# EVERY RIDE COUNTS

## Campaign Guidance

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# Guidance on Effective Promotion of Transportation Services

Transportation providers spend considerable effort to reach riders and potential riders, including developing and improving websites, creating comprehensive lists of transportation options, using social media and traditional methods to get out the word about their services, and attending local events. However, success in reaching those who most need the information is mixed in part because most older people, people with disabilities and their caregivers go first to family, friends and neighbors to learn about community transportation options.  This resource builds on NADTC's Every Ride Counts (ERC) Campaign to offer guidance on effective communications approaches to transportation programs, mobility managers and information and referral providers. It was developed with extensive input from an Expert Panel whose eight members have expertise in transportation, mobility management and information and referral/assistance and the results of a brief online survey of registered users of ERC materials. All images provided in this publication are from the Every Ride Counts Campaign. The messages, materials and photos can be found at the Every Ride Counts webpage on the NADTC website.

## Building a Successful Promotion Strategy

NADTC conducted a survey to better understand the complexities of transportation promotion and to explore the audiences, messages, strategies, and materials that are being created and used by organizations across the country. In the following sections, we offer recommendations for implementing a transportation promotion strategy, informed by communications best practices identified in the survey and the expert panel.

## Identifying Your Audience

**This section introduces ways to identify your primary and secondary audiences, including a list of potential secondary audience groups to consider when building your campaign.**

Primary users of local transportation services include: older adults, people of all ages with disabilities, individuals with lower incomes, and individuals without access to a reliable vehicle. We recognize that every organization is different - serving unique populations in a variety of geographic locations with a range of resources and capacities. Identifying your **primary audience, including both current and prospective riders, as well as secondary audiences who need to know about your program, is a critical first step to conducting transportation promotion**.

**Current Riders** Taking an inventory of your typical clientele will help you to begin to understand your primary users. If your program collects demographic and geographic information about your users, it can be helpful to review this data to see what common identifiers rise to the top. Do your users skew older? Are more of your users' seeking rides to locations such as medical appointments or the grocery store? Digging into this data can help to create a better picture of the audience that you serve which will in turn inform your strategy to reach these individuals.

**Potential Users** People who are not yet current riders and their families are also an essential part of your primary audience. Who can you identify that may need to use your services in the future or who

may at some point need to arrange a ride for a family member? Are you effectively serving everyone in your community who needs transportation and could take advantage of your services? Pay attention to underserved groups or people who live in more remote areas. Consider tailoring messages and outreach to engage these individuals and appeal to their distinct needs as well.

**Secondary Audiences** Secondary audiences include organizations and programs that serve both your current and potential users or businesses and other entities that they frequent. Such organizations can serve as intermediaries to help you get the word out on transportation services. Many service organizations, civic groups, and churches will appreciate the opportunity to learn more about transportation and will be willing to share your information with their clients and the people with whom they have contact. Secondary audiences to consider might include:

- Area Agencies on Aging and other organizations that serve older adults
- Centers for Independent Living and other organizations that serve people with disabilities
- Community and Cultural Centers
- Geriatric Care Managers
- Grocery stores and food pantries
- Home-health professionals
- Hospitals and medical professionals
- Housing coordinators
- Libraries
- Lions Clubs
- Local businesses, particularly those who hire people with disabilities
- Local community-based organizations
- Local government
- Local law enforcement
- Local nonprofit organizations
- Local religious organizations
- Organizations that serve diverse populations
- Other transportation providers
- Public assistance offices such as Social Security
- Public health professionals and advocates
- Rotary Clubs
- Schools and colleges
- Social workers/case workers
- Transportation advocacy groups
- Veterans organizations

