



How Section 5310 Supports Community Transportation Innovations

This best practice describes how Section 5310 is currently being used by former NADTC grantees that have been successful in obtaining this important funding source. Starting in 2017 with our first grant competition, NADTC has encouraged grantees to explore funding opportunities, especially Section 5310, to sustain and expand the innovations they developed through their grant projects. All of the best practices discussed in this Compendium focus on improving transportation accessibility in their communities. All could potentially qualify for Section 5310 funding.

NADTC's [Survey of Organizations That Provide Transportation to Older Adults and People with Disabilities](#) (February 2020) compared responses to several questions from transportation providers that receive Section 5310 funding (29 percent of respondents do) with those that do not. The survey found that, in addition to the fact that Section 5310 providers are more likely to serve both older adults and people with disabilities, they also more frequently:

- Accommodate riders who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices;
- Provide rider assistance, such as help with boarding and alighting and offering hand-to-hand assistance;
- Have a mobility manager position; and
- Coordinate with other transportation providers.

Section 5310 Snapshot

According to the Federal Transit Administration's [FAST Act Fact Sheet](#), the purpose of the Section 5310 *Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program* is "to improve mobility...by removing barriers to transportation service and expanding transportation mobility options." This encompasses transportation



Credit: Capacity Builders, Farmington, NM

services "planned, designed, and carried out to meet the special transportation needs" of this population in all areas: large urban (with populations over 200,000); small urban (with populations between 50,000 and 200,000); and rural (where populations are less than 50,000). The FAST Act also authorized the [Access and Mobility Partnership Grants](#) which support transportation innovations and are open to Section 5310 recipients.

Section 5310 funds both traditional capital projects and "nontraditional investment beyond the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) complementary paratransit." Traditional projects include funding for buses and vans; wheelchair lifts and securement devices; transit related information technology systems including scheduling/routing/one-call systems; and mobility management. Also included is the acquisition of services under a contract, lease or other arrangement. Nontraditional Section 5310 projects include new public transportation services and alternatives beyond those required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) that are designed to assist individuals with disabilities and older adults. Examples include:

This best practice is based on the experiences of grant programs funded by the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC) from 2017 to 2019 to support innovative programs to increase the accessibility of community transportation services for people with disabilities and older adults.

- Travel training
- Volunteer driver programs
- Building an accessible path to a bus stop, including curb cuts, sidewalks, accessible pedestrian signals or other accessible features
- Improving signage or way finding technology
- Incremental cost of providing same day service or door-to-door service
- Purchasing vehicles to support new accessible, taxi, ride sharing and/or vanpooling programs
- Mobility management programs

The [Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021](#) (CRRSAA) provided relief funds to Section 5310 programs. This funding prioritizes operational activities and can cover expenses that date back to January 20, 2020. Programs do not necessarily have to be current Section 5310 recipients to receive funding. However, each state Department of Transportation or Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) has discretion to decide how and to whom these funds will be awarded. (For additional information, see the [NADTC blog, Relief! CRRSAA Funding Available for 5310 Programs.](#))

Using Section 5310 to Support Planning and Coordination

Planning and program design activities to improve transportation accessibility are considered appropriate activities for Section 5310 recipients. In 2018, NADTC’s ten planning grants developed plans to improve transportation accessibility for older adults and people with disabilities in their communities.

2018 Planning Grantees

- 3P Ride, Inc.
- Capacity Builders, Inc.*
- Easterseals DC/MD/VA
- Feonix Mobility Rising
- Greater Portland Council of Governments*
- INCOG Area Agency on Aging*
- North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization*
- Piedmont Triad Regional council Area Agency on Aging
- Shared Mobility, Inc.*
- University of Nevada’s Sanford Center on Aging

