



Providing Transportation to Older Adults with Vision Loss: Challenges & Opportunities

March 24, 2022



MISSION: To promote the availability of accessible transportation options that serve the needs of **Older Adults, People with Disabilities, Caregivers and Communities.**

• **MAJOR OBJECTIVES:**

- Person-centered technical assistance and information
- Training
- Communication and Outreach
- Coordination and partnership
- Investment in community solutions



Photo Credit: Metrolina Association for the Blind, Charlotte, NC

NADTC & American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) Partnership

- At least half of Americans aged 65 and older are at high risk of eye diseases that can lead to some form of visual impairment.



NADTC & American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) Partnership

- Resources in development:
 - Information Brief: Meeting the Needs of Older Passengers with Vision Loss: Guidance for Transportation Providers
 - Drivers Make the Difference for Older Passengers with Vision Loss
- Open Forum on March 10

Partners & Speakers

American Foundation for the Blind:

- Priscilla Rogers, Special Advisor, Aging and Vision Loss
- Neva Fairchild, National Aging and Vision Loss Specialist

- Pete Benavidez, President/CEO, Riverside Blindness Support Services, Inc, Riverside, CA

- Denise Jess, Executive Director, Wisconsin Council of the Blind and Visually Impaired



AFB American Foundation®
for the Blind
Expanding possibilities for people with vision loss



Meeting the Needs of Older Passengers with Vision Loss

Guidance for Transportation Providers

- Understanding vision loss
- Understanding transportation challenges related to vision loss
- Understanding potential interventions that address these challenges

More Guidance

- How transportation providers can serve and communicate effectively with passengers with vision loss
- Connecting them with orientation and mobility & other services. One place to start: aphconnectcenter.org
- Importance of ongoing training for staff and drivers

Guidance for Drivers

- Understanding types of vision loss and how it affects getting around

Common Eye Conditions that Cause Low Vision



Age-related Macular Degeneration

Scattered Scotomas



Diabetic Retinopathy

Central Blind Spot (Scotoma)

Peripheral Field Loss



Glaucoma

National Eye Institute, National Institutes of Health (NEI/NIH)

More Guidance

- Signs of vision loss such as shuffling, looking down at feet, holding fare card close to eyes to read
- Techniques for helping such as human guide technique
- Problems and solutions for providing assistance such as finding a seat

Passengers Speak Out

- “The most difficult part of my disability is not being able to drive.”
- “Finding out about route changes has been difficult—the websites are not very accessible...Trying to contact the bus company to plan routes if on a flex schedule is impossible and the map apps are not accurate.”

Safety Concerns

- “I often ride paratransit and have noticed how often drivers fail to identify themselves when picking me up which is critical since I can’t see the driver’s uniform... if they say nothing, I have no idea they are there. This has resulted in me being startled and even frightened.”

Contact Information

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BLINDNESS SUPPORT SERVICES INC.

*Strategies, Expectations and Practices to
Improve Transportation Services for
Persons Living with Low or No Vision*

Introduction

- Transit Dependent Riders

Overall Expectations

- Safety
- Efficiency
- Comfort
- Accessibility

Coach Operators

- Awareness Training
- Clear and Descriptive Verbal Communication

Transit Providers

- Travel Training Programs
- Accessible Route Schedules
- Useable Bus Passes
- Clean and Safe Bus Stops
- Calling Out Stops

Accessing Transportation as a Person with Vision Loss

Denise Jess

Executive Director



**Wisconsin Council of the
Blind & Visually Impaired**

Mission & Values

The Council promotes the **dignity and empowerment** of the people of Wisconsin who live with vision loss through legislative advocacy, education and vision services.

Values are inclusivity, integrity and uncompromising respect.

The Complete Trip Framework

1. Plan and book a trip
2. Travel to the transit stop
3. Ride the bus/train
4. Cross the street
5. Arrive at destination

Plan a Trip: Challenges

- Accessibility barriers with print, online and app-based scheduling tools
- Lack of accessibility tools/training for the user due to cost and availability of service

Plan a Trip: Creating Access

- Large print materials
- Screen reader accessible webpages and apps
- Phone support beyond the standard business day
- Mobility management

Travel to the Stop: Challenges

- Wayfinding from departure location to transit stop
- Locating the stop in the correct direction of travel

Travel to the Stop: Creating Access

- Phone support
- Travel training
- Bus shelters or other notable markings
- Referrals for orientation and mobility training

Ride the Bus: Challenges

- Boarding the correct vehicle
- Locating an open seat
- Getting off at the correct stop

Ride the Bus: Creating Access

Automated announcements:

- External: route information
- Internal: stop information

Disability aware operators:

- Greet boarding passengers and confirm route
- Point out open seats
- Confirm stop location when asked

Crossing the Street: Challenges

Street crossing, especially at unsignalized crossings, is one of the greatest risks faced by travelers with vision loss. Even for highly skilled travelers, this task requires enormous focus. Additionally, much of what happens on the street is out of our hands.

Crossing the Street: Creating Access

- Transit operator attentiveness to disembarking riders
- Communication between transit and traffic engineering
- Pedestrian features that enhance safe crossings

Arrive at the Destination: Challenges

- Wayfinding from vehicle to destination and navigating obstacles like poles, planters, steps
- Locating the destination and correct entry door
- Internal wayfinding

Arrive at Destination: Creating Access

Door-to-door service:

- Position the vehicle for safest path to the building
- Offer to escort the rider to the building, offering sighted guiding
- If not escorting, give clear verbal directions about the location of the entrance

Travel training and O&M referrals.

The Power of Training, Attentiveness and Collaboration

“Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much”
— Helen Keller

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Questions





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