



**AARP Testimony in Support of
Increased Municipal Matching Grant Funding for Dial-A-Ride
Appropriations Committee
February 16, 2012**

On behalf of our over 600,000 AARP members in Connecticut, AARP asks the Appropriations Committee to restore Dial-A-Ride municipal matching grant funds to 2010-2011 levels. The funding was cut by 25% in last year's budget which resulted in a corresponding cut of 25% in demand responsive transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities statewide. We urge that the Dial-A-Ride program authorized by Connecticut General Statute 13b-38bb to be restored. Only \$1 million are needed to make this program whole for the towns currently participating.

Transportation for seniors and people with disabilities is a high priority for AARP this legislative session. Mobility options are essential to independent community living. Public transportation is not readily available to all residents in Connecticut, especially residents in less dense suburban and rural areas. The lack of transportation can leave 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 or religious activities.

Demand responsive transportation (often referred to as Dial-A-Ride) provides essential access to the community for people who are 60 years or older or have a disability and do not have access to public transportation. These services often mean the difference between remaining mobile and independent in their community or being institutionalized in a nursing home. Since this \$1 million cut last year, older adults and people with disabilities have become more isolated and immobile. This goes counter to the state's policy trend of expanding home and community based long-term care options.

In 1999, several AARP volunteers organized to help pass CT General Statute 13b-38bb, which directed the Commissioner of Transportation to establish a state matching grant program to help municipalities expand demand responsive transportation for the elderly (persons 60 and older) and people with disabilities. The proposed funding level was \$5 million when the law passed in 1999. To ensure parity for all 169 municipalities, the allocation formula would be based 50% on elderly population and 50% on square mileage of a municipality. Unfortunately, Connecticut General Statute 13b-38bb wasn't implemented for over 6 years because funding had not been appropriated.

Then in 2005 with the hard work of some of the members of this Committee and other legislator, the program was finally funded in 2005 with a two-year \$10 million dollar funding mechanism and again in the last biennium. These grants are matched with local funds. Since 2005, the municipal matching grant program has been tremendously successful at expanding demand responsive transportation until the severe funding cut last year.

The municipal matching grant program also helps our communities provide transportation to those individuals who have had to quit driving without forcing them to give up the things they love--their mobility or independence. We know that about 480,000 people over the age of 65 live in Connecticut and surveys indicate that one in five of those residents no longer drive.

AARP research has shown that over half of the non-drivers over age 65 stay home on any given day. The reasons for this include their declining health, their physical limitations, and their concern over driving safely – they don't want to hurt someone – and that they have no access to transportation.

These older non-drivers are dependent on others, who may or may not be available. When they can't get out, this can lead to depression, illness and eventually nursing home placement. Just think, if you had to give up your own car and couldn't drive for a couple of weeks— What would you do? How would you get around? The municipal matching grant program allows towns to expand their demand responsive transportation and keep seniors active in the community.

The municipal matching grant program for demand responsive transportation has been one of the most successful senior transportation programs in state history. Please make this program whole by adding \$1 million in funding. This will increase transportation options in over 125 towns and cities across the state.