

**U.S. Administration on Aging Reauthorization Listening Forum
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On behalf of the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a)

***Enhance the Role of the Aging Services Network in Coordinated Planning Activities
and Mobility Management Services***

Good afternoon, I appreciate the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a). My remarks will focus on how the Aging Services Network's role in transportation services needs to adapt to the challenges ahead and how we as a Network can take advantage of opportunities in providing more consumer-driven transportation options.

Over the years, the Aging Services Network has provided a significant amount of transportation as a core service of the Older Americans Act (OAA). According to the most recent Administration on Aging (AoA) data, the Network provided 29.6 million trips at a cost of \$66 million in FY 2008.¹ Almost half (47.9 percent) of transportation users served by the Network relied on transportation services under the OAA for almost all of their rides; 45.6 percent of the riders described themselves as "mobility impaired" (defined as having no car and living more than ¾ of a mile away from a fixed route public transportation stop).

Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) play a critical role in administering these OAA transportation funds at the community-level, leveraging these resources with other federal, state and local resources to provide transportation, both directly and on a contract-for-services basis. Based on a July 2009 survey by the National Center on Senior Transportation (NCST), a joint partnership of Easter Seals and n4a funded by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), three-quarters of AAAs (75.7 percent) provide transportation services primarily through contracting with services providers while 27.8 percent provide transportation services directly to consumers.

The OAA currently provides authorization and funding for transportation services under Title III-B that "facilitate access to supportive services or nutrition services, and services provided by an area agency on aging, in conjunction with local transportation service providers, public transportation agencies, and other local government agencies, that result in increased provision of such transportation services for older individuals."

¹ Fourth National Survey, U.S. Administration on Aging

The NCST survey found that nearly 85 percent of AAAs rely on these Title III-B funds to support transportation services and almost 22 percent utilize Title III-E National Family Caregiver Support Program funds for transportation. In addition to the OAA, AAAs also support transportation through a number of other funding sources including state funds designated to human services transportation (41.5 percent), local funds (28.3 percent), Medicaid HCBS Waiver funds (17.9 percent) and Medicaid transportation funds (16.2 percent).

Meanwhile, AAAs also receive funding through federal transportation programs, but to a lesser degree, and this funding tends to be more restricted to capital investments than supporting program operating costs. With 13.4% of AAAs receiving Section 5310 Elderly and Individuals with Disabilities funds, 9.2% receiving New Freedom funds, and 12.3% receiving rural transportation funds.

The transportation services provided by the Network at the community are defined by local needs and can include “family of services” to promote greater mobility options for older adults and persons with disabilities. These services include such as older driver safety and transition; mobility management and travel training; assisted transportation; door-to-door and door-through-door paratransit services; demand-response; taxi voucher; and volunteer driver programs, among others. The transportation services these programs offer are consistently ranked among the highest needs by older adults and are critical to their ability to maintain their independence and well-being in the community and avoid unnecessary institutional care.

AAAs also serve as a primary source of information and case management services on transportation options in the community through their Information & Referral/Assistance (I&R/A) programs for older adults and persons with disabilities. It is clear that AAA I&R/A programs (as well as Aging and Disability Resource Centers providing person-centered access to information on aging and disability long-term services and supports) are well positioned and trusted resources to consumers in search of transportation options.

The survey also revealed that AAAs play a variety of other roles to meet transportation needs in their communities. They include:

- 1) Advocating for transportation services for older adults (86.1 percent);
- 2) Addressing transportation in the AAA Area Plan (85.6 percent);
- 3) Providing information, education, and assistance on transportation needs (82.3 percent); and
- 4) Identifying gaps/unmet need in transportation services (81.4 percent).

AAAs have also become key participants in the development of the coordinated public transit—human services transportation planning process established under the 2005 transportation authorization (SAFETEA-LU). More than sixty-three percent of AAAs surveyed indicated that they are involved in this process, which is required for the three FTA specialized transportation programs (the Section 5310, JARC and New Freedom programs).

Given the Network's extensive role in coordinating and providing transportation to older adults and persons with disabilities through the OAA, other human service programs such as Medicaid, and federal transportation programs, we must evaluate how we can best enable the Network to meet the challenges of increased service demands over the next OAA reauthorization period and beyond. In particular, we need to explore ways we can strengthen the Network's role in the coordinated planning activities through greater collaborative efforts between transit, planning and aging agencies and enhancing the role of the Network in the growing field of mobility management services.

Specifically, n4a encourages AoA to carefully consider the following policy options when developing the Administration's reauthorization proposal:

Formalizing the role of the Aging Services Network, in particular AAAs, in the coordinated public transit–human services transportation planning process and authorizing funding support and technical assistance to support these efforts. Including complementary provisions that reinforce and build upon this role under the pending surface transportation reauthorization.

Building on existing provisions in the OAA to encourage greater collaboration between AoA and the DOT and FTA-funded programs that will help break down funding silos. The Aging Services Network needs to maximize limited resources through the OAA by working more frequently with local transit agencies and providers. By developing effective partnerships, AAAs will be able to serve more individuals with additional funding available through the FTA's specialized transportation programs.

Adding new language to the OAA to expand the description of transportation services to include mobility management activities. Providing a broad enough definition of mobility management to include the different facets of this burgeoning approach to providing transportation resources promises to improve both program effectiveness and the responsiveness of services they offer to consumers' needs.

Authorizing dedicated funding to implement the Technical Assistance and Innovation to Improve Transportation for Older Americans program under Section 416 of the OAA. This provision, added in the 2006 amendments, authorizes grants to non-profit organizations for demonstration projects or technical assistance to assist local transit providers, AAAs and other groups to encourage and facilitate coordinated transportation services and resources.

The AoA and Congress have a tremendous opportunity in the reauthorization of the OAA to strengthen the Network's role in meeting the transportation needs of an expanding older population over the next decade, and to build on current efforts the Network has started in the areas of coordinated planning and mobility management services. n4a looks forward to working with AoA, Congress and other advocates to make the most of this opportunity. Thank you.