Transportation Providers: Services for Older Adults and People with Disabilities

July 9, 2020

Photo courtesy of NADTC 2019 Photo Contest 2nd Place Winner, MetroWest Regional Transit Authority, Framingham, Massachusetts
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Transportation Providers: Services for Older Adults and People with Disabilities

July 9, 2020
Method
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- KRC Research prepared an online survey for organizations that provide transportation services to older adults and people with disabilities.

- NADTC distributed a survey link to e-news subscribers, Area Agencies on Aging and Title VI Native American Aging Programs. The link was also sent to the National Rural Transit Assistance Program and National Center for Mobility Management asking that they forward the survey to provider organizations.

- The survey was conducted from November 12 to December 9, 2019. Two hundred and nineteen (219) individuals from more than 200 organizations from across the U.S. responded.
Method

This report focuses on organizations that provide transportation services to older adults and people with disabilities to learn about their:

– Experiences in providing services
– Communications and public awareness efforts
– Driver training and safety programs
– Coordination efforts
– Funding sources
– Challenges and unmet needs
– Opinions about new technology and the future
### Profile of Transportation Service Agencies and Companies That Responded

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Organizations</th>
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* Respondents were able to report operating in multiple states and regions, so this will not sum to 100% nationally.

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<td>Fares</td>
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<td>FTA Section 5311</td>
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<td>Donations</td>
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<td>Private funding</td>
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<td>City</td>
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<td>Regional across state lines</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statewide</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>Other (e.g. National, town, specific purpose)</td>
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<th>Riders Served</th>
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<td>Older adults</td>
<td>92</td>
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<td>People w/disabilities</td>
<td>84</td>
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<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>76</td>
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* Respondents were able to report operating in multiple states and regions, so this will not sum to 100% nationally.
Detailed Findings

Photo courtesy of Via Mobility, Boulder, Colorado
1 Transportation Landscape for Riders
Older adults and people with disabilities use transportation services for a wide variety of needs—many of which are essential to support community living.

### Transportation Uses
(Percent Often or Occasionally)

- **Medical, dental, and other health-related services**: 82% Often, 11% Occasionally, 93% Total
- **Grocery shopping**: 64% Often, 19% Occasionally, 84% Total
- **Pharmacy**: 55% Often, 26% Occasionally, 82% Total
- **Social services**: 47% Often, 31% Occasionally, 78% Total
- **Nutrition, restaurants, meal sites**: 52% Often, 25% Occasionally, 77% Total
- **Cultural, recreational, physical fitness, and social**: 38% Often, 38% Occasionally, 76% Total
- **Human services or counseling**: 43% Often, 30% Occasionally, 74% Total
- **Retail, banking, postal, barber/hairdresser**: 46% Often, 25% Occasionally, 71% Total
- **Work or employment**: 42% Often, 16% Occasionally, 58% Total
- **Education**: 26% Often, 22% Occasionally, 49% Total
- **Faith-based or religious locations and activities**: 21% Often, 25% Occasionally, 47% Total
- **Volunteer service work**: 16% Often, 29% Occasionally, 45% Total

Q22-33: How often are people using the services you provide in order to access each of the following: (n=219)
For those who do not drive, finding alternative transportation is difficult according to 77% of agencies—and the difficulty is strongly related to affordability.

Q4: How difficult is it for older adults and people with disabilities in your service area who do not drive to find transportation alternatives to driving? (n=219)

Difficulty of Finding Alternatives to Driving

- 77% difficult
- 28% Very difficult
- 49% Somewhat difficult
- 17% Not too difficult
- 5% Not at all difficult
- 1% Not sure

Difficulty of Finding Alternatives by Affordability

- Highly affordable: 13% Very difficult, 33% Somewhat difficult, 33% Not too difficult, 23% Not at all difficult
- Moderately affordable: 19% Very difficult, 58% Somewhat difficult, 20% Not too difficult, 2% Not at all difficult
- Not affordable: 49% Very difficult, 47% Somewhat difficult, 4% Not too difficult, 2% Not at all difficult
Only a quarter say transportation options are good—and only 3% very good. Less than 1 in 5 say options are highly affordable, and a third say not affordable.

