



**Department for
the Aging**

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Getting Fresh: Seniors Board Yellow School Buses Headed To Green Markets

*—Free Age-Friendly NYC initiative makes use of school buses during
downtime, allowing seniors to frequent quality food stores—*

RED HOOK, BROOKLYN – October 13, 2009 – Commissioner Lilliam Barrios-Paoli today highlighted the Department for the Aging’s **Market Ride Initiative**, which offers seniors greater access to healthful and nutritious food at supermarkets. The initiative, offered through participating senior centers, uses Department of Education school buses to transport seniors to supermarkets and other locations. The initiative is free and open to senior center members. The Market Ride Initiative is one of the 59 initiatives Mayor Bloomberg detailed when he announced the City’s Age-Friendly NYC report this past August. Age-Friendly NYC aims to make New York City more livable for its growing senior population, which is expected to increase by approximately 50% over the next 25 years. Commissioner Barrios-Paoli joined 25 seniors from the RAICES Times Plaza Senior Center in Downtown Brooklyn as they disembarked from a yellow school bus at the Red Hook Fairway Market. Commissioner Barrios-Paoli was joined by Times Plaza Senior Center Director Rosemary Bland and General Manager David Serrano of Fairway Market’s Red Hook store.

“Through the creative use of government resources—using idle school buses when they’re not transporting children—this initiative gives older adults the opportunity to frequent quality food stores and make healthier food choices,” said Commissioner Barrios-Paoli. “Because of partnerships with supermarkets like Fairway Market and community providers like RAICES, New York City seniors will now have the opportunity to explore a range of food options that might not exist in their immediate community. As part of the *Age-Friendly NYC* effort, this initiative is another example of the City’s strong commitment to enhancing its “livability” for older New Yorkers.”

The City estimates that approximately 3 million New Yorkers do not live near supermarkets and rely solely smaller produce stores for their food purchases. These stores often lack fresh produce, offer unhealthy foods and carry higher prices than supermarkets. Building on existing efforts to ensure that all New Yorkers have access to healthy and fresh foods, the City also launched the Green Carts initiative, through which City Hall will issue 1,000 new permits for vendors to sell fresh fruits and vegetables in neighborhoods where availability is limited.

The Department for the Aging piloted the Market Ride Initiative in Brooklyn during the 2008/2009 school year. As part of the pilot, 74 bus trips to supermarkets were made from 41 senior centers and NORCS. Last year, more than 500 older adults participated in the initiative.

DFTA coordinates the bus logistics and makes arrangements between the Department of Education and the senior center. Trips are typically scheduled three weeks in advance. The buses pick seniors up at the senior center in the morning and return them to the center by lunchtime. Buses are available during hours when they are not being utilized to transport children, typically between 9:30 am and 1:30 pm.

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