

Navigating Tribal Transportation Funding

Overview

Who: This resource was developed for federally recognized tribes. It supports the Administration for Community Living's (ACL's) [Older Americans Act \(OAA\) Title VI](#) program directors and grantees.

What: This resource describes opportunities available to improve transportation services, including grant opportunities and service coordination strategies.

Why: As members of the [Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility \(CCAM\)](#), ACL and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) are collaborating to improve transportation coordination for tribal grantees.

Background

Public transportation, especially in rural and tribal areas, is crucial for connecting people to jobs, education, healthcare, and more. More affordable and reliable transportation options can improve people's quality of life.

The CCAM is a federal interagency council working to coordinate [human services transportation](#) funding. The [CCAM members](#) work together to promote effective and efficient transportation options to serve the needs of its three targeted populations: people with disabilities, older adults, and individuals of low income.

Together, the CCAM members administer [132 federal programs](#) which may fund human services transportation for CCAM's targeted populations, including ACL and FTA programs.

Federal Fund Braiding

[Federal fund braiding](#) is when federal funds from one grant program are used to fulfill the local match requirement of another federal grant. Typically, permission is granted through statute. In addition to statutory authority, the transportation activity must be eligible under both programs and benefit both programs' grantees.

Did you know? ACL grantees may use Older Americans Act (OAA) Title VI (Nutrition and Supportive Services Grant) funding as local match to meet FTA's match requirements for grant programs, such as [Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program](#) or [Section 5311 Formula Grants for Rural Areas](#) (see Figure 1 above). Funds can be used for eligible coordination activities, including those in Figure 2 below.

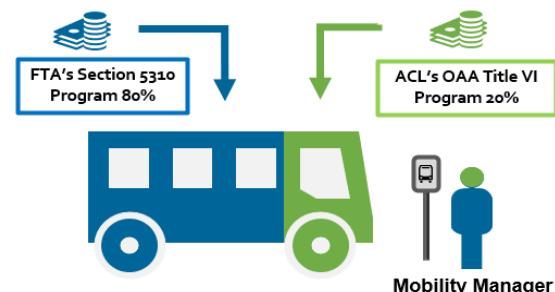


Figure 1. Federal Fund Braiding Visual



	Program Name	Coordination Activities			
		Meal Delivery	Transit Fares/Vouchers	Operating Vehicles	Vehicle Purchase
FTA	5310	✓	✓	✓	✓
	5311	✓	✓	✓	✓
	5311(c)(1)(B)	✓	✓	✓	✓
	5339(a)	✓	✗	✗	✓
	ICAM	✓	✗	✗	✓
	5339(b)	✓	✗	✗	✓
	5339(c)	✓	✗	✗	✓
	5311(c)(1)(A)	✓	✓	✓	✓
ACL	OAA Title VI	✓	✓	✓	✓

Key

✓	Eligible coordination activity
✗	Ineligible coordination activity

Figure 2. Eligible Coordination Activities. More information on the FTA programs can be found starting on page 5.

Coordinated Transportation

Coordinated transportation involves multiple entities working together to deliver one or more components of a transportation service to increase capacity. Coordinated transportation includes the shared use, incidental use, or charter of project property.

Incidental use allows FTA grant recipients to permit the use of their federally funded assets (like a van, bus, transit hub, etc.) by another entity. The non-transit activity may not reduce or limit transit service by the grant recipient. Whereas shared use allows an entity, separate from the recipient, to formally share the use of project property.

Additionally, charter service is the exclusive use of a bus or van for transporting groups of people.

Note: Incidental and shared use of federally funded assets is permitted for recipients of funding under all FTA grant programs.

Examples of the coordinated use of federally funded assets (real property and equipment) are included below:



Commuter Parking Lot (Real Property)

A commuter parking lot that has high traffic/utilization on Monday-Friday is used as a mobile food pantry on weekends.



Vehicle Sharing (Equipment)

A van, purchased with FTA funding (e.g. FTA's Section-5311), is currently operated by ABC Nonprofit Organization, a sub-recipient to the state department of transportation. ABC operates Monday – Friday. The local OAA Title VI program uses the vehicle on weekends for meal delivery.



Transporting People and Meals (Equipment)

Tribal Meals on Wheels (MoW) enters into a partnership with a Section-5310 eligible organization, such as a local Tribal Area Agency on Aging (AAA), and submits a joint application for a shared use vehicle. The shared use application would outline when the AAA would use the vehicle to transport tribal elders, and the MoW would use the vehicle to provide meals to tribal elders.



Federal Grant Opportunities

Both FTA and ACL fund grant programs that may be used to address transportation barriers and improve the availability and efficiency of transportation for tribal elders. Two of these programs are listed below.

FTA

FTA's [Section 5310 Program](#) is dedicated to improving mobility for older adults and people with disabilities by removing barriers to transportation services and expanding transportation mobility options. See below for more specific program information for tribal grantees.

- **Tribal Eligibility:** Federally recognized tribes may apply directly to FTA for Section 5310 funds that a state, local government authority, or designated recipient has awarded to the tribe. For more information, see "Tribes as Direct Recipients" on page III-4 of [Section 5310 Program Guidance C 9070.1H](#).
 - **Additional Unique Eligibility:** A person whose addiction to drugs poses a substantial limitation on one or more major life activities is a person with a disability and is eligible to receive transportation through the Section 5310 program, including to a drug treatment center.
- **Match Requirements:** 80/20 Capital; 50/50 Operating.
 - **Capital:** Capital expenses may include purchasing or leasing equipment, such as a bus or other vehicle, and leasing a public transportation facility.*
 - **Operating:** Operating expenses include costs needed to operate, maintain, and manage a public transportation system, such as driver salaries and fuel.*
- **Funding:** Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 apportionment totaled \$438.2 million (increasing through FY26 due to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law). More detail can be found in the [Section 5310 Fact Sheet](#).