Identifying the primary and secondary audiences relevant to your organization and your community will prepare you to begin crafting tailored messages, strategies, and materials that are appropriately aligned with each audience group.
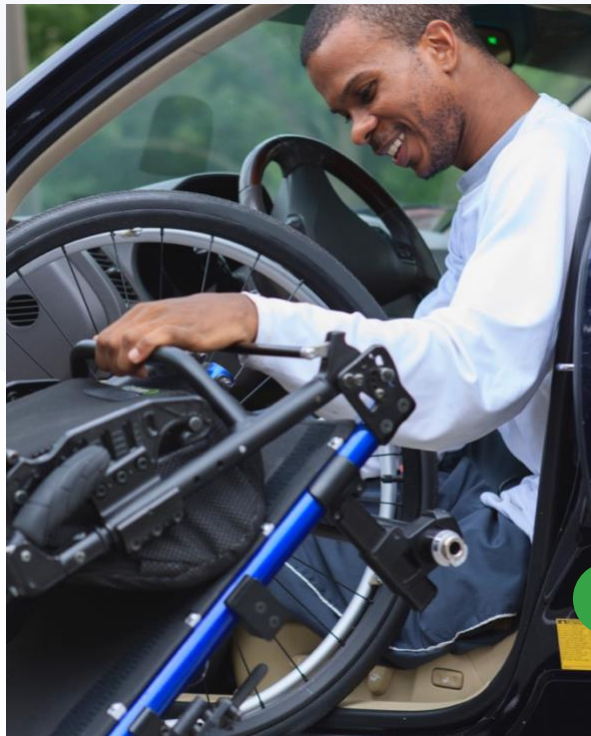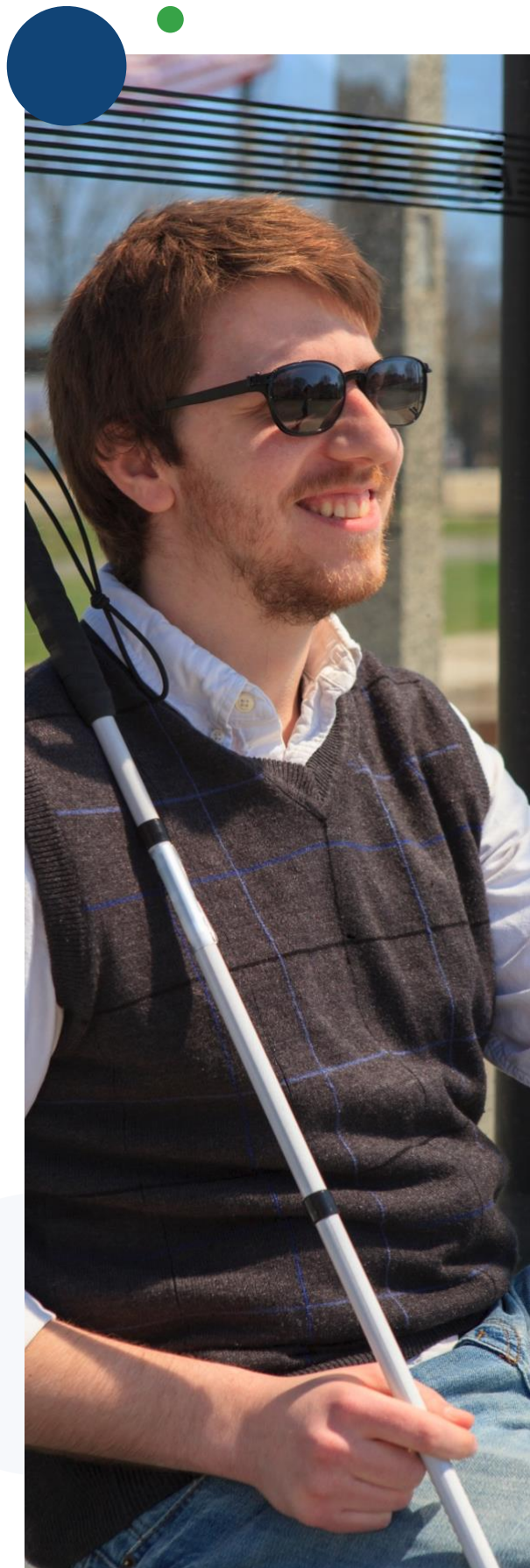
# Creating Strong Messages

**This section introduces how to craft strong messages that resonate with your primary audience and encourage your secondary audiences to promote your services.**

