



Forums on Partnerships and Practices Advancing Transportation for Older Adults and People With Disabilities

Overview

In August and September 2025, the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC) partnered with two transportation providers, the Peninsula Area Agency on Aging (PAAA) of Newport News, VA, and the Aging and Disability Resource Center of Rock County (ADRCRC) of Janesville, WI, to host regional forums focused on advancing transportation for older adults and people with disabilities. Both sites were selected based on their work with transportation planning and programs in their communities.

Each forum's format was decided locally. PAAA hosted a panel of state, regional and local voices who addressed more than 50 leaders and stakeholders from throughout the peninsula. The panel presentations were followed by a moderated discussion and small group discussions. ADRCRC also gathered more than 50 participants, comprising representatives from several community-based agencies, local health care agencies and 16 consumers. The forum began with a keynote address followed by a moderated discussion, panel and small group activity.

The objective of the forums was to highlight existing transportation collaborations and focus on exploring innovative partnerships, sharing best practices, and developing coordinated transportation solutions for older adults, people with disabilities, caregivers, and the wider community. The forums also facilitated discussion of local challenges and potential solutions.

Peninsula Area Agency on Aging (PAAA)

PAAA's panel offered multiple perspectives on regional transportation issues including planning, operations and human services. The roundtable discussions that followed gave professionals from aging, disability, transit, housing and healthcare sectors the opportunity to network across sectors and share candidly. The forum raised awareness of regional transportation challenges, generated solution-focused dialogue and reinforced the importance of collaboration across sectors. In hindsight PAAA would have liked broader representation from rural areas to ensure that

challenges outside of urban centers were better reflected in the discussion. Allowing for hybrid participation might have increased geographic reach as well.

Aging and Disability Resource Center of Rock County (ADRCRC)

ADRCRC's keynote challenged attendees to consider local transportation designed specifically for non-drivers with the understanding that safe, inclusive, accessible transportation benefits everyone. With this perspective in mind, a role-play activity had attendees consider their own living situation and what it would look like if they no longer had access to a vehicle. They also were given scenarios to consider what steps they would take to resolve specific transportation issues.

A panel of three experts representing Wisconsin Department of Transportation and Janesville Transit Systems spoke about their individual areas of expertise and current issues in transportation. Regional data was shared to ground participant conversation and discussions: Nearly 28 percent of the region's population will be age 60 and older by 2040, and 13.5 percent of the total population has a disability. Thirty-three percent of those over age 65 report having a disability.

Finally, attendees gathered in small groups to discuss where consumers struggle most with transportation, who is being left out, which times of day and days of the week need better coverage and what solutions could realistically work in Rock County. Each group then shared their findings on identified gaps and a top solution.

Key Challenges and Issues Addressed

Both forums collected valuable feedback from participants. Most of the feedback pertained to universal concerns applicable to all riders, irrespective of their demographic characteristics and geographic differences. Key points included the following:

PAAA

- Inconsistent or unavailable transportation across jurisdictions, particularly for evening and weekend rides. This creates barriers for older adults and people with disabilities to access work, healthcare, food and social opportunities.
- Lack of coordination among healthcare, housing and transportation. Such silos lead to miss opportunities, inefficiencies and unmet needs, especially for those riders who reside outside urban centers.
- Perception and accessibility barriers. Public transportation carries a stigma and is often viewed as a "last resort." Lack of familiarity with systems, technology gaps and knowledge required to utilize services deter riders, especially among older adults and veterans.

ADRCRC

- Barriers to transportation include affordability, awareness and availability. Affordable rides are needed particularly for low-income riders.
- Ride coordination and community education are needed in rural areas.

- Specialized transportation representatives are “stretched to the limit.”
- While engagement was strong, additional participation from private transportation providers would have benefited the small group discussions.
- ADRCRC recognized from participant reactions that the community needs more education on what transportation options are currently available. Also, additional time was needed to discuss issues.

Moving Forward

Both forums highlighted important takeaways that will shape their efforts toward advancing transportation for older adults and people with disabilities.

Key Takeaways from PAAA

- Expand mobility management programs to improve consumer awareness, and streamline access to services.
- Advocate for dedicated regional transit funding and increased coordination between local jurisdictions.
- Support pilots for on-demand micro-transit, volunteer driver programs, and travel training to empower riders.
- Work with healthcare providers and discharge planners to embed transportation into care transitions.

Key Takeaways from ADRCRC

- Expand hours of operation for both early and late in the day.
- Conduct outreach and advocacy efforts to legislators.
- Consider a regional, centralized hub that crosses multiple counties.
- Simplify access to transit information.
- Improve services like subsidized trips, Complete Streets and electronic farebox.
- Strengthen regional transit governance through annual provider and healthcare meetings as well as collaborative funding efforts.

Conclusion

PAAA expressed a need for additional funding and greater flexibility to pilot innovative models such as micro-transit and voucher programs that can expand access across the region. They also need support in developing regional coordination agreements, which are essential to help jurisdictions align their efforts and reduce service gaps. In addition, PAAA believes increased volunteer recruitment and more driver resources will strengthen nonprofit-led transportation programs, which remain a critical piece of the mobility network.

ADRCRC will consider such solutions as expanding its volunteer driver program, piloting micro-transit, adding a shared ride program for evening hours and cross-county partnerships. Most importantly, ADRCRC will offer additional consumer education about transportation throughout Rock County.



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. www.usaging.org

Easterseals provides life-changing services nationwide and advocates for improving the quality of life for people with disabilities, veterans, and their families. Through our vast network of Affiliates, Easterseals offers essential support each year to 1.5 million people – from early childhood programs for the critical first five years to autism services, medical rehabilitation and employment programs, transportation and mobility services, veterans' programs, and more. We continue to positively shape perceptions and address the urgent and evolving needs of one in four Americans with disabilities today. www.easterseals.com

September 2025