



**Testimony of AARP on  
Transportation Budget Proposal  
February 25, 2011**

AARP is a nonprofit, non-partisan organization with nearly 600,000 Connecticut members. AARP helps people 50+ have independence, choice and control in ways that are beneficial and affordable to them and society as a whole. We appreciate this opportunity to comment on Governor Malloy's proposed transportation budget.

AARP opposes Governor Malloy's recommendation to cut funding for demand responsive transportation for seniors and people with disabilities, known as Dial-A-Ride in many communities, (CT General Statutes 13-b-38bb) by at least 25 percent. We urge this committee to restore those municipal matching funds. During the 2010 elections, AARP asked candidates for the General Assembly, Governor, and other statewide officials about their support for funding municipal matching grants for Dial-A-Ride because it is one of AARP's top legislative priorities. There was overwhelming, bipartisan support for this program from candidates.

Unfortunately, Governor Malloy's budget recommendations significantly underfund this program by capping the grants to \$3 million. That means that over 130 towns currently participating will face at least a 25% cut in funding per year. But, since the funding is set by formula and open to every town, the reduction can be much greater if additional towns join the program. Moreover, the funding cap will discourage towns with existing programs to expand services because any expansion will mean that the \$3 million fund is further divided, cutting town aid for all towns by the amount of any new grants.

AARP is concerned that the reduction in transportation aid for Dial-A-Ride will result in fewer transportation options for Connecticut's older adults and persons with disabilities, especially considering that there is a growing older population that will need these services.

These mobility options are essential for seniors to remain independent and active as they age. Public transportation is not readily available to all residents in Connecticut, especially residents in less dense suburban and rural areas. The lack of transportation often leaves older adults and people with disabilities stranded. They lose their independence and are unable to work, get to medical appointments, go shopping, and attend social events and religious activities. For many seniors, Dial-A-Ride services can mean the difference between remaining mobile and independent in the community or being institutionalized in a nursing home.

The municipal matching grant program for Dial-A-Ride also helps our communities provide transportation to older adults, who have had to quit driving, without forcing them to give up the things they love: their mobility or their independence. AARP research has shown that over half of the non-drivers over age 65 stay home on any given day. Dial-A-Ride provides these seniors with mobility options to engage fully in their communities. The municipal matching grant program for Dial-A-Ride has been one of the most successful senior transportation programs in state history. Please renew the funding for this vital program.