With your primary and secondary audiences in mind, you can begin to develop distinct messages for each. As each audience interacts with your organization in a different way (e.g., older adults use your service while local organizations may promote or refer potential riders to your service), it is important to develop a relevant message for each group with an appropriate call to action that appeals to that audience. Messages should always be succinct, clear, thoughtful, and speak directly to a need of the target audience.
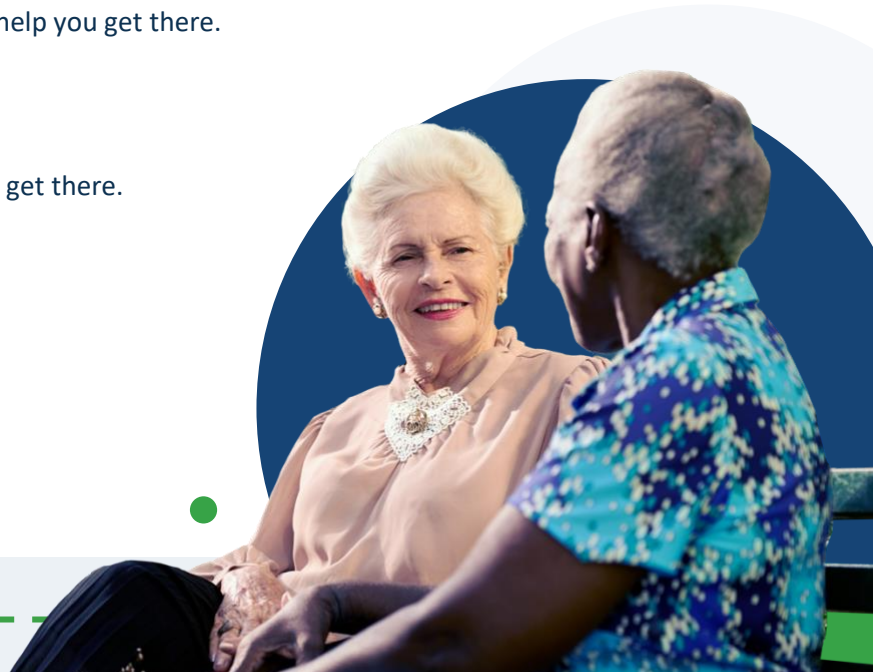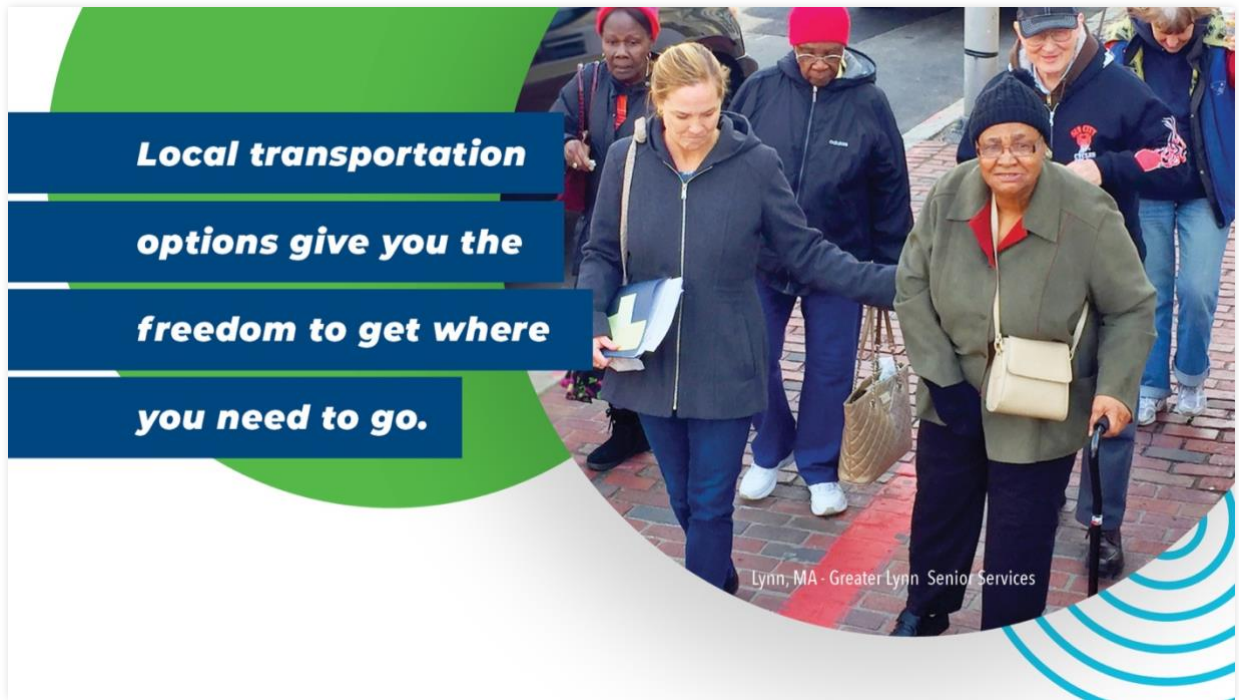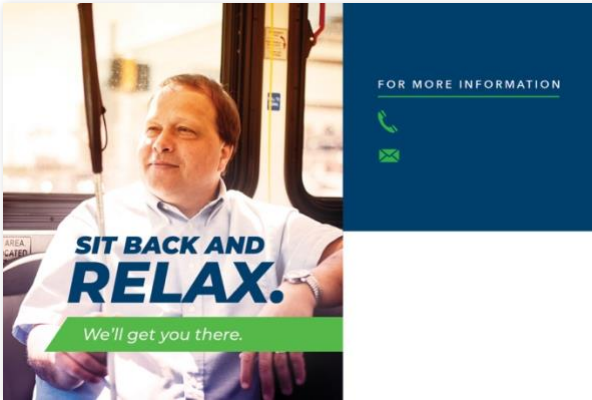
**Primary Audience Messages**

