

RTAP Peer Roundtable Written Summary:

Funding: types and creative funding opportunities

3/20/24 10-11:30 am CT

Participants: 14 total, 12 from transit agencies

1. Allison Karau, Take Me There Transit
2. Jeffrey Phillips, Region 5 Regional Development Commission
3. Nancy Brown, Duluth Transit Authority
4. Tina Neary, MnDOT OTAT
5. Pat LaCourse, Brown County Heartland Express
6. Paul Coyour, Prairie Five RIDES
7. Scott Stark, St. Cloud Metro Bus
8. Alan Herrmann, Scott and Carver County Smartlink
9. Jeremy Monahan, Prairie Lakes Transit
10. Lezlie Grubich, Paul Bunyan Transit
11. Randy Jahnke, Wadena County Friendly Rider
12. Paula Mastey, St. Cloud Metro Bus
13. Berta Hartig, RTAP
14. Mariah Kathan, RTAP

Where do you get your funding?

- **TCAP (Smartlink):** funding for transit from Met Council, for mobility management from MnDOT, from the Department of Human Services for non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT), and they've received for a Live Well at Home Grant to revive their volunteer driver program, keeping an eye out for funding opportunities from Trellis (dba. Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging (MAAA)) to fund the development of a fixed route local shopping route. DHS funding is 50/50 grant to local match, MnDOT's 5310 program is 80/20.
- **5311 (Joint Powers Board):** Funding through MnDOT (subrecipient), no indirect costs.
- **5311 (through Human Services):** Funding through MnDOT (subrecipient) and fares.
- **5311 (Multiple Cities & Counties):** Funding through MnDOT (subrecipient), set amount asked for from each city/county and DACs, and fares. Capital purchases are divided by all counties and cities.
- **5307:** 5307 funds and 5311 funds (for vehicles), state funds for capital and operating expenses, specialty grants depending on the scope, farebox revenue, and a tax levy for local match.
- **RTCC:** Funded by the cities and counties they support.

Challenges:

- Finding someone to be the lead agency on a funding project
- Being the lead is valuable, but it does take extra effort
- Having all agencies understand their roles and responsibilities in a joint procurement
- Making plans years in advance to obtain funding, but in the intervening years, the conditions change and sometimes that changes what the needs are. Being able to modify the request closer to the implementation date would be helpful.
- Going to cities and counties and asking for increased local share for bus costs that have gone up.
- Understanding funding when you don't deal with it on a regular basis.
- The time to receive a vehicle from vehicle grants can be very long (over 18 month)
- Grant applications, such as the 5310 vehicle grant, can have a tight turnaround time that can be hard to meet.
- When local match is denied by one of the cities that you're operating in, that can lead to transit service shut down.
- MnDOT's local share assistance will run out at some point, which will cause transit agencies to have to navigate keeping a bus on the road past its useful life.
- If an agency applied for a replacement vehicle through MnDOT, based on the calculation of the vehicle's useful life, but that vehicle is operational and another one that is not at the end of its useful life is not operational, it's not possible to swap them. It would be helpful to not have to identify the specific vehicle being replaced so the agency can make that call when the bus comes in based on maintenance information at that time.

Solutions:

- Teaming with your local human service organizations to provide NEMT can bring in more than the posted fare in revenue.
- Advertising on the buses as additional revenue, such as bus wraps.
- Hiring a firm to coordinate bus advertising
- Having an advertising policy for buses to prevent controversial advertising. Have your policy reviewed by a lawyer and consistently enforce it. St. Cloud Metro Bus's policy is [posted to their website](#).
- Put in your advertising contracts that the transit agency has the right to review and approve the ad before it's produced.
- Partnering with cities in your area to create a new route
- Alan volunteered to share funding opportunities with the group. Many of them come out in the spring.
- Participating in FTA requests for comments on procurement and purchasing helps FTA understand what this process is like for transit systems so your voice can be heard. Speak out when things aren't working because it can change the policy (Nancy shared an

example when they shared a comment about spare buses and the policy was later changed because of the comment).

Specific Questions & Answers

Do transit agencies team up with their local human services organizations to provide NEMT?

One 5311 system provides it but they're nervous about getting the fare wrong, they charge them what they would charge everyone else.

Another system does have a contract with human services and charges the higher rate.

Is NEMT service for human services a local rate or a statewide rate?

Waiver rates are set by the state.

Ask a Peer Part of the Meeting

How are cutaway bus deliveries coming along?

Agencies are receiving buses, or their buses are awaiting inspection.

Has anyone had issues on their buses with threatening behavior from passengers and what did you do?

There was recently a new state law passed about violence on public transit. Knowing the law is helpful.

Intoxicated individuals riding the bus is a common issue. Having a policy about appropriate conduct helps.

Have a policy that outlines that you can trespass people and they can be banned from the bus. Nancy shared that most of the time individuals are trespassed for a period of time because many in their population are dependent on transit and a permanent ban would affect their quality of life, so they don't treat that option lightly.

Your policy needs to have an appeals process to be compliant. There are occasions where law enforcement has to be involved. They defer to law enforcement about what

the citation or action would be. It's a good idea to have a conversation with your local law enforcement about what constitutes a crime, because sometimes a violation of transit policy wouldn't violate the law.

Action Items: Address the concerns about bus procurement at a future TAC meeting

Next Session: Driver Shortage April 10, 2024