**Availability of Transportation Options for Older Adults and People with Disabilities**
- **27%** Good
- **24%** Fair
- **15%** Poor
- **17%** Not sure

**Affordability of Transportation Options for Older Adults and People with Disabilities**
- **44%** Highly affordable
- **18%** Moderately affordable
- **33%** Not affordable
- **5%** Not sure

Q5: How would you rate the availability of a range of transportation alternatives in your community that meet the needs of older adults and people with disabilities? (n=219)
Q6: How would you rate the affordability of transportation alternatives for most individuals in your community that meet the needs of older adults and people with disabilities? (n=219)
2 Transportation Service Agencies
Nearly a third of organizations described themselves as public transit agencies, and most are county or regionally based.

### Types of Organizations

- **Public transit**: 30%
- **Area agency on aging**: 21%
- **Human service agency**: 18%
- **Volunteer driver program**: 16%
- **Other nonprofit**: 14%
- **Senior center**: 13%
- **Non-emergency medical transportation contractor**: 12%
- **Aging and disability resource center**: 10%
- **Council of government**: 5%
- **Community action agency**: 5%
- **Center for independent living**: 4%
- **Taxi or trans. network company**: 3%
- **Housing provider**: 2%
- **For profit provider**: 2%

### Best Description for Area Services Provided

- **Single county**: 38%
- **Multiple counties**: 36%
- **Region within the state**: 22%
- **City**: 19%
- **Regional across state lines**: 7%
- **Statewide**: 5%
- **Other**: 8%

Q34: Which of the following best describes your company or agency? (showing those of at least 2%, n=219)  
Q39: Which of the following best describes the area in which your organization provides transportation services to older adults and people living with disabilities? (n=219)
Most agencies offer rider assistance—most commonly, assistance with embarking and disembarking. About a third provide more personal assistance.

94% of agencies provide rider assistance

Q61: Which of the following best describes the level of rider assistance you provide? Select all that apply. (n=219)

Type of Assistance Provided

- Assistance with boarding and alighting: 77%
- Assistance with use of ramp/lift: 75%
- Door-to-door: 70%
- Tie-down assistance for mobility devices: 68%
- Companion/escort: 35%
- Hand-to-hand: 33%
- Door-through-door: 28%
- Other: 5%
Three-quarters of the organizations serve both older adults and people with disabilities.

Q1: Does your program provide transportation services to older adults and/or people with disabilities? (n=219) Q37: What percentage of all your rides are for each of these following groups? (n=varies; older adults=201; riders with disabilities=184, women=219)

- **Both**: 76%
- **Older adults**: 16%
- **People with disabilities**: 8%

Of those who provide services to these groups...

- **68%** of rides are for older adults (60+)
- **48%** of rides are for people with disabilities

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Q1: Does your program provide transportation services to older adults and/or people with disabilities? (n=219) Q37: What percentage of all your rides are for each of these following groups? (n=varies; older adults=201; riders with disabilities=184, women=219)
A majority of those who serve people with disabilities are providing transportation for riders who use mobility devices.

Q36: IF HAVE RIDERS WITH DISABILITIES: Which of the following best describes the disabilities of your riders? People who use...

- Use other mobility devices: 87%
- Use wheelchairs: 85%
- Use powerchairs: 68%
- Are blind or have vision loss: 80%
- Have intellectual disabilities: 77%
- Have dementia: 58%
- Have other disabilities: 21%
- All of the above: 7%

(\(n=184\))
Roughly equal portions of agencies provide services 5 days a week, every weekday, or specific days, for an average of 12.8 service hours per day.

