

SENIORS TALK: To drive or not to drive, that is the question.

Description

default watermark

Driving has always been part of the California dream. But as we age, driving becomes difficult or unaffordable for some of us. SeniorBeat went to the Castro Senior Center and asked seniors if they still drive their own cars, how they cope if they donâ??t, and do they think it would be fair to require seniors to take an additional driving test. (*Cover photo Image by Freepik.*)

No life without cars



Sergio Torres, 84, canâ??t imagine life without his five cars. He takes his convertible to the beach on sunny days and is always available to give a friend or a neighbor a ride. â??Helping others is the reason to get up and get out of the house. So I do,â?• he said. He has plenty of room in his backyard, so parking isnâ??t a problem. When it comes to required extra testing for seniors, Torres, a retired insurance consultant living in West Portal, said no: â??You know yourself when youâ??re not capable. Being old doesnâ??t mean youâ??re not adequate.â?•

Broken nose in minor collision



Vicki Lew, 78, hasnâ??t driven in more than a decade. She misses the convenience of a car and finds that the Muni line nearest her Balboa Park home â?? the M Ocean View â?? isnâ??t always reliable. She can no longer afford a car, and since she once suffered a broken nose in a minor collision, she worries about safety. â??Every time you drive youâ??re taking your life and the lives of other people in your hands,â?• she said. She favors screening older drivers, but adds: â??They should do it in a parking lot, or somewhere out of traffic.â?• Lew teaches exercise to older adults.

Night vision went dark



default watermark

Margaret Sullivan, 80, no longer drives. â??I stopped a year ago when my night vision started to fail,â?• she said. â??I donâ??t really miss it. I can take a bus all over and get to any neighborhood.â?• Sullivan grew up on a farm and got in the habit of taking long walks; she still does and thatâ??s another reason she doesnâ??t need to drive. Sullivan, who worked as a PBX operator and home care worker, thinks a driving test for seniors might be a good idea: â??Sometimes your reflexes arenâ??t there,â?• she said. Sullivan lives in Bernal Heights.

Repairs, parking a headache



Patrick Larkin, 70, gave up his car nine years ago when he tired of spending money on repairs. He doesnâ??t miss it. â??I never liked driving. Parking had gotten terrible,â?• in his former neighborhood of Bernal Heights. He gets around town on Muni and when he goes on vacation he rents a car. Larkin, the director of the Castro Senior Center and a resident of Pacific Heights, urges seniors who are still driving to learn how to get around on Muni before they are forced to give up their license. â??Otherwise you spend too much time alone at home and you can get isolated,â?• he said.

From hitchhiking to public transit



Lisetta Sappington, 88, has never been a driver. She got around by hitchhiking when she lived in Europe, and when she moved to San Francisco she found that she didnâ??t need a car: â??I lived in the Haight Ashbury and the buses were right there.â?• Now she lives in South Beach and thereâ??s a Muni Metro stop close by: â??It works perfectly for me and I like to walk.â?• A retired kindergarten teacher, Sappington thinks that a driving test for seniors isnâ??t a bad idea. â??You donâ??t know how youâ??ll do (behind the wheel),â?• she said.

Riding a bus builds community



Judy Hubbell, 80, was a driver when she lived on the East Coast, but not anymore. Cars are an expense she can do without and sheâ??s had some issues with her vision. Taking public transit and walking puts her in touch with whatâ??s happening in the city, the way driving never did, she said. â??Muni is great and I can walk anywhere.â?• She recommends that other seniors get out of their cars more: â??Seniors need community,â?• something you donâ??t have one driving by yourself. Hubbell lives in Bernal Heights and teaches Mind Body Health at City College of San Francisco and Senior Centers.

Category

1. All Posts

Date Created
20/11/2023
Author
snyder