



Annual Report & Strategic Plan

Planning for the Future

Tennessee Department of Transportation | March 2025



Introduction

The Office of Mobility and Accessible Transportation (OMAT) was established in 2020 by the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) and its partners to transform Tennessee's statewide planning efforts for strategically providing resources to improve accessible transportation and mobility across the state. TDOT leads the planning efforts with invaluable support from partnerships with other state departments, human services agencies, area agencies on aging, regional and metropolitan planning organizations, public transit providers, non-profit organizations, advocates, users of accessible transportation, and the general public.

OMAT and the Mobility & Accessible Transportation Workgroup have continued to engage with stakeholders and successfully make progress on the five strategic goals identified during the planning process. This Annual Report includes information about the ongoing initiatives and actions taken to support accessible transportation in Tennessee.

Looking Ahead

Key successes from the initial strategic planning years are evolving into effective practices and spreading across the state to improve customer service and reduce barriers to mobility through information sharing, better access to resources, streamlined processes for reporting, and better marketing and outreach guidance.

OMAT is updating its Strategic Plan in 2025. The process will involve significant community engagement and an updated examination of existing resources and gaps in accessible transportation options for health, wellness, employment, socialization, and more.

OMAT Strategic Goals

The Mobility and Accessible Transportation Strategic Plan identified five strategic goals that focus on addressing the current and future transportation challenges and gaps in services in Tennessee.

Expand Access. Support local solutions for expanding and improving access to transportation services.

Service Solutions. Identify where barriers to transportation overlap and develop quality solutions that meet travelers' needs.

Collaboration. Establish a structure and collaborative culture that maximizes financial resources for transportation across multiple programs and departments.

Technology Solutions. Prioritize user-focused public information systems and transit technology tools to diversify access to services.

Communication. Facilitate communication and coordination between transportation providers and users for a more seamless mobility network.

OMAT Mission Statement

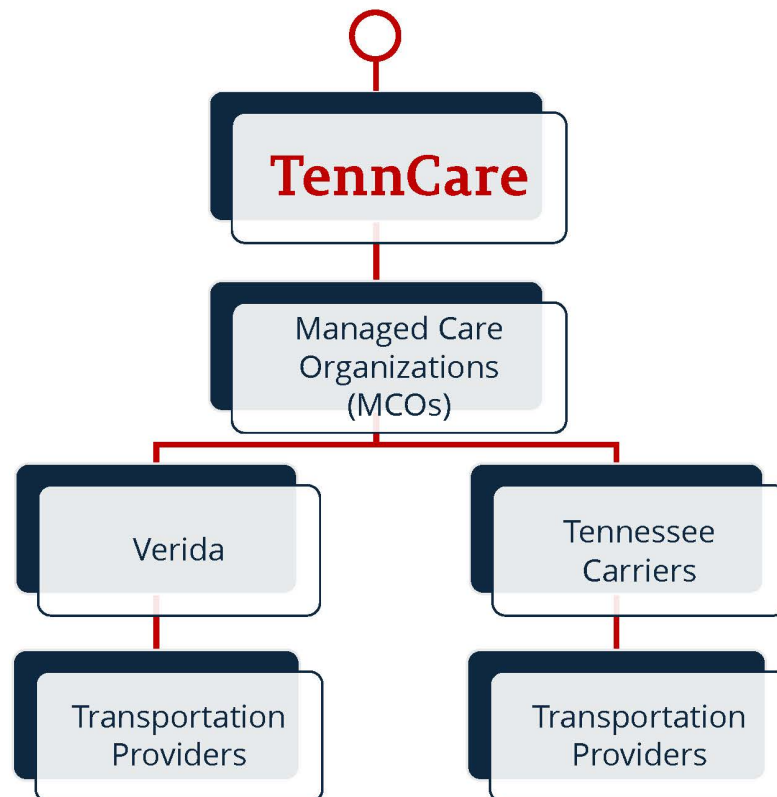
Provide resources and expertise for expanding and improving accessible transportation and mobility across the state.

Spotlight on Non-Emergency Medical Transportation

Medicaid non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) is an important benefit for Tennessee's Medicaid beneficiaries who need to get to and from medical services and have no other means of transportation. In Tennessee, rides are provided for any TennCare Member who does not have access to transportation. Transportation is available to any TennCare covered service.

NEMT is a critical resource for TennCare Members who need transportation to their medical appointments and services. Many seniors and individuals with disabilities rely on this benefit to get to doctor's appointments and life-saving services such as dialysis.

