



Texas Transportation Institute  
The Texas A&M University System  
701 North Post Oak, Suite 430  
Houston, TX 77024-3827

409-740-4734  
Fax: 409-740-4778  
<http://tti.tamu.edu>

**Effect of Defining the Capital Metro Service Area  
for Complementary Paratransit  
to Comply with ADA Requirements**

Prepared for

Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO)

And

Capital Area Regional Transit Coordination Committee (RTCC)

**DRAFT**

Prepared by

Texas Transportation Institute

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Linda Cherrington  
409-740-4762 or 713-882-2085  
[L-Cherrington@tamu.edu](mailto:L-Cherrington@tamu.edu)



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## **Effect of Defining the Capital Metro Service Area for Complementary Paratransit to Comply with ADA Requirements**

The purpose of this briefing paper is to document the effect of the Capital Metro policy to define the service area for complementary paratransit to comply with the minimum requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). [1] The briefing paper is organized into five sections. The first section documents the specific requirements for ADA complementary paratransit service as required by federal regulation. Section two provides background on the Capital Metro policy for ADA paratransit and summarizes the impact of the change to define the service area for ADA complementary paratransit to comply with the minimum requirements of the federal regulation. The third section identifies alternate strategies to provide public transportation service to areas outside the ADA defined service area. Peer transit agency examples are included in section four, and section five provides a discussion of the application of New Freedom program funding.

### **1. Requirements for ADA Complementary Paratransit**

The ADA provides a comprehensive framework and approach for ending discrimination against persons with disabilities in a wide range of endeavors. The stated national goals of the ADA are to assure that persons with disabilities have equality of opportunity, a chance to fully participate in society, are able to live independently, and can be economically self-sufficient. The ADA contains requirements related to employment, communications, building access, transportation services, and prohibits state and local governments from discriminating against disabled persons in their programs and activities.

The ADA specifically addresses transportation provided by public entities. In general, the law prohibits public entities from denying individuals with disabilities the opportunity to use public transportation services, if the individuals are capable of using the system. The U.S. Department of Transportation issued regulations (49 CFR Parts 28, 37, and 38) to implement the transportation provisions of the ADA effective January 1992. [2] The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) along with the Department of Justice is responsible for enforcing the regulations as pertains to public transportation. The regulations require every public transportation agency to provide nondiscriminatory accessible transportation service.

According to regulations to implement ADA, all vehicles used in fixed route bus service must be accessible. The definition of “accessible” includes requirements for wheelchair access (by lift or accessible ramp) and wheelchair tie-down locations in every bus used in fixed route service. Local jurisdictions covered by the ADA must ensure that the facilities they build or alter such as bus stops and shelters are accessible to people with disabilities. The ADA also requires that fixed route operators announce stops at transfer points, major intersections, major destinations, and bus stops requested by passengers with disabilities. With accessibility, many persons with disabilities are able to use the fixed route system.

Since 1990, the nation’s transit fleets have become nearly 100 percent accessible. The Capital Metro fixed route transit fleet was fully accessible by 1993. [3] Persons with disabilities use Capital Metro fixed route transit services. According to data provided by Capital Metro, a total of 26,977,959 passenger trips were made on fixed route in 2007. Of all fixed route passenger trips, 98,333 passengers used wheelchairs to board the bus, representing 0.4% of total passenger trips. An additional 2,252,945 passengers with disabilities (but not using a wheelchair) boarded a fixed route bus, representing 8.4% of total passenger trips. [4]

However, there are still persons who can not ride a fixed route system because of their disabilities, despite the availability of accessible vehicles. For example, a person with limited cognitive ability might be able to board a bus but is unable to know where to exit; a person with a physical disability may not be capable of traversing the terrain between home and the nearest bus stop; and a person who is blind may not have the mobility skills to navigate the transit system. To ensure accessible transportation service, a transit system that operates fixed route service (bus or rail) is also required to offer ADA complementary paratransit for persons who cannot use fixed route due to their disabilities. A transit agency may require persons to make application and provide verification of eligibility for ADA complementary paratransit service.<sup>1</sup>

Transit agencies must provide complementary paratransit to meet ADA regulations. The regulations include very specific requirements to ensure that the paratransit service is complementary to fixed route service. Among the requirements for ADA complementary paratransit are the following:

- A public transportation agency must provide ADA complementary paratransit in the same service area as the fixed route system – that is, within  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile on either side of a fixed bus route, within  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile of the stop at the ends of each fixed bus route, or within  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile of a rail station.<sup>2</sup>
- A public transportation agency must provide ADA complementary paratransit throughout the same hours and days as the fixed route service. If a person can travel to a given destination using a given fixed route at a given time of day, an ADA paratransit eligible person must be able to travel to that same destination on paratransit at the same time of day.
- A public transportation agency must not show a pattern of denial of trip requests for ADA complementary paratransit service from ADA paratransit eligible persons. The transit agency cannot impose restrictions on trip purpose or establish priorities based on trip purpose. These requirements are often referred to as “zero trip denial.”
- A transit agency must provide complementary paratransit service for ADA paratransit eligible persons who reserve trips at least 24 hours in advance and may permit reservations up to 14 days in advance.
- The fare charged for an ADA complementary paratransit trip cannot be more than twice the fare that would be charged to an individual paying full fare for a trip of similar length at a similar time of day on a fixed route.

ADA complementary paratransit services have expanded in order to comply with the requirement for zero trip denials for an increasing number of ADA paratransit eligible persons. As demand for ADA complementary paratransit service increases, public transportation agencies, including Capital Metro, are struggling to manage costs while fully complying with the ADA regulations and requirements.

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<sup>1</sup> “ADA paratransit eligible” refers to a person who has met all requirements to verify eligibility for ADA complementary paratransit service.

<sup>2</sup> ADA complementary paratransit is not required within  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile of commuter bus routes; however, transit vehicles used for commuter bus routes must be accessible. Commuter bus service means fixed route bus service characterized by service predominantly in one direction during peak periods, limited stops, use of multi-ride tickets, and routes of extended length, usually between the central business district and outlying suburbs. Commuter bus service may also include other service characterized by a limited route structure and limited stops and coordinated with other transit modes.

