Travel Training for Student Success: The Route to Achieving Post-Secondary Student Outcomes

A Practical Guide for School Administrators developed by Easter Seals Project ACTION with contributions from Education, Disability, and Transportation Professionals
Travel Training for Student Success: The Route to Achieving Post-Secondary Student Outcomes

Introduction
Travel training is a set of services designed to teach people with disabilities how to safely and independently use fixed-route public transportation. For those students with disabilities who are unable to obtain driver's licenses, travel training can be the key to successful post-secondary outcomes. For many of these students, travel training results in increased independence, confidence, and ability to live, learn, work, and play within their communities.

High schools across the nation are recognizing the difference travel training can make in the lives of students with disabilities. Schools are connecting students in many ways with travel training services ranging from obtaining services from school district personnel to enrolling in a program offered by the local transportation provider or a human service agency. If your school is considering how to connect students to travel training services and you are interested in learning more about (1) how to get buy-in from decision-makers and (2) how to start offering travel training to your students, then these resources are designed with you in mind.

Travel Training for Student Success: The Route to Achieving Post-Secondary Student Outcomes is a primer for school administrators interested in learning how high schools across the country are connecting students to travel training services. This resource includes the following:
- A document highlighting schools and other organizations that are currently offering travel training to students with disabilities, and
- Travel Training for Student Success: The Route to Achieving Post-Secondary Student Outcomes PowerPoint Presentation.

Starting a new travel training program for students takes time, effort, and thoughtful planning. And administrators, teachers, parents, and students will express varying degrees of apprehension. Through our research with school administrators that said “yes” to travel training, we found that the following areas of concern should be proactively addressed in order to answer the related questions and get buy-in from decision-makers at the outset.
- Student safety and school liability
- Connecting travel training to the curriculum
- Determining which personnel will provide travel training
- Training the travel trainers
- Funding

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1 There are two versions of the PowerPoint presentation. The first version, Part One, addresses what travel training is, the benefits of travel training, and what school administrators are saying about travel training. The second version, Part Two, addresses how schools can offer travel training to students, the steps that need to be taken to make it happen, and the resources that are available.
It is important to keep in mind, however, that travel training initiatives can start small. In fact, most do. Many of the travel training initiatives highlighted in this publication did not require the hiring of additional staff; nor did they require the securement of new funding.

In addition, ESPA has a number of free resources that can help you get started. These include:

- Public Transportation: A Route to Freedom
- You Can Ride
- Rights & Responsibilities of Transit Customers with Disabilities
- ADA Bookmark
- Competencies for the Practice of Travel Training and Instruction
- Introduction to Travel Training Course

For additional information on these and other ESPA products and services, visit our Website at www.projectaction.org or call us at 1-800-659-6428.

The examples highlighted in this resource are not exhaustive; rather they represent a small sampling of the current state-of-the art of travel training for students.2 Some of the travel training initiatives cited have been in existence for over 30 years while others are just getting started. Although ESPA does not endorse any particular program or product, we are very appreciative of the willingness of school and agency staff to share with us the work that they are doing in the area of travel training.

If your organization’s travel training program for students was not included in this resource and you would like to be included in the next edition, please complete the Questionnaire for Organizations Providing Travel Training to Students. Completed questionnaires can be emailed, faxed, or mailed to:

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Thank you for your interest in Travel Training for Student Success: The Route to Achieving Post-Secondary Student Outcomes. We look forward to hearing about your efforts and outcomes in the future.

2 ESPA disseminated a call for information on travel training programs for students with disabilities. This was done with the assistance of the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) and the Association of Travel Instruction (ATI). (See Questionnaire for Organizations Providing Travel Training to Students).
Travel Training for Student Success: The Route to Achieving Post-Secondary Student Outcomes

Model A: Schools Success Stories

BERGEN COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

Provider Type: Public School

Background:
Bergen County Special Services School District began providing travel training instruction to students in 2000, and currently provides travel training services to approximately 300 students per year.

Travel training is provided to students in order to promote independence and to provide travel to and from internships and job sites or to participate in leisure activities.

Motivation:
The primary motivation for starting the travel training program was the need to get students to workshops and internships. In addition, many of the students in the school district are unable to get drivers licenses.

How It Works:
School personnel provide travel training using public transit buses and paratransit. Classroom activities related to travel training include reading schedules, computer use, and general information. In addition, travel training is offered during summer programs.

How It’s Funded:
This travel training program is funded through the School District’s general operating budget.

