

May 15 Equity Advisory Committee Accessible Transportation Policy Blueprint

Presentation - Adina Levin and Kaleo Mark, Seamless Bay Area

Research - Kaleo Mark 8 minutes

- New research showing current needs for accessible transportation
- New case studies of reforms around the US

Policy Recommendations - Adina Levin - 7 minutes

- Funding reform opportunities in 2024
- Policy recommendations supported by 20 years of studies

Q&A / Discussion - 15 minutes - Adina Levin

- Questions and comments
- Coalition and education opportunities in 2024

Current Needs

Rider Focus Groups and Service Provider Surveys



Current Needs - Riders

What changes are needed to improve services?

Paratransit services essential for mobility of riders. However, barriers within the system hamper people's ability to get where they want, when they want.

Improvements needed:

- Decreasing trip times.
- More reliable and frequent service in more areas, at more times of the day.
- Acquiring vehicles that meet the needs of riders. More operator training.
- More connections between people with disabilities/older adults and decision makers

"We need to elevate the perception and the respect for people with disabilities. We do what you do. We need to go where you go. We need to be what you are."



Current Needs - Operators

What changes are needed to improve services?

More robust operations

- Standardized wheelchair lifts on vehicles
- Expanded service area and longer hours of service
- Hire and retain worker with higher pay
- Funding to buy and operate more vehicles



Streamlining User Experience

- Shorter eligibility wait times
- Ability to pay fares with transit cards and credit/debit cards

Deeper coordination

- Coordination among nonprofits and community organization providers
- Unify service operators to work off the same software
- Coordination with social service agencies for standardized eligibility requirements, staff training, etc.

More rider voices on policy/advisory bodies and in public meetings

Case Studies

Florida: Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged

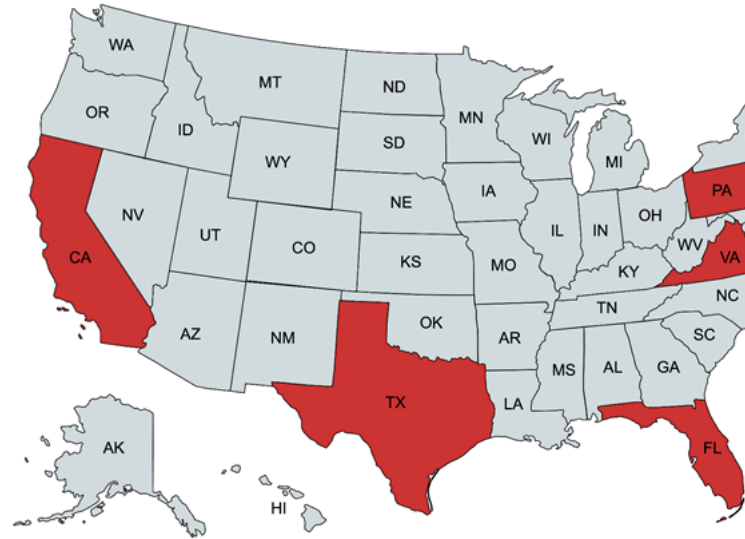
Rappahannock-Rapidan, Virginia: Regional Transportation Collaborative Program

Harris County, Texas: RIDES Program

Pennsylvania: Find My Ride, Apply

Bay Area, California: Transit Transformation Action Plan

Purpose: Find places that have strengthened regional coordination and governance structures to improve mobility.



Florida, Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (1989)

Key Takeaways:

Balances local flexibility for service implementation with statewide policy development and oversight.

Rationalizes and streamlines the implementation of paratransit services statewide.

2023: 7.2 million trips on ADA Paratransit statewide

Clearly defined roles for the state level governing body and counties/regions. Retains local-level discretion for service vision and planning goals.

Florida Commission for the



**Transportation
Disadvantaged**

Florida, Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (1989)

State Level

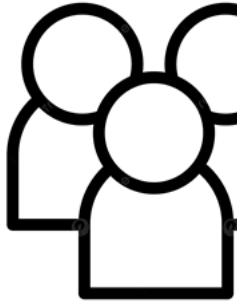


Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged: Develops policies and procedures to coordinate services.

Independent agency within FDOT with its own budget and rule making authority

7 board members: 2 must be people with disabilities. 1 must be over 65

Local Level



Community Transportation Coordinator: Provides service at the county or regional level. Mobility management and oversight of service.

Designated Official Planning Agencies: Conducts and coordinates planning of local service.

