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Expanding Access to Transportation for Older Adults and People with Disabilities

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>> Hi, everyone. Welcome to the NADTC webinar on Expanding Access to Transportation for Older Adults and People with Disabilities.

Thank you so much for joining us today. We really appreciate your time. A couple of logistics before I turn the session over and we get started. The webinar is being recorded today. We'll be providing an archive of the webinar on the NADTC website. The important part of that is to make sure that you recognize that your chat section and your email questions will be provided in that archive. If you want to ask a question or make a comment, you're able to type that either into the chat box, which is on the left bottom of your screen, or if you have not joined the webinar room today, you can email your question to mgray@n4a.org. We are providing captioning today. You can access that in one of two ways. You can either click on the CC icon at the top left of your screen or press CTRL 8 on your keyboard.

You can contact black board technical assistance line at 877‑382‑2293 or you can fully participate in the session by following along with the PowerPoint presentation that was emailed to you and calling into that telephone line. That will allow you full participation if that's what you need to do to participate today.

With that, I don't want to keep you any longer from the information that's being provided today. I'm going to turn the legislation over to Lori Gerhard, which is the director of the Office of Integration Innovation with the U.S. Administration for Community Living.

>> Thank you very much. On behalf of the ‑‑

( Audio is cutting in and out )

>> We would like to welcome you to the webinar today for Expanding Access to Transportation for Older Adults and People with Disabilities. This is a very participant topic. We know transportation plays a key role in helping people engage and access life. We're really excited to talk with you today.

My colleagues that will be joining us for the presentation today include Marian Stock who is the chief at the rural and targeted programs and Virginia Dize who is with the national association of area agencies and 4A.

Today's agenda will include an overview of the Department of Transportation and a nationwide network that we fund and support.

Ways to find Match for the FTA 5307, 5310, and 3511 grant programs as well as additional resources available through NADTC. Then we'll take question and answers.

>> Thank you for the introduction. The Federal Transit Administration is really excited to be working with the administration for community living with how we can work together to make transportation better for older adults and people with disabilities. The recent announcement about funding being able to Match FTA funding is really exciting. I'm really honored to be here and share more details about how we can make this happen. The end result, we think, will be more and better transportation for the people who need it most, and that is certainly the bottom line for all of us.

Okay. So I want to jump right in. For people on the webinar who may not be familiar with the TFA grant programs, they can use HHS funding as Match. This first slide is talking about section 5310 program, which is the program that most closely aligns to the ACL constituency and provides funding for Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities. That's the official legislative name of the program.

And the purpose, of course, is to improve mobility for adults and those with disabilities throughout the country, including rural areas, urban areas, everywhere it's needed.

What this program does is it provides operating and capital assistance to eligible recipients, including states, tribes, and designated recipients. What that means is it's the particular recipients that have been designated by their governors of each state to be the recipient of funding under this program.

Just to give you an idea of the size of the program, it was in FY 2020, it has about 285 million there are ‑‑ $285 million nationwide.

To give you an idea of how this program works and how it's distributed around the country, the program itself has some formula aspects to it that divide the nationwide funding among different areas. In FY 2019, we had 179 recipients nationwide. 108 in smaller areas, and 53 in rural areas, which 53 are the 50 states plus a few territories.

There's a wide range of how much is received in each state. As you can see here, California and Florida each received over $5 million for use in smaller areas around the state. The smallest category was Alaska that only got $80,000 to use across the state for this purpose.

For rural areas, Texas has probably the largest rural areas in the nation, and that's why they received the most funding. Alaska was the smallest. These are our territories that also received funding under this program, but they get very small amounts.

I wanted to briefly mention the FTA's competitive grant program, the innovative coordination access and mobility competitive program, and that is for finding projects for transportation disadvantaged that improve the coordination of transportation services and non‑emergency medical transportation services. We funded 37 projects, totaling $9.6 million. 41% went to areas around the country. We have an open opportunity for the 3.5 million that's available in FY 20. This slide gives you the details on that. Again, as I said, we're looking for projects that employ innovative coordination based on partnerships with, in general, we're hoping this will be partnerships between transportation agencies and human services agencies that depend on transportation to bring the constituency of the older adults, the individuals with disabilities, and people of low income, to their services.