When speaking directly to your primary audience, consider what you have learned about these individuals from both the review of your current user data and the analysis of your prospective users. Think about developing messages that you feel will appeal to your unique clientele and directly meet their needs. Consider the messages that will resonate with your regular riders as well as those that will connect with your prospective riders. Messages can also be used to broadly advertise services or to promote a new service, changes in scheduling, or relay any other important and relevant details to your primary audience.

Our expert panels also identified several key themes to consider incorporating into your messaging. These include messages related to independence, accessibility, ease of use, cost, connectedness, support, community, and availability. Depending on your unique community and offerings, your organization may consider which of these themes are more applicable or relevant to your users or currently underserved groups that you are trying to reach.

NADTC's Every Ride Counts Campaign offers several messages with accompanying materials to help transportation organizations get started. These include:

- Local transportation options give you the freedom to get where you need to go.
- Need to get somewhere? It's easier than you think.
- We can help you get where you need to go.
- You know where you want to go. We'll help you get there.
- Get where you want to go.
- Staying connected is a call away.
- You have places to go. We can help you get there.
- Sit back and relax. We'll get you there.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

SIT BACK AND
RELAX.
We'll get you there.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

WE CAN HELP YOU
GET WHERE YOU
NEED TO GO.



Local transportation
options give you the
freedom to get where
you need to go.

Lynn, MA - Greater Lynn Senior Services

**Secondary Audience Messages**

When it comes to secondary audiences, the message is different. The goal in this outreach is to relay the importance of your services, to clearly define who you are hoping to reach by partnering with the secondary audience, and to build a connection that will motivate the secondary audience to advance your mission by sharing your resources.

Your organization and your secondary audiences may serve similar clientele. It is likely that you are both motivated to improve the well-being and connectedness of the same audience groups. Your ask to these entities should appeal to your shared desire to serve these populations while reinforcing the relevance of your services to their audiences and encouraging them to share your information and materials.

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# Spreading the Word

**This section outlines several owned, shared, earned, and paid media strategies and offers recommendations for creating thoughtful and inclusive materials.**

After developing key messages for your audiences, it is time to decide on the appropriate promotional strategies and materials to use for your campaign.