Staffing:
There are 70 or more employees district-wide who provide travel training instruction as part of their job. All staff that provide travel training are overseen by certified staff. Each program varies with the time devoted to travel training. According to Frank Appleton, more time is devoted to travel training during work/internship days.

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BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

Provider Type: Public School

Background:
Birmingham City Schools have provided travel training to approximately 200 students with disabilities since the travel training program was started in 2003.
Sallie Lawrence of Birmingham City Schools noted: “We have met little resistance from parents when presenting the (travel training) program to them. They see it as a way to make their children independent and free to move about the community. Our school administrators have always been pleased with the results the program yields and the cost-effectiveness of the program.”

Birmingham City Schools’ travel training program is embedded in their transition course curriculum. The Alabama State Department of Education has recognized the travel training program as being a “best practice” and the program is often highlighted at state conferences.

Motivation:
The primary motivation for starting a travel training program in Birmingham City Schools was to connect students with employment through increasing access to transportation.

According to Ms. Lawrence, “After receiving a survey of graduates from our system, we realized the number one reason students with disabilities were not currently being employed was transportation. Previous students stated this was the greatest barrier for them to maintain employment. We looked at our resources in our community and determined that travel training using public transportation would be an incredible addition to our transition program.”

Terry Hyche, Special Education Specialist for Birmingham City Schools noted the following: “My first reaction (to travel training) was one of great interest. My experience with job placement of high school students in Birmingham made me aware of the need for travel options. Many students were able to locate a job and perform the duties of the job. Many of the students lost jobs because they were unable to get to the job in cases when there was no adult to drive them to work or in cases where the car did not run.”

Speaking to other school administrators about travel training, Mr. Hyche said: “Make this happen! Travel training makes a difference in the lives of our students. We started the program as a way of increasing opportunities for students to access employment. We opened another world for some students. One student, upon being trained told his teacher, ‘Now I can get a haircut by myself.’ What a difference travel training made in the life of this student.”

How It Works:
Students are taught individually and in small groups, depending on their learning styles. After classroom instruction is completed, students are taken into the community for a “real-life” training experience. A portion of the transition services allows students to go to a satellite classroom. Students are encouraged to use public transportation to get to and from the training program. In addition, students use the training they receive to travel to places for leisure, work, home, etc.

How It’s Funded:
Originally, the travel training program was funded through a grant from the state legislature. After that, the school system began using federal funds designated for transportation to purchase tokens and passes for students.

Staffing:
There are four travel trainers on staff. In addition, teachers and para-educators provide support when appropriate.

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CHULA VISTA, CALIFORNIA

Provider Type: Public School

Background:
Sweetwater Union High School District in Chula Vista, CA recently formalized its travel training program. Travel training is currently provided to students individually by travel trainers and in small to medium-sized groups by travel trainers or by teachers in transition programs. Approximately 45 students receive travel training each year.

Motivation:
Lorna Berliner, an Orientation & Mobility Specialist, recognized the need to provide travel training to students with disabilities; however, she was not able to provide the training herself due to her current commitment to provide O&M instruction to students with visual impairments. She developed a curriculum, a referral process, and documentation for teachers to be able to provide travel training themselves.

How It Works:
Classes with students with mild to moderate cognitive delay are provided travel training in groups of up to seven and these groups go on occasional outings. Within transition classes, students take public transportation in small groups to work sites. Within the Points of Transition classes, students are trained to take public transportation independently first from home to the program and then to the work site and recreational areas. The travel trainers train students that do not fit into the above mentioned programs and who need to take public transportation to a job site or secondary school.

How It’s Funded:
This travel training program is funded by the School District’s general operating budget.

Staffing:
The school district employs three Orientation & Mobility (O&M) Specialists/Travel Trainers. The travel trainers provide one-on-one travel training. In addition, certified teachers in transition programs provide group travel training.

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DETROIT, MICHIGAN

Provider Type: Public School

Background:
Julia Purkett, Principal of Detroit Transition Center East of the Detroit Public School System, started the school’s travel training program three years ago. The school currently provides travel training to approximately fifty to fifty-five students per year.

Motivation:
According to Ms. Purkett: “We knew that for any program, we would have to train the students how to navigate the community...Our goal is to have our students access community services, navigate their community, find entry level jobs, and be able to get there.”

How It Works:
According to Ms. Purkett, travel training is one of the services students can select. The
school offers a three semester class, which has a mobility focus. The class meets two hours in the morning and three hours in the afternoon. Through this class, students obtain their driver’s licenses or IDs and, if appropriate, receive travel training. There are two sets of students in these classes—those that receive travel training and those that receive O&M instruction.

