a life beyond the driver's seat just got easier. The new "My Transportation Plan" worksheet in Florida's Guide to Safe Mobility for Life can help paint the picture of your transportation options in one, easy-to-reference place.

The worksheet offers seven questions to help you identify:

- Where you want to go
- How often you travel there
- How far away your destination is
- What options are available (walk, bike, transit, rideshare and more)
- First transportation choice
- Alternative transportation choice
- If you can combine modes of transportation (like a bike ride to the bus stop)

Combined with resources like [FindaRideFlorida.org](https://findarideflorida.org), you have all you need to create a transportation plan and test it out. Visit fdot.tips/orderform to order the new **Florida's Guide to Safe Mobility for Life** and challenge yourself to use walking, riding a bike and public transit to get around your community.





The Pepper Institute on Aging and Public Policy

Aging impacts every element of our society – not just transportation. Florida State University’s Pepper Institute on Aging and Public Policy focuses on understanding how public policies can address these impacts. This focus makes it a perfect fit for the Florida Department of Transportation’s Safe Mobility for Life Program.

In 2009, the two joined forces and the Safe Mobility for Life Coalition was born. Since then, The Pepper Institute has played an active role in addressing the specific needs of Florida’s older adults. With a focus on education, they improve the safety, access, and mobility of Florida’s aging road users by conducting The Keys to Safe Mobility for Life workshops, housing the Safe Mobility for Life Resource Center and distributing free educational materials to individuals and communities throughout the state. We thank them for their continued partnership and hard work in our communities.

To learn about all of the 28 organizations that are working together to help Floridian’s achieve safe mobility for life, visit fdot.tips/Coalition.



Florida Receives AARP's Age-Friendly Designation

In April, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis and AARP Chief Executive Officer Jo Ann Jenkins announced Florida's participation in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities. Florida cities, towns, and counties can develop more age-friendly communities with access to resources such as national and global research, planning models and best practices.

This designation is in line with the Safe Mobility for Life Coalition's focus on "aging in place," encouraging older adults to live in lifelong communities. These are communities where you have access to services that are needed day to day while maintaining your independence and quality of life.

The Safe Mobility for Life Coalition put together a transportation checklist to help you find out whether a community has features and services that are important to help you remain independent, mobile, and active. Head over to fdot.tips/checklist to access the interactive **Lifelong Community Checklist** and determine if your community meets your safety and mobility needs.



The Importance of Vision as a Safe Driving Skill



Did you know that ninety percent of the information needed to stay safe on the road comes from our vision? From reading road signs to adjusting to glare, our eyes have a full-time job when we are behind the wheel. That is why it is so important to stay on top of our vision needs, regardless of our age.

That being said, it is normal to see our vision decline as we get older. A simple vision test with your doctor can shed light on your eye health, and a new eyeglass prescription can do wonders and make things easier on the road. If it has been at least a year since your last test, or if you are having trouble with your vision, make an appointment for a checkup today.

Do you know a group of older adults who would be interested in learning more about the Keys to Achieve Safe Mobility for Life? Email Contact@SafeMobilityFL.com to schedule a “The Keys to Achieve Safe Mobility for Life” workshop today.



[SafeMobilityFL.com](https://www.SafeMobilityFL.com)



Safe Mobility for Life Program

Florida Department of Transportation | State Traffic Engineering and Operations Office
605 Suwannee Street, MS 36, Tallahassee, FL 32399-0450