

# Transportation Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: A Look at the Needs of Diverse Older Adults and People with Disabilities

May 9, 2023



# National Aging & Disability Transportation Center

## **Our Mission:**

To promote the availability of accessible transportation options that serve the needs of Older Adults, People with Disabilities, Caregivers and Communities.

# National Aging & Disability Transportation Center

## What We Provide:

- Technical Assistance & Training
- Publications & Resources
- Partnership Coordination
- Community Grants and Coalitions

“Our decisions about transportation determine much more than where roads or bridges or tunnels or rail lines will be built. They determine the connections and barriers that people will encounter in their daily lives - and thus how hard or easy it will be for people to get where they need and want to go.”



## Elijah Cummings

American politician and civil rights advocate who served in the United States House of Representatives for Maryland's 7th congressional district

# Poll #1

## **Please indicate your organization's involvement or work on transportation diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI):**

- We have not started work in DEI
- We are only beginning to discuss the topic of DEI
- We are working internally (e.g., hiring, company culture)
- We are collecting data about who we serve
- We are working on our outreach and communications
- We have conducted a customer and/or community survey to identify racial, ethnic and culturally diverse groups.
- We have made some changes in our transportation policies and/or practices.

# NADTC's DEI Initiative Focus

NADTC's focus on DEI began in 2020 and includes:

- Information collection to identify transportation needs and experiences of diverse older adults, younger adults with disabilities and caregivers.
- Identification of promising practices – Workable solutions that may be adapted to better meet transportation needs.
- Education, guidance and support for communities and providers

*NADTC Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiative- <https://www.nadtc.org/diversity-equity-inclusion-initiative/>*

# NADTC's DEI Initiative Approach

NADTC embarked on a multi-pronged initiative to shine a light on transportation challenges that specifically impact diverse older adults, people with disabilities and caregivers. This approach encompassed:

- A national survey launched March 1, 2021.
- Focus groups with riders and potential users of transportation services from across the U.S.
- Conversations with transportation providers, human services organizations, advocates and community leaders.

*NADTC Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiative- <https://www.nadtc.org/diversity-equity-inclusion-initiative/>*

# Focus Groups

## ➤ Purpose:

- Gather the lived experiences of transportation users in different parts of the country
- Explore perceptions of how their experiences might be impacted by their race, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation or other personal characteristics



# In Their Own Words – Older Adults

- “They take off before you have a chance to sit down.”  
~ *Older adult from Washington*
- “I want to go everywhere...I don’t want to be limited...”  
~ *Older adult from Georgia*
- “Most people are on fixed income. It is hard to figure out how much you have left to spend on transportation after you pay for your necessities.”  
~ *Older adult from Ohio*

# In Their Own Words – Younger Adults with Disabilities

- “I work weekends, and I have to hitchhike, and I am blind. It is so stressful. I live on a hope and a prayer.”  
~ *Younger adult with a disability from Georgia*
- “I take county transit to the doctor and grocery shopping, but otherwise I am not able to leave my home; I would get out more if I had the choice.”  
~ *Younger adult with a disability from Kansas*
- On being referred to as an 'ADA' by a driver: “No courtesy to ask my name. It isn't appropriate to refer to someone as their label.”  
~ *Younger adult with a disability, Washington*

# Stakeholder Meetings

## ➤ Purpose:

- Identify the work transportation programs are doing to address Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- Learn about the challenges they face in serving marginalized and underserved communities
- Hear their perspectives on issues identified in the survey

# How Stakeholders are Addressing Transportation & DEI

- Conducting listening sessions
- Expanding opportunities for online participation
- Sharing information with social service and community-based groups serving diverse populations
- Engaging in rural community via local churches, county periodicals, the farmer's market, the library, and surveys

# Highlights of Findings – Stakeholder Meetings

- Language can be a barrier to working with some groups.
- “We are transportation social workers. We work to find solutions.”
- Travel training might better serve diverse populations by including training on using apps and other technologies.
- In working to address transportation DEI, building community relationships is critically important.

# Lessons Learned

- Not everyone has the same understanding of transportation diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Some providers struggle to recognize diversity in their communities stating, “We don't focus on any community--we serve them all.”
- Stakeholders clearly want to know more about transportation DEI and are ready to borrow ideas from others.
- Although participants are comfortable talking about transportation barriers related to age or disability, the same does not hold true when discussing how race, ethnicity or culture impacts transportation access.

A woman wearing a wide-brimmed straw hat, a dark jacket, a blue scarf, and jeans is seated in a red and black motorized wheelchair. She is positioned on a black metal ramp with yellow safety markings, which is extended from the side of a white bus. The bus has green and blue decorative stripes. The woman is smiling and holding the yellow handrails of her wheelchair. The background is a solid blue color with a white horizontal line below the text.

