Let's TACL Coordination Twitter Chat
October 20, 2021

Summary

National RTAP held a #LetsTACLcoordination Twitter Chat on October 20, 2021, which was moderated by Heather Edmonds, National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC); Melissa Gray, NADTC; and Marcela Moreno, National Center for Applied Transit Technology (N-CATT). The chat focused on challenges, solutions, and resources for transportation coordination.

There were over 3,079 impressions just from National RTAP Rural Transit Day tweets. Age Friendly Ohio, Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR), University of South Florida (USF), Central Massachusetts Agency on Aging, Eldercare Locator, Feonix Mobility Rising, HIRTA Public Transit, National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC), National Center for Applied Transit Technology (N-CATT), National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM), RidePal, RTEC, Rural Health Research Gateway, Shared-Use Mobility Center (SUMC), Transportation Research Board (TRB), USAging were among the many organizations and individuals who participated in the chat.

Visit the chat transcript for questions asked during the chat and attendees' replies. And be sure to visit TACL, the Transportation Technical Assistance Coordination Library, for more valuable information and resources about rural and tribal transportation coordination.

Question 1: What role(s) do older adults and people with disabilities play in the development and execution of your community transportation plans?

Answers:
- Rural Health Research Gateway explained that we must recognize disparities in rural/urban needs. Rural residents have higher rates of disability overall for adults living alone. They cited prescient data from their report Demographics and Disability Status of Adults Living Alone in Rural Areas. In addition, the most common type of disability among adults living alone is ambulatory difficulty, reported by 20.8% of rural adults living alone and 15.5% of

urban adults living alone. Marcela agreed that data is so powerful and can speak volumes to the needs in your community across different groups - transportation or not!

- As important stakeholders, older adults and people with disabilities should be engaged and consulted on plans. NADTC's 2020 Trends Report on Inclusive Planning for Older Adults and People with Disabilities is a great resource. They stressed that it is so important to understand the unique needs of older adults and people with disabilities in rural areas.
- Mountain Empire Older Citizens, a grantee in NADTC's Planning for Sustainability, had a vision of the needs in the community and used their plan to make a difference in the lives of their clients.
- Answers from the Margins: Participatory Planning with Disadvantaged Communities researchers found that community-based organizations should decide what good community engagement is and that trust is crucial.

Question 2: How are you ensuring that your transportation programs are meeting the needs of diverse older adults and people with disabilities?

Answers:
- University of Minnesota Rural Health Research Center has identified 33 statewide age-friendly initiatives, several of which focus on transportation.
- NADTC provided a snapshot of the lived experience of racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse older adults, people with disabilities, and family caregivers concerning transportation access and other barriers they have encountered. It's important to plan for the transportation needs of people with intellectual disabilities. NADTC's Transportation for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) shows you how.
- Michigan DOT launched the Michigan Mobility Challenge to address core mobility gaps, which included a new automated shuttle service that improves mobility and accessibility for persons with disabilities.
- N-CATT shared the story of CARTA and their launch of Wayfinder app to assist people with cognitive disabilities navigate their fixed route system. Their team shared their insights with them in their Emerging Transit Tech video series.
- Meeting the Needs of Older Adults Living in Rural Communities: The Roles of Area Agencies on Aging by USAging shows how AAAs provide nonmedical, volunteer, and assisted transportation and more.
- Data from reports like Administration for Community Living's Profile of Older Americans address key topic areas such as income, living arrangements, education, health, and caregiving. Use these data in your plans.
- A higher proportion of rural than urban residents identified the price of gasoline as a barrier to travel.
- National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM) helps build partnerships across human services and transit that represent diverse riders. Judy Shanley from NCMM exclaimed that talking about barriers AND also talking about solutions and getting the right people to the table through coordination and FTA CCAM activities is critical!
- Jason Jones, a mobility manager in Oregon, said his agency is spending time with their community by reaching out to individuals and groups in person and virtually. Marcela

responded, "Very true! It has given agencies an opportunity to be creative in ways that they work with riders learning their system."

