

Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) provides funding for coordinated transportation and mobility management resources through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5310 Program, Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities. DRPT also works to lead regional coordinated transportation efforts to improve mobility for these targeted population groups.

The statewide Coordinated Human Services Mobility (CHSM) Plan is a planning requirement for continued Section 5310 program funding. DRPT, in partnership with a consultant team, is in the process of updating the 2022 CHSM Plan for the state. The goal of the plan is to build upon the existing network of public, private and human service agency transportation services in a way that will efficiently and effectively improve mobility for older adults, individuals with disabilities, people with low incomes, and the general public.

Closing gaps in the Human Service Transportation system will take a coordinated effort between human service providers, transportation providers, local and regional entities, and state agencies. The following goals have been derived directly from the needs heard from transportation providers and their riders during surveys, focus groups, workshops, and conversations over the last 10 months. Strategies to achieve those goals have been developed using ideas from local conversations and national best practices.

- **Goal 1:** Diversify Funding Sources for Human Service Transportation ([Learn More](#))
- **Goal 2:** Create Additional Capacity for and Expand Existing Services ([Learn More](#))
- **Goal 3:** Expand Beyond Existing Services ([Learn More](#))
- **Goal 4:** Increased Support for Riders Over the Complete Trip ([Learn More](#))
- **Goal 5:** Consistent Information and Streamlined Distribution ([Learn More](#))
- **Goal 6:** Bring Human Service Transportation Into Broader Planning Conversation ([Learn More](#))
- **Goal 7:** Structured and Consistent Technical Assistance ([Learn More](#))



GOAL 1

Diversify Funding Sources for Human Service Transportation

Funding availability and the strings attached to that money are a constant struggle for many human service transportation providers across the state. Human Service Transportation providers need access to additional, diverse, and stable sources of funding to meet current needs and effectively meet the needs of their changing communities. With Federal funding for transportation likely to stay at similar levels for the duration of this plan, the strategies to achieve this goal are focused on diversifying income streams for systems, building capacity for grant management, and leveraging local partnerships and knowledge.

Core Strategies:

- **Increase fund braiding to diversify funding sources for transportation programs.** Fund braiding refers to the use of multiple grants to fund a total project, or more specifically, the use of Federal grant funding to meet local match requirements for a different grant program.
- **Increase local knowledge and capacity for grant applications and fund management.** Having help understanding application requirements, program eligibilities, and reporting procedures can give systems the support and confidence they need to go after additional funding.
- **Identify regional entities with capacity and ability to accept funding and provide or contract for transportation services.** Current funding structures can limit where Virginians are able to go, increasing the availability of funding through discretionary grant program selection preferences or a focus on regional transportation for fund braiding, could help open the door to expanded or additional regional human service transportation services.

**GOAL 2****Create Additional Capacity For and Expand Existing Services**

Human Service Transportation providers serve thousands of riders each year, with the desire to assist more individuals to get where they need to go, with the support they need along the way. Expanding existing services that are working well can create new opportunities for those with limited options to get around.

Core Strategies:

- **Coordinate locally to free up human service transportation capacity for recurring trips.** Human Service Transportation may not always be the most efficient mode for each trip, and local coordination to put each trip on the most efficient mode can help free up local capacity for additional trips.
- **Focus volunteer driver networks on the needs of daily life.** Volunteer networks can be refocused to center on the needs of daily life, helping increase capacity for recurring trips.
- **Increase Incidental Use of Transit Vehicles.** Transit vehicles are allowed to be used for purposes other than transit provision, so long as that use does not affect the service levels of the transit service that vehicle was procured for. Incidental use is a novel way for human service providers to gain access to vehicles to transport their clients to services when other transportation options are not available.

**GOAL 3****Expand Beyond Existing Services**

Fixed route and other existing transit services can be difficult to change once they are in operation. Human service transportation providers and their riders also have needs that may not be met by current services, or the type of transit being provided. Creating additional services and providing new types of human service transportation will increase access to critical services and destinations and allow all Virginians to live an independent life.

Core Strategies:

- **Encourage the creation of additional community transportation options, particularly focused on community circulation and recurring trips.** Additional providers, focused on specific communities, can add critical capacity for recurring medical trips and trips to other quality of life destinations.
- **Increase utilization of contracted services.** Contracting for services, particularly on-demand services, can add service capacity to a region while shifting many of the operating and reporting burdens to a third party.
- **Provide a variety of modes to meet the needs of every individual.** Individuals with varying levels of support need different modes of transportation, requiring a mix of vehicles and services in each community for all individuals to be able to live fulfilling lives.