In Tennessee, NEMT is provided through a transportation brokerage system. TennCare operates a mandatory managed care organization (MCO) model, with NEMT responsibility carved into state contracts with participating health plans. TennCare has four MCOs that use two transportation brokerages (currently, Verida and Tennessee Carriers) to schedule and contract for NEMT rides.





In 2023, OMAT executed research on the TennCare model with a focus on how service delivery is impacted by state NEMT requirements for providers and their drivers. The purpose was to review existing policies and regulation and identify opportunities for improved accessible transportation and mobility across Tennessee.

On September 28, 2023, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued updated regulatory guidance for NEMT. Under the new guidance, CMS calls on states to “fully operationalize,” monitor and improve the way they meet the program's transportation assurance and encourages states, MCO and transportation providers to work collaboratively to ensure beneficiaries are educated and informed. The updated guidance also contains a compilation of Medicaid transportation policy on federal requirements and state flexibilities.

Tennessee already serves as a model state regarding the new CMS guidance, with well-established safety and performance standards for NEMT trips provided through

the brokerage model. The new guidance also opens up opportunities to continue to collaborate, improve service efficiency, and reduce duplication of effort across state agencies. Some potential opportunities raised by this guidance and the research project include:

- Implementation of a single portal model for submission of documentation to all brokers.
- Streamline TennCare driver training requirements to meet all CMS, Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Department of Transportation (DOT) requirements with one set of standards across transportation brokers.
- Multi-use transit passes as an alternative to individually scheduled NEMT trips, as permitted by the updated CMS guidance.
- Review of the current model and potential for Human Resource Agencies to provide enhanced NEMT scheduling and services.

1 Goal: Expand Access

Support local solutions for expanding access to transportation services

Access to transportation services means access to work, health and wellness activities, socialization, and independence. OMAT is working with state and regional organizations to design and implement programs that expand access to important and essential community resources.

Updates

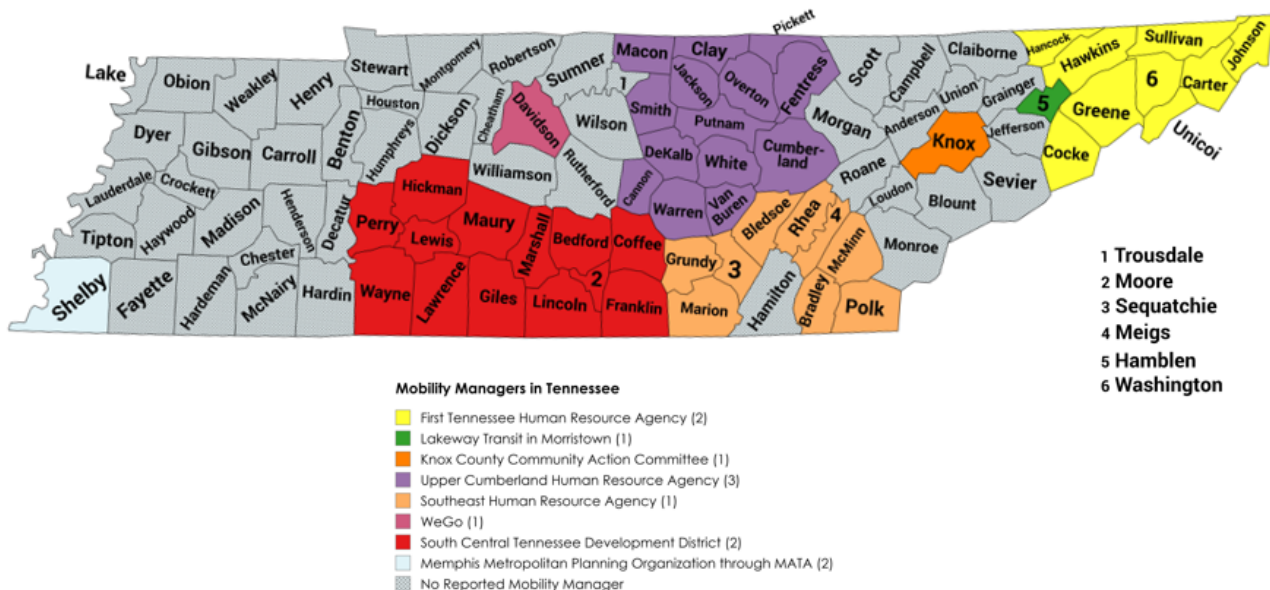
The job access planning program is designed specifically to consider and meet the needs of individuals with disabilities. Programs are designed so that they can be successfully implemented in local communities and also applied to a future statewide program.

