**Building Cooperative Relationships with the Disability Community in Transit**

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Ever feel as though you are uninformed about transportation options in your area or don’t know how to advocate for what you want or know where to begin? Transportation involves a lot of moving parts and familiarizing yourself with the local dynamics in your community is important to building lasting and cooperative relationships with local transit providers. This session is intended to help you navigate the bureaucracy to identify decision-making authority, jurisdiction, and to think both long term and short term about your needs So you can build reciprocal communication and continued community involvement in your community.

**Local Community Characteristics**

It is important to have an understanding of you r local community transportation landscape.

Is your community rural or urban?

Do you know who your public transit provider is or are?

Is there a rural transit provider in your community?

**Decision-making Authority and Jurisdiction**

Transportation providers provide specific options within their jurisdictions. Some offer fixed route options while others only offer paratransit or demand response services.

Do you know which entities operate fixed route transit services in your community?

Is there a rural transit service?

Are there ADA paratransit or other demand response services in your community?

**Infrastructure**

**Transportation infrastructure involves a complex mix of entities and it is important to know which entities are responsible for what.**

Who owns the right-of-way on the streets and roads where the transit service(s) operate?

Who is responsible for: building bus stops or stations, ensuring sidewalk connectivity, purchasing and installing audible pedestrian signals, service planning?

**Financing and Agency Costs**

Funding transit service can be expensive and agencies have to balance costs with community interest.

How are transit services funded in your community?

Do you live in a “pay to play” community?

Who is playing and who is not?

What are the cost associated with providing fixed route transit services compared to demand responsive service such as paratransit?

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**Advisory Committees**

Get to know your local transportation advisory committee and learn about the transportation issues most important for persons with disabilities in your community.

Remember that advisory committees provide recommendations and are not decision makers.

**Can be an effective platform for advocacy.**

**Transit Agency Organizational Structure**

Reach out to your local transit agency to learn which individuals and what departments are responsible for what.

Understand the organizational structure of your local transit providers.

Reach out with specific questions to responsible persons or departments.

**Trust and Cooperation**

Develop regular communication.

Request a presentation for your organization.

Provide constructive feedback while considering the resources available to the transit agency.

Complement when appropriate and be critical when necessary.

Remember that transit employees are people too and by and large want to do the right thing.