



Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization

County-City Building
555 South 10th Street - Suite 213
Lincoln, Nebraska 68508
(402) 441-7491

Recommended Grant Awards for Job Access & Reverse Commute and New Freedom Programs FY 2011-12

**Lincoln MPO Officials Committee
September 27, 2011**

Federal legislation (SAFETEA-LU) provides funding for Federal surface transportation programs through FY 2009 and extended through FY 2011. This legislation requires projects seeking Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds through the Job Access & Reverse Commute (Section 5316) and New Freedom (Section 5317) programs to be competitively selected and derived from a locally developed *Coordinated Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan*. Based upon the Lincoln MPO Plan, a call for projects for JARC and New Freedom proposals was issued on June 15, 2011, lasting approximately six weeks. During that time, five applications were received for a separate projects (3-JARC and 2-NF) requesting these funds to be used for a portion of project operating costs.

Project Selection Task Force

The MPO Technical Advisory Committee created the advisory *Project Selection Task Force* to review and prioritize project proposals for the JARC and New Freedom programs. All project proposals were reviewed to conform to the guidelines established by FTA and evaluated and prioritized based upon the selection criteria identified in the *Coordinated Transportation Plan*. Projects deemed most important in addressing the community's needs were identified for funding according to the attached allocations.

The *Project Selection Task Force* members include the following*:

1. Lincoln-Lancaster Planning Department, Transportation Planner, Mike Brienzo
2. Lincoln StarTran, Transit Planner, Brian Praeuner
3. Lincoln Urban Development Department, Community Planner, Wynn Hjermstad
4. Human Services Federation, Interim Director, Jason Varga
5. Lincoln-Lancaster Health Department, Health Promotion & Outreach, Mike Heyl
6. Nebraska Department of Roads, Rail and Public Transportation Division, Wayne Masek

(* Task Force members with a project proposal under review will recuse from voting on projects)

Task Force recommendations were recommended by the MPO Technical Committee and adopted by the MPO Officials Committee.

Grant Summary

FTA Section 5316 - Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) and FTA Section 5317 - New Freedom Programs

The **Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC)** and the **New Freedom Programs** were authorized under SAFETEA-LU and booth programs are funded through FY 2011. Each program has unique criteria and funding intended to improve transportation services for individuals with lower incomes or persons with disabilities.

The Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization (City of Lincoln) is the designated recipient of JARC and New Freedom funds for the Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Area. The role of the Lincoln MPO is to ensure that funding under these programs is distributed in a competitive basis and that the established program requirements are met. Applicants may include local government agencies, social services agencies, tribal government, private and public transit operators, non-profit organizations and regional transportation planning agencies. Applications for funding must be submitted to the Lincoln MPO as described under the Applications Instructions section located on the MPO web page. After an application has been selected for funding, the project sponsor will be required to execute an agreement with the City of Lincoln and submit to FTA certifications and assurances.

The JARC formula program supports the development and maintenance of services designed to transport welfare recipients and eligible low-income individuals to and from jobs and activities related to their employment. According to FTA guidance, projects for these programs need to be derived from a *Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan*. For the Lincoln program, JARC funds are only to be applied to the operating costs of new or expanded transportation services. The funds may also be used for such activities as service extensions, guaranteed rides home, shuttle services, and ridesharing activities.

The New Freedom formula program provides funding for new public transportation services, and alternatives to public transportation services, for people with disabilities, beyond those required by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). New Freedom funding may be used to support up to 50 percent of the project's net operating expenses.

Project Selection Task Force Findings and Recommendations

The MPO Task Force evaluated agency proposals for funding separately based upon the program type, JARC or New Freedom. All five proposals were found to meet the basic selection criteria and support Coordinated Transportation Plan strategies to improve transportation services for individuals with lower incomes or persons with disabilities. We are fortunate to have sufficient funds in the New Freedom program to fully support the funding requested for by the two applications from the League of Human Dignity and the Lincoln-Lancaster Seniors Foundation.