First, students are trained to ride the school bus and, then, they are trained to use public transportation. The travel training includes both one-to-one and group instruction.

Alice Fort, a Work Study Coordinator for Detroit Public Schools, discussed strategies for addressing parents’ safety concerns. She said: “Parents are reluctant (about travel training) because of safety concerns... Traveling in groups alleviates this fear.”

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HOUSTON, TEXAS

Provider Type: Public School

Background:
According to Margo Gillum, an Employment Specialist at Jack Yates High School in Houston, TX, hundreds of students have received travel training since their travel training program began. Travel training is a district-wide program.

Motivation:
The primary motivation for starting the travel training program was the need to teach students how to use public transportation before graduation. In addition, Ms. Gillum noted: “Since I do job training, it makes sense for the students to learn how to get to and from their jobs using public transportation.”

How It Works:
The Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County, the local public transportation provider, provides Certified Teacher Freedom Passes which allow teachers to ride public transportation for free while they provide travel training to students. The passes are valid throughout the school year.

Ms. Gillum shared the following change in perspective she experienced about travel training: “I initially fought having to ride public transportation. With the push for our students to be able to move about their communities, I realized that public transportation would be their only means of transportation. For the last ten years, travel training has been at the top of my concerns.”

Ms. Gillum described how students react to travel training as well as the educational benefits of travel training: “When students
see me coming, they know they are getting ready to experience something different and outside of the classroom. Because of the community experience, my students are more excited about learning. In this travel training experience, my students learn to read, do math, and geography. Academics continue—even when they are off campus.” In Ms. Gillum’s very wise words: “A happy experience is a learning experience.”

How It’s Funded:
The Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County provides Certified Teacher Freedom Passes. In addition, this travel training program is funded by the School District’s general operating budget.

Staffing:
Ms. Gillum works together with the certified Life Skill teachers and other Employment Specialists to ensure that all travel training IEP (Individualized Education Program) objectives are met. Twenty-seven teachers provide travel training to students as part of their job responsibilities. Ms. Gillum estimates that she spends between 26 and 50 percent of her time travel training students.

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MISSION VIEJO, CALIFORNIA

Provider Type: Public School

Background:
Saddleback Valley Unified School District began its travel training program in 1988. Since then, they have provided travel training to between 700 and 1,000 students with disabilities. The travel training program is housed under the WE CARE Career Division, which stands for Work, Ethics, Careers, and Real life Experiences and the Adult Transition Program known as FUTURES.

One thing that is unique about the travel training program is that is probably the only travel training program in the United States that uses a cruise ship. The FUTURES Adult Transition Program has taken summer school students on a three-day cruise and plans to do so again this summer.

Motivation:
Roberta Menn first started providing travel training to students with disabilities in 1977. A colleague of hers developed the Individual Critical Skills Model, a precursor to what is now called transition. Ms. Menn started with trips to the supermarket and later taught students how to take the bus to the regional vocational program and to job sites. In 1988, she moved to Saddleback, where she was hired to develop a community-based program. She worked with a Regional Occupational Program (ROP). Travel training was a key component for successful job placement.

How It Works:
Ms. Menn describes the travel training services provided by the school as “one-on-one, route-specific” travel training. Training is typically completed in one to two weeks. According to Ms. Menn, there are also class trips in which students are trained as an entire class. Travel Training is also a key component of the Work Experience Program.
How It’s Funded:
According to Ms. Menn, the program is entirely grant funded. Funds are received from the State Department of Rehabilitation to work with school-age students and adults. The school also receives funding through WorkAbility 1—a program focused on pre-employment tasks. They also have a Social Security Administration Demonstration Grant.

Staffing:
There are 20 job coaches who can provide travel training on an as-needed basis. The percentage of staff time spent on travel training varies widely from 100% during peak times (September – November and January) to much less. In addition, there are community-based trips every Friday for those students between the ages of 18 and 22, in the Adult Transition Program.

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NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Provider Type: Public School

Background:
In 1970, District 75 of the New York City Department of Education started providing travel training to students with disabilities. At that time, school busing stopped at age 17 for students with moderate to severe mental retardation. The Occupational Training Centers (OTCs)—schools for students with mental retardation that prepared students for employment in sheltered workshops or competitive employment—had independent travel as a requirement. It had been demonstrated by a New York City agency that persons with moderate to severe mental retardation could learn to use public transit if provided with direct instruction.