Local Coordination Board: Local advisory body that assists CTC with identifying local service needs and providing information, advice, and direction of coordination. Membership: Local elected officials, state agencies, rider transportation industry, and medical community

Harris County, Texas – RIDES Program (1990) and Rappahannock- Rapidan, Virginia – Regional Transportation Collaborative Program (2020)

Key Takeaway: Regional entity using a centralized booking system and implementing staff and resource sharing programs to coordinate and improve accessible transportation services.

Centralized booking system across multiple providers: Software helps avoid duplicative services, opens up vehicles and drivers to serve more trips by creating more efficient travel routes. Enables all providers (that meets the riders accessibility needs) to fulfill a rider's trip.

Virginia: **Shared use of resources and staffing to create efficiencies**

- Staffing: 12 shared staff across 5 non-profit organizations and community groups. Help with marketing, mobility management, volunteer coordination, and more.
- Resources: Sharing 11 vehicles across 7 service providers.

Virginia: **Collaborative grant-application processes.** Reduces duplicative staff time spent applying, investors see joint applications as more stable and better suited for grant funding.

Pennsylvania, “ Find My Ride, Apply” Program (2020)



Key Takeaway: Statewide online application portal for local transit agencies to use. State-level innovation and leadership benefitting local transit agencies and riders.

Benefits:

1. **Standardized, online option to apply for paratransit.**
1. **Simplifying the Discount Eligibility Process.** The FMR Apply program automatically matches applicants to eligible programs across 6 major public transit discount programs.
1. **Reduces administrative burden for local transit agencies.** Applicant information automatically entered into a centralized data

San Francisco Bay Area, Transit Transformation Action Plan (2021)



Key Takeaway: Regional governance structure (MTC) facilitating voluntary coordination of accessible transportation services.

Reforms:

- **Mobility Manager** to coordinate rides and act as a liaison between transit agencies
- **One-seat Ride Pilot Program**
- **Integration of ADA Paratransit into regional fare payment system**
- **Standardize eligibility practices** for people with disabilities
- **Identify paratransit challenges and recommend reforms** in planning process

Policy Background



- **Goal: Improve transportation accessible for seniors and people with disabilities, based on study recommendations over the last decades**
- Caltrans 2012: the current system provides ineffective and inefficient service with gaps, inconsistent service, duplication and underutilization of resources, inconsistent safety standards and customer inconvenience⁵

Policy Background

Review of this policy area identified six efforts conducted from 2003 to 2021, all intended to result in improvements in accessible transportation:

- 2003: Health & Human Services Agency: Strategic Plan for an Aging California
- 2004: Assembly Committee on Aging & Long-Term Care Committee: Building an Aging Agenda (Master Plan on Aging)
- 2005: Caltrans: Transportation Task Team Report to the California Commission On Aging
- 2007: Caltrans: Second Progress Report to the State Legislature on the Strategic Plan for Aging California Population
- 2012: Caltrans: California Mobility Action Plan
- 2021: Department of Aging: Master Plan for Aging

Policy Background

Assess Funding Needs

Two current initiatives are authorized by state law to assess and make recommendations regarding transportation funding. **These initiatives should assess and recommend funding to implement recommendations from multiple previous state studies.**

- SB 1121 (2022) requires California Transportation Commission in consultation with CalSTA and Caltrans to prepare a needs assessment of the cost to operate, maintain, and provide for the necessary future growth of the state and local transportation system for the next 10 years. The Needs Assessment is due on or before Jan 1, 2025 and every 5 years thereafter.
- SB 125 (2023) requires CalSTA to convene a Transit Transformation Task Force to develop policy recommendations relating to transit funding, improving the transit experience for all users, and growing transit ridership. CalSTA, in consultation with the task force, is required to submit a report of findings and policy recommendations based on

Guide existing funding

- **Better Utilize Coordinated Plan Funding Guidance for Federal Funding**

Federal law requires locally developed Coordinated Plans to guide Section 5310 federal funding intended for transit dependent and transit disadvantaged people – including the elderly, disabled, persons of limited means. Caltrans reaffirms this in its State Management Plan.

California case study shows an insufficient alignment between the priorities identified in the Coordinated Plans and the State Management Plan and the uses of Section 5310 funding. **This alignment should be improved.**

- **Reform “Unmet Needs” Process for State Funding**

California’s Transportation Development Act (TDA) requires jurisdictions to identify unmet transit needs and those needs that are reasonable to meet in order to guide state TDA funding.

The determination of unmet needs should consider the needs identified in Coordinated Plans so TDA funds can be used for Coordinated Plan implementation, and should include a public review process to provide transparency.

