



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan Update, or "Coordinated Plan Update," is the latest mandated five-year update for the Municipality of Anchorage.

Plan Purpose

A Coordinated Plan's purpose is to improve transportation for older adults, people with disabilities, and others facing mobility challenges. Required under federal, state, and regional policy, coordinated plans ensure transit and human service providers work together to meet the needs of transit-dependent populations. This updated plan clarifies why coordination is essential, identifies the groups most affected, and outlines available transportation modes in Anchorage, providing context, needs assessment, and strategies to guide more equitable and efficient transit services in the region.

The Anchorage Region

The Municipality of Anchorage covers approximately 1,962 sq mi, with a population of about 291,000-roughly 40% of Alaska's total population. The municipality offers a rare blend of urban density and direct access to wilderness, with a public transit system serving both urban neighborhoods and outlying communities, creating both opportunities and challenges for an integrated, multi-modal transportation framework.

Plan Overview

Transportation Modes in Anchorage

Coordinated plans must consider each mode of transportation available in a given region, including those connecting to and from adjoining areas.

Common public transportation modes are summarized in Figure 1. Modes available in Anchorage are indicated in blue, with unavailable modes in gray:

Figure 1 Public Transportation Modes



Passenger Rail

Moves many customers over long distances, usually with high frequencies. (While the Alaska Railroad does transport passengers, FTA does not consider this mode commuter rail.)





Bus Rapid Transit

Bus service on high-frequency corridors with dedicated infrastructure, such as exclusive bus lanes, traffic signal priority, or upgraded stations.



Commuter/Express Bus Routes

Long-distance service for passengers needing access to employment, education, medical, and shopping opportunities not otherwise available in their area.



Fixed Route Bus (People Mover)

Buses operating on predetermined routes with set schedules and stops, the most common form of public transportation in the U.S.



Flex Route Bus

Also known as "deviated fixed-route," this service operates on a scheduled fixed route where drivers may "deviate" off-route at the request/need of customer(s).



Demand Response

Demand response transit service is "demand-based," based on the needs or schedules of customers. It is the second largest type of public transit service in the U.S.



Paratransit Service (AnchorRIDES)

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that transit operators offering fixed-route services must offer "comparable" service to individuals with disabilities.



Ride Share/Transportation Network Companies (TNCs)

Ride share, also known as ride-hailing, is a form of transportation service that is a hybrid between demand-response and taxi service.



Volunteer Transportation Program

Volunteer transportation operates a variety of ways but centrally relies on volunteer drivers to drive passengers.



Carpool/Vanpool Programs

Carpools and vanpools are another low-cost alternative to serve anywhere from three to 18 passengers. Anchorage has a municipal carpool/vanpool program contracting with Commute with Enterprise for vans.

Existing Conditions

The study team examined demographic characteristics, transportation needs, and service gaps in the Municipality of Anchorage for this update.



Demographics

This Coordinated Plan Update aims to improve transportation access and services for specific target populations. These groups often face greater mobility challenges due to age, income, disability, language, or location. The table below provides an overview of each group, the mobility challenges they face, and pertinent demographic information in the Anchorage region.



Figure 2 Target Populations

Target Population Challenges and Demographics in Anchorage



Older Adults (aged 65 and older): May drive less often due to health or mobility limitations, creating greater reliance on transit.

Older adults are 13% of Anchorage's population, with the largest presence on the northwest and southeast edges of the municipality.



Youth Populations (ages 10 to 17): Often cannot drive and may lack access to reliable transportation to school, jobs, and activities.

The Rider Survey indicated youth constitute less than 5% of current ridership on People Mover.



Individuals with a Disability: Physical or cognitive limitations may prevent independent travel, requiring additional support.

They represent 15% of Anchorage's population, with higher concentrations in the northern city center and areas like Eagle River and Chugiak—suggesting a need for expanded paratransit and first/last-mile support in those areas.



