

## The State of the State for Missourians with Disabilities

# TRANSPORTATION

“Access to transportation is often a powerful positive predictor not only of employment, but also of several other quality of life indicators such as political participation, access to entertainment, socializing, and religious attendance. Likewise, inaccessible transportation limits the ability of people with disabilities to participate in these activities.”<sup>1</sup>

### Our Beliefs

The Missouri Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities (MPC) believes that persons with developmental disabilities (DD) should be able to have transportation that is available and meets their needs.<sup>2</sup> Without accessible transportation, persons with DD may not be fully included in the community.

MPC’s Statewide Needs Assessment findings indicate that Missourians with DD still struggle with the availability and cost of accessible transportation that allows them to go where they need to go, when they need to go.<sup>3</sup> Individuals indicate that transportation challenges prevent them from working and increasing their independence through increased income. Many others indicate that transportation prevents them from enjoying social and recreational activities. This especially affects Missouri’s many rural communities, thus promoting isolation and lack of integration in the community. When participants were asked what could be done to improve the community for persons with disabilities, one of the top three comments was to improve transportation, further validating the importance of this issue to persons with disabilities and their families.

### What the Research Says

While transportation services for persons without disabilities have improved, the gap for persons with disabilities has actually increased in recent years according to the National Organization on Disability.<sup>4</sup>

A national study by the U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics (2002) discovered six million people with disabilities have difficulty finding needed transportation.<sup>5</sup> Further, over a half million people with disabilities do not leave their homes due to transportation difficulties, impacting participation in work, social activities, worship, and other activities.<sup>6</sup> Nationwide, one third of people with disabilities have problems with inadequate transportation, as compared to one tenth of people without disabilities.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, the inequity of funding for highways versus public transportation appears to indirectly discriminate against these persons.

*Systemic Change in Coordination.* A report by the National Council on Disability (NCD) states that real change in transportation will not occur until funding is provided for comprehensive, accessible public transportation.<sup>8</sup> Previously, the “2003 National Dialogue, Transportation Policy and Research Forum on Accessible Community Transportation in America”<sup>9</sup> outlined seven areas for national improvement with corresponding action plans.

1. Unified Public Transportation Systems
2. Systems for Effective Customer Feedback
3. Coordination for Rural Transportation
4. Transportation Training for Youth
5. Improvement in use of Mobility Aids
6. Travel Training Programs
7. Improvement in Best Value ADA Paratransit

#### MPC Beliefs

- Community inclusion is the basis of the services and supports that people receive.
- Services and supports provide opportunities for people with DD to be valued members of the community, making contributions as well as receiving needed supports.
- The system promotes the use of community resources, and in so doing, builds community capacity.
- Services and supports are accessible and easy to use.

#### What Missourians with DD and Their Families Are Saying<sup>10</sup>

##### How People Get Around

Respondents thought persons with DD were *most likely* to use:  
(47%) public transportation  
(28%) rides from family/friends

Respondents thought persons with DD were *least likely* to use:  
(39%) special transportation  
(37%) self-transportation

##### Adequacy of Transportation Options

When averaged, no option achieved a rating of more than *fair*.  
(72%) community-based transportation rated inadequate/fair  
(69%) special transportation rated inadequate/fair  
(62%) public transportation rated inadequate/fair

##### Top 5 Challenges in transportation:

- Availability, especially in rural areas
- Cost to meet transportation needs
- Limited transportation schedules
- Reliable, consistent transportation services
- Vehicle accessibility

“Transportation that was offered to my 4 year old was a Vo-Tech bus and that had high school kids on it.”

“You can’t be spontaneous because it is so hard to set up transportation—it takes too many calls and too much red tape to get something arranged.”

“There are no buses with wheelchair lifts.”

Rural Transportation. The passage of the Federal Public Transportation Act of 2005: “Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA-LU)” will assist in providing resources for accessible transportation in rural America.<sup>11</sup> Although this addresses a need for transportation to medical appointments and employment opportunities, transportation for recreational and social opportunities are lacking.

Emergency Preparedness. Recent experiences with natural disasters in this country have raised public awareness of the need to plan for evacuation of persons with disabilities in the case of such events. In a recent testimony before the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging,<sup>12</sup> an official stated the challenges of identifying “transportation-disadvantaged populations,” determining their needs, and providing coordination for their transportation. It appears state and local emergency management officials across the country show wide variation in their attempts to address these special issues.

### **The State of the State in Transportation**

According to the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA), in 2005, Missouri had a “comprehensive” approach to transportation involving many agencies, organizations, officials, and disadvantaged populations in statewide coordination efforts.<sup>14</sup> They did, however, find inactivity in the Missouri legislative committees on special transportation needs, which were then officially eliminated in 2006.

In 2005, the Missouri Department of Transportation (MODOT) began the Missouri Advance Planning Project (MAP) and produced a summary of the “Trends and Conditions”.<sup>15</sup> MODOT reported the following critical trends in Missouri:

- Missouri’s population is aging
- Demands on the transportation system are increasing.
- Missouri’s transportation infrastructure is aging and will require significant investment.

