

GENERAL TRANSPORTATION VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES

for The VTMFSP Solidarity Transportation Network

While all of these guidelines are very important its most important for you to relax and enjoy the opportunity to get to know your neighbors! Being a solidarity driver is a great way to make new friends and build our community for social and economic justice in Vermont. NO ONE in the state of Vermont has ever been found guilty of any act or crime for driving another human being! Nonetheless, when you are driving its most important to remember that what might be minor hassles for you (a ticket, a flat tire, an accident) might lead to the detention and deportation of a passenger.

The information below is intended to protect the safety and confidentiality of those persons requiring transportation assistance. It is intended to inform volunteers of some of the expectations and tips to have a positive experience while participating in the VT Migrant Farmworker Solidarity Project's Solidarity Transportation Network! The information is adapted from Robert Appel's (VT Human Rights Commission Executive Director) collaborations with the Amistad transportation program in Addison County. Thanks for your support!

A volunteer driver **must**:

- Possess a valid driver's license, vehicle registration and proof of current auto liability insurance in compliance with state standards.
- Be able to read maps and road signs
- Have no history of crime against a person

A volunteer driver **should check** the following items before transporting anyone:

- Be sure that the vehicle has a current inspection sticker
- Have current registration, driver's license and proof of insurance card in your possession.
- Be sure that the vehicle's tires, steering system, turn signals, tail lights and all running lights, wipers, exhaust system, etc. are in good working order. There should be nothing obstructing the driver's view of the road including anything hanging from the rearview mirror including **fuzzy dice** as that is a violation of a rule of the road and gives an officer authority to stop a vehicle.
- Be certain of the location to where the passenger lives! If possible, check two sources such as a Vermont Road Atlas (A VT Gazateer is a handy tool!) as well as Google Maps to corroborate directions.
- Be sure that the vehicle has fuel adequate for the full extent of the trip.

- ☒ Be certain of the location to which the passenger needs to be transported.
- ☒ Try to determine how long it will take to reach your neighbor for pick-up, and how long it will take to drive to the a selected destination knowing that finding farms and farm worker housing might take some extra time! Then allow yourself at least an extra 15 minutes to allow for delays.
- ☒ Bring a cell phone, if one is available, and have contact numbers to call should you encounter difficulties. The Vermont Immigration and Asylum Advocates will take calls should a traffic stop or encounter with law enforcement lead to a detention: (802) 864-3200. You may also call the VT Human Rights Commission: (802)-828-2482. Of course you can and should call the VTMFSP with any problems, concerns or feedback: 802-658-6770.
- ☒ Confirm appointment with the transportation coordinator (if applicable) before starting out, especially if the arrangements had been made several days in advance. Ask them to let the passenger know in advance what color and type of car to look out for.
- ☒ Make sure that everyone in the car is wearing a seat belt.
- ☒ Do not exceed any speed limit. Do not drive excessively slowly.
- ☒ Avoid driving too closely to either the center line or the fog line. Avoid weaving in lane. Strictly obey all traffic signals and rules.
- ☒ When picking up passenger, bring something that identifies you as a friend if you do not already know the person that you are transporting. Program logo, tennis ball on the car antenna or even a smile can lessen a worker's (or farmer's) anxiety upon your arrival.
- ☒ A volunteer driver **shall not:**
 - Inquire about a rider's legal status.
 - Make sexually explicit comments, solicit sexual favors or engage in sexual activity of any kind.
 - Solicit or accept controlled substances, alcohol or medications from riders.
 - Use alcohol, narcotics or any controlled substance or be under their influence while transporting persons.
 - Smoke in the vehicle when rider(s) are present.
 - Wear any type of headphones or use a cell phone while driVing a rider.
 - Proselytize individuals being transported on any subject.

So, what to do if stopped by an officer?

- ☒ Do not get out of your car as that act threatens police officers. More cops are shot at roadside stops (and domestics) than anywhere else. Be prepared to hand your license, registration and insurance papers to the officer upon his approach. Do not engage the officer in conversation, but be polite and cooperative. The officer may question you, but you have an absolute right not to answer questions.
- ☒ If there is suspicion of operating under the influence, the officer may ask you to get out of the car and perform field sobriety tests. Ultimately, the officer if he has probable cause to believe that you are under the influence, may ask you to provide a breath sample for preliminary road-side screening and then for evidential purposes. Though you do have a right to refuse, such refusal of a legitimate request will result in a suspension of your license for at least 6 months.
- ☒ With regard to a passenger in the vehicle, the officer has no legitimate reason to question the passenger (or request identification) unless there is objective evidence that the passenger has committed a crime, or if there is contraband or a weapon in plain view of the officer while interacting with the operator. A passenger has a right not to answer the officer's questions, or any command to exit the vehicle absent some independent evidence of criminal activity or threat to the safety of the officer.

What do in case of an accident?

- ✓ State law requires any operator involved in a crash which results in injury or death or total property damage of \$1,000.00 or more, to make an accident report to DMV with 72 hours of the event. See, [http://dmv.vermont.gov/sites/dmv/files/pdf/DMV-VA004Operator Accident Rpt. pdf](http://dmv.vermont.gov/sites/dmv/files/pdf/DMV-VA004Operator%20Accident%20Rpt.pdf). There is no statutory requirement that the police be contacted in the event of an accident. You should exchange insurance information with the other operator(s) involved in the crash. Your passengers should not become involved in these discussions, and are best off if they can remain in your vehicle.
- ✓ If a passenger is injured, though not required by statute to do so, you should take that person to a qualified medical provider at the earliest possible time.

What about compensation and mileage reimbursement?

- The Solidarity Transportation Network is currently assessing with farm workers what a reasonable donation would be to cover gas expenses for volunteers. Many farm workers, just like any friends, will insist on and feel best by contributing for gas money. The VTMFSP Coordinating Committee will be coming up with a recommended policy soon. In the meantime if costs incurred for transportation are a limiting factor for your participation please let us know and we will do our best to work with you.