### Days Per Week Service is Provided
(among those who provide Dial-A-Ride or Fixed Route Service)

- Monday: 94%
- Tuesday: 94%
- Wednesday: 94%
- Thursday: 94%
- Friday: 94%
- Saturday: 58%
- Sunday: 36%

Weekend service is much less common

### Hours of Service Per Service Day
(among those who provide Dial-A-Ride or Fixed Route Service)

- 71% provide 8 to 16 hours per service day
- 12.8 Average number of hours per service day

Q59: On which days do you provide service? (n=101)  Q60: Most frequently, what are your hours of service per day? (n=96)
Most agencies offer free or reduced fares, most commonly dependent on the rider’s age or disability.

Nearly 9 in 10 Offer Free or Reduced Fares

- 38% Free
- 33% Free and Reduced
- 17% Reduced
- 11% No discount

85% have specific criteria for riders to receive these lower or no cost fares.

Criteria for Free or Reduced Fare

- Age: 75%
- Disability: 60%
- Income: 32%
- Other: 24%

Q71: Does your program offer free or reduced fare rides? (n=219)  
Q72: Do recipients of free or reduced fare rides have to meet specific eligibility criteria? (n=193)  
Q73: Which criteria do your riders need to meet to be eligible for free or reduced fare rides? Select all that apply: (n=164)
3 Service Funding
Most agencies receive funding from several sources. State, FTA Section 5310, and Older Americans Act funds are primary sources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All Sources of Funding</th>
<th>Primary Sources of Funding</th>
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<td>State</td>
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<td>FTA Section 5310</td>
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<td>Fares</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gaming</td>
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</table>

Q42-57: Which of the following are sources of funding, both large and small, for the transportation services your organization provides to older adults and/or people with disabilities? (n=219)

Q58: Which of these funding sources are your primary sources for the transportation services your organization provides to older adults and/or people with disabilities? (n=219)
Agencies receive funding from a patchwork of sources, ranging from 5 to 11 sources.

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</table>

- Significantly more likely to be a primary source of funding than other types of organizations

Q34: Which of the following best describes your company or agency? (showing those of at least 2%, n=219)  
Q58: Which of these funding sources are your primary sources for the transportation services your organization provides to older adults and/or people with disabilities? (n=219)
4 Communications and Marketing
Two-thirds of agencies have a public awareness campaign, utilizing a wide array of channels to reach riders, including both passive and active.

Q62: Does your agency have a public awareness campaign or marketing effort to promote your services? (n=219)  
Q63: Which of the following methods do you use to promote or educate potential riders about your transportation services? (n=144)
5 Drivers and Driver Safety Training
While a majority of agencies exclusively use paid drivers, those that use volunteer drivers are significantly less likely to provide formal driver training.

### Paid or Volunteer Drivers

- **57%** Paid
- **21%** Volunteer
- **16%** Both
- **7%** Not sure

### Who Offers Formal Driver Training?

- **62%** Of those who only use volunteer drivers
- **85%** Of those who only use paid drivers
- **63%** Of those who use both paid and volunteer drivers provide training to both

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Q77: Does your program have paid or volunteer vehicle operators? (n=219), Q78: Does your agency have a formal driver training program for all vehicle operators? (n=204)
Inter-agency Service Area Coordination
Most agencies coordinate with other service providers in their area, resulting in a somewhat coordinated network of transportation services.

Do You Coordinate With Other Providers In Your Service Area?

- 65% Coordinate
- 29% Do not
- 6% Not sure

Levels of Transportation Services Coordination in Community

- Very coordinated: 15%
- Somewhat coordinated: 52%
- Not too coordinated: 20%
- Not at all coordinated: 11%
- Not sure: 2%

Q81: Do you coordinate your transportation activities with any other transportation providers within or outside of your service area? (n=219), Q82: How well coordinated are transportation services in your community? (n=219)
Thirty-two percent of organizations have a Mobility Manager position.

Q83: Does your agency have a Mobility Manager position? (n=219), Q84: Does your agency anticipate adding a Mobility Manager position? (n=131)
7 Service Challenges
Nearly half maintain data on unmet requests, which are most frequently related to hours or service area – but many also limit access based on the trip purpose.