- Although the state’s transportation funding outlook is improving, instability remains as costs increase.
- Land use and development decisions in the state place greater stress on the transportation system.
- There are few long-range, multimodal, multi-jurisdictional views of transportation.

While MAP poll respondents generally expressed support for placing much more emphasis on transportation that would benefit economic development, only mild support was noted for increasing emphasis on accessibility and availability of public transportation.

*“Don’t have a taxi service and OATS is usually booked with appointments for senior services.”*

*“They sometimes forget me. It does cause trouble with work. Weekends are my biggest problem.”*

*“For an accessible bus, you have to schedule two weeks in advance. If you miss, you still have to pay.”<sup>13</sup>*

### **What We Recommend**

These recommendations are suggested to increase access and availability of transportation to meet the needs of Missourians with disabilities.

- Encourage Missouri Department of Transportation to plan for and carry out projects that increase the availability of public supported transportation and increase public awareness of transit issues for people with developmental disabilities.
- Enhance coordination of transportation options in the State by creating an infrastructure that will facilitate the efforts of Private and Governmental transportation providers to more effectively and efficiently use available transportation resources.
- Increase the level of funding by the Missouri Legislature for affordable accessible and flexible transportation, especially in rural areas.
- Develop transportation plans that will address the emergency evacuation of person with disabilities in the event of a natural disaster or other type of catastrophic event. Encourage local communities to participate and engage individuals with disabilities and family members in developing local plans.

## TRANSPORTATION ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> “Access to Transportation”. (2002) Excerpted from the N.O.D./Harris 2000 Survey of Americans with Disabilities. The National Organization on Disability. Retrieved on 10/17/2006 at <http://www.nod.org>
- <sup>2</sup> “FY 2007-2011 Developmental Disabilities State Plan Goals and Objectives”. (2006) Missouri Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities. Retrieved 1/07 from [www.mpcdd.com/MPCDDStatePlan.htm](http://www.mpcdd.com/MPCDDStatePlan.htm)
- <sup>3</sup> Rinck, C., Graybill, T., Berg, R., Horn, W. (2006). “The Missouri Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities Statewide Needs Assessment”.
- <sup>4</sup> “Access to Transportation”. (2002) Excerpted from the N.O.D./Harris 2000 Survey of Americans with Disabilities. The National Organization on Disability. Retrieved on 10/17/2006 at <http://www.nod.org>
- <sup>5</sup> “Freedom to Travel”. (2002). U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics. Retrieved on 11/28/06 from [http://products.bts.gov/publications/freedom\\_to\\_travel/](http://products.bts.gov/publications/freedom_to_travel/)
- <sup>6</sup> “Transportation Difficulties Keep Over Half a Millions Disabled at Home”. (April 2003). BTS Issue Brief (3). U.S. Department of Transportation Bureau of Transportation Statistics. Retrieved on 11/25/06 from [http://www.bts.gov/publications/issue\\_briefs/number\\_03](http://www.bts.gov/publications/issue_briefs/number_03)
- <sup>7</sup> The National Organization on Disability. Accessed at <http://www.nod.org>
- <sup>8</sup> “The Current State of Transportation for People with Disabilities in the United States.” (2005). National Council on Disability: Washington, D.C.
- <sup>9</sup> “The 2003 National Dialogue, Transportation Policy and Research Forum on Accessible Community Transportation in America”. (2004). Report and Recommendations from the July 2003 Conference, Washington, D.C.
- <sup>10</sup> Rinck, C., Graybill, T., Berg, R., Horn, W. (2006).
- <sup>11</sup> “SAFETEA-LU – The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act - A Legacy for Users (Public Law 109-59) of Interest to People and Programs on Disability”. (2005). Washington, D.C.: Easter Seals Project Action. Accessed at <http://projectaction.easterseals.com/site/DocServer/SAFETEA-LU.pdf?docID=15703>
- <sup>12</sup> “Disaster Preparedness: Preliminary Observations on the Evacuation of Vulnerable Populations Due to Hurricanes and Other Disasters.” GAO-06-790T. Washington, D.C.: May 19, 2006.
- <sup>13</sup> Rinck, C., Graybill, T., Berg, R., Horn, W. (2006).
- <sup>14</sup> Sundeen, M., Reed, J., & Savage, M. (2005). “Coordinated Human Service Transportation: State Legislative Approaches”. Community Transportation Association of America. Retrieved on 11/25/06 from [www.ctaa.org/ntrc/coordination/coordinated.h.s.transportation.pdf](http://www.ctaa.org/ntrc/coordination/coordinated.h.s.transportation.pdf)
- <sup>15</sup> “Missouri Advance Planning Phase 1 Synthesis Report.” (2005). Missouri Department of Transportation <http://www.mapourfuture.org/assets/molrtp/documents/050914Phase1SynthesisReport-SR.pdf>