Individuals Living in Poverty: Often cannot afford a personal vehicle and may struggle with even the cost of transit fares.

Low-income residents comprise 8% of the population, with a sharp concentration just north of East 5^{th} Avenue.



Indigenous Populations: Often live in rural or isolated areas with limited transit access and long travel distances to services.

This population makes up 8% of Anchorage's population, with the highest concentrations in central and western areas.

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Target Population Challenges and Demographics in Anchorage



Veterans: Face challenges reaching healthcare and services, especially when living in rural areas.

Comprising 11% of Anchorage's adult population, veterans are most heavily concentrated near Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson.



Limited English Speakers: Language barriers make it harder to understand or access available transportation services.

Over 95% of the population speaks English at home. A variety of languages make up the remaining 5%, including Korean, Yup'ik, Tagalog or Filipino, Russian, Hmong and Samoan.



Households with No Vehicle Access: Lack private transportation and must depend entirely on transit or others for mobility.

Mirroring those living with poverty just north of East 5th Avenue, 17-25% of the population there has limited vehicle access.



Unhoused Individuals: Often lack reliable or affordable transportation, limiting access to jobs, food, and services.

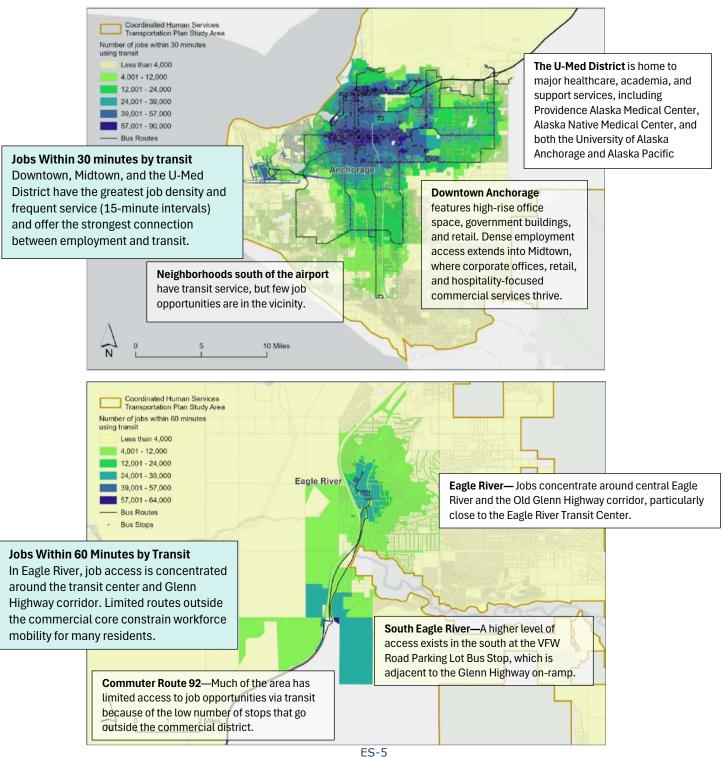
Almost 30% of respondents to our Rider Survey indicated they have spent at least two days unhoused in the last year.

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Urban Analysis

Transit availability can be assessed by several factors, including the number of jobs accessible by transit within a certain time. The study team considered transit-accessible jobs available via 30- or 60-minute transit rides from central Anchorage, which revealed distinctive regional patterns.

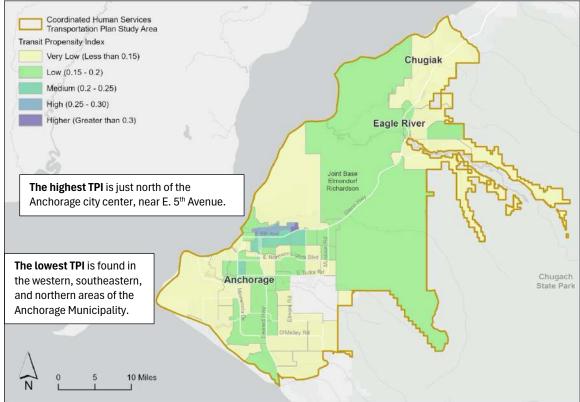
Figure 3 Jobs Within 30 and 60 Minutes by Transit



Transit Propensity Index

The Transit Propensity Index (TPI) reflects the level of need for transit services in a designated region. In Anchorage, the area with the highest TPI coincides with the part of the municipality with the highest concentration of individuals living below the poverty line.

