



National Cooperative Highway Research Program 08-183: Resource to Support Volunteer Driver Programs in Rural and Low-Density Areas

Presenter:

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Rural Volunteer Driver Program Workshop

Workshop Purpose / Agenda

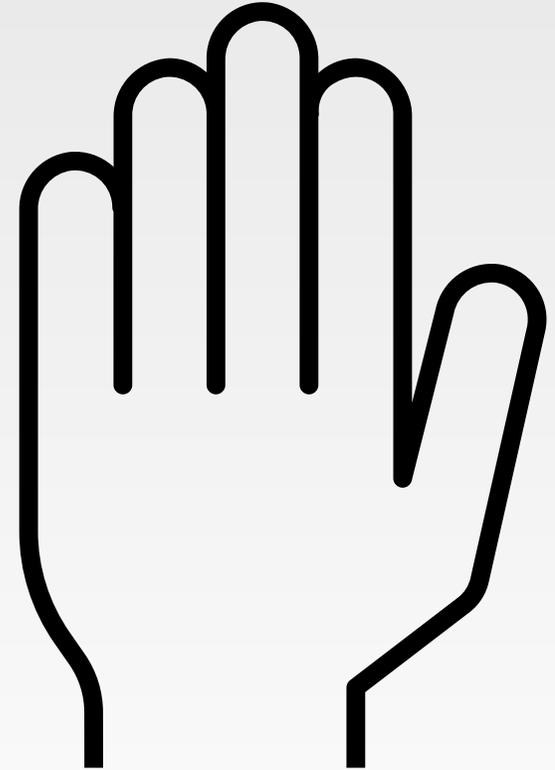
- To present preliminary findings from NCHRP study
 - Literature review/industry scan
 - Responses to National Surveys
 - Responses to Requests for Information

- Learn more from you!



Who is in the Audience?

- Please raise your hand if you are...



Overview of NCHRP Project 08-183

Purpose:

Support Tribes, DOTs & partners in rural/low-density areas to plan, launch, and evaluate Volunteer Driver Programs.

Why It's Needed:

- Fills mobility gaps
- Current guidance is limited
- Agencies need scalable tools

Toolkit Will Include:

- Templates
- Toolkit & calculator
- Case examples



Summary of Findings – Volunteer Driver Program Models

Operational

- Full Service
- Consumer Choice

Organizational

- Tribal
- Nonprofit
- County government

**** Which one may work better for your tribe?***



Summary of Findings - Attributes

- Address for whom, where, when and how.
- Administration
 - Technology
- Funding
- Vehicle ownership

****What would work best for our tribe?***



Summary of Findings – Risk Management & Liability

- Insurance
- Volunteer protection
- Background checks and drug testing
- Training & policies as risk mitigation

****What challenges with risk management & liability do you see for your tribe?***



Other Findings

- Driver recruitment & retention
- Funding approaches
- Regulatory & compliance
- Planning & Implementation

**** Do you see a topic that may be or is challenging for your tribe?***



Overview

- VDPs generally serve older adults and people with disabilities
- Insurance and liability regulation ambiguity
- Guidance for integrating VDPs into transit systems
- Comprehensive guidance on planning, development and evaluation of VDPs.
- Technology use by VDPs
- Volunteer recruitment messaging & incentives
- Standard data collection and performance measures
- National organization for support, peer learning and resources.

