



Advocacy. Action. Answers on Aging.

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Washington, DC – n4a CEO Sandy Markwood released the following statement today on the new report by Transportation for America (T4 America) “Aging in Place: Stuck without Options”

“I commend T4 America’s report for drawing much needed attention to the lack of transit options available to older Americans in many communities. The report importantly focuses on the current lack of transit access for seniors coupled with the demands of a growing aging population as significant challenges for communities,” said n4a CEO Sandy Markwood. n4a’s own survey research supports this conclusion as well. A recently released n4a report, *Maturing of America II*, funded by the MetLife Foundation, found that inadequate transportation options for older adults have emerged as a dominant concern for communities across the country in the past five years.

T4 America’s report recognizes that it is not enough to simply have transit available in a community. A safe, clean and secure physical environment is equally important for enabling older adults to access and use transit. Even where transit is available, attention must be given to the facilities and amenities that make it attractive and user-friendly for those who have never used it before, or who have health or mobility challenges. This kind of planning addresses the needs not just of older adults, but transit users of any age and ability. Such an approach calls for safe sidewalks near bus and rail stations, mobility management to counsel individuals on the best options to meet their transportation needs, and travel training to familiarize new public transit users with how to navigate the system.

The report also highlights the connection between transportation access and independent living as older adults seek to age-in-place in their own homes and communities. This is an especially difficult challenge for the millions of older adults who live in suburban and rural areas of the country where destinations are too far to walk, public transit is non-existent or poor, and private transportation is limited and prohibitively expensive.

National Association of Area Agencies on Aging

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In addition to their role in providing transportation as a core service of the Older Americans Act (OAA), Area Agencies Aging (AAAs) are working to expand on efforts in the areas of coordinated planning and mobility management services. AAAs have become key participants in the development of the coordinated public transit–human services transportation planning process established under the 2005 surface transportation authorization. Given the network’s extensive role in coordinating and providing transportation through the OAA, other human service programs such as Medicaid and federal transportation programs, it is clear collaboration is needed between the aging and transportation arenas to address the considerable transportation needs of older adults.

“As an example, it should be noted the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), Area Agency on Aging, has been a pioneer in ensuring that the needs of older adults are integrated in transportation, housing and land-use planning in the larger Atlanta region. They have distinguished themselves as a model for collaborative action to build lifelong communities.

It is to the ARC’s credit that they recognized long before the publication of this report that they, like many other American communities, face huge challenges in meeting the mobility needs of older adults living in this sprawling metropolitan area. Their efforts to provide travel training to encourage older adults to use transit where it is available (a project developed in partnership with transit and funded under a New Freedom grant) and to begin developing mobility management services indicates that this forward-thinking community is meeting these challenges head-on; with creative solutions that enable them to address the mobility needs of Atlanta residents across their lifespan.”

“As Congress considers the next surface transportation reauthorization bill, n4a believes a greater emphasis must be placed on community transportation programs that provide a vital link between the home and community for older adults and people with disabilities. We enthusiastically support the policy recommendations outlined in T4 America’s report calling for increased investment in transit options, greater support for program operating costs, incentives for innovative practices such as mobility management, a more inclusive planning process that involves seniors, and implementing “complete streets” policies that promote greater walkability and access to safe and desirable transit options.”

National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a): n4a is the leading voice on aging issues for Area Agencies on Aging and a champion for Title VI Native American aging programs. Through advocacy, training and technical assistance, we support the national network of 629 AAAs and 246 Title VI programs.