ADA complementary paratransit service is provided at a significantly higher cost per passenger trip than fixed route. According to data reported to the National Transit Database (NTD), Capital Metro demand response (paratransit) services represented 19% of total operating expenses but just 1.98% of total passenger trips in 2007. The cost for fixed route bus service was \$3.25 per passenger trip, and the cost for paratransit was \$38.10 per passenger trip, almost 10 times more than fixed route per passenger trip. [5]

## 2. Capital Metro and ADA Complementary Paratransit

Historically, Capital Metro has referred to its ADA complementary paratransit service as Special Transit Services (STS). The City of Austin originally initiated the STS program in July 1976, and Capital Metro incorporated STS into the services of the regional transit authority when the agency was created in 1985. Capital Metro is re-branding the service to be called MetroAccess. In the following discussion, STS will refer to paratransit services prior to 2007, and MetroAccess will refer to Capital Metro's current ADA complementary paratransit service.

In addition to FTA regulations for ADA complementary paratransit, Capital Metro is also subject to a Texas statutory requirement. In 1995, the 74<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature approved, and the governor signed, a bill that specifically required Capital Metro to continue to provide transportation services for persons with disabilities in any "unit of election" that voted to withdraw from the authority. This legislation applies to the cities of Cedar Park, Pflugerville, Rollingwood, and West Lake Hills. [6] Voters in each of these cities originally approved creation of Capital Metro in 1985 but subsequently voted to withdraw from the authority.

In the 1995 legislation, the local municipality was required to fund 50% of the cost of the service (less fare revenues) from local sales tax receipts. [7] Capital Metro was required to fund the remaining 50% from the general resources of the agency since it was no longer collecting sales tax from the withdrawn cities. The legislative requirement was changed in 2007, and now the local entity is responsible for the full amount of the difference between the cost of providing transportation services to persons with disabilities and the fares collected.<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 1** is excerpted from the *Capital Metro STS Policies and Procedures Guide, Revised October 2002*. STS was available throughout the entire Capital Metro service area, including the cities that had withdrawn from the transit authority service area. [8]

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<sup>3</sup> In 2006, STS provided about 4,900 annual trips for ADA paratransit eligible residents of the cities that had withdrawn from the authority. These trips were 3,561 for residents of Pflugerville, 912 for Cedar Park, and 441 trips for West Lake Hills. The count for Rollingwood is not available. The trips for these cities represented less than 1% of the total 567,845 STS trips in 2006.

The number of trips provided for ADA paratransit eligible residents the cities that withdrew from the transit authority has not changed significantly, according to Capital Metro in September 2008. The reason is because these trips are provided for ADA paratransit eligible persons who scheduled subscription service (pre-scheduled regular paratransit trips) prior to the change in policy. The subscription service for these ADA paratransit eligible individuals in Pflugerville, Cedar Park, and West Lake Hills was grandfathered by Capital Metro. [3]

<b>Service Area</b>			
STS transportation services are provided to any location within the Capital Metro service area, including:			
Austin	Lago Vista	Pflugerville*	Rollingwood*
Cedar Park*	Leander	San Leanna	West Lake Hills*
Jonestown	Manor	Sunset Valley	
Unincorporated areas of Travis County			
*The STS passenger must be a resident to be eligible for service in this area.			

Source: *Capital Metro STS Policies and Procedures Guide (Revised October 2002), page 13*

### Figure 1. Service Area for Capital Metro STS

The policy to provide STS throughout the Capital Metro service area was a local decision and went beyond requirements of the regulations for ADA. The FTA regulations for ADA complementary paratransit establish minimum requirements. If a transit agency provides paratransit in areas that are beyond the minimum requirements for ADA complementary paratransit, then the other ADA requirements are also relieved. For example, that portion of paratransit service that goes beyond the ADA required service area may be subject to capacity limitations. Some transit agencies refer to this practice as a “tiered” approach. The first tier is ADA complementary paratransit meeting all minimum requirements of the regulations for ADA, and the second tier of service is paratransit for ADA paratransit eligible persons subject to local operating rules but not subject to the regulations for ADA.

As early as 2001, Capital Metro began granting priority to ADA paratransit eligible persons requesting ADA complementary paratransit service within ¾ mile of non-commuter routes. Requests for service outside the ADA service area were accommodated if the STS system had available capacity after meeting zero trip denial obligations for trips within the ADA service area. By 2004, the paratransit system capacity was almost fully absorbed by trips in the ADA service area. Very few trips could be provided to ADA paratransit eligible persons located outside the ADA required ¾ mile service area. [3]

In 2004, Capital Metro formally constrained first tier ADA complementary paratransit service to those areas within ¾ mile of non-commuter fixed routes consistent with minimum requirements of the ADA in order to comply with FTA regulations for zero trip denial. [3] Capital Metro announced a revised policy, reflected in **Figure 2**, to permit access for ADA paratransit eligible persons who live beyond the ADA service area if the individual comes into the ADA service area for the origin (and destination) of the trip. Any trip request within the ¾ mile service area must meet all other ADA complementary paratransit service requirements. This policy reflects a second tier of service for persons who live within the Capital Metro jurisdiction but beyond the first tier service area. A third tier of service is available for ADA paratransit eligible passengers who live in the cities that withdrew from Capital Metro if the individual comes into the ADA service area for the origin (and destination) of the trip. A fourth tier of service is available for trips for ADA paratransit eligible persons that originate outside the ADA complementary paratransit service area if schedule capacity is available.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> In September 2008, Capital Metro staff reported the ability to serve fourth tier trips was limited to less than 10 trips per month. ADA paratransit eligible passengers who made requests for trips from outside the ADA service area were counseled on how to find alternate locations within the ADA area.

**Figure 2** is excerpted from the cover page of the *Capital Metro STS Policies and Procedures Guide, Revised October 2002* as posted on the Capital Metro website. The amended policy on the cover page was added in 2007 and should not be confused with the title of the document (*Revised October 2002*).

