

Transportation Outreach Planner

Demographics > Age > Seniors > Accessibility and Outreach Strategies for Persons with Disabilities

Public Outreach Strategies

Accessibility and Outreach Strategies for Persons with Disabilities

Quick Links

Toolbox Navigation

- [Recommended Target Groups](#)
- [Strategy Class](#)
- [Strategy Types](#)
- [Description](#)
- [Special Uses](#)
- [When to Use](#)
- [Cost](#)
- [Time](#)
- [Implementation Guidelines and Suggestions](#)
- [Lesson Learned/Challenges](#)
- [Case Studies](#)
- [For Further Information](#)
- [Sources](#)
- [Provide Feedback](#)

Recommended Target Groups

Education

College Education
High School Diploma
No High School Diploma

Language

Creole
Other
Spanish

Disability

Hearing Impaired
Other
Physically Challenged
Sight Impaired

Income

Low Income
Middle to Affluent

Vehicle Ownership

Non-vehicle Owner
Vehicle Owner

Race and Ethnicity

Race and Ethnicity

Age

Seniors

Working Age Adults

Youth

Strategy Class

- General

Strategy Types

- Promotional

Description

Persons with disabilities include, but are not limited to, persons who have the following functional limitations: blindness/vision impairments, deafness/hearing impairments, physical mobility restrictions, and cognitive/mental impairments. Because persons with disabilities may have unique transportation needs and may encounter difficulty in accessing and navigating the public transportation system, it is important to encourage their participation in the planning and development of transportation projects so that their needs may be addressed. The following sections provide a review of federal regulations and specific outreach strategies for persons with disabilities that should be considered in developing a public involvement plan.¹

Special Uses

Several important federal regulations require public transportation projects to be accessible to persons with disabilities and for agencies to provide specific public participation and consultation activities.

- **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990:** The ADA requires public meetings and public participation activities to be accessible to persons with disabilities. To ensure accessibility, it also calls for transportation agencies to consult with people who have disabilities to encourage their participation in the development and evaluation of transportation services and projects.²
- **Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 508, as Amended in 1998:** This legislation was enacted to eliminate barriers in information technology for people with disabilities and to encourage the development of new technologies that would enhance accessibility to information. The law establishes criteria for using computers, software applications, web-based information and applications, telecommunication products, video and other multimedia products. Federal agencies are required to comply with Section 508; however, non-federal agencies may also use the criteria to determine if they are consistent with basic standards for making technology accessible to persons with disabilities.³

When to Use

The ADA, as well as other federal, state, and local regulations, require that all public activities and public transit facilities be accessible to persons with disabilities. More specifically, the following are required for all transportation projects:³

- Consultation with persons with disabilities
- Public comment opportunities
- Information in accessible formats
- Public hearings to be held in accessible facilities
- Summaries of comments provided during the public comment period
- Strategies to involve persons with disabilities in the planning process

Cost

**** Moderate (\$1000 to \$9999)**

The cost for implementing a strategy to improve accessibility to persons with disabilities may be high. Costs include staff time, interpreter services, closed captioning, renting or purchasing assisted listening systems, as well as

technology, printing and recording services.

Low (up to \$999)	*
Moderate (\$1,000 to \$9,999)	**
High (\$10,000 to \$50,000)	***
Very High (Above \$50,000)	****

Disclaimer: The cost estimates provided are intended to be a guide. Project costs will vary depending on the size and nature of the project.

Time

** 6 months to a year

Organizing a comprehensive accessibility program may take six months to a year to implement. However, like any public involvement plan or program it should be seen as ongoing and evolving. The most time consuming aspects will be converting written documents to formats for the visually impaired and creating recordings, closed captioning and transcripts of meetings.

1 to 3 months	*
6 months to a year	**
Multiyear	***

Disclaimer: The time estimates are approximations. The duration of a project may vary depending on various factors, including size and budget.

Implementation Guidelines and Suggestions

The following serve as recommended guidelines and suggestions for improving accessibility and outreach to persons with disabilities:⁴

- **Identify and consult with the disabled community.** Meet with organizations that represent the disabled community and with community advocates in order to determine how best to conduct outreach efforts and improve public involvement.
- **Develop a mailing list of persons with disabilities.** The list should include advocates, leaders of organizations that serve persons with disabilities, as well as persons who receive paratransit services, and people who request information about such services. The mailing list should be used to send information on projects and policies, announce public involvement activities, and seek feedback on accessibility and other issues of concern.
- **Create a fact sheet which lists the transportation services available to persons with disabilities and includes information on opportunities for public involvement.** This type of information should be included on the agency's website and should be made available in various formats for people with hearing and visual impairments.
- **Establish a checklist for making sure public events and meetings are accessible to people with disabilities.** Many public agencies have developed checklists for planning accessible public events. The following include some of the items which should be part of the checklist:⁴
 - Facilities and meetings rooms used for public meetings events must be accessible to the disabled community.
 - Meeting or event location should be accessible to public transportation and should be held at a time when public transportation is available. It should also have sufficient handicap parking.
 - Meeting areas, entrances, elevators, restrooms, common areas, and sidewalks must be wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs and should be free of obstructions.
 - Public notices for events must indicate that interpretation services for persons with disabilities will be made available upon request.
 - All notices should include a text telephone (TTY) number where people can request interpretation services and obtain information. TTY telephones enable users to communicate through typed messages displayed on an LED or computer screen.
 - If the meeting is videotaped, arrangements should be made to have captioning or computer assisted note-

taking services.