# Inclusion of Diverse Populations

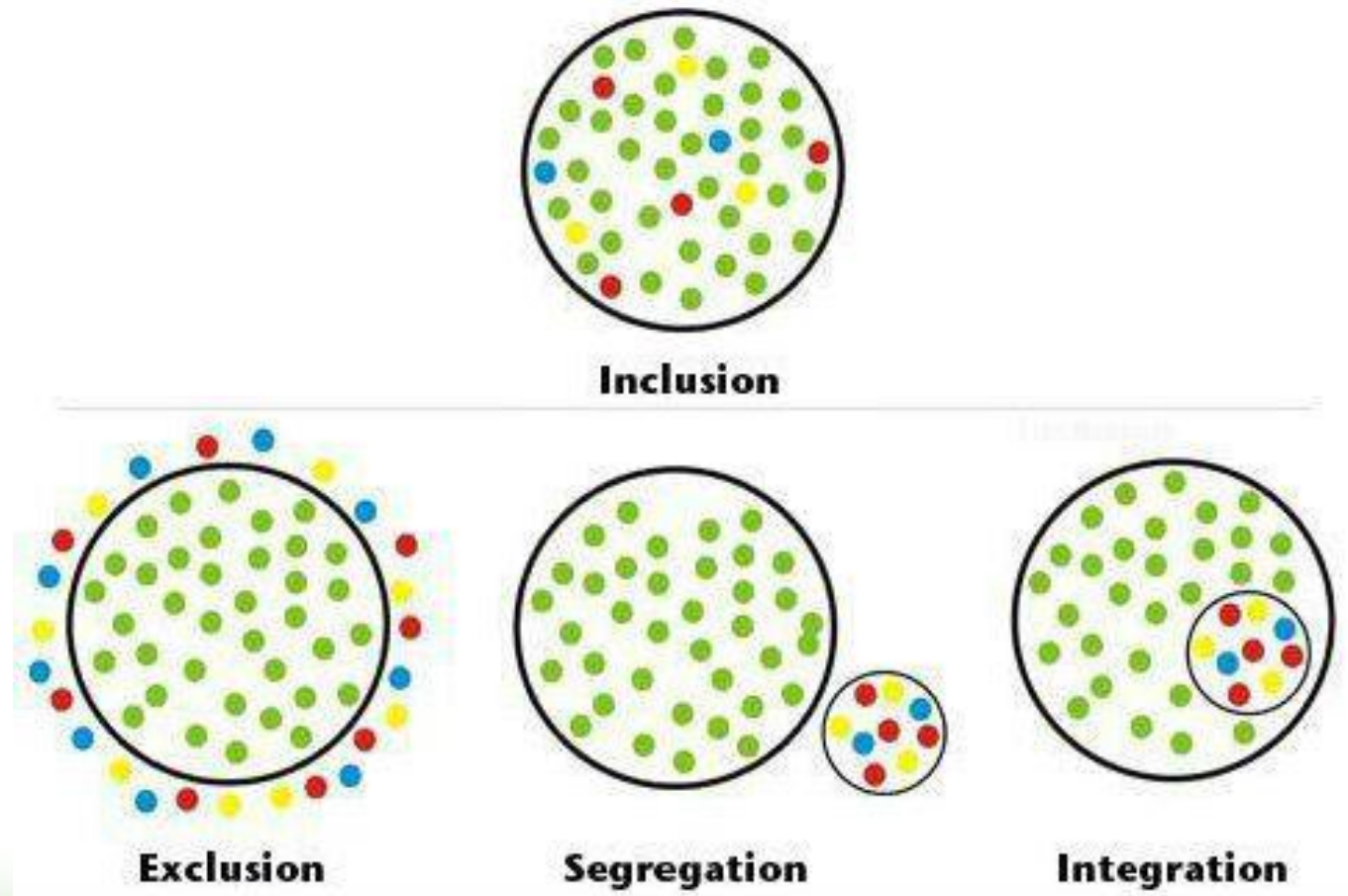
# What is Inclusion?

"Inclusion refers to **how diversity is leveraged** to create a fair, equitable, healthy, and high-performing organization or community where all individuals are **respected, feel engaged and motivated**, and their contributions toward meeting organizational and societal goals are **valued.**"

*Source: Global Diversity and Inclusion Benchmarks: Standards for Organizations Around the World*



# Inclusion vs Everything Else



# Participant Engagement

All people, regardless of age or disability, should be able to live independently and participate fully in their communities. Every person should have the right to make choices and to control the decisions in and about their lives. This right to self-determination includes decisions about their homes and work, as well as all the other daily choices most adults make without a second thought. (<https://www.acl.gov/about-community-living>)

# Inclusive Planning

A process whereby Stakeholders (*Participants and Transportation Partners*) are actively and meaningfully involved in the plan's development.