The New York City Department of Education received funding from the New York State vocational rehabilitation agency – currently called Vocational Education Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) and formerly called New York State Office of Vocational Rehabilitation—to develop a travel training program for students with moderate to severe mental retardation.

Travel training began in two boroughs in the 1970 – 1971 school year and expanded to other boroughs and to students with other disabilities beginning in the 1971 – 1972 school year. Since 1971, the travel trainers in District 75 have provided travel training to approximately 11,000 students.

Motivation:
In 1970, school busing stopped at age 17 for students with moderate to severe mental retardation. Put simply, these students needed to get to school. In addition, the Occupational Training Centers (OTCs)—schools for students with mental retardation that prepared students for employment in sheltered workshops or competitive employment—had independent travel as a requirement.

How It Works:
The travel training services provided are comprehensive and include:

- One-to-one travel training for students
- Pre-travel instruction for students
- Technical assistance and consultation to school and agency personnel
- Professional development for school personnel
Presentations at conferences/workshops
- On-the-job training for travel trainers
- Ongoing professional development for Travel Training personnel

The direct one-to-one travel training is initiated by a referral of a student followed by parental contact, student assessment, parental conference and consent contract, environmental analysis, and the provision of one-to-one instruction.

The one-to-one training includes teaching pedestrian skills with an emphasis on street crossings, social skills and behaviors, following a route to a destination, using an alternate route to a destination, knowing what to do if lost, solving travel-related problems and working with travel contingencies, requesting assistance appropriately, and maintaining appropriate behavior. Whenever possible, students on a waiting list for travel training participate in “pre-travel instruction” that is focused on particular skills a student will need to learn, such as use of a telephone, requesting assistance, and crossing streets.

In addition to the one-to-one travel training, District 75 provides professional development for school personnel—including classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, occupational and physical therapists, speech therapists, transition coordinators, and any other personnel involved with the education of students with disabilities other than blindness. A particular emphasis of the program is working with classroom teachers to encourage the introduction of travel and transportation-related skills and behaviors in the curriculum. This can range from the introduction of purposeful movement activities for young children through teaching students how to move through the environment safely and independently to using public transit for class trips.

Ms. Groce noted the importance of engaging parents. She said: “Workshops for parents are very beneficial, especially when reaching out to parents of young children. We present options and strategies to help families build independent functioning into the daily routines of life.”

Ms. Groce also cited the importance of data collection. She said: “Data collection is essential... It is essential to collect the information, analyze the data, and use it for planning. It also helps when cost benefits can be shown that support the educational benefits and requirements of the IDEA 2004 transition section.”

Joan Washington, Principal of P811Q Marathon School in Little Neck, New York, is a strong supporter of the travel training program. She said the following: “It’s just astounding how many students CAN be travel trained...It’s a critical breakthrough when they are able to travel on their own. What’s the problem with referring and trying?”

Speaking to other school administrators about travel training Ms. Washington offered the following words of advice: “Go for it! It’s exhilarating and it’s such a positive experience for young adults to take the ultimate leap into independence. It really opens the door to options. They can’t do anything on their own if they can’t travel independently.”

Nigel Pugh, the Principal of Queens High School of Teaching, is also a strong supporter of travel training. He stated: “I had no idea how magical it (travel training) can be for kids—how their lives can be transformed...Once I spoke with kids, I learned how important it was.”

Speaking to other school administrators about travel training Mr. Pugh offered the following advice: “Do it and do it now! It
(travel training) will give your students a totally different view of themselves. It makes them feel really independent and closer to their peers... They will be ambassadors for the program and will really add to your school.”

**How It’s Funded:**
According to Ms. Groce, the Travel Training Program is funded through the tax-levy funds of the District.

**Staffing:**
There are currently 40 travel trainers employed by the New York City Department of Education. This includes 9 Travel Training teachers that are licensed, certified teachers of special education and 31 paraprofessional travel trainers that meet the qualifications for paraprofessionals under the New York State Education Department guidelines and requirements.

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**OREGON CITY, OREGON**

**Provider Type:** Public School

**Background:**
At Oregon City Senior High School, life skills teachers provide travel training to approximately six students per year. They work closely with the RideWise program—a private non-profit community service organization established to link accessible transportation with community need—through which they receive bus passes for trips and videos for use in the classroom.

**Motivation:**
The teacher who started Oregon City Senior High School’s travel training program has retired. However, according to Amy Moore, “The School District feels that it is important to train students with developmental disabilities how to access the community using public transportation since driving may not be an option. It (travel training) enables students to access vocational and recreational options throughout their adult lives.”