**GOAL 4****Increased Support for Riders Over the Complete Trip**

Human Service Transportation providers support their riders to the best of their abilities, but can only do so much, particularly once a rider is off the vehicle. Riders of human service transportation can need additional support in order to successfully complete the reason for their trip. Providing increased support for riders over their complete trip may mean increasing touch points between riders, case managers, and transportation providers.

Core Strategies:

- **Regular local or regional meetings between human service providers and transportation providers to discuss needs and further ways to coordinate.** Simply coming together to discuss solutions to common problems is a key way to ensure local coordination ideas turn into local coordinated services.
- **Additional support services from curb-to-door.** Providing transportation services with additional assistance built in, or coordinating with human service providers to help when individuals arrive at their services can ensure that individuals are receiving the services they need, and trips are fulfilling their intended need.

- **Support existing local mobility managers, and encourage coverage across the state.** Local mobility managers, housed in regional organizations, county or local governments, or other human service providers, are critical to connecting human service providers and their clients to the transportation options available to them.

**GOAL 5****Consistent Information and Streamlined Distribution**

A lack of information was cited as a barrier not only for those seeking to use human service transportation, but also those looking to provide and coordinate those services. Ensuring critical information on available transportation services, such as eligibility requirements, operating times, and service areas, is disseminated in consistent ways across the commonwealth will benefit both riders and providers alike.

Core Strategies:

- **Introduce human service transportation to other local conversations.** Existing meetings of local human service providers should be leveraged to discuss existing transportation services and community needs. Including transportation in as many conversations on human service delivery as possible keeps the issue at the forefront, even when staff changes.
- **Establish travel training programs to help community members understand their options.** Travel training is helpful for riders and human service providers alike, allowing them to fully understand the transportation options available, and how to be comfortable using them.
- **Create single sources of regional human service transportation information.** Systems such as One-Call/One-Click centers or regional resource navigators can bring together many sources of information to help riders understand all the available options.

**GOAL 6****Bring Human Service Transportation Into the Broader Planning Conversation**

Many human service and community transportation providers feel as if they are operating separately from other services, particularly when it comes to planning conversations. This leads to unknown expectations for human service transportation providers, and human service providers left out of many transportation planning conversations. Bringing human service transportation into the larger planning conversation can help build a long-term pipeline of projects that benefit the community and make the most of available funding.

Core Strategies:

- **Create Regional Human Services Transportation Plans to create regional project pipelines.** Creating Regional Human Service Transportation plans would provide a dedicated opportunity for local organizations to come together and discuss their priorities. These plans would also set up a local pipeline of projects to be funded, allowing for local prioritization and coordination on funding decisions.
- **Bring community transportation into local land use planning conversations, particularly for developments affecting older adults and individuals with disabilities.** Ensuring that new developments are within existing service areas, or that there is a plan for reasonably extending service, is critical to keeping communities accessible as they grow and change.



GOAL 7

Structured and Consistent Technical Assistance

Providing statewide technical assistance on common issues, such as driver recruitment and retention, and grant writing and management could help many providers in advancing their goals while creating a central store of knowledge, not dependent on individual staff at providers. Increasing the use of national technical assistance centers and coordinating efforts to maximize benefits across the state could also help providers gain access to information or opportunities they may not otherwise have.

Core Strategies:

- **Increase regular touchpoints with 5310 grantees and other human service providers throughout the year.** Holding regular meetings or workshops with human service transportation providers outside of the grant application cycle allows providers the chance to gain a better understanding of the program and how it can meet their needs.
- **Utilize services from national technical assistance centers.** National technical assistance centers, such as the Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility Technical Assistance Center (CCAM-TAC), National Center for Applied Transit Technology (N-CATT), and National Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP), provide various forms of technical assistance ranging from funding options to technology adoption. They are available to assist localities, regions, and states on human service transportation issues, often with grants to assist with the costs.
- **Create regional mobility managers.** Regional mobility managers could coordinate larger regional funding and program questions, leaving local mobility managers to focus on the daily needs of their communities.