Please be advised the following items have been amended in the current policy and are different than what is printed in the enclosed manual:

- Service Hours and Service Area are comparable to Fixed Route Service
- If you reside in the following areas you will be allowed to register but must come into the ADA Service Area for pick-up: Cedar Park, Pflugerville, Leander, Jonestown, Manor, San Leanna, Sunset Valley, Rollingwood and West Lake Hills

Source: *Capital Metro STS Policies and Procedures Guide (Revised October 2002), cover page*

### **Figure 2. Service Area for Capital Metro STS**

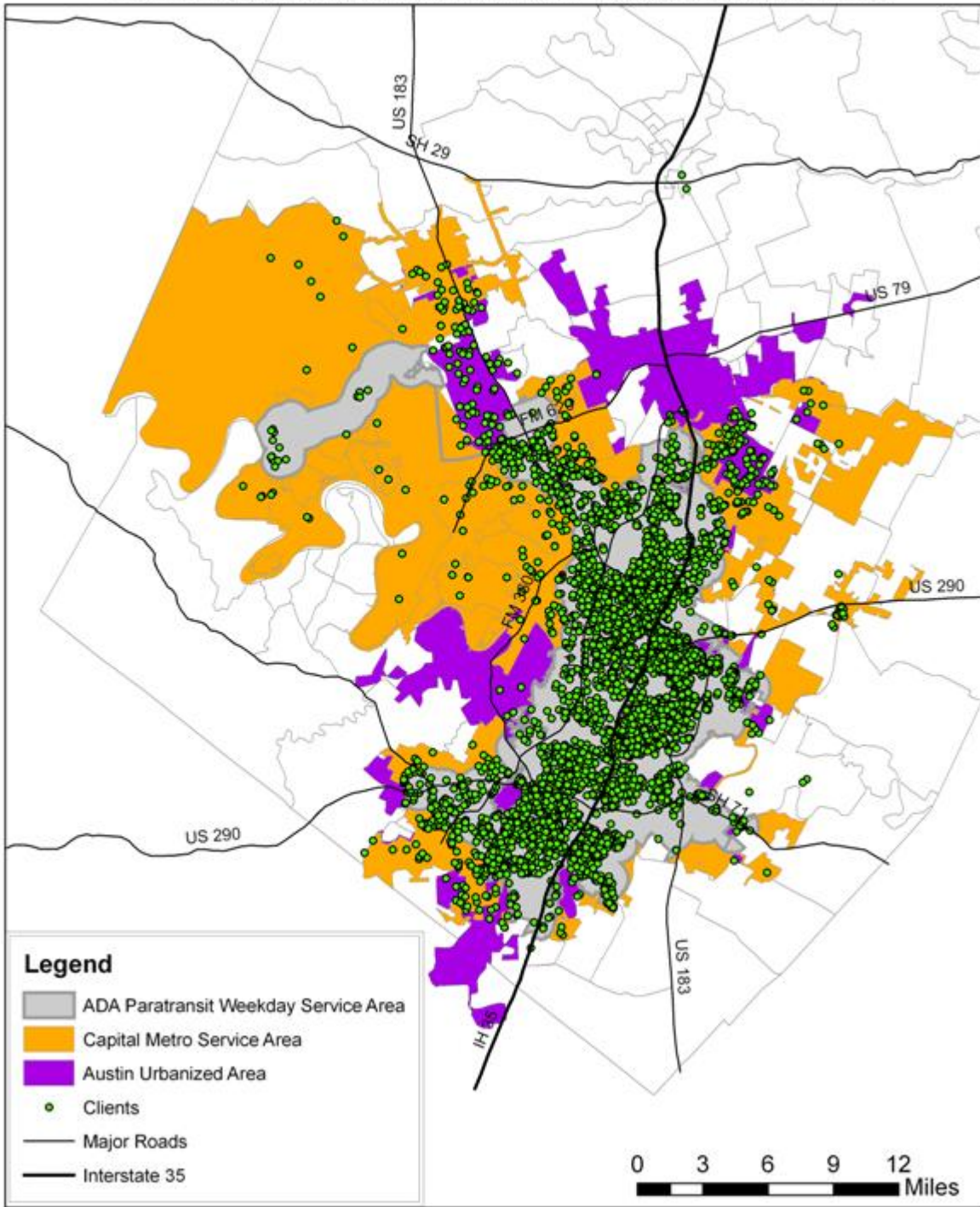
Demand for ADA paratransit service was constrained by the change in policy for two years; however demand has increased since 2007, as shown in **Table 1**.

**Table 1**  
**Demand for Capital Metro ADA Paratransit Service**  
**STS/MetroAccess**

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Passenger Trips</b>	<b>Percent Change</b>
2004	614,285	
2005	603,134	-1.8%
2006	576,052	-4.5%
2007	668,612	16.1%
2008	708,536	6.0%

Source: *Capital Metro*

**Figure 3** illustrates the Capital Metro service area and the ADA complementary paratransit service area for MetroAccess. The area in gray is the ADA service area with  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile of weekday bus routes; the area in orange is the Capital Metro transit authority jurisdiction beyond the ADA service area; and the purple is the Austin urbanized area beyond the Capital Metro jurisdiction (includes the cities of Cedar Park, Pflugerville, Rollingwood and West Lake Hills among others). The green dots on the map show the location of ADA paratransit eligible persons as of April 2007.



