

In 2017, the Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (ADDPC) published [Stuck at Home: By-Passing Transportation Roadblocks to Community Mobility and Independence](#), a policy brief which highlighted transportation challenges for individuals with disabilities in Arizona. Transportation barriers have an impact on many aspects of daily life for many people with disabilities, including accessing healthy food, attending doctor appointments, seeing friends and family, and going to work. Some of the barriers faced by individuals with disabilities when using public transportation are an absence of shade structure at some stops and the limited number of Uber and Lyft fleet vehicles that are accessible, [though there has been progress in this area](#). In rural areas, there are additional challenges such as limited options and high costs, especially in these under-resourced areas of the state. This brief will shed light on developments and promising practices in transportation for individuals with disabilities in Arizona and around the country.



Public transportation can be funded from federal, state, and local tax dollars. However, Arizona is one of five states in the country that does not fund public transportation with state dollars¹, which means that only federal funding and local taxes are used to meet community transportation needs.² The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) offers two funding programs to support public transportation. Section 5310 provides a funding option designated for supporting transit services to

seniors and people with disabilities and Section 5311 is designated for transportation in rural areas.³ Agencies apply for grants from these programs, and while 5311 funds are open to anyone in a state’s rural areas, funds from 5310 are only used for individuals who receive services from the grant-receiving agencies. This leaves many people still in need of reliable and affordable transportation options.⁴

¹ American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, 2012. Survey of State Funding for Public Transportation: Final Report 2012 (FY 2010 Data). <http://scopt.transportation.org/Documents/SSFP-6.pdf>

² Transportation is also funded by lottery dollars in Maricopa County only

³ Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council, 2016. Comprehensive Review and Analysis

⁴ For more information on 5310 and 5311, please refer to the FTA website.

<https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grants/enhanced-mobility-seniors-individuals-disabilities-section-5310>

Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) encourages agencies and organizations to share accessible vehicles and funding, but this often creates liabilities for organizations regarding insurance coverage for vehicles and drivers.⁵ As a result, some accessible vehicles remain unutilized. Governments, non-profits, businesses, and companies have developed initiatives to address these shortcomings and expand options for transportation. This brief will discuss current accessible transportation options available across Arizona and provide examples of successful programs across United States. It will also offer recommendations on how to improve transportation options in Arizona.

CURRENT OPTIONS IN ARIZONA →

Public Transportation

Valley Metro is Maricopa County's regional public transportation authority. It has numerous transportation programs for people with disabilities, including free and reduced fare programs. Individuals are eligible for this program if they prove they have a disability through documentation or if they complete an optional interview and simulation to assess their abilities to ride transit vehicles. This helps both the individual and Valley Metro staff know what supports they need to successfully navigate the transportation system. Free transportation is provided for applicants to and from the Mobility Center for these assessments. Applications can be mailed, emailed, completed online, or delivered in-person.

The Valley Metro Mobility Center provides a variety of services for people with disabilities. These include:

- **Paratransit Service**: A complement to fixed routes for people unable to use the bus and light rail some or all the time and live within three quarters of a mile from the nearest transit route.⁶ Fully accessible vehicles pick individuals up at their place of residence and take them to their requested destinations. Service schedules match those of the fixed routes but can sometimes take longer due to multiple scheduled pick-ups. Rides must be requested at least a day in advance, and it is advised that they schedule 30-minute windows and 5-minute driver wait times.
- **RideChoice**: Valley Metro's RideChoice program is a non-shared alternative on-demand transportation for people with disabilities or seniors in participating communities. On-demand transportation is the option to schedule a same-day trip. Accessible vehicles are available if needed, but the wait times might be longer. Valley Metro RideChoice contracts American Logistics Company who partners with Lyft and other taxi services. This program costs \$3 for the first eight miles, and \$2 for every



⁵ More information on ADOT's state management plan can be found here. <https://www.azdot.gov/docs/default-source/planning/adot-fy-2018-coordinated-mobility-program-guidebook.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

⁶ Valley Metro, www.valleymetro.org, ADA Paratransit

additional mile, cash is not required, fares can be paid electronically. Participants can take up to 20 trips a month, and this can be bumped up to 50 if they use it for medical, work, or school. This program is offered 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every day of the year. RideChoice is available in the following communities Chandler, Fountain Hills, Gilbert, Mesa, Maricopa County unincorporated areas, Surprise, and Tempe. Any resident of these communities who are ADA certified⁷ may use this anywhere in Maricopa County.