Figure 4 Transit Propensity Index



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Existing Service Providers

Figure 5 captures the service providers currently operating in the Anchorage region. Service providers include not only public transportation but also human service and private providers.

Figure 5 Existing Service Providers

Fixed Route

People Mover | peoplemover.org

Demand Response Paratransit

AnchorRIDES | muni.org/Departments/transit/AnchorRides

Human Services

Alaska Medical Transport | alaskamedicaltransport.com

Alaska Medicaid NEMT Brokers | health.alaska.gov

Alaska Mental Health Consumer Web | akmhcweb.org

The Arc of Anchorage | thearcofanchorage.org

Armed Services YMCA of Alaska Y on Wheels | alaska.asymca.org/y-on-wheels

Assets Inc. | assetsinc.org

Department of Veteran Affairs | vetride.va.gov/app/home

Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education

doh.gcdse.info@alaska.gov

Hope Community Resources | hopealaska.org

McKinley Services of Alaska | mckinleyservicesllc.com

SALA Medical | salamedics.com

Salvation Army Serendipity Adult Day Services | serendipity.salvationarmy.org

Statewide Independent Living Council of Alaska | alaskasilc.org

Triton Medical Transportation | <u>sentrymedicalcare.com/transport</u>

United Non-Emergency Medical Transportation | <u>unitednemt.com</u>

Turnagain Social Club | turnagainsocialclub.com

Private

Alaska Yellow Dispatch | alaskayellowdispatch.com

BAC Transportation | <u>bactrans.com</u>

Muni RideShare Vanpooling | <u>muni.org/Departments/transit/ShareARide</u>

University of Alaska Anchorage Parking Services

Transportation Needs Assessment

The Coordinated Plan Update's Transportation Needs Assessment evaluated how well current services are meeting community needs—particularly for older adults, people with disabilities, low-income residents, and those in rural areas—by identifying gaps, barriers, and issues of availability, affordability, and reliability. Utilizing surveys, interviews, data analysis, and community feedback, the assessment provides a foundation for system improvements.

Key themes and needs that emerged during the assessment include:

	Theme	Key Needs		
9	Access to Key Destinations	Shopping, Grocery, BankingSocial OutingsMedical/Dental/Wellness Appointments		
G	Service Reliability and Timeliness	Real-time arrival informationImproved bus scheduling and frequency		
A	Safety Concerns	Better bus stop amenities and lightingIncreased security presence		
	Accessibility to Paratransit & Alternative Mobility Options	 Expanded AnchorRIDES services Dedicated senior and disability transportation options Door-to-door services 		
i	Educational Outreach and Information Access	 Simplified communication of transit options Access to information in multiple languages and formats 		
\$	Affordability and Economic Impact	 Discounted fares for low-income, senior, and disabled individuals Subsidized programs for employers and employees 		

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2018 Coordinated Plan Review

Purpose of the Review

The 2025 Update built upon the 2018 Coordinated Plan by updating data, incorporating lessons learned, and addressing significant changes in demographics, economic conditions, and transportation systems since 2018. This review process was critical for ensuring the updated plan reflected post-pandemic realities, integrated the latest census and American Community Survey data, and accounted for shifts in funding, coordination efforts, and service delivery. The following table provides the current status of recommendations from the 2018 plan.

