FTA

FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration

REPORT SUMMARY

Accessible Transit Services for All

Background

Ensuring the provision of accessible transit for all requires that both accessible fixed-route transit services and ADA complementary paratransit services be provided. Significant progress has been made on both since the passage of the ADA in 1990, but challenges remain, including the provision of high-quality, cost-effective, and sustainable ADA paratransit. Between 1999 and 2012, demand for ADA paratransit increased from 68 million trips per year to 106 million trips per year, and the average nationwide cost per trip increased from $13.76 to $32.74. This report presents successful strategies for providing high-quality, cost-effective, and sustainable ADA paratransit service and describes examples of inclusive service designs that can be used to effectively meet the transit needs of all riders.

Objectives

The primary purpose of this study was to research the provision of ADA paratransit and identify successful strategies that can be used by transit agencies to improve the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of these services. A second purpose was to identify successful examples of alternative, inclusive service designs that can be implemented by transit agencies to ensure more accessible transportation for all riders.

Findings and Conclusions

Significant improvement has been made since the passage of the ADA in the provision of transportation services for all riders; the provision of ADA paratransit services has been an integral part of this success.

Detailed information about the current operation of ADA paratransit services was obtained. A number of approaches for improving ADA paratransit cost-efficiency were identified, and successful examples of alternative, inclusive service designs were documented. These approaches were based on a review of relevant literature, a national survey of transit agencies providing ADA paratransit services, a roundtable discussion involving selected managers of ADA paratransit services, case studies of transit agencies that documented successful practices for operating cost-efficient and quality ADA paratransit services, and input from the disability community, including ADA paratransit riders.

The message of the study is that operating quality, cost-effective ADA paratransit starts with selecting a service design and matching the design with appropriate performance standards and performance monitoring. If services are contracted out, it is important that the procurement and contracting process foster competition, minimize contingency costs, identify and detail provider costs, and match the method of payment with the service design.

Good operating procedures and use of advanced technologies also can improve both the service quality and cost-efficiencies of ADA paratransit. Case studies found that the unit (per trip) costs of ADA paratransit service was 21–36% below the national average at transit agencies that effectively used these strategies and techniques.

The study identified a number of short-term and longer-term strategies that can be used by transit agencies to improve the cost-efficiency of providing quality ADA paratransit service, as well as innovative services that can be implemented to provide cost-effective transportation for all riders.

Among the short-term strategies are improved run-cutting, use of non-dedicated service providers, periodic fine-tuning of travel speed settings, improved recruitment and training of drivers, greater use of advanced technologies, and improved procurement and contracting to promote greater competition and lower costs.

Longer-term strategies include reviewing and revising underlying service designs and implementation of innovative transit services such as community bus services, coordinated paratransit programs, and general public dial-a-ride services.

Benefits

This study identified numerous strategies that can be used to provide more cost-efficient ADA paratransit service without reducing service quality. It also identified several examples of new, inclusive service designs that have been successfully implemented. Transit agencies should consider these strategies as a way to continue to provide cost-effective and quality transportation for all.

Project Information

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This research project was conducted by Marilyn Golden of the Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund (DREDF) in collaboration with David Chia of The Collaborative, Buffy Ellis of KFH Group, and Russell Thatcher of TranSystems Corporation. For more information, contact FTA Transportation Program Specialist Charlene Wilder at (202) 366-1077, Charlene.wilder@dot.gov. All research reports can be found at **www.fta.dot.gov/research**.