- **Travel Training:** Travel training provides a Valley Metro staff person to accompany a new rider and/or caregiver of a new rider through individualized routes to and from work, school, grocery stores, libraries and back home. These trainings can last for up to two weeks. It can take up to a month to get an appointment from one of the two travel trainers at Valley Metro, but their services are invaluable.⁸ Travel Training is offered in Tucson and Flagstaff within the facilities of the transportation authorities.



- **ADA Platinum Pass:** The ADA Platinum Pass is a plastic card that provides free access to ride the bus and light rail and is provided to anyone who is ADA Certified or has completed Valley Metro's Travel Training.⁹

Grant Opportunities

Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) coordinates grant application process and provides training and services to organizations supporting people with disabilities through the FTA 5310 grant program.¹⁰ Any non-profit or similar group is eligible to apply for 5310¹¹ grants disbursed through MAG. Awardees can use these funds for vehicle and capital purchases, maintenance and some management services¹². In the past year, 35 agencies and organizations received funding through this program. Once they are awarded the grant, organizations are required to attend PASS (Passenger, Safety and Security) training, where they are taught how to treat, work, and ensure the safety of individuals with disabilities and older adults. The training follows the manual from the Community Transportation Association

⁷ Chandler, Fountain Hills, Surprise and Tempe allow seniors 65 and older to participate in RideChoice addition to those who are ADA certified.

⁸ Valley Metro, www.valleymetro.org, Travel Training

⁹ Valley Metro, www.valleymetro.org, ADA Platinum Pass

¹⁰ Maricopa Association of Governments. <http://azmag.gov> MAG Connect-A-Ride

¹¹ Please refer to MAG handbook and guidelines for clarification.

<https://azmag.gov/Portals/0/Documents/MagContent/EPDC%20Jan%202019%20Handbook%20and%20Guidelines%20Final.pdf?ver=2019-01-25-130559-357>

¹² Please see MAGs handbook for eligible activities.

of America (CTAA), and is taught either by someone from MAG Human Resources or a senior center.

MAG recently launched their [Age Friendly Arizona](#) initiative, which, along with community partners, received a grant from The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation to establish a Rural Transportation Incubator to address the lack of access to transportation services by older adults. Grant partners may participate in the Exploratory Track which includes workshops on topics that will help them to launch new and/or expanded transportation services. Alternatively, partners may focus on the Implementer Track, which includes the workshops, one-on-one mentoring, and a \$30,000 stipend to assist with launching new and/or expanded transportation services. ¹³

Trip Planners

MAG also helps individuals find transportation in their area through a website called [MAG Connect-a-Ride](#). Individuals choose items from drop-down menus regarding the Service Area, Mode of Transportation and Service Availability. When they press 'View Providers', a list will appear that includes website and contact information for all service providers that meet the desired request. Pima County has a similar website called Find-A-Ride.

These websites provide resources, but have a couple major shortcomings. First, an individual has to call each company to find out if they are eligible. In addition, there is not an option for people who need wheelchair-accessible vans or for riders that use heavy equipment.

TRANSPORTATION INNOVATIONS ACROSS THE UNITED STATES →

States, cities, counties, transportation authorities, and organizations around the country are working together to create solutions to transportation problems. By pooling resources, partnering with private companies, sharing vehicles and promoting bicycle ridership, many more people are able to get to where they need to go.

Serving Rural Areas

In rural northeast Pennsylvania, Crawford Area Transportation Authority (CATA) partnered with Venango County Transit through grants from Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) and the Northwest Commission for Transit Planning to improve public transportation options. CATA partners with multiple local agencies such as the Titusville Hospital and Meadville Medical



¹³ The deadline to apply is July 17, 2019 by 3:00pm. For more information, please contact please contact Amy St. Peter or Nancy Knoche by calling 602.254.6300

Center that financially support routes, and smaller agencies that buy bus passes for individuals with disabilities and older adults. To mitigate the insurance liability issue, they formed a self-insured pool with 20 other PA transit systems called State Association for Transportation Insurance (SAFTI) and are covered under governmental immunity. It manages a 65-vehicle fleet and a state-of-the-art maintenance facility. Ridership exceeds 1,000 passenger trips per day and 390,000 passenger trips per year.¹⁴ CATA's LifeLine route is also notable since it connects people in rural areas to employment, medical, recreational and other opportunities in the larger communities.¹⁵ However, because trips are longer, passenger totals are lower than in urban settings, and trips are longer, cost recovery is difficult.¹⁶

Despite these challenges, CATA has been the two-time recipient of the FTA Administrators Award for Outstanding Public Service. CATA is funded by lottery money and is coordinated by one regional organization. This may be difficult to administer in Arizona because transportation is divided up by city/town and each entity does things differently.