# Questions to Consider

- What kind of planning occurs regarding mobility?
- What are the opportunities to get involved?
- Are the opportunities to get involved in planning sufficient?
- Are the opportunities to get involved in planning inclusive of all community members (e.g. older adults, people with disabilities)?

# How to Approach Inclusion

- Clearly understanding and recognizing Participant and Partner/Stakeholder roles
- Evolving Steering Committee members & roles
- Participant-led focus groups
- Town halls & community meetings that invite open dialogue

# How to Promote Inclusion

- Education for everyone/the solution is in the room!
- BORPSAT: “bunch of the right people sitting around the table” – does it look like your community?
- Not just the "Usual Suspects"
- Practice Openness to new ideas/thinking outside the box
- Recognize and seize opportunities

# External Barriers to Inclusion to Consider

- Space that is not physically accessible
- Materials not in accessible formats
- Forums that lack accessibility
- Lack of transportation to participate in planning activities
- Online collection of input that is not accessible

# Internal Barriers to Inclusion to Consider

- **Be aware** of your own implicit biases and automatic responses
- **Replace stereotypes:** Instead of assuming a need for help, ask if assistance is needed
- **Understanding Intersectionality:** What unique challenges does this person face? How does this individual cope with day-to-day challenges?



# Identify Your Equity Commitment

- Define equity for YOUR community
- Think about your equity process for inclusion
- Incorporate equity through programs and partnerships





# Areas to Evaluate

How do we measure?

**Access online at:**

<https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.goveda.org/resource/resmgr/resources/ONEVirginiaPlan-StateGov-2..pdf>

## Access & Success

- Is our organization diverse? Does it reflect the communities we serve?

## Climate & Relations

Do our staff feel like they belong? Do they feel affirmed and/or empowered?  
Do they embody our values?

## Training & Education

Do staff have the knowledge and tools to appreciate a diverse working environment?  
Do staff have the knowledge and tools to do their jobs effectively?

## Infrastructure

Are our staff accountable for ensuring our agency is diverse, inclusive, and one that promotes equity?

## Community Engagement

Do our partners promote and lead through diversity, inclusion and equity?  
Do our clients feel welcomed and included by our staff?

# EDI in Action: Employee Resource Groups at COTA

In 2020 Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) supported diverse identity groups within Team COTA:

- Veterans Employee Resource Group (**VERG**)
- Parents Actively Collaborating Together (**PACT**)
- Black Employees Leading Inclusion, Excellence, Vision and Education (**BELIEVE**)
- Women for Inspiration, Strength and Excellence (**WISE**)

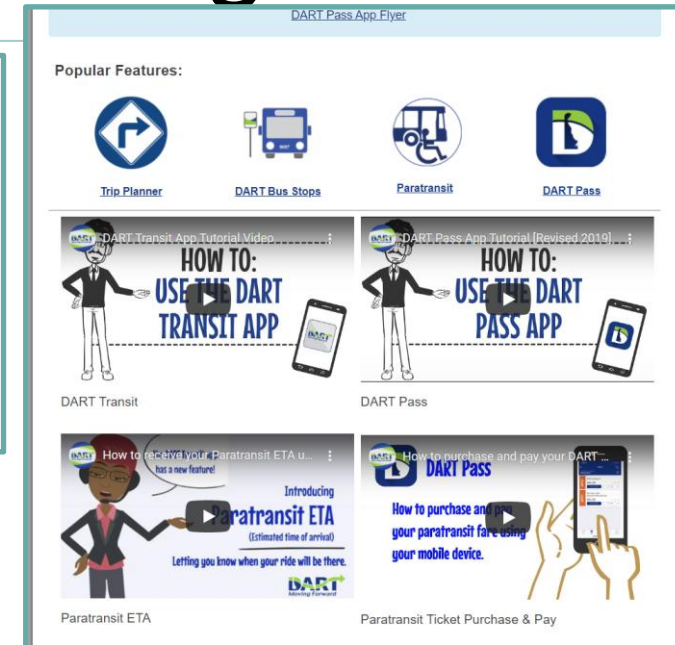
*During the holidays, these ERGs spearheaded a toy drive and donated over 500 toys to Nationwide Children's Hospital.*





