



# HUMAN SERVICES TRANSPORTATION BEST PRACTICES

BEST PRACTICES REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2025



# CONTENTS

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. Federal Program Overview	2
1.2. Funding Allocation	2
1.3. Report Purpose	3
<b>2. Designated Recipient Roles and Responsibilities</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1. Best Practice	5
2.2. Peer Examples	5
2.3. Takeaways for the MAG region	6
<b>3. Capital vs. Operating Considerations</b>	<b>7</b>
3.1. Best Practice	7
3.2. Peer Examples	8
3.3. Takeaways for the MAG region	9
<b>4. Project Scoring and Selection</b>	<b>10</b>
4.1. Best Practice	10
4.2. Peer Examples	11
4.3. Takeaways for the MAG region	13
<b>5. Use of Committees</b>	<b>16</b>
5.1. Best Practice	16
5.2. Peer Examples	17
5.3. Takeaways for the MAG region	17
<b>6. Balancing Regional Needs</b>	<b>18</b>
6.1. Best Practice	18
6.2. Peer Examples	18
6.3. Takeaways for the MAG region	19

<b>7. Coordinated Transportation Plan .....</b>	<b>20</b>
7.1. Best Practice .....	20
7.2. Peer Examples .....	21
7.3. Takeaways for the MAG region .....	22
<b>8. Ongoing Grantee Education .....</b>	<b>23</b>
8.1. Best Practice .....	23
8.2. Peer Examples .....	23
8.3. Takeaways for the MAG region.....	24
<b>9. Summary of Recommendations.....</b>	<b>25</b>



## 1. Introduction

The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) is undertaking a review of its Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Transportation Program, which is funded primarily by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) under 49 U.S.C. Section 5310. The Section 5310 program provides formula funding to states and urban areas (UAs) to improve mobility for older adults and people with disabilities by removing barriers to transportation service and expanding transportation mobility options.

Section 5310 funding is one of several federal funding sources MAG receives, as outlined in the agency's Regional Strategic Transportation Infrastructure Investment Plan (RSTIIP). The RSTIIP was developed to serve as the basis for Proposition 479, the 20-year extension of the Maricopa County Transportation Excise Tax. The investment plan details a portfolio of transportation projects and

programmatic investments to support the efficient movement of people and goods in the region. The RSTIIP incorporates all federal, state and regional funding sources, including the region's Section 5310 allocation.

This review included an analysis of Section 5310 practices by other comparable agencies, including a literature review and a series of six peer agency interviews. Metropolitan planning organization (MPO) peer agencies were selected based on characteristics such as urban area (UA) population and land area, the amount of their most recent 5310 apportionment, whether the MPO covers multiple UAs, and the approximate number of subrecipients. Peer agencies included the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), the Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho (COMPASS), the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG), the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC), the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), and the Wasatch Front Regional Council (WFRC).

## **1.1. FEDERAL PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

Section 5310 funding has been renewed and strengthened in various transportation legislation over the last several decades, beginning with the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) and evolving through Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA).

Section 5310 program funds are available for capital and operating expenses to: (1) serve the special needs of transit-dependent populations beyond traditional public transportation service, where public transportation is insufficient, inappropriate, or unavailable; (2) support projects that exceed the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); (3) support projects that improve access to fixed route service and decrease reliance on complementary paratransit; and (4) support projects that provide alternatives to public transportation.

## **1.2. FUNDING ALLOCATION**

Funds are apportioned based on each state's share of the population both for seniors and for persons with disabilities. Formula funds were dispersed through a single statewide authorization until adoption of MAP-21, which changed the formula to a three-tiered allocation. Today, funds are dispersed on a percentage basis as follows:

- Large urbanized areas: 60 percent of funds are directly given to areas with a population over 200,000
- Small urbanized areas: 20 percent of funds are given to states to disperse to areas with a population between 50,000-200,000
- Rural/non-urbanized: 20 percent of funds are given to states to disperse to areas with populations under 50,000

In large urban areas (population over 200,000 people), a direct recipient is chosen by the governor. Direct recipients have flexibility in how they select subrecipient projects for funding, but their decision process must be clearly noted in a program management plan. The selection process may be formula-based, competitive, or discretionary, and subrecipients can include states or local government authorities, private non-profit organizations, and/or operators of public transportation. As designated by the Governor of Arizona, the City of Phoenix Public Transportation Department (PTD) is the designated recipient for the Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale and Phoenix West-Goodyear-Avondale UAs.

Per FTA, at least 55 percent of program funds must be used on capital – or “traditional” 5310 projects, including purchase or lease of rolling stock, equipment, and related activities for Section 5310-funded vehicles; mobility management programs; or acquisition of transportation services under a contract, lease, or other arrangement.

Per the *FY 2025 Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Handbook and Program Guidelines for the Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale Urban Area and Phoenix West-Goodyear-Avondale Urban Area*, the MAG region has chosen to program 60 percent of program funds towards “traditional” capital to ensure federal requirements are easily met. Up to 10 percent is set aside for administrative costs, and the remaining 35 percent is eligible for use on other nontraditional capital and operating project expenses that are planned, designed, and carried out to meet the special needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities; public transportation projects that exceed the minimum ADA requirements or improve access to fixed route and decrease reliance on ADA paratransit; and alternatives to public transportation.

### **1.3. REPORT PURPOSE**

This report outlines key findings from the peer agency literature review and interviews, and suggests items to explore in future program development, including the next update of the agency’s Coordinated Transportation Plan (CTP). This summary supplements the information presented in the February 2025 Program Overview/MAG Process Memo (Appendix A), the March 2025 Peer Agency Literature Review Memo (Appendix B), and the April 2025 Peer Agency Interviews Summary (Appendix C).



## 2. Designated Recipient Roles and Responsibilities

[FTA Circular 9070.1H](#) provides Program Guidance related to the Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program. In this document, a DR is defined as:

“(A) An entity designated, in accordance with the planning process under 49 U.S.C. 5303 and 5304 by the governor of a State, responsible local officials, and publicly owned operators of public transportation, to receive and apportion amounts under Section 5336 to urbanized areas of 200,000 or more in population of (B) a State or regional authority, if the authority is responsible under the laws of a State for a capital project and for financing and directly providing public transportation (49 U.S.C. 5302).”

Chapter II outlines the DR Designation Process, noting:

“The Urbanized Area Formula Funding Program (Section 5307) Designated Recipient provides and coordinates transportation services for the region and is familiar with FTA’s program oversight requirements; therefore, it is appropriate for the Designated Recipient for the Section 5310 program to be the same as the Designated Recipient for Section 5307 funds. Alternatively, the MPO, State, or another public agency may be a preferred choice based on local circumstances.

A State agency may be the DR of Section 5310 funds for a large, urbanized area, as long as all apportioned funds for the large, urbanized area are allocated to agencies within the large urbanized area.”

The Governor of Arizona has designated the City of Phoenix PTD as the DR for all FTA funding in the Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale and Phoenix West-Goodyear-Avondale UAs. The Regional Transit Planning, Programming and Fund Allocation agreement as approved by the MAG Regional Council in April 2015, outlines the regional roles and responsibilities for transit funding for the City of Phoenix and MAG. As the DR, the City of Phoenix is responsible for capital procurement, grant management, and federal compliance. MAG coordinates an open, competitive, annual application process and handles the programming of funds. The agency also manages the human services transportation coordination planning process (federally required), provides training for subrecipients, and supports Phoenix in their compliance efforts.

## **2.1. BEST PRACTICE**

The Section 5310 program allows for considerable flexibility in implementation, which gives regions the ability to tailor their program to capitalize on agency strengths and help meet the needs of a diverse customer base. The literature review and peer agency interviews revealed information about a variety of different structures and approaches. Although there are potential benefits to certain arrangements between an MPO and DR, the ability of agencies to assume the roles they are most willing and able to fulfill, in a regional context, is paramount. Thus, the benefits of various arrangements will be noted, but a single best practice will not be identified for this category.

## **2.2. PEER EXAMPLES**

On one end of the spectrum, DRCOG is both the pass-through entity and the DR for 5310 funds in the Denver metro area. DRCOG also serves as the region’s Area Agency on Aging, which allows a singular agency to oversee programs related to older adults and people with disabilities. This arrangement gives the agency considerable control over and responsibility for all elements of their 5310 program. It also allows maximum coordination between project scoring and selection, the development of the CTP, and the development of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

DRCOG has four planners dedicated to development of the agency’s CTP, along with five staff members who support various grant programs, including 5310. This level of staffing is comparable to combined staff at MAG and City of Phoenix dedicated to these tasks.

In some other states, the state assumes a more significant role in the allocation of 5310 funds to urban areas. In Washington, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) manages these funds, along with a variety of other federal funding programs, through a “consolidated grant” process statewide. PSRC, the region’s MPO, mainly assumes responsibility for defining regional priorities. Although Washington has a unique scoring process, the main takeaway is the reduced (but still important) role the MPO plays in funding allocation. PSRC is responsible for developing the region’s CTP and aligns this with the RTP update on a four-year cycle.

## 2.3. TAKEAWAYS FOR THE MAG REGION

MAG and the City of Phoenix coordinate closely on all aspects of human services transportation. This level of cooperation has created a successful and highly regarded regional program. Although there are benefits to having a single agency as the pass-through entity and DR, each state currently has different mandates related to the selection of a DR for 5310 funds. Because MAG and the City of Phoenix coordinate so closely, the agencies have essentially recreated the benefits of the program being under a single agency, while working within the state-mandated framework.

Should the State of Arizona mandate changes in the future, Washington and PSRC serve as a positive example for how the MPO can still advance regional priorities in a state-run process.



## 3. Capital vs. Operating Considerations

### 3.1. BEST PRACTICE

As noted in Section 1, the FTA requires that at least 55 percent of Section 5310 funds be used for “traditional” capital projects, meaning those that meet the special needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities when public transportation is insufficient, inappropriate, or unavailable. The 55 percent threshold is the minimum, but recipients may allocate a greater percentage. It is important to note that this requirement applies to the annual apportionment amount, not the award amount, as an award might have multiple years of funding.

Government agencies may use 5310 funds for traditional capital if the agencies are approved by the state to coordinate services for seniors and individuals with disabilities or if they certify to the governor that there are not any nonprofit organizations available in the area to provide the service. The traditional capital 55 percent threshold only applies to the amount of funding specifically apportioned to the 5310 program.

Some common examples of eligible traditional capital projects include:

- Buses and vans; wheelchair lifts, ramps, and securement devices; transit-related information technology systems including scheduling/routing/one-call systems; and mobility management programs

- Acquisition of transportation services under a contract, lease, or other arrangement. Both capital and operating costs associated with contracted service are eligible capital expenses
- Purchase of rolling stock for the acquisition of ADA-complementary paratransit service (projects must be included in the coordinated plan)

Up to 10 percent of the apportionment is available for program administration to cover the associated costs of managing the program. The remaining funds, up to 45 percent of the apportionment, are eligible for other “nontraditional” projects. These projects are defined as capital and operating expenses for new public transportation services and alternatives beyond those required by the ADA, designed to assist individuals with disabilities and seniors. Examples of these types of projects include:

- Travel training
- Volunteer driver programs
- Improving signage or way-finding technology
- Incremental cost of providing same-day service or door-to-door service
- Purchasing vehicles to support new accessible taxi, ridesharing, and/or vanpooling programs
- Mobility management

The federal share of funding for traditional capital projects is 80 percent, while the federal share for operating assistance is 50 percent, making traditional projects more advantageous for agencies and organizations with limited budgetary resources. In some cases, the federal share can vary depending on the type of capital purchase. For example, the federal share on ADA accessible vehicles can range from 80 percent to 90 percent. However, there is often a greater need for operating assistance as this tends to represent the greatest share of expenditures and there may be fewer eligible funding sources for operating costs.