ACL

ACL's [Older Americans Act \(OAA\) Title VI Program](#) provides Part A/B and/or Part C grants for the provision of nutrition, supportive services, and caregiver support services for American Indian, Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian elders. Title VI Part A/B funds also can be used for a variety of transportation services and related expenses.

- **Tribal Eligibility:** Federally recognized tribes.
- **Match Requirements:** None.
- **Funding:** FY24 funding totaled \$50.3 million (\$38.3 million for supportive and nutrition services, and \$12 million for family caregivers).



Figure 3. Transportation Provider in Tribal Neighborhood (credit: FTA Technical Assistance Center)

*View more activities in 49 U.S.C. 5302(4).



Relevant Resources, Technical Assistance, and Federal Funding Opportunities

FTA funds technical assistance, training, and research resource programs through national nonprofit organizations across many areas to improve public transportation, which includes supporting the transportation needs of people experiencing substance abuse challenges.

CCAM Program Inventory and Federal Fund Braiding Guide

Originally published in 2019, the updated CCAM Program Inventory includes 132 federal programs that may provide funding for human services transportation. In accordance with the 2023 – 2026 CCAM Strategic Plan, this iteration of the program inventory includes information on local match requirements and federal fund braiding eligibility for each respective program. Additional information on federal fund braiding to meet local match requirements can be found in the updated CCAM Federal Fund Braiding Guide on the CCAM webpage.

2023 – 2026 CCAM Strategic Plan

The CCAM's plan prioritizes expanding safe and efficient transit, providing affordable mobility options and sets a framework for collaboration among CCAM grantees at all levels and across jurisdictions.

The CCAM TA Center (CCAM-TAC) is a national technical assistance center funded through a cooperative agreement with FTA. The CCAM-TAC is supported by a federal agency partner advisory group. The strategic goal of the Center is to support CCAM members, federal agencies, their grantees, partners, and stakeholders in improving transportation access for people with disabilities, older adults, and individuals of low income.



The National Rural Transit Assistance Program (National RTAP) is a national technical assistance center funded through a cooperative agreement with FTA. National RTAP creates rural and tribal transit solutions through technical assistance, collaboration, free training, and transit industry materials.



The Accessible Transportation Resource Center (ATRC) is a national technical assistance center funded through a cooperative agreement with ACL. ATRC works to develop and promote strategies that make transportation services more accessible for people with disabilities, older adults, family caregivers, and others in their support networks.



Federally recognized Indian tribes or Alaska Native villages, groups, or communities as identified by the [U.S. Department of the Interior \(DOI\) Bureau of Indian Affairs \(BIA\)](#) are eligible applicants or recipients for [numerous FTA programs](#), some of which are outlined below. FTA awards funds in competitive and formula grants.

Formula

[Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program – Section 5310](#)

- Supports transportation services planned, designed, and carried out to meet the special transportation needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities in all areas – large urbanized (over 200,000), small urbanized (50,000-200,000), and rural (under 50,000). For more information, see the [Section 5310 Program Guidance C 9070.1H](#).

[Formula Grants for Rural Areas – Section 5311](#)

- Provides capital, planning, and operating assistance to states to support public transportation in rural areas with populations of less than 50,000. For additional program details, see the [Section 5311 Fact Sheet](#). Federally recognized Tribes may apply directly to FTA for Section 5311 funds. For more information, see “Tribes as Direct Recipients” on page III-2 of [Section 5311 Program Guidance C 9040.1H](#).

[Tribal Transit Formula Grants – Section 5311\(c\)\(1\)\(B\)](#)

- Funding may be used for capital, operating, planning, and administrative expenses for public transit projects that meet the growing needs of rural tribal communities. For additional program details, see the [Section 5311 Fact Sheet](#).

[Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Formula Program – Section 5339\(a\)](#)

- Provides funding to states and transit agencies through a statutory formula to replace, rehabilitate, and purchase buses and related equipment, and to construct bus-related facilities. For additional program details, reference the [Section 5339 Fact Sheet](#).

Competitive

[Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility \(ICAM\) Grants](#)

- Innovative capital projects for transportation disadvantaged populations, which improve the coordination of transportation services and non-emergency medical transportation services. For additional program details, see the [ICAM Fact Sheet](#).

[Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Program – Section 5339\(b\) and Low or No Emission Grant Program – Section 5339\(c\)](#)

- Provides funding to replace, rehabilitate, and purchase buses and related equipment, and to construct bus-related facilities, including technological changes or innovations to modify low or no emission vehicles or facilities. Funding is provided through both formula allocations and competitive grants. For additional program details, reference the [Section 5339 Fact Sheet](#). New in FY24, streamlined requirements were introduced for federally recognized tribes requesting less than \$1 million in federal funds, making it easier for tribes with relatively small requests to apply to either or both programs.



Tribal Transit Competitive Grants – Section 5311(c)(1)(A)

- Federally recognized tribes may use the funding for capital, operating, planning, and administrative expenses for public transit projects that meet the growing needs of rural tribal communities. For additional program details, reference the [Section 5311 Fact Sheet](#).

Please reach out to the CCAM at CCAM@dot.gov with any questions, comments, or concerns.

Note: This guidance document is not legally binding in its own right and the Federal Transit Administration will not rely upon it as a separate basis for affirmative enforcement actions or other administrative penalty. Conformity with this document (as distinct from existing statutes and regulations) is voluntary only, and nonconformity will not affect rights and obligations under existing statutes and regulations.