

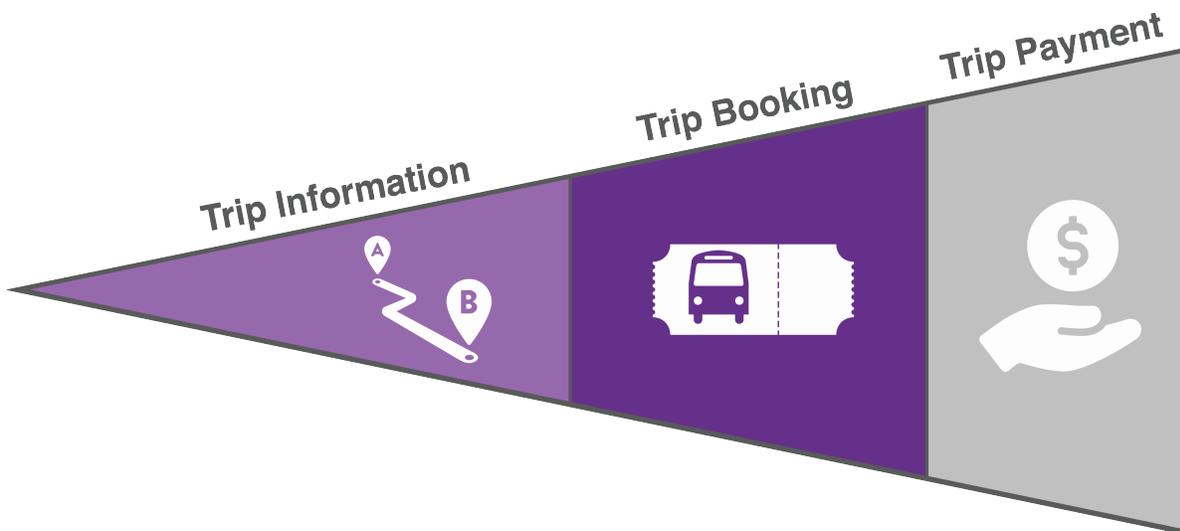
## Spotlight Project for One-Call/One-Click Systems

Project Location: Northwest Phoenix Metro Area, Arizona

Project Owner: Northwest Valley Connect

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### Project Background

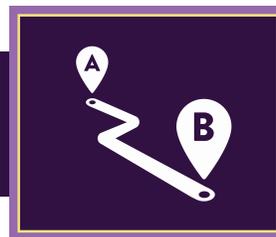


One-Call/One-Click System Diagram for the Northwest Phoenix Metro Area

[Northwest Valley Connect](#) (NVC) began operations in 2014 in the northwest Phoenix metro area, including Surprise, Sun City, and Sun City West. After a local transit provider called Sun City Area Transit ceased operations in 2010 after 27 years of service, local residents totaling around 200,000 were left without options in the area. This prompted a concerned citizens' group to form, and consequently two local organizations called the [Sun Health Foundation](#) and [Benevilla](#) agreed to partner and create a nonprofit to help the situation. NVC was formed as a nonprofit in 2014, and it has been scaling up its operations since day one.

In 2014, NVC's leaders focused first on making sure the public was aware of all the transportation options in the area, setting up a call center to achieve that aim. The nonprofit began referring callers to transportation options with a database of 55 local transportation services in total. During the last four months of 2014, NVC received 288 calls. The next year, the nonprofit embarked on a marketing effort, receiving 1,457 calls in 2015. In 2019, NVC received 23,508 calls.

During 2014, the nonprofit also leveraged the call data on who was not able to get a ride and why, prompting NVC's leaders to decide a volunteer driver system was needed. The nonprofit began the volunteer driver system service in 2015, and today has around 10 dispatchers and 30 drivers that provided 16,895 trips in 2019. Each user must complete an application for service that involves income verification. The drivers are reimbursed only a nominal amount, and all services that NVC provides are free of charge to users.



## Transportation Services

Home > For Customers > Transportation Services

- Transportation Services
- Rider Registration
- Request a Ride

### Testimonial

"I have been riding with the volunteer program since my husband got sick – more than five years. They were really here for us. I'd be lost without them. What would I do without them? I couldn't go anywhere. I can't drive."

– Jane Cotter – senior who travels to the dentist

Connecting Residents to Local Transportation Resources As a central point of contact within the community, Northwest Valley Connect coordinates information on a variety of existing travel options to provide residents with easy-to-use information that will assist them in planning their transportation needs. Working with government, private, nonprofit and volunteer transportation providers, our goal is to educate residents on existing available transportation resources and to simplify their approach to trip planning. This assistance is readily available here on our website and by phone at (623) 282-9300. Our call center is staffed by specially trained operators providing friendly and free guidance to help residents choose transportation options in the area that best meet their needs.

Northwest Valley Connect has compiled this listing of government, private, nonprofit and volunteer transportation agencies that provide transportation in the Northwest Valley. Narrow your search of transportation resources by clicking on the check boxes below.