## 3.2. PEER EXAMPLES

Most of the agencies interviewed in the peer review are programming funds required for traditional capital for uses other than the purchase of vehicles, including several of the examples highlighted in Section 3.1. Although information regarding the typical traditional/nontraditional split of projects was not generally disclosed, based on the descriptions provided for the types of projects funded, it is estimated that many agencies are programming only the required minimum 55 percent of funds toward traditional projects.

Most agencies did not use nontraditional funds for infrastructure improvements such as accessible sidewalks due to the liability and cost of ongoing maintenance and the difficulty in tracking these assets over time. Using federal funds can increase the cost of projects due to additional federal requirements such as National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); Build America, Buy America; Davis-Bacon; and others. Compliance with federal requirements can increase both the cost and duration of projects.

In many cases, the burden of the reporting and compliance requirements associated with federalized projects outweighs the benefits of using these funds for smaller capital improvements.

It is typically more advantageous for the overall project cost and implementation timeframe to use local or regional funding sources for these types of improvements. Agencies typically have other needs that represent a more straightforward use of these funds, such as operating expenditures, travel training, and mobility management.

### **3.3. TAKEAWAYS FOR THE MAG REGION**

The peer interviews consisted of a variety of MPOs and transit agencies in terms of UA population and geographic area, and some are much smaller than MAG in one or both categories. However, even the larger MPOs/agencies had a significantly smaller number of subrecipients, with the largest number of any peer agency at roughly half that of MAG. MAG typically has about 50 subrecipients at a given time, while peer agencies had between two and 25.

The potential reasons for this are likely varied and accumulative, and could include factors such as the size of the Phoenix metro area, the absence of a singular transportation authority jurisdiction, and the smaller geographic area and/or higher density of similarly sized cities and UAs.

A recommendation would be to consider exploring opportunities for consolidation among subrecipients. There could be opportunities to reduce duplication of services or perhaps combine fleets to reduce the number of vehicles in service, freeing up additional funding for other traditional uses of capital projects.

Another consideration would be to evaluate a brokerage service that would operate as a third party to coordinate and arrange transportation services. This model could introduce efficiency where there might be multiple providers with different objectives and could eliminate confusion for patrons by having a centralized service to best meet their needs. In turn, this type of service could free up additional resources and funding for subrecipients to use for other purposes.



## 4. Project Scoring and Selection

### 4.1. BEST PRACTICE

There are two main components when considering project scoring and selection best practices – the process and the scoring system.

#### **PROCESS**

There were notable differences between peer agencies in the project scoring and selection process, mainly due to the varying roles and responsibilities of the DR, as noted in Section 2. However, despite these different roles and responsibilities, one notable best practice was providing regular opportunities for participants to improve the process. In some cases, this occurred in a regular, formal manner (e.g., annually, as part of the scoring and selection process). In other regions, opportunities for feedback were more informal, but still highly valued. Providing regular opportunities to improve the process, either formally or informally, fostered a spirit of collaboration and served as an occasional checkpoint to evaluate program effectiveness.

Another best practice was providing agency assistance during the Call for Projects. MAG and several other agencies provided application assistance to help applicants understand relevant requirements (e.g., eligibility, forms, reporting, etc.) This upfront assistance can help reduce the number of ineligible and/or incomplete applications received.

## SCORING SYSTEM

Although scoring systems varied among peer agencies considered, there were some commonalities worth noting. In particular, all agencies allocated a substantial number of points to “Coordination,” per federal requirements that all subrecipients of Section 5310 federal funds participate in coordination activities. This category generally encompassed a variety of coordination activities, such as attending meetings, participating in trainings, and completing surveys. In some cases (e.g., DRCOG), this category also included compatibility with the agency’s CTP. The Coordination category allocation ranged from 25 to 65 points (out of 100), with MAG being the lowest (25 points), DRCOG being the highest (65 points), and other agencies each allocating 30 points.

One notable peer agency practice was creating sub-categories for Traditional Capital and Operating/ Nontraditional Capital. For example, DRCOG has 70 points available for all project types, and then the remaining 30 points are allocated differently for the two main project types. This bifurcation allows reviewers to more fairly compare project types.

## 4.2. PEER EXAMPLES

The most tangible way to compare the scoring and selection process for peer agencies was by reviewing their respective scoring rubrics. The breakdown of scoring categories and points for each peer agency, along with MAG’s current allocation, is provided in Table 1.

**Table 1: Peer Agency Scoring**

CATEGORY	WEIGHT
<b>MAG (Phoenix)</b>	
Cover letter, agency info, and checklist completed	5
Agency experience and capabilities	20
Project description (meets needs of target populations)	25
Budget/cost efficiency	10
Coordination	25
Applicant interview and presentation	15
<b>DRCOG (Denver)</b>	
Compatibility with the DRCOG Coordinated Transit Plan	65
Innovation and transferability	5
Capital subcategory: replacement of revenue service vehicles; expansion of revenue service vehicles; facilities, design, and equipment – OR --	30
Operating and mobility management subcategory: financial need; service justification; coordination/effectiveness	30

CATEGORY	WEIGHT
<b>Georgia Department of Health (Atlanta)</b>	
Ability to service target population	25
Coordination	30
Need and use of proposed funds	25
Fiscal and managerial capability	20
<b>METRO (Houston)</b>	
Project description/benefits	20
Project goals/objectives	20
Project planning/coordination/implementation	30
Project implementation/readiness	10
Project financial status/monitoring/sustainability	20
<b>UTA (Salt Lake City)</b>	
FTA 5310 coordination requirement	30
Commitment to collaboration	25
Project work plan	25
Performance measures	20
<b>WSDOT (Seattle)*</b>	
A	Funded
B	25
C	12
D	0
Not ranked	Disqualified

\*Although WSDOT oversees the application review process, PSRC and other regional agencies have an opportunity to provide priority rankings of proposed projects using the letter-based system outlined in Table 1. Rankings are based on regional priorities and alignment with PSRC’s CTP. Each agency has a limited number of A, B, and C rankings to allocate. A-ranked projects are automatically funded, with declining points allocated for B- and C-ranked projects.

This review of scoring rubrics, combined with the literature review and peer agency interviews, revealed that most agencies rely on a mostly qualitative process to review and evaluate project applications. Recommendations for developing a more quantitative process are provided in the following section.

## 4.3. TAKEAWAYS FOR THE MAG REGION

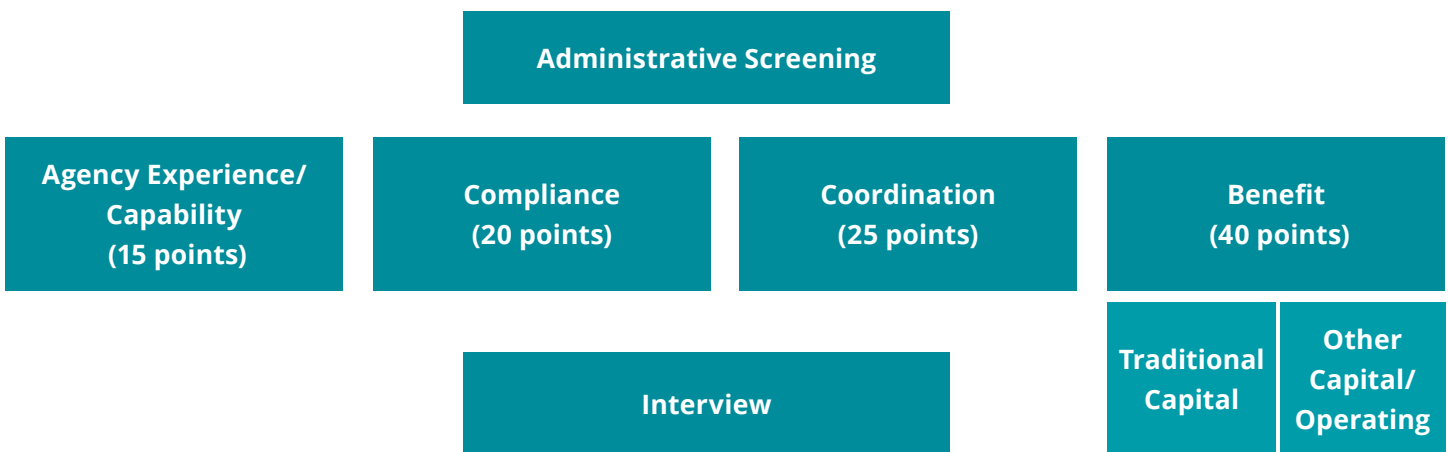
### PROCESS

MAG should continue providing regular opportunities for participants in the scoring and selection process to provide feedback. This input may be related to the process or the points allocation system. Although some stability and continuity in the process are valuable and likely appreciated by applicants, an openness to continue evolving and improving the process is also important. MAG should also continue providing application assistance during the Call for Projects to help improve the eligibility and quality of applications received.

### SCORING SYSTEM

Several changes to MAG’s existing scoring and weighting system are recommended based on the peer agency literature review and interviews, and subsequent conversations with MAG staff. Key components of the recommended scoring system are summarized in Figure 1 and described in the following text:

**Figure 1. Recommended Scoring System**



### Administrative Screening

MAG and City of Phoenix staff currently conduct a technical assistance review as part of the evaluation process. During this review, staff check for application completeness; match requirements; agency experience and capabilities; utilization of past funding; and compliance with coordination requirements. This screening helps streamline and simplify the scoring process for the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities Transportation (EPDT) Committee, allowing committee members to focus on more discretionary elements. MAG should consider developing a brief questionnaire for applicants to fill out in advance of the technical assistance review, in lieu of requesting completion of all or portions of the application itself. This questionnaire could cover topics such as the agency’s history and/or experience providing similar services; agency staffing availability; and funding availability, particularly if grant funding is not awarded. The questionnaire should also ask applicants to briefly describe their request (e.g., capital vs. operating, number of vehicles, etc.).

## Agency Experience/Capability (15 points)

A reduction in points (from 20 to 15) available under this category is recommended in order to emphasize categories with a more quantitative focus.

## Compliance (20 points)

This category is similar to MAG's existing "Project Description/Meets the Needs of Target Populations" category. A reduction in points (from 25 to 20) available under this category is recommended in order to emphasize categories with a more quantitative focus.

## Coordination (25 points)

No changes to this category are recommended. MAG's current allocation of 25 points is slightly lower than most peers, so no further reductions were recommended.

## Benefit (40 points)

This category is a modified version of MAG's current Budget/Cost Efficiency category, as it attempts to quantify the benefits of proposed investments. However, under the proposed allocation, budget compliance elements should be considered under the Compliance category. Significantly more points have been allocated to this category than in MAG's current scoring system to emphasize quantifiable benefits when possible. Different project types (Traditional Capital vs. Operating/Nontraditional Capital) should be considered separately, based on available data. Potential evaluation metrics include:

### Vehicle Purchases

- **Unmet Need Score:** % of seniors or individuals with disabilities in the service area without access to existing transportation providers (using MAG transit data or Census data).
- **Future Utilization:** Number of projected rides or clients. This can give estimates on cost per client served based on the vehicle cost for different applications.
- **Fleet Age/Condition Score:** Points for replacing vehicles beyond useful life (based on FTA-defined thresholds).
- **Vehicle Sharing or Coordination:** Give higher scores if the vehicle is shared among multiple agencies or fills a known gap in MAG's regional plans.