**Grantees with an asterisk received NADTC funding in 2019 to implement their plans.*

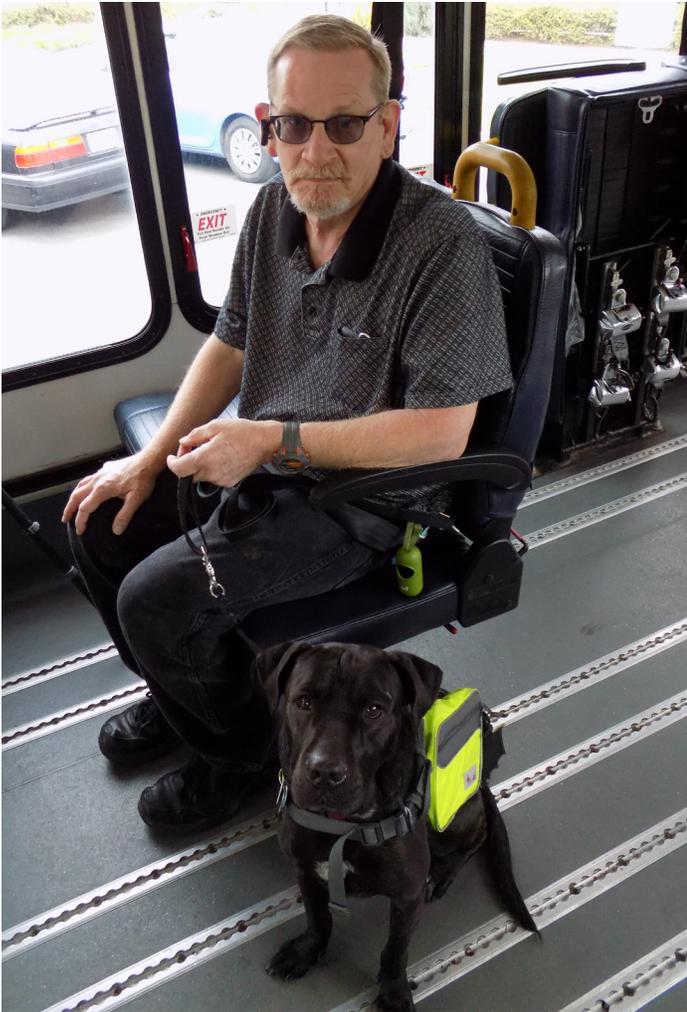
Planning and program design are also woven into the nine best practices discussed in the Compendium. The major planning activities that NADTC grantees undertook are discussed in detail in the best practice on engagement and outreach and included the following specific elements:

- **Advisory groups created to guide planning.** Typically, these groups encouraged the active participation of transportation stakeholders (such as public transit and volunteer transportation programs) and older adults and people with disabilities, helped to identify unmet needs, and explored solutions for addressing the needs and preferences of riders. The advisory groups developed by the planning grantees usually met once per month for 4-6 months and produced a brief plan for implementing their chosen innovation. (Five of the planning grantees received additional funding from NADTC to implement their plans.)
- **Focus groups and public forums.** These outreach activities provided an opportunity to gather information from the community, including riders and those who were not current users of public transportation, to identify unmet needs and recommendations for improving transportation services. Such gatherings also facilitated information exchange between transportation providers and users of their services.
- **Surveys.** Written surveys were shared online, sent by mail, or conducted in-person in places such as sheltered workshops or senior centers. Surveys enabled transportation planners to reach more people and hear from those who were unable or unwilling to participate in a focus group or public meeting.

Using Section 5310 Funding to Increase Access to the Community and Address Barriers

Despite the potential match between Section 5310 and the transportation innovations supported by NADTC grants, not all of NADTC’s former grantees are recipients. ***The following projects do not receive Section 5310.***

City of Hernando, MS developed a bicycle rental program for older adults and has since expanded the program. The city’s Parks and Recreation Department maintains the bicycles and the city has adopted a Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. (For more information, see the best practice on bicycle transportation.)



Credit: Human Services Council of Southwest Washington, Vancouver, WA

The former grant projects discussed below are current recipients of Section 5310. The programs developed by these grantees are described in detail in the referenced best practices.

Area Agency on Aging 1B developed a travel training program aimed at assisting paratransit riders make better use of public transportation services in two counties. The program has since grown to serve four counties in southeast Michigan, including the City of Detroit, with support from Section 5310 Mobility Management funds. (For more information, see the best practice on travel training.)

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (RPC) worked closely with local providers of transportation to develop a central access point for older adults and people with disabilities for scheduling rides to healthcare that crossed jurisdictional boundaries. Section 5310 supports the purchase of the vans used by Councils on Aging and other area transportation providers that participate in this coordinated system and the full-time mobility manager at Berkshire RPC. (For more information, see the best practices on coordination; rural transportation; and transportation call centers.)

Capacity Builders, Inc. (CBI) connected Navajo Reservation elders and people with disabilities in remote San Juan County, NM to a variety of destinations, including an area food bank. At the end of the grant, the organization applied for and currently receives Section 5310 funding. CBI was also awarded an Access and Mobility Partnership grant in 2019 by the Federal Transit Administration. (For more information, see the best practices on access to healthy food; engagement and outreach; and rural transportation.)

