



Technical Assistance Brief

Microtransit Accessibility

The National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC) promotes the availability and accessibility of transportation options that meet the needs of older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers.

Microtransit is increasingly relevant to riders with disabilities of all ages. Microtransit is a form of shared-ride on-demand transport that extends the reach of transit systems or in some cases, replaces fixed routes. This technology is being used for first/last mile feeder connections with fixed route bus or rail services, ADA paratransit, midday grocery shopping, non-emergency medical transportation, shared-ride commuter trips and night-time and weekend services where fixed route bus service is not economical.

When designing microtransit, accessibility must be worked into the planning. This technical assistance brief provides resources to help better understand the requirements for microtransit services that are structured to meet the mobility needs of people with disabilities and older adults.

How Does Microtransit Work?

For microtransit service, rides are requested, scheduled, and paid for at the time the ride is needed. Advance reservations are not required. This is done through an app available on smartphones and desktop computers or through a call center. Small, shared-ride vehicles pick up and drop off individuals within a defined perimeter. Microtransit subsidized with FTA funds must follow all accessibility requirements.

Microtransit Resources:

Microtransit: What is it and Why Use It? National Center for Applied Transit Technology Factsheet, May 24, 2022, <https://n-catt.org/guidebooks/microtransit-what-is-it-and-why-use-it-factsheet/>

Microtransit, Shared Use Mobility Center's Mobility Learning Center, https://learn.sharedusemobilitycenter.org/learning_module/microtransit/

Planning Microtransit Services

“Nothing about us without us” is both the mantra of the disability rights movement and a fundamental feature of an inclusive planning and design process. A successful and financially sustainable microtransit system can serve multiple markets: commuters during peak periods, older adults and people with disabilities to healthcare appointments during the day, high schoolers in the afternoon, or third-shift workers at night. Understanding the perspectives of those who are intended to use microtransit is fundamental to a successful design process. For instance, what challenges do they encounter when riding the service? Where do they want to go if a ride was available? Planners don’t know what they don’t know unless they reach out and ask. This knowledge will come from a public engagement process that starts from the beginning and continues through service design, implementation, and evaluation. Mobility planning, including for a microtransit service, should be predicated on each step of the [complete trip](#) from the trip origin to destination.

The first step for ensuring meaningful engagement is to identify the stakeholders. These include elected officials, leaders or influencers of neighborhood and community groups, and organizations like area agencies on aging, senior centers, centers for independent living, and representatives of the metropolitan or regional planning as well as older adults, persons with disabilities and their caregivers. The transit system should know what ADA paratransit rides are already provided in the prospective microtransit service area. They need to have discussions with local programs and riders and identify the mobility objectives of each participant and when, where, and how often do they need to ride. Proposed solutions should be tested to see if they meet their needs.

Inclusive Planning Resources:

- Coordination Committee Toolkit, <https://www.nadtc.org/resources-publications/resource/coordination-committee-toolkit/>
- Creating a Transportation Committee that Reflects All Community Voices, NADTC.org, <https://www.nadtc.org/resources-publications/resource/creating-a-transportation-committee-that-reflects-all-community-voices//>
- Transit Planning 4 All <https://transitplanning4all.org/>
- ITS4US, It’s Transportation for All of Us <https://its.dot.gov/its4us/htm/overview.htm>

Considerations for Accommodating People with Disabilities and Older Adults on Microtransit

Microtransit service is required to be accessible to people with disabilities, though not every vehicle has to be accessible. The same quality of service is expected and must be measurable.

- Is the average wait time between ride request and pickup about the same for those who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices vs. riders who do not?
- Is the app to book and track rides accessible to screen-readers, meeting [WCAG accessibility standards](#)?

- Are the microtransit drivers trained to assist riders with disabilities that are both apparent and hidden?

Most individuals certified for ADA Paratransit qualify for microtransit because they cannot get to or from the nearest transit stop. If both ends of the trip are within the microtransit zone, microtransit can meet their needs. Some of those certified for ADA complementary paratransit service can also transfer to bus or rail routes and get to their destination. Microtransit will work for many of their needs. Individuals with disabilities who cannot make connections between vehicles may need ADA paratransit outside the microtransit zone.

Microtransit drivers are not required to provide door-to-door assistance or hand-to-hand service and may not be able to serve individuals who require assistance above the minimum required for ADA complementary paratransit. The ADA paratransit eligibility process can be designed to assess which riders are appropriate for microtransit services. Travel-training programs should include instruction in using microtransit.

Reasonable accommodations may be required to meet the need of people with disabilities and older adults. Here are some considerations for accommodations that may be needed.

Microtransit technology generally sends notifications before the vehicle arrives.

- Can the number of minutes in advance of the notification be customized to meet their needs?

Some microtransit systems pick-up and drop-off at neighborhood meeting points.

- Can the microtransit vehicle meet riders with disabilities and older adults at the curb by their building?
- Will the system accommodate people with disabilities and older adults who need longer times to board or alight?

ADA Requirements & Training Resources:

- [NADTC Access Matters Training videos](#)
- Federal Transit Administration ADA Regulations, <https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-guidance/civil-rights-ada/ada-regulations>
- What Are the Requirements for Demand-Responsive Service? <https://www.transit.dot.gov/what-are-requirements-demand-responsive-service>

Conclusion

Microtransit is a growing key service strategy and equity tool to extend transit connections and ADA complementary paratransit coverage. Microtransit can accommodate riders with disabilities and older adults, but the design must be intentional and include feedback from users and potential users. Ensuring accessibility in any new service, including microtransit is essential and must be considered at the start when planning begins.



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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

Easterseals is leading the way to full equity, inclusion, and access through life-changing disability and community services. For more than 100 years, we have worked tirelessly with our partners to enhance quality of life and expand local access to healthcare, education, and employment opportunities. And we won't rest until every one of us is valued, respected, and accepted. Through our national network of affiliates, Easterseals provides essential services and on-the-ground supports to more than 1.5 million people each year — from early childhood programs for the critical first five years, to autism services, to medical rehabilitation and employment programs, to veterans' services, and more. Our public education, policy, and advocacy initiatives positively shape perceptions and address the urgent and evolving needs of the one in four Americans living with disabilities today. Together, we're empowering people with disabilities, families and communities to be full and equal participants in society. www.easterseals.com