Stakeholder Engagement Activities

What We Did / Will Do

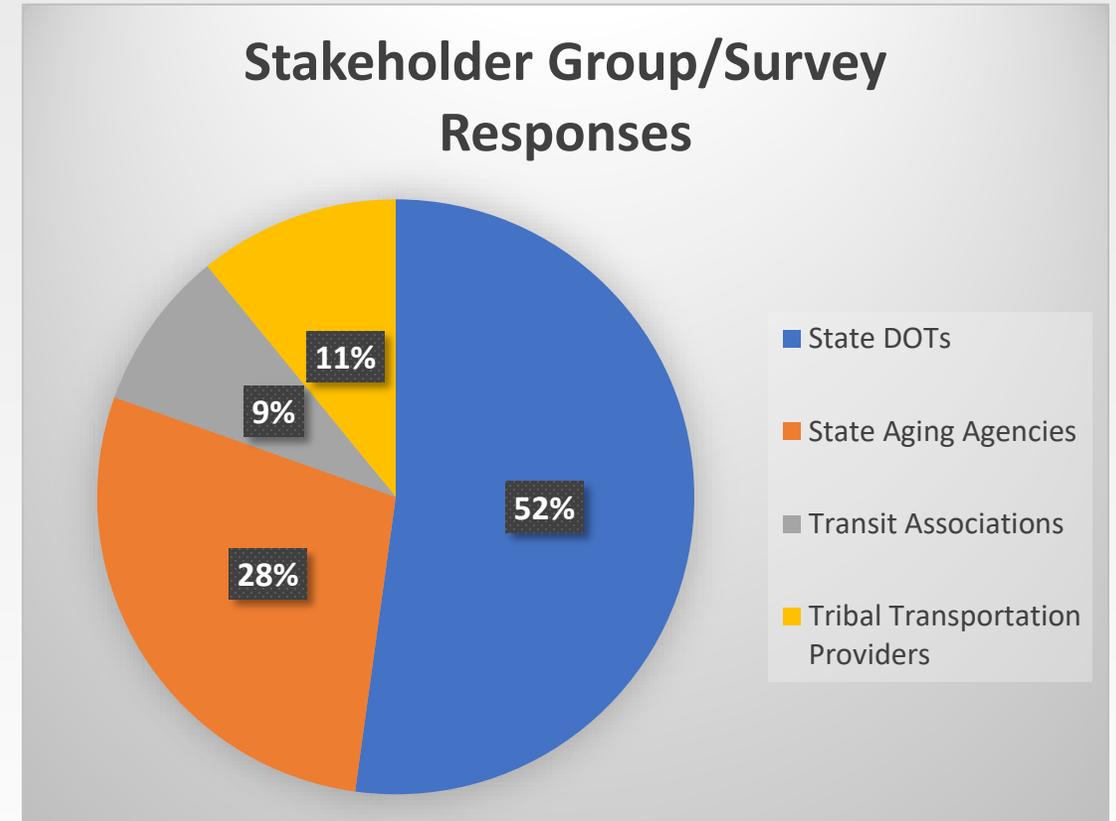
Multi-Pronged Engagement Approach:

- **Stakeholder Surveys**
DOTs, Tribal Providers, Aging Agencies, Transit Associations
- **Request for Information (RFI)**
Targeting active VDP providers nationwide
- **Interviews & Case Studies**
With program leaders and experts for broad input



Stakeholder Engagement Activities - Respondents

- Who responded to the Survey?
 - Four separate surveys were conducted to engage different stakeholder groups involved with or supporting VDPs.
 - State DOTs (24 responses)
 - State Units on Aging (13 responses)
 - Tribal transportation providers (5 responses)
 - Transit associations (4 responses)





Title VI Native American Aging Programs

- Funded by the Older Americans Act
- Pays for meals, transportation, in-home services, family caregiver supports to help elders continue to live in their homes and communities.
- Web-based survey conducted every 3 years, August – Nov. 2023
- 80% of programs – 233 responding (of 290 tribal aging units)

