

Oklahoma Dept. of Transportation (ODOT)



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The Oklahoma Department of Transportation employs a range of best practices to enhance mobility and accessibility for older adults and people with disabilities. These strategies use Section 5310 and other innovative funding solutions, coordinated planning, collaborative partnerships, training and technical support.

BEST PRACTICES

- Use an analysis of locally coordinated public transit-human services transportation plans to prioritize goals and guide decision making.
- Identify common transportation issues, challenges, and barriers among transportation providers across state regions and brainstorm with them how DOT might assist through such activities as hosting trainings, recommending resources, or identifying funding opportunities.
- Encourage transportation providers to form coordinating agreements and provide assistance on ways to overcome cross jurisdictional issues.
- Help mobility managers generate local projects and look for partners and opportunities for coordination with member agencies of the Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM) that support grants to fund transportation.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Oklahoma's administration of FTA Section 5310 has evolved. In 1975, the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (DHS) managed FTA Section 5310 funding, which was directed to human service agencies, nonprofit organizations and other public agencies for purchasing vehicles. Between 2008 and 2012, Indian Nations Council of Governments (INCOG) became the direct recipient of 5310 for the Tulsa transportation management service area. In 2019 Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) became the direct recipient of Section 5310 funds for rural and small urban areas statewide, and in

2024 EMBARK in Oklahoma City became the designated recipient for its urbanized area.

In 2021, ODOT staff began offering training and technical assistance to help improve coordination efforts among providers in Oklahoma. Subrecipients are required to submit coordinated public transit-human services transportation plans and meet regularly with transportation providers in their regions to better coordinate their services.

Currently, ODOT's Section 5310 funding supports capital expenses for vehicles and vehicle-related expenses, including buses, vans, radios and communication equipment, vehicle shelters, wheelchair lifts and restraints, and preventative maintenance in rural and small urban areas. Since assuming responsibility for Section 5310 funding, ODOT has rolled out a mobility management program with a director who oversees mobility managers located in five regional transportation planning organization (RTPO) areas across the state plus two in subregions that incorporate urbanized areas (UZAs). Because each RTPO is so large, however, ODOT is considering subdividing some of the mobility management service areas to better serve communities with a goal to eventually have as many as 23 mobility managers statewide.

ODOT defines mobility management as short-range planning and management activities, supporting projects for improving coordination among public transportation and other transportation service providers to expand availability of services. Mobility managers fulfill numerous critical roles, including:

- Working with individuals, organizations and communities to identify and address unmet transportation needs and improve access to transportation.
- Hosting travel trainings and developing strategies to improve rider and caregiver experiences.

FUNDING ●

During the first year of ODOT's mobility management program, ODOT designated 10 percent of state allocated Section 5310 funds to administer the program. This percentage has grown to 30 percent for the purpose of increasing coordination of subrecipients' 5310 vehicles, maximizing service availability and increasing efficiency. ODOT proposes to add mobility

- Providing the general public with information about transportation and resources, which often involves creating materials to clearly communicate within communities.
- Reaching out to non-transportation agencies, businesses, non-profit organizations, health departments and medical services, disability centers, etc. to educate them and connect them with area transportation providers. In turn, invite representatives of these organizations to coordination meetings to have conversations with transportation providers.
- Meeting with transportation providers monthly or semi-monthly.
- Convening local "transportation chats." So far, two regions are hosting public forums to provide updates and education on transportation topics and listen to attendees. These meetings sometimes reveal gaps in services.

ODOT has developed a toolkit with agendas, worksheets, maps and more to help lead agencies and mobility managers in each region run meetings as well as a dashboard for them to record tasks, outreach efforts, and other data and outcomes from their meetings. The dashboards keep ODOT informed of what's happening in each region.

management to the state budget to reduce the allocation of FTA funding for mobility management, thus enabling ODOT to provide a higher percentage of Section 5310 funds directly to transportation providers. State funds would also help meet Section 5310 match requirements.