Q113: Does your agency/program track/maintain data on unmet transportation needs in your community, e.g. requested rides that you cannot provide? (n=219), Q114: Which types of transportation needs for older adults and people with disabilities are not adequately met in your area? Select all that apply. (n=219)

Types of Unmet Needs

- Rides on weekends or evenings: 77%
- Rides to destinations outside the jurisdiction served by your program: 70%
- Trips to social and/or religious events: 56%
- Other shopping trips: 34%
- Transportation to medical appointments: 32%
- Rides to the grocery store: 32%
- Other: 2%
- None of the above: 7%
What barriers does your organization currently face in offering these services?

“We are trying to provide 2020 service demand on 2013 funding levels. Staff haven't had raises in 5 years.”

“No drivers or staff that want to work on weekends.”

 “[Lack of] accessible vehicles and trip software.”

“Not enough volunteer drivers or lift equipped vehicles.”

“Lack of coordination with local social service agencies.”
The top three unmet requests are fairly evenly distributed between limitations by trip type, service area/distance, and hours or frequency.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Unmet Requests for Service</th>
<th>Trip Type</th>
<th>Service Area/Distance</th>
<th>Hours/Frequency</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Trip type</td>
<td>Medical transportation 12%</td>
<td>Out of service area 18%</td>
<td>Weekend service 15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service area, distance</td>
<td>Non-medical rides 9%</td>
<td>Rural / crossing county lines 14%</td>
<td>Evening service 13%</td>
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<td>Hours, frequency</td>
<td>Para-transit 6%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fixed/regular trips 7%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>On-demand trips 5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q122: What requests for service have you received in the last two years that you have been unable to implement into your transportation program? (n=219)
What requests for service have you received in the last two years that you have been unable to implement into your transportation program?

“Long-distance trips are cost prohibitive.”

“Night and Sunday Service. Additional service to rural areas.”

“Many requests for transportation to shopping, nutrition, socialization, court appointments, etc.”

“Paratransit service to a different county.”

“People without Medicaid needing rides.”
Future Opportunities and Impacts
“Diversifying funding sources that will allow us to serve individuals that are not elderly or disabled that need transportation assistance, especially in very rural counties.”

“Fundraising for staff positions to grow & maintain volunteer driver availability.”

“Expand number of vehicles.”

“Coordinating commuter service from another city within the county.”

“Expansion of hours to Sundays.”
Snapshot:
FTA Section 5310

Photo courtesy of INCOG Area Agency on Aging, Tulsa, Oklahoma
Section 5310 funded organizations more frequently provide assistance with boarding and usage of mobility devices.

96% of agencies that receive Section 5310 funding provide rider assistance.

Q61: Which of the following best describes the level of rider assistance you provide? Select all that apply. (n=219)

- Assistance with boarding and alighting
- Assistance with use of ramp/lift
- Door-to-door
- Tie-down assistance for mobility devices
- Companion/escort
- Hand-to-hand
- Door-through-door

**Type of Assistance Provided**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assistance Type</th>
<th>Section 5310 Funded</th>
<th>No Section 5310 Funded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assistance with boarding and alighting</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance with use of ramp/lift</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Door-to-door</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tie-down assistance for mobility devices</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companion/escort</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand-to-hand</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Door-through-door</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Agencies funded by Section 5310 more often have a Mobility Manager position.

Q83: Does your agency have a Mobility Manager position? (n=219)

- Yes: 45%
- No: 74%
- Not Sure: 8%

Section 5310 funded
No Section 5310 funding
Agencies that receive Section 5310 funding are more likely to coordinate with other transportation providers.

**Q81: Do you coordinate your transportation activities with any other transportation providers within or outside of your service area? (n=219)**

**Do You Coordinate With Other Providers?**

- **Yes:** 73% (56% Section 5310 funded, 20% No Section 5310 funding)
- **No:** 38% (6% Section 5310 funded, 7% No Section 5310 funding)
- **Not Sure:** 7% (Section 5310 funded, No Section 5310 funding)
Questions
Call toll-free: 866.983.3222
Email: contact@nadtc.org
Web: www.nadtc.org

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