Feonix-Mobility Rising, a 2018 NADTC planning grantee, continued after the grant ended to work with local partners in the Coastal Bend Region of Texas to develop a volunteer transportation program to augment the limited transportation options available in this rural community. The successful partnership with the Coastal Bend Center for Community Living continues today with support from Section 5310. (For more information, see the best practices on rural transportation and volunteer transportation.)

Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG) addressed barriers to accessing food experienced by older people and people with disabilities living in South Portland, Cumberland County, ME using a special “Shopper Links” shuttle and transportation network companies. Currently, the city’s Transportation Director

Senior Transportation Connection (STC) in North Olmstead, a suburb of Cleveland, OH, offered expanded hours of service on evenings and weekends. This program has continued since the end of the grant to offer rides during expanded hours. Passengers pay fares based on income. (For more information, see the best practice on evening/weekend hours.)

Shared Mobility, Inc. (SMI) developed a new volunteer transportation program by adopting a successful model of volunteer transportation developed by the Volunteer Transportation Center Western New York (VTC). SMI continued the partnership with VTC, which was awarded an Access and Mobility Partnership Grant (now extended through March 2022). The grant provided support to more fully establish the volunteer program. While SMI considered applying for Section 5310 in the most recent funding cycle, that effort is currently on hold. (For more information, see the best practices on bicycle transportation; engagement and outreach; and volunteer transportation.)

is exploring options for continuing this effort. Section 5310 funds are used for vehicle purchases by providers of demand response transportation. GPCOG is also a recipient of an Access and Mobility Partnership Grant which supports their continued efforts to address transportation access barriers, engage older adults and people with disabilities in transportation planning and develop a mobility manager position. (For more information, see the best practices on access to healthy food and engagement and outreach.)

Indian Nations Council of Governments Area Agency on Aging (INCOG) served nine square miles in north Tulsa, OK where residents had limited access to affordable, fresh and nutritious food sources. At the conclusion of the NADTC grant, INCOG temporarily suspended the program. A grant from AARP in the fall of 2020 supported no-cost grocery delivery service to a community in the food desert area using electric bicycles provided by a local organization. Funding from Section 5310 along with Older Americans Act Title IIIB supports demand response transportation. Efforts are currently underway to utilize Section 5310 funding to: 1) provide rides to grocery stores for residents of three Tulsa food desert areas; and 2) continue grocery delivery to homebound residents. The new program will cover grocery delivery fees and place online grocery orders for residents who lack internet access. (For more information, see the best practices on access to healthy food; transportation call centers; and travel training.)

Mountain Empire Older Citizens (MEOC), developed a dedicated call center and a rider assistance program for individuals with chronic health conditions to help them travel long distances to health clinics and dialysis using the demand-response transit system. MEOC receives both Section 5310 and Section 5311 funding to support its demand response transit system and continues to offer assistance to those who need help to ride. (For more information, see the best practices on engagement and outreach; rural transportation; and transportation call centers.)

North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) worked to coordinate transportation providers in rural Larimer County and partnered with neighboring Via Mobility to develop a one-call system for scheduling rides. Section 5310 funding supports a Dial-a-Taxi program, travel training, expansion of the mobility program beyond the urban area to include resort areas and the rural parts of the county, and a mobility coordinator position. (For more information, see the best practices on coordination; engagement and outreach; and transportation call centers.)

Learnings

The following are observations regarding the use of Section 5310 based on the experiences of the NADTC grantees.

- **The process required to be approved as a Section 5310 recipient takes time.** Programs that sought Section 5310 funding during or at the end of the NADTC grant period were not always, or not immediately, successful. It is important to become familiar with how the application process for Section 5310 works in the state and when funds for new projects are typically made available.
- **It is important to think of Section 5310 funding as one part of the funding puzzle.** NADTC's 2020 survey of providers, discussed above, found that most transportation providers use between 5 and 11 different funding sources to support their programs. The grant programs profiled in this Compendium that sustained their efforts following the grant mirror that experience, using a patchwork of funding in addition to Section 5310.
- **Having Section 5310 funding, whether the funding is used for traditional or nontraditional services, often helps to solidify the funding base for transportation providers.** With more assured funding, programs have greater flexibility to address barriers and respond to opportunities for improving transportation accessibility to meet the needs and preferences of older adults and people with disabilities in their communities.