In 2024, OMAT and the Mobility & Accessible Transportation Workgroup collaborated on the development of specifics for a Tennessee job access program that would incorporate

the improvements that transportation providers and human resource agencies have made with regard to information sharing, enhanced services, and removing barriers. Action steps align with the *Helping Obtain Prosperity for Everyone (HOPE) Project: Developing a Tennessee Job Access Program* (2023).

In 2024, the TDOT Passenger Transportation, Rail & Freight Division completed a comprehensive assessment of statewide intercity bus mobility needs. OMAT served on the consultation group for the 2024 Intercity Bus Study and ensured accessible transportation needs were reflected in the study.

- Over 80 percent of Tennessee residents live within 25 miles of an intercity bus station. Public transit is also available in all 95 counties, including feeder and general rural demand response service to intercity bus locations. The 2024 Intercity Bus Study included recommendations for further analysis of regional mobility and opportunities to improve open communication and collaborative solutions between different modes of service, including transportation services for older adults and individuals with disabilities.



Objective	Action Steps
<p>Oversee updates of Regional Coordinated Transportation Plans with a focus on identifying local issues and solutions to those issues.</p>	<p>New and updated Regional Coordinated Transportation Plans have been completed for the South Central, Southeast, and Southwest Human Resource Agency Regions, and OMAT continues to work closely with transit and planning agencies as plan updates are completed in urban areas.</p> <p>OMAT is on the steering committee for the Greater Nashville Regional Council plan for middle Tennessee, which includes Nashville, Clarksville, the Mid-Cumberland Human Resource Agency region, and Murfreesboro, with an expected completion date in 2025.</p>
<p>Develop Regional Transportation Advisory Boards (RTAB) in each region with representation from each county.</p>	<p>The Mobility Management Program provides funding, leadership, and a collaborative structure for regional passenger transportation. Today, there are 13 Mobility Managers coordinating transportation resources and assessing unmet needs throughout Tennessee. These Mobility Managers work at the regional level and communicate with OMAT about existing resources and needs.</p>
<p>Ensure passenger transit is considered in non-transit plans for development, and establish effective methods of communication within the regions and counties.</p>	<p>OMAT is coordinating beyond transportation agencies, including Tennessee Housing Development Agency (THDA) and the Department of Health. OMAT collaborated with the THDA as they explored the intersection of transportation and housing development. THDA is working to include transit considerations in housing plans and programs, such as consideration of Transit Oriented Development in plans that incentivize housing development.</p>



2 Goal: Service Solutions

Identify where barriers to transportation overlap and develop quality solutions that meet travelers' needs

The Strategic Plan developed suggestions for state-level policy amendments that would enable the successful implementation of solutions and reduce administrative barriers to service.

Updates

As we entered 2024, some of the most significant challenges to service solutions for Tennessee were a result of the national vehicle shortage. Aging vehicles could not be replaced on schedule, forcing transportation

and human service providers to work with aging vehicle fleets or shrinking fleet sizes. TDOT worked with the Central Procurement Office to establish a new statewide contract for FTA-funded vehicles, including vehicles ordered through the Section 5310 program. The Federal Transit Administration Section 5310 Program, *Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities*, makes Federal resources available to improve mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities by removing barriers to transportation services. OMAT manages the Section 5310 Program in Tennessee's rural and small urban areas.

In the 2024 Call for Projects, TDOT's Section 5310 Program awarded \$5.7 million in total project funds to 16 agencies. The funds will be used for the purchase of 38 new wheelchair-accessible vehicles and to support Mobility Management programs in 22 counties. A full list of awards is available [on our website](#).

Objective	Action Steps
<p>Use the Strategic Plan to conduct a regional assessment of barriers and opportunities.</p>	<p>In 2024, the OMAT research study concluded there are opportunities to improve NEMT services throughout Tennessee. One such opportunity is the adoption of consistent document requirements for FTA-funded providers and the use of standardized forms. A solution to this challenge would be for the adoption of one set of uniform documents to be submitted by providers to brokers.</p> <p>Many transportation providers saw improvement in their ability to order and receive transit vehicles in 2024. TDOT began receiving vehicles in the fall of 2024 against a multi-year award backlog for the Section 5310 Program. As a result, approximately 64 vehicles were delivered in 2024–2025 to agencies and put into service, with more vehicles arriving in 2025. All vehicles in the program are designated to meet the transportation needs of older adults and individuals with disabilities.</p>
<p>Standardize transportation safety and quality guidelines among all programs for older adults and individuals with disabilities to be consistent with other transportation funding programs.</p>	<p>Service standards and policies of the participating transportation providers are included in the NEMT Policy project. Standardized safety policies ensure a consistent level of passenger service and safety no matter which participating transportation provider operates the trip.</p>
<p>Explore the effectiveness of structures to support electric vehicles and service modes like vanpools and microtransit.</p>	<p>TDOT worked with the Central Procurement Office to include a fully accessible electric vehicle option on the State purchasing contract for the first time. TDOT also published a zero-emission vehicle readiness guide for transit agencies.</p> <p>Alternative service modes, such as vanpools and microtransit, are explored through the Mobility Management structure.</p>