Institutional Reforms with additional funding

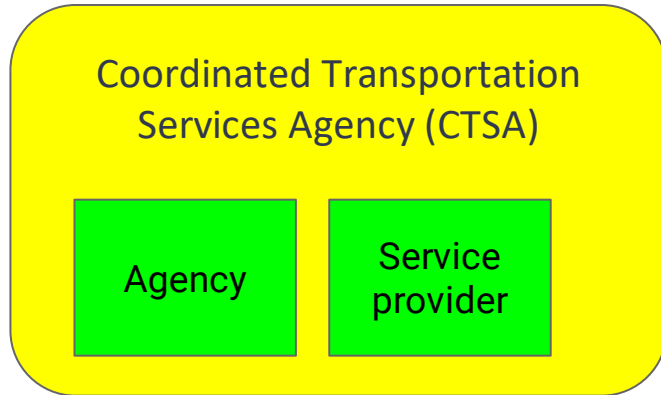
- **Establish California Mobility Council** with authority over reform of implementation of the Social Service Transportation Improvement Act.
- **Enhance the Consolidated Transportation Services Agency (CTSA) mechanism** The 1979 SSTI Act established the CTSA mechanism for the purpose of “improving the quality of transportation services to low mobility groups while achieving cost savings, lowered insurance premiums and more efficient use of vehicles and funding resources.”
- **Utilize Regional Network Management entities in regions where they are established.** For example, in the San Francisco Bay Area, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission Network Management function that oversees the coordination across counties.

Institutional Reforms with additional funding

Coordination opportunities

- **Standardize eligibility.** Single set of criteria, streamlined process to qualify for accessible transportation services.
- **Mobility Management:** Provide a single point of contact connecting users accessible transportation with appropriate service for their needs. Support with standardized booking software.
- **Cross Jurisdictional Service:** Also known as one-seat-ride or regional trips accommodating riders traveling between transit districts.
- **Public Rights of Way (PROW):** Traversable sidewalks, paths, and routes are critical for accessible mobility. These local mobility issues are best addressed at the local level. CTSAs will be empowered to review capital improvement other planning and programming documents.

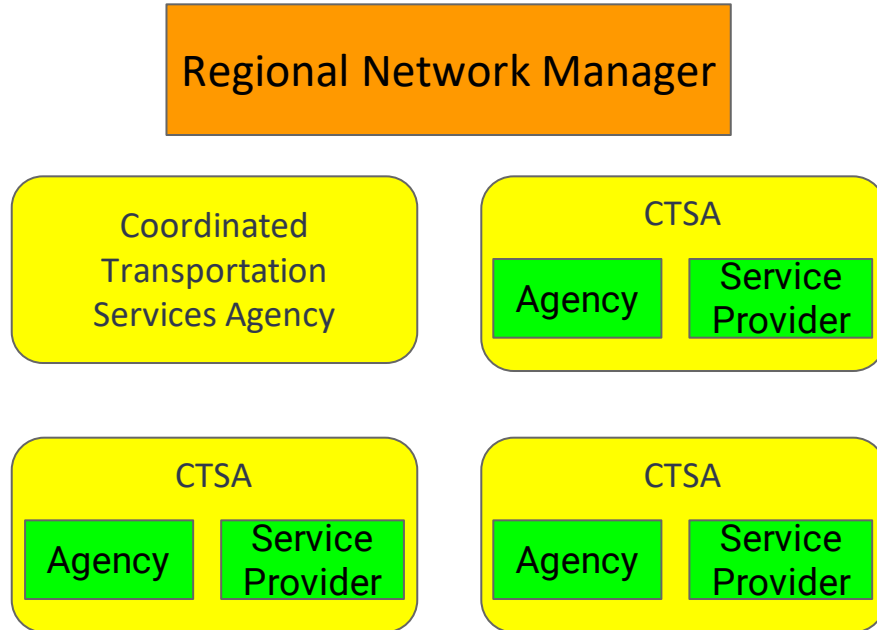
Region without Network Manager



Coordinates Accessible Transportation Services within a County

- Allocates funding to transportation providers
- Serve as Mobility Manager
- Enable "One-Seat-Ride" within County
- Review Public Rights of Way Local P

Region with Network Manager



Coordinates Accessible Transportation Services Initiatives Across a Region

- Allocates Funding to CTSAs
- Ensuring standardization and coordination across region

Coordinates Accessible Transportation Services within a County

- Sub-allocates funding to transport providers
- Serve as Mobility Manager
- Enable “One-Seat-Ride” within County
- Review Public Rights of Way Local