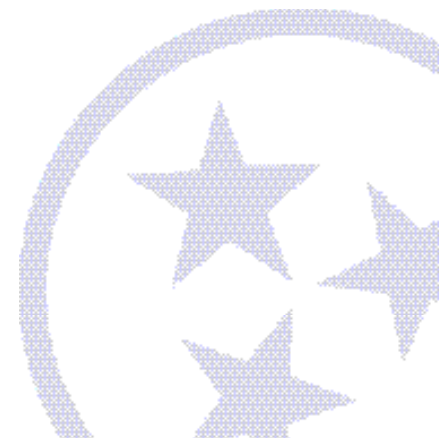




Annual Report & Strategic Plan

Planning for the Future

Tennessee Department of Transportation | March 2023



Introduction

Starting with the creation of the Office of Mobility and Accessible Transportation (OMAT) in 2020, the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) and its partners initiated a transformative statewide planning effort to develop priorities, goals, and strategies for providing resources and expertise that result in improved accessible transportation and mobility across the state. The multi-department planning effort was led by TDOT and supported by partnerships with other state departments, human services agencies, area agencies on aging, regional and metropolitan planning organizations, public transit providers, non-profit organizations, advocates, users of accessible transportation, and the general public. It served as a catalyst to establish strategic goals for reducing barriers to transportation for older adults, individuals with disabilities, and other users of accessible transportation.

The Annual Report highlights partnerships built and investments made in community resources. New investments that support mobility and accessibility include the HOPE employment planning project; transit technology improvements; and Disability Pathfinder, which is a statewide one-stop resource for information about public and human services disability resources, including transportation.

TDOT and its partners continue to identify and seek solutions for new and recurring transportation challenges to accessing transportation including the process of schedule non-emergency medical transportation trips, the national vehicle shortage, and labor force shortages that make it difficult for transportation providers to hire a sufficient number of staff to meet demand.

The Mobility and Accessible Transportation Strategic Plan identified five strategic goals that focus on addressing the current and future transportation challenges and gaps in services. This Annual Report provides ongoing updates to the goals, strategies, and recommended action steps for each goal. It also includes information about ongoing initiatives and actions taken to support accessible transportation in Tennessee.

As OMAT and the Accessible Transportation Workgroup continue to engage with stakeholders and implement the five strategic goals identified during the planning process, action steps and performance measures have been refined to ensure meaningful and successful outcomes.

Expand Access. Support local solutions for expanding and improving access to transportation services.

Service Solutions. Identify where barriers to transportation overlap and develop quality solutions that meet travelers' needs.

Collaboration. Establish a structure and collaborative culture that maximizes financial resources for transportation across multiple programs and departments.

Technology Solutions. Prioritize user-focused public information systems and transit technology tools to diversify access to services.

Communication. Facilitate communication and coordination between transportation providers and users for a more seamless mobility network.

Expand Access

Support local solutions for expanding access to transportation services

Statewide efforts made during 2022 toward supporting local solutions for expanding and improving access to transportation services include:

- OMAT partnered with local transit agencies to support the development of three regional Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Plans (CPT-HSTP) in South Central, Southeast, and Southwest Tennessee. Together the three regional plans encompassed approximately 32 percent of Tennessee's 95 counties. The regional CPT-HSTPs were prepared in cooperation with a local lead human resource agencies and participating nonprofit, human resources agencies, for-profit, and governmental organizations. Each plan included participation from older adults, individuals with disabilities, key stakeholder organizations, and the general public. The plans resulted in a locally adopted goals and strategies to address unmet transportation needs and gaps in access to transportation throughout the regions. The 2022 regional plans included the following service areas:
 - South East Tennessee Human Resource Agency: Bledsoe, Grundy, Marion, Sequatchie, Hamilton, Rhea, Meigs, McMinn, Bradley, and Polk Counties
 - South Central Transportation Development District: Bedford, Coffee, Franklin, Giles, Hickman, Lawrence, Lincoln, Marshall, Maury, Moore, Perry, and Wayne Counties
 - South West Human Resource Agency: Chester, Decatur, Hardeman, Hardin, Haywood, Henderson, Madison, and McNairy Counties
- The Mobility Manager Toolkit was created and is complete with job descriptions and instructions for establishing a Regional Transportation Advisory Board (RTAB) or other regional coordinating committees. The Toolkit also includes instructions for developing or updating a CPT-HSTP.
- Suggested tools for creating a local marketing and outreach plan are incorporated into the Mobility Manager Toolkit. The tools are intended to be modified by local Mobility Managers so that they target the appropriate local markets for accessible transportation.

