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America at a glance: 5310 & 5311 Transportation Funding in Rural Counties

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America at a glance: 5310 & 5311 Transportation Funding in Rural Counties

RTC:Rural

Research and Training Center
on Disability in Rural Communities

February 2021/ Andrew Myers & Ari Lissau

SUMMARY:

- **Although 16% of Americans with disabilities and older adults live in rural counties, these counties only receive 5% of available funding for providing them with transportation (§5310), and 49% of available funding for supporting rural transit services (§5311).**
- **Fewer rural counties in the South and Appalachian regions receive either 5311 or 5310 funding than in other parts of the country, with 5311 being more common than 5310 in most states.**
- **The top three types of organizations that receive 5310 or 5311 funding in rural counties are: government agencies, transit authorities, and non-profit organizations.**

Background

Lack of transportation continues to be a major barrier for people with disabilities to working, accessing healthcare, and participating in their communities.¹ This is particularly acute in rural America where residents are generally older,² disability is more prevalent,³ and public transportation is typically limited or non-existent.⁴



The United States Federal Transit Administration (FTA) maintains two programs designed to support transportation for people with

disabilities and rural communities. The FTA's Elderly and Persons with Disabilities program (§5310) provides federal funding to states to assist in meeting the transportation needs of older adults (65+) and people with disabilities where transportation is "unavailable, insufficient, or inappropriate." These funds are apportioned

directly to states based on their population of older adults and people with disabilities. States then distribute funds to agencies across the state. The Formula Grants for Rural Areas program (§5311) provides funding for public transportation to rural areas with populations less than 50,000, "where many residents often rely on public transit to reach their destinations." Similar to the 5310 program, funds are allocated to states, which distribute them to organizations within the state.

We linked 2019 revenue reports from the National Transit Database (NTD) to county designations from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The OMB classifies counties as metropolitan (urban core of 50,000 or more), micropolitan (urban core of 10,000-49,999), or noncore (urban core less than 10,000). This fact sheet reports general trends across different county classifications and explores the types of organizations that receive funding in rural counties. For these analyses, "rural" includes micropolitan and noncore counties and "urban" includes metropolitan counties.

The most rural counties receive the least funding

Table 1 shows the amount of 5310 and 5311 FTA funding allocated to metropolitan, micropolitan, and noncore counties. Micropolitan and noncore counties (i.e. rural) receive significantly less 5310 funding than metropolitan counties (i.e. urban); 4.86% combined between micropolitan and noncore counties compared to 95.14% in metropolitan, with noncore counties getting approximately 1.5%. This is a disproportionately small percentage of available funding, considering that over 5.1 million (16%) of people with disabilities and older adults live in rural counties.⁵

Only 921 rural counties receive 5310 or 5311 funding

While there appears to be a more even distribution of 5311 funding between rural and urban counties (51.21% versus a combined 48.79%), the most rural counties (noncore) receive only 17% of FTA funding allocated for rural areas. However, it

is also important to note that 5311 funding is available to rural communities regardless of their county designation. For example, a small town in a metropolitan county may still qualify for 5311 funds. Overall, only 921 rural counties out of

Table 1: Funding amount by county type

County type	5310 Dollars	5311 Dollars
Metropolitan	\$311,707,695 (95.14%)	\$394,690,140 (51.21%)
Micropolitan	\$11,072,333 (3.38%)	\$244,944,748 (31.78%)
Noncore	\$4,857,935 (1.48%)	\$131,078,135 (17.01%)

Note: Metropolitan counties may contain rural communities of less than 50,000 which are eligible for 5311 funds.

Section 5310

Transportation funding for:

- Older adults (65+)
- People with disabilities

Section 5311

Transportation funding for:

- Rural areas with populations <50,000

2,213 (or just 42%) receive funding from either 5310 or 5311 funding mechanisms. In general, the least populated counties do not receive any funding. For example, the mean population of rural counties with either type of funding is 31,097, while the mean population of rural counties without funding is 17,120.⁵