Source: U.S. Census, Capital Metro and TTI presentation

**Figure 3. Service Areas for Capital Metro and ADA Complementary Paratransit (Weekday) with Location of ADA Paratransit Eligible Passengers**

To estimate the number of persons who may be eligible for ADA paratransit and who live in the Capital Metro service area but are located outside the ADA complementary paratransit service area, TTI first estimated the population of persons with disabilities in the area that does have access to MetroAccess service. ADA paratransit eligible persons who live inside the ¾ mile ADA paratransit service area receive first tier access to MetroAccess. ADA paratransit eligible persons in the cities that are in the Capital Metro service area but outside the ADA paratransit service area (Leander, Manor, Jonestown, San Leanna, Sunset Valley<sup>5</sup>) receive second tier access, and ADA eligible persons in the cities that withdrew from the Capital Metro service area (Pflugerville, Cedar Park, Rollingwood, and West Lake Hills) receive third tier access. **Table 2** shows the Census 2000 population, the Census reported percent of population that are persons with disabilities,<sup>6</sup> and the equivalent number of persons with disabilities for each area that does have MetroAccess services. The total number of persons with disabilities with access to MetroAccess is 96,350.<sup>7</sup> Of this total, 10,000 or 10.38% are ADA paratransit eligible as of 2009. [3]

**Table 2**  
**2000 Population and Population of Persons with Disabilities**  
**in Areas Eligible for MetroAccess Service**

Tier	Area	2000 Population	Persons with Disabilities	% Persons with Disabilities
First Tier Capital Metro	ADA within 3/4 mile fixed route service area	610,897	89,802	14.70%
Second Tier Capital Metro	Cities of Leander, Manor, Jonestown, San Leanna, Sunset Valley	11,230	1,875	16.70%
Third Tier Withdrawn from Capital Metro	Cities of Cedar Park, Pflugerville, Rollingwood and West Lake Hills	46,903	4,673	9.96%
	Total in ADA Service Areas Tiers 1, 2, 3	669,030	96,350	14.40%
	ADA Paratransit Eligible Passengers		10,000	
	Percent ADA Paratransit Eligible Passengers		10.38%	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; Capital Metro as of April 14, 2009; calculations by TTI

**Table 3** shows the calculations to determine the population in the Capital Metro service area that does not have access to MetroAccess. The table shows the Census 2000 population and the number of persons with disabilities in the Capital Metro service area and then subtracts the same data for the areas with first tier, second tier, and third tier eligibility for MetroAccess. The total number of persons with disabilities in the Capital Metro service area that do not have access to MetroAccess is 10,747.

<sup>5</sup> Sunset Valley is not a part of the Capital Metro Transportation Authority; however, the city is an enclave of the service area.

<sup>6</sup> The Census-reported count of persons with disabilities is based on self-declared status and is typically higher than number of persons who have disabilities according to the ADA paratransit definition of a disability.

<sup>7</sup> The data in these tables are updated and may be different than similar data presented by TTI in a study about ADA complementary paratransit for Capital Metro in 2007.

**Table 3  
Population in Capital Metro Service Area  
Currently Not Eligible for MetroAccess Service**

Tier	Area	2000 Population	Persons with Disabilities	% Persons with Disabilities
	Capital Metro Area	744,852	102,424	13.75%
First Tier	Less: ADA within 3/4 mile fixed route (Tier 1)	(610,897)	(89,802)	14.70%
	Capital Metro Outside ADA Tier 1	133,955	12,622	9.42%
Second Tier	Less: Cities of Leander, Manor, Jonestown, San Leanna, Sunset Valley (Tier 2)	(11,230)	(1,875)	16.70%
	Capital Metro Outside ADA Tiers 1 and 2	122,725	10,747	8.76%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, calculations by TTI

**Table 4** shows the calculations to determine the population in the Austin Urbanized Area outside the Capital Metro service area that does not currently have access to MetroAccess. The table shows the Census 2000 population and the number of persons with disabilities in the Austin Urbanized Area and then subtracts the same data for the areas with third tier eligibility for MetroAccess. The total number of persons with disabilities in the Austin Urbanized Area beyond the Capital Metro service area that do not currently have access to MetroAccess is 10,824.

**Table 4  
Population in Urbanized Area Outside Capital Metro Service Area  
Currently Not Eligible for MetroAccess Service**

Tier	Area	2000 Population	Persons with Disabilities	% Persons with Disabilities
	Urbanized Area beyond Capital Metro Area	148,692	15,497	10.42%
Third Tier	Cities of Cedar Park, Pflugerville, Rollingwood and West Lake Hills	(46,903)	(4,673)	9.96%
No ADA	Urbanized Area beyond Capital Metro Not in ADA Tier 3	101,789	10,824	10.63%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, calculations by TTI

Based upon the data shown in **Table 3** and **Table 4**, the total number of persons with disabilities that do not have access to MetroAccess is 21,571 based upon Census 2000 data. If the same percent of the persons with disabilities in these areas qualify as ADA paratransit eligible passengers as in the existing MetroAccess service areas, 10.38% will qualify (see **Table 2** for calculation). As shown in **Table 5**, the estimated persons in the areas not currently included in the MetroAccess service area that might be expected to qualify as ADA paratransit eligible is 2,239 additional persons.

**Table 5**  
**Estimated Persons in Areas Not Served Who May Qualify as ADA Paratransit Eligible**

<b>Area</b>	<b>2000 Population</b>	<b>Persons with Disabilities</b>	<b>% Persons with Disabilities</b>
Capital Metro Outside ADA Tiers 1 and 2	122,725	10,747	8.76%
Urbanized Area beyond Capital Metro Not in ADA Tier 3	101,789	10,824	10.63%
Estimated Persons in Areas Not Served	224,514	21,571	9.61%
Percent ADA Paratransit Eligible		10.38%	
Estimated Persons in Areas Not Served that May Qualify to be ADA Paratransit Eligible		2,239	

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Capital Metro, calculations by TTI*

These estimates are based on Census 2000 population and are not adjusted for population growth. **Table 6** documents population growth in the Capital Metro service area and in the surrounding areas in Travis, Williamson and Hays Counties. The 2000 population in the Capital Metro service area is expected to increase 22% by the next decennial census in 2010. The area in the non-Capital Metro area is expected to increase 58% from 2000 to 2010. The number of persons that might be expected to qualify as ADA paratransit eligible is estimated to increase at least by comparable percents. Because of the aging of the population, the number of persons with disabilities may increase at a higher percent.

