

Disability Rights: Transportation programs are vital to older adults and people with disabilities

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Disability and aging advocates thank the Joint Finance Committee for increasing funding for some key transportation programs. Many older adults and people with disabilities are nondrivers and rely on transportation programs to access nutrition, healthcare, and other basic needs. It is encouraging to see the 11% increase in the Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Specialized Assistance Program (85.22) and the 4% increase to paratransit services approved by the Joint Finance Committee this week.

As the budget moves forward, advocates ask legislators to advance an increase for another essential program for nondrivers. In our conversations with legislators, we heard broad support for an increase to a non-driver transportation program that is especially important to older adults and people with disabilities in rural parts of Wisconsin: the County Elderly and Disabled Transportation Assistance Program (85.21) and Tribal Elderly Transportation Assistance Program (85.215).

In rural areas, this program funds the limited transportation services available to get older adults and people with disabilities to grocery stores, medical appointments, polling places, libraries, and other government agencies, and communities to take care of personal business. Limited program funding means rides are prioritized for nutrition and medical trips and people do not get the rides they need to be an active member of their community. 31% of state residents are non-drivers, including many people with disabilities and older adults and the number is growing as Wisconsin ages.

The good news is that there is still an opportunity to increase funding for 85.21 and

85.215 as the budget moves forward, to meet the growing needs of nondrivers in our rural communities.

We ask the Joint Finance Committee to increase funding for the 85.21 program by \$1.5 M per year and increase funding for the 85.215 program by \$87K per year as part of the committee's 999 motion.

Disability Rights Wisconsin

Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources

Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities

Wisconsin Coalition of Independent Living Centers

Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired