



Trends Report 2022

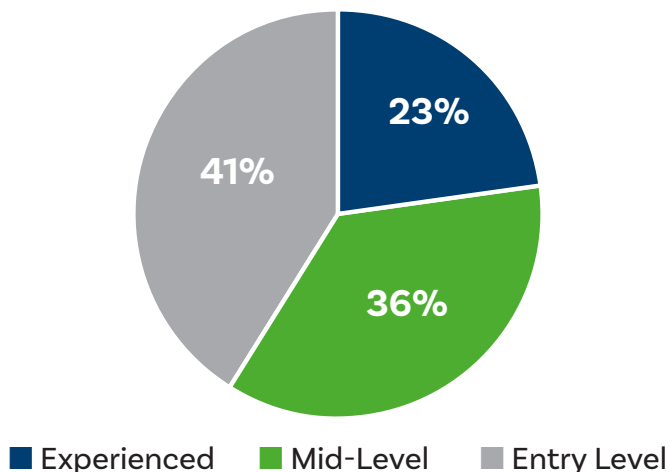
Responses from the Field

Each year the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC) publishes a Trends Report highlighting emergent topics in transportation. This year’s report is based on an annual survey distributed to NADTC e-news recipients, Federal Transportation Administration-funded national transportation technical assistance centers and the U.S. Administration for Community Living (ACL), which forwarded the survey to its mailing list. A link to the survey was also posted on the NADTC website. The survey was conducted via SurveyMonkey and responses were collected between September 8 and September 28, 2022.

A total of 456 responses from 48 states and Washington, D.C., were received by the deadline. Survey respondents included public transit and human services transportation providers, stakeholders, and aging and disability organizations such as Area Agencies on Aging, Centers for Independent Living and Aging and Disability Resource Centers. Forty percent of respondents identified themselves as professionals, 35 percent were stakeholders (e.g., case managers, volunteers, board members and public health workers), and 12 percent were transportation advocates. A number of respondents were also transportation users who offered both personal and professional perspectives. The responses underscore the deep commitment of transportation providers, stakeholders and advocates to ensuring high quality transportation services for older adults and people with disabilities.

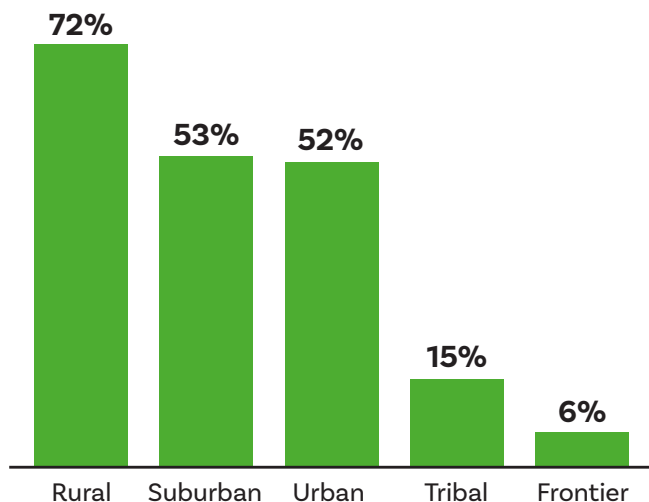
As noted in Chart A, 59 percent of respondents indicated that they are either experienced or mid-level transportation professionals, while 41 percent identified their transportation experience as entry level. Respondents were also invited to select the geographic area they represent.

Chart A: Transportation Experience Level



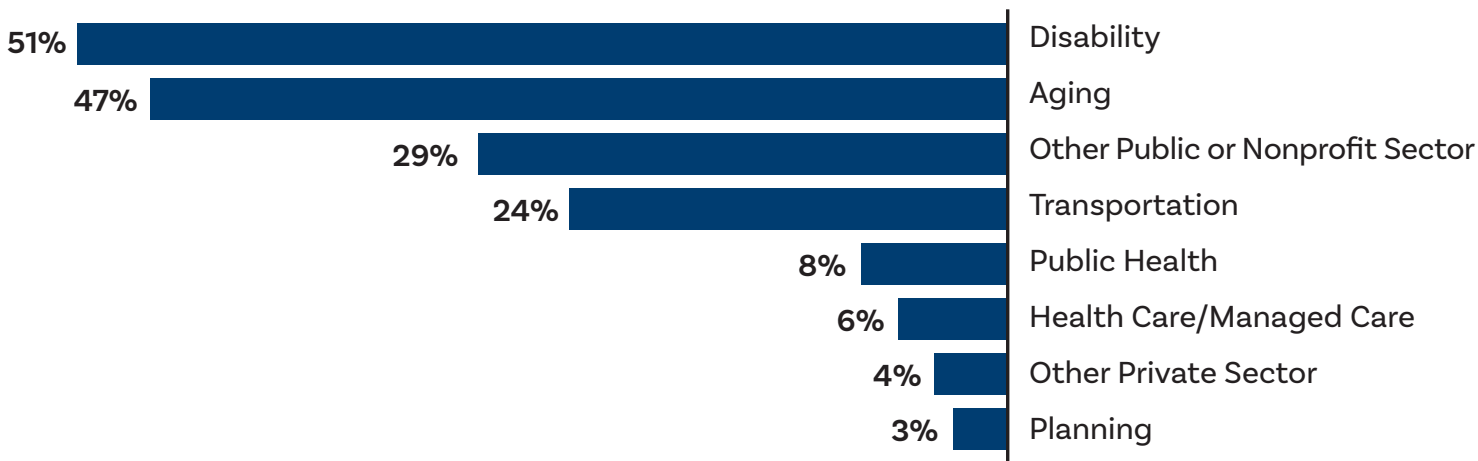
As shown in Chart B, respondents frequently selected more than one type of geography, with the highest percentage (72 percent) indicating that they represent rural areas. Fifty-three percent of respondents chose suburban while an almost equal proportion (52 percent) selected urban. A combined 21 percent of respondents were from tribal and frontier areas.

Chart B: Geographic Area Served



Given the opportunity to choose multiple answers to describe their organization, most respondents selected disability (51 percent) followed closely by aging organizations (47 percent). Twenty-four percent of respondents chose transportation to describe their organizations. Chart C, Respondents by Organization Type, details the types of organizations represented.

Chart C: Respondent by Organization



Top Challenges

Respondents were asked to identify the top challenges they face in providing transportation to older adults, younger adults with disabilities and caregivers. Responses to this open-ended question provide insight into respondents’ concerns and advocacy for the people they serve. Given the wide range of detailed responses gathered through the survey, NADTC staff members carefully examined all responses and related comments, grouped similar ideas together, and identified nine major themes. The themes below are presented in rank order, from highest to fewest number of responses.

Theme 1: Operations

Responses about scheduling rides in advance, lack of evening or weekend service hours, and long wait times and long rides were grouped under transportation operations. Respondents' comments offer additional explanation of operational issues, including, "Our current operation schedule can leave the passenger with an early wake up time and prolonged trip to their destination." Some noted specific needs such as "transportation on weekends" and "transportation to appointments that are timely and accurate, that don't leave riders stranded or missing appointments that are vital to their treatment." Another respondent noted the limitations of the services they provide, such as "options that we run are only 8 to 5."

Theme 2: Funding

The need for transportation funding was frequently identified as a challenge. One respondent commented, "Funding! There isn't enough of it to provide services to all customers." Another added, "Funders don't recognize how much high-quality, accessible transportation actually costs." Related to this theme, many respondents identified two specific funding needs: local matching funds and funding to purchase vehicles.

Theme 3: Lack of Transportation

Lack of transportation included responses regarding both lack of services overall and lack of the specific type of services needed, such as accessible rides under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Respondents commented, "Finding transportation in our area...we have limited options," and "Not enough public transportation available." One wrote of the need for "cot transport for those who are bed bound total care," while another commented, "Appropriate modes of transportation must be available to meet various degrees of mobility."

Theme 4: Rural

When rural transportation challenges were identified, the lack of transit was often specifically named, such as a lack of "availability in remote/rural areas" and the need for "transportation access in rural communities." One respondent pointed out, "rural areas do not have reliable wheelchair accessible modes of transportation."

Theme 5: Staffing

More than half of those who identified staffing challenges referred specifically to difficulties in recruiting, hiring, training and retaining drivers. Respondents identified challenges such as, "[not] having enough drivers to drive our participants," "driver shortages," and "retaining and hiring drivers at a competitive wage."

Theme 6: Volunteers

Closely related to staffing, the need for volunteer drivers was identified as a separate challenge. As one respondent commented, "We are a volunteer transportation group and volunteer recruitment has been challenging."

Theme 7: Cost

Almost half of those who listed transportation costs as a challenge identified concerns about the cost of a ride, including specific challenges related to the cost of vehicles, maintenance and fuel. Respondents also pointed out concerns about the cost of “car repairs”; the “cost of vehicles, expensive hourly maintenance costs”; and “lack of resources to support increased cost of fuel, maintenance and insurance.”

Theme 8: Accessibility/ADA

The accessibility challenges identified by respondents included, but were not limited to, ADA accessible transportation. Issues included the ease with which older adults, younger adults with disabilities, as well as other riders, can find out about available transportation options, schedule a ride, and use transportation services.

In discussing ADA issues, several respondents mentioned challenges providing services to individuals who are deaf, blind or deaf-blind. Another referenced ADA paratransit eligibility restrictions, and another commented about in-language support. One respondent wrote, “Need skilled drivers in helping older adults and people with disabilities enter and exit transportation safely.”

Accessibility concerns also addressed the physical infrastructure (e.g., lack of sidewalks) and the affordability of a ride, as well as the availability of vehicles equipped for access by people who use wheelchairs or walkers. One respondent noted the huge challenge facing his community: “Our county is large with almost nothing available. Our agency can provide only two trips per month and only to clients who can enter/exit a car/vehicle independently. We cannot help people using wheelchairs or walkers.”

Theme 9: Vehicles

While respondents often mentioned vehicles in relation to ADA and cost challenges, specific concerns included the lack of “availability of accessible vehicles” and the need for “funding to support purchase of accessible vehicles.” “Vehicle shortage” was named as a specific challenge.

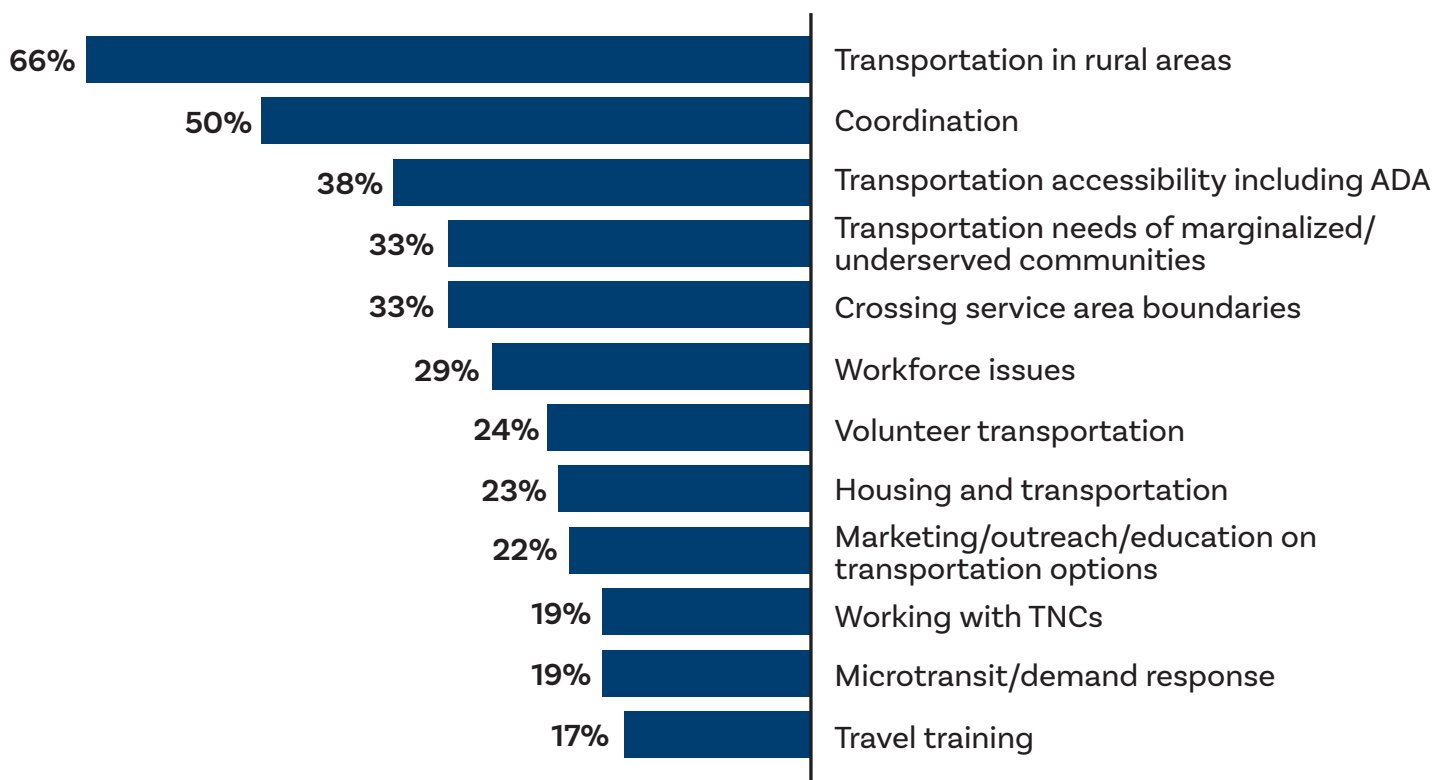
Top Accessible Transportation Issues

The question on top accessible transportation issues offered respondents the opportunity to choose up to five options from the list provided. The list was developed from technical assistance requests and issues raised by participants in NADTC webinars and conference sessions. As may be seen in Chart D below, many but not all responses to this question align with the open-ended responses to the broad question about transportation challenges.

Transportation in rural areas was identified as the biggest transportation accessibility concern (66 percent) followed by coordination (50 percent), transportation accessibility, including ADA (38 percent), and transportation needs of specific marginalized or underserved communities (33 percent).

Crossing service boundaries (33 percent) was a top accessibility issue specifically identified in open-ended responses to the question about transportation challenges. As respondents noted,

Chart D: Top Accessible Transportation Issues



“transportation [is needed] out of service area for medical needs,” “transportation from one service area to another is very difficult to find,” and “accessible transportation comes to a screaming halt at the county borders.”

Workforce issues (29 percent) and volunteer transportation (24 percent) were also identified in the open-ended question as top challenges. As noted by one respondent, “Lack of volunteer drivers, no funding for paid staff, and too many competing responsibilities to run the program myself. I do not have a mobility manager or coordinator to run the programs appropriately.” Another wrote, “Staffing needs are greater than we can accommodate.”

The responses also identified several other issues that were not mentioned in the open-ended question, including housing and transportation, marketing/outreach/education, working with transportation networking companies (TNCs), microtransit/demand response and travel training.