### Mobility Manager Positions

- **Coordination Impact:** Number of partners involved, or coordination activities supported.
- **Regional Coverage Score:** If the manager serves multiple jurisdictions or fills a geographic gap (based on MAG's experience).
- **Client Efficiency Ratio:** Number of clients supported per dollar of funding requested.

## Preventive Maintenance

- **Asset Condition Score:** Based on maintenance records or miles on vehicle.
- **Service Impact:** Reduced downtime or extended life—projected hours or miles gained per \$1,000 spent.
- **Past Utilization:** Tie-in with past preventive maintenance outcomes (data from prior FTA reporting if available).

## Technology/Equipment

- **System Impact:** Whether equipment improves scheduling, client communication, trip tracking, or reporting.
- **Interoperability/Scalability:** Use of standardized or regional platforms.
- **Cost Efficiency:** Equipment cost per client served or trip.

The Nontraditional Capital/Operating category is primarily comprised of programs (e.g., Volunteer Driver, Taxi Voucher, or Transportation Alternatives), which would best be evaluated in terms of the number of rides provided or expected to be provided.

## Interview

Interviews are required for all applicants, and provide the evaluation panel with an opportunity to ask clarifying questions. Under the recommended scoring system, points would no longer be assigned to interviews. Rather, interviews facilitate the process of confirming and/or adjusting scores to other categories.



## 5. Use of Committees

The main requirement noted in the Section 5310 program guidance is that the DR provide a description of their criteria for selecting projects and distributing funds among applicants, including the policy rationale and methods used. The guidance notes:

“This description should include the recipient’s procedures for (1) assuring equity of distribution of benefits among eligible groups within the State or urbanized area, as required by title VI of the Civil Rights Act; (2) assuring that projects were included in a locally developed coordinated plan; and (3) documenting evidence that the local coordinated plan was developed and approved in cooperation with stakeholders, including individuals with disabilities and seniors utilizing transportation services.”

### 5.1. BEST PRACTICE

Although a competitive selection process is not required for the apportionment of Section 5310 funding by the DR ([FTA C 9070.1H](#) Page VII-3), the use of an advisory committee or working group to review, score, and recommend project applications for funding can be a vehicle for implementing a fair and transparent process to award federal funding. An inclusive committee or working group structure can build regional awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the value of the program, particularly when subject matter experts with a variety of backgrounds and perspectives are utilized. However, many

types of review panels are allowable under federal legislation, as evidenced by the various structures and levels of formality seen among peer agencies.

## **5.2. PEER EXAMPLES**

Although all peer agencies made use of some form of committee process during project scoring and selection, the number and composition of committees varied. In situations where the DR was the transit agency (or other type of agency), committee members often included representatives of the MPO. The composition was reversed when the DR was the MPO. This avoided any appearance of bias or conflict of interest in scoring and ranking applications. In some cases, former subrecipients served on a committee, but only when they were not actively pursuing a funding award.

Other typical committee members included representatives of different agencies such as the State Department of Transportation (DOT), city/county human services staff, and other related social service agencies. Some committees also consisted of Tribal representatives and transit users.

Utah established Local Coordinating Councils (LCCs) as forums to help coordinate regional transportation efforts. The LCCs lead the development and updates of Local Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plans, in addition to their role in the project selection process. Council membership includes government agencies, non-profit human transportation providers, private companies, citizens, and UTA. WFRC incorporates the priorities of the LCCs in their region. This allows for priorities to be determined at the sub-regional level thereby streamlining the process for funding award.

## **5.3. TAKEAWAYS FOR THE MAG REGION**

The existing MAG committee process strives to promote impartiality, while conforming to the regionally accepted MAG committee structure and conventions. However, if there was a desire to streamline the committee process (e.g., by reducing the number of committees), the EPDT Committee could be consolidated into another existing MAG committee. The project scoring process could be managed by a working group who would make a recommendation for the larger committee to approve. Such an approach would be allowable under current federal guidance and is comparable to the arrangements of several peer agencies.

Given the number of subrecipients and applications received in a given cycle, it would also be worth considering establishing an LCC structure for enhanced coordination between the Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale and Phoenix West-Goodyear-Avondale UAs.

Additionally, extending the application cycle to cover a period of multiple years could help to streamline the process and ensure greater funding amounts for more meaningful impacts if priorities are pre-determined. Potential program changes will be developed in collaboration with regional partner agencies.



## 6. Balancing Regional Needs

### 6.1. BEST PRACTICE

Agencies are challenged with meeting diverse mobility needs that can vary widely in scale and across geographic areas. Many agencies are also facing over-subscription of available 5310 funds. Strategies used by peer agencies to address these challenges include:

- Reserving set-asides for small agencies or working with applicants to scale their requests.
- Connecting applicants with other potential funding sources.
- In some regions, larger transit agencies who are the direct recipient of other FTA program funds do not submit for 5310 funding or make only minimal applications. This strategy can be useful in areas that are particularly over-subscribed, to help facilitate broader funding distribution.

### 6.2. PEER EXAMPLES

H-GAC reserves a share of funds for smaller service providers and remaining funds are available for the competitive process.

WFRC generally provides full funding to the top three ranked applications. Other requests are scaled to distribute the grant funds among a larger number of applicants.

When 5310 funds are insufficient to meet all of the highly scored applications, some agencies are able to use other funding sources to meet these needs. WSDOT brings additional state funding to supplement the 5310 funds and address urban area needs.

## 6.3. TAKEAWAYS FOR THE MAG REGION

MAG has multiple options for balancing needs across the region:

- Identify a set-aside or reserve of funds for small agencies prior to distribution of other 5310 grant funds. This set-aside would promote a more equitable distribution among qualified applications rather than funding a single large project. It could also help ensure that all regional funding, including funding available through the Proposition 479 Transit Life Cycle Program (TLCP) is being used effectively and efficiently to fund eligible services.
- Consider additional uses for traditional capital rollover funds, such as applying them towards the capital cost of contracting.
- Work with applicants to scale budget requests.
- Increase applicant awareness of additional resources and/or alternative funding sources (e.g., grant funding).





## 7. Coordinated Transportation Plan

Chapter V of the Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program Guidance ([FTA C 9070.1H](#)) notes:

“Title 49 U.S.C. 5310 requires a recipient of Section 5310 funds to certify that projects selected for funding under this program are included in a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan and that the plan was developed and approved through a process that included participation by seniors; individuals with disabilities; representatives of public, private, nonprofit transportation and human service providers; and other members of the public.”

The CTP is tasked with providing an inventory of existing transit services, identifying gaps in service provision (particularly for the program’s target populations – seniors and individuals with disabilities), and documenting the need for improved and/or additional services. Thus, the CTP provides important guidance and justification in the project selection process for Section 5310 funds.

### 7.1. BEST PRACTICE

#### A DATA-DRIVEN PLAN

A common theme among agencies interviewed was a desire to develop a more data-driven CTP.

While plans reviewed varied considerably in content presentation, the most effective plans typically included the following data points:

- The results of focused public/transit rider survey questions about service needs and desires
- Consider additional uses for traditional capital rollover funds, such as applying it towards the capital cost of contracting
- A description (text and maps) showing concentrations of seniors and/or individuals with disabilities
- An inventory of services currently provided
- A gaps analysis showing discrepancies between needs and services

## **RTP COORDINATION**

When possible (i.e., when the MPO was responsible for developing the CTP), many agencies found efficiencies in coordinating the development of the CTP with the development of their RTP. In particular, there were often benefits to joint outreach efforts, such as public meetings, surveys, and stakeholder outreach. Joint outreach created efficiencies related to staff time and helped reduce survey fatigue among residents and stakeholders.

## **7.2. PEER EXAMPLES**

### **A DATA-DRIVEN PLAN**

The PSRC Coordinated Mobility Plan (Appendix B to the Regional Transportation Plan) includes a series of maps showing common destinations, including major medical facilities, educational institutions, regional shopping centers, and recreational/parks facilities, in addition to employment densities. This data series highlights some of the region's most critical destinations for target populations.

Several agencies also highlighted various types of survey results in their CTP. For example, COMPASS summarized key findings from their Transportation Needs Identification Survey, which was distributed to the area's Homeless Coalition, Housing Authorities, Senior Homes, and other organizations, as well as individual stakeholders representing aging, homeless, senior, and special education interests. This survey work provided valuable insights about program needs related to accessibility, service deficiencies, access to desired destinations, customer service, and coordination needs.

Similarly, DRCOG administered an interactive poll at a series of Committee and Coordinating Council meetings. They used the results of the polling exercise to help identify needs, gaps, and strategic priorities.

### **RTP COORDINATION**

Most agencies interviewed noted the efficiency of coordinating the development of the CTP and the RTP, including outreach, when possible. DRCOG is the most coordinated example, given the agency's role as the MPO, the pass-through entity, and the DR. DRCOG staff noted that their RTP and CTP are adopted at the same time, and outreach is coordinated whenever possible.

## 7.3. TAKEAWAYS FOR THE MAG REGION

### A DATA-DRIVEN PLAN

MAG should continue working to include more quantitative data in the agency's CTP to justify plan recommendations and priorities. Example data points include survey results; maps highlighting the location of target populations and key community destinations; an inventory of services currently provided; and a detailed assessment of gaps to be filled. Specific suggestions include:

- The most recent version of MAG's CTP includes a summary of agency survey responses. These responses could be supplemented by a section presenting findings from public and/or rider surveys to provide insights about program strengths or deficiencies. Additional survey work is recommended, targeting both existing and potential service users.
- A map of key community destinations could also be overlaid with target populations (e.g., seniors and individuals with disabilities). The current CTP includes a map showing senior centers and 5310 agencies; however, showing additional destinations such as major medical facilities and regional shopping centers would provide important information about the ability of target populations to reach essential goods and services. Survey work is recommended to identify the most critical destinations for users of these services.
- The gaps analysis in the most recent version of the CTP could be expanded to include individuals with disabilities, in addition to seniors and minority populations, given the focus of the 5310 program. These gaps can then be used in the project scoring and selection process, to help identify the most impactful projects.

Developing a more data-driven CTP is critically important, particularly given the plan's role in the project selection process. Implementation of the strategies outlined above is strongly recommended during the next update of MAG's CTP, potentially paired with revisions to the scoring rubric to ensure that they are compatible and reinforcing.

### RTP COORDINATION

Although some MPOs had limited involvement in the development of the CTP, MAG's current level of involvement in the development of this plan fosters efficiency and continuity with RTP development. Continuing to coordinate outreach efforts whenever possible is highly recommended to help prevent survey fatigue and capitalize on outreach budgets for both plans.

MAG's next update of the CTP should be planned to overlap with the early stages of the agency's next RTP update to facilitate coordinated stakeholder and community engagement, while also imparting opportunities for data collection and analysis efficiencies.



## 8. Ongoing Grantee Education

### 8.1. BEST PRACTICE

Education opportunities and levels of engagement with grantees varied among peer agencies, with some mainly responding to specific questions and others taking a more proactive approach to disseminating information. Although most agencies provided information upfront through an initial training workshop, those that provided ongoing grantee education seemed to have some of the most positive program outcomes and experiences.

