

DISABILITY & AGING RIGHTS



DEVELOPED BY EQUIP FOR EQUALITY UNDER A GRANT PROVIDED BY THE ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT ON AGING



TRANSPORTATION

Rural Transportation and People with Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a civil rights law that protects the rights of people with disabilities, including older adults with physical, sensory, mental and cognitive impairments, when using public or private transportation. The ADA does not require that transportation be provided in every community where people live. However, if public transportation is provided, it must comply with ADA requirements for accessibility for people with disabilities. Private transportation providers, such as taxi companies and intercity over-the-road bus companies, also must follow ADA requirements.

Many areas of rural Illinois provide publicly funded transportation service. Most are “demand response” service, sometimes known as dial-a-ride, but some areas also offer standard or deviated fixed-route bus service. Another transportation option in some rural areas is offered by human service agency programs, which may only serve its clients. The public transportation provided in rural or small-urban areas often has limited funding, which results in low levels of service. Private transportation providers, such as taxi companies or rideshare programs, may not have any accessible vehicles.

Rural transportation statistics

Twenty-seven percent of the U.S. population lives in rural areas, but only 6 percent of federal transit dollars are allocated to serve them. More than two-thirds of rural residents are older adults. About 38 percent of rural residents live in areas with no public transportation.

Funding for rural transportation

One source of federal money to support rural transportation comes from the Section 5311 program, the Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP).

Another federal program, Section 5310, enhances mobility for older adults and people with disabilities by funding programs to serve the needs of transit-dependent populations beyond traditional public transportation services and ADA paratransit services. The Section 5310 program is available only for areas with populations under 200,000. Money can go to state or local government authorities, private nonprofit organizations or operators of public transportation.

At least 55 percent of Section 5310 money must be used on public transportation projects to meet the needs of older adults and people with disabilities in places where public transportation is insufficient, inappropriate or unavailable. The remaining 45 percent may be used for:

- Public transportation projects that exceed the requirements of the ADA
- Public transportation projects that improve access to fixed-route service and decrease reliance by people with disabilities on complementary paratransit
- Alternatives to public transportation that assist older adults and people with disabilities

In Illinois, Section 5310 funds are administered by the Illinois Department of Transportation, through the Division of Public and Intermodal Transportation.



Improving transportation options in rural areas

If a community has no public transportation, or if it is very limited in its hours or service area, it may have a political problem, but not necessarily a legal problem. This means that the solution to improving transportation in a community will probably involve a political process. Decisions about how public money should be spent are made by government officials and elected representatives based on ideas from many different people and groups. A community organizing in support of government money for public transportation increases the chances that transportation may be created or expanded in that community.

How can people help improve public transportation options in their community?

Below is a list of ideas and resources:

- Write letters to your local, state and federal government representatives.
- Create a petition calling for more public transportation – ask as many community members as possible to sign on – and give the petition to your government representatives.
- To find your elected representatives in state or federal government, go to FirstGov.gov, the U.S. government’s official web portal, at www.firstgov.gov/Contact/Elected.shtml, or call **1-800-333-4636** (in Illinois, go to www.ilga.gov and click on “Legislator Lookup”).

Easter Seals Project ACTION (ESPA) is funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation to promote access to transportation for people with disabilities by providing training, technical assistance, research, outreach and communication. ESPA has collaborated with a variety of organizations on publications aimed at helping to improve rural transportation options. These include:

- “Expanding Mobility Options for Persons with Disabilities: A Practitioner’s Guide to Community Based Transportation Planning”: Developed collaboratively by ESPA and the Community Transportation Association of America, this publication provides a model approach for community-based transportation planning drawn from the experiences of 13 communities across the U.S.
- Rural Transportation Topic Guide Series: ESPA, in collaboration with the National Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) and the National Center on Senior Transportation (NCST), is creating a topic guide series to provide practical information to help rural communities address their transportation needs, especially those related to transportation access for people with disabilities and older adults. The first guide is “Needs Assessment – Assessing the Need for New Accessible Transportation Service in Rural Communities.”

- “Transportation Services for People with Disabilities in Rural and Small Urban Communities”: Identifies issues and presents innovative and effective solutions in meeting the transportation needs of people with disabilities in rural and small urban areas.
- “The Community Inclusion Driver Strategy: Assisting People with Disabilities Living in Rural Areas in Finding Personal Transportation”: Considers how rural transportation providers can act as brokers between people with disabilities seeking rides and independent drivers who can supply them.

1-800-659-6428

**[www.projectaction.org/Resources
Publications/RuralTransportation.aspx](http://www.projectaction.org/Resources/Publications/RuralTransportation.aspx)**

The Illinois Department of Transportation’s **Division of Public and Intermodal Transportation** administers federal funds to pay for small buses and vans to serve older adults and people with disabilities. More information about where this money goes in rural Illinois can be found on its website: **www.dot.il.gov/dpit/index.html**. A detailed list of rural Illinois public transportation providers is available from: **www.dot.il.gov/dpit/section5310.html**.

The Illinois Rural Transit Assistance Center (RTAC) is a unit of the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs at Western Illinois University. RTAC operates under a contract from the Illinois Department of Transportation.