**How It Works:**
Life skills teachers meet their students at either the transit center or the college. The students arrive by school bus. Then, the teachers show the students which bus to get on and where to get off the bus. The teachers follow the students on the bus to ensure that they get off the bus at the correct location. This is done until the student completes the route independently on five consecutive attempts. Then the student is considered ready to travel the route independently.

In addition to individual instruction, students also travel in groups to places in the community.

**How It’s Funded:**
This travel training program is funded by the School District’s general operating budget. In addition, RideWise provides free transit passes for teachers who provide travel training.
Staff:
Both certified staff (teachers) and classified staff (instructional assistants) provide travel training as part of their job responsibilities.

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SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA

Provider Type: Public School

Background:
During the latter part of the 1970s, two Special Education teachers who were employed at Bridge View School in Saint Paul—a school that only served students with special needs—started thinking about finding ways to teach their students how to travel independently. The first teacher requested that an Orientation & Mobility (O&M) Specialist on the Saint Paul Schools Vision Team train the teacher’s students how to travel independently. None of her students had visual impairments and so the O&M Specialist felt ill-equipped to train them.

At that same time, another Special Education teacher took a group of students with cognitive disabilities out into the community to teach them a bus route to a work experience site. The teacher thought that one ride on the city bus was enough training. The next day, the teacher sent one of the higher functioning students to the job site via city bus and the student got lost.

Subsequently, the teachers and two administrators involved in programming for transition-age students recognized the growing demand for personnel to teach students with disabilities how to travel independently. They asked the O&M Specialist to assist them in writing a grant to hire an O&M Specialist who was interested in teaching non-blind students how to travel. The administrators’ justification for this new position was that transition-age students all over the district could benefit from this service.

The administrators hired an O&M Specialist mid-year. The O&M Specialist developed a curriculum, but only taught for six months before he moved to Florida. The administrators then advertised for the position, looking for an O&M Specialist who was also interested in providing this type of training.

Lydia Peterson had just graduated with a Master of Science degree in Orientation and Mobility and Travel Instruction (called Generic O&M at that time) from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in August, 1980. That same month, Ms. Peterson started teaching at Bridge View School. The need for travel instruction services became so great that the program went district-wide in 1984. The district hired a second O&M Specialist, Susan Olsson, in the late 1980s. Ms. Peterson provided Ms. Olsson with on-the-job training in travel instruction. The district also hired a Travel Trainer in the mid-1990s.

Since the travel instruction program began, approximately 1,200 students have received travel instruction.
Motivation:
In the 1970s, two visionary special education teachers decided that they wanted to teach their students how to travel independently. As the saying goes, the rest is history!

Jane Cacich, the Lead Teacher of the EMSEC Vision Program for Saint Paul Public Schools is a strong supporter of travel instruction. She said: “The greatest case for travel instruction is that it helps our students to be as independent as possible.”

How It Works:
Travel instruction services in Saint Paul Public Schools are provided in three different ways:

- Students with disabilities participate in pre-travel group classes.
- Students with disabilities participate in a transition program and learn how to travel independently to and from community job sites.
- Students with disabilities learn how to travel to their homes and recreational sites.

How It’s Funded:
Two Travel Instructor positions are funded through the Saint Paul Schools Vision Team due to their status as O&M Specialists. The Travel Trainer position is funded through Saint Paul Schools Special Education.

Staffing:
Saint Paul Public Schools employs two Travel Instructors, who are O&M Specialists, and one Travel Trainer. The Travel Instructors have teacher licensure and the Travel Trainer has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Education.

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ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

Provider Type: Public Transportation Provider

Background:
Since 2002, People Mover, the local public transportation provider, has provided travel training to 261 students with disabilities. According to Monica Hoodak, the travel training program was started with the assistance of a consultant. “We held agency meetings, went over our paratransit client files to recruit clients, and started training after plenty of outreach to the community.” People Mover staff work with existing paratransit eligible individuals, students in the schools’ life skills classes, senior citizens, human service organizations and the general public. Most students are referred to travel training through mandatory ADA in-person eligibility assessments for paratransit.

According to Ms. Hoodak, outreach is a very important ingredient for a successful travel training program. She does success stories with the media. She shared the following success story: “We trained a young man who was resistant (to the idea of travel training) at first. His mom told us that before the training she could not get him to walk across the street for the newspaper alone with her
watching out the window. He feared someone would approach him and ask for money. After the (travel) training he would answer the doorbell and go shopping on his own. He became a very independent young man.”

