

# Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments



## BEST PRACTICES

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) 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, collaborative partnerships, and data-driven approaches to create sustainable and effective transportation programs.

*Photo courtesy of Metropolitan Washington COG*

- Works closely with transportation committees to develop a unified vision for regional transportation.
- Uses the coordinated plan to establish evaluation criteria for competitively awarding funds.
- Maintains a comprehensive website and hosts trainings to inform the public as well as current and potential applicants of Section 5310 funding priorities, opportunities, and selection criteria.
- Evaluates and funds a variety of projects to meet the region's needs, including vehicle expenses, operating costs and innovative services like travel training and mobility management.
- Collects data from projects to determine effectiveness; uses findings to recommend changes for future funding opportunities.

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Metropolitan Washington COG is a direct recipient of FTA Section 5310 funds. The COG serves all of Washington, D.C., and 23 other jurisdictions in Maryland and Virginia. Organizations and local governments located within jurisdictions comprising the Washington—Arlington, DC—VA—MD Urbanized Area (UZA) are eligible subrecipients of Section 5310 funds.

The COG is advised by a board of directors and the National Capital Region

Transportation Planning Board (TPB). The TPB is the federally designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Washington DC metropolitan region and is staffed by COG employees. The TPB is responsible for the region's Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan, which is updated every four years. Every two years, COG/TPB conducts an open solicitation throughout the region for applications from prior Section 5310 subrecipients and potential new

subrecipients for its grants awarded through a competitive process.

The close coordination between COG and the TPB, and their shared vision and goals for the region, allows Enhanced Mobility staff, who work specifically on Section 5310 funding, to approach program implementation through the lens of its Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan. This plan serves as the framework for COG's Enhanced Mobility grant program. The plan identifies the unmet needs of the community of older adults and people with disabilities and prioritizes these to guide the selection of Section 5310 grant awards.

The Section 5310 funding solicitation is posted on the COG website, promoted

through committees and subcommittees of the TPB (e.g., Access for All Advisory Committee, the Long-Range Planning Task Force and Community Advisory Committee) and sent directly to past recipients. COG/TPB conducts an initial review of the applications to ensure alignment with selection criteria, including coordination among agencies, responsiveness to the Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan, institutional capacity, project feasibility, regional need and customer focus. Following internal review, applications are forwarded to a selection committee comprised of DC Council members, local representatives from Maryland and Virginia and others who score and make recommendations to the TPB, which approves the final awards.

## FUNDING

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Most subrecipients of Section 5310 funding are nonprofit organizations, including Area Agencies on Aging, the ARC, Jewish Councils for the Aging, the Chinese Cultural and Community Service Center, Boat People SOS, and other organizations serving older adults and people with disabilities. About 50 percent of Section 5310 funding typically is approved to purchase or replace vehicles. Past project selections for accessible vehicles include Leisure World, a shared-ride transportation service for the City of Hyattsville, MD, and the Fairfax Mobility Access Project of the Fairfax County, VA, Neighborhood & Community Services.

COG/TPB also considers other capital and operating projects that support innovation

and out-of-the-box thinking, as reflected in past Section 5310 projects to support construction of ADA-compliant sidewalks and bus stops in Rockville, MD; a mobility management program operated by Capitol Hill Village in DC; and a travel training program operated by the Dulles Area Transportation Association (DATA) for Fairfax County, NV Rides and The ARC of Northern Virginia. Capitol Hill Village and DATA also use their Section 5310 funding to increase awareness of transportation options and expand the availability of transportation services to underserved populations, including older adults, veterans, and individuals with disabilities.

## COORDINATION/PARTNERSHIPS

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COG/TPB has broad goals related to mobility, accessibility, sustainability, livability and prosperity. Working with local, state, regional, and federal partners,

the TPB coordinates future plans, provides data and analysis to decision makers, and coordinates regional programs to advance safety, land-use coordination, and more.

The Enhanced Mobility program under Section 5310 is one of many regional transportation programs administered by COG/TPB staff, including Commuter Connections, the Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program, Transit Within Reach Program, and the Transportation Land-Use Connections Program. The Enhanced Mobility program focuses on needs identified in the Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan. By providing incentives for coordination, the Enhanced Mobility program seeks to improve

standards, level of service, and operations of services and programs.

COG/TPB is involved in several community-wide efforts as well, including a partnership with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), announced in April 2024, to develop a unified vision for the region's transit system. The boards of directors of COG and WMATA are working to identify ways to efficiently provide, fund and govern public transit, and in partnership with government, business, labor, and civic stakeholders, focus on the region's long-term transit needs.

## **PROGRAM IMPACT** ●

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Due to the efforts of COG/TPB to coordinate the Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan with Section 5310 funding, grant solicitations are more likely to focus on the area's identified transportation priorities. That connection also helps to ensure that Section 5310 projects align with the unmet needs identified by older adults and people with disabilities.

COG is particularly proud of its online process for working with subrecipients. The streamlined and efficient website, which includes Section 5310 application requirements and application forms, supports online applications, lists currently funded projects, and enables subrecipients to submit progress reports online. The website supports communication with prospective applicants and grantees, while also enhancing the administration of the Section 5310/Enhanced Mobility Program.



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## Who We Are

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

The **National Aging and Disability Transportation Center** is funded through a cooperative agreement of Easterseals, USAging, 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.

**USAging** 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. USAging 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.

[www.usaging.org](http://www.usaging.org)

**Easterseals** empowers people to live independent, full lives. We make a lasting difference in the lives of 1.5 million people each year by providing essential services to children and adults with disabilities, older adults, veterans, and their families. Our national network of 70 Affiliates is trusted to provide programs customized to meet the needs of each community we serve from coast-to-coast—trust earned for more than 100 years. We positively shape perceptions and address the evolving needs of more than one in four Americans with disabilities through public education, policy, and advocacy. That's our impact. In thousands of communities across America. To learn more, visit [www.easterseals.com](http://www.easterseals.com) or follow our socials.