We have the notice of funding opportunity published on November 1st. Applications are due January 6th. The eligible applicants are the designated and direct recipients of programs you see listed here, but the funding opportunity requires them, as I mentioned earlier, to partner with human services agencies. So we are looking for projects that really show how in communities those partnerships occur to provide more and better transportation for the impacted communities. I should just make one note, since we're talking about Match today. This program, unfortunately, cannot be Matched because it's not an FTA formula program. It cannot be Matched with the HES funding. But, again, we're really emphasizing the partnership so we hope that there will be projects that show us how those partnerships can happen, even without a Match opportunity under this particular program.

For more details we're going to be having another webinar on the third that will go into detail about how to apply for that program in particular.

Another program that can be Matched ‑‑ now get back to programs that can be Matched by the HHS funding are sections 5311 program that's a formula program that provides transportation for rural areas in the country. As we can see here, it's available for capital funding, such as purchase of vehicles, planning funding, if you're planning a new transit service in a rural area; or for operations, what we call operating assistance, which is to pay for the actual operation of the service, for public transportation in rural areas. We define those as areas that have populations of less than 50,000.

This program has $673 million available in FY 2020. That includes a 35 million that's set aside directly for tribes. I think I'm going to talk about that in another slide.

Just a few things to give you sort of a picture of how this rural transit program work s, the most commonly funded activity for rural transit is actually the operation of the service. Again, to give you sort of an idea of the volume, Texas has a lot of rural areas. They get $47 million a year. Rhode Island, a small state, gets about 630,000. Every area gets some funding, though.

Interestingly, most of our recipients under this program are providing demand response service. That's the service where you might call it a dial‑a‑ride. It's not a fixed bus route that goes from stop to stop, but you call up and make a reservation, and you get, in general, door‑to‑door service when it's needed.

As mentioned, this program, tribes are eligible to participate in the program, but there's also a separate program that's specifically for federally recognized Indian tribes. They provide transit on their tribal lands. In FY 2020, there's $35 million in that program. 30 million of that is a formula program that's distributed amongst the tribes, according to a statutory formula. And 5 million is a competitive program that we run every year. There's a growing program. We know there's a great need up in Indian county. As an example, we had 83 recipients under that program. Now, in FY 19, we have 126. Almost every year we get more tribes coming in to provide transit service under that program. The most commonly funded activity, again, is the operating expenses of operating the actual transit service.

In order to help everyone participate in these programs, we have our three technical assistance centers that FTA funds. One of them, of course, is the National Aging Disability Transit Center that's sponsoring this webinar today. So we really appreciate that. They provide support particularly for our program that is for enhanced mobility for older adults and seniors ‑‑ I'm sorry. Older adults and people with disabilities. As you can see on the slide, it mentions that they usually have a community grant program as well, which would be separate from FTA's grant program, as funding permits. We also have the national center for mobility management that supports communities and individuals that want to create new mobility options in their communities and learn how to make those more efficient and work together on coordination. And then we have the National Rural Transit Assistance Program, and that supports our world transit program and provides all kinds of training and resources for the people who are providing transit in rural areas.

And then we have one more technical assistance center that's just getting started now. It's called the National Center for Applied Transit Technology. It's a brand new center that's going to be supporting transit systems in developing new technologies and new institutional paradigms or ways of being organized that help ‑‑ there will be more transit service in rural areas and small cities. They use new technology to sustain services most effectively. You may see more of that as we're going to be promoting it in the coming weeks and months.

Just to give you an idea, as it says here, the FTA‑funded technical assistance centers provide competitive grants to communities that are a little bit more flexible in some ways than FTA's direct grants. Usually, they do not require a Match. They help communities that want to get into transit service that may or may not be already grantees of FTA but are starting to develop new mobility options. So these are some of the examples. In 2019, the Greater Portland Council of Governments in Portland, Maine, began testing a citywide weekly shop or shuttle service for older adults and individuals with disabilities and individuals with low incomes. You know, they developed this little project with the grant to meet an unmet need in their community for door‑to‑door service for grocery shopping.