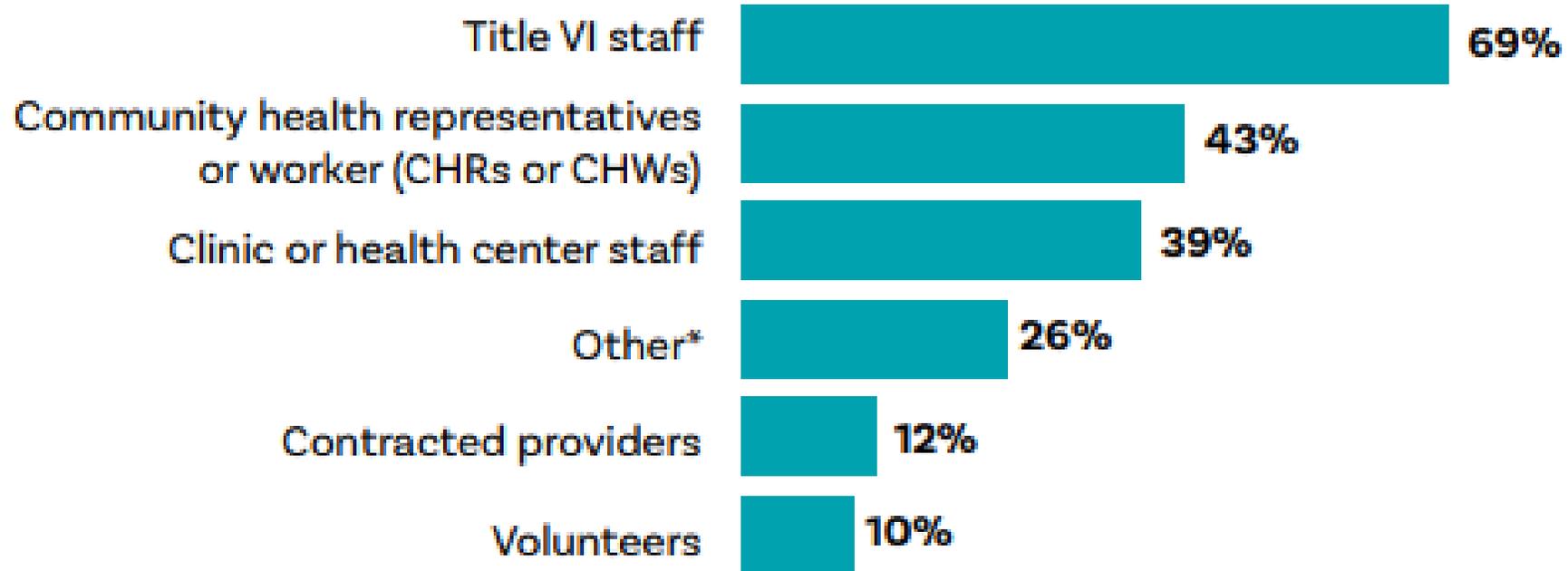


Title VI Native American Aging Survey

- Transportation services help elders stay connected to the community and maintain their health.
- 89 percent—report that transportation is available to elders through the Title VI program and/or the tribe.
- Average distance of a one-way trip is 35 miles, ranging from half a mile to 150 miles.
- Transportation services are most commonly provided for the following activities:
 - 82% Social or cultural events
 - 75% Medical appointments
 - 72% Meal sites
 - 72% Shopping or other errands
 - 68% Vaccination clinics or appointments

Volunteers as Transportation Providers

Figure 1.8: Providers of Transportation Services for Elders
(n=204)