2018 Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Work Together as a Community

The 2018 plan called for the creation of a standing human services coordinating committee, but progress stalled due to lack of structure, unclear leadership, and pandemic disruptions. Although an Interagency Committee was briefly convened in 2019, it dissolved without establishing sustainable processes. Moving forward, formalizing a committee with clear charters, meeting norms, and priority projects remains a central need.

Recommendation 2: Build an Inclusive Transportation Network

This recommendation saw the most success. While a dedicated plan for mobility for seniors and persons with disabilities was not produced, the 2020 *Transit on the Move* plan (the transit plan for the City of Anchorage) emphasized inclusivity by tracking service impacts on vulnerable groups. Engagement efforts included 33 public events, and surveys such as the AnchorRIDES Customer Satisfaction Survey provided demographic insights. These steps improved alignment between services and the needs of seniors, people with disabilities, low-income households, and youth.

Recommendation 3: Grow and Share Funding for Human Services Transportation

This effort was largely unfulfilled. While opportunities were identified, such as partnerships with the VA's Veteran Transportation Service and the state Medicaid Non-emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) program, progress was hindered by lack of local examples, dedicated staff, and pandemic-era funding constraints. Strategic funding partnerships—especially for medical transportation—remain a priority area for renewed focus.

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Community Engagement

Public engagement was a foundation of the 2025 Anchorage Coordinated Plan Update.

Around Anchorage 2025 put riders, providers, and other stakeholders into a central position in the formation of the Coordinated Plan. Surveys of riders and stakeholders, and direct input from the Transportation Working Group ensured that the plan reflected the lived experiences of Anchorage residents and the professional expertise of transportation providers. Themes drawn from these sources became the foundations of the plan, showing the common goals for the human services transportation network.

The TWG was formed by selecting representatives from the major human services transportation providers in Anchorage as well as key organizations that regularly interact with this network, including AnchorRIDES and People Mover riders, and transit advocates. Their roles were to contribute ideas during two workshops, to solicit input from their constituents, and to assist in implementing the plan's recommendations.

Working Group Themes. Contributors emphasized the need for stronger coordination across agencies, led by a dedicated mobility coordinator. Equity and inclusion were recurring themes, with a focus on fair access, improved safety, and clearer communication.



Rider Survey Themes. The Rider Survey received 161 responses. Riders highlighted practical, day-to-day barriers such as limited service hours, affordability, and inaccessible routes. Safety was a significant concern, particularly during winter or after dark, with calls for better lighting, shelters, and extended service hours. Many also requested real-time information for reliable trip planning.

Provider Survey Themes. The 14 organizations that participated in the Provider Survey raised system-level challenges, including insufficient funding, workforce shortages, and weak interagency collaboration. Respondents stressed the need for shared tools, fare assistance programs, and consistent infrastructure maintenance—particularly snow removal at stops and along sidewalks.

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Shared Priorities

Across all engagement efforts, eight core priorities emerged:

- 1. Establish a mobility coordination entity.
- 2. Improve infrastructure and accessibility.
- 3. Expand service hours and trip types.
- 4. Enhance affordability.
- 5. Increase rider communication.
- 6. Create shared tools and directories.
- 7. Streamline and expand funding access.
- 8. Support workforce development.



Goals and Strategies

Developed collaboratively with the Transportation Working Group (TWG), the 2025 Anchorage Coordinated Plan Update identifies six goals that reflect the area's most pressing transportation needs and opportunities. These goals are rooted in recurring themes identified through community engagement. Together, they form a framework for action over the next five years, guiding investments and policies toward a more reliable, equitable, and resilient transit system.

Goal 1: Safety and Reliability

Maintain transit assets, improve pedestrian safety, add shelters and lighting, reduce wait times, and deploy trained staff for security.

Goal 2: Clear Communication and Outreach

Provide real-time, multilingual, and accessible service information through both digital and non-digital channels and expand coordination with health and human services providers.

Goal 3: Equitable Access

Improve sidewalks, lighting, and routes to essential services; keep fares affordable; and expand cashless options while maintaining inclusive payment alternatives.