**Motivation:**
People Mover provides free one-to-one and group training to individuals with or without disabilities to promote independence in the community. Individuals eligible for paratransit, but able to use the fixed-route for some or all of their trips gain flexibility and reduce their transportation costs as the fare on fixed-route is less than the paratransit fare. Travel Training is one tool that helps the department manage growth of the paratransit system.

**How It Works:**
One-to-one travel training is provided to students who are referred for travel training either directly by a human services agency, a school, or through assessments for paratransit. Ms. Hoodak is the Coordinator of the travel training program and the assessor for People Mover’s paratransit program.

**How It’s Funded:**
People Mover’s Travel Training Program, including staff, equipment and vehicles is funded through FTA 5307.

**Staffing:**
The staff for People Mover’s Travel Training Program consists of one full-time coordinator and two full-time travel trainers who spend between 50 and 75% of their time travel training.

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EDMONTON, AB CANADA

**Provider Type:** Public Transportation Provider

**Background:**
The Edmonton Transit System started its travel training program in 1995 and has provided travel training to 8,000 students. According to Margaret Dorey, “We committed to purchasing only accessible vehicles, and brought in the travel training program as part of the introduction to the new fleet.”

The travel training program has three tiers. First, there is a train-the-trainer program for community organizations. Second, there is group training and information for customers. Third, there is one-on-one travel training for customers.

**Motivation:**
According to Ms. Dorey, the primary motivation for starting the travel training program was to teach people how to use their new low floor buses. Ms. Dorey said: “We had these wonderful, cutting-edge technology vehicles being added to our fleet—in fact, BECOMING our fleet—and we wanted to make sure that people knew what made them different, and how to use them. We felt that it was all very good to offer buses with easier access—without steps at the front and back doors, with kneeling and ramp features that would make boarding and disembarking easier—and with other features that would make overall use of transit better and more...
accessible, but none of it would be much good if people didn’t know HOW to use the new features.”

**How It Works:**
The train-the-trainer program provides organizations with the information they need to instruct and inform their clients about using public transit. The group training and information is designed to provide people in residential settings, group homes, recreational groups, and smaller programs with the opportunity to learn about public transit use and to try out vehicles in a low-key, low-pressure atmosphere. The one-on-one travel training is customer-focused and directed to provide the skills and practice time to learn how to use public transit.

**How It’s Funded:**
The Edmonton Transit System’s travel training program is included as a part of the regular community service program and is funded through the general operating budget. Edmonton Transit System is a municipal government department.

**Staffing:**
Edmonton Transit System has one travel trainer who spends 75% or more of her time travel training.

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**EVERETT, WASHINGTON**

**Provider Type:** Public Transportation Provider

**Background:**
In 1996, Community Transit, the local public transportation provider in Snohomish County, WA, conducted the pilot project of what is now the organization’s travel training program. Since then, they have provided travel training to approximately 440 students with disabilities.

**Motivation:**
According to Lee Schooley, the initial motivation for starting this travel training program was to “help reduce demand and costs associated with operating our paratransit services.”

**How It Works:**
Community Transit provides travel training to students on a one-on-one basis and in groups. One-on-one training is tailored to meet each student’s needs. Group trainings and classroom presentations are also available upon request. There are no formal agreements with schools. Requests from schools are addressed on an as-needed basis.

Upon request, Community Transit also provides teachers with annual bus passes for use when conducting travel training with students. Typically, between 30 and 35 passes are issued to school teachers each year.

**How It’s Funded:**
This travel training program is funded through Community Transit’s general operating funds.
Staffing:
Community Transit employs one travel trainer who spends between 26 and 50 percent of his time travel training.

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LAKE COUNTY, OHIO

Provider Type: Public Transportation Provider

Background:
Laketran serves downtown Cleveland and the largely suburban Lake County. Recently, they started a travel training program and have already trained fifteen students with disabilities. Most of the travel training originates from individual referrals.

At the time of the writing this publication, Laketran also had an agreement with Mentor High School to work with a class. According to Jessie Baginski of Laketran, “Mentor High School is very supportive of best practices and research-based practice. That is what appealed to them about this project—being on the cutting edge.”

Ms. Baginski describes Laketran’s travel training as “personalized individual or small group work sessions that allow the individual to determine what level of independence they want to pursue.” This includes crossing the street, repeat destination travel, trip planning skills, etc.

Ms. Baginski offers the following advice: “Keep in mind the big picture with all this. It’s all about living independently, but make it fun!”

Motivation:
The travel training program began as a marketing effort. According to Ms. Baginski, “We realized there was a need for an educational outreach component. When we put the word out (about travel training), the first groups that responded were from the disability community.”

