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**NEWS RELEASE: HSI TRANSPORTER KEEPS COUNTY RESIDENTS OUT
AND ACTIVE**

DATE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HSI Transporter Keeps County Residents Out and Active

Zella Kroshus quit driving about six years ago but the active 86-year-old hasn't quit getting around.

Instead of hassling with gas, traffic and parking, Kroshus takes advantage of HSI's "Transporter" to get to many of her appointments.

"At first, I used it mainly to go grocery shopping," Kroshus recalls, "but then I started using it for my hair appointments and my doctor visits and the dentist. I like the convenience and it's reasonably priced. Plus, the drivers are so courteous and nice and very kind. I know most of the drivers by name. One calls me 'pretty lady' so I think maybe he should have his eyes checked but he drives well. Even though I live in assisted living and I don't buy as many groceries, I still use it very regularly, every week," says Kroshus. "And now Kowalskis (grocery store) has arranged for Transporter trips once a week."

Here's how the shared-ride transit program works. The ride, which can be to anywhere within Washington County, costs \$3 during peak hours (Monday-Friday, 7:30-9 a.m. and 3-5 p.m.) and \$2.25 during non-peak hours (9 a.m.-3 p.m.) The blue-and-white Transporter buses range in capacity from 10 to 18 passengers and all vehicles are lift-equipped to assist disabled riders. Aides and personal attendants ride for free but also need a reservation.

"Our main audience is transit-dependent people who don't, or who are unable to, drive," says Roxanne Emerson, HSI Director of Eldercare and Transportation. "Our goal is to help people maintain their independence. Primarily, we serve elderly and disabled residents but our program is open to anyone.

"89,290 rides were provided last year .We have riders who go to sheltered workshops or day treatment programs. We take people to work within the county. And special needs can be cognitive or physical. If

you can't afford a car or gas or insurance, you've got a need. We have young people who ride the Transporter because if you're 12 or older, you can ride by yourself."

"We provide door-through-door service," says Emerson, "which means we'll pick you up at your front door and, whether you're ambulatory or not, we'll escort you through the front door of your destination. If people don't have transportation, they're really cut off from society."

Riders may set up a regular schedule of rides and may purchase "ride cards," which are punched each time a ride is taken. Trips outside of the county to specific destinations and medical facilities in St. Paul are also available. Rides to a Metro Transit bus line for travel to almost anywhere in the metro area can also be arranged. Riders 65 or older ride Metro Transit for 50 cents between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. In addition, riders who are certified as covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) may arrange to transfer, at no extra cost, to a Metro Mobility vehicle for trips into Ramsey and Hennepin counties.

"We're in the business to help people. Just give us a call if you have a question about the program or whether you're eligible. You don't commit yourself to anything if you just call and ask us questions," continues Emerson.

"They must have quite a scheduler," marvels Kroshus. "They're so good about fitting me in. I just have to write myself a note on my calendar to call ahead. They're very accommodating. If I get done earlier, I'll call them and nine times out of ten, they'll come right out and get me. Once in a while, they'll ask if it's OK if they pick up someone else first, or stop somewhere. I just can't praise them enough."

Need a ride or have questions about HSI transportation program call (651) 275-4300 or (TDD) (651) 770-6834 for a reservation. HSI (Human Services, Inc.), a nonprofit organization, with 7 offices located throughout Washington county, annually serves over 8,600 children, adolescents, adults, families and seniors who are challenged with problems associated with aging, mental or chemical health, and physical or sexual abuse.

651-777-5222 www.hsicares.org.

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