**Table 6**  
**Population Growth in the Capital Metro Service Area\*  
and the Three-County CAMPO Planning Area**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Total</b>			
	<b>Population 2000</b>	<b>Population 2005</b>	<b>Population 2010</b>	<b>Percent Change 2000 to 2010</b>
<b>Travis</b>	817,495	896,753	993,892	22%
Capital Metro	716,341	767,828	841,951	18%
Non-Capital Metro	101,154	128,925	151,941	50%
<b>Williamson</b>	244,137	330,740	407,502	67%
Capital Metro	40,365	64,504	78,089	93%
Non-Capital Metro	203,772	266,236	329,413	62%
<b>Hays</b>	97,007	126,206	152,180	57%
Capital Metro	89	305	318	257%
Non-Capital Metro	96,918	125,901	151,862	57%
<b>Grand Total (3-County)</b>	<b>1,158,639</b>	<b>1,353,699</b>	<b>1,553,574</b>	<b>34%</b>
<b>Total Population</b>				
<b>Capital Metro Total</b>	<b>756,795</b>	<b>832,637</b>	<b>920,358</b>	<b>22%</b>
<b>Non-Capital Metro Total</b>	<b>401,844</b>	<b>521,062</b>	<b>633,216</b>	<b>58%</b>
<b>Grand Total (3-County)</b>	<b>1,158,639</b>	<b>1,353,699</b>	<b>1,553,574</b>	<b>34%</b>

*Source: CAMPO, data analysis by TTI; population summaries are based on TAZ level data*

### 3. Strategies for Paratransit Outside the ADA Service Area

The purpose of this section is to identify alternate strategies to provide paratransit service to areas outside the ADA defined minimum service area. The challenge is to match resources and the demand for ADA paratransit. Generally, ADA complementary paratransit service is provided at a higher cost per passenger trip than fixed route. As demand for ADA complementary paratransit service increases, transit entities are struggling to manage total costs while fully complying with the ADA regulations and requirements. Additional resources for paratransit outside the ADA service area may be available through the FTA New Freedoms Program, discussed in Section 5 of this briefing paper. In this section, the strategies for paratransit outside the ADA service area include ways to provide more trips using the resources already committed to ADA complementary paratransit (increase productivity), different service delivery methods to increase capacity, and models for providing paratransit service by agencies other than public transportation agencies with the goal of reducing total resources required.

#### ***Tiered Paratransit Services***

The use of tiered paratransit services are designed to increase ADA paratransit capacity to make it possible to serve more paratransit trips with the same resources. Capital Metro is providing tiered paratransit service to provide public transportation for ADA paratransit eligible persons who live outside of the ADA defined service area.

The first tier for paratransit service must comply with all federal regulations for ADA complementary paratransit. Additional tiers can be defined by local policy.

- First Tier – Provide MetroAccess ADA complementary paratransit within ¾ mile on either side of a non-commuter fixed bus route, within ¾ mile of the stop at the ends of each fixed bus route, or within ¾ mile of a rail station. A public transportation agency must not show a pattern of denial of trip requests for ADA complementary paratransit service from ADA paratransit eligible persons. The transit agency cannot impose restrictions on trip purpose or establish priorities based on trip purpose. These requirements are often referred to as “zero trip denial.”
- Second Tier – Provide the option for ADA paratransit eligible persons who live in cities within the Capital Metro service area to come into the MetroAccess service area for ADA complementary paratransit service. When the ADA paratransit eligible passenger comes into the MetroAccess service area, the service is first tier.
- Third Tier – Provide the option for ADA paratransit eligible persons who live in one of the cities that withdrew from Capital Metro to come into the MetroAccess service area for ADA complementary paratransit service. When the ADA paratransit eligible passenger comes into the MetroAccess service area, the service is first tier.
- Fourth Tier – Provide paratransit service for ADA paratransit eligible persons outside the ADA service area on a space-available basis.

Capital Metro counsels ADA paratransit eligible passengers who make requests for trips from outside the ADA service area on how to find alternate locations within the ADA area.

Capital Metro has adopted the scheduling practice of providing trips outside the ADA service area only if there is capacity for the trip. This practice may improve MetroAccess productivity without risk of reducing service quality if the trip fills an open time slot, and also provides some service to additional persons. There is a risk that the practice may increase miles per passenger trip.

### ***Feeder Service***

Feeder service is mentioned in the ADA regulations as a way of providing paratransit service to persons with disabilities. Passengers are transported on paratransit to bus or rail stops and then travel on fixed route for the remainder of the trip. This type of service ensures ADA complementary paratransit access from origin to the closest and most convenient point of transfer to a fixed route bus or rail, rather than origin to destination service. Because trips are generally shorter, the practice can improve MetroAccess productivity and therefore generate more paratransit capacity. If the capacity is not fully absorbed by other ADA complementary paratransit first tier trips, then it is possible to operate more paratransit service for ADA paratransit eligible passengers outside the ADA service area.

### ***Service Routes***

Service routes are designed to operate from areas where there are concentrations of seniors and persons with disabilities to activity centers where services and essential shopping are available. Service routes are often flexible, meaning the route can deviate for the convenience of the passengers. The purpose of a service route is to provide fixed or flexible route transit access to meet the particular needs of a target population at a lower cost than if the same service is provided using paratransit. Service routes operate on a regular schedule but not necessarily daily. Capital Metro currently operates two service routes within the fixed route service area (151 Allendale and 161 Delwood). This same concept could be applied in areas outside the fixed route service area where there are concentrations of seniors and persons with disabilities who do not have access to ADA complementary paratransit under current policy.

### ***Cooperative Models***

Cooperative models are specialized, agency-focused transportation programs which work together to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and scope of their services. One goal of cooperative models is to provide paratransit services at a lower cost than traditional transit; however, resources are still required and may come from sources of funds for public transportation. The public transportation agency may be one of the participating agencies in a cooperative model. Examples of cooperative models are coordinated services, brokerages, and consolidated services.

Coordinated services generally refer to local human service agencies that own and operate vehicles and agree to work together to develop local plans, make pooled purchase agreements, or share some passenger trips. In a brokerage, one agency acts to facilitate the shared resources of two or more additional agencies through coordinated schedules and shared rides to maximize efficiency. Consolidated services are when local entities work together to form an independent entity to provide transit services.