Ms. Baginski added: “We wanted to take mobility for our citizens to the next level.”

How It Works:
Travel training is provided one-to-one or in small groups. Students are typically referred for the service by work study coordinators at local high schools. The training is tailored to meet the individual needs and interests of the student.

Joseph Spiccia, the Principal of Mentor High School, is a strong supporter of the travel training. He said: “This type of program (travel training) is truly meeting the needs of students who are receiving special education services. It truly prepares them to act independently.”

How It’s Funded:
Laketran’s travel training is currently funded by the public transportation provider’s general operating and marketing budgets. Laketran took money out of its advertising program budget initially to hire a travel trainer.
Ms. Baginski noted several additional benefits of the program and how it is structured and funded. She said: “One benefit is that we have changed the perception of what marketing does—we teach the community. Another benefit is that we get a really good pulse of the public perception of our service because we are out riding the bus. This has also helped with the morale of drivers because it has helped to have ‘the administration’ on the bus.”

Staffing:
Laketran has one and one-half travel trainers.

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PORTLAND, OREGON

Provider Type: Human Service Transportation Provider

Background:
Since 2004, Ride Connection—a human service transportation provider in Portland Oregon—has provided travel training to 74 individual students and to 912 students in group settings through its RideWise travel training program.

According to Mike Mullins, “When we began pursuing support for this program, we conducted research nationally and locally through surveys, documented case studies, and made site visits to well-established programs. We heard from nationally recognized leaders that travel training is an important component of a quality, coordinated transportation plan.”

Ride Connection identified organizations, schools, and independent contractors who provide some travel training; but, according to Mr. Mullins, “the degree to which travel training was provided was dependent on the instructor’s level of comfort and knowledge of the transit system.” In addition, Mr. Mullins found that there were customers “who wanted the independence afforded by public transit, but did not have a reliable source in order to learn to use the transit system in Portland.”

Motivation:
The primary motivation for Ride Connection was to develop a travel training program as part of a high quality coordination plan.

How It Works:
According to Mr. Mullins, “In many cases, teachers and support staff are able to provide travel training as part of their curriculum.” The RideWise program currently supports these efforts in 14 different school programs by providing the following:

- *A Guide to Travel Training*
- Fixed-route vehicle familiarization
- Group presentations or assistance with trips
- Personalized trip-planning assistance
- In-service presentations for teachers and staff
- One-to-one travel training

In addition, TriMet, the local public transportation provider, and Ride Connection support high school community transition programs by providing transit materials and free monthly passes during the school year for teachers/coordinators/job developers who are providing travel training. In return, they request participation in a RideWise presentation for transition staff
and submission of monthly reports on the number of trained students.

**How It’s Funded:**
The RideWise program is funded through the State of Oregon Special Transportation Fund, TriMet funding based on dollars saved through lengthening the service life of its paratransit vehicles, a Business Energy Tax Credit based on the reduction in vehicle miles traveled in single-occupant vehicles, and Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) funds.

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**WASHINGTON, DC METROPOLITAN AREA**

**Provider Type:** Public Transportation Provider

**Background:**
The Washington Area Metropolitan Transit Authority (WMATA), also referred to as Metro, serves the Washington, DC metropolitan area.

The Metro is Accessible outreach program was launched in early 2004. Travel training is a component of that program. According to Rikki Epstein of WMATA: “Travel training is a regular part of our outreach efforts. The Metro Office of ADA programs works in collaboration with all the school systems, disability organizations, and social service agencies throughout the Washington, DC metropolitan region.” Ms. Epstein describes the travel training services provided by Metro as “individualized Metro system orientations tailored to the needs of people with disabilities, as well as group Metro system orientations to familiarize people with disabilities with how to travel independently and safely on accessible public transportation.”

Since the program began in 2004, Metro has provided system orientations to approximately 1,500 students with disabilities.

**Motivation:**
The Metro is Accessible outreach program was initiated to promote Metrorail and Metrorail accessibility and to encourage people with disabilities to use fixed-route public transportation. As a component of the outreach program, it was determined that it was essential to offer free Metro system orientations in order to teach people with disabilities how to travel safely and independently on the accessible Metrobus and Metrorail systems. The goal of the travel training program is to increase travel on fixed-route public transit by people with disabilities.

**How It Works:**
According to Ms. Epstein: “Metro has developed informal relationships and partnerships with all of the school systems and with hundreds of disability organizations throughout the Washington, DC metropolitan region, and offers a wide array of resources and services in collaboration with special education teachers and transition specialists.” Metro offers the

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**Staffing:**
There are three full-time travel trainers for the RideWise program.

