

SECTION 6: PRIORITY PROJECTS

The purpose of the priority projects is to signal to potential applicants the kinds of projects that are most needed in the region. Agencies may also apply for other project types not listed as priority projects. As outlined in the TPB's Selection Criteria for Enhanced Mobility, proposals addressing Priority Projects can score up to twelve additional points out of a maximum of one-hundred.

A. Mobility Management

Mobility Management at the Systems Level means a full or part-time staff position within a county or city government, such as a county's transportation or human service agency, that serves in several capacities - policy coordinator, broker to help identify the best services for individual trip needs, and researcher of gaps in service. A Mobility Manager helps coordinate services in the jurisdiction and across jurisdictional lines and adapts the service to local need, serves as an information resource, for example, sharing information with agencies about project best practices, and connects agencies with travel trainers.

Mobility Management at the Individual Level is one-to-one assistance to customers in identifying their mobility needs and preferences, understanding the available options in their community that fit, providing assistance with applications for programs, or planning and reserving a trip from start to finish, as requested.

Good Examples:

- ✓ Jewish Council for the Aging's Connect-a-Ride (funded by Montgomery County DPWT).
- ✓ Montgomery County Maryland Department of Health & Human Services.
- ✓ Fairfax County Neighborhood & Community Services' Northern Virginia Mobility Access Program (NVMAP).
- ✓ Resource: The National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM) has toolkits and position descriptions for mobility managers, among other resources.

B. Coordinated Planning Efforts

This priority project emphasizes the importance of coordination at the local level by providing grant funds to jump start coordination efforts by funding the planning process. Grant funds could be utilized to make the planning process more inclusive, encourage non-traditional but interested parties to take a seat at the table, develop a local coordinated plan to share vehicles, or develop a mobility management plan for a County or region.

Good Examples:

- ✓ Prince William County, Virginia's "Transportation Options Group", a coalition of private non-profit and public human service agencies, transportation providers, and government officials who developed and implemented a Mobility Management Plan.
- ✓ Resource: Administration for Community Living (ACL) Strengthening Inclusive Coordinated Transportation Partnerships to Promote Community Living projects.

C. Travel Training

Travel Training teaches people with disabilities or older adults how to access and use transportation services, including fixed-route services. There are different types of travel training services. Some include general orientation and others are tailored to the needs of the individual. Training can be provided in groups, one-on-one, and peer-to-peer. Travel training should instruct individuals on trip planning, payment systems, the use of mobile applications (“apps”), or alternatives to apps for people without access to Smartphones. Orientation and Mobility (O&M) training is specific to people with visual impairments and teaches safe and effective travel skills. O&M training is needed throughout the region, so people can receive training closer to where they live. Many people can benefit from travel training, including older adults, people with physical, intellectual, and sensory disabilities, people unable to afford their own vehicle, and people with limited English proficiency.

Good Examples:

- ✓ Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)’s MetroReady Travel Training and System Orientation.
- ✓ The Arc of Northern Virginia’s Train the Travel Trainer program.
- ✓ Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind’s Orientation & Mobility Training.
- ✓ Resource: The Association of Travel Instruction (ATI) has a published definition of Travel Training and other resources.

D. Door-through-Door or Escorted Transportation Service

Escorted transportation services, also known as door-through-door or assisted transportation, provides a means of extra safety and assistance to a rider who needs support to travel. The level of assistance a program provides varies but does not include heavy assistance such as lifting or handling medical needs or equipment. Examples might include preparing a rider for a trip by helping with a coat or gathering documents, accompanying someone into a medical building, and staying with them throughout their appointment, or helping an individual get into and out of a vehicle.

Good Examples:

- ✓ Arlington and Alexandria Area Agencies on Aging.
- ✓ DC Office on Aging’s CREST program.