Making Connections through Public-Private Partnerships in Colorado

While the Phoenix metropolitan area has buses and light rail as public transportation options, but sometimes transit stops are inconvenient or inaccessible for an individual. Park and Ride works well for those who have vehicles, but what do passengers do once they get off the bus and still must walk a mile or more to work?

First Mile/Last Mile is a program in the City of Lone Tree, Colorado that addresses the gaps at the beginning and end of an individual's trip. The city is working on a First Mile/Last Mile solution to these situations through a service called Link on Demand. Link on Demand is a partnership between the City of Lone Tree and Uber that began in 2017 with a grant awarded them by the Transportation for America Smart Cities Collaborative. This service provides Link, a circulator from the light rail to major employers and social centers, such as Sky Ridge Medical Center, Charles Schwab and Park Meadows Retail Resort. It also serves the recreation center, library, and Lone Tree Arts Center.¹⁷

Link on Demand also provides a free ride-sharing service that picks up multiple individuals that are going in the same direction. ADA approved, 12-passenger seat and family friendly vans installed with bike racks and driven by professionally trained drivers are designated for this program. People schedule rides by calling Link on Demand during service



"By partnering with Uber, we optimized the infrastructure we already had ... With Link On Demand, we are providing more transportation options and reducing congestion, which are top priorities for our residents and businesses."

- Mayor Jackie Millet. *City of Lone Tree News*, 2019.

¹⁴ Meadville Tribune, 2018. CATA receives Federal Transit Administration award. www.meadvilletribune.com

¹⁵ CATA, 2019. www.catabus.org

¹⁶ CATA is funded by lottery money and is coordinated by one regional organization. This may be difficult to administer in Arizona because everything is divided up by city/town, and each entity does things differently.

¹⁷ City of Lone Tree News, 2019. www.cityoflonetreenews.com

hours or through the Link on Demand app, which is available on both iOS and Android.¹⁸ Wait times vary, and scheduled rides are not guaranteed – nevertheless, Link on Demand has provided more than 20,000 rides in the city in the past two years.¹⁹ “By partnering with Uber, we optimized the infrastructure we already had and used the opportunity to collect data necessary to make updates to our on-demand transit service. With Link On Demand, we are providing more transportation options and reducing congestion, which are top priorities for our residents and businesses.”

Expanding Rides through Vehicle Sharing in Arizona

One way to provide more rides to more people is through vehicle sharing between organizations that have accessible vehicles. This ensures that accessible vehicles are not standing idle and can be used by many groups to provide transportation for multiple populations, if funding allows. Foothills Caring Corporation in Maricopa County shares its vans with eight other organizations. Their strategy is to have drivers from each organization become Foothills volunteers, so that all drivers are under coverage through Foothills’ insurance.²⁰

The Community Food Bank in Pima County contracts with Marana Health Center to transport food bank clientele by using 5310 funds to pay Marana an hourly rate. This covers the cost for the longer driver time and insurance premiums, which allows Marana to serve more people over more days and hours of the week and reduces the likelihood of accessible vehicles from standing idle. Organizations in other states incorporate these strategies through collaborations and grants.²¹

What About Bikes?

Bicycles are common in major cities, and provide a direct, quick, and affordable route to destinations. They can be used to make First Mile/Last Mile connections.

Bicycles can also be good options in rural areas. Thrive Allen County, an economically depressed region in Kansas, operates a bike share based on the Bike Library Program. They use basic single speed bicycles that cost about \$400 a bike and utilize Google docs for the check out system. Local stores receive more foot



¹⁸ www.lonetreelink.com).

¹⁹ This is a micro-transit pilot program, which means it only operates within the city limits of Lone Tree.