However, the three applications requesting JARC funds are greater than the funds we have available for this program. The Task Force developed a method to provide funding to all existing programs that would keep them whole based upon last year's funding allocations. The recommendation is to fund each program at 97.3% of level funded through last year's program. This strategy will continue to fund in part the Lincoln Literacy, StarTran, and Center for People in Need.

Agency application description and recommended funding is attached.

Grant Awards Summary

Job Access & Reverse Commute and New Freedom Programs

FY 2010-11

Job Access & Reverse Commute Program

Lincoln Literacy Council – Transportation Services for New Americans Preparing for Work Entry

Program Proposal

This proposal is to use Job Access funds to develop a door-to-door **transportation van service and voucher program** for refugees and their preschool children and infants in traveling to and from work-readiness English classes. The Lincoln Literacy Council provides such classes in various locations in Lincoln on weekdays and Saturdays. These classes are crucial to refugees and new Americans in the community in becoming employable and achieving self-sufficiency. The *Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan* indicates that low-income people from the Literacy Council's service area lack adequate transportation and notes there are cultural and linguistic barriers for non-English speakers in accessing transportation. The Lincoln Literacy Council primarily serves low-income, non-English-speaking refugees and new Americans and has experience in providing the mix of efficient, effective transportation and language services necessary to refugees to become employable.

The transportation and voucher programs focus on providing agency administered van rides, transportation education and mileage reimbursement for the volunteer driver program. These services are intended to supplement existing nonprofit van service providing low income individuals access to places of employment, job training and education.

Discussion

This is the fourth year this program is recommended for funding. This year's program builds upon the successes of previous years JARC-supported transportation services program that assists clients in accessing instruction that prepares them for the job market. The target group and existing need is well defined, and the program currently the van service provides an average of approximately 200 passenger miles per week. The management plan is well developed and this has a proven coordination and outreach program. The administration plan and project budget is well developed with a combination of funding coming from the combined assistance of the Woods Charitable Fund, Dollar General Fund, Lincoln community Foundation, and Ameritas Foundation funds applied in this program.

The *Project Selection Task Force* evaluated all JARC projects in relation to available funding and program funding activity of last fiscal year. Grant funding recommendation is 97.3% of the JARC Funds that was allocated for the FY 2011 program.

JA/RC Funds Requested for FY 2012: \$28,523

JA/RC Funds Allocated for FY 2011: \$28,912

Recommended Funding: \$28,132

StarTran/City of Lincoln – Subsidize StarTran Bus Routes

Program Proposal

The **StarTran Bus Route** project proposal is to continue to use Job Access & Reverse Commute (JARC) funds to fill a gap in unmet transportation need by providing transportation for low-income persons and persons with disabilities to access employment and job training opportunities. Specifically, funding will be used to subsidize two bus routes identified in the approved Transit Development Plan. These two routes, the “Havelock/Heart Hospital” and “West A/Gaslight” routes, are key routes in providing employment opportunities by serving new employment centers that are not being served by StarTran today. Route service on both routes is to operate on weekdays from 5:15 am - 7:10 pm and Saturdays from 5:55 am - 7:10 pm. Regular service on “Havelock/Heart Hospital” will operate every 30 minutes during weekday peaks and 60 minutes during mid-days and Saturdays and the “West A/Gaslight” route will operate every 60 minutes all day with no service for two-hours during mid-day. (Service hours are subject to change depending on matching funds.)

New employment centers include: South Walmart, Nebraska Heart Institute, and Menards Home Improvement Center. These routes will also provide increased service to the other employment centers including Kawasaki, Pfizer, Verizon, Immigration & Naturalization Services, Lincoln Plating, 70th & Pioneer Commercial Center and West A Commercial Center. The objective for the two new bus routes is to achieve approximately 170,942 trips to new employment centers in the fourth year of service. This is an increase of 1.5% in projected trips.

