

*Diversity, Equity and
Inclusion Initiative*

Rider and Provider Perspectives on Transportation

Overview of findings from
focus groups and
stakeholder meetings



NADTC's DEI Initiative Focus

NADTC's focus on DEI began in 2020 and includes:

- Information collection to identify transportation needs and experiences of diverse older adults, younger adults with disabilities and caregivers.
- Identification of promising practices – Workable solutions that may be adapted to better meet transportation needs.
- Education, guidance and support for communities and providers



NADTC's DEI Initiative Approach

NADTC embarked on a multi-pronged initiative to shine a light on transportation challenges that specifically impact diverse older adults, people with disabilities and caregivers. This approach encompassed:

- A national survey launched March 1, 2021.
- Focus groups with riders and potential users of transportation services from across the U.S.
- Conversations with transportation providers, human services organizations, advocates and community leaders.



Focus Groups

➤ Purpose:

- Gather the lived experiences of transportation users in different parts of the country
- Explore perceptions of how their experiences might be impacted by their race, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation or other personal characteristics



Focus Group Locations



Focus Group Participants Included

- 44% were African American
- 6% were Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI)
- 5% were Hispanic
- 6% were LGBTQ
- 31% have low income
- 32% have mobility issues



Focus Groups Observations – Access

- Evening and weekend hours critical to social connections
- Transportation access is not limited to accessible vehicles.
- Frustrations getting to adjoining jurisdictions
- Having to schedule rides too far in advance



Focus Groups Observations - Cost

- Cost impacts how frequently someone can ride and where they choose to go.
- Long distance trips are not always available, and if they are, cost is an issue.
- It is difficult to keep asking friends & family for rides due to price of gas.



Focus Groups Observations - Treatment

- Some identified discrimination based on race, immigrant status and sexual orientation.
- More often, focus groups participants focused on treatment based on disability.
- Many praised their drivers.



In Their Own Words – Older Adults

- “They take off before you have a chance to sit down.”
~ *Older adult from Washington*
- “I want to go everywhere...I don’t want to be limited...”
~ *Older adult from Georgia*
- “Most people are on fixed income. It is hard to figure out how much you have to spend on transportation after you pay for your necessities.”
~ *Older adult from Ohio*



In Their Own Words – Younger Adults with Disabilities

- “I work weekends, and I have to hitchhike, and I am blind. It is so stressful. I live on a hope and a prayer.”
~ *Younger adult with a disability from Georgia*
- “I take county transit to the doctor and grocery shopping, but otherwise I am not able to leave my home; I would get out more if I had the choice.”
~ *Younger adult with a disability from Kansas*
- On being referred to as an 'ADA' by a driver: “No courtesy to ask my name. It isn't appropriate to refer to someone as their label.”
~ *Younger adult with a disability, Washington*



In Their Own Words – Caregivers

- Noting that she pays for transportation out of her own pocket,
“Sometimes you just do it.”
~ Caregiver from Washington
- “I am the transportation ... I don’t get a break; I change my schedule to meet theirs.”
~ Caregiver from Ohio
- “Essentially, if it were not for the heart of the caregivers, taking money out of their own pockets, these individuals would be institutionalized—no questions asked—or they would be dead.”
~ Caregiver from Alaska



Stakeholder Meetings

➤ Purpose:

- Identify the work transportation programs are doing to address Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- Learn about the challenges they face in serving marginalized and underserved communities
- Hear their perspectives on issues identified in the survey



Stakeholder Meeting Participants

NADTC convened two national stakeholder meetings in June 2022.



Urban/Suburban

Online: n=122



Rural/Tribal/Frontier

Online: n=107



How Stakeholders are Addressing Transportation & DEI

- Conducting listening sessions
- Expanding opportunities for online participation
- Sharing information with social service and community-based groups serving diverse populations
- Engaging in rural community via local churches, county periodicals, the farmer's market, the library, and surveys



Highlights of Findings – Stakeholder Meetings

- Language can be a barrier to working with some groups.
- “We are transportation social workers. We work to find solutions.”
- Travel training might better serve diverse populations by including training on using apps and other technologies.
- In working to address transportation DEI, building community relationships is critically important.



Stakeholders Work in DEI & Transportation

- 50% do outreach to reach underserved communities
- 47% collect demographic data
- 40% are surveying customers and community to identify needs
- 28% are working on hiring and program policies that address diversity
- 13% have made adjustments to fare structure
- 4% have changed routes to better serve diverse populations



Lessons Learned

- Not everyone has the same understanding of transportation diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Some providers struggle to recognize diversity in their communities stating, “We don't focus on any community--we serve them all.”
- Stakeholders clearly want to know more about transportation DEI and are ready to borrow ideas from others.
- Although participants are comfortable talking about transportation barriers related to age or disability, the same does not hold true when discussing how race, ethnicity or culture impacts transportation access.



Conclusions and Next Steps for NADTC

- Publish a synthesis paper of the focus groups and stakeholder meetings.
- Develop four information briefs that address topics derived from the focus and stakeholder groups.
- Distribute an annual customer survey.
- Continue to provide education and guidance through webinars and other resources with direction from the DEI Advisory Committee.



Discussion