**Other includes city transit, tribal transportation buses, elder service employees and tribal staff*

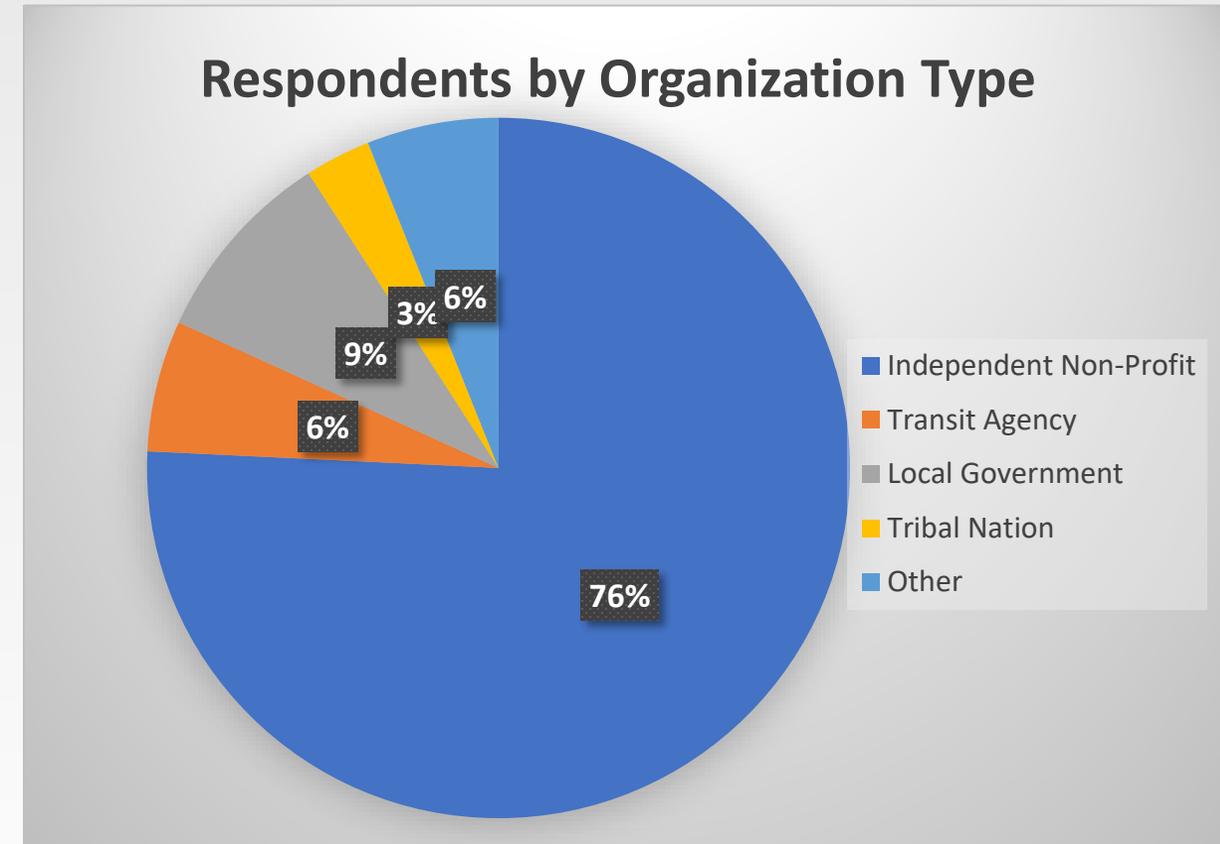
Title VI Native American Aging Survey

Table 1.7: Sources of Transportation Funding

Funding Source	Percent (n=205)
Tribal funds	63
Title VI	61
State	18
Other*	12
Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5311 formula funds for tribal transit	8
Don't know	6
Fares	4

Stakeholder Engagement Activities - RFI

- Who responded to the RFI (Request for Information)?
 - 35 responses received from VDPs across the U.S.
 - 76% were independent non-profits
 - 3% were Tribal Nations
 - the rest included transit agencies, local governments,



Results from Tribal Responses

- Each department does volunteer rides as needed
- Half had a tribal transit plan or equivalent includes VDPs
- Tribes generally do not have training or policies for VDPs operating
- There are not enough drivers – paid or volunteer
- Time and scheduling are challenges



Quote from survey



“Elders need more transports around town to take care of their personal business and there are more medical transports after colder weather and high winds due to cold & flu, allergies/sinus infections. As well as when new immunizations are available.”

Stakeholder Engagement Activities - Input

Stakeholders shared input on:

- Current involvement in VDPs
- Key barriers to success
- Types of guidance and tools needed

Common challenges identified across sectors:

- Volunteer recruitment difficulties
- Liability and insurance concerns
- Limited cross-sector coordination
- Tribal providers highlighted the importance of culturally relevant solutions and challenges related to rural geography.
- State DOTs and aging agencies emphasized a need for standardized methods to track and evaluate program performance.



Stakeholder Engagement Activities

Overall “limitations”: *What we learned thus far?*

Limited Capacity

Agencies support VDPs but often lack staff or funding to grow them.