In Tulsa, Oklahoma, the area agency on aging is developing a paratransit program to help those older adults and those with disabilities who live in food deserts through transportation services and ride‑sharing services as well.

Those are some examples of grants that have been funded through our technical assistance centers. We encourage you to look at those grant opportunities as they come up in the future.

I wanted to take just very briefly and quickly to go explain a little bit about our coordinating council on access and mobility, which is an interagency partnership with 11 federal agencies you see on the slide on the right‑hand side and what we call the CCAM. It consists of all these federal agencies to work together to implement this mission of implementing policy recommendations and implementing activities to improve the availability, accessibility, and efficiency of transportation for the same targeted populations that we've been talking about, individuals with disabilities, older adults, and individuals of low income.

In order to fulfill some requirements that are in legislation about the CCAM, in 2018, the CCAM conducted some focus groups specifically to ask the participating agencies at the state and local level about barriers to transportation coordination. One of the highest barriers that came up was limit ed awareness of federal funding sources that are available for these constituencies and the policies that enable coordination. That was one of the purposes of today's webinar. We're trying to ‑‑ among many other activities we're undergoing to try to address that issue? We're happy you're here to increase your awareness.

Again, in order to address that limited awareness barrier, we are going to have another webinar series going on in 2020. We've developed an inventory of all of the federal programs that can fund transportation. There are currently 130 of them on our list. These are all various federal programs that provide various services for, again, those three targeted populations, and, as you can see, HHS has 64 programs, many more than the Department of Transportation has. So in order to, again, increase awareness about these for all grantees of any of our member agencies, we are going to have a series of webinars starting in January of 2020 to talk about all of these programs and how they can work together to fund more transportation.

Another activity at the CCAM was the development of a course called the advancing mobility management course offered by the national transit institute. This is a class for mobility management of professionals to help improve coordination between transit and non‑traditional stakeholders, such as human agencies. It talks about how to implement strategies in your community. It is free for public transit and for government agencies. So if you're interested, there's a list on the slide of dates that are being offered. You can register at the link that's on the slide.

So we also wanted to just bring to your attention some of the changes to non‑emergency medical transportation that are potentially under way. In 2019, the Health and Human Services budget committed to using its regulatory authority to make what is currently a requirement for states to provide transportation to Medicaid recipients. It's proposed to make it optional for states to participate in. If you want more information about that, you can look at this link to the HHS budget for 2019. There's been some research on non‑emergency medical transportation that shows the way different states are handling non‑emergency medical transportation brokerage. Opportunities are listed out in this report from the Transportation Research Board. There's a link, if you're interested, to see what's going on in your state in this area. You can click on the link and see that report.

That's all I have for the Federal Transit Administration. Thank you for listening. I will be around for the question‑and‑answer session at the end.

>> Thank you very much, Marianne. This is Lori Gerhard for the Administration for Community Living. I would like to tell you a little bit about the administration for community living.

Our mission is to maximize the independence, well‑being, and health of older adults, people with disabilities across the life span, and their families and caregivers. They should be able to live where they choose what the people they choose and participate fully in their community. ACL funds a nationwide network. We'll go on to the next slide. This is one of our greatest strengths. This nationwide network reaches into every community across the country. It is staffed and run by the people who live in these communities, and they really know the resources that are available in the community and the ways in which they can best help people access those services. The nationwide access system serves older adults, people with disabilities, caregivers, and their families and helps them get connected to the services and publicly funded programs that allow them to thrive in their communities. This nationwide network includes different agencies, centers for independent living, state assistive technology programs, tribal organizations, university centers for excellence and developmental disabilities, and many others. We have more than 1,322 access points across the country.

ACL, or the administration for community living, invests in transportation. In fiscal year 2018, we provided over 20 million rides to older Americans through our nationwide network. 2.3 million rides that included assistance in support of the person receiving the transportation, and approximately 16,900 people with disabilities received some type of transportation service. That could include peer‑to‑peer training to learn about public transit systems, transportation vouchers, and other transportation services. This is from information we received through the centers for independent living. It's really important to notice that in centers for independent living, they help people with newly acquire ed disabilities for temporary disabilities, due to a medical procedure they had. Maybe they're healing from a broken leg and have some immobility. The center for independent living are available to help people who have limited mobility learn how to use the public transportation system and who may also be unfamiliar with even accessing the transportation services.