	Riders Served				Purpose of Rides					Level of Service			
	Seniors	General Public	People with Disabilities	Veterans	Medical	Religious Events	Social	Shopping	Other	Door To Door	Door Through Door	Curb to Curb	Volunteer stays with Customer
<a href="#">Refine Your Search Here &gt;</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(QTS) Quality Transportation Services	[+]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>											
ABS Shuttle Services	[+]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>											
All Around the Town Errand and Driving Service, LLC	[+]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>											
Arizona Spinal Cord Injury Association	[+]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Dependable Medical Transport Services (DMTS)	[+]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Discount Cab	[+]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>											
Duet	[+]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Foothills Caring Corps	[+]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>											
Northwest Valley Connect	[+]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>											

Screenshot of Northwest Valley Connect's Online Provider Directory

## Provider Options

NVC published the online [provider directory](#) for the first time in 2016. Initially, it was planned as an effort to reduce the burden on calls and keep the provider information as public as possible.

NVC also uses the information in the provider directory to support call center services for “options counselling,” applying a clear process to each call. Options counselling involves helping users assess eligibility factors and connecting users with applicable transportation services. First, an options counselor checks on if one of the services in the provider directory is a good fit for the requested trip. If not, they find out if providing the trip with a taxi is an option. This is more expensive, but can be an option for users with higher income. Lastly, if another provider or a taxi is not an option, then they route the trip to the volunteer driver system. By ensuring that other options are exhausted first, NVC attempts to keep the volunteer driver system trips only for those who need them the most.

## Trip Booking



### Reservation Service

In addition to maintaining an online provider directory, NVC also provides a phone-based reservation service for its volunteer driver system. Once a user's trip is confirmed as a good fit for the volunteer driver system, a match is made with a volunteer driver. Each driver has communicated their preferences to NVC. Some are open to taking multiple passengers, essentially providing a carpool, while others are willing to take only one passenger at a time. NVC uses software to help with efficient volunteer driver route planning, and its leaders credit the routing software, called Shah Software and created by Jagat Shah, as a driving factor in its success since the software was customized to NVC's needs. Once the nonprofit confirms that a user is a good match with a volunteer driver, a confirmation is provided to the user that the trip is booked.

## Support

As mentioned above, a concerned citizens' group helped local organizations realize that there was a major gap in transportation options in the area. This provided the initial advocacy and support base needed to encourage the nonprofit's creation. As the years have gone by, NVC has benefited from many proactive volunteers. On a shorter-term basis, the volunteers' services have ranged from database management and software development to keeping an eye on affordable properties to house the growing operations of the call center and volunteer driver system. On a longer-term basis, there are around 10 call center volunteers, 10 volunteer dispatchers, and 30 volunteer drivers currently supporting operations. Further, the Executive Director has been with the organization since the beginning and provides the nonprofit with a strong base of institutional knowledge and strategic direction. NVC has also benefitted greatly from partnerships. For instance, the nonprofit partners with a group of mechanics who help individuals with a low income obtain car repairs. NVC provides the garage space needed for their work and in return the group of mechanics helps the nonprofit maintain its vehicles. As with many nonprofits, NVC makes progress because of the people who care about it and have committed to its growth.

## Challenges, Maintenance, and Future Plans

### Lack of Funds for Options Counselling

NVC faces major funding challenges, particularly for running the call center that provides options counselling. The nonprofit has found that locating funding to coordinate transportation services, a significant benefit of options counselling, is often elusive.

## **Running a Volunteer-based Organization**

NVC is able to afford only two paid positions, and volunteers are critical to the organization's mission. Although volunteers have been a major help to the nonprofit, when compared with paid staff there are issues to consider. Volunteers for NVC tend to have shorter shifts with limited weekly hours, so there is a constant state of flux as volunteers change shifts throughout the week. Further, it can be difficult to train all the volunteers consistently, since there is no staff person with ongoing responsibility for training. At the same time, the volunteers are the heart of the organization, and NVC reports that they are the key to convincing donors their contributions are well-placed through the care volunteers demonstrate for the riders.

## **Filling Transportation Gaps that Keep Growing**

Other organizations in the area have come to rely on NVC more and more, which is a testament to their success. At the same time, the nonprofit is operating at the maximum of its ability nearly all the time, with little room for expansion to meet emerging needs. NVC's growth is difficult to support without further financial investment.

## **Lack of Users' Understanding**

NVC sometimes has callers who are disappointed at having to wait for their call to be answered, receiving a call-back later, or not being able to be served due to a lack of volunteer driver availability or other reasons. They share this disappointment with the call center volunteers, who are donating their time and energy at no cost to help their community. This cycle harms volunteer morale and can contribute to higher volunteer turnover. To help address this challenge, NVC is recruiting more "ambassadors" to provide outreach services at community locations such as church groups. The outreach events will include an explanation of how NVC works, which should in turn foster more understanding among users.

## **Advocating for Transit Service**

NVC is very active in strategic planning for transit services in the area as well as political involvement that supports funding for transit service expansion. For the short-term, NVC provides a volunteer driver service, but for the long-term the nonprofit's leaders are well-aware that more options are critical for the area's stability. Therefore, they have a two-prong approach to addressing the need now and in the future.

## **Maintenance Planning**

NVC's annual budget is \$280,000, which includes a range of items including rent, utilities, software, safety needs (e.g., first aid and CPR training), vehicle maintenance, and other costs. NVC's leaders continually consider ways to support budget items, from grants and other funding to partnerships and volunteer services.

## **Related Materials & Contacts**

For additional information, contact NVC's Executive Director, Kathryn Chandler, at [kchandler@northwestvalleyconnect.org](mailto:kchandler@northwestvalleyconnect.org).