

Senior Transportation and Mobility Improvement Act
Sponsored by Senator Herb Kohl (D-WI)

Background

Advances in longevity as well as the aging of the baby boom population will increase the need for enhanced mobility options for older Americans. For seniors age 65 and older who no longer drive due to declines in health, more than half – or 3.6 million – stay home on any given day partially because they lack transportation options. Compared with older drivers, older non-drivers in the U.S. make 15 percent fewer trips to the doctor, 59 percent fewer shopping trips and visits to restaurants, and 65 percent fewer trips for social, family and religious activities. Alternatives to driving are particularly sparse in some regions and in rural and small town communities. Without adequate transportation options, many seniors will be at risk for increased isolation and may be forced into unnecessary institutionalization.

Bill Summary:

Section 5310 Elderly and Disabled Program:

- Authorizes states to use up to 33 percent of any increase in its annual Section 5310 allocation for operating and maintenance needs after FY 2012.
- Authorizes states to use their Section 5310 allocations to assist with the costs of operating vehicles (such as insurance, rising fuel costs and driver compensation) or other capital assets acquired through the Section 5310 program at a 50 percent federal match.
- Requires states to report annually to FTA how they plan to coordinate their Section 5310 program with transportation services offered under Title III of the Older Americans Act.
- Expands the National Transit Database to require the program to track Section 5310 and 5311 data (by local level funding recipient and aggregate state level data) on an annual basis including the number of vehicles purchased, rides provided and any other relevant data elements determined by the Secretary. FTA would also be responsible for making the collected Section 5310 and 5311 program data readily accessible to the public.

Metropolitan and Statewide Planning and Coordination:

- Strengthens the coordinated public transit human service transportation planning process by requiring that groups representing older adults, and people with disabilities are included in the planning process and that these groups are given an opportunity to review and comment on the final plan.

Technical Assistance and Mobility Management:

- Directs new funding (\$11.5 million over two years) to the National Center on Senior Transportation (NCST) to provide technical assistance to transit and human service organizations and disseminate best practices associated with senior transportation. In addition, funds would be used for community seed grants to test innovative and replicable approaches for addressing the mobility needs of seniors, including those in rural areas.
- Establishes a supplemental FTA Mobility Management program for older and disabled adults, to connect them with the best available transportation options in their communities. Provides \$8 million over two years to award grants to non-profit aging services organizations to offer mobility management services and enhanced technology to support these services.