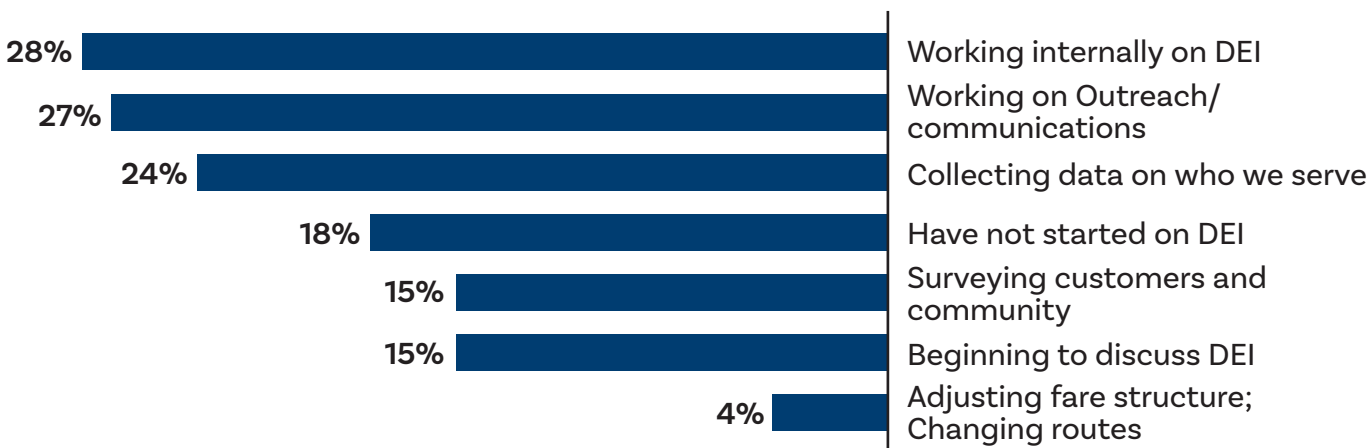
Key Initiatives

The survey included questions to identify the activities and involvement of NADTC constituents in two key transportation issues: diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and coordination. Survey information will guide NADTC’s work on these two initiatives.

(1) Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Survey participants were asked to indicate their organization’s involvement or work on transportation diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). Multiple answers were possible, and while nearly 18 percent indicate they have not started work on DEI and 15 percent are just beginning to discuss the topic, other responses show a strong involvement in DEI efforts. Twenty-eight percent of respondents indicated that they are working internally on DEI efforts, 27 percent are working on outreach and communications, and 24 percent are collecting data on who they serve.

Chart E: Current DEI Involvement by Organization



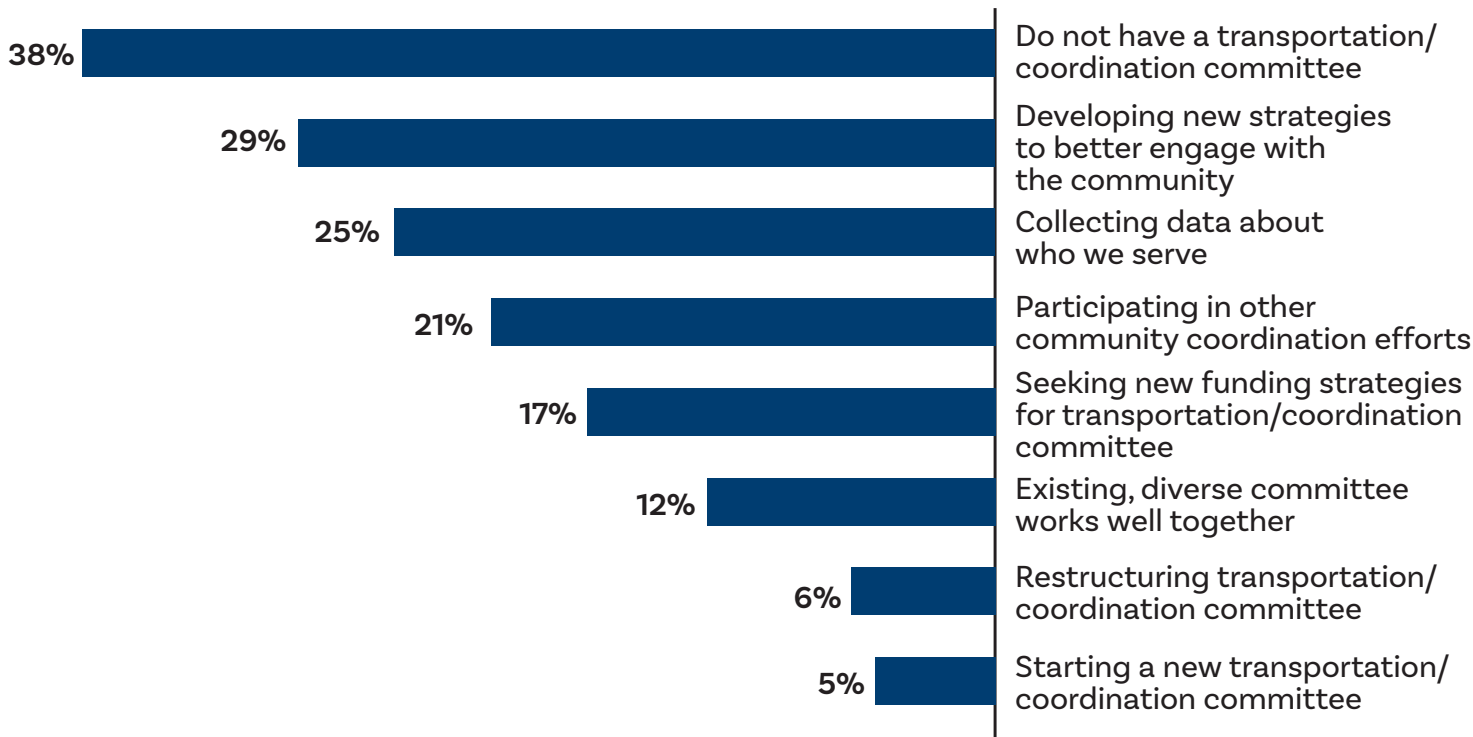
Approximately four percent of survey respondents are adjusting their fare structures to accommodate individuals with low incomes or changing routes to go to more places that serve historically marginalized and underserved populations. Respondents noted the following as specific DEI activities: “We are conducting a grant-funded project on transportation equity for healthy aging” and “We are adding a language line for ease and convenience of translation.”