- Robin Phillips from National RTAP added that partners can help you bring new resources to the table and new riders to your program. planning is great way to build partners.
- Also, mark your calendars for TRB's [International Conference on Mobility and Transport for Older Adults and People with Disabilities (TRANSED)](#) in September 2022 in Seattle, Washington.

Question 3: What are innovative examples of coordination that you have observed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Answers:

- CUTR's [COVID-19 – Emergency Management Tips and Practices for Bus Transit Systems](#) provides coordination examples, including emergency operations centers, governmental officials, and health departments.
- NADTC's [Trends Report: Volunteer Driver Programs in the Age of COVID-19](#) features some innovative ways programs continued to serve those who rely on volunteer transportation.
- COVID-19 has sparked the telehealth boom. As opposed to supplying modes of transportation, telehealth can have the effect of reducing need for transportation. Browse Rural Health Research Gateway's [telehealth research](#). N-CATT also believes that telehealth is a critical piece of the system that can get folks the care they need, especially if there are limited transportation options. Broadband access also comes into the picture! Jason thinks that once StarLink becomes more prevalent, we will see great accessibility to broadband.
- Jason also shared that as travel training has become more specific, travel training/information video content creation has been a great development. Heather and Melissa answered, "Yes! Especially when programs are having to conduct some of their travel training virtually due to the pandemic."
- Judy felt that we should use all the tools we have to educate people about mobility and transportation services. Let's start in elementary school to educate future independent travelers about mobility options! Heather and Melissa responded, "Absolutely! It's better to equip young people now to become familiar with alternative transportation options rather than waiting until they have no other choice than to retire from driving."

Question 4: What is the best way to incorporate existing systems when coordinating transit for areas that do not have existing transit?

Answers:

- Coordination with local agencies has allowed Cadillac Wexford Transit Authority "WexExpress" to [provide rides](#) to areas with no public transportation. Marcela thought

that this was amazing. The answers to this question are so important to help enhance mobility in areas that may be considered 'transit deserts'.

- Thanks to a new partnership, transit riders can go from one end of the Ohio Valley to the other. The Ohio Valley Regional Transit Authority and Steel Valley Regional Transit Authority [announced the union](#). Ohio also has a [rides to work program](#) that crossed county borders - The Butler County WorkLink program.
- "The Northwest Connector service has been an integral part of how people meet their regional transportation goals when just 5 years ago there was nothing," added Jason.
- From Judy: "Communities and regions have to do environmental scans to ensure they have the participation of existing and potential providers - everyone has a role - and this message has to come across loud and clear!"
- "Talk to them about what you need, build solutions together," stated Robin.

Question 5: What are ways to ensure cross county line or out of city transportation options are available for older adults and people with disabilities?

Answers:
- Try a demonstration project. WATA [won a grant](#) for a 3-year test to extend service to lower York County. York County and WATA are also planning a paratransit service for people with disabilities. Marcela replied, "Demonstration or pilot projects are great to gather information and make incremental tweaks to meet your community needs. Love it!"
- Make them connected and safer. The Gwinnett Board of Commissioners and Georgia DOT will [deploy connected vehicle onboard units](#) in county transit buses, improving mobility and safety for all riders.
- Agencies are exploring microtransit as a tool to serve areas where transportation options are limited. SUMC's study on the partnership between KC Metrobus, Sound Transit, the city of Seattle, and VIA [shares insight](#) on the pilot.
- TAM and Marin Transit introduced Connect2Transit with transportation options for older adults and people with disabilities throughout the county. Read SUMC's [case study](#) to learn more.
- From Jason: Looking at this from the mobility manager point of view, ensuring that robust travel training is available and is a common language among other districts that share connections. Older adults and people with disabilities do not travel if there is no support.

Question 6: How can transit agencies utilize technology for better inter- and intra- agency coordination?

Answers:
- [Access Lynx](#) uses online booking paratransit service & the transportation disadvantaged users, a coordinated state-wide effort which groups riders together for shared ride service.
- Check out NADTC's blog, [RideSheet: A Transportation Technology Solution for Rural America](#) discussing transportation software for inter and intra agency use in rural areas.