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following free services and resources to
school systems and disability organizations:

- One-to-one and group bus and rail
  system orientations
- Tours of Metro stations highlighting
  accessibility and safety features
- Bus familiarization (buses are
  available to come to schools and
  organizations)
- Train the travel trainer workshops for
  service providers
- Group photo ID sessions for groups of
  30 or more students on-site at schools
  and organizations
- Trip planning assistance

**How It’s Funded:**
Metro’s travel training program is offered
through existing operating funds by WMATA
as a component of the Metro is Accessible
outreach program. The program is a key
component of the work of the Metro Office of
ADA Programs, which is part of the Metro
Department of Access Services.

**Staffing:**
Currently, two ADA Communication
Outreach Specialists provide travel training
in addition to providing other outreach
services. Metro has just hired three full-time
Metro System Orientation Specialists whose
focus is on travel training. The Metro
System Orientation Specialists devote 100
percent of their time to travel training and
related activities.

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**Model C: County Governments**
**Success Stories**

**WESTCHESTER COUNTY, NEW YORK**

**Provider Type:** County Government

**Background:**
One-to-one travel training began in
Westchester County in 1999 as a pilot to try
to reduce the number of riders on the
paratransit service. According to Anna
Masopust, Mobility Specialist: “We soon
realized that it was very difficult to get
people to switch from the curb-to-curb
service that was already in place, so we
started to look for ways to travel train
consumers before they even applied for
paratransit.” Ms. Masopust informally
started to work with educators and service
providers to incorporate travel skills
development into the daily curriculum. In
2006, Westchester County Office of the
Disabled and the Department of
Transportation created B.E.A.T. Plus (Be
Educated About Transit), a travel training
skills development program. Since the
program’s informal inception in 2002, over
600 students with disabilities have received
travel training.

**Motivation:**
One-to-one travel training began in 1999 as
a pilot to try to reduce the number of riders
on the paratransit service. B.E.A.T. Plus
was developed as a foundation to entice
students, through exposure, to mass transit.

**How It Works:**
Westchester County Office of Disabled offers
two types of travel training services. The
first type is a one-to-one program for students and adults with developmental disabilities. The second type is a travel training skills program B.E.A.T. Plus, which, according to Ms. Masopust, “is designed to entice students’ desires to be independent while training the trainer both in the classroom as well as in the field.”

The travel training skills program consists of four classroom sessions: (1) an Introduction session, (2) a “Be Educated About Transit” session, which is a forty-minute interactive presentation with an activity book and teacher’s guide that reviews safety rules, appropriate behavior, and skills, (3) a schedule and map reading session, and (4) a trip planning session. The training concludes with a Bee Line (the local public transportation provider) bus field trip. According to Ms. Masopust, “Each session deals with a specific travel enabling skill and can easily be adapted into a Life Skills or Social Studies classroom lesson plan.”

The training audience for the B.E.A.T. Plus program consists of both students and educators. According to Ms. Masopust:

“How It’s Funded:
B.E.A.T. Plus is funded by the County of Westchester as a budgeted item for the Westchester County Office of the Disabled. In addition, the County’s Department of Transportation designs and presents the B.E.A.T. Safety/skills session as well as metro cards for travel training purposes.

Staffing:
Ms. Masopust is the only travel trainer in Westchester County. She spends between 51 and 75% of her time travel training.

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Model D: Disability Organizations Success Stories

GROVEPORT, OHIO

Provider Type: Disability (non-transit) service provider

Background: The Association for the Developmentally Disabled (ADD) Community Access Training Program (CAT) began in the early 1990s.

Motivation:
According to Mel Rhoads, ADD’s CAT started the travel training program because they “recognized the need for independence to get into the community.”

How It Works:
ADD receives an application, contacts the individual, conducts an initial meeting, performs an assessment, and provides travel training. According to Sarah Beard, travel training ends when the individual is “able to demonstrate the skills independently.”

ADD then does a follow-up phone call with the student two weeks to two months after the training has concluded.
In addition to one-to-one travel training, ADD also offers group trainings, group presentations, and group demonstrations.

**How It’s Funded:**
ADD’s travel training program is funded through the Central Ohio Transit Authority RFP.

**Staffing:**
ADD CAT has two travel trainers and a supervisor that provide travel training as part of their job responsibilities.

**Contact:**
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Travel Training for Student Success:
The Route to Achieving Post-Secondary Student Outcomes

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