3 Goal: Collaboration

Establish a structure and collaborative culture that maximizes financial resources for transportation across multiple programs and departments

Multi-agency collaboration and collaboration between State and local-level program administration within a single agency is a goal for OMAT because stakeholders recognize that successful solutions are possible but require leadership. This leadership is provided by the Mobility & Accessible Transportation Workgroup, which brings together stakeholders at the state level to ensure collaboration and efficient use of available transportation resources.

Updates

OMAT and the Mobility & Accessible Transportation Workgroup focused on identifying and maximizing transportation funding to ensure existing services, as well as potential service expansions, are sustainable. The group collaborated to address existing transportation-related policies that were creating challenges for partnerships or limiting their ability to respond to identified gaps in access to services.

- OMAT is collaborating with TennCare and transit providers to review policies and procedures that maximize the benefits to users of the Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) program, including beneficiaries, health care providers, and transportation providers. This project follows updated guidance on NEMT pro-

vided by the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

- In 2013, the Tennessee Employment First Initiative was established by executive order to expand community employment opportunities for Tennesseans with disabilities. The Employment First Task Force was created to address barriers and create solutions for Tennesseans with disabilities in the workforce. OMAT and the Mobility & Accessible Transportation Workgroup worked to establish a new transportation goal for the 2026 Employment First Strategic Plan. As employment stakeholders work together on the Employment First taskforce, this will ensure transportation is considered as a key component of employment access for individuals with disabilities.
- When construction for TDOT's Nolensville Pike project disrupted access to current transit routes, OMAT worked with WeGo and TDOT Region 3 to develop a construction mitigation project. The project established a new WeGo Link Zone to ensure safe and affordable transit access in the construction zone, so transit riders can continue to get to work, school, and other important destinations while roadway improvements are ongoing.



Objective	Action Steps
Identify and maximize sustainable transit funding.	<p>Many local providers receive capital assistance from TDOT through the Section 5310 Program, <i>Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities</i>, while receiving funds for operations as grantees or contractors from other state agencies. Sixty-four vehicles were delivered to agencies through the program in 2024–2025. Examples of programs receiving vehicles include: senior centers, mental health treatment providers, NEMT providers, agencies serving individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, such as through the Employment and Community First (ECF) CHOICES program or the Section 1915(c) Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) waivers, and senior living facilities.</p> <p>OMAT and the Mobility & Accessible Transportation Workgroup are continuing to review NEMT policy and procedures and identify opportunities to eliminate policy-related barriers to effective NEMT service for users of accessible transportation.</p>
Expand sources of sustainable funding.	<p>OMAT supported new and continuing Mobility Management programs across the state. Mobility Management is a type of transportation project that is focused on coordinating available transportation resources and funding.</p>
Nurture regional partnerships that fill identified gaps in transportation.	<p>Mobility Managers are focused on developing multi-agency partnerships that offer transportation solutions to the gaps identified through local and regional needs assessments. OMAT provides resources, tools, and guidance to Mobility Managers.</p>

4 Goal: Technology Solutions

Prioritize user-focused public information systems & tools to diversify access to services

Technological advancements continue to quickly and drastically impact the way organizations and people function, and OMAT is supporting its transit systems as they make service changes that bring important technology advancements to the public. Riders want simplicity in planning and using transportation services and they are increasingly expecting transportation services and information to be available at their fingertips on websites and apps.

Updates

TDOT partnered with transit agencies across the state to identify two preferred transit scheduling and software providers. TDOT has continued to work with transit agencies as they procure and implement modern, more efficient software to support their operations. New software has been implemented in eight out of nine rural regions, and software funding opportunities have been made available for urban areas. As an example, the following list summarizes the benefits Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency (UCHRA) experienced. Other regions have experienced similar advancements.

- Increase (7%) in the number of trips provided to customers.
- Able to adjust their pick-up window from 1 hour to 30 minutes, leading to more efficient trips and better service for riders.
- Significant reduction (12%) in fuel usage.