### 8.2. PEER EXAMPLES

Of the peer agencies considered, WFRC and UTA provided the most resources and training for applicants and eventually, grantees. In addition to their Application Workshop and Post-Award Training, UTA offers a lunch and learn series covering a range of topics related to the 5310 program, including ADA, Title VI, invoicing, writing a budget, how to use ZoomGrants, allowable costs, and asset management. UTA staff noted that these sessions are optional, but typically well attended, suggesting that applicants find the information presented useful.

### **8.3. TAKEAWAYS FOR THE MAG REGION**

Although City of Phoenix currently offers monthly subrecipient trainings (with MAG participation), MAG could help ensure the usefulness of these trainings through additional survey work and coordination.

MAG staff could prepare a brief survey or reach out to a selection of grantees directly to gauge interest in subrecipient training, and to better understand which topics are most helpful. It may also be useful to ask whether specific days or times would be more convenient for the trainings. Based on this feedback, MAG could help the City of Phoenix adjust the days, times, and/or topics offered at these trainings. Opportunities for participant interaction should be emphasized when planning the training sessions.

Periodic reviews of attendance and engagement at the training sessions is recommended to help inform future modifications.





## 9. Summary of Recommendations

Through the literature review and peer agency interviews, we have learned that while there are many similarities in the agency processes for the selection and prioritization of FTA Section 5310 subrecipient applications, the federal guidance provides for significant latitude and flexibility in program implementation. Thus, the structure and relationships of the implementing agencies can vary considerably.

MAG has a positive working relationship with the City of Phoenix, and while there are some opportunities to evolve the current process, many processes that are currently in place are working well. Coordination is a key focus area and requirement of the Section 5310 program, and a hallmark of MAG's larger committee structure. MAG will continue working closely with the City of Phoenix and other agency partners and stakeholders to improve the region's Human Services Transportation, including the Section 5310 program.

Table 2 outlines a series of peer agency best practices and suggests items to explore in future Section 5310 program development, including the next update of MAG's CTP.

**Table 2. Summary of Best Practices and Recommendations for the MAG Region**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Best Practice</b>	<b>Peer Agency Experiences</b>	<b>Takeaway for MAG</b>
<b>Designated Recipient Role and Responsibility</b>	None noted; various arrangements available.	Some MPOs serve as the DR and others are a pass through entity from a regional or state agency.	Maintain current working relationship with City of Phoenix as DR; re-evaluate if state mandates change in the future.
<b>Capital vs Operating Considerations</b>	Must adhere to minimum FTA cost split (at least 55 percent of funds used traditional capital projects).	Most agencies maintain the 55 percent/45 percent split for projects and not many agencies are funding purchase of new vehicles; common nontraditional uses include operating expenditures, travel training, and mobility management.	<p>Consider offering multiple years of funding in a single Call for Projects.</p> <p>Opportunity to explore consolidating subrecipients to reduce duplication of services or combine fleets to free up additional funding for other traditional capital projects.</p> <p>Could evaluate brokerage service to arrange transportation services to eliminate confusion among patrons.</p>
<b>Project Scoring and Selection</b>	Provide regular opportunities to improve the scoring and selection process; create sub-categories for Traditional Capital and Operating/ Nontraditional Capital.	Different weights and criteria are used across different agencies; compatibility with CTP tends to have greatest weight.	Develop an applicant questionnaire to be completed in advance of the technical assistance review. Add a new “Benefit” category to the scoring criteria to incorporate more quantitative metrics. Continue working to develop an online portal to house the application and integrate publicly available and applicant-provided data into a more automated scoring process.

Topic	Best Practice	Peer Agency Experiences	Takeaway for MAG
<b>Use of Committees</b>	An advisory committee to review, score, and recommend project applications can help alleviate administrative burden of the DR and implement a more transparent process.	Most agencies used a committee; make-up and roles vary; typically include DR, MPO, and transit agency (in which either may be the DR), as well as a DOT, city/county, tribe, and/or social service agency.	<p>MAG could consider converting the EPDT Committee into a working group as part of an existing committee.</p> <p>The region could also consider establishing an LCC for enhanced coordination between the Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale and Phoenix West-Goodyear-Avondale UAs.</p> <p>MAG could extend application cycle to cover multiple years to streamline application and review process.</p>
<b>Balancing Regional Needs</b>	Agencies include some set-asides for small agencies, work with applicants to scale requests or connect applicants with other potential funding sources.	Varies widely: H-GAC reserves a share of funds for small service providers; WFRC provides full funding to the top three applicants; WSDOT brings additional state funding to cover unfunded needs.	MAG could consider reserving funds for small agencies, working with applicants to scale budget requests, and helping applicants understand other available funding sources and resources.
<b>Coordinated Transportation Plan</b>	Develop a data-driven plan and when possible, align CTP development with RTP updates.	Many agencies coordinated outreach/surveys for the CTP with RTP development, which conserved resources and informed regional needs identification.	<p>MAG should continue to include more quantitative data in the CTP to justify plan recommendations and priorities.</p> <p>Continue to coordinate CTP planning with RTP development.</p>

Topic	Best Practice	Peer Agency Experiences	Takeaway for MAG
<b>Ongoing Grantee Education</b>	All agencies provide information upfront; more positive program outcomes experienced with ongoing grantee education.	WFRC and UTA provide post-award training and lunch and learn series covering many topics related to 5310 program implementation.	MAG and City of Phoenix should continue to offer post-award training, and consider enhanced survey efforts to better understand grantee interest, information needs, and desired participation levels.





# **APPENDIX A**



# Human Services Transportation Best Practices

## Section 5310 Program Overview/MAG Process

*Prepared for*  
The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG)



February 13, 2025

**ParametriX**

# Contents

<b>1. Federal Program Overview .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Funding Allocation .....	1
1.2 Coordination with Federal Programs .....	2
<b>2. MAG Application and Selection Process .....</b>	<b>2</b>
2.1 Key Milestones and Schedule .....	2
2.2 Elderly and Persons with Disabilities Transportation (EPDT) Committee .....	3
2.3 Selection Criteria .....	4
2.4 Available Resources for Applicants .....	5
<b>3. Next Steps.....</b>	<b>6</b>

## **TABLES**

Table 1. Typical Section 5310 Schedule.....	3
Table 2. Selection Criteria .....	4

# 1. Federal Program Overview

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Persons for Disabilities Grant Program (49 U.S.C. Section 5310) provides formula funding to states and designated recipients to improve mobility for older adults and people with disabilities by removing barriers to transportation service and expanding transportation mobility options.

Section 5310 funding has been renewed and strengthened in various transportation legislation over the last several decades, beginning with the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) and evolving through Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). Federal guidance for the program is provided in [FTA Circular 9070.1H](#), which was published in 2024.

Section 5310 program funds are available for capital and operating expenses to: (1) serve the special needs of transit-dependent populations beyond traditional public transportation service, where public transportation is insufficient, inappropriate, or unavailable; (2) support projects that exceed the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); (3) support projects that improve access to fixed route service and decrease reliance on complementary paratransit; and (4) support projects that provide alternatives to public transportation.

## 1.1 Funding Allocation

Funds are apportioned based on each state's share of the population both for seniors and for persons with disabilities. Formula funds were dispersed through a single statewide authorization until adoption of MAP-21, which changed the formula to a three-tiered allocation. Today, funds are dispersed on a percentage basis as follows:

- **Large urbanized areas:** 60 percent of funds are directly given to areas with a population over 200,000
- **Small urbanized areas:** 20 percent of funds are given to states to disperse to areas with a population between 50,000-200,000
- **Rural/non-urbanized:** 20 percent of funds are given to states to disperse to areas with populations under 50,000

In large urban areas (population over 200,000 people), a direct recipient is chosen by the governor. Direct recipients have flexibility in how they select subrecipient projects for funding, but their decision process must be clearly noted in a program management plan. The selection process may be formula-based, competitive, or discretionary, and subrecipients can include states or local government authorities, private non-profit organizations, and/or operators of public transportation.

As designated by the Governor of Arizona, the City of Phoenix Public Transportation Department (PTD) is the designated recipient for the Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale and Phoenix West-Goodyear-Avondale Urban Areas. The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) coordinates an open, competitive, annual application process; handles the programming of funds; and ensures that subrecipients comply with applicable federal requirements. The City of Phoenix is responsible for capital procurement, grant management, and federal compliance.

At least 55 percent of program funds must be used on capital – or “traditional” 5310 projects, including buses and vans; wheelchair lifts, ramps, and securement devices; transit-related

information technology systems, including scheduling/routing/one-call systems; mobility management programs; or acquisition of transportation services under a contract, lease, or other arrangement. The MAG region chooses to program 60 percent of program funds towards capital to ensure that federal requirements are easily met.

The remaining 45 percent can be used for non-traditional projects, such as volunteer driver programs; improvements to signage or wayfinding; construction of an accessible path to a bus stop; incremental cost of providing same day service or door-to-door service; or purchase of vehicles to support new accessible taxi, ride sharing, or vanpooling programs.

Section 5310 program funds are subject to a local match. The required match for capital varies depending on the type of equipment purchased. ADA-equipped vehicles are purchased at an 85/15 match, while all other capital (e.g., preventive maintenance, mobility management, equipment purchases, computers, GPS units, etc.) are subject to an 80/20 match. Operating assistance is subject to a 50/50 match.

The 10 percent that is eligible to fund program administrative costs, including administration, planning, and technical assistance, may be funded at 100-percent federal share. The MAG region chooses to utilize these administration programming funds.

Federal funds from other agencies may be used as match for the Section 5310 program, as discussed in the [Federal Fund Braiding Guide](#). The City of Phoenix requires that subrecipients provide the full local match for vehicles and/or vehicle equipment in advance of the creation of any purchase orders.

## **1.2 Coordination with Federal Programs**

FTA's Section 5310 program requires grantees and subrecipients to coordinate on human services transportation. Coordinated transportation involves multiple entities working together to deliver one or more components of a transportation service to increase capacity. The transportation coordination guidance aims to reduce overlap between the [130 Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility \(CCAM\) programs](#) across nine federal agencies that may fund human services transportation and incentivize collaboration.

## **2. MAG Application and Selection Process**

### **2.1 Key Milestones and Schedule**

As noted in the previous section, the City of Phoenix PTD is the designated recipient for the Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale and Phoenix West-Goodyear-Avondale Urban Areas. MAG has the responsibility for overseeing a competitive process for the Section 5310 grant program across the region. Table 1 provides a chronological summary of the annual application solicitation, evaluation, and selection process.

**Table 1. Typical Section 5310 Schedule**

Month	Action
January	Public notice of funding availability; application published; support materials available online; Regional 5310 Grant Workshop
February	Application technical assistance available; applications due
	Public notice of applications submitted
March	Elderly and Persons with Disabilities Transportation (EPDT) Committee receives applications, public comments, instructions for evaluation, and ranking process
April	Applicants receive/respond to EPDT Committee follow-up questions
	Applicant interviews held with EPDT Committee
	EPDT Committee develops a prioritized listing of projects for recommendation
May	Priority listings forwarded through MAG committees for recommendations (Transit Committee, Transportation Review Committee, Management Committee, Transportation Policy Committee)
June	Priority listings recommendations forwarded to MAG Regional Council for approval
	Final funding recommendations forwarded to City of Phoenix PTD
	MAG Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment approved at Regional Council
	Applicants receive selection notification
July-August	TIP Amendment Process

Source: FY 2025 [Transportation Programming Guidebook](#) and [Handbook/Program Guidelines](#)

## 2.2 Elderly and Persons with Disabilities Transportation (EPDT) Committee

MAG developed the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities Transportation (EPDT) Committee, formerly known as the Urban Mass Transportation Committee, in 1975. The committee's main role is to review, evaluate, and prioritize applications to receive FTA Section 5310 grant funds for capital and operating awards in the MAG region's urban areas.