Objective

Oversee updates of Regional Coordinated Transportation Plans with a focus on identifying local issues and solutions to those issues.

Action Steps

Participation from advocates, providers, and end-users is documented in the plans.

OMAT reviews draft final regional plans for rural regions.

OMAT will use the local plans to feed statewide initiatives. OMAT will use Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM) information to identify Federal transit funding sources. OMAT will create MOUs that allow for fund braiding when appropriate.

Recommendations	2022	2023	2024	2025
1. Regional CPT-HSTP plans are developed and include priorities.		1		
2. Local participation on the CPT-HSTP includes older adults, individuals with disabilities, and key stakeholder organizations from all counties in the region.		2		

Objective

Develop Regional Transportation Advisory Boards (RTAB) in each region with representation from each county.

Action Steps

TDOT will establish guidelines for RTABs. OMAT will be an At-Large member on all RTABs. Regional representation must strive to include decision makers from all key stakeholder organizations with responsibilities related to the goals of the CPT-HSTP or other local transportation improvement plans.

Recommendations	2022	2023	2024	2025
1. A pilot RTAB is created with a defined organizational structure, roles and responsibilities and an annual agenda.		1		
2. RTABs are created in each HRA region following a similar structure as the pilot.		2		
3. RTABs achieve annual agenda items and report quarterly progress to OMAT.			3	

Objective

Ensure passenger transit is considered in non-transit plans for development. Examples of non-transit plans include complete streets (which often include pedestrian infrastructure); economic development; ADA transition plans; and community needs assessments.

Action Steps

OMAT will provide a framework or toolkit for local Mobility Managers and transit managers.

OMAT will encourage transit operators to participate in regional and local planning efforts to ensure transit is considered during the planning phases.

Transit operators will keep the RTAB informed of planning efforts and discuss opportunities to influence those plans.

OMAT serves in an advisory role to TDOT multimodal planning for projects to provide expertise and information pertaining to the accessibility needs for transit riders, pedestrians, bicyclists, older adults and individuals with disabilities. In this way, OMAT will help ensure full integration of multimodal access into projects.

Recommendations	2022	2023	2024	2025
1. Mobility Manager toolkit/framework is developed and distributed.	1			
2. OMAT actively contributes to TDOT multi-modal planning efforts.		2		

Objective

Establish effective methods of communication within the regions and counties.

Action Steps

Activities include but may not be limited to:

- Consistent marketing plan
 - Regional or state transportation logo in addition to transit system logo
 - Brochure content and design
 - Website content and design
 - Rider-guide content and design
- Partnerships with local agencies that are not public transportation providers for transportation resources and customer comments.

Recommendations	2022	2023	2024	2025
1. OMAT and Mobility Managers design a marketing and outreach program.	1			
2. OMAT and Mobility Managers deploy the approved communication program.		2		
3. Public survey feedback indicates awareness of transportation resources and information improves.			3	

Service Solutions

Identify where barriers to transportation overlap and develop quality solutions that meet travelers' needs

Statewide efforts and progress made during 2022 toward identifying where the barriers to transportation overlap and developing quality solutions that meet travelers' needs include:

- The Strategic Plan includes a comprehensive list of barriers that transportation providers across the state commonly face when working to address unmet transportation needs and gaps in services. The list of barriers was presented to the Accessible Transportation Workgroup in early 2022 along with a discussion about suggestions for State-level policy amendments that would enable successful implementation of transportation solutions. Over time, additional specific major statewide barriers that impact access to transportation resources have been identified:
 - The national vehicle shortage, which includes accessible minivans, transit vans, and small cutaway buses commonly used to provide accessible transportation
 - Challenges with labor shortages for disability and transportation services, including difficulty hiring a sufficient number of transit drivers, mechanics and staff to expand services in a way that more effectively addresses unmet needs
 - Potential passengers have expressed a need for transportation services that are flexible and frequent enough to allow them to drop-off and pick-up children at childcare before and after work, and have policies that allow children to accompany patients to medical appointments
 - Pedestrian access to transit bus stops or other community resources is limited due to lack of accessible sidewalks, curb cuts, and crosswalks
- One step forward in this area is contracting improvements implemented in TDOT's Curb Ramp Upgrade Program. By developing a separate, dedicated contract for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) improvements connected to resurfacing projects in the program, improvements such as curb cuts in sidewalks can be addressed more quickly by a specialized contractor.

The OMAT Accessible Transportation Workgroup was created in early 2022 and includes representatives from state agencies and statewide organizations. The workgroup meets on a quarterly basis, or as needed. The role of the OMAT Accessible Transportation Workgroup is as follows:

- Focus on addressing statewide accessible transportation needs
- Advise and coordinate on solutions by providing vital support and partnership as state and statewide agencies work together to support strategic goals
- Provide current knowledge, critical thinking and analysis
- Help establish and maintain strong community partnerships and relationships across stakeholders
- Create special ad-hoc committees and subcommittees on a time-limited basis to address special issues

Objective

Use the Strategic Plan to conduct a regional assessment of barriers and opportunities.

Action Steps

Use resources developed through the needs assessment and gaps analysis to inform development of quality solutions.

Identify priorities and work toward aligning funding/grant opportunities with identified top priority solutions.

Recommendations	2022	2023	2024	2025
1. OMAT will compile a list of barriers that transportation providers face when working to address needs to identify strategies that could have the most impact statewide.	1			
2. OMAT will review policy-related barriers with the Accessible Transportation Workgroup and suggest Federal or State-level policy amendments that would enable successful implementation of solutions.		2		

Objective

Standardize transportation safety and quality guidelines among all programs for older adults and individuals with disabilities to be consistent with other transportation funding sources.

Action Steps

OMAT will establish an Accessible Transportation Workgroup and will work with consultants to develop plans and strategies to address differences in service quality standards and guidelines. OMAT will work with consultants to develop plans and strategies to address differences in service quality standards and guidelines. In 2022, TDOT identified conflicting driver standards and drug and alcohol testing policies as barriers to be addressed.

Recommendations	2022	2023	2024	2025
1. OMAT will establish the Accessible Transportation Workgroup	1			
2. OMAT and a subcommittee of the Accessible Transportation Workgroup will review and identify differences in service quality standards/guidelines among agencies that serve older adults and individuals with disabilities.		2		
3. Where appropriate, OMAT and the Accessible Transportation Workgroup will propose standardized training and service quality standards to state-level agency administrators and request that all agencies sign a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to implement changes that result in standardization of service quality.			3	

Objective

Explore the effectiveness of structures to support electric vehicles, and service modes like vanpools and microtransit for first/last mile or multi-jurisdiction trips.

Action Steps

TDOT will continue identify projects that support this objective. OMAT will support TDOT planning decisions through participation in project selection activities. TDOT will move forward with its long-term plan of electric charging stations to facilitate possibilities for electric vehicles. A new ADA-accessible electric van has been added as a new potential line item to the upcoming re-procurement of the Statewide Contract for FTA-Funded Vans & Buses.

Recommendations	2022	2023	2024	2025
1. TDOT will identify projects that support this objective and collaborate on project selection activities.			1	
2. OMAT will provide information and support to subrecipients and urban transit systems in development of non-traditional transportation solutions that address gaps in access to transportation.			2	

Objective

Explore feasible opportunities to expand eligibility requirements of the volunteer driver programs (i.e., MyRide TN) or support more volunteer programs that include service for individuals with disabilities of any age.

Action Steps

OMAT will coordinate with MyRide TN leadership or other volunteer transportation programs to review an expansion of the senior transportation insurance waiver. The waiver does not currently include protections for volunteer drivers who are transporting individuals with disabilities. OMAT will work to explore the potential of a new waiver or expansion of the current senior volunteer transportation waiver.