Capacity, internal resources, and other organizational factors will clearly determine your organization's approach to transportation promotion. However, there are a wide range of strategies and platforms to consider that can fit within the specific constraints of your organization.

In marketing, we consider four main media types - owned media, shared media, earned media, and paid media - when crafting a campaign. Your organization may consider each of these media types in building your promotional strategy, based on your individual resources and budget.

**Owned Media**

Owned media refers to any type of content that is created and owned by your organization. The opportunities for owned media are limited only by your creativity! A few examples include -

- Blog posts
- Events hosted by your organization
- Graphics and infographics
- Photos, GIFs, and videos
- Podcasts
- Print materials (e.g., brochures, flyers, posters)
- Rider and volunteer testimonials
- Webinars
- Website content

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**Shared Media**

Shared media refers to any content that is shared across third party platforms or across multiple owners. One of the primary shared media sources is social media where others can interact with your content by sharing, commenting, or liking. Another is participating in events hosted by others, which is a great way to spread the word and align your organization with other like-minded organizations. Some shared media opportunities to consider in your campaign include:

- Community or partner events

- Facebook

- Instagram

- Linked-In

- Pinterest

- Social media toolkits (sharing graphics or posts with relevant parties to post to their social media channels about your organization)

- TikTok

- Twitter

- YouTube

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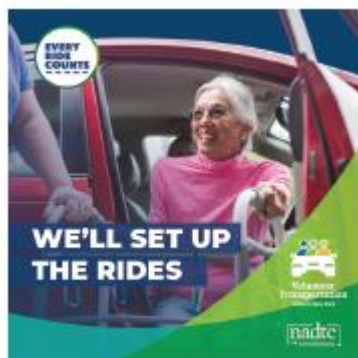
**Earned Media**

Earned media refers to any content that is created by someone else in support of your services and that does not require you to pay. This is content that you "earn" through public relations or outreach. This can be a great option for organizations on a tight budget yet still have a great story to tell about their services. Some earned media opportunities include press coverage from local reporters or blog writers, being featured in a local list of resources on a community blog or other resource center, or simply word of mouth from your users or advocates to prospective users.

**Paid Media**

Paid media refers to any content that you must pay to promote. Budget clearly dictates the extent of an organization's ability to participate in paid media promotion. However, there are a wide range of options for every budget and target audience. Some paid media opportunities to explore for your transportation promotion campaign include:

- Direct mailers

- Event sponsorships

- Newspaper or magazine ads

- Out of home advertising materials (e.g., billboards, bus ads, posters, and more)

- Paid social media and digital advertising (e.g., Facebook or Instagram ads, display ads)

- Podcast advertising

- Public Service Announcements (check with local media sources to see if there are any opportunities for free non-profit PSA placements)

- Sponsored content or Mat Release (paid placement of an article or content in a news media outlet or blog)

- Traditional or streaming radio and TV ads

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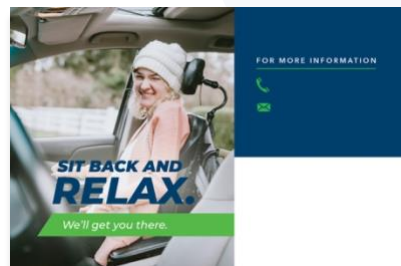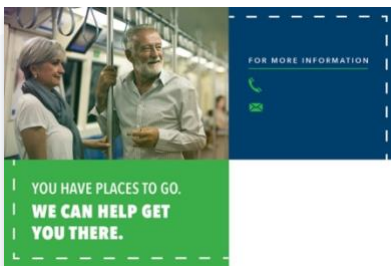
Based on your unique needs and type of users, you can build a strategy that implements one or several of the tactics listed above. Consider where your primary audience consumes their information. Does your audience have regular internet access? Do they frequent a particular store or route in the community? Also consider what formats your secondary audience is most likely to pass on to prospective users on your behalf.