E. Increase Access to Transit Stations (and First Mile/Last Mile Connections)

Increasing walk, and bike access to transit stations is one of the seven transportation initiatives endorsed by the TPB. This priority project category includes this initiative as important way to make first mile/last mile connections from bus and rail stations and adds motorized options as well. Improvements near transit stations that provide connections to hospitals, libraries, government buildings and voting sites have the greatest priority. Three types of projects are included here:

Improving pedestrian infrastructure around transit stations to eliminate barriers to the use of public transit; including making bus stops more accessible. Bus stops need proper boarding and alighting surfaces, spaces for a wheelchair under a shelter, accessible signage, proper snow removal, and removal of newspaper boxes or other items that block pathways.

Promote adaptive cycling for people with disabilities by increasing the number of accessible bikes in bikeshare programs (e.g. hand bikes, side-by-side bikes, electric bikes and tricycles; and ensuring that these bikes are reserved for people with disabilities).

Offering taxi, ride-hailing and shuttle services to transit stations. If walking or biking is not an option to make a first mile/last mile connection to a Metrorail station due to disability, weather, or time of day– taxis, ride-railing and shuttle services can provide an important link to increase access to public transit.

Good Examples:

- ✓ Montgomery County’s Bus Stop Accessibility efforts
- ✓ Bike share programs with adaptive bikes: College Park, MD; Portland and Corvallis, OR; Carmel, IN

F. Increase Wheelchair-Accessible Options in Taxi and Ride-Hailing Services

People who use wheelchairs or mobility devices need vehicles with ramps or lifts in order to use taxis, ride-hailing services or microtransit. Wait times can be longer for people who use mobility devices, and in some cases, there is no wheelchair-accessible service available at all. A priority is to make sure wheelchair-accessible taxis, ride-hailing and microtransit services accommodate customers who use mobility devices within reasonable wait times. This project type can involve accessible vehicle acquisition, driver training and operating subsidies. Also, wheelchair-accessible services delivered by private providers (such as taxis) can offer cost-effective ways to provide specialized transportation.

The use of wheelchair-accessible taxis for people to get to dialysis, for example, could help curb the cost to public agencies and improve the customer’s transportation experience. MetroAccess is a shared-ride, pre-arranged service and the length of time a dialysis patient, who may not be feeling well, is in a vehicle could also be reduced using taxis. Ride-hailing companies can partner with health care providers to offer patients rides to medical appointments given transportation challenges can be a common reason why people miss appointments.

Good Examples:

- ✓ TransportDC
- ✓ Abilities-Ride in Suburban MD
- ✓ MontCo Union Taxi Cooperative
- ✓ Uber Health

G. Volunteer Driver Programs

Trained volunteers drive agency-owned or private vehicles to transport seniors and people with disabilities to wherever they need to go. Volunteer driver programs fill an important niche in outer and rural areas where transportation options are more limited and as a more affordable option for riders requiring an extra hand with groceries or navigation of a medical office building.

Good Examples:

- ✓ Jewish Council for the Aging's Village Rides and Volunteer Driver Resource Center programs.
- ✓ Capitol Hill Village
- ✓ NV Rides

H. Tailored Transportation Service for Clients of Human Service Agencies (e.g. Vehicle Acquisition)

This project would assist people with disabilities who utilize agency services, but for whom public transit is not a viable option, either because of the unavailability of transit or due to the nature of their disability. One option is that agencies provide transportation to their clients by contracting with a provider, or with directly owned or leased vans. Human service agencies could also coordinate and potentially share vehicles, maintenance, insurance, operating support, and driver training between agencies to provide agency-specific transportation for clients.

Good Examples:

- ✓ The Arc of Montgomery County, The Arc of Prince George's County, and the Arc of Greater Prince William/INSIGHT, Inc.
- ✓ Seabury Resources for Aging

Funding Types and Match Amounts

There are a variety of project types and eligible activities for which Enhanced Mobility funds can be used, and the types of funding and match requirements create the possibility for confusion. Table 3 includes common eligible activities under the Section 5310 program and the type of funding that each activity would be funded as. The activities in the table are not intended to be an exhaustive list, only to provide guidance.