Goal 4: Workforce Recruitment and Retention

Strengthen operator recruitment and retention with incentives and training, enhance coordination with Medicaid and care providers, and engage staff through surveys and listening sessions.

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Goal 5: Technology Integration

Expand real-time bus tracking, interactive scheduling, and safety surveillance; improve digital accessibility; implement cashless fare systems with inclusive alternatives.

Goal 6: Sustainable Funding and Smart Investments

Diversify funding streams, pursue grants and partnerships, establish a dedicated revenue source, and use data-driven planning to ensure resilience and efficiency.

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Strategies

The development of strategies for the 2025 Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan began with the first Transportation Working Group (TWG) workshop in June 2025. Participants engaged in structured discussions and breakout sessions to identify community needs and opportunities across key themes, including safety, accessibility, communication, workforce capacity, and funding. These inputs—later refined in a second workshop and supplemented by survey feedback—shaped the strategic direction of the plan, ensuring it reflects both expert and community perspectives.

Plan Strategies: Needs and Opportunities

Identified Needs	Identified Opportunities		
Winter safety and reliability improvements: heated or sheltered stops, better snow removal, sidewalk maintenance, and enhanced lighting.	Specialized and flexible services: same-day AnchorRIDES, plus smaller buses running more frequently.		
Improved access to key services: closer stops or new routes to hospitals, healthcare centers, supportive housing, food sources, and senior facilities.	Partnerships: with Alaska Native Corporations, healthcare providers, senior councils, and food banks to expand reach.		
Better rider information and communication: multilingual resources, real-time updates, and non-digital options for seniors.	Community engagement and education: listening sessions, "bus buddy" programs, travel training, and outreach at markets and food banks.		
Workforce capacity: additional bus drivers, maintenance staff, and care coordinators to meet demand and maintain service quality.	Technology integration: real-time bus location, interactive scheduling, cashless payment, plus senior-friendly technology with training support.		
Equitable fare access: discounted/free passes for low-income riders, seniors, and people with disabilities; sliding scale pricing.	Creative funding: grants, strategic partnerships, dedicated funding streams, and managed advertising revenue.		

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Strategic Themes

The strategies developed for the 2025 Anchorage Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan are grounded in community feedback and working group collaboration. They reflect a shared commitment to building a safe, reliable, and equitable transit system for Anchorage residents. Organized into six major themes, the strategies provide a framework for addressing barriers, expanding opportunities, and ensuring sustainable improvements.

Theme 1: Safety & Security

- **Increase visible security** at transit facilities and on buses to deter crime and build rider confidence.
- **Install cameras and improve lighting** at bus stops to enhance visibility and reduce vandalism.
- Enhance stop safety and winter accessibility through better design, snow and ice removal, and clear sightlines.
- **Provide heated shelters or warming stations** at high-traffic stops to protect health during extreme cold.
- **Embed safety across operations**, ensuring both riders and drivers are supported year-round.

Theme 2: Communication & Outreach

- **Standardize educational messaging** across platforms for clarity and consistency.
- Provide accessible, multilingual materials in both digital and print formats.
- **Create a universal resource directory** to simplify transit navigation and connect riders to services.
- **Expand real-time communication** with apps showing bus locations and arrival times.
- Coordinate with medical providers for hospital discharges, appointments, and patient visits.
- **Improve transparency** with more reliable rider communications during service disruptions.
- Provide travel information packets to out-of-town patients before arrival.

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Theme 3: Infrastructure & Accessibility

- **Expand sidewalks with safety buffers** and improve pedestrian routes to transit.
- **Increase lighting** along sidewalks and stops to support safety in dark winter conditions.
- Develop a snow removal and maintenance plan to ensure safe, reliable access year-round.
- **Design barrier-free pathways** between bus stops and destinations to serve riders with mobility challenges.
- Improve transit access to food sources, such as grocery stores and food banks.
- Coordinate transportation with healthcare needs, including waiver navigation.
- Offer senior-friendly tools and support, such as simplified devices and large-print guides.