Objective	Action Steps
Serve as the liaison between the State and the community to support transportation programs across the State in their efforts to implement advance technology.	Software has been fully implemented by eight out of nine rural regional providers.
Support smart investment in scheduling and dispatching software.	Additional agencies have the opportunity to apply for grant funding to support new or updated software through TDOT.
Encourage technology that allows customers to choose their mobility option and schedule.	Using the new software, local agencies have been able to open up online scheduling for riders, and are developing support for on-demand scheduling options.
Identify technology that facilitates coordination between operators and provides options for multiple services to work together toward meeting transportation needs.	The single portal model for document submission to all NEMT brokers is currently being tested by selected NEMT providers.
Equitable access to technology options.	The Mobility Management Toolkit developed by OMAT incorporates strategies to ensure telephone options are available in addition to websites and apps, and that training programs are available to teach people how to use new technology. TDOT provides basic guidelines to transit agencies to ensure selected technology is accessible. Finally, OMAT and the Mobility & Accessible Transportation Workgroup represent the population of older adults and individuals with disabilities to ensure procurement of technology is accessible, especially as technology continues to be identified as a need in locally developed Coordinated Plans.



5 Goal: Communication

Facilitate communication and coordination between transportation providers and users for a more seamless mobility network

Public transportation is available in all 95 Tennessee counties, and specialized transportation is offered across the state. During the strategic planning process, OMAT often heard from people who were trying to get to critical destinations like healthcare, employment and education. When transportation options are limited, finding a ride becomes an additional challenge in an already difficult process of getting to services and locations that are vital to health and wellness.

Updates

[Tennessee Disability Pathfinder](#) is a one-stop shop for disability resources, including information about accessible transportation. Pathfinder provides a website with an online database of resources, and it also has a call center with trained staff who can walk callers through every step of their journey. Pathfinder call-takers can make a warm hand-off to ensure people can access the resources they are looking for, including transportation.

In 2023 and 2024, TDOT partnered with other state agencies to fund Tennessee Disability Pathfinder. Pathfinder has connected over 38,000 individuals to resources by providing personalized assistance with multiple information topics, in multiple languages. Information about resources ranging from addictions, advocacy, education, training, and employment to social skills, technology, transportation, and veterans is available through Disability Pathfinder.

“We don’t know how to ask or who to ask.” (From a TN Disability Services survey run by Vanderbilt University in 2021)

Objective	Action Steps
<p>Establish and oversee a clearing-house and moderator for transportation issues and solutions.</p>	<p>TDOT partners with other state agencies to help fund Tennessee Disability Pathfinder, an existing one-stop location for disability resources, including transportation options. The state leadership team includes the Council on Developmental Disabilities, as well as the Departments of Education, Human Services, Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, and Transportation. In 2024, OMAT hired an intern to help update all of the transportation resource information in the Tennessee Disability Pathfinder platform. The update included resource information about transportation options across the state, including many transportation options not offered through TDOT. OMAT will continue to update transportation resources annually to ensure individuals with disabilities, their families, and professionals have access to accurate information on transportation resources in Tennessee.</p>
<p>Develop the role of mobility management. Support local and regional mobility managers.</p>	<p>OMAT produced the Mobility Management Toolkit including forms and tools to assist local and regional leaders with stakeholder meetings, information-sharing and marketing, tracking and reporting performance measures, and more in 2023. The toolkit is actively used throughout the state.</p> <p>Mobility Managers are impacting the lives of people across the state by connecting people with the resources that will meet their needs. Mobility Management assistance focuses on transportation but often goes above and beyond identifying a transportation provider to include connecting people with other necessary community resources.</p> <p>Mobility Managers also assist drivers and transportation providers with challenges related to connecting passengers with the services they need. In Sequatchie County, for example, the Mobility Manager, local Transit Administrator, and local Walmart manager coordinated to ensure that a passenger with visual impairments could safely travel and complete their grocery shopping.</p>



Linda was so moved by learning we were all there for her in a moment where she had no other hope. In that moment we could all sense her humbleness as she stated, “I’ve never qualified for disability or social security, and I’ve only had food stamps a couple times in my life.” We knew Linda needed us more than we could ever fathom. She explained to us that she has severe anxiety when riding with other people as she had faced death in several vehicle accidents as a passenger. This has left her very reluctant to ride with anyone, so we assured her our trained staff would take care of transporting her safely.

*– Daniel Rogers, Mobility
Manager at Southeast
Tennessee HRA*

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tn.gov/tdot/multimodal-transportation-resources/omat.html