Accessibility and inclusion are also important when developing materials. When drafting materials, always incorporate accessibility features from the outset including using plain language and alt-text for images. If relevant, consider developing materials translated into other languages or formats, such as large print, Braille, or video versions with ASL interpreters, to maximize the accessibility and reach of your materials. When selecting imagery, choose photos that depict the diversity of your primary users to ensure that viewers can see themselves reflected in your materials.

# Tracking Success

**This section outlines metrics that can be used to track the impact of your campaign.**

As you test out various strategies, it can be useful to track the impact of your campaign to help assess the response to your messages and materials. Tracking success may also help strengthen partnership opportunities or open grant funding possibilities as you showcase transportation services in your community.

While success looks different for each unique campaign, there are several metrics you can track to help develop a clearer picture of your campaign's impact. These include:

- Attendance and engagement at events
- Blog post views
- Distribution of materials to partners
- Donations
- Emails or chats
- Following on social media
- Follows, impressions, views, likes, mentions, shares and comments on social media
- Impressions and clicks on digital or social media advertising
- Impressions on out of home advertising
- New partnerships
- New riders
- Number of referrals from secondary audience groups
- Phone calls
- Podcast listens
- Press coverage
- Requests for information
- Sharing of materials by partners
- Video or webinar views
- Website visits

# Survey Summary

The NADTC Transportation Survey received inputs from 58 respondents across the transportation (58.6%), aging (55.2%), and disability (24.1%) fields. Those who selected other (19%) represented mobility management, advocacy groups, and other community services. Respondents serve a diversity of communities, including rural (65.5%), suburban (55.2%), urban (50%), tribal (10.3%), and frontier (6.9%).

According to the responses, older people (84.5%), older people with disabilities (79.3%), individuals with lower incomes (62.1%), and individuals without reliable access to a vehicle (56.9%) were identified as the primary users of transportation across the respondents' communities.

Respondents agreed that several secondary audience groups are important to engage, including organizations that serve people with disabilities (98.28%), organizations that serve older people (94.8%), local community-based organizations (89.7%), local nonprofit organizations (84.5%), social workers (75.9%), case workers (75.9%), and local religious organizations (74.1%).

The top barriers or challenges that organizations face in promoting transportation included limited budget for promotion or creation of materials (53.5%), demand for services already outpaces capacity to fill rides (50%), and staff capacity (37.9%). Despite facing these challenges, 50% of respondents regularly conduct public awareness and outreach activities to promote transportation services.

Respondents also agreed that there are several useful ways to promote transportation with the top responses including social media posts (72.4%), social and digital advertising materials (70.7%), hosting or attending community events (69%), and flyers (67.2%). The survey also showed that materials in different languages and formats would be beneficial, particularly materials in large print (59.6%), Braille (23.4%), Mandarin or other Chinese dialects (23.4%), and Vietnamese (21.3%).

Websites (82.8%), in-person events (81%), and Facebook (75.9%) were the top platforms used for promoting transportation services.

Finally, respondents felt that the most important themes to relay in transportation promotion messaging and materials are independence (82.8%), accessibility (75.9%), cost (70.7%), and ease (70.7%).

## Acknowledgements

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- **Cynthia Alarico**, Fairfax County (VA) Neighborhood and Community Services
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- **Bobbi Craig**, Center for Independent Living
- **Sara Fought**, Center for Information Services, JEWISH COUNCIL FOR THE AGING
- **Sierra Royster**, Association of Rural Independent Living Programs (APRIL)
- **Danny Schnathorst,** HIRTA Public Transit
- **Sara Tribe Clark**, Eldercare Locator & DIAL, USAging

## Resources

NADTC's Every Ride Counts campaign offers several free resources to help organizations to get started including photos, postcards, flyers, infographics, posters and social graphics. All of these materials can be found at the Every Ride Counts webpage.

All photography in this document can be found in the NADTC Photo Gallery.

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**The National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC)** is a program funded by the Federal Transit Administration and administered by Easterseals and USAging with guidance from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living.

NADTC's mission is to increase accessible transportation options for older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers nationwide.