ODOT's Section 5310 funding cycle for subrecipients for the remaining 70 percent

of allocated funding is held annually and competitively. Also, ODOT staff make an effort to inform potential subrecipients that they will be ineligible for funding without a coordinated plan and regular attendance at regional coordination meetings.

ODOT works closely with mobility managers to promote Section 5310 funding opportunities. While the full application process is not online, ODOT distributes downloadable pdfs that subrecipients can upload when they are completed. Eventually, ODOT wants to

synch its funding cycle with EMBARK and INCOG.

In addition, ODOT supports regional efforts to identify funds to meet match requirements for local projects, for example, working with mobility managers to identify possible funding partners through member agencies of the Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM) that support funding transportation. ODOT's ultimate goal is to train and prepare transportation providers so they are ready and meet eligibility requirements to apply for operating funds, not just capital funds, under Section 5310.

COORDINATION/PARTNERSHIPS

ODOT's Section 5310 mobility management program funds mobility management statewide. EMBARK has a separate mobility management program, and INCOG's program is scheduled to start in 2025, but both are funded through ODOT's mobility management program and together the three Section 5310 recipients coordinate to prevent duplication of services. In fact, tribes, which may have their own mobility management programs under FTA Section 5311 for rural public transportation, also coordinate with ODOT's statewide mobility management program.

For the past several years, ODOT has worked with its mobility managers to create overall coordinated plans for each region. In 2023, ODOT helped to develop five coordinated plans. All subrecipients in those regions were required to participate in plan development, and ODOT reviews these locally coordinated public transit-human services transportation plans to prioritize goals and guide their decision making. For example, ODOT looks for

common transportation issues, challenges, and barriers across state regions, then identifies whether they need assistance with trainings, recommends resources, and/or identifies possible funding opportunities. Common issues identified through this process include lack of drivers, inadequate technology and providing rides that cross jurisdictional boundaries. To address the cross-boundary issue, in particular, ODOT works with mobility managers to facilitate discussions between transportation providers and create coordinating agreements.

In addition, ODOT requires Section 5310 subrecipients to attend regular meetings throughout the year to enhance coordination. Each region has a lead transportation provider in charge of meetings who is supported by the region's mobility manager. Regional meetings are made public on the ODOT and mobility managers' websites, and announcements are emailed to subrecipients, transportation providers and others.

PROGRAM IMPACT ●

ODOT has based its mobility management program on practices adopted from Ohio DOT's successful regional approach. ODOT recognizes that coordinated plans are valuable tools; staff take the information gleaned from regions to meet with state agencies, tribes, transit and rail associations, universities, state-level foundations and nonprofits, resulting in projects from hospitals and other organizations that, in turn, are communicated back to the regions. Broad communication has also led to new

organizations applying for Section 5310 funds to purchase their own vehicles.

When mobility managers generate projects in their communities, they are aided in their search for matching grants by a list of CCAM member agencies that support transportation supplied by ODOT. ODOT assists in identifying opportunities for fund-braiding, which is using funds from one federal program to meet the match requirements of another. The result is a truly dynamic mobility management network.



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Who We Are

Established in 2015, the NADTC is a federally funded technical assistance center administered by Easterseals and USAgings based in Washington, DC.

The **National Aging and Disability Transportation Center** is funded through a cooperative agreement of Easterseals, USAgings, and the U.S Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration, with guidance from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living.

USAgings is the national association representing and supporting the network of Area Agencies on Aging and advocating for the Title VI Native American Aging Programs. Our members help older adults and people with disabilities live with optimal health, well-being, independence and dignity in their homes and communities. USAgings and our members work to improve the quality of life and health of older adults and people with disabilities, including supporting people with chronic illness, people living with dementia, family caregivers and others who want to age well at home and in the community. Together, we are ensuring that all people can age well. Our members are the local leaders that develop, coordinate and deliver a wide range of home and community-based services, including information and referral/assistance, case management, home-delivered and congregate meals, in-home services, caregiver supports, transportation, evidence-based health and wellness programs, long-term care ombudsman programs and more.

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