



Special Mode Transportation for Veterans With Visual Impairments Fact Sheet

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) places the highest priority on patient safety. The decision to authorize the use of the Veterans Transportation Program's (VTP's) special mode transport (SMT) for Beneficiary Travel-eligible Veterans with a visual impairment is solely a medical decision. Decisions are based on each Veteran's diagnosis or physical and/or mental limitation, as documented by a qualified clinician.

What is SMT?

SMT refers to an ambulance, ambulette, air ambulance, wheelchair van or other mode of transportation that is specially designed to transport disabled persons.

When are Veterans with a Visual Impairment Eligible to use SMT?

There may be circumstances when, regardless of the Veteran's ability to move from one place to another, it is unsafe for him or her to access forms of transportation other than VTP's SMT. Examples are when getting to a bus station means having to navigate uneven terrain or areas of high traffic congestion, or in rural areas when taxis and hired cars are not available.

What does a Veteran with a Vision Impairment Need to Request of His or Her Clinician?

As a case example, an authorized clinician may order SMT for a Beneficiary Travel-eligible Veteran with a vision impairment by entering "vision impairment or blind" as the diagnosis, with additional notes that the Veteran "cannot safely ambulate due to no safe access to other types of transportation." This satisfies the medical justification and SMT should then be provided at VA expense, or alternatively by Veterans Transportation Service (VTS), for the period specified for both VA and authorized non-VA medical appointments.

Where Can I Find Answers to my Questions?

For more information, call the Health Benefits Hotline toll free at 1-877-222-VETS (8387) Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. until 7 p.m. CST or email us at VHABeneficiaryTravelQuestions@va.gov.