Theme 4: Driver/Workforce Retention & Training

- **Hire additional care coordinators** to support riders navigating eligibility processes.
- Create hiring and retention incentives to attract and keep bus operators.
- Address workforce shortages among drivers, maintenance, and support staff.
- Hire dedicated staff for coordination and data management, improving accountability.
- **Provide targeted training** for bus and paratransit drivers to better support diverse rider needs.

Theme 5: Technology Integration

- **Implement real-time bus tracking** to give riders accurate location and timing.
- **Expand security camera program to more locations** to deter crime in high-traffic areas.
- Develop an interactive paratransit scheduling tool for AnchorRides.

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- **Tailor technology for accessibility**, ensuring usability for older adults, people with disabilities, and non-English speakers.
- Offer senior-friendly features such as large fonts, voice navigation, and plain language.
- **Provide non-digital backups** for riders without smartphones.
- **Host community training sessions** to help riders adopt new apps and digital payment tools.

Theme 6: Funding, Financial Sustainability & Affordability

- Pursue diverse funding sources, including grants and partnerships.
- **Establish a dedicated transit funding stream** for long-term stability.
- **Expand bus advertising** to generate supplemental revenue.
- **Offer discounted passes** through nonprofit partners to support vulnerable populations.
- **Maximize economic efficiency** by improving agency transparency, accountability, and performance.

These strategies provide a comprehensive roadmap for strengthening Anchorage's human services transportation system. By addressing safety, communication, accessibility, workforce development, technology, and financial sustainability, the plan sets clear priorities for action. The emphasis on coordination and equity ensures that transit improvements directly respond to community needs, creating a safer, more reliable, and inclusive system for all riders.

Plan Implementation and Funding Sources

The implementation plan translates the proposed strategies into an actionable framework by assigning priorities, timelines, and rankings. Strategies were informed by public engagement and the Transportation Working Group, then prioritized into high, medium, and long-term rankings to guide near- and long-term decision-making.



HIGH-PRIORITY strategies include foundational investments and programs identified as critical to address immediate needs within the next 1–2 years. These efforts focus on closing urgent service gaps and building coordination among regional partners.

MEDIUM-PRIORITY strategies remain important but are not considered the most urgent. Some may rely on the successful rollout of high-priority initiatives, while others were added later in the process and await further discussion before final reclassification.

LONG-TERM PRIORITY strategies address systemic and structural challenges—such as the impacts of demographic shifts and equity issues—that require ongoing attention and integration into all future transportation planning.

Strategy Implementation Champions

The project team facilitated a discussion with the working group to identify which agencies would take the lead or provide support for implementing specific strategies. While some agencies volunteered as champions, the sign-up process was not complete by the time the plan was finalized. To address this, the team created a shared online table where agencies can continue to volunteer and track their roles. This "Strategy Champions" document will remain a living resource for the Municipality of Anchorage and the Transportation Working Group, allowing ongoing updates and accountability for strategy implementation.

The following recommendations were ranked as the highest priorities by the Transportation Working Group:

Strategy	Timeline	Priority	Overall Ranking
Strategy 1d. Improve winter weather safety at bus stops.	MT	HIGH	1

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Strategy	Timeline	Priority	Overall Ranking
Strategy 2d. Provide real-time updates on bus location and arrival times via a mobile app.	IT	HIGH	1
Strategy 3d. Design and maintain accessible, safe pathways between bus stops.	LT	HIGH	1
Strategy 4b. Create hiring and retention incentives to recruit and retain bus operators.	ST	HIGH	1
Strategy 5a. Implement real-time bus location data to better inform riders	LT	HIGH	1
Strategy 5d. Tailor technology to meet the needs of diverse audiences, including individuals with disabilities and language barriers.	ST	HIGH	1
Strategy 6a. Pursue additional funding sources (grants, strategic partnerships) for providers.	ST	HIGH	1