### ***Subsidized Taxi or Taxi Voucher***

Taxis can be used as a “supplemental” service that is not integrated with the paratransit service. This is an auxiliary service that may serve the same group of eligible persons that are ADA paratransit eligible but with a broader service area. Subsidized taxi vouchers may be offered to ADA paratransit eligible persons outside of the ADA service area. Costs can be constrained by limiting the number of vouchers available daily or limiting the value of each voucher.

Voucher models provide resources directly to the individuals with disabilities who then purchase their own transportation. There are no restrictions on destination, but the individual must arrange their own rides. Vouchers are sometimes called “user-side” subsidies.

### ***Volunteer Drivers and Community Inclusion Drivers***

In many locations where publicly supported transportation services are insufficient or unavailable, particularly in rural areas, some communities address these gaps by organizing available local resources,

including volunteer drivers. Volunteer systems may be operated by a non-profit organization, a public agency, or faith communities. Volunteers with vehicles agree to provide rides, and may be reimbursed a limited amount.

The Easter Seals Project ACTION sponsors a program to match volunteer drivers with individuals who have intellectual and developmental disabilities. The Community Inclusion Driver is a well-structured model that provides for driver training and oversight. The strategy is a system the public transportation provider can use to assist people with disabilities living in underserved or unserved areas in methods for finding and securing their own transportation. The Community Inclusion Driver strategy is an arrangement that brings together the consumer (a person with a disability), a transportation provider (the public transportation provider), and an independent driver in a negotiated agreement to provide transportation services to a person with a disability living in an area where public transportation services do not presently exist or where the expansion of public transportation is not feasible. The public transportation provider's role in this strategy is as a broker.

#### **4. Peer Examples of Paratransit Services Outside the ADA Service Area**

This section will describe peer examples of how strategies discussed in the previous section have been applied in other regions. The three regions are Harris County, Texas (Houston), Los Angeles County, California, and King County, Washington (Seattle).

##### ***Keeping Harris County Moving, Harris County, Texas***

In 1999, Harris County, in partnership with Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC), The American Red Cross, and other human service organizations, commissioned a study to determine the transportation needs within Harris County and to determine the best methodology to maximize existing resources for transportation coordination. [9]

The study documented the need to fill in the gaps in services provided by the Metropolitan Transit Authority (Houston METRO). The gaps in services are may include geographic regions outside of METRO, but may also include areas within the METRO jurisdiction where METRO service is either unavailable or inaccessible to people who are disabled and/or elderly.

The study recommended a countywide user-side subsidy model as the most efficient system with the lowest incremental cost to implement. In March 2003, Harris County, through the Office of the County Judge and with approval by Commissioners Court, became the fiscal agent of the Harris County Coordinated Transportation Program and began operation with FTA Section 5310 funds from the Texas Department of Transportation.

In October 2003, Harris County launched the Harris County Coordinated Transportation Program (HCCTP) as an innovative pilot of regional and statewide significance. Now known as Harris County RIDES, the program coordinates many of the region's transportation resources to provide basic mobility for Harris County residents with disabilities, seniors, and people with low income when the current transportation system is unavailable, insufficient, or inappropriate. Today the program is financed using Section 5307 Urbanized Area formula funds, New Freedom grants and funds provided by Harris County.

RIDES is a curb-to-curb subsidized program that allows eligible customers and participating agencies to purchase transportation tickets at a significant discount. The customer/agency pays a reduced fee of \$3.00 per ticket: that's a 50% savings off the regular \$6.00 value of the ticket. Each customer may select from two levels of service:

- Shared Ride - This non-metered program in which passengers share rides with other passengers requires advance reservations. Of the two, this is the more economical. The cost is based on the mileage distance from the point of pick-up to the destination. The price will range from 1 to 7 tickets for a one-way trip. Trips must be booked a minimum of 24 hours in advance.
- Taxi Service - The cost of this metered same-day service is based on the rate of the meter fare box. Customers may use a maximum of 8 tickets for fare on a one-way trip. With this service, rides are dispatched on the same day as the request. Trips can be booked 90 minutes in advance.

To use the RIDES service, the individual must be registered as an eligible customer either directly with the program or with a sponsor agency and have an assigned customer identification number. Once approved and registered, the individual is eligible to receive discount travel tickets that may be used with any of the designated transportation companies.

To qualify under elderly or disabled qualifications, the individual must reside within Harris County and meet one or more of the following criteria: (1) over 60 years of age, (2) disabled. To qualify under low-income qualifications, the individual must reside within Harris County and have an income of \$21,350/year or under.

RIDES utilizes a market-based approach, innovative within the transportation arena, to expand services for the elderly, disabled, and low-income while (1) increasing the coordination of existing resources, (2) promoting consumer choice, (3) coordinating multiple funding sources, and (4) monitoring performance in service delivery. RIDES increases coordination of transportation resources through utilization of an open request for proposal (RFP) process to qualify transportation providers for participation in the program, thereby making use of the vehicles, scheduling software, and personnel from multiple transportation providers.

RIDES increases coordination among other community organizations to improve customer services. The program has multiple access points. It utilizes the relationship organizations already have with their clients, in turn allowing caseworkers to serve as mobility managers. In addition, RIDES program staff provides both outreach to new organizations and mobility management services directly to individual customers.

To accomplish this coordination:

- Tickets are the "currency" customers use to purchase services from qualified transportation providers.
- Community organizations serve as points of access, making them partners in marketing the program and funding and serving as mobility managers for the customers.
- Harris County, H-GAC, METRO, and the City of Houston work together to support the operations of this program. The program incorporates joint agreements between Harris County, the City of Houston, and non-profit organizations.
- The office of the County Judge serves as the fiscal agent. In conjunction with the RIDES staff, the Harris County's Purchasing Department, County Attorney's Office, and Management Services Department issue RFPs, review proposals, develop and implement specific selection criteria, and award contracts for the coordinated program. The County's Community and Economic Development Department provides administrative coordination of federal and state grant funds.

