



# ***6th National RTAP Conference, Wrangling Access and Mobility in Rural and Tribal Transit***

***Working Together, Funding Smarter: Mobility Management Through 5311 & 5310 Partnerships***

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U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Transit Administration

# National RTAP Presenters



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# Understanding FTA Funding: Sections 5310 & 5311

A comprehensive guide to federal funding mechanisms designed to enhance mobility for seniors, individuals with disabilities, and rural communities.



# Defining the Programs

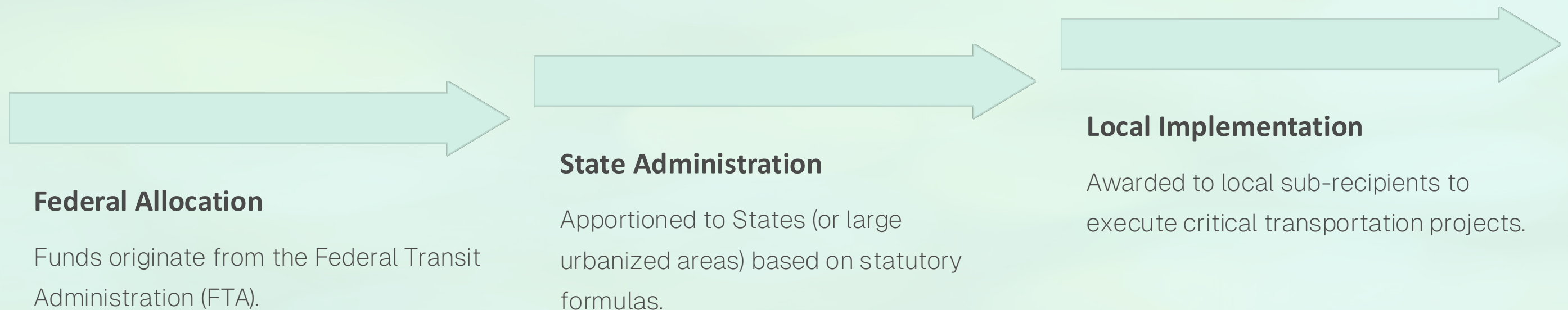
## Section 5310

Dedicated to enhancing mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities nationwide, removing barriers to transportation services and expanding transportation mobility options.

## Section 5311

Specifically supports public transportation in rural areas with populations under 50,000, ensuring residents have access to employment, education, health care, shopping, and recreation.

## Distribution Model



## Section 5310: Enhancing Access

This program provides formula funding to states for the purpose of assisting private nonprofit groups in meeting the transportation needs of older adults and people with disabilities.



### Program Scope

- **Recipients:** Private nonprofits, local governments, and operators of public transportation.
- **Geographic Coverage:** Inclusive of large urban, small urban, and rural areas.
- **Core Mission:** To remove physical and systemic transportation barriers, ensuring equitable access to community resources.

## Section 5311: Rural Formula Grants

The 5311 program provides capital, planning, and operating assistance to states to support public transportation in rural areas with populations of less than 50,000.

### → Strategic Targets

Focuses on rural public transit providers, including significant support for tribal governments.

### → Usage Flexibility

Funds cover capital (vehicles, equipment), planning studies, and essential operating costs.

### → Collaboration

Mandates active coordination with other federally assisted transportation services.



### 📄 Cost Sharing Breakdown

The federal share is 80% for capital projects and 50% for operating assistance. States often provide additional support to help meet the local match requirements.

# Eligibility Landscape

Understanding who qualifies is the first step to securing funding. While both streams support public transit, the recipient pools differ slightly.

## Section 5310 Eligibility

Primarily targets private nonprofit organizations. State and local governments, as well as operators of public transportation services, are also eligible recipients.



## Section 5311 Eligibility

Includes State agencies, Indian tribes, local government bodies, nonprofit organizations, and operators of public transit services.

**Note for Tribal Transit:** Federally recognized Indian tribes are eligible direct recipients under Section 5311, bypassing state administration in many cases.

# Strategic Allocation: Eligible Uses

Both programs aim to improve service quality and accessibility, but they fund specific line items tailored to their mission.



## 5310 Investments

Focuses on specialized equipment and services: accessible buses, wheelchair lifts, scheduling software to optimize routes, mobility management programs, and non-emergency medical transportation.



## 5311 Investments

Supports the backbone of rural transit: vehicle acquisition, fuel costs, driver salaries, routine maintenance, administrative expenses, and projects specifically designed to improve access to employment.

# Funding Dynamics & Competitiveness

## Section 5310

Due to its broad eligibility covering urban, suburban, and rural areas, 5310 grants are typically **highly competitive**. Numerous nonprofits and agencies vie for a limited pool of funds.

## Section 5311

Allocated regionally based on rural population needs. These are often **less competitive** locally, as usually only one designated provider services a specific county or region.

### Key Formula Factors



Population



Land Area



Low-Income %



Seniors



Disability Stats



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# Compliance & Regulatory Framework

Receipt of federal funds comes with strict reporting and regulatory responsibilities to ensure transparency and safety.

01

## Data Reporting

All recipients are mandated to submit data to the National Transit Database (NTD), either directly to the FTA or via their state DOT.

02

## Drug & Alcohol Rules

Section 5311 recipients must strictly comply with FTA drug and alcohol testing regulations. 5310-only recipients are generally exempt from this specific requirement.

03

## Strategic Coordination

Projects must be included in a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan and adhere to federal regulations.

# Measuring the Impact

The strategic application of 5310 and 5311 funds yields tangible benefits for communities and providers alike.

## 1 Operational Efficiency

Directly reduces operational and capital burdens for transit providers, allowing resources to stretch further.

## 2 Community Well-being

Enhances access to critical healthcare, education, and economic opportunities, directly improving quality of life.

## 3 Sustainable Transit

Promotes efficient routing and ride-sharing, which leads to reduced fuel consumption and lower long-term maintenance costs.





# Maximizing Mobility Through Strategic Strategic Funding

Sections 5310 and 5311 represent more than just financial assistance; they are the lifeline for America's most vulnerable populations and rural communities.

## Vital Support

These programs are essential for maintaining independence for seniors and connecting rural residents to the broader economy.

## Operational Excellence

Effective utilization and strict compliance are key to securing continued funding and enhancing service delivery.

## Access for All

Investing in these programs drives social equity, ensuring that geography and physical ability do not dictate one's opportunity to thrive.



# Maximizing Mobility Through Strategic Strategic Funding

Sections 5310 and 5311 allow incidental use per guidance that allows the following eligible activities below providing better access:

Public transit systems can support **prescription deliveries** by coordinating with pharmacies to transport medications to riders who face mobility or access challenges. Using existing routes or off-peak vehicle time allows agencies to provide a reliable, low-cost option for getting essential medications to community members. These partnerships improve health access, reduce missed medications, and strengthen the role of transit in supporting overall community well-being.

**Food delivery services** can partner with public transit to improve access to fresh groceries, especially for residents in rural or underserved areas. Transit agencies can use existing routes and vehicles during off-peak hours to support community food distribution programs. These collaborations help reduce transportation barriers, strengthen food security, and maximize the value of public transit resources.