- Georgia DOT and Georgia DHS established a service with a regional advance reservation system, giving seniors and persons with disabilities whose trip is funded through DHS more options for rides. Marcela liked this. "Coordination, in this case, gave riders the ability to have multiple options at their fingertips! Very cool. This makes me proud to have grown up in Georgia," she shared.
- HIRTA has been working on their "Health Connector: An Inclusive Mobility Experience from Beginning to End" project through US DOT Complete Trip – ITS4US Deployment Program funding. Integrating the scheduling of healthcare appointments & transit. Read more about this HIRTA project.
- N-CATT shows how demand-response transit transactional data specifications standards can allow agencies to coordinate to provide trips, provide better services, and reduce wait times.
- Telehealth technology and services alters transportation need. Rural residents travel farther and have longer travel times for medical/dental services.
- "For neighboring districts that utilize trip planning or mobile ticketing technology, efforts in planning and execution should be focused on coordination within those districts to allow for better accessibility," explained Jason. Marcela agreed. "Having a regional trip planning and mobile ticketing solution gives riders the opportunity to travel more seamlessly across service areas. So important, since we need to travel across service boundaries!" she said. National RTAP's free technology tool, GTFS Builder, is available for rural and tribal transit agencies to create trip planning.

Question 7: How are you engaging local partners and stakeholders to address transportation challenges and barriers found in your community?

Answers:
- Read Writing a Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan – a joint publication by National RTAP, NADTC, and NCMM. "Implementing a regional or state level mobility management network is one way to make the HST plan a reality - it operationalizes the content of a plan," advised Judy.
- National RTAP and NCMM also updated their publication Advocating for your Transit System to assist transit managers with building local support for transit. This resource is helpful for communicating with the community and building coalitions.
- N-CATT's 's Virtual Engagement Guidebook provides examples of how transit agencies and MPOs use tech to coordinate virtually with each other and other stakeholders throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Jason discussed how the pandemic has changed things. Pre-pandemic: Transit engagements, employer/employee training events, open houses . . . During the pandemic, the all-familiar Zoom or Twitter Chat has taken the place. We all have/had to adapt in ways we never thought possible just 2 years ago. This is not to say that in-person meetings have completely dried up. "I have been adapting and finding balances anywhere I can," he shared.

Question 8: How do you demonstrate value-added for partners not typically engaged in transportation, such as philanthropy, the arts, and healthcare?

Answers:

- "Partners can help you bring new resources to the table and new riders to your program. Planning is great way to build partners," stated Robin.
- Jason said, "Offering a good example of how more ridership equals less vehicle congestion in a small community usually helps bring some to the table."
- Judy recommended, "Help partners develop performance measures that assess outcomes and impacts to demonstrate the ROI of focusing on transportation." Marcela responded, "Yes - super powerful! There are so many overlapping goals and desired outcomes, and coordination helps reach those quicker."
- UCLA researchers suggest partnering with providers on how clients are overcoming pandemic transportation barriers and with stores, pharmacies, libraries, and schools to bring mobile clinics to people.
- LaGrange Housing Authority developed a partnership with the court system so clients could attend classes, drug screenings, and self-help meetings, relieving a lack of transportation and focusing on rehabilitation.
- Age Friendly Arizona published the Rides That Save Lives Toolkit to help nonprofits, communities and mobility providers collaborate during the pandemic to improve vaccine access for older adults.
- Transportation agencies can use powerful data visualizations to demonstrate their role in mobility access. N-CATT provides resources so agencies can harness their data 4 good - join them in Richmond, VA at the CTAA Symposium for a workshop on data.

Question 9: What recommendations do you have to improve transportation coordination?

Answers:

- ALTRAN County Transit Authority was highlighted in a case study in the 2004 TCRP report: Toolkit for Rural Community Coordinated Transportation Services. Find the study at on the NADTC website.
- NCMM says developing partnerships and coordinating funding across agencies, non-transportation companies, human services, and transit is a powerful resource to provide transportation for many riders.
- From HIRTA: At the national level, we have to work so the government understands more roads means more traffic - Put that money into better public transit and watch how we change the world!
- "Coordination is a process, once you start it has no end," declared Robin.