I would like to talk a little bit, too, about the grant to readminister with the Department of Transportation system. It's a planning program. It's distributed through several organizations. This grant provides small demonstration grants to communities of transportation ‑‑ it requires transportation planners or service providers and organizations that include people with disabilities, older adults or caregivers, and the whole purpose of the grant is to help bring together the voice of the people that use transportation services to influence the design and the delivery of transportation services.

Through this grant, we have been able, through these community demonstrations, to really understand how do we include consumers or older adult s and caregivers in the design of transportation services. We have developed a tool call the ladder of inclusivity. It's a self‑assessment tools that organizations that provide transportation can choose to see how inclusive they are in their services and delivery of those services.

This can be used by the people they serve so they can see how close they are to the service. This is important in designing the services so they really work for the people that use them.

In addition, through the small community grants, we've been able to develop service s that are more responsive to people. So, for example, in Kentucky, they identify that their bus drivers were having some challenges communicating can people that were non‑communicative. There were also challenges with people who were non‑communicative with others. So they worked with them to come up with an app to be used and is available on buses so that people with disabilities that are non‑communicative are able to be communicating with the bus driver and vice versa. That has improved quality and reduced turnover with the bus drivers who were frustrated at times when they weren't communicating. That's just one example.

I also wanted to share about the American s with disability s PARC. They publish items in understanding transportation needs and opportunities for improvement. The metropolitan leaders in Austin, Texas, decided to invest $73 million to improve sidewalks and access to public transportation, and they learned this through using the PARC data and interacting with the people who use public transit. They're also putting wheelchair charging stations at these bus stops because one of the things that was identified by their riders is that the path that they had to navigate to get to the bus stop, the sidewalks were hard to navigate, and they were also needing some improvements. Also, the distance they had to go, the wheelchairs were almost ‑‑ if you had a motorized power, it was almost out of power by the time you got to the bus stop. This is enhancing the access to the transportation services. PARC is a resource for organizations looking to apply for some of the FTA grants because there's data that could be useful in you making your case.

The last item I wanted to mention was assistive technology programs. ACL funds a program available in all territories. The programs demonstrate and teach people how to use assistive technology. There is technology out, for example ‑‑ there's technology available that help people get in and out of vehicles, that help them access and schedule rides through apps. There's technology like the WeWALK cane that is a cane for people with vision impairment that has Google Maps built into it. It speaks to you so it can tell you what's coming. There's a lot of assistive technology that can be assistive to people who are in need of transportation. We encourage you to access your state's assistive technology program.

I would like to move into finding Match for FTA grants. So the federal transit law permits funds from other programs to be used to Match three types of Federal Transit Administration grants for public transit. My colleague mentioned these earlier. 5307 funds in urbanized areas. 5310 funds in rural areas, and 3511. FTA grants are available for capital projects such as purchase of vehicles and are often used to pay for expenses. This can be especially helpful in rural area withes and nonprofit agencies providing services.

If you're a recipient of an Administration for Community Living grant that is used for transportation, and you're using that grant for the intended purposes of the ACL grant for transportation, you can use the money that you spent on transportation provided that you're using it for the original services within the ACL grant as Matched to satisfy the FTA5307, 5310, or 5311 grant. We want to make sure you're aware of that because by publicizing this practice, we can increase funds for states and communities, especially in rural and frontier areas where we know there's limited funds available to use for Match. When communities and states do not have their required Match, they forego applying for federal funds. We want to assure federal funds for transportation can get to these areas where there is a lot of need.

With that, we're thrilled to be partnering to further expand this practice. I will turn things over to Virginia Dize from the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center.

>> Thanks, Lori. We're going to move right along here. You can post questions or make comments in the chat box, if you're online. If you're not online and you're on the phone, feel free to send an email to mgray@n4a.org.