Through the benefits of collaboration, the program has proven to be an effective model for expanding services, promoting consumer choice, and ensuring optimum quality in service delivery. Through the benefits of this program, people that are elderly or disabled or low-income can now go to doctor's appointments, the grocery store, the pharmacy, and make other necessary trips.

### ***Immediate Needs Transportation Program - Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA)***

The Immediate Needs Transportation Program has been available for about 16 years, providing taxi vouchers, coupons and bus tokens to Los Angeles County residents with limited resources who have a transportation need and no other resources to meet that need. The Immediate Needs Transportation Program is built upon a cooperative partnership between MTA and the two lead agencies that serve as brokers: First African Methodist Episcopal Church Renaissance Program and the International Institute of Los Angeles. The MTA budgets about \$5 million annually for the program. [10]

The two brokers make the service available throughout Los Angeles County via 400 not-for-profit and government agencies that distribute taxi coupons, transit tokens and/or scrip to their clients. In order to receive subsidy, an individual must be a member of the participating agency and meet the agency's and Immediate Needs Transportation Program's eligibility guidelines.

The Immediate Needs Transportation Program provides three types of transportation subsidies:

- Transit Tokens and Scrip - Participants who can use regular bus or rail transportation for some of their Immediate Needs Transportation Program trips will be issued transit tokens for the appropriate transit system. Each client may receive no more than \$20 in transit tokens/scrip.
- \$7 Taxi Coupon - Each coupon has a fixed maximum value of \$7.00. For estimating purposes, this covers a distance of just under 3 miles.
- Variable Value Voucher - Variable value vouchers are taxi vouchers for emergencies only. They are available for travel to only agencies such as hospitals, shelters, the corrections department and those agencies serving homebound seniors.

In addition to the requirements set above, any of the following conditions must be met for one to qualify to receive taxi coupons:

- Frailty
- Mental, developmental or visual disability
- Presence of health risks in using transit
- Lack of available transit

The urgency of the need determines whether an individual should receive the \$7 taxi coupon or the variable value voucher (i.e., shelters and medical emergencies).

### ***King County Community Transportation Program***

King County Metro in Seattle, Washington, established the Community Transportation Program to provide services beyond the accessible regular bus service and paratransit service required by the federal ADA regulations. The program is intended to provide service that is more flexible and responsive to the unique transportation needs of persons with disabilities. [11]

- Enhanced Access Transportation Service – With passage of the Transit Now initiative by voters to increase local funding, the service area for Enhanced Access Transportation Service includes several rural areas not previously served. Registered ADA paratransit eligible persons can request trips in the expanded area on non-holiday weekdays between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.
- Taxi Scrip Program – The Taxi Scrip Program serves low-income King County residents age 18 to 64 that have a disability or age 65 and over. Once registered, an eligible person can buy up to six blocks of taxi scrip each month from Metro at a 50% discount to help meet transportation needs. Each \$10 book of taxi scrip costs \$5. Most taxi companies accept taxi scrip. At the end of the taxi trip, the individual pays the driver the meter fare using taxi scrip instead of money.
- Transit Instruction Program – Since 1994, Metro has provided free training services to teach persons with disabilities and seniors on how to ride regular public transportation.
- The Hyde Shuttle – The Hyde Shuttle is a free van service for seniors 65 or older and people with disabilities who live in Central or Southeast Seattle. Service is available in a prescribed service area. The van is lift-equipped and service is Monday through Friday. Rides are on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Community Access Transportation – Elements of the Community Access Transportation (CAT) program have existed at King County Metro for a number of years. CAT is an effort to make use of an increasing number of high-quality retired Metro Access and vanpool vehicles as well as creating programs such as the Hyde Shuttle. There are two CAT programs. The CAT Advantage Vans is a program where Metro provides emergency response, vehicle maintenance and repairs, driver training, and technical assistance to participating agencies. Agencies agree to provide a minimum number of rides to Access users each month. For those committing to a higher level of rides, Metro provides a small operating grant annually to offset the cost of insurance, fuel, and administration. Rides are requested through the individual programs. The second CAT program is CAT Vanworks to pay the monthly cost of a standard King County Vanpool agreement on behalf of local agencies that have a number of clients who are eligible for Metro Access transportation and are traveling to worksites.

In addition to the programs of King County Metro, King County Senior Services also provides transportation assistance for persons over age 65 years. A team of over 400 volunteer drivers use their own vehicles to transport and accompany seniors to medical and other essential appointments. Senior Shuttles provide van transportation to hot lunches, senior centers, grocery shopping, and other local errands. The Hyde Shuttle is an example of a senior shuttle, using a retired Metro Access or vanpool vehicle.

## **5. New Freedom Program**

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), the federal funding authorization for fiscal years 2006 through 2009, includes the New Freedom funding program to improve transportation services for persons with disabilities. [12]

The New Freedom formula program provides funding for new public transportation services, and alternatives to public transportation services, for people with disabilities, beyond those required by ADA. New Freedom funding may be used to support up to 80% of the capital project costs and up to 50% of the project's net operating expenses. Funds from other non-U.S. Department of Transportation federal programs (e.g. human services) may be used for matching purposes.

A new or expanded fixed route service or a new or expanded demand response service is eligible for New Freedom funding provided that:

- The service is identified in the locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan;
- The service is designed to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities;
- The service removes barriers to transportation and assists persons with disabilities with transportation;
- The service was not operational on August 10, 2005, and did not have an identified funding source as of August 10, 2005, as evidenced by inclusion in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) or the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP); and
- The service is not designed to allow an agency to meet its obligations under the FTA regulations for ADA complementary paratransit service.

The New Freedom program is a competitive grant program. Applicants may include local government agencies, social service agencies, tribal governments, private and public transit operators, non-profit organizations, and regional transportation planning agencies.

