

Issue: DDAN ISSUE REPORT: TRANSPORTATION

Issue Description:

Public transportation in and around New Jersey is generally limited, but especially for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). The same can be said for private transportation services such as Uber or Lyft.

One of the most broadly used public transportation services for NJ residents with I/DD, Access Link, must be expanded. At this time, Access Link shuttles and buses do not cross state or county lines, yet the state Department of Transportation has never given a satisfactory reason why that is the case. Such restrictions should be lifted and the Access Link program should be expanded. In addition, the state should explore alternative options to Access Link, such as partnerships with Uber and Lyft.

Ultimately, this comes down to allocating resources appropriately. When allocating “state-only dollars”, more funding needs to be devoted to public transportation for individuals with I/DD. In addition, the Department of Transportation would do well to conduct a thorough reassessment of the number of riders with I/DD using transportation in the state, the times and locations in which transportation is most heavily needed, and then redistribute funding and resources appropriately.

Access to transportation is essential for people to live their lives. The issue is critical for people with disabilities as many people do not drive and need accommodations in order to use public transportation. The State of New NJ Transit’s ADA Paratransit, Access Link was established to provide public transportation to people with disabilities who are unable to use the local bus service according to the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). Unfortunately, the system is limited by: 1) geography, 2) cash payment requirements, 3) a one-day reservation requirement and, 4) availability of NJ Access Link.

There are a number of private transportation providers, however, access to this information is inconsistent and not immediately available. NJfindaride.org provides a good platform to find transportation. However, the system is not widely known and is additionally limited by incomplete data.

Issue Action Items:

1. State/Federal level – Expand NJ Access Link system. Conclude NJ Transit’s pilot program regarding debit card payments that ties into Medicaid reimbursement. NJ Access Link’s pilot program began in October

2018 and includes online access and well as EZ-Wallet, an electronic fair options. It is unclear if EZ Wallet can be linked to a DDD budget.

2. State/Federal level – expand the NJ Access Link debit pilot program to private transportation systems.
3. State/Federal – Partner with private transportation systems with a clear record of access such as Uber and Lyft. There are two companies Attain and Gain and PennReach who act as facilitators for people dependent on DDD funds. The cost is \$2.40 to \$3.00 per mile.
4. Expand NJfindaride.org
 - a. NJ Find a Ride should be included in Support Coordinator education.
 - b. Expand ride service provider description to include Medicaid approval.

Next Steps:

1. Complete NJ Access Links’ efforts to introduce a debit card system tied to Medicaid. Identify partners to invest in a model that will duplicate Uber or Lyft’s mobile access.
2. Expand 211.org.
3. Start education process for support coordinators.
4. Encourage Medicaid eligibility for transportation providers. A review of 211.org shows a number of transportation options available to people with disabilities. However, it is unclear if these providers are approved by DDD. That process starts with Medicaid eligibility.

1 2015 DDD Quality Improvement Stakeholder Report

https://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/ddd/documents/stakeholder_input_report_on_quality_improvement.pdf

2 CQL – 5 Factors of Quality (<https://c-q-l.org/files/2017Documents/CQL-Personal-Outcome-Measures-Factors-And-Indicators.pdf>)