I'm assuming a lot of people, if not all of you, are familiar with NADTC. We're a partnership between the Easterseals. My counterpart is Carol Wright Kenderdine.

We have a broad mission. The slide is not coming up, but I will tell you what the mission is anyway. It's to promote the availability of acceptable transportation options that particularly serve the needs of older adults, people with disabilities, caregivers, and communities. Included in our work is a lot of messages on providing any individualized technical assistance. Two programs as well as for individuals that want to know how to improve their transportation in their community. We have a nationwide toll‑free website as well as an email address NADTC ‑‑ I'm sorry.

( Audio is cutting in and out )

>> And we have a number of publications and resources on our website. Marianne mentioned that we do usually an annual competition. You can expect to see something on our next small grant competition probably around the new year. I'm going to go on to the next slide. For some reason, that other one is not coming up.

I will also say that 5310 has always been part of our mission and work through the NADTC. One of the things we're doing this cooperation is for those 37 access and mobility grants the FTA announced in May, in that particular instance, we're providing technical assistance, and we're working with the grants to help them with their performance measures and to help them track their successes.

So, finally, we'll keep this slide up, which is the main thing I wanted to say. We have a few things on our website that are specific to 5310 funds. We have done a number of webinars since 2016, as well as online courses and conference presentations, that were focused on 5310, including a webinar that we give ‑‑ I think we did this one in 2016 or 2017 called the 5310 webinar 2: The state perspective. There's examples of what states are doing with their 5310 funding. We have a couple of publications from 2018. 5310 funding Match, specifically focused on funding Match. It talks about being able to use a CL as a Match for 5310. As well as there's a blog post we did in 2018. You can expect to see this webinar with all of the slides posted on our website probably next week. Hopefully, it will be before the holiday. There's our contact information. Again, I encourage you all, if you've got questions or issues ‑‑ especially if you're on the phone and you're unable to get ‑‑ you have burning questions that you're unable to get answered during the period of time for this webinar, feel free to send us an email at contact@NADTC.org or call our toll‑free number, and we'll be glad to assist you in any way that we possibly can.

With that, I guess we'll open it up to questions, Lori.

So I've got one question that's just been sent to me. Is this the question that just came in? Okay.

It's a person who is asking about services for older people and people with disability s, saying that many passengers use phones with their journey getting transit information can be challenging for people who don't have smartphones. Calling a help center for a transit operator isn't very useful for somebody using sign language. I'm wondering if there's something available or a technological solution that ‑‑ technological solution that aides in this scenario.

Marianne, I'm going to turn that to you, and I will see if Lori has anything to add to it.

>> Sure. Thank you. That is a good question. I guess part of my response is that in general our programs are used ‑‑ all of the FTA grant programs are used by the recipients to make various investments that they think are beneficial to their customers. Certainly enhancements to a transit information center to help make it more accessible to customers, if that is a priority in a particular community and the transit system believes that, it is certainly an eligible expense under many of our programs, and they would be able to structure an FTA grant application in order to do that. So, again, one of the things I neglected to mention with regard to our 5310 program for enhanced mobility for seniors and people with disabilities is that there's a requirement that in order to apply for that program, all of our guarantees have to be working with their community on what is called a coordinated human services transportation plan. That's a whole planning effort that is intended to help the community develop what types of enhancements to their transit system is most needed for accessibility purposes, to serve the populations better. So the project that you describe can make transit information more readily available to people with various disabilities. That would be the perfect type of project to bring to that plan. Our transit systems are required to have participation from the community and the agencies in the process. I would encourage you to try to find out how that plan is being developed in your community, who is the primary sating that develops it, and bring that need to the planning process.

>> Thank you so much. Just a reminder to everyone, you can post your question in one of two ways. You can post them in the chat section, which is the bottom left of your screen, or you can email your questions to mgray@n4a.org. I apologize for the issues we had with the posting, but we're getting your questions.

We have the next question. Is mobility management and eligibility activity under the FTA programs and also programs funded by the ACL?

>> This is Marianne. I will answer on behalf of FTA. Yes, it's under eligible activity under all of our grant programs. Yes. I can't answer for ACL.