The EPDT Committee is comprised of stakeholders interested in alternative transportation options, including volunteer representatives from both transportation and community development. This diverse representation brings a mixed and holistic perspective to the application process.

Current membership includes one representative each from the cities of Avondale, Buckeye, Chandler, Mesa, Phoenix, Scottsdale, Surprise, Tempe, and Tolleson; the towns of Florence and Gilbert; Pinal County; and Valley Metro. Although there is no limit on the total number of committee members, each MAG member agency is limited to one representative. All representatives must be approved by the MAG Regional Council. The current membership composition includes four representatives each from the western and central portions of the MAG planning area, and five from the eastern portion.

The EPDT Committee meets four times per year, with the following objectives:

- In January, to kick off the process
- In March, to receive and review applications
- In April, to develop the priority listing of projects
- In October/November, to provide feedback and debrief

The committee then makes preliminary funding recommendations to the MAG Regional Council. The EPDT Committee also develops (and adjusts, as needed) project selection criteria in partnership with the PTD.

## 2.3 Selection Criteria

The EPDT Committee uses a pre-determined set of selection criteria in the scoring and selection of applications for 5310 program awards. MAG and the City of Phoenix refined the set of scoring criteria previously used in the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) scoring and selection process for use by the EPDT Committee when the agencies first took over the process in 2014. One major change made at this time was adding applicant interviews back to the process.

Although the main categories have remained consistent to ensure compliance with program requirements, sub-categories and weighting have been adjusted over the years to ensure a fair and balanced approach. As noted in the previous section, every November, the EPDT Committee reviews the application scoring and selection process, making adjustments as needed. An example of a recent update has been placing a higher weight on the “Coordination” score (Section 8), due to the importance of coordination to the overall program objectives.

More detailed information about each criterion is available in the [Program Management Plan](#) and the [Handbook](#).

**Table 2. Selection Criteria**

Selection Criteria	Needs Improvement	Meets Criteria	Meets All or Exceeds Criteria
Section 1, 2, and 9: Cover Letter, Agency Info, and Checklist Completed (5 points)	1	2-3	4-5
Section 3: Agency Experience and Capabilities (20 points)	1-9	10-14	15-20
Section 4 and 5, 6, or 7: Project Description (25 points)	1-9	10-19	20-25
Section 5, 6, or 7: Budget (10 points)	1-3	4-7	8-10
Section 8: Coordination (25 points)	1-9	10-19	20-25
Applicant Interview and Presentation (15 points)	1-4	5-10	11-15

Source: City of Phoenix PTD Program Management Plan

MAG has established a process that adheres to the defined selection criteria while also prioritizing funding availability for eligible smaller non-profit organizations with the most limited resources. Historically, the region has been able to fully fund application requests for this contingent of subrecipients.

However, the smaller of the two UAs (the Phoenix West-Goodyear-Avondale Urban Area) has been apportioned less federal funding but has a larger amount of unmet transportation needs. Thus, the region is constantly exploring options to better utilize this funding source. The peer agency review component of this study will dive deeper into this issue, to determine conventions and best practices among regions that are consistently over-subscribed.

## **2.4 Available Resources for Applicants**

### **Regional Grant Workshop**

MAG and the City of Phoenix hold an annual Section 5310 Regional Grant Workshop in advance of the call for projects. This meeting uses a virtual format to share important information about the program; the application process; reporting, eligibility, documentation, and compliance requirements; and the specific requirements related to working with the City of Phoenix. The agencies also describe the resources provided in the Handbook and cover a set of frequently asked questions.

This workshop is a critical first opportunity to help potential applicants understand the full set of requirements related to receiving federal funding. This information is particularly important for first-time applicants and agencies who are less familiar with federal requirements.

### **One-on-One Appointments**

MAG and the City of Phoenix also offer 30-minute appointment windows to provide application assistance. Attendance at one of these appointments is mandatory for new applicants. Staff requests that applicants come to the appointment with a portion of the application completed and bring specific questions related to their proposed project or strategy. In addition to the Regional Grant workshop, these one-on-one appointments help applicants better understand reporting and compliance requirements before entering the process.

### **Website Materials**

The following resources for applicants are provided on the Section 5310 page of MAG's website:

- The [Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Handbook and Program Guidelines](#)
- PDFs of the required online application forms (Sections [10A](#), [B](#), [C](#), and [D](#))

The Handbook provides information for applicants about the program and the application process, including:

- Contact information and areas of eligibility
- Timeline of key milestones for the current fiscal year
- Program overview
- Federal program requirements
- Program measures

- An overview of the application and selection process, including selection criteria
- Final selection process and considerations
- Reporting, compliance, and other requirements
- Asset management

The Handbook is updated each year to provide current dates and reflect any changes to federal or City requirements.

### **3. Next Steps**

Peer agency conventions and potential best practices related to the application scoring and prioritization process will be further explored in the next phase of this study (i.e., the literature review and peer agency interviews). Peer agencies have been selected based on a number of characteristics, including UA population and area; 5310 apportionment (2024); and the presence of multiple UAs within the region, among other considerations.

Research and interview questions will focus on better understanding the relationship between MPOs and designated recipients; details of each agency's scoring and prioritization process; how agencies balance the needs of larger and smaller service providers; and the role of the committee in project scoring and prioritization.



# **APPENDIX B**



# Human Services Transportation Best Practices Peer Agency Literature Review

*Prepared for*  
The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG)



March 18, 2025

**Parametrix**

# Contents

<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Memo Purpose.....	1
1.2 Section 5310 Program Overview.....	1
1.3 Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plans.....	1
1.4 Program Management Plans.....	2
<b>2. Peer Agency Selection Process.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3. Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC).....</b>	<b>3</b>
3.1 Call for Projects and Schedule.....	3
3.2 Selection Process.....	4
3.3 Applicant Resources.....	4
<b>4. Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho (COMPASS).....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>5. Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG).....</b>	<b>5</b>
5.1 Call for Projects and Schedule.....	5
5.2 Selection Process.....	5
5.3 Applicant Resources.....	6
<b>6. Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC).....</b>	<b>6</b>
6.1 Call for Projects and Schedule.....	6
6.2 Selection Process.....	6
<b>7. Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC).....</b>	<b>7</b>
7.1 Call for Projects and Schedule.....	7
7.2 Selection Process.....	7
<b>8. Wasatch Front Regional Council (WFRC).....</b>	<b>8</b>
8.1 Call for Projects and Schedule.....	8
8.2 Selection Process.....	8
8.3 Applicant Resources.....	9
<b>9. Summary and Conclusions.....</b>	<b>9</b>

## TABLES

Table 1. Peer Agency Characteristics.....	4
---	---

# **1. Introduction**

## **1.1 Memo Purpose**

This technical memorandum will provide a literature review summary of six peer agency Coordinated Human Services Transportation plans (plan names vary by agency) developed under the Section 5310 Program, to glean best practices which may be applicable to MAG. Relevant plans may include the region's Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan and/or the Program Management Plan. These plans outline the need for transit/mobility solutions for seniors and persons with disabilities, and describe how the funding program is implemented. This information will be paired with a series of peer agency interviews to ultimately build the Best Practices Memorandum.

## **1.2 Section 5310 Program Overview**

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Persons for Disabilities Grant Program (49 U.S.C. Section 5310) provides formula funding to states and designated recipients to improve mobility for older adults and people with disabilities by removing barriers to transportation service and expanding transportation mobility options.

Section 5310 program funds are available for capital and operating expenses to: (1) serve the special needs of transit-dependent populations beyond traditional public transportation service, where public transportation is insufficient, inappropriate, or unavailable; (2) support projects that exceed the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); (3) support projects that improve access to fixed route service and decrease reliance on complementary paratransit; and (4) support projects that provide alternatives to public transportation.

Under MAP-21, large urban areas had the option to choose their designated recipient. However, under current legislation (the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act), in large urban areas (population over 200,000 people), a direct recipient is chosen by the governor. Direct recipients have flexibility in how they select subrecipient projects for funding, but their decision process must be clearly noted in a program management plan. The selection process may be formula-based or competitive, and subrecipients can include states or local government authorities, private non-profit organizations, and/or operators of public transportation.

## **1.3 Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plans**

Federal transit law requires that projects selected for funding under the Section 5310 program be included in a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan, and that the plan be developed and approved through a process that includes participation by seniors; individuals with disabilities; representatives of public, private, and nonprofit transportation and human services providers and other members of the public utilizing transportation services.

A Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan is a comprehensive strategy for public transportation service delivery that ultimately identifies eligible projects for funding under the Section 5310 program. Specifically, the plans are required to:

- Assess available services provided by current transportation providers (public, private, non-profit).
- Identify the transportation needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities.

- Lay out strategies for meeting these needs and improving coordination among the human services transportation providers in the region.
- Prioritize services for these target populations.

A designated recipient typically develops Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plans in accordance with FTA requirements, however in some cases, co-designated recipients or sub-recipients may take responsibility for developing and updating the plan. In some regions, the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) may develop the Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan on behalf of the subrecipient. Plans need to be updated at least every five years to remain eligible for federal funding under the Section 5310 program, although some regions may choose to update their plans more frequently based on local needs and changing demographics.

## 1.4 Program Management Plans

A Section 5310 Program Management Plan (PMP) is a document that outlines the strategies and procedures for administering Section 5310 program funds. The document details the management, distribution, and implementation of these funds to ensure effective mobility solutions for eligible populations, including such elements as:

- **Program Goals and Objectives:** Clearly defined goals for improving mobility options for seniors and individuals with disabilities.
- **Eligibility Criteria:** Specific guidelines on who qualifies to receive funding under Section 5310.
- **Funding Allocation:** Details on how the allocated Section 5310 funds will be distributed among eligible subrecipients.
- **Application Process:** Details on how potential subrecipients can apply for funding, including required documentation and evaluation criteria.
- **Performance Monitoring:** Key performance indicators (KPIs) to track the effectiveness of funded projects, such as ridership data, service area coverage, and client satisfaction.
- **Project Management Procedures:** Guidelines for project implementation, including timelines, budget management, and reporting requirements.
- **Outreach and Communication Strategy:** Plans to inform the community about available services and encourage participation.

A Section 5310 Program Management Plan is generally developed by the designated recipient agency, typically a public transit provider or a regional planning organization. The PMP should be updated at least annually to reflect any changes in program needs, federal regulations, or significant changes in the service area, but should also be reviewed and potentially updated whenever there are major changes to the transit system or when applying for a new grant cycle.

## 2. Peer Agency Selection Process

Peer agencies were selected based on several key factors, including Urbanized Area (UZA) population, land area, density, 5310 apportionment, and the presence of multiple UZAs in the planning area (see Table 1). Regions were generally sought with similar characteristics to the MAG planning area, including those who may also have well-developed Coordinated Human Services Transportation programs and associated best practices to collect. Although not all agencies were similar to MAG in all characteristics, each had enough similarities to warrant being considered a peer.

