



Technical Assistance Brief

Resources on Rides for Employment for Older Adults and People with Disabilities

Transportation enables older adults and individuals with disabilities to access and sustain paid employment or volunteer work activities. Depending on the geographic area, the transportation options can vary considerably. Urban areas often provide multiple options from public, fixed route systems to paratransit and even demand-response or on-demand transportation that goes above and beyond ADA requirements to offer the additional assistance some older adults and individuals with disabilities may need. Rural areas typically offer more limited options due to funding limitations. Even in communities with many transportation options, schedules, routes and cost can be barriers for some riders. Consequently, transportation providers and communities often look for creative ways to serve the mobility needs of older adults, individuals with disabilities and caregivers.

Rides to employment, in particular, may require reliability from transportation providers. Without access to reliable transportation, older adults and people with disabilities often find that they are unable to obtain or sustain employment or volunteer activities.

Rides to employment are a regular trip purpose for any transportation provider that qualifies for Federal Transit Administration Section 5307, 5310 or 5311 funding, but often local match requirements will mean that providers seek additional funds from public and private grants. The programs and resources on providing rides to



Credit: SilverSource, Inc., Stamford, CT

work highlighted below can assist local communities in starting, improving, or expanding transportation services to help older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers access employment and volunteer opportunities more easily.

Programs

Vanpools and Inclusive Mobility on Demand (MOD)

Mountain Line in Flagstaff, Arizona, developed two innovative programs that help riders access employment. The first is a vanpool program funded by Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) using Federal Transit Administration Section 5311 grant funds, with a local match from Coconino County, to serve groups of commuters. With this funding, Mountain Line supports up to 22 vanpools. Contracting with Commute with Enterprise, a rideshare program which provides vehicles for the vanpool groups, Mountain Line provides a monthly \$400 subsidy for each vanpool group to lower the lease price program participants pay.

While currently all vanpools are within Coconino County, Mountain Line is working with Winslow Indian Health Care Center to provide service outside Coconino for the Navajo Nation to take employees from Navajo County to work at health care centers in Winslow and Dilkon, where the commutes are between 60 and 90 miles. Winslow Indian Health Care Center agreed to pay the vehicle lease costs and annual costs for three vanpools.

Mountain Line's second program began as an inclusive Mobility on Demand (MOD) pilot in November 2021 with grant funding from Transit Planning 4 All (TP4A). Mountain Line started a microtransit project in an area with more than 10 health and human service agencies that were previously underserved by public transit. Riders who need to access these agencies receive door-to-door service or connect with the fixed route bus service. Some riders, like those from the homeless shelter, have been able to use the new service to access employment.

For more information:

<https://mountainline.az.gov/services-programs/commuter-vanpool/>

<https://transitplanning4all.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/TP4As-Project-Spotlight-Series-2-Flagstaff-AZ.pdf>

Employer/Employee Benefit

Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) promotes Wave to Work, a ride program for employers and employees. RIPTA describes the variety of options available on their website, highlighting 1) how employers can receive a tax deduction to subsidize employees' cost of using public transportation, 2) how employees can pay for bus fare with a pre-tax payroll deduction, and 3) how employees and employers can share the cost of bus fare. Employees who participate in the program use either a Wave smart card or mobile app when boarding RIPTA buses.

RIPTA, in partnership with the Rhode Island Department of Human Services and the Comprehensive Community Action Program, also created the Rides Toward Work program. This program benefits participants in Rhode Island Works, a Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program that provides financial and employment assistance for parents and families with little to no income who have children high school age or younger. Rides Toward Work is funded in part through a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Human Services Coordinated Research (HSCR) grant. It goes above and beyond offering RI Works participants bus passes. Rides Toward Work ensures that those facing transportation barriers can use other modes of transportation to access employment, job training, interviews, and other program-related services.

For more information:

<https://www.ripta.com/employer-programs/>

<https://dhs.ri.gov/programs-and-services/ri-works-program>

Rural Connectivity

Quaboag Valley Community Development Corporation (CDC) and the Town of Ware, Massachusetts, operate the Quaboag Connector, a demand-response, curb-to-curb transportation service to help older adults, people with disabilities, and low-income individuals access medical services, employment, and more. Serving 10 rural communities in the rural Quaboag Valley, 40 percent of the riders are older adults, and approximately 50 percent of rides are for employment. In partnership with a neighboring community, the town of Palmer, the Quaboag Connector operates the Palmer Rides to Work program, which provides discounted rides to employment, employment-related training or job interviews for Palmer residents funded through a community development block grant (CDBG).

For more information:

<https://www.rideconnector.org/quaboag-connector/>

Technical Assistance Resources

Each program or resource is followed by a description and links to websites, pdf documents, or other relevant information. Additional transportation resources can be found at <https://www.nadtc.org/resources-publications/>. For technical assistance and additional information, please contact NADTC directly at contact@nadtc.org.

A Ride to Independence: Kyle's Story

This blog of one young man's experience showcases how transportation and job access have become an integral part of his daily support system and essential for him to be an active member of the community. (NADTC 2022)

www.nadtc.org/news/blog/a-ride-to-independence-kyles-story/

APRIL Toolkit for Operating a Rural Transportation Voucher Program

This model describes how to bring together community members and resources to develop and operate a transportation system for people with disabilities in rural areas, providing vouchers to use for employment, non-emergency medical, daily living chores and social activities.

<https://www.umt.edu/rural-disability-research/resources/transp-voucher-prog/default.php>

Autonomous Vehicles: Driving Employment for People with Disabilities

This information brief published by the Office of Disability Employment Policy in October 2019 and posted on the U.S. Department of Labor website summarizes a national dialogue to promote innovative thinking around the design and deployment of autonomous vehicles (AVs) for breaking down barriers to employment for people with disabilities.

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/program-areas/employment-supports/transportation>

How Centers for Independent Living (CIL) can Promote Transportation Options in Rural Areas: Developing a Transportation Program

Access to transportation options is a barrier to employment, healthcare, goods and services and being an active part of a community. CILs can play an important role in advocating for and developing transportation options for persons with disabilities living in rural areas of the United States.

<https://aoddisabilityemploymentcenter.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/How-CILs-Can-Promote-Transportation-Options-in-Rural-Areas.pdf>

Conclusion

Many transportation programs offer rides to work among the ride purposes they provide, but not all providers have created a separate program to meet this need. Still, it is important to remember that access to reliable and affordable transportation for older adults and younger adults with disabilities who cannot drive may influence their ability to accept employment or participate in volunteer activities.

While some transportation programs focus on riders' medical and healthcare needs, others take a more general approach to serve rides for grocery shopping, education, social activities, and employment. Nevertheless, ensuring that older adults and people with disabilities who need or want to access employment may require a specific focus on their transportation needs. The examples and resources provided in this brief highlight the creative efforts of some communities to address this need.

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Who We Are

Established in 2015, the NADTC is a federally funded technical assistance center administered by Easterseals and USAgging based in Washington, DC.

The **National Aging and Disability Transportation Center** is funded through a cooperative agreement of Easterseals, USAgging, 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.

USAgging 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. USAgging 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