( Overlapping speakers )

>> I think Lori had something to add to the question.

>> Thank you, Cristina. This is Lori at ACL. There are grant where is mobility management is a possibility. For instance, in the no wrong door systems, there are persons and counselors that can help with mobility management. There's also some additional grant where is mobility management could be something that would be covered or research in that area could be funded.

>> Fantastic. Thank you so much.

>> So we do have another question in the chat section, which is: How would an urban agency or state agency apply and secure HHS Match, and how would that be shown in the trans application, and what is the best way for world agencies to secure and HHS funding.

>> So this is Lori Gerhard at ACL. I'm going to turn things over to Marianne because the Match would be shown in the FTA application. The key piece to remember is that the funds that you are using as Match, the grant funds from HHS that you're using as Match, need to be used for the intended purpose of the HHS grant, and you need to be able to fully account that you're using those funds for that HHS grant. I will turn things over to Marianne to talk about how you will reflect if you were using any of those funds as Match for the FTA application.

>> Sure. So I think that the most important thing would be that your project in your grant application to the FTA fully describes the entire project, including whatever portion of it is being funded through that Match, and then I don't have in front of me the specific codes for how you identify the Match, but there are ‑‑ similar to anything, any other grant and Match that you're using, you would just construct your grant application the same way you would ordinarily do it, and then you could just identify that that is your source of funding. It would be great if you would do that. I don't think it's a requirement that you specifically identify the exact source of your Match to FTA in most of these programs, but it certainly helps us out if you do. We would love to know you're doing this with HHS. So we would just follow the normal grant application procedure in trans, and, just, like I said, make sure your eligible expenses, your entire project are fully described, including the parts eligible for the HHS funding and that you're using that funding.

>> This is Virginia. I would just like to add to what Lori and Marianne have said. Marianne has mentioned the importance of transit human services planning process. That's a perfect organization or effort that can create partnerships and close working relationships through the HHS programs and transit programs. So it's a good way to start talking about things and whether or not funds are available to support a new idea or a new effort that may be going on.

Cristina, back to you.

>> Fantastic. Thank you, guys, so much. There was an additional question in the chat session about the December 3rd webinar and the funding available. It was about details that were available. I think maybe the best thing we can do is provide a link to the description of the webinar and registration information. If you guys wanted to mention anything regarding what the expectation for the agenda for the webinar is, that might be helpful.

>> Sure. I will just quickly say yes, we agree. If you don't already have it, ACL will provide it to you so all the participants on this call can have the details and how to register. The webinar is really geared toward potential applicants. We'll sort of go through all of the requirements in our current funding opportunity, you know, what we're looking for in a good application, how to apply all the different sections you need to fill out in your application, and, you know, eligible expenses, all of the details you need to know to submit a good application under that notice of funding opportunity. It is linked. It's out. It's published in the federal register. There's a place on grants.gov. As mentioned earlier, primary applicants do have to be current recipients, but we're definitely looking for them to be ‑‑ it's part of the details that they have to demonstrate to us that they are partnering within their community with human services agencies. So we hope to see a lot of that. I hope a lot of you will tune in to that webinar also.

>> Information on the webinar is posted on the NADTC website so that you can follow the information and get the link to register for the webinar.

>> Fantastic. I just put the NADTC website into the chat section for those of you who may not be familiar with that. Thank you so much.

This is all the questions I have in the chat box. I don't know if you have any additional questions in the email.

>> No. So I guess that's it.

>> So we wanted to thank you all again for attending today's webinar. We want to encourage you to help us get the word out. Tell at least three friends about this opportunity to really leverage the transportation funds to reach ‑‑ to provide greater access to transportation. Thank you for everything you do each day to serve people with disabilities, older adults, and caregivers across the country. You make a difference in their lives, and we truly appreciate it. Thank you very much.

( Overlapping speakers )

>> Absolutely. And we will be sending out an evaluation for the session today. Take a moment to fill it out. We use that to improve future sessions. Thank you so much for your participation today. Take a look at the NADTC website, which is NADTC.org to find out about future sessions and technical assistance and training opportunities.

Thank you so much. Have a great day, everyone.

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