(2) Coordination

Survey respondents were asked to indicate which activities best describe their organization’s efforts on transportation coordination. With multiple answers possible, most respondents show some level of involvement with coordination, despite not necessarily having a transportation/coordination committee (38 percent).

Almost one-third (29 percent) of respondents are developing new strategies for engaging with the community, while 25 percent are collecting data about those they serve. Twenty-one percent noted that they participate in other coordination efforts, such as conducting a Community Needs Health Assessment (CNHA), developing a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) and participating in comprehensive planning or development of aging plans. Seventeen percent are seeking new funding for their transportation/coordination committee, and 12 percent have an existing, diverse committee that works well together to strengthen programs.

Chart F: Coordination Efforts by Organization



Finally, about six percent of respondents are restructuring their transportation/coordination committees to include organizations that are not direct transportation providers, and five percent are working to start a new transportation/coordination committee.

To illustrate the range of activities included under the coordination umbrella, one respondent noted, “We are coordinating more on the interagency level, for example, to go for multi-agency grants and do more transportation planning combined with housing, infill (i.e., building within existing developed areas), and transit planning.” Yet challenges remain, as noted by another respondent, “We have both local and regional coordinated transportation committees and programs. A lot of work is being done, but there are limits to what people who already have full-time jobs with an agency can do, and the needle is not getting moved along as it should.”

Conclusion

One respondent summed up the transportation challenges that must be addressed in order to create accessible transportation services that meet the needs of older adults, people with disabilities, caregivers and communities across the country: “There are many gaps that need to be filled, and rather than duplicate or push everyone to one type of service, more of a mobility management mindset needs to be established to fill gaps without duplication, then provide a community resource to share information and do any necessary intake so the right solution can be found based on need for any given individual facing a transportation challenge.”

NADTC will use the results of this annual survey to guide our work over the coming year. To respond to the challenges and needs identified by respondents, we will continue to offer a variety of learning opportunities, including conference sessions, webinars, Lunch and Learns, and office hours, as well as publications such as information briefs, blogs, reports, eNews articles and social media content. Current NADTC resources on many of the topics discussed in this report are listed below and may be accessed through the website, www.nadtc.org or by connecting with Technical Assistance staff at info@NADTC.org.

Resources

Coordination in Transportation Programs, NADTC, Jan. 2022, www.nadtc.org/wp-content/uploads/USAgings-NADTC-Coordination-in-Transportation-Programs_508.pdf

NADTC Coordination Initiative, www.nadtc.org/coordination-initiative/

Critical Issues in Human Services Transportation, NADTC, Jan. 2021, www.nadtc.org/wp-content/uploads/Human-Svcs-Transportation-Information-Brief-FINAL_508compliant.pdf

NADTC Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiative, www.nadtc.org/diversity-equity-inclusion-initiative/

Expanding Transportation Programs to Evening/Weekend Hours, a Best Practice resource published by NADTC, January 2022, www.nadtc.org/wp-content/uploads/USAgings-NADTC-Expanding-Transportation-Programs.pdf

Federal Funding for Transportation Programs Serving Older Adults and People with Disabilities, NADTC, September 2022, www.nadtc.org/wp-content/uploads/USAgings-NADTC-Transportation-Funding-Guide-508.pdf