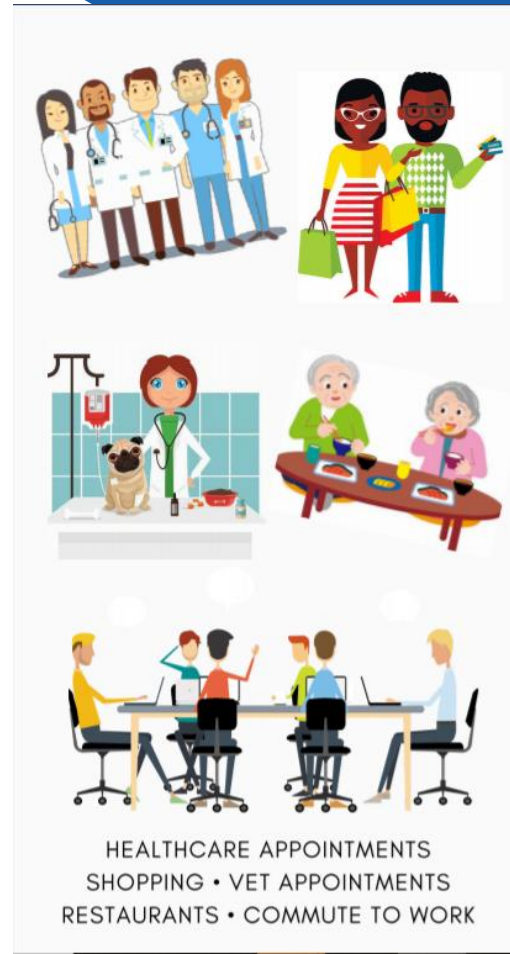
# FIDELITY – Long-Term Thinking

- Equity
  - Consider the needs of unbanked seniors and those with different abilities
  - Make sure the transportation services available in urban areas are also accessible and available in rural areas
- Education & Surveys
  - Videos and Travel Training Programs can augment staff resources
  - Regularly educate and survey internal staff and clients
- Engineering
  - Integrating accessibility into your programs and products early in service development will increase user acceptance and long-term success



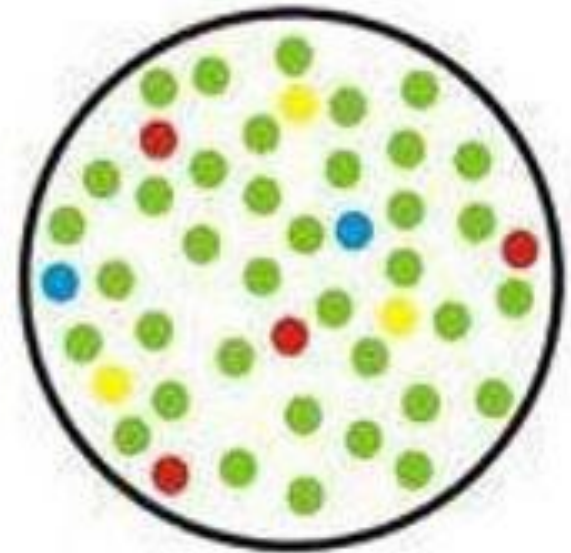
# Inclusive Materials

- Safe Space Stickers in our vehicles
- Large print brochure
- Translated materials
- Impaired vision brochure
- Beyond the Bus Symposium: Inclusion Matters (2021)



# Outcomes from Inclusion

- Shared Knowledge
- Sensitive Design
- Support for Implementation
- Building Community Capacity



**Inclusion**

# Stakeholders Work in DEI & Transportation

- 50% do outreach to underserved communities
- 47% collect demographic data
- 40% are surveying customers and community to ID needs
- 28% are working on hiring and program policies that address diversity
- 13% have made adjustments to fare structure
- 4% have changed routes to better serve diverse populations

# Poll #2

## **What is your biggest barrier to implementing efforts toward transportation diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI)?**

- Lack of MPO, transportation committee or board commitment (i.e., governance)
- Lack of CEO or executive staff support or interest
- Lack of staff resources or agency capacity (e.g., need internal champion or team)
- Budget constraints
- Physical or social barriers to engaging diverse communities



# Resources

**2020 Trends Report Spotlight: Inclusive Planning for Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities**

<https://www.nadtc.org/wp-content/uploads/6-2020-Trends-Inclusive-Planning.pdf>

**Transit Planning 4 All** <https://transitplanning4all.org/>

**Transportation Diversity and Equity Resources**

<https://www.nadtc.org/diversity-equity-inclusion-initiative/diversity-and-equity-resources/>

**Advancing Equity and Racial Justice Through the Federal Government**

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/equity/>

**CCAM Strategic Plan**

<https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/2022-11/2023-2026-CCAM-Strategic-Plan.pdf>



# National Transportation Accessibility Center (NTAC)

**Goal:** To expand access to transportation for people with disabilities and older adults by increasing awareness and adoption of transportation accessibility strategies, inclusive planning, and mobility on demand transportation systems.

## Major Activities:

- Develop project steering committee
- Create the National Accessible Transportation Accelerator Network (NATAN): [Sign up to be a member](#)
- Establish Communities of Practice (COPs)
- Increase Awareness and Adoption of Transportation Accessibility Strategies





**Call toll-free: 866.983.3222**

**Email: [contact@nadtc.org](mailto:contact@nadtc.org)**

**Web: [www.nadtc.org](http://www.nadtc.org)**

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