Volunteer Recruitment

The top challenge—groups struggle to find and keep drivers.

Tribal Support Needs –

Cultural relevance and geography require tailored approaches.

No Standard Metrics

Need for consistent ways to measure performance and impact.

Insurance Uncertainty

Policies around volunteer coverage are often unclear.

Coordination Gaps

Aging, health, and transit services often operate in silos.

High Demand for Tools

Stakeholders want templates, case studies, and planning guides



Stakeholder Engagement Activities

What's next?

1. Develop Toolkit Components

Create templates, checklists, performance metrics, and risk management resources.

2. Pilot the Toolkit with Practitioner Feedback

Distribute to selected agencies, gather user input, and refine the tools based on feedback.

3. Submit Final Toolkit to NCHRP

Package the final toolkit and share it with Tribes, DOTs, transit agencies, and community partners.

4. Completion – late 2026



What are Your Needs

What are your top needs for transportation that VDPs may be able to solve?



Challenges

What are the top challenges you experience or expect when operating a VDP?

Plan Your Own VDP

How could a VDP work in your Tribe?

Who are the decision makers that need to be convinced?

Where would it be located?

Who would operate it?

How might it be funded?



How can a Toolkit Help?

Guidance for Tribal Leadership
Guidance for Funding Agencies



Wrap - Up

- Questions
- Additional Comments

- Contact us:
- Carrie Diamond – cdiamond@easterseals.com
- Kelly Blume – K-blume@tti.tamu.edu
 - Principal Investigator

FTA Section 5310 Purpose

- Improve mobility of older adults and people with disabilities
- Remove barriers and expanding transportation mobility options
- Transportation services must be planned, designed, and carried out to meet the special needs of older adults and people with disabilities in all areas
- Requires coordination with other federally assisted programs and services

**information sourced from FTA Circular Guidance webinar*

Eligible Direct Recipients

- States
- Designated Recipients
- Tribes, state or local government authorities that operate public transit services

* Apply for funds directly through TrAMS

Eligible Subrecipients

- Private nonprofit organization
- State or local governmental authority
- Tribal governments
- Operator of public transportation
- Selection process must be in the state (SMP) or program management plan (PMP).

Allocation of Apportionment

- The amount of traditional projects shall not be less than 55 percent of funds apportioned.
 - Capital projects
- The amount of non-traditional projects cannot exceed 45 percent of funds apportioned.
 - Capital and operating projects

Eligible Traditional Capital Projects

- Vehicle Purchases (Accessible Buses and Vans)
- Wheelchair lifts, Ramps, Securement devices
- Mobility management
- Software
- Acquisition of services

Eligible Activities – Non-Traditional

- Travel training
- Volunteer driver programs
- Building accessible features
- Providing same day or door-to-door service

Match

- The Federal share of eligible capital assistance may not exceed 80%.
- The Federal share of eligible operating assistance may not exceed 50%

Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan

- Section 5310 projects must be included in the locally developed coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan.
- Plans must be developed and approved through a process that included participation by:
 - Older adults
 - People with disabilities
 - Representatives of public, private, and nonprofit transportation and human services providers
 - Other members of the public

FTA Materials

- [FTA 2024 5310 Circular Update Presentations](#)
- [FTA C9070.1H](#)
- [FTA Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities – Section 5310](#)
- [49 U.S. Code §5310 – Formula grants for enhanced mobility of seniors and individuals with disabilities.](#)
- [Coordination Council on Access and Mobility \(CCAM\)](#)
- [CCAM Program Inventory](#)
- [FHWA Flexible Funding Process Guidebook](#)

NADTC Resources – www.nadtc.org

- [NADTC Section 5310 Resource Hub](#)
- [FTA Section 5310 Profiles](#)
- [Coordination Committee Toolkit](#)
- [Community Engagement Toolkit: Essentials for Planning and Facilitating Meaningful Conversations](#)
- [NADTC Webinars on Coordination](#)
- [Section 5310 Funding Checklist](#)