Recommendations	2022	2023	2024	2025
1. OMAT will request MyRide TN or another volunteer transportation program make a presentation to the Accessible Transportation Workgroup regarding the insurance waiver.		1		
2. OMAT will assign a subcommittee of the Accessible Transportation Workgroup to explore insurance waivers in other states and develop a white paper and presentation regarding the waiver.			2	
3. The Accessible Transportation Workgroup will consult with insurance companies doing business in Tennessee to explore and document opportunities for the waiver.			3	
4. The Accessible Transportation Workgroup will make final recommendations regarding the potential support of an expanded waiver.				4

Collaboration

Establish a structure and collaborative culture that maximizes financial resources for transportation across multiple programs and departments

Statewide efforts and progress made during 2022 toward establishing a structure and collaborative culture that maximizes financial resources for transportation across multiple programs and departments includes:

- TDOT partnered with other state agencies to fund Disability Pathfinder, as noted in Strategic Goal 4: Technology Solutions Technology Solutions below.
- Potential policy barriers which need in-depth review, including possible policy conflicts between Federal Transit Administration (FTA), U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), and TennCare driver safety standards and drug and alcohol testing requirements for Non-Emergency Medical Transportation.
- OMAT facilitated the Tennessee Helping Obtain Prosperity for Everyone (HOPE) Project which is a statewide plan to help facilitate employment access into and from Persistent Poverty Areas, as well as encourage regional economic health. The goal of the HOPE Project is for a fully developed plan for a statewide Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) program, which could be used to create a state-funded plan to apply for competitive federal grant opportunities, or as a model for agencies in the state to implement locally-funded programs. The planning process involved stakeholder and community engagement and a variety of regional outreach efforts that were implemented in conjunction with Human Resource Agencies (HRAs) across the state.

Objective

Identify and maximize sustainable transit funding.

Action Steps

OMAT will introduce the cost-sharing pricing tool to other State agencies to encourage providers to put passengers funded by different programs on the same vehicle when feasible — and to do so with a streamlined invoicing and billing process to ensure funders are appropriately billed for service.

Recommendations	2022	2023	2024	2025
1. OMAT introduces cost-sharing and pricing tool to State agencies that provide funding for transportation.	1			
2. Interested agencies develop cost-sharing agreements.			2	
3. OMAT advises interested agencies as they develop a streamlined invoicing and billing process.			3	
4. TDOT provides direction that ensures systems establish cost-sharing agreements and pricing that is consistent.			4	

Objective

Expand sources of sustainable funding.

Action Steps

OMAT will survey State-funded programs that include transportation as part of their services to identify the current level of funding dedicated to consumer transportation. The survey will also clarify the level of service provided to passengers. The results will be shared with the State-level agencies so they can compare program cost effectiveness and work toward improvements that could be achieved through fund braiding. OMAT will investigate opportunities for using funding from different Federal or State Programs to fund a common transportation service or goal.

Recommendations	2022	2023	2024	2025
1. OMAT surveys all State-funded programs to identify current transportation-related funding levels, expenses, and levels of service.	1			
2. OMAT presents survey results to State-agencies with a comparison of cost-effectiveness.		2		
3. OMAT works with interested agencies toward more cost-effective transportation structures that could be achieved through fund braiding.			3	
4. OMAT and participating agencies implement new agreements that result in more cost-effective use of transportation resources in Tennessee.			4	

Objective

Nurture regional partnerships that fill identified gaps in transportation.

Action Steps

This objective is accomplished through the coordinated planning process and RTAB representation. Action steps are at the regional level but will be reported to OMAT and monitored in a quarterly report. OMAT will examine where, at the State-level, is TDOT creating challenges for partnerships. After identifying challenges, OMAT will work within TDOT toward a solution.