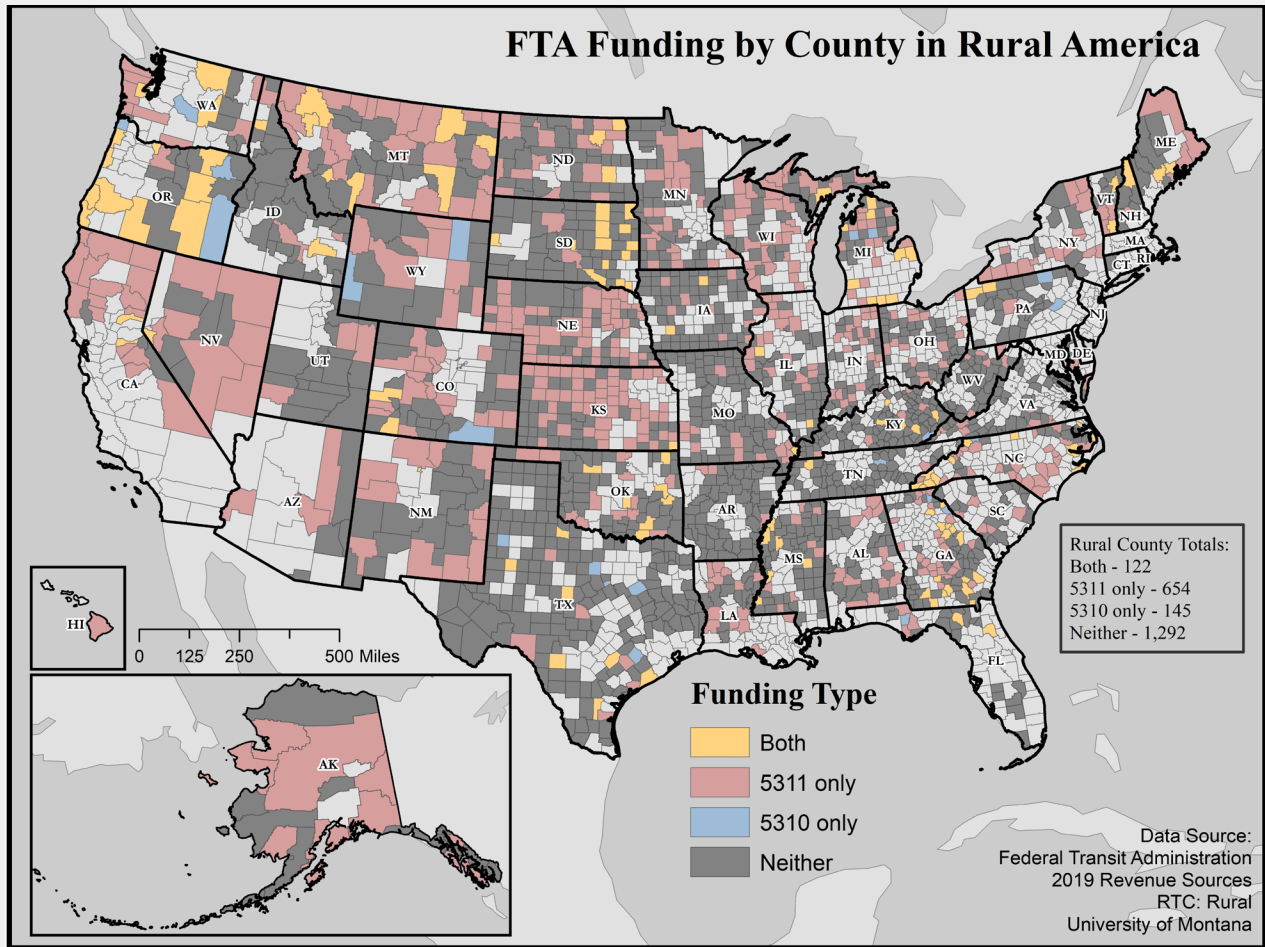
Funds distribution across the U.S.

Figure 1 is a map of the United States showing which rural counties receive FTA funding and the type of funding they receive. Of the 2,213 counties represented, 654 receive only 5311 funding, while 145 receive only 5310 funding. A total of 122 counties receive both 5311 and 5310 funding. The remaining 1,292 do not receive either type of FTA funding. These 1,292 counties include approximately 3.6 million people with disabilities.⁵

The map shows that 5311 funding is spread widely among rural counties across the country, with less distribution in some states, especially in the South and Appalachian regions. Many rural counties in these states do not receive any FTA funding at all, with a smaller number receiving both 5311 and 5310 in states like Texas, Oklahoma, and Georgia. Rural counties that receive FTA funding in Alaska and Hawaii receive exclusively 5311 funding.

