



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

April 15, 2015

Dear Representative:

The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) Transportation Task Force writes to urge you to assure that any final transportation authorization legislation provides funding for transportation programs that serve people with disabilities. The CCD Transportation Task Force is a coalition of national organizations which advocates on behalf of the transportation needs of people with a variety of disabilities, including developmental disabilities, mental illness, sensory disabilities, physical disabilities, and intellectual disabilities.

The Task Force supports funding for all transit programs. It is critical that transit programs have a sustainable, reliable and robust source of funding to assure their viability. People with disabilities disproportionately rely on public transit.ⁱ Public transit and paratransit are essential modes for people with disabilities to shop, work, participate and live in their communities.ⁱⁱ If transit services are cut back, people with disabilities may be forced to use more expensive specialized transportation services to access work, education and social opportunities in their communities, or may find themselves confined to their homes.^{iii,iv}

A number of federal formula grant programs support mobility for people with disabilities. Specifically, the Section 5310 Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities formula grant program. Others that provide additional services for, and promote independence for, people with disabilities by funding programs as diverse as travel training, accessible taxicabs, door-through-door paratransit services, and other programs to help people with disabilities get to where they need to go.

Accessible public rights-of-way (PROW), including well-maintained sidewalks with curb ramps, and pedestrian signals at crosswalks, are vital for people with disabilities and benefit everyone. Accessible PROW allow people with disabilities to travel, including the last and first mile home or to work from a transit stop. The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) can fund many of these needed and common sense infrastructure improvements.

Section 5310, TAP and other programs provide necessary avenues for people with disabilities to access employment. The unemployment rate for people with disabilities is currently around 11%, nearly twice the unemployment rate for the general population. Enhanced transportation and pedestrian accessibility allows more people to get to their jobs.^v

Many local transit systems are struggling to meet the needs of citizens with disabilities through their paratransit programs. Further incentive is needed to create new and innovative ways to become more accessible and address existing deficiencies in service for individuals with disabilities. The competitive grant programs, strong outcome and accountability measures proposed in the Transit Accessibility Innovation Act would help achieve that goal. We hope that the final reauthorization bill will incorporate this important new idea.

In addition, strong technical assistance support is needed to make all these critical systems work for people with disabilities. The Task Force supports continued unique, targeted technical assistance and training activities at the Federal Transit Administration and also supports proposals to fund such activities out of the trust fund versus general funds.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the transportation reauthorization bill. If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact or Carol Tyson, United Spinal Association, (202) 556-2076 x7104, ctyson@unitedspinal.org, or Dara Baldwin, National Disability Rights Network, (202) 5408-9514 x102, dara.baldwin@ndrn.org.

Sincerely,

ACCSES

American Association on Health and Disability
American Foundation for the Blind (AFB)
American Network of Community Options and Resources
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund
Easter Seals
The Jewish Federations of North America
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Council on Independent Living
National Disability Rights Network
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
Paralyzed Veterans of America
United Spinal Association

ⁱ U.S. Census Bureau (2011, September). *Means of Transportation by Selected Characteristics, Supplemental Table to Commuting in the United States: 2009, American Community Survey Reports*. Retrieved March 29, 2015 from http://www.census.gov/hhes/commuting/files/2009/means_of_transportation.pdf

ⁱⁱ US Department of Transportation (USDOT), Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) (2003). *Freedom to Travel*. Retrieved March 29, 2015 from http://www.rita.dot.gov/bts/sites/rita.dot.gov.bts/files/publications/freedom_to_travel/html/figure_03.html

ⁱⁱⁱ People with disabilities have a greater difficulty getting the transportation they need . The problem most frequently cited is no or limited public transportation. See UDOT, BTS (2003), *Freedom to Travel*. p.5. Retrieved March 29, 2015 from http://www.rita.dot.gov/bts/sites/rita.dot.gov.bts/files/publications/freedom_to_travel/pdf/entire.pdf.

^{iv} More than half a million people with disabilities never leave their home because of transportation difficulties. See USDOT, BTS (2003). p.1.

^v U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015, March 6). *Employment status of the civilian population by sex, age, and disability status, not seasonally adjusted*. Retrieved March 29, 2015 from <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t06.htm>.