Several of the strategies to enhance public transportation accessibility for persons with disabilities that were discussed in Section 3 of this briefing paper are eligible for funding under the New Freedom Program, as long as the services provided meet the definition of “new:” The following list of services that may be eligible for New Freedom Program funds is taken from suggestions provided in FTA Circular 9045.1. [13]

### ***Strategies to Enhance Paratransit***

- Expand the ADA complementary paratransit service beyond the  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile required by the ADA.
- Expand the current hours of operation for ADA paratransit services that are beyond those provided on the fixed-route services.
- Fund the incremental cost of providing same day service (rather than advanced scheduling).
- Fund the incremental cost of making door-to-door service available to all eligible ADA paratransit riders (but not as a reasonable modification for individual riders in an otherwise curb-to-curb system).
- Enhance the level of service by providing escorts or assisting riders through the door of their destination.
- Purchase vehicles and equipment designed to accommodate mobility aids that exceed the dimensions and weight ratings established for common wheelchairs under the ADA and labor costs of aides to help drivers assist passengers with over-sized wheelchairs. This would permit the acquisition of lifts with a larger capacity, as well as modifications to lifts with a 600 pound design load, and the acquisition of heavier-duty vehicles for paratransit and/or demand-response service.
- Install additional securement locations in public buses beyond what is required by the ADA.

### ***Strategies for New Public Transportation Services beyond ADA Standards***

- Implement new “feeder” service (transit service that provides access) to commuter rail, commuter bus, intercity rail, and intercity bus stations, for which complementary paratransit service is not required under the ADA. This may include feeder service to Capital Metro park-and-ride lots on express commuter routes or to rail stations on the new Metro Rail Red Line.
- Implement new service routes to connect the area of high concentration of ADA eligible persons to local destinations for services and essential shopping. The service routes could be in areas outside the current Capital Metro jurisdiction.
- Provide new training programs for individual users on awareness, knowledge, and skills of public and alternative transportation options available in their communities. This includes travel instruction and travel training services, if the program goes beyond what Capital Metro or other agency is currently providing.
- Make accessibility improvements to transit bus stops and intermodal stations not designated as key stations. New Freedom funds are eligible to be used for new accessibility enhancements that remove barriers to individuals with disabilities so they may access greater portions of public transportation systems, such as fixed route bus service and rail. This may include:
  - Build an accessible path to a bus stop that is currently inaccessible, including curb cuts, sidewalks, accessible pedestrian signals or other accessible features,
  - Add an elevator or ramps, detectable warnings, or other accessibility improvements to a non-key station that are not otherwise required under the ADA,
  - Improve signage, or way finding technology, or
  - Implement other technology improvements that enhance accessibility for people with disabilities including Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS).

### ***Strategies for New Alternatives to Public Transportation***

- Use New Freedom funds to purchase and operate accessible vehicles for use in taxi, ridesharing and/or van pool programs provided that the vehicle has the capacity to accommodate a passenger who uses a “common wheelchair” while remaining in his/her personal mobility device inside the vehicle.
- Support the administration and expenses related to new voucher programs for transportation services offered by human service providers. This activity is intended to support and supplement existing transportation services by expanding the number of providers available or the number of passengers receiving transportation services. Only new voucher programs or expansion of existing programs are eligible under the New Freedom Program. Vouchers can be used as an administrative mechanism for payment of alternative transportation services to supplement available public transportation.

The New Freedom Program can provide vouchers to individuals with disabilities to purchase rides, including:

- Mileage reimbursement as part of a volunteer driver program;
- Taxi trip; or
- Trips provided by a human service agency.

Providers of transportation can then submit the voucher for reimbursement to the recipient for payment based on pre-determined rates or contractual arrangements. Transit passes for use on existing fixed route or ADA complementary paratransit service are not eligible. Vouchers are an operational expense which requires a 50/50 (federal/local) match.

- Develop a new volunteer driver programs and include support for costs associated with the administration, management of driver recruitment, safety, background checks, scheduling, coordination with passengers, and other related support functions, mileage reimbursement, and insurance associated with volunteer driver programs. The costs of new enhancements to increase capacity of existing volunteer driver programs are also eligible. FTA notes that any volunteer program supported by New Freedom must meet the requirements of both “new” and “beyond the ADA.” FTA encourages communities to offer consideration for utilizing all available funding resources as an integrated part of the design and delivery of any volunteer driver/aide program.
- Support new mobility management and coordination programs among public transportation providers and other human service agencies providing transportation. Mobility management is an eligible capital cost. Mobility management techniques may enhance transportation access for populations beyond those served by one agency or organization within a community. For example, a non-profit agency could receive New Freedom funding to support the administrative costs of sharing services it provides to its own clientele with other individuals with disabilities and coordinate usage of vehicles with other non-profits, but not the operating costs of the service.

Mobility management is intended to build coordination among existing public transportation providers and other transportation service providers with the result of expanding the availability of service. Mobility management activities may include:

- The promotion, enhancement, and facilitation of access to transportation services, including the integration and coordination of services for individuals with disabilities, older adults, and low-income individuals;
- Support for short term management activities to plan and implement coordinated services;
- The support of state and local coordination policy bodies and councils;
- The operation of transportation brokerages to coordinate providers, funding agencies and customers;
- The provision of coordination services, including employer-oriented Transportation Management Organizations’ and Human Service Organizations’ customer-oriented travel navigator systems and neighborhood travel coordination activities such as coordinating individualized travel training and trip planning activities for customers;

- The development and operation of one-stop transportation traveler call centers to coordinate transportation information on all travel modes and to manage eligibility requirements and arrangements for customers among supporting programs; and
- Operational planning for the acquisition of intelligent transportation technologies to help plan and operate coordinated systems inclusive of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping, Global Positioning System (GPS) technology, coordinated vehicle scheduling, dispatching and monitoring technologies as well as technologies to track costs and billing in a coordinated system and single smart customer payment systems (acquisition of technology is also eligible as a stand alone capital expense).

The following is a link to a sample of New Freedom grants that FTA awarded in fiscal year 2008:

[http://www.fta.dot.gov/funding/grants/grants\\_financing\\_7633.html](http://www.fta.dot.gov/funding/grants/grants_financing_7633.html)

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