²⁰ Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council, 2017. Stuck at Home:By-Passing Transportation Roadblocks to Community Mobility and Independence

²¹ Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council, 2017. Stuck at Home:By-Passing Transportation Roadblocks to Community Mobility and Independence

traffic because the bike stations are located at their storefronts, and people go inside to check out a key for the bike. In the first year of the program, bikes were checked out 565 times.

Despite the benefits of bike use, riding a bike for people with developmental disabilities can be difficult due to the need for faster physical and mental responses, balance issues, and safety concerns from family members. Studies show that teaching people to ride bikes with training wheels is not an effective manner for people with developmental disabilities to learn, because it is not easy to transition from four wheels to two. Therefore, an alternative manner of teaching people how to ride bikes was created. Individuals begin on adapted bikes that have crowned rollers on the front and back of the frame, instead of wheels. A crowned roller is a device that replaces the wheels of a bicycle to increase stability and traction while maintaining the traditional bicycle form. Students then progress to bicycles with large thick wheels and eventually a traditional two-wheeler.²² Many people with disabilities became proficient on the bicycle within a few weeks of this training. Another option could be to use more tricycles, as this will be easier to use for people with balance problems. In the Phoenix metro area, bicycles can be purchased from [Handlebar Helpers](#), run by STARS (Scottsdale Training and Rehabilitation Services) in Scottsdale, AZ. Here, people with developmental disabilities are taught how to fix bicycles and sell them to the general public. Bike styles range from beach cruisers to mountain bikes and are sold for prices as low as \$20. They are open Monday through Friday from 10am – 12pm, and have bike sales every second Friday of the month from 5pm – 7pm.

Maricopa County-based [Daring Adventures](#) hosts bicycle rides for people of all abilities, and provides helmets, bikes for specific disabilities, and training as needed. Bicycle rides cost two respite hours for DDD members, \$15 for non-members, and \$10 if the riders bring their own bikes.



[Tugo Bike Share](#) in Tucson offers a Tugo-For-All pass, which is a \$5 annual pass for SunTran Economy Fare plan holders and registered members of SNAP and Medicaid. This pass provides individuals with an unlimited number of 30-minute trips, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for 365 days in a year. For trips longer than 30 minutes, users pay \$2 for every additional 30-minute period.²³

MOVING FORWARD IN ARIZONA →

It is important to provide a variety of transportation options for people with and without disabilities that are easily accessible, affordable and efficient. This ensures that people are not isolated and are able to get to where they need or desire to go. The transportation landscape in Arizona has made some good developments, but needs to be developed further in order to provide wide-spread, reliable, and friendly service to Arizona residents in urban and rural

²² *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 2005. Adapted Bicycles for Teaching Riding

²³ Tugo Bike Share. Tugo-For-All Pass <https://tugobikeshare.com>

communities. Since many of the current systems in Arizona do not meet these requirements, it may take a while for riders to build trust in a new system.

Recommendations

Arizona needs transportation options that are accessible, affordable, efficient and reliable. Here are some recommendations to improve transportation infrastructure in Arizona:

- **Innovate and educate:** Continued statewide training and technical assistance on vehicle sharing would expand the supply of accessible vehicles.
- **Increase partnership opportunities:** Public transportation authorities across the state could partner with ridesharing businesses and grant agencies to create and operate free and more efficient programs like Link on Demand. State and private organizations could then share funding to reduce costs.
- **Prioritize developing services for people with disabilities:** Transportation authorities could set aside funds to hire more travel trainers (like the ones at Valley Metro, which would increase the capacity to teach people with disabilities how to use current transportation options.
- **Encourage Ride-Share Companies to Continue Expanding Options:** UberACCESS has created two new programs since its unveiling in 2015 in an effort to expand ride options for individuals with disabilities- UberWAV and UberASSIST- with mixed results. In spring 2019, Lyft and Vantage Mobility International (VMI) launched a pilot program in Phoenix to ensure that people using wheelchairs can reliably hail rides in Phoenix.
- **Promote bicycle use:** Free bicycle-share programs could give people with disabilities alternatives to addressing transportation barriers in their areas. And to encourage bike use, bike racks should also be added to all accessible vehicles.

Reducing transportation barriers and adding transportation options would increase the ability for individuals with disabilities to access work and leisure opportunities in their communities. People with disabilities can educate community leaders on best practices and barriers they experience in navigating the transportation system. With their continuous input and critical information, accessible opportunities can be increased for many.