Support Increased Funding for Specialized Transportation

STATE ISSUE BRIEF

Wisconsin Aging | Advocacy | Network

608-228-7253
www.gwaar.org/waan
emily.petersen@gwaar.org
@WAAN.ACTION

Invest in specialized transportation assistance to meet the needs of older adults and individuals with disabilities

Specialized transportation assistance – s.85.21/s.85.215

The annual 85.21 (specialized transportation assistance for counties) allocation has not increased in the last five years. From 2000 to 2022 the 60+ population increased from 909,367 to 1,519,222, a 67% increase. This trend means that **the demand for specialized transportation will continue to grow.** *Source: US Census, Population Estimates Program 2000-2022.*

Programs are making service cuts, limiting passenger rides, and/or denying transportation all together.

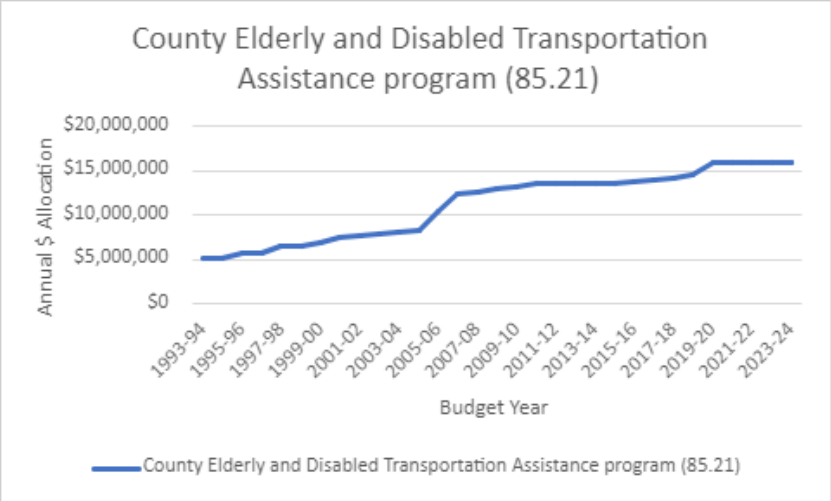
1. **Increase specialized transportation funding by 10%, approximately $1.6 million/annually for s.85.21 (counties) and $43,560/annually for s.85.215 (tribes) and incorporate annual inflationary increases for both programs** to ensure future expansion and maintenance of services.

WAAN's position: Increase funding for specialized transportation services to support the health, well-being, financial security, independence, and community engagement of Wisconsinites who do not drive by:

(1) Increasing specialized transportation funding by 10%, approximately $1.6 million/annually for s.85.21 (counties) and $43,560/annually for s.85.215 (tribes) and incorporate annual inflationary increases for both programs to ensure future expansion and maintenance of services, and

(2) Increasing the capital and operation assistance program funding for specialized transportation (s.85.22) by 20% ($220,580) to assist with operations, replacement or acquisition of new transit vehicles and expand mobility management services to meet the needs of non-drivers as they age.

These programs provide financial assistance to counties and tribes providing transportation services for seniors and/or individuals with disabilities of any age, who would not otherwise have an available or accessible method of transportation, and thereby improve and promote the maintenance of human dignity and self-sufficiency.



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Specialized transportation assistance – s.85.22

The Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program grants capital and operating projects that improve the mobility of seniors and individuals with disabilities by using federal (5310) and state Specialized Transportation Program (s.85.22) funding.

In 2024, there were 90 applications requesting $12,694,941 funds for 121 projects. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) provided $1,244,450 out of $2,032,846 requested to fund 18 Mobility Management projects at 64.3% of total project expenses. WisDOT also provided $1,620,760 out of $2,910,848 requested to fund 22 Operating projects at 56% of the total project expenses. All 5310 projects require a minimum local match. The above percentages indicate the amount WisDOT awarded out of the applicant's funding request and do not include the additional local match required of applicants. WisDOT awarded 29 vehicles at 70% of the total vehicle cost totaling $2,367,581 of the $7,751,247 requested. The applicant is responsible for paying the remaining 30% of the total vehicle cost.

Program funding requests continually exceed the available funding, resulting in some projects not being funded and others receiving partial funding awards. Consequently, programs supporting non-drivers had to make cuts to service, limit the number of trips per individual or deny transportation all together.

2. **Increase the capital and operation assistance program funding for specialized transportation (s.85.22) by 20% ($220,580) to assist with operations, replacement or acquisition of new transit vehicles and expand mobility management services needed for non-drivers**.

The specialized transportation infrastructure is critical for the non-driving public, economic growth, and overall quality of life. Specialized transportation funding and coordination:



- Supports family caregivers by enabling them to remain employed and reducing lost productivity.
- Drives economic growth by increasing livability through infrastructure investment.
- Provides access to preventive and routine healthcare.
- Reduces household costs with alternatives to buying and maintaining a personal vehicle.
- Promotes independence by increasing access to community resources.
- Increases socialization by providing opportunities to engage in the community.
- Reduces isolation and increases contact with individuals who live alone.

Find this and other WAAN issue briefs at: https://gwaar.org/issues-and-initiatives (1-30-2025)

Core member organizations

Aging and Disability Professionals Association of Wisconsin (ADPAW) • Alzheimer's Association Wisconsin Chapter Board on Aging and Long Term Care (BOALTC) • Wisconsin Adult Day Services Association (WADSA) Wisconsin Association of Area Agencies on Aging (W4A) • Wisconsin Association of Benefit Specialists (WABS) Wisconsin Association of Nutrition Directors (WAND) • Wisconsin Association of Senior Centers (WASC) Wisconsin Family and Caregiver Support Alliance (WFACSA) • Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging (WIHA) Wisconsin Senior Advocates • Wisconsin Senior Corps Association (WISCA) • Wisconsin Tribal Aging Unit Association

Mission

The Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network (WAAN) works with and for all older adults by educating community members and policy makers on priority issues while advocating for meaningful change. Learn more at https://gwaar.org/waan.