- Listening assistance services should be provided. Such services may include: sign language interpreters, devices that amplify speakers' voices, and closed captioning (if the event is televised). Listening assisted devices may be rented. If using an interpreter and meetings are longer than an hour, two interpreters are needed.

- **Offer materials in various forms.** To ensure people with different types of disabilities have access to information, it is important to provide materials in a variety of forms, including:⁵

- Brail
- Large print (22 point is recommended)
- Electronic computer files
- Transcriptions
- Audio recordings
- Videos with closed captioning

Recommended Target Demographics

Since many of the tools that are used to improve accessibility are based on technology, agencies need to be aware that some technologies may be more effective with specific demographic groups. For example, persons with disabilities who are elderly, or who are low income may not have access to computers, the internet or social media. More mature individuals may also have discomfort in using such technology. Traditional methods, such as brail and audio cassettes, may be more effective with these demographic groups. On the other hand, youth, working age adults, and individuals from middle income and high income communities are more apt to be engaged and seek information through electronic technology.

Lessons Learned/Challenges

- **Partner with agencies that work with persons with disabilities.** Such agencies can provide insight on how to improve accessibility and how to encourage involvement.
- **Evaluate access to public meetings/events as well as accessibility to information in order to ensure that there are no barriers.** This may include an assessment of publications, public notices, meeting sites, and staff knowledge of services for persons with disabilities. The evaluation should include interviews of clients and service agencies.
- **Provide opportunities for interested persons to get involved and provide feedback.** In addition to committees and advisory groups, agencies can use the internet and social media technology to enable persons with disabilities to express comments and concerns regarding projects, policies and services.
- **Partner with organizations that serve people with disabilities in the use of special equipment, for public events and meetings.** Some of these organizations rent or loan hearing devices and other equipment. Agencies may be able to reduce expenses by creating a partnership with these organizations and developing an agreement to use their equipment as needed.
- **Ensure compliance with the information technology criteria established in Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.**

Case Studies

The following are case studies of how to improve accessibility and outreach for persons with disabilities:

Alameda County provides a "Resource Toolkit" of web-based and downloadable information for seniors and persons with disabilities. The Toolkit includes a comprehensive list of accessible transportation services and resources. This is intended to serve as a resource for providers, but is also accessible to the general public (http://www.actia2022.com/app_pages/view/147).⁶

The Current State of Transportation for People with Disabilities in the United States is a report published by the National

Council on Disability (NCD). It identifies transportation barriers as well as best practices and case studies that can serve as models for improving outreach and accessibility to transportation for persons with disabilities (<http://www.ncd.gov/publications/2005/06132005>).⁷

The Research and Training Center on Independent Living of the University of Kansas conducted a national study to identify exemplary best practices to assist persons with mobility impairments obtain assistance during disasters. The report identified six exemplary sites, and some of their best practices. The report includes outreach, education, and inclusion in the planning process on the list of best practices (http://www.nobodyleftbehind2.org/findings/pdfs/bestpractices_3-21-072.pdf).⁸

For Further Information

Disability.gov: This award winning federal government website provides a one-stop interactive, community-driven information network of disability-related programs, services, laws and benefits. It includes a specific section related to transportation (<https://www.disability.gov/>).⁹

US Department of Transportation, Disability Resource Center: This site provides useful information on regulatory requirements and other issues related to persons with disabilities (<http://www.drc.dot.gov>).¹⁰

Easter Seals Project ACTION Store: Easter Seals, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Federal Transit Administration, have created Project Action in order to provide resources, as well as training and technical assistance regarding ADA and transportation accessibility for persons with disabilities. The site store provides numerous resources on accessible transportation. Over forty of the products are free of charge, including videos, audio and multimedia products (https://secure2.convio.net/es/site/Ecommerce/591545544?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=7704&store_id=9663).¹¹

Sources

¹ Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), "USDOT FHWA/FTA Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making: People with Disabilities." August 2002, 29 March 2011 <http://www.planning.dot.gov/PublicInvolvement/pi_documents/toc.asp>.

² US Department Transportation: Federal Transit Administration, "Americans with Disabilities Act," 8 June 2011, http://www.fta.dot.gov/civilrights/civil_rights_2360.html.

³ United States Access Board, "The Rehabilitation Act Amendments (Section 508)," 8 June 2011, <<http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/act.htm>>.

⁴ US Department of Transportation, Disability Resource Center, "Checklist for Planning Accessible Meetings and Events," 9 June 2011, <<http://www.drc.dot.gov/documents.html>>.

⁵ FHWA, "People with Disabilities."

⁶ Alameda County, "Provider Resource Toolkit," November 2010, Alameda County Transportation Authority, 20 August 2011, <http://www.actia2022.com/app_pages/view/147>.

⁷ National Council on Disability (NCD), "The Current State of Transportation for People with Disabilities in the United States," 13 June 2005, NCD, 24 August 2011, <<http://www.ncd.gov/publications/2005/06132005>>.

⁸ White, Glen W., Michael H. Fox, and Catherine Rooney, "Nobody Left Behind (NLB): Report on Exemplary and Best Practices in Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Response for People with Disabilities," 15 March 2007, Research and Training Center on Independent Living University of Kansas, 20 August 2011, <http://www.nobodyleftbehind2.org/findings/pdfs/bestpractices_3-21-072.pdf>.

⁹ U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), "Disability.gov," ODEP, 20 August 2011, <<https://www.disability.gov/>>.

¹⁰ US Department of Transportation (US DOT), "Disability Resource Center," US DOT, 20 August 2011, <<http://www.drc.dot.gov>>.

¹¹ Easter Seals Project ACTION. "Easter Seals Project ACTION Store," 20 April 2012,

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