In their article, Satariano et al. discuss the public health implications of modes of mobility and health in older populations. The authors highlight implications for practice and policy, and call for a longitudinal cohort study of mobility patterns that would provide comprehensive measures of age-related health and function as well as detailed information on mobility including walking, driving, and passenger transport. We applaud the call for research on functioning and modes of mobility in older adults and want to call attention to opportunities for studying this relationship using the National Health and Aging Trends Study (NHATS). NHATS, supported by the National Institute on Aging, is a nationally representative longitudinal study of Medicare beneficiaries aged 65 years and older. Participants are interviewed yearly and are asked questions on health conditions, mobility, functioning in self-care and household activities, work status and participation in valued activities, cognitive functioning, and help provided with daily activities.

Specific to the call by Satariano et al. for research as a component of a mobility agenda, NHATS collects data on driving and alternative transportation options such as walking, using van or shuttle services for seniors or people with disabilities, and passenger transport by family and friends. Questions about transportation are tied to performance of relevant household and health care activities (e.g., shopping for groceries, getting to the doctor). Whether lack of transportation restricts participation in valued activities such as visiting family and friends or attending religious services is another area of inquiry.

NHATS round 1 data are currently available. NHATS was designed for the study of both trends and trajectories in disability and collects data on an annual basis. To learn more about the study and to find information on accessing the publicly available data, please visit http://www.nhats.org.

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