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Implementation Steps

The full list of implementation steps identified by the Transportation Working Group is as follows:



Prioritize and phase recommendations



Define roles and responsibilities



Assign strategy implementation champions



Develop clear action steps



Establish performance metrics



Identify funding and resources



Set timelines and milestones



Engage community partners and the public



Monitor and report progress

Funding Sources for Strategy Implementation

Anchorage's efforts to improve human services transportation continue to face funding constraints, even as demand grows—particularly among seniors, whose 80+ population is projected to **triple over the next three decades.**



Federal Funding

Federal programs remain the backbone of support: Medicaid's Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT), the Veterans Transportation Service, and the Older Americans Act fund essential services. In addition, FTA programs such as Section 5310 (approximately \$277K in 2025) and Section 5339 (about \$667K annually) provide targeted funding for vehicles, buses, and facilities. Recent federal investments under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) have also significantly expanded overall transit funding.

State and Local Funding

At the state level, Alaska DOT&PF and the Department of Health manage federal programs and Medicaid waivers, with the state contributing \$700K in 2023 for match requirements. Locally, the Municipality of Anchorage leverages general funds and service contracts, with additional support from the Alaska Mental Health Trust, Nutrition/Transportation/Support Services, and Medicaid home- and community-based waivers. National technical assistance centers such as NADTC and NCMM also offer competitive grants for innovation and planning.

Challenges and Opportunities

Despite these resources, funding challenges remain. Most allocations are categorical and inflexible, leaving certain populations underserved. To meet future needs, Anchorage will need to:

- Maximize federal and state opportunities
- Expand grant-seeking efforts
- Pool resources across agencies
- Strengthen partnerships

These actions will help ensure equitable and sustainable transportation for seniors, individuals with disabilities, and other underserved residents.

The Road Ahead

Ongoing public engagement and stakeholder collaboration will be central to advancing the Anchorage Region's Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan.



Future Considerations

- Establishing annual progress reporting
- Clarifying lead agencies for implementation
- Adopting performance measures to track success

The plan also recognizes the importance of emerging technologies—such as microtransit, shared micromobility, and partnerships with companies like Uber and Lyft. Ensuring alignment across regional mobility and planning efforts will be essential, supported by ongoing TWG meetings and the creation of implementation committees.

Next Steps

The successful implementation of this plan depends on continued collaboration and regular communication between the MOA and the TWG. Establishing consistent meeting intervals—bi-monthly or quarterly—will provide the structure needed to advance funding, implementation, and coordination strategies.

Role of the Transportation Working Group

Advisory Input

The TWG played a central role in shaping this plan through surveys, workshops, and online sessions. Members expressed strong interest in continued collaboration, and quarterly meetings are recommended to maintain momentum and identify opportunities to advance the Around Anchorage 2025 Plan.



Moving from Plan to Action

Through consistent engagement, the TWG can transform this plan from concept to reality. Regular meetings will provide a forum to share expertise, build partnerships, and test new coordination models. The TWG will be

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central to building a more efficient, accessible, and sustainable human services transportation system for Anchorage.

Opportunities for Collaboration

Plan Involvement

Survey responses highlighted several promising initiatives that can strengthen coordination and expand resources:

 Regional Repository of Services – Led by MOA, with support from the Alaska Commission on Aging and Catholic Social Services



- Joint Grant Writing and Funding Led by MOA, the National Association of Social Workers, and Senior Voice Alaska
- Needs Assessments Supported by Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center, MOA, and Turnagain Social Club
- Resource Pooling Broad partner interest in combining funds and coordinating transportation services
- Data Collection and Reporting Led by MOA and Turnagain Social Club

Other opportunities—such as shared driver training, vehicle maintenance, or fueling facilities—seek local champions. These may require the TWG to explore peer-region models before implementation.