Recommendations	2022	2023	2024	2025
1. OMAT supports RTABs through development of regional multi-agency partnerships that offer transportation solutions to the identified gaps.			1	
2. OMAT will identify specific policies or practices within TDOT that are challenging successful regional partnerships.			2	
3. OMAT will work with other TDOT divisions and offices to eliminate or change policies that prevent successful collaborative transportation services from being implemented at the local level.			3	

Technology Solutions

Prioritize user-focused public information systems & tools to diversify access to services

Statewide efforts made during 2022 toward prioritizing user-focused public information systems and tools to diversify access to services include:

- In partnership with transit agencies, TDOT developed detailed specifications for new, modern scheduling and dispatching software and organized a transit technology Request for Information. During this process, two preferred technology vendors were identified. Transit agencies who need scheduling and dispatch software will be able to purchase modern software from these vendors. The new transit technology has capabilities that can fit the needs of individual agencies, such as:
 - Customizable algorithms that let the computer identify the most efficient schedule, allowing agencies to serve as many customers as possible with the resources they already have.
 - General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) data for routes, which allows third-party map or transit apps and websites to show transit route information in a standardized way.
 - All software options are compatible with potential technology solutions such as rider apps, real-time vehicle tracking, and text message alerts.
- OMAT continues to maintain links to public and specialized transportation providers services on its website.
- TDOT is now a funding agency for the Tennessee Disability Pathfinder, which is led by the Council on Developmental Disabilities and the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center. Disability Pathfinder provides disabilities services information across the state, including provider information for both public transit and specialized transportation services, to anyone seeking access to services. Through this important partnership, people with disabilities, their families, disability professionals, and others who need information on transportation for people with disabilities are able to find the information they need in one place. The web-based service is available through both a standalone website and on the MyTN app.
- Public transit agencies continue to offer potential passengers the option to call for information in addition to opportunities to find information or schedule trips on websites and apps. Using multiple means of communication helps ensure equitable access to all people.

Objective

Serve as the liaison between the State and the community to support transportation programs across the State in their efforts to implement advance technology.

Action Steps

TDOT will incorporate short- and long-range technology goals into State transportation plans and inform lead agencies developing regional transportation plans about statewide initiatives and goals.

Recommendations	2022	2023	2024	2025
1. OMAT and TDOT multimodal planning develop short- and long-range technology plans.	1			
2. OMAT participates in development of a statewide transportation technology RFP.		2		
3. When appropriate, OMAT informs RTAB representatives and Mobility Managers about statewide transportation technology initiatives.			3	
4. OMAT informs TDOT multimodal planning, RTABs/ Mobility Managers of regional initiatives related to transportation technology.			4	

Objective

Support smart investment in scheduling and dispatching software.

Action Steps

TDOT will determine funding and eligible applicants for scheduling and dispatching software. With input from OMAT, two vendors have been identified for inclusion in a statewide contract which eligible transit agencies can utilize. This gives transit agencies the ability to purchase new, more modern software, which has the capacity to enhance scheduling and dispatch practices and is compatible with forward-thinking customer focused software such as apps, messaging and telephone alert systems, and vehicle tracking.

Recommendations	2022	2023	2024	2025
1. TDOT develops funding and eligibility guidelines for scheduling and dispatching software.	1			
2. If Section 5310 programs are eligible, OMAT helps facilitate implementation and training for transportation staff.			2	

Objective

Encourage technology that allows customers to choose their mobility option and schedule.

Action Steps

OMAT will support one-call/one-click centers that provide access to multiple transportation providers. OMAT will identify a potential pilot program, develop a pilot proposal and plan, and assist with implementation of the program. Following implementation, OMAT will monitor performance and consider expanding the program.

Recommendations	2022	2023	2024	2025
1. A potential pilot for a one-call/one-click center for transportation information (and potentially scheduling) is identified.			1	
2. OMAT and TDOT develop a pilot proposal and plan.			2	

Recommendations	2022	2023	2024	2025
3. One-call/one-click pilot program is implemented and performance measures are established.				3
4. If successful, potential additional one-call/one-click programs or expansion of the pilot are identified.				4
5. TDOT will maintain links to public and specialized transportation provider services and the Vanderbilt's Kennedy Center call center on its Rural Transportation Assistance Program (RTAP) or TDOT website.	5			

Objective

Identify technology that facilitates coordination between operators and provides options for multiple services to work together toward meeting transportation needs.

