



NATIONAL AGING AND DISABILITY
TRANSPORTATION CENTER



Photo Credit: Colonie Senior Services Center, Inc., Albany, NY

Transportation Options for Mobility Independence

**Community transportation can help you
stay connected to essential services such
as health care and other activities.**



Photo Credit: The Rapid, Grand Rapids, MI

Where to Find Local Resources

Transportation options available in your community are likely to include a variety of services. It helps to understand these options to make more informed decisions. Local experts, such as **mobility managers** and information and referral specialists, can help you learn about the transportation options in your community. Contact your local public transit agency or local organizations, such as the Area Agency on Aging (AAA), Center for Independent Living (CIL), Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) or Indian Tribal Organization.

The Eldercare Locator can also help connect you to resources in your area. Contact the Eldercare Locator at eldercare.acl.gov or 1-800-677-1116.

Transportation Options

The transportation options available in your community are likely to include some of the services listed below.

Public transit/fixed-route transportation is provided by bus or rail along established routes with set schedules, and no reservations are required.

Complementary paratransit. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires public transit agencies that provide fixed-route services to offer

complementary paratransit services to individuals who are not able to use fixed-route service due to a disability. The service must operate within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of the fixed route and is available during the same days and hours as the fixed-route service. A personal care attendant can travel with the passenger at no cost. To qualify for complementary paratransit, riders need to meet specific eligibility requirements established under the ADA.

Demand response is sometimes called Dial-A-Ride and transports multiple passengers who are picked up from different origin points and dropped off at separate destinations. This service often requires reservations to be made at least 24–48 hours in advance.

Volunteer transportation programs may be offered by local nonprofit or faith-based organizations. Drivers may provide rides in their own cars or agency-owned vehicles. Rides must be prearranged. Volunteer programs often have eligibility requirements or may restrict rides to certain trip purposes, such as medical appointments. Volunteer transportation programs offer only curb-to-curb service or may provide door-to-door or door-through-door assistance. Some programs require riders to pay a fee, while others offer free rides.



Photo Credit: Capacity Builders, Farmington, NM

On-Demand Services

- **Microtransit** is a shared-ride service, using smaller transportation vehicles. The service area is within a defined geographic perimeter, such as between a senior high-rise building and downtown. Passengers can book trips through a mobile app or by calling to request the trip. Reservations are not required.
- **Transportation network companies (TNCs)** like Uber and Lyft connect passengers with independent drivers who provide transportation in their own vehicles. These services are usually booked and paid for by the rider through a mobile app and do not typically offer rider assistance. However, TNC services in some local communities are provided through a special arrangement with public transit or another transportation provider. Such services may offer reduced fares or free rides and rider assistance.
- **Taxi services** use a fleet of licensed vehicles that are booked by phone or using a mobile app. Trips usually can be scheduled in advance or on the spot, and fares are charged per mile or per minute. Many communities require taxi companies to have accessible vehicles in their fleets.

Questions to Ask

Safe, accessible transportation is critical for independent living. Keep in mind the following to help you find transportation services that meet your needs.

Service Area, Trip Type and Scheduling

Many transportation options have a defined service area, set hours and days of operation. They may also limit service by type of trip, such as providing only rides to medical appointments. Reservations may be required for some services, such as demand response and Medicaid non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT), while others, such as TNCs or taxis, make same-day reservations.

Ask

- What is the service area?
- What types of trips can be provided?
- How much advanced notice is required?
- What are the hours and days of operation?

Eligibility and Cost

Some programs, such as complementary paratransit, require riders to meet certain eligibility criteria. The fees for transportation services will vary and may include a reduced rate or no-cost service for older adults and people with disabilities.

Programs that can help pay for transportation:

Transportation voucher programs provide fare assistance or free rides to low-income older adults and people with disabilities who meet the program's eligibility criteria. Eligible riders usually receive vouchers for specific types of transportation. Voucher programs may offer rides only to certain destinations, such as medical appointments.

Medicaid NEMT is available to people with Medicaid insurance benefits to travel to and from medical services. Eligibility criteria and types of destinations vary from state to state.

Medicare transportation benefits are limited to emergency ambulance transportation services under Medicare Plans A and B. Some Medicare Advantage Plans (Part C or MA Plans) cover NEMT. These trips may require prior approval and may have a limited number of trips available. Contact the insurance provider for benefit information.

Medicare cardholders qualify for half fare on public transit/fixed-route transportation during off-peak hours.

Ask

- What are the requirements to qualify for the service?
- What is the cost for a one-way ride?

Special Accommodations and Rider Assistance

Consider any needs you may have that must be accommodated when traveling, such as using a wheelchair, scooter or walker, or the use of verbal announcements or electronic signs to announce the next stop on the route.

The level of passenger assistance will vary by service. In curb-to-curb service, passengers are picked up at the curb or driveway. Door-to-door passengers are assisted to enter and exit the vehicle and may be helped to the door. Door-through-door passengers are helped from the vehicle into the door of their residence or destination.

Ask

- Are accessible vehicles available?
- Do you offer passenger assistance?
- Can a personal care attendant or family member ride with me?

Travel Training. Public transit agencies and many local aging and disability organizations provide free instruction to help new riders learn to travel safely on public transit. Travel training may be provided by professionals or peers who are experienced users of public transit.



*Photo Credit:
MetroWest
Regional
Transit Authority,
Framingham, MA*



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