1,292 rural counties do not receive either type of FTA funding

Figure 1: Map of rural counties and funding types



Note: Counties which are colored light gray on this map are urban.

Rural funding relies on government agencies and nonprofits

Table 2 shows the amount of 5310 and 5311 funding allocated to each type of organization in rural counties that receive FTA funding. The three types of organizations that receive the greatest amount of funding from 5310 and 5311 programs are government agencies or departments of transportation (26.33% of 5310 and 32.66% of 5311), independent transit authorities (36.9%



of 5310 and 24.58% of 5311), and non-profit organizations (30.59% of 5310 and 27.13% of 5311).

Discussion

Transportation continues to be a barrier for people with disabilities to participating in their communities, especially in rural areas. A better understanding of 5310 and 5311 resources may help rural communities advocate for a portion of state allocation if they can identify an appropriate agency to administer funds and programs. Given that non-profits play an important role in securing transportation funding from these programs, a better understanding of where non-profits exist but are not currently receiving funding may be a strategy for building capacity.

Table 2: Dollar amount and percentage of 5310 and 5311 funding allocation by type of organization in rural counties

Type of organization	5310	5311
City, county or local government unit or Department of Transportation	\$4,195,137 26.33%	\$122,811,394 32.66%
Private-non-profit corporation	\$4,873,600 30.59%	\$102,004,429 27.13%
Independent public agency or authority of transit service	\$5,877,538 36.90%	\$92,438,991 24.58%
Tribe	\$377,567 2.37%	\$29,797,880 7.92%
Private-for-profit corporation	\$0 0.00%	\$8,666,308 2.30%
Area Agency on Aging	\$116,453 0.73%	\$5,642,556 1.50%
University	\$40,895 0.26%	\$5,270,135 1.40%
MPO, COG or other planning agency	\$182,069 1.14%	\$5,099,019 1.36%
State government unit or Department of Transportation	\$0 0.00%	\$2,761,190 0.73%
Other publicly-owned or privately chartered corporation	\$151,261 0.95%	\$1,226,890 0.33%
Private provider reporting on behalf of a public entity	\$109,723 0.69%	\$186,206 0.05%
Subsidiary unit of a transit agency, reporting separately	\$6,025 0.04%	\$117,885 0.03%

Limitations

These analyses have some limitations. First, we only report funding from 5310 and 5311 sources. Counties may, and likely do, receive other types of transportation funding. As such, this should not be interpreted as comprehensive of transportation funding in rural America. These are, however, important revenue sources for developing and supporting rural transportation services. Second, we utilize county designations from the OMB. However, FTA funds are not allocated based on county boundaries, they are allocated to states which then distribute the funds to organizations in specific communities which may or may not align with OMB designations. Third, urban areas (populations over 50,000) receive additional funding through the FTA's Urbanized Area Formula Grant program (5307), which excludes rural counties. Finally, these analyses rely on data from the NTD. Only organizations receiving 5307 and 5311 funding are required to report to the NTD, otherwise reporting is optional. As a result, these findings may exclude counties that only receive 5310 funding.



Conclusion

In sum, less than half of all rural counties in America receive either 5310 or 5311 funding or both, a disparity that is most pronounced in the South and Appalachian regions of the country. Of the counties that do receive funding, the most common type of funding received is 5311. Despite wider distribution of 5311 funding across rural counties, they receive disproportionately less funding than urban counties, particularly when share of population is considered.

Less than half of all rural counties receive either 5310 or 5311 funding, or both

While states allocate funding to a number of different kinds of organizations, the three main organization types that receive the most funding are local government agencies, independent transit authorities, and non-profits. Non-profits, in particular, may be an important avenue for developing rural funding capacity.



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Images

Unless otherwise noted, all photos are from Healthy Community Living (www.HealthyCommunityLiving.org) under which people from around the country have sent in photos of "Real People, Real Places" that have to do with living with disability in America.

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For Additional Information

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