

Model Programs for Collaboration with the Disability Community and Transportation Organizations

It is important to connect the disability community and transportation agencies with intent to share ideas and resources towards inclusive transportation services. Several models have offered avenues for youth to engage with transportation.

One such program was the Transportation Advocacy Mentoring Initiative (TAMI) completed in 2018. This was a pilot project on peer mentoring about inclusive transportation that paired young adults with disabilities from Massachusetts with young advocates with disabilities in Michigan, who already had experience and success advocating for inclusive transportation options. The project was funded by the federal Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Community Living (ACL) through an agreement between Easterseals and the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA). Key collaborators on the project included Easterseals, Partners for Youth with Disabilities (PYD) and Programs to Educate All Cyclists (PEAC) in Michigan.

Engaging people with disabilities, and in this case, youth with disabilities in projects about inclusive transportation is a clear path to inviting disability awareness into the transportation industry as well as educating and engaging with the disability community.

Specifically, the initiative was a demonstration project to:

- Help youth to think about inclusive mobility options;
 - Assist transit providers to consider the voices of youth with disabilities in service planning;
 - Improve the range of accessible transportation options available to youth;
- and,
- Highlight the viability of careers in mobility and transportation sectors.

This model project offered interactive mentoring and educational sessions, young adults from Massachusetts developed new skills and confidence to engage in their own advocacy project. Based on our findings, 100% of the youth experienced an increase in confidence, with all participants being able to now talk about both barriers and solutions for inclusive transportation. And, because 100% of the participants demonstrated increased self-advocacy skills through specific activities, the experience between Massachusetts and Michigan-based peers can and should be replicated to change the accessibility challenges within transportation.

The *Transportation Advocacy Mentoring Initiative Implementation Guide* is available as a resource for transportation agencies, disability community advocates, and human service providers to develop similar peer mentoring models that enhance youth transportation advocacy in new communities. The link to this guide is available in the Policy and Training Tools and Resources section of the TRACS Project page on WID's website:

<https://wid.org/transportation-accessibility>