**Table 1. Peer Agency Characteristics**

Agency	Urbanized Area	UZA Population	Area (sq mi)	Density (pop/sq mi)	5310 Apportionment	Multiple UZAs?
MAG	Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale; Phoenix West	4,262,379	1,238	3,443	\$5,264,495	Yes
WFRC	SLC-West Valley; Ogden-Layton	1,792,721	513	3,495	\$1,208,157	Yes
ARC	Atlanta	5,211,164	2,553	2,041	\$5,535,987	No
COMPASS	Boise City-Nampa	626,989	205	3,058	\$551,596	Yes
DRCOG	Denver-Aurora	2,691,349	644	4,179	\$2,964,576	No
H-GAC	Houston	6,640,709	2,080	3,193	\$5,755,210	Yes
PSRC	Seattle-Tacoma-Bremerton	3,783,829	1,129	3,351	\$4,067,907	Yes

### 3. Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC)

The Atlanta Regional Commission is the regional planning agency and inter-governmental coordination agency for the 11-county Atlanta region in Georgia. The agency coordinates regional Transportation Planning, Mobility Services, and Aging Services and Resources, among other services.

In Georgia, the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS) is the designated recipient of Section 5310 funds and administers the program. The state is divided into twelve regions, each of which has a DHS Regional Transportation Office (RTO) which is responsible for monitoring and compliance of 5310 funding. Each region has a Regional Transportation Coordinating Committee (RTCC) to establish policies and procedures within each region and is responsible for contractor oversight and approval of new contracts each year. The Committee is made up of regional division and human service provider representation and others with vested interest in transportation in each area.

#### 3.1 Call for Projects and Schedule

The call for projects begins with the DHS RTOs preparing the publication for the newspapers notifying eligible local recipients of the availability of the funds. The RTOs receive responses from interested entities and provide application packets to them. Entities complete the applications and return to the RTOs for review. The RTOs review and score the application, using identified gaps in service from local needs assessments as a gauge to determine how to best meet the needs in their areas. Applications are then submitted to the DHS Transportation Services Section - Atlanta office for final

approval. Approved applicants are notified by the RTOs. Subrecipients are notified of their funding amounts based on the Federal allocations for the UZAs by the State Office via e-mail.

To obtain the application package, candidate applicants must contact the DHS Office of Facilities and Support Services, Transportation Services Section by mail or email. All new and current subrecipients are required to submit an application each funding cycle.

## **3.2 Selection Process**

As program administrator, DHS certifies the eligibility of applicants and project activities, reviews applications, selects projects for funding, ensures compliance with federal requirements, monitors local projects, and oversees project audit and closeout.

DHS uses the following criteria for the evaluation and selection of applicants for Section 5310 assistance.

- Ability to service target population (25%)
- Coordination (30%)
- Need and use of proposed funds (25%)
- Fiscal and managerial capability (20%)

Each applicant is evaluated on the points assigned to each of the categories and must meet basic qualifications. Applicants with the highest overall score will be eligible for an award. Selection/non-selection notifications are provided to all applicants and will be maintained on file within the Office of Facilities and Support Services, Transportation Services Section for three years.

Funds for the Section 5310 program are distributed among the twelve DHS regions. If there is a lack of demand for Section 5310 funds in a service area, the monies for that area are distributed by the department to programs in other service areas.

## **3.3 Applicant Resources**

Georgia's Program Management Plan is not located online, and thus no information can be currently gathered on the application schedule or applicant resources.

## **4. Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho (COMPASS)**

COMPASS is the regional planning organization for the area including Ada County, Boise County, and Canyon County, and the cities within those Idaho counties. The agency also serves as the MPO for Ada and Canyon Counties (i.e., the region's urbanized areas). Valley Regional Transit (VRT), the regional public transportation authority and primary transit provider, is the designated recipient for Section 5310 funds. VRT and COMPASS work collaboratively to develop the region's Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan.

VRT uses a portion of 5310 funds to contract with private companies or non-profits to "acquire" service, which seeks to fill gaps that are not addressed by fixed route or other demand-response services like ACCESS and OnDemand services. Currently, this list includes 11 service providers.

COMPASS/VRT's Program Management Plan is not located online, and thus no information can be currently gathered on the call for projects and schedule, selection process, or applicant resources.

## **5. Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG)**

DRCOG serves as the federally designated metropolitan planning organization for the agency's eight-county planning area, including Adams, Arapahoe, Broomfield, Clear Creek, Denver, Douglas, Jefferson, and Gilpin counties in Colorado. The agency also serves as the designated Area Agency on Aging for the region.

### **5.1 Call for Projects and Schedule**

DRCOG serves as both the designated recipient and pass-through entity for Section 5310 funds. DRCOG holds an annual call for projects. This is advertised via the DRCOG [website](#) and email notices to stakeholders and current and previous grantees.

Potential applications are required to attend mandatory training conducted via Zoom prior to submitting a proposal. Potential applicants must also attend a mandatory pre-application workshop and submit a letter of intent. DRCOG holds a "letter of intent discussion" with each potential applicant. If the letter of intent is accepted, sponsors will be invited to apply. All application materials are submitted through DRCOG's grant management system ([WebGrants](#)).

### **5.2 Selection Process**

DRCOG ensures the 55/45 (capital/operating) split for each year is achieved as applications are reviewed, approved, and programmed during the development of the Program of Projects. An initial review of all applications is conducted by DRCOG staff to ensure they address needs, gaps, and strategies identified in the Coordinated Transportation Plan (CTP). It also includes an equity analysis.

Project selection criteria includes the following major categories and scoring allocation:

- Compatibility with the DRCOG CTP (65%)
- Innovation and transferability (5%)
- (for Capital projects) Replacement of Revenue Service Vehicles; Expansion of Revenue Service Vehicles; Facilities, Design, and Equipment (15%)
- (for Operating and Mobility Management Projects) Financial Need; Service Justification; Coordination/Effectiveness (15%)

DRCOG maintains a project review panel to assist with scoring and evaluating projects, including both internal and external participants. A cost analysis is conducted on each application to determine whether the subrecipient understands the financial aspects of the project and has developed reasonable estimates of required costs.

Recommendations of the review panel are reviewed by the DRCOG Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), who make their own recommendations to the Regional Transportation Committee and DRCOG Board of Directors. The TAC may agree with the panel's recommendations or amend them.

## **5.3 Applicant Resources**

Application forms and requirements are posted on DRCOG's website to ensure the most up to date information is readily available.

## **6. Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC)**

H-GAC is the regional planning entity for the 13-county area surrounding Houston and Galveston, Texas. The Board of Directors includes 37 elected officials representing the region's 13 counties, 107 cities, and 11 independent school district members. H-GAC also serves as the federally recognized metropolitan planning organization for the urbanized area.

The Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO) is the designated recipient for the UZA's Section 5310 funds. METRO is responsible for submitting grant program applications, receiving the resulting FTA grant contracts, and managing the grant program. Successful applicants become subrecipients to METRO.

### **6.1 Call for Projects and Schedule**

METRO allocates a designated amount, based on the last three years of eligible activities and associated grant funding, to the region's dedicated transit providers. Remaining funds are allocated to non-profit organizations through a competitive process. METRO issues a call for projects and leads a project evaluation committee to make recommendations to the METRO Board of Directors for the allocation of funds.

Electronic and paper copies of the application form are made available. Additional materials made available include the project selection schedule; estimated available funds; the most recent version of the Program Management Plan.

METRO conducts a workshop and meets with applicants to explain program requirements, discuss the application process and project selection process, and answer questions. The workshop is not mandatory, and those who are unable to attend may ask questions via email or telephone.

The competitive selection process/application cycle occurs at least once per year, generally beginning in January with the call for projects, and concluding late April with project approval through the METRO Board and H-GAC Transportation Policy Council for inclusion in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)/Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

### **6.2 Selection Process**

After applications have been received and the submission deadline has passed, the Project Evaluation Team (PET) members receive a copy of each application, the selection criteria, project evaluation form, and the PMP. The PET is made up of two METRO representatives, two representatives from dedicated transit operators who have previously operated and reported service inside the Houston UZA, and one representative from the non-profit community.

The PET has a set amount of time to perform technical evaluations; after this time has passed, they meet to decide on final project scores. A draft list recommending projects to be funded is then submitted to METRO's Board of Directors for approval.

Primary categories for evaluation include:

- Project Description/Benefits: 0-20 points
- Project Goals/Objectives: 0-20 points
- Project Planning/Coordination/Implementation: 0-30 points
- Project Implementation/Readiness: 0-10 points
- Project Financial Status/Monitoring/Sustainability: 0-20 points

## **7. Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC)**

PSRC develops policies and coordinates decisions about regional growth, transportation, and economic development planning within King, Kitsap, Pierce, and Snohomish counties in Washington state (Seattle metropolitan area). The agency is comprised of almost 100 members, including cities and towns; ports; state and local transportation agencies; and Tribal governments, in addition to the four counties.

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is the direct recipient of several federal funding sources, including Section 5310 funds, and administers the funding through a statewide consolidated grants program. PSRC also has a supportive role to WSDOT in the distribution of Section 5310 funding and is responsible for programming these funds within the region into the TIP.

### **7.1 Call for Projects and Schedule**

WSDOT distributes federal program funds through a consolidated application process. The consolidated application process coincides with the state biennial cycle. WSDOT makes applications available in the late summer to early fall of even years. Grant contracts resulting from the application process cover 24-month and 48-month periods that begin in July of the following year.

### **7.2 Selection Process**

Projects are awarded through competitive process and WSDOT works with an advisory committee when establishing ranking criteria. Potential grantees use a single grant application form, regardless of the type of funding they intend to use for the project. Applications are available through the web-based Grants Management System (GMS). WSDOT provides a written explanation of the application questions and a complete description of the evaluation process in the GMS and PDF application instructions document.

WSDOT's Public Transportation Division also offers technical assistance in grant writing. To avoid conflict of interest, WSDOT staff not involved with the evaluation of grant applications provide the technical assistance.

During the application period, WSDOT conducts training workshops and develops instructional materials to explain program requirements, the application process, and project selection to potential applicants. These workshops are beneficial in coordinating public transportation providers.

## **8. Wasatch Front Regional Council (WFRC)**

WFRC is the MPO for the Wasatch Front Region, which includes the Salt Lake City-West Valley Urban Area and the Ogden-Layton Urban Area. The agency's Regional Council has 27 members, including 21 voting and six non-voting members. The voting members are mayors and commissioners from the cities and counties throughout the planning area, as well as the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) and the Utah Transit Authority (UTA).

UTA is the designated recipient for 5310 funds for all of Utah's Large Urbanized Areas, including those within the WFRC planning area. UTA is responsible for all major aspects of Section 5310 coordination, including developing/updating the Program Management Plan and Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan; holding and advertising the call for projects; facilitating project scoring and selection; and managing awards.

### **8.1 Call for Projects and Schedule**

UTA makes use of a competitive process to allocate regional 5310 funds. This process operates on a two-year cycle. The agency typically publishes the Notice of Funding Opportunity in December and holds the Application Workshop the following January. UTA requires applicants to submit a letter of intent in mid-January, before the application period officially opens in late January. Applications are due in late February.

### **8.2 Selection Process**

Applications are reviewed internally by UTA staff, then scored and ranked, and a draft Program of Projects is developed in late March. Primary categories for evaluation include:

- FTA 5310 Coordination Requirement: 0-30 points
- Commitment to Collaboration: 0-25 points
- Project Work Plan: 0-25 points
- Performance Measures: 0-20 points

The Local Coordinating Councils (LCCs) within each UZA will select a committee to represent them in the final project selection process. LCCs include representatives from seniors; individuals with disabilities; and members of public, private, and non-profit transportation and human services providers. In April, the committee chosen by the LCC will receive all necessary documentation to begin reviewing draft scores and rankings. Each applicant has an opportunity to discuss their proposed project(s) in an LCC meeting before final decisions are made.