**Stipes Hall 318, 1 University Circle,
Macomb, IL 61455-1390
1-309-298-2141 or 1-800-526-9943
RTAC@wiu.edu
www.iira.org/outreach/rtac.asp**

National Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) is a program of the Federal Transit Administration dedicated to creating rural transit solutions through technical assistance, partner collaboration, and free training and other transit industry products.

www.nationalrtap.org

Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL) is a national, grassroots, consumer-controlled nonprofit membership organization. It consists of centers for independent living, their satellites and branch offices, statewide independent living councils, other organizations and people concerned with the independent living issues of people with disabilities living in rural America.

**11324 Arcade Drive, Suite 9
Little Rock, AR 72212
1-501-753-3400
[www.april-rural.org/index.php/
rural-transportation](http://www.april-rural.org/index.php/rural-transportation)**



Community Transportation Association of America is a national association of organizations and people that provides programs and services to remove barriers and improve mobility for all people, particularly senior citizens and people with disabilities.

**1341 G St. NW, 10th Floor
Washington, DC 20005
1-800-891-0590
www.ctaa.org**

The National Center on Senior Transportation strives to increase transportation options for older adults to support their ability to live independently in their homes and communities throughout the United States.

**1-866-528-6278
ncst@easterseals.com
www.seniortransportation.net**

What can you do if you have a disability-related problem with public or private transportation service?

First, and most important, let the transportation provider know about any problems. If you can, make your complaint in writing (email or letter). Give them as much information as possible (description of what happened, date, time, location, etc.). Keep a copy for your records.

For problems with public transportation service: You can file a complaint with the Federal Transit Administration Office of Civil Rights. Complaints must be filed within 180 days of the incident of discrimination, although the deadline may be extended for good cause. You can fill out the FTA's Complaint Form or send a letter to: **Director, FTA Office of Civil Rights, East Building – 5th Floor, TCR, 1200 New Jersey Ave. SE, Washington, DC 20590.** Include as many details as possible.

The FTA's ADA website is www.fta.dot.gov/civilrights/12325.html, and the FTA ADA complaint form is at www.fta.dot.gov/civilrights/12875_14816.html. You may also leave a message at FTA's ADA Assistance Line, **1-888-446-4511**, through the Federal Information Relay Service, **1-800-877-8339**, or by email at: FTA.ADAAssistance@dot.gov.

Also note: Paratransit Requirements for 5311-Funded Fixed-Route Service Operated by Private Entities:
www.fta.dot.gov/12325_3892.html

For problems with private transportation service: You can file an ADA complaint with the U.S. Department of Justice ADA Information Line: **1-800-514-0301** or **1-800-514-0383** (TTY)

www.ada.gov/filing_complaint.htm
ADA.complaint@usdoj.gov
U.S. Department of Justice,
950 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Civil Rights
Division, Disability Rights Section – 1425
NYAV, Washington, DC 20530

If your complaint is with a private transportation provider, you can also file a complaint with the Illinois Department of Human Rights, which has offices in Chicago, Springfield and Marion. Submit a completed “Public Accommodations Complainant Information Sheet” in person or by mail. A charge of discrimination must be filed within 180 days of the alleged discrimination.

www2.illinois.gov/dhr/FilingCharge/Pages/Public_Accommodations.aspx
1-312-814-6200 or **1-866-740-3953** (TTY)
Chicago office: **100 W. Randolph St.,**
10th Floor, Intake Unit, Chicago, IL 60601

Another option is to file a complaint with the Illinois Attorney General’s Disability Rights Bureau. Send a letter to: **Office of the Attorney General, Chicago Disability Rights Bureau, James R. Thompson Center, 11th Floor, 100 W. Randolph St., Chicago, IL 60601.** Include as many details as possible.

www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/rights/disabilityrights.html
1-312-814-5684 or **1-800-964-3013** (TTY)



Taxis and limousines: Many taxi and limousine companies are licensed and regulated by the cities and towns in which they operate. Check with your local government office to find out if they act on complaints about private taxi or limousine service.

For more information about this and other topics, contact Equip for Equality at **1-800-537-2632** or visit **www.equipforequality.org**.

Additional helpful resources and links

Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund provides advocacy for and training about accessible transportation.

1-510-644-2555

1-510-841-8645 (Fax/TTY)

info@dredf.org

www.dredf.org/public-policy/transportation

U.S. Access Board issues ADA standards for transportation facilities and vehicles:

Website: **[www.access-board.gov/](http://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/transportation)**

[guidelines-and-standards/transportation](http://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/transportation) ■



Equip for Equality

20 North Michigan Avenue
Suite 300
Chicago, IL 60602

www.equipforequality.org
1-800-537-2632
1-800-610-2779 (TTY)

Illinois Department on Aging

One Natural Resources Way
Suite 100
Springfield, IL 62702-1271

Senior HelpLine:

1-800-252-8966
1-888-206-1327 (TTY)
www.illinois.gov/aging

The Illinois Department on Aging does not discriminate in admission to programs or treatment of employment in programs or activities in compliance with appropriate State and Federal statutes. If you feel like you have been discriminated against, call the Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966, 1-888-206-1327 (TTY).