

Make Transportation Funding Work Together

Create More Seamless Trips Through Braided Transportation Funding

A person's day doesn't always fit neatly into the rules of a single transportation program.

Someone may need to visit the doctor, pick up groceries and return home.

But different transportation funding programs can pay for different types of trips. That can mean arranging separate rides through separate providers rather than making one coordinated trip.

At a time when transportation funding for older adults and people with disabilities is limited, WILN believes Wisconsin should find ways to make existing resources work together more efficiently.

One solution is **braided transportation funding**.

The Problem

Transportation funding is divided into separate programs with different purposes and requirements.

Consider a person who needs to go to a doctor's appointment and the grocery store on the same day.

Transportation to the medical appointment may qualify for Medicaid-funded Non-Emergency Medical Transportation, or NEMT.

The trip to the grocery store does not.

Under the traditional model described by WILN, the person may need to arrange the medical trip through the NEMT provider and then separately arrange transportation to the grocery store using another service supported by a different funding source, such as Wisconsin's Section 85.21 transportation program.

That can make a relatively ordinary day unnecessarily complicated for the rider.

It can also mean using multiple transportation resources when better coordination could potentially make the trip more efficient.

WILN's Solution

Allow transportation funding sources to work together while maintaining the requirements of each individual program.

Braided funding coordinates multiple funding sources while keeping each source identifiable and accountable for the portion of a service it is permitted to support.

For example, consider this trip:

HOME → DOCTOR → GROCERY STORE → HOME

The eligible medical portion of the trip could be supported through NEMT.

Other portions of the trip could be supported through an appropriate transportation program, such as a cab or bus service funded through Section 85.21.

Different funding sources would remain responsible for eligible portions of the transportation, but better coordination could make the experience more seamless for the rider.

WILN believes Wisconsin should explore and implement legally permissible opportunities to braid transportation funding rather than requiring transportation programs to operate entirely in isolation from one another.

Why it Matters

People don't experience transportation as a collection of funding streams. They experience it as a ride.

For people with disabilities and older adults who do not drive, transportation can be essential to living independently.

Medical appointments are important—but so are groceries, work, family, errands and participation in community life.

Requiring people to navigate multiple transportation systems for different parts of the same day can create additional complexity for riders who already have limited transportation options.

Better coordination could help Wisconsin make more effective use of limited transportation resources while creating a simpler experience for riders.

AN IMPORTANT DISTINCTION

Braided funding does not mean combining different funding sources into one unrestricted pool of money.

Each funding source continues to have its own requirements and restrictions.

Federal funds may be used to meet another program's matching requirements only when the programs involved authorize that use. Federal rules also restrict the use of

federal funds to replace state or local funding commitments that have already been made.

The goal is to identify legally permissible ways for transportation programs to coordinate their resources while maintaining appropriate accountability for each funding source.

The Ask

WILN calls on Wisconsin policymakers and transportation agencies to:

Identify and implement legally permissible opportunities to braid transportation funding so existing resources can be used more efficiently and riders can experience more coordinated, seamless transportation.

The Bottom Line

Funding programs may see separate trips and separate funding sources. Riders just need to get where they're going. Wisconsin should make its transportation resources work together whenever possible.