The Grant Management Advisory Team (GMAT) will then review committee recommendations and make final awards in May. The GMAT oversees UTA's 5310 large urbanized area grant program, and includes representatives from UTA's Grant Management Team, the state's three MPOs, and a representative from each LCC.

Awarded applications are then finalized in the Program of Projects, which notes the subrecipients and projects for which UTA is applying to FTA (on behalf of subrecipients) for financial assistance under the Section 5310 program. Finally, award letters are sent out in June.

## 8.3 Applicant Resources

UTA maintains an FTA 5310 Grant Program [web page](#), which includes information and resources for applicants and grantees. The web page provides a list of proposed awards for the previous grant cycle; information about the current and/or upcoming application cycle; an overview of the 5310 program and its purpose; a [link](#) to UTA's Program Management Plan; application documents; and contact information.

UTA also holds an Application Workshop during each application cycle and offers Post-Award Training for all subrecipients to explain reporting and other requirements.

## 9. Summary and Conclusions

While there are many similarities in the agency processes for the selection and prioritization of FTA Section 5310 subrecipient applications, the federal guidance provides for significant latitude and flexibility in program implementation. Most agencies evaluate applications through a combination of the following general criteria:

- Compatibility/alignment with regional goals or policies
- Subrecipient financial and administrative capacity
- Project merit
- Project readiness

In addition, many agencies have established a preliminary information/training workshop (mandatory or optional) and a project selection committee to assist in the review and selection of applications. These themes are consistent among most agencies regardless of the size of the region served or the role of the designated recipient. Application cycles across the agencies reviewed range from every two to four years. Most of the agencies reviewed have also established a competitive process, but it is unclear if there are other external factors considered in the allocation of funding, particularly if needs exceed available funding.

Fortunately, there is an opportunity to follow up with each of the peer agencies through scheduled interviews which will result in a subsequent memo providing detailed findings. This next step should reveal nuances in project selection and funding allocation that are not publicly available on agency websites, and will allow MAG to paint a more robust picture of industry practices and trends. The goal of collecting this information is to evaluate potential methods to improve or enhance MAG's current process through agency collaboration.



# **APPENDIX C**



# Human Services Transportation Best Practices Peer Agency Interviews Summary

*Prepared for*  
The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG)



April 25, 2025

**ParametriX**

# Contents

<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Memo Purpose.....	1
1.2 Interview Questions .....	1
<b>2. Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) .....</b>	<b>2</b>
2.1 Overview.....	2
2.2 Application and Scoring Process .....	2
2.3 Coordinated Plan .....	3
<b>3. Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho (COMPASS).....</b>	<b>3</b>
3.1 Overview .....	3
3.2 Application and Scoring Process .....	3
3.3 Coordinated Plan .....	4
<b>4. Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG).....</b>	<b>4</b>
4.1 Overview .....	4
4.2 Application and Scoring Process .....	4
4.3 Coordinated Plan .....	5
<b>5. Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC).....</b>	<b>5</b>
5.1 Overview .....	5
5.2 Application and Scoring Process .....	5
5.3 Coordinated Plan .....	6
<b>6. Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC).....</b>	<b>6</b>
6.1 Overview .....	6
6.2 Application and Scoring Process .....	6
6.3 Coordinated Plan .....	7
<b>7. Wasatch Front Regional Council (WFRC).....</b>	<b>7</b>
7.1 Overview .....	7
7.2 Application and Scoring Process .....	7
7.3 Coordinated Plan .....	8
<b>8. Summary and Conclusions.....</b>	<b>8</b>

## TABLES

Table 1. MPO Program Comparison.....	9
--------------------------------------	---

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Memo Purpose

The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) is undertaking a review of its Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Transportation Program, which is funded primarily by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) under 49 U.S.C. Section 5310. An important part of this analysis is a review of Section 5310 practices by other comparable agencies. This technical memorandum summarizes findings from a series of six interviews held with MAG's peer agencies. This summary supplements the information presented in the March 2025 Peer Agency Literature Review Memo.

Metropolitan planning organization (MPO) peer agencies were selected based on characteristics such as urbanized area (UZA) population, UZA area, amount of their most recent 5310 apportionment, and whether the MPO covers multiple UZAs. The approximate number of subrecipients was also a consideration, although this was not known for all agencies prior to the peer interview.

## 1.2 Interview Questions

A set of questions was prepared and distributed in advance of each peer agency interview. The proposed list of questions is summarized below. Additional and follow-up questions were also asked as warranted by each conversation, as noted in the individual agency interview descriptions. Detailed notes from each agency interview are provided in Appendix A.

### General Questions

- How long has your agency been running a 5310 program?
- How has the program evolved over the years?
- Who is the Designated Recipient? (if this information was not available in the literature review)
- What is the delineation of responsibility between the MPO and the Designated Recipient (DR)?
- Approximately how many subrecipients do you award funds to in a typical year?
- Are awards limited to capital improvements?
- Can you tell us about your fleet management strategy (e.g., how do you budget/plan for vehicle replacements)?

### Application Process Questions

- How do you raise awareness about funding availability?
- Can you tell us about your application process? (e.g., overall process; types of training and resources provided to applicants; opportunities to debrief)
- Who leads the selection process (MPO or DR)?

- What type of methodology do you use in project scoring and selection (e.g., do you use a committee)?
- How do you develop the priority list?
- Are the process and results made publicly available?
- Do you/how do you balance the needs of larger and smaller service providers in the scoring process?
- Would you be willing to share the scoring rubric/weighting used in the scoring process?

### **Coordinated Plan Question**

- Is the Coordinated Plan developed regionally? Can you tell us about the plan's priorities?

### **Concluding Questions/Requests**

- Would you be willing to share your 5310 Program Management Plan (if it's not already available online)
- Is there anything you expected us to ask you, but we didn't?

## **2. Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC)**

### **2.1 Overview**

ARC has been administering the Section 5310 program for over a decade. Prior to 2016, ARC was the DR of 5310 funds. However, that designation has since been moved to the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS) and ARC is now a subrecipient.

### **2.2 Application and Scoring Process**

As the DR, DHS determines the amount of funding that is allocated to the urbanized area. The amount of Section 5310 funds that ARC has received over the past few years (approximately \$1.2 million) is significantly smaller than the federal apportionment, as some of the funds go to DHS coordinated transportation services in individual counties.

ARC issues a notification of funding availability (NOFA) to the entire region every three years. Contract cycles have changed over time (previously up to four years then down to two years), but they currently operate on a three-year cycle. ARC manages Older Americans Act (OAA) funding in addition to Section 5310 funds; both programs follow a similar process. There are currently six subrecipients for 5310 funds (has ranged from four to seven in the past), and 16 subrecipients for OAA funds (have been as many as 20 in the past).

A NOFA is initiated about four to eight months prior to the award of funds for an October 1 date, which coincides with the federal fiscal year. Typically, the NOFA begins no later than April. ARC maintains a mailing list of previous applicants and interested parties, as well as publishing the notice in the newspaper and posting information on their website. ARC hosts a voluntary pre-proposal conference where they provide a basic presentation with program details and important dates in the application process. DHS provides information on Title VI, civil rights, and other important

requirements that are incorporated into the presentation. The application period is generally open for six to eight weeks.

A committee primarily consisting of volunteers from other ARC departments evaluates the applications and scores each based on specific criteria. ARC prefers to use staff from other departments who might not be as familiar with the program and subrecipients to maintain a more objective review. They utilize a rubric of weighted scoring criteria, which are also published in the NOFA, and evaluators score each of the applications in an Excel-based template that compiles the scores. The scoring criteria are structured in a manner that is aligned with the priorities of the Section 5310 program, the needs of the region, cost effectiveness, and projects of greater scale in terms of geographic influence and ridership activity.

### **Misc. Project/Award Information**

- ARC only administers capital funds per their agreement with DHS. Funds are not used for fleet management/vehicle replacements due to the long-term tracking requirements. Some subrecipients do have private fleets, but those operate under Older Americans Services.
- All awards are routed through the county-based Boards of Commissions in the region.
- Historically, ARC has not published subrecipient awards but is planning to begin doing so in future grant cycles. Individual feedback on the application reviews is only provided if requested.

## **2.3 Coordinated Plan**

Projects funded through Section 5310 are required by federal law to be included in a locally developed coordinated public transit human services transportation plan, which is referred to as the Coordinated Plan. ARC has little interaction with coordinated transportation in the region. They are invited to participate in quarterly meetings hosted by DHS, but there is not much collaboration due to the manner in which funds are allocated by DHS throughout the region.

## **3. Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho (COMPASS)**

### **3.1 Overview**

Prior to 2012, COMPASS was responsible for the Section 5310 program. However, on the recommendation of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), this responsibility was turned over to Valley Regional Transit (VRT), the primary fixed route transit provider for the Boise large urban area and the current DR.

VRT also provides transit service in the Nampa small urban area, but the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) is the DR for those funds.

### **3.2 Application and Scoring Process**

VRT administers a three-year application cycle primarily for operating funds, but this also serves as a look ahead for vehicle procurement planning purposes. A call for applications is noticed in the local

newspaper and VRT maintains a bidder's list from past applicants who are also contacted. In addition, a list of non-profit organizations is provided in the Coordinated Plan.

A selection team comprised of VRT staff reviews the applications and scores them based on the evaluation criteria that is published in the notification. However, an application has never been denied due to the limited number of applications received. A notice of intent to award is published for the successful applications.

### **Misc. Project/Award Information**

- All Section 5310 funds are used for traditional operating service.
- VRT is the group plan sponsor for Transit Asset Management, and they replace vehicles based on the FTA useful life benchmark. Non-profit organizations can lease vehicles from VRT but must go through the VRT fleet management training program. If an organization has its own fleet, VRT administers compliance checks for the program.

## **3.3 Coordinated Plan**

COMPASS is responsible for the development of the Coordinated Plan and has been leading this effort since 2009. Prior to 2014, COMPASS developed a regional Coordinated Plan for a six-county area, but since then have been developing the Coordinated Plan for the Boise urbanized area (Ada and Canyon Counties).

VRT is a major stakeholder and partner in the development of the Coordinated Plan, which is typically updated on the same cycle as the Regional Long-Range Transportation Plan (approximately every five years). The Regional Advisory Council (RAC) is a standing committee of the Valley Regional Transit Board and is also a major contributor to the outreach and development of the Coordinated Plan. During the last Plan update, the RAC helped distribute targeted surveys for input and assisted in the development of the goals and priorities for the Plan. COMPASS drafted the Plan which was recommended and approved by their Regional Transportation Advisory Committee and Board, respectively.

## **4. Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG)**

### **4.1 Overview**

DRCOG took over the Section 5310 program 4 years ago from the state department of transportation (DOT). DRCOG is also the Area Agency on Aging, which allows a singular agency to oversee programs related to older adults and people with disabilities.

### **4.2 Application and Scoring Process**

DRCOG issues an annual call for projects each fall. The program runs on the state fiscal year from July-June. DRCOG uses the web grants online database to collect applications, including narratives and budgets. Prior to submitting applications, DRCOG holds a training session about what is eligible and program requirements. Program applicants are required to attend the workshop. They do not have a letter of intent process, because it is generally the same applicants year after year. Any new applicants are asked to reach out to verify their eligibility.

