

Thank you for considering participation in our Shelter Partners transport program!

We have provided some information about the program that you may find help in making a decision to volunteer.

The van we send for trips is a Dodge Sprinter, its extra long, extra high and also has an air-conditioning unit on the top which increases the height as well. There is a barrier between the driver and cargo area but has a walk through opening (it does smell and it is loud). No special licensing is required (CDL). Generally takes about 20 minutes to get used to using side mirrors as there is no window in the back to see through. You quickly get used to taking wide turns so you don't run over curbs.

We set up with 24 – 27 crates, and sometimes additional crates are added at the side door. Dogs are loaded based on size and final destination. Sometimes more than 1 to a crate, as long as they are comfortable.

Drivers have been so helpful in communicating what works and what does not. Initially we thought it was best to stop at least twice and walk each dog. Not only does this take a tremendous amount of time but generally the dogs are so worked up they don't take advantage of the "potty break". In addition there is always the risk of an animal escaping. Most experienced drivers have determined it is best to not walk the animal unless the cage needs cleaning. With the van door closed they leash and remove the dog. While one person walks the dog, the other cleans the cage.

Each trip takes about 24 hours, driving straight through is required. This is why we must have two drivers for each trip. While one naps the other can drive. We asked drivers to limit the length and number of stops on the way up, stopping for diesel and restroom breaks only. Unless you pack your food for the trip up, fast food will become your friend very quickly. Obviously if both drivers are tired, pulling over and napping in the van is allowed if needed! Safety first! This is a really long trip for the dogs too so we try not to add extra time unless it's unavoidable.

Many people who have considered driving mention wanting to take the time to visit friends/relatives close to the route or just site-see either in New Hampshire or some little side trip in the area or along the way. We do need to know ahead of time if you want to add days. Most of our experienced drivers do the trip in 3 days, turning around and heading back several hours after dropping off the animals before they stop for sleep.

The shelter provides reimbursement for diesel receipts (if you're adding days, we use the AAA gas estimate for the to/from portion to guide us and our trips to each shelter have been pretty consistent. We also provide 2 nights hotel reimbursement and 4 days reasonable food reimbursement so please no \$25 filets on us.

At this time, we're basically asking volunteers to propose driving dates and we then try to line up a receiving facility in place (the only scheduling issue we have is making sure we don't overlap the van use). Thus far, they've been pretty much waiting on us to get them there. That being said, receiving shelters don't confirm the dates till about 30-60 days ahead.

As far as logistics go, once we're able to get a trip date in place, we just need to get a few things in place paperwork wise. We have to have a volunteer application (on our site) for each driver, then closer to the trip our controller/accountant will get in touch with the drivers for copies of drivers licenses and whatever else the insurance company needs so we can add you as volunteer drivers on the vehicle. (not sure if they need social security numbers or just the drivers license information, she's taken care of all that so far). Of course, clean driving records are required or we can't add to the policy.

We do comply with all the transporting requirements (transport health certificates, compliances with New Hampshire's incoming animals requirements, guidelines for sending facilities etc). We've worked hard to get this in place, and honestly never thought drivers would be our issue!

Are there any other questions? Happy to answer them, and thank you so much for considering! Feel free to contact me directly via email, sara@shelbyhumane.org or 205/669-3916 extension 29.

With all this being said, please think carefully about whether you and your driving partner (friend, spouse, coworker usually) can really commit to the straight through 24-hour trip. Some people really aren't up for it, and its better not to volunteer if you are any less than 100% committed and comfortable with that. If you have ANY hesitation about your ability and willingness to do the trip safely straight through, please do not volunteer for this! It jeopardizes our good relationships with the receiving shelters and our ability to continue this program of sending hundreds of dogs each year to our partner shelters if the trips don't go as planned.

Sara Shirley
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