Action Steps

OMAT will encourage knowledge-sharing across public transit systems, human service transportation providers, and private transportation companies on technology advancements, as well as on support services and training resources.

Recommendations	2022	2023	2024	2025
1. OMAT will attend multi-agency meetings and other organized events pertaining to technology that facilitates coordination between programs and centralized information for riders/potential riders.	1			
2. OMAT identifies specific technology platforms that improve coordination and address identified needs.		2		
3. Public transportation information available through centralized information resources is comprehensive and accurate.			3	

Objective

Equitable access to technology options.

Action Steps

OMAT will ensure that technology, and the information shared through the technology via websites and apps, is accessible to users with disabilities. OMAT will work with providers to ensure telephone options are available in addition to app-based services for riders who do not use smartphones. When new technology is implemented, OMAT and the Accessible Transportation Workgroup will support development of effective training programs to teach users about the new apps and websites.

Recommendations	2022	2023	2024	2025
1. Public transit agencies continue to have telephone options in addition to websites and apps.	1			
2. TDOT provides basic guidelines to transit agencies to ensure selected technology is accessible.	2			
3. OMAT and the Accessible Transportation Workgroup represent the population of older adults and individuals with disabilities to ensure procurement of technology is accessible.	3			
4. OMAT supports development of effective training programs to teach people to use new transportation apps and websites.	4			

Communication

Facilitate communication and coordination between transportation providers and users for a more seamless mobility network

Ongoing statewide efforts toward facilitating communication and coordination between transportation providers and users for a more seamless mobility network include:

- TDOT maintains a link on its webpage and the Rural Transit Assistance Program webpage with current information about resources for organizations serving older adults, individuals with disabilities, and general public consumers.
- OMAT provides information about its webpage resources to potentially interested parties and encourages local transit providers and state agencies to add a link to their own webpages.
- OMAT responds to user feedback and makes improvements to its webpage and resource listings.
- The Mobility Manager job description is included in the Mobility Manager Toolkit and will be shared with agencies as part of the 2023 Section 5310 Call for Projects
- OMAT created a Mobility Manager Toolkit as a resource for new regional Mobility Managers. OMAT also reviews quarterly reports with Mobility Managers upon request.
- People who contact Disability Pathfinder when they are searching for resources have access to information about available transportation services that would meet their needs. People can use the website to independently search for information, or they can call the Help Line to receive personalized assistance from a trained operator. The information is available in multiple languages and Disability Pathfinder is committed to ensuring people with disabilities are connected with available resources.
- Mobility Managers are encouraged to lead regional coordinating committee or Transportation Advisory Board meetings in their service areas.

Objective

Establish and oversee a clearinghouse and moderator for transportation issues and solutions.

Action Steps

OMAT will develop an online resource/clearinghouse for transportation issues related to older adults and individuals with disabilities. The resources will include links to HRAs, valuable industry research, locally developed Coordinated Plans, mobility managers, RTABs, and more.

Recommendations	2022	2023	2024	2025
1. OMAT creates a link on the TDOT or RTAP webpage with resources for organizations serving older adults and individuals with disabilities and consumers.	1			
2. OMAT maintains current information on the webpage.			2	

Recommendations	2022	2023	2024	2025
3. OMAT notifies potentially interested parties about the information available on its webpage and encourages them to add a link to their own webpages.		3		
4. Number of hits on the webpage resources increases over time.			4	
5. OMAT responds to user feedback to make improvements to the webpage.			5	

Objective

Develop the role for mobility management. Support local and regional mobility managers.

Action Steps

TDOT and OMAT will develop a template job description for mobility managers defining potential roles and responsibilities. Actual job descriptions and duties will be established by the local areas. OMAT will develop a Mobility Management Toolkit as a resource to help Managers get started and as an ongoing resource for their growth and development.

Recommendations	2022	2023	2024	2025
1. TDOT and OMAT develop Mobility Manager job description and share it with HRAs.	1			
2. OMAT reviews quarterly reports and facilitates quarterly meetings to support Mobility Managers.		2		
3. Mobility Managers participate in and/or lead RTAB meetings.			3	
4. OMAT develops a Mobility Manager Toolkit and distributes it as a resource.	4			

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