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National Aging and Disability Transportation Center

## Reduced Fare Podcast Transcript

The following is a transcript of the Reduced Fare Podcast available on the NADTC website ([www.nadtc.org](http://www.nadtc.org)).

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**Julie Dupree:** Welcome to our podcast sponsored by the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center. My name is Julie Dupree, and I am a training and technical assistance specialist with NADTC and Easterseals. I am joined today by my colleague Ken Thompson, who is a training and technical assistance specialist. Ken provides a whole host of supports and services and expertise on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and he is really familiar with all types of programs and transit information. Today he is sharing his expertise on reduced fare programs, the types of programs that are out there, common trends that we see in the transportation industry, and he'll be talking about incentives, and the parameters around eligibility related to these programs. Thank you for listening to this podcast.

*Timepoint 1:04*

**Julie Dupree:** I'll go ahead and get started. Ken, I was really curious if there are transit providers out there that are required to offer reduced transit fare to seniors, people with disabilities, or Medicare card holders?

**Ken Thompson:** Well, yes there is. The requirement is really under the Section 5307 Urbanized Area formula funding program from the Federal Transit Administration which says that the transit providers which are federally funded may not charge more than half of the peak fare for fixed-route transit during off-peak hours for seniors, people with disabilities and Medicare card holders. The confusion a lot of times is that people think it is part of the Americans with Disabilities Act, but it's not really part of

the ADA but rather it's a general condition placed on those who receive 5307 funding. And so that's where that requirement comes from.

*Timepoint 2:08*

**Julie Dupree:** And by reduced fare programs, what type of programs are you referring to?

**Ken Thompson:** Well, there's a variety of fare incentive programs for people with disabilities used by transit systems. Programs in existence include half fare or less than half fare during all fixed-route service hours. Some offer off-peak reduced fare as specified in requirement of the law. Some offer no fare or free rides to those certified as ADA paratransit eligible for fixed-route, and then sometimes there are no fare for people certified for ADA paratransit qualified in other ways such as those who've received or are receiving travel training or who have participated in travel training programs. The primary purpose of the FTA reduced fare program is to make transit more affordable for many seniors or people with disabilities have limited income or others cannot drive a car and rely on public transit for their community activities. It's a way to help people who many not have so much money or means to get around to have an incentive or way to get around by public transit.

*Timepoint 3:57*

**Julie Dupree:** Thanks, Ken. Speaking of incentives, how do these incentives help?

**Ken Thompson:** The whole idea of fare incentives is to encourage riders with disabilities, and that may include ADA paratransit riders, just to use fixed-route service. The incentive is that it's convenient for the rider so there may be no need to schedule the ADA trip. It makes it easier to travel with friends and family as there's no limitation on the number of people to bring along. For ADA paratransit, you can bring along one companion but on these trips you can bring anybody you want. It's a cost savings for the rider. On fixed-route fare, a ride may cost two dollars as a general example. An ADA paratransit trip could be no more than double those two dollars, so it could be four dollars, so for the rider it would be cheaper. And the other thing to think about is that you can ride whenever you want [during fixed-route service hours].

As far as transit, there's a cost savings. ADA paratransit costs on average, kind of a rough average, about 35 dollars per paratransit trip and if you looked at the average cost of an unlinked bus trip, it's about four dollars. Unlinked means one part of the trip but not any other part. So, transit agencies who offer reduced fare will extend that discount to weekly and monthly passes. An example is that a half-fare monthly pass

would be half the cost of a monthly pass which is also an incentive for people to ride that system.

*Timepoint 5:53*

**Julie Dupree:** How about eligibility?

**Ken Thompson:** Eligibility for programs usually involves an application, and it can be submission of a form for verification or some way you have to get that information, and the verification is to ensure that a person really is a senior, of a certain age group or a person with a disability. As the law requires, Medicare card holders who show the federally issued red, white and blue card can get half fare discounts. An area of confusion is that some people get Medicare and Medicaid confused. There's not really any discount for Medicaid card holders. And the point, though, is that even Medicaid card holders may use Medicaid services for certain trips can also apply for some of these reduced fare programs as people with disabilities.

Now often in your transit system there's some electronic fare payment in place. It could be a swipe card or a tap card or some other system. In most situations that reduced fare will be automatically applied for eligible riders because that information will be connected to an electronic system. It might be inside the card itself as part of the identification or it may be in the back end when the rider's ID is processed, the reduced fare is applied to the card. ADA paratransit eligible riders in a lot of situations will be able to just show their ID or fare card and ride at a reduced fare. Some situations or systems are fairly simple that way.

*Timepoint: 7:56*

**Julie Dupree:** This is a whole lot of wonderful information. I'm sure that our listeners will pick up on something new just as I have today. Do you have any other thoughts on how, in theory, these programs and incentives can really work for people and kind of understanding that these incentives are available while ensuring accessibility? Any other thoughts on how to make these programs work well?

**Ken Thompson:** My thought really is that for any kind of program that works well in transit, you need to reach out to people with disabilities and seniors so that they understand the program and the limitations. For new or potential transit riders, you need to include information about the fare incentive program and applications. You want to get this information to people through transit fairs, any type of orientation, and if you take a bus out to a senior program or senior fair you provide the reduced fare information to people and anytime you have any big, public gathering. I know some transit systems, whenever there's a local fair, they have a section where they

bring transit buses to the fair, and one transit system said something interesting. They said that not only do we offer buses at the fair, but we'll give you a ride to the fair, and they'll bill that whole package that the drop-off point for the transit bus is at the fair gate where the transit buses are for the demonstration. I thought that was clever.

And, so, that's what you want to do. You want to get the bus and the information about the reduced fare programs to the people. And, also, just keep in mind that it's very important that your accessible equipment such as your securement areas, the ramps, and lifts on buses and the stop announcement system are maintained and in operable condition and that the bus operators are trained to serve people with disabilities and seniors in a courteous manner because if you do that then more people will continue to use your system. Also, some transit systems are developing and offering reduced fare programs for children, to public school students, universities, active duty military, and qualified veterans with disabilities. My son is in college, and he likes the fact that he has transit pass, which is his school ID card, and he can use that to get off campus, and he's become a good transit rider.

Just think of all these reduced fare programs that are really beneficial to everyone. Transit is in the business of moving people, and we want to connect people to the community, so we want to keep rides affordable, and keep the rides accessible so that all of us can live, work, and participate in the community.

So, enjoy the ride, and thanks for listening, and if you have questions, always give me a call.

*Timepoint: 11:15*

**Julie Dupree:** Great. Thank you so much, Ken. As Ken mentioned, you can give him a call or touch base with NADTC, the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center at [www.nadtc.org](http://www.nadtc.org). The website has all of our contact information and the variety of ways you can get in touch with Ken or anyone else that can assist you. It also has detailed information on our upcoming training opportunities like webinars, online courses, and events like this podcast today. Thank you again for your time in listening. Thanks again to Ken, and we'll see you for the next podcast.

## Contact the NADTC

To reach Ken or any member of the NADTC technical assistance and information and referral staff, call toll-free (866) 983-3222 or email [contact@nadtc.org](mailto:contact@nadtc.org).