A committee completes the application review and scoring process. The committee is generally made up of external experts or senior services local government experts, such as from the DOT, County Human Services staff, Department of Public Health, and Veterans Services. They try not to use DRCOG staff because they also apply for funds (to avoid a conflict of interest).

Scores are posted and shared with applicants. They are always open to talking with applicants and doing debriefs.

### **4.3 Coordinated Plan**

Part of updating the Coordinated Transportation Plan (CTP) is reliance on qualitative research and feedback to establish gaps in existing service. They would like to have a more data-focused approach to the gap analysis as part of the upcoming plan update. RTP and CTP adoptions occur at the same time with coordinated outreach.

## **5. Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC)**

### **5.1 Overview**

H-GAC is not the Section 5310 DR for the region. There are four different urbanized areas (UZA) that comprise the Houston region and each has their own DR. Most of the time, the transit agency is the DR in each UZA. METRO, as one DR and most applicable to the H-GAC region, has direct Section 5310 responsibilities.

### **5.2 Application and Scoring Process**

Section 5310 funding is not solicited on a regular schedule. Sometimes it occurs annually, other times it will occur every three years. The three-year cycle is predominant because of the efficiency in conducting a comprehensive call for projects.

METRO will advertise for funding, but also ask H-GAC to distribute to sub-committees, transit providers, non-profits, social service agencies, etc. METRO handles the application process. The subrecipients and H-GAC will participate in the review/evaluation of projects. METRO has the ultimate decision-making capability and once decisions on projects are made, METRO's board will approve the program of projects and distribute funds. This list gets incorporated in H-GAC's TIP (similar process occurs with other UZAs in the region).

#### **Misc. Project/Award Information**

- Most applications have historically been capital improvements or vehicle purchases.
- Transit agencies will receive a share of funds first and remaining funds are available for the competitive process.
- The region's Section 5310 funding allocation is relatively small. Many related transit improvements will be funded through the Transportation Alternatives (TA) program (e.g., sidewalk improvements, access to transit), which occurs during the annual TIP call for projects.

## 5.3 Coordinated Plan

H-GAC develops the Coordination Plan in coordination with the regional transit entities. This plan includes needs for the broader rural counties as well, even though funding usually is not received for them (covers a total of 13 counties). The H-GAC Transportation Department completes the plan in-house. H-GAC conducts outreach for this plan, but not usually coordinated with other plans.

## 6. Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC)

### 6.1 Overview

PSRC has been involved with the Section 5310 program since MAP-21. Prior to that, PSRC participated with other human services transportation programs. PSRC was initially the DR for the urbanized area. However, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) now manages these funds, along with a variety of other federal funding programs through a “consolidated grant” process statewide. WSDOT leads the selection and distribution process. PSRC focuses on defining regional priorities.

### 6.2 Application and Scoring Process

WSDOT leads the call for projects. PSRC attends mobility coalition meetings to announce funding availability. PSRC has their own stakeholder list to which they distribute the call for projects.

WSDOT sets the application review process and schedule, but PSRC offers their priorities at the regional level. PSRC coordinates with individual applicants and evaluates projects to determine regional priority projects. PSRC facilitates a committee to assist and allocate rankings. One of their evaluation factors is the alignment with higher priority strategies in the Coordination Plan.

The stakeholder committee, which includes counties, tribes, transit agencies, transportation system users, priority population representatives, medical transportation, and ferries, takes the factor rankings and assigns the WSDOT letter rankings. This goes through the PSRC Board for approval. WSDOT provides a ranking scale and limits the number of A/B/C rankings available during the scoring process; PSRC provides “grade” for all projects: A is best, D is worst.

WSDOT manages the distribution of funds. They incorporate two levels of inputs into their decision-making: (1) WSDOT completes a call for projects and completes their own rankings; (2) regions/MPOs provide their own rankings/priorities. WSDOT incorporates regional input to finalize rankings/scoring.

#### Misc. Project/Award Information

- There are no limitations to project types – both capital and operating funds are awarded.
- The agency does not have a fleet management strategy in place, although this is recognized as a need. They currently reference “useful life benchmark information” included in the application.

## 6.3 Coordinated Plan

PSRC develops the Coordination Plan and aligns this with the RTP update process every 4 years. Outreach is coordinated between both efforts. The Coordination Plan is also appended to the RTP.

# 7. Wasatch Front Regional Council (WFRC)

## 7.1 Overview

Prior to 2014, the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) was the DR for all 5310 funds in the State of Utah. At that time, the governor reassigned DR status for the state's three large, urbanized areas (Salt Lake, Provo-Orem, and Ogden-Layton) to the Utah Transit Authority (UTA). UTA now serves as the DR for the Wasatch Front region, and administrates all aspects of the 5310 program.

The Wasatch Front Regional Council (WFRC) serves in a supportive role by ensuring projects are included in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), participating in the Grant Management Advisory Team (GMAT), and incorporating Local Coordinating Council (LCC) Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plans into the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

## 7.2 Application and Scoring Process

UTA releases a NOFA for grant applications on a two-year cycle, largely to cut down on the administrative load of scoring and selecting projects, drafting agreements, programming projects, and other recurring responsibilities. The agency uses the Local Coordinating Council (LCC) email distribution list to notify past subrecipients and service providers of each upcoming application period, and also works with WFRC to assist with notifications.

UTA holds a mandatory workshop for potential applicants to inform them of important information and timelines. They utilize the ZoomGrants online portal for application intake. Grant applications are scored individually by UTA staff, and a median score is provided for each application. The scored applications and supporting recommendations, including identification of any "high risk" applications, are provided to the Grant Management Advisory Team (GMAT), which is comprised of representatives from WFRC, UTA, and past subrecipients who are not actively seeking funding. The GMAT ranks the applications and determines the projects and amounts for final award. Applicants are given an opportunity to answer any questions from the GMAT in-person before a final decision is made.

Notice of awards are mailed and/or emailed to successful applicants and projects are listed in the Program of Projects (POP) by rank. Scores are withheld unless requested by the applicants. UTA will also offer a debrief if requested and there is an informal feedback process for the refinement of future application cycles. UTA also holds a mandatory post-application training workshop. In addition, UTA holds optional but well attended "lunch and learns" throughout the year covering topics such as ADA, Title VI, invoicing, writing a budget, how to use ZoomGrants, allowable costs, and asset management.

### Misc. Project/Award Information

- Project funding requests are primarily for operating, preventative maintenance, mobility management, voucher programs, travel training, and occasional vehicle purchases. UTA does

not provide funding for construction activities as asset management for those types of expenditures is difficult to track.

- The top three ranked applications/agencies generally receive their full funding request. Awards may then be scaled to ensure some degree of coverage.
- Most vehicle purchases are for accessible vehicles which are piggybacked on UTA contracts. Occasionally, non-accessible vehicles will be purchased for subrecipients through state contracts.

### **7.3 Coordinated Plan**

LCC plans are updated by UTA with local input approximately every three years. However, UTA is currently considering extending this update cycle to every 4 years. The most recent plans are incorporated into the RTP as appendices whenever there is an update.

## **8. Summary and Conclusions**

In most of the peer agency regions, the MPO was not the designated recipient (DR) of 5310 funds, and a few have little involvement in the application process or development of a coordinated human services transportation plan. Fortunately, some of the interviews also included participants representative of the DR agency and overall process. Table 1 provides a high-level comparison of each of the MPOs interviewed.

Compared with MAG, which averages around 50 subrecipients per year, most MPOs have a significantly smaller number of subrecipients, ranging from two to 25. Some of the larger MPOs did not have as many subrecipients due to a fewer number of transportation service providers or the structure of funding agreements. In the example of ARC, most of the 5310 apportionment is managed by the state with a much smaller portion going to the MPO. Most agencies experience some form of funding constraints but are generally able to fund the majority of applicants through a competitive process. Applicants ranged from small non-profit organizations to university campus operators to major regional transit providers. However, most major transit providers typically request a nominal amount for administrative costs or small programs that benefit the region as a whole. Essentially, every eligible use of 5310 funds is being supported across the collective group of peer agencies, though vehicle purchases tend to be the exception for some agencies. Some agencies did not award funds for vehicle purchases at all, and of those who did, it was generally a limited number.

None of the agencies directly have brokerage agreements in the traditional sense of a third party service that coordinates and arranges transportation services. There are a few subrecipients that contract third parties for very specific program needs. For example, UTA has a subrecipient who contracts with taxi companies to provide ADA rides, and another who partners with United Way to operate a day program. In the DRCOG region, Douglas County has a traditional brokerage with subconsultants who coordinate with several providers through a call center.

In general, agencies administer their respective programs in a typical framework with a competitive application process that includes noticing, training, evaluation by a committee, scoring/ranking of applications for award, and some level of oversight. Any differences between agencies is primarily influenced by the structure of their regional governments, named designated recipient, or, in some cases, the role of their state government. The greater the number of UZAs, local governments, and/or transit agencies operating within the MPO planning area, the more complex those structures tend to be.

Notable practices of the peer agencies include the following:

- Holding multi-year calls for projects to streamline administrative processes.
- Limiting bias in project selection committees by using participants from external agencies or departments that are not regularly involved in Section 5310.
- Establishing clear and simple scoring criteria and rating systems.
- On-going subrecipient support and training, including regular “lunch and learn” events with focused topics.

In conclusion, the peer interviews offered a glimpse into the relative flexibility of 5310 program administration and highlighted many similarities in the challenges that agencies face in meeting the needs of their community.

**Table 1. MPO Program Comparison**

<b>MPO/ Agency</b>	<b>MPO Designated Recipient?</b>	<b>Prioritized Scoring Process</b>	<b>Standing Award Committee</b>	<b>Project Award Types</b>	<b>Funding Shortfalls</b>	<b>Coordinated Plan Lead</b>
<b>MAG</b>	No - City of Phoenix	Yes - aligned with program needs	Yes - Elderly and Persons with Disabilities Transportation Committee	60% of funds for traditional capital, also PM, mobility management, transportation for medical services	Yes - vehicle procurement cost increasing	MAG
<b>ARC</b>	No - Georgia DHS	Yes - aligned with program needs	ARC staff evaluate; awards made through County Commissions	Trip reimbursement, mobility management	ARC receives small % of apportionment, DHS oversees most	DHS leads; minimal ARC involvement
<b>COMPASS</b>	No - VRT	Yes - aligned with program needs	VRT staff evaluate/ award	Operating only - contracts are renewed	Not federal, but local match	COMPASS with support from VRT and RAC
<b>DRCOG</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes - external members	Programs, operating, some vehicles	Most applications are fully funded	DRCOG in coordination with RTP update
<b>H-GAC</b>	No - County or transit agency	Yes - METRO oversees process	H-GAC is one of many agency members	Primarily capital and vehicles	Transit agencies receive requested amount; remainder is competitive	H-GAC in coordination with regional transit agencies (13 counties)
<b>PSRC</b>	No - WSDOT	Yes - aligned with regional priorities	Several members; combination of PSRC & WSDOT scoring	Capital & operating without limitations	Yes - generally more needs than funds	PSRC in coordination with RTP update
<b>WFRC</b>	No - UTA	Yes - aligned with LCC priorities	GMAT - WFRC, UTA, past subrecipients	Programs, operating, PM, few vehicles	No, with the exception of operating in Salt Lake County	UTA in coordination with LCCs, incorporated into RTP