2021 Trends Report Spotlight: Rural Transportation Programs, NADTC, www.nadtc.org/wp-content/uploads/7-Rural-Volunteer-Transportation-Programs.pdf

Addendum—Survey Data

Q: In a few words or short phrase, name your organization’s top challenge in providing transportation for older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers. (436 responses)

- 18 percent: Operations (42 percent of these are scheduling concerns, e.g., long wait times, no evening or weekend service, having to schedule too far in advance, etc.)
- 17 percent: Funding
- 17 percent: Lack of transit (often mentioned with rural, but not always. This could also mean lack of options.)
- 16 percent: Staffing (70 percent of these responses mentioned drivers specifically)
- 15 percent: Cost (42 percent referred to ride costs; 12 percent: Vehicle costs; five percent maintenance; three percent; fuel)
- 12 percent: Rural
- 10 percent: Accessibility, which might include ADA equipped
- nine percent: ADA issues, which might include accessibility but also mentioned serving specific populations like deaf/blind
- six percent: Vehicles (54 percent ADA issues; eight percent maintenance; 25 percent vehicle shortage)
- six percent: Volunteers
- five percent: Coordination

Q: What are the top 5 accessible transportation issues related to the mobility needs of older adults, people with disabilities and caregivers that NADTC should address in the coming year? (454 responses)

- 66 percent: Transportation in rural area
- 50 percent: Coordination
- 38 percent: Transportation accessibility including ADA
- 33 percent: Transportation needs of specific marginalized or underserved communities
- 33 percent: Crossing service area boundaries
- 29 percent: Workforce issues
- 24 percent: Volunteer transportation
- 23 percent: Housing and transportation
- 22 percent: Marketing/outreach/education on community transportation options
- 19 percent: Working with Transportation Network Companies (TNCs)
- 19 percent: Microtransit/demand response
- 17 percent: Travel training

Q: Please indicate your organization’s involvement or work on transportation diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). (441 responses)

- 28 percent: We are working internally (e.g., hiring, company culture)
- 27 percent: We are working on our outreach and communications
- 24 percent: We are collecting data about who we serve
- 18 percent: We have not started work in DEI
- 15 percent: We are surveying our customers and community
- 15 percent: We are only beginning to discuss the topic of DEI

(Nearly four percent are adjusting fare structure to accommodate people with low incomes or changing routes to go to more places that serve historically marginalized and underserved populations.)

Comments:

- “We are conducting a grant-funded project on transportation equity for healthy aging.”
- “My patients are directly impacted by the poor reliability of transportation for people with disabilities.”
- “We are adding a language line for ease and convenience of translation.”

Q: Please indicate which activities best describe your organization’s efforts on transportation coordination. (436 responses)

- 38 percent: We do not have a transportation/coordination committee
- 29 percent: We are developing new strategies to better engage with the community
- 25 percent: We are collecting data about who we serve
- 21 percent: We are participating in other coordination efforts such as Community Needs Health Assessment (CNHA), Community Health Improvement Plans (CHIP), comprehensive plans, aging plans, etc.
- 17 percent: We are seeking new funding strategies for our transportation/coordination committee
- 12 percent: We have an existing, diverse committee that works well together to strengthen programs

(Nearly six percent are restructuring transportation/coordination committees to include new organizations that are not direct transportation providers, and just over five percent are working on starting a new transportation/coordination committee.)

Comments:

- “We have both local and regional coordinated transportation committees and programs. A lot of work is being done, but there are limits to what people who already have full-time jobs with an agency can do, and the needle is not getting moved along as it should.”
- “We participate on other organizations’ transportation plans and needs.”
- “As a new program manager at the SUA, we are in the process of determining who the players are outside the AAA network and investigating what services are provided in the AAA network.”
- “We are coordinating more on the interagency level, e.g., to go for multi-agency grants and do more transportation planning combined with housing, infill, and transit planning.”
- We have a mobility manager for a seven-county region working on this issue.”



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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 501(c)(3) 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 throughout the United States live with optimal health, well-being, independence and dignity in their homes and communities. USAging is dedicated to supporting the success of our members through advancing public policy, sparking innovation, strengthening the capacity of our members, raising their visibility and working to drive excellence in the fields of aging and home and community-based services. www.usaging.org

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