



## Accessible Transportation Problem/Solution Summary

### Transportation for Older Californians and Those With Disabilities



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**Problem:** A significant portion of senior and disabled Californians can't get where they need to go, when they need to go, because the State's immense transportation funding and policy apparatus does not address their needs. In stark contrast to the rest of the transportation system, accessible transportation<sup>i</sup> funding, policies, and programs for this population have remained stagnant for decades despite the demographically driven increase in demand for services and the open acknowledgement by the State that improvements need to be made.

- **Demographics:** The aging of society is a well-documented result of the baby boom. This demographic shift is placing increasing demands on a wide range of policy areas, transportation included. The State's 2021 Master Plan for Aging describes the situation: *"California's over-60 population is projected to diversify and grow faster than any other age group. Increasing from 16 percent in 2010 to ¼ of the population by 2030, when there will be 10.8 million older adults in California."*
- **Study and Stagnate:** In the past 19 years there have been six State initiatives that have documented this problem and made recommendations. **No recommendations have ever been implemented.** See "Legacy of Stagnation" below.
- **Inequities:** Every other segment of the transportation system receives increased funding and policy support with consistent implementation. Examples: In 2008 the California Complete Streets Act was passed which bolstered policies and funding to improve facilities for cyclists and pedestrians. In 2017, SB 1 included increased funding for road maintenance, cyclists/pedestrians, conventional transit, boating/park programs, university research, etc., but no dedicated funding for accessible transportation. Further inequities are found in rural areas, especially during disasters, due to limited services and population-based funding formulas resulting in inadequate transportation options which strand and endanger disabled and older Californians. **The "largest and most complex transportation system in the nation" is simply not providing equitable benefits to all Californians.**

*"Current senior-oriented mobility services do not have the capacity to handle the increase in people over 65 years...the massive growth among the aging ...points to a lack of fiscal and organizational readiness...the closure and consolidation of medical facilities while rates of diabetes and obesity are on the rise will place heavy demands on an already deficient system."*

Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan,  
Metropolitan Transportation  
Commission

### Solutions

- **Short Term:** Pass a resolution in the legislature supporting the work of the Disability and Aging Community Living Advisory Committee on accessible transportation and encourage Caltrans, CalSTA, and the California Transportation Commission (CTC) to acknowledge the problem and commit to working with CalHHS to support the development of increased funding and stronger policies respecting the "Nothing About Us Without Us" tenet. Leverage the transportation needs assessment in SB 1121 (2022) to have the CTC, Caltrans, and CalSTA address this issue.
- **Medium Term:** 2023 Legislation strengthening the 1979 Social Service Transportation Act through the statewide designation of county based accessible transportation coordination centers to ensure consistent provision of services. This would be modeled after the area agencies on aging structure. Any improvement in this service area requires a new dedicated formula funding stream. This is a systematic, funded approach that is used successfully in other areas of the transportation system to provide consistent and high-quality transportation infrastructure and programs.

**Legacy of Stagnation:** California has *decades* of unsuccessful initiatives to address the problem, we are stuck in a “study and stagnate” cycle:

- **2003:** California Health and Human Services: Strategic Plan for an Aging California: Comprehensive accessible transportation recommendations. **No implementation.**
- **2004:** Master Plan *on* Aging: Transportation recommendations: **No implementation.**
- **2005:** CA Commission on Aging Transportation Task Team Report: **No implementation.**
- **2007:** CA Commission on Aging Transportation Task Team Report: **No implementation.**
- **2009:** Caltrans: Mobility Action Plan-Assessing Human Service Transportation Coordination. Extensive study on accessible transportation with recommendations. **No implementation.**
- **2017:** *Senate Bill 1 Road Repair and Accountability Act (\$5.2B Annual): No dedicated funding for accessible transportation<sup>ii</sup>*
- **2021:** Master Plan *for* Aging: The Governor’s Stakeholder Advisory Committee drafted a robust, thoughtful set of recommendations based on widely accepted best practices. This input was not included in the final Master Plan for Aging report while recommendations in all other service areas were accepted. **No meaningful transportation recommendations were included.**
- The last success was the **1979** Social Service Transportation Improvement Act which has proven to be ineffective due to the lack of funding and permissive language which this proposal addresses.

### **Barriers**

- Transportation issues related to aging and disability are overshadowed by every other segment of the transportation system. There is no seat at the transportation table for accessible transportation needs.
- This vulnerable population has a limited capacity for self-advocacy, there is no ability to be the “squeaky wheel”.
- Because of this limited ability for self-advocacy, issues around ageism and ableism are often left out of the many long overdue diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives underway.
- Reliance of Caltrans, CalSTA, the CTC and the legislature on the public transit lobby for guidance on accessible transportation. Public transit agencies are the minority provider<sup>iii</sup> of accessible transportation and are consumed with other priorities including commute, school, low-income, greenhouse gas reduction efforts, and ADA paratransit<sup>iv</sup> services. See pullout quote to the right.

*Political individuals and organizations with vested interests in “the status quo” will often view expanded transportation services as a threat to their own power or influence and may, therefore, take steps to derail both personal and organizational capital invested in the coordinated transportation system.*

Transportation Research Board, National Academies of Sciences, on coordinating human service transportation and transit.

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<sup>i</sup> Accessible transportation is a term being used to refer to a broad range of transportation related services provided to persons with disabilities and elderly individuals. For the purposes of this paper, accessible transportation is defined as a range of transportation/transit and supportive services such as city/community programs, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandated public paratransit service, accessible wayfinding and public rights of way, transportation provided by private non-profits, mobility management programs, volunteer-based transportation programs, etc.

<sup>ii</sup> SB1 was not an initiative to improve accessible transportation but used to highlight that, in this grand restructuring and increase of gas taxes, virtually every mode of transportation and related issues were funded but no dedicated funding for accessible transportation.

<sup>iii</sup> American Public Transit Association Fact Book

<sup>iv</sup> ADA paratransit only addresses a small fraction of the needs of this population and due to numerous factors, cannot be scaled up to address the needs of older persons and those with disabilities.