



This fact sheet is designed to support conversations with state legislators about the critical role transportation plays in helping people with disabilities live independently, work, and participate fully in their communities.

Who does a Center for Independent Living (CIL) serve?

CIL transportation services primarily serve:

- Adults and youth with disabilities (physical, sensory, cognitive, mental health)
- May serve individuals who do not qualify for Medicaid transportation
- Individuals living in rural or underserved areas
- People with limited or no access to personal vehicles or public transit

Nearly 1 in 5 West Virginians — about 19.5% of the state's population — live with one or more disabilities, one of the highest rates in the nation, highlighting the widespread need for accessible transportation and support services

Why Transportation Is a Critical Need for Individuals with Disabilities

Reliable transportation allows people with disabilities to:

- Get to and from work or job training
- Attend medical and behavioral health appointments
- Participate in education and skills training
- Access grocery stores, banks, and pharmacies
- Engage in community life and civic activities
- Avoid isolation and unnecessary institutionalization
- Prioritizes dignity, choice, and community integration
- Without transportation, many consumers cannot access services they are already eligible for.

Transportation is not a luxury—it is an essential support service. Transportation is often the *gateway service* that makes all other services possible.

Common Barriers Faced by Consumers

Consumers with disabilities frequently experience:

- Limited or no public transit in rural areas
- Inaccessible transportation options (no wheelchair lifts, inadequate space)
- High cost of private transportation (taxis, rideshare)
- Strict eligibility rules for Medicaid transportation
- Inconsistent scheduling and long wait times
- Lack of transportation for non-medical needs (employment, education, daily living)

For many consumers, missing one ride can mean missing a job, losing housing stability, or declining health.

Barriers Faced by CILs as Transportation Providers

While demand continues to grow, CILs face significant challenges in providing transportation:

Funding Limitations

- Transportation is expensive and underfunded
- Fuel, insurance, maintenance, and vehicle replacement costs continue to rise
- Many funding sources do not fully reimburse true costs
- Limited ability to charge fees without impacting consumers
- Inconsistent or no funding across programs

Vehicle and Infrastructure Barriers

- Cost of accessible vehicles and lift maintenance (New wheelchair-accessible vans with electric lift or ramp systems built in can cost \$60,000 to \$100,000)
 - Aging vehicle fleets and limited funding for replacement and expansion
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The Impact of Inadequate Transportation Funding

When transportation funding is insufficient:

- Consumers miss work, appointments, and services
 - Employment outcomes decline
 - Health outcomes worsen
 - Caregiver burden increases
 - Communities see higher long-term costs from institutional care
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How is supporting additional funding for Transportation services helping West Virginians?

- Promote independence and self-sufficiency
 - Support workforce participation
 - Reduce reliance on more costly systems
 - Strengthen rural and underserved communities
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What Legislators Can Do Now?

- **Provide Flexible Transportation Funding**
Allow funds to be used for true operating costs, including fuel, insurance, maintenance, driver training, administrative support, and vehicle replacement.
- **Adjust Rates to Reflect Real Costs**
Support reimbursement or per-trip rates that account for mileage, driver time, wait time, rural travel distances, and accessibility requirements.
- **Recognize Non-Medical Transportation as Essential**
Ensure transportation for employment, education, independent living, and community participation is treated as a core service—not a discretionary expense.
- **Address Rural Transportation Gaps**
Promote policies and funding structures that recognize higher costs, longer distances, and limited alternatives in rural and underserved areas.

Conversation Starters for Legislators

- How can transportation funding better reflect real operating costs?
- How can rural transportation gaps be addressed more effectively?
- What policies can support workforce recruitment for transportation services?
- How can non-medical transportation be better recognized as essential?