Discussion

This is the fourth year this program is recommended for funding. This is a needed service filling a gap in unmet transportation needs which is documented in a well developed transit service plan. This supports the strategies identified in the *Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan* and appears to be well designed to meet the goal of increasing access to jobs for low-income, welfare-recipients and persons with disabilities. The management plan is well developed and StarTran has a proven coordination and outreach program. StarTran has qualified and experienced personnel able to provide this service and has provided a well developed implementation plan.

This service is effective in meeting the identified service needs. These two bus routes continue to build upon previous years success having met their stated ridership goals and are projecting an increase in the number of trips provided the past year by 1.2%. A continuing concern expressed by the *Project Selection Task Force* is that the JARC funds identified for the StarTran project are initiative funds that only can cover up to 50% of the total project costs and sustaining this program is dependent upon the City of Lincoln continuing to support this service.

The *Project Selection Task Force* evaluated all JARC projects in relation to available funding and program funding activity of last fiscal year. Grant funding recommendation is 97.3% of the JARC Funds that was allocated for the FY 2011 program.

JA/RC Funds Requested for FY 2012: \$396,334

JA/RC Funds Allocated for FY 2011: \$371,862

Recommended Funding: \$361,826

Center for People in Need – Driver Voucher Program

Program Proposal

This is a **Driver Voucher Program** developed by the Center for People in Need (CFPIN) that reimburses volunteer drivers on a per trip basis for providing eligible low-income workers with transportation to and from employment and employment-related activities. This program is targeted toward eligible low-income workers who are responsible for locating a driver and making the transportation arrangements that best suits their needs. Program funding is used to reimburse a volunteer driver on a per-trip basis for car-related expenses. The reimbursement is a set fee of \$5.00 per round trip, \$2.50 per one-way trip, and \$10.00 per round trip outside the city limits. The intent of the program is to provide transportation for low-income persons to access employment and job training opportunities. Priority for participation is given to those who are unable to utilize public transportation and who are not eligible for any other type of funding for transportation.

The focus of this program is to increase mobility for employment and employment-related activities. This is accomplished in this program by distributing travel vouchers to approved clients in assisting them in gaining full employment through training and other related to employment activities. Documentation on each trip is provided to the program administrator prior to reimbursement.

Discussion

This is the fourth year the Center for People in Need program has applied for funding through the JARC program. This was a new program that got off to a slow start due to voucher distribution and documentation problems. The *Project Selection Task Force* was looking for progress in program activity and the Center has made significant strides over the past year in developing voucher distribution and documentation. Program administration and the coordination with other agencies were initiated as part of program development appears to have been greatly improved over the past year in serving the growing demand for travel vouchers.

The *Project Selection Task Force* sees this program as a valuable asset to the community and tailored to JARC funding. A goal for this program the *Task Force* and would like to see further developed is for it to become self-sustaining with use of private donations and other grants materialize. Program coordination also needs to be further developed by engaging in partnerships with other human service agencies and employers. Program administration is supported in part with existing funding from the Center which comes through private donations, fund raising, and grants from local foundations but additional sources of funding have not been developed specifically for the Driver Voucher Program. The program has grown but the additional support has not to date.

The *Project Selection Task Force* evaluated all JARC projects in relation to available funding and program funding activity of last fiscal year. Grant funding recommendation is 97.3% of the JARC Funds that was allocated for the FY 2011 program.

JA/RC Funds Requested for FY 2012: \$90,000

JA/RC Funds Allocated for FY 2011: \$50,000

Recommended Funding: \$48,651

New Freedom Program

League of Human Dignity, Inc. – Extended Hours Service (EHS)

Program Proposal

The League of Human Dignity is continuing its “Extended Hours Service” (EHS) program that was converted from a foundation funded “demonstration project” three years ago. The on-going program continues to provide accessible transportation services to Lincoln’s mobility limited residents. This program extends service beyond the hours and days provided by StarTran’s ADA-compliant service. Under this program, up to 70 trips per week are provided within the City of Lincoln for any purpose, other than medical, and during weekends and legal holidays when StarTran buses do not run. The program strategy is to address gaps and needs in transportation service for the mobility limited which is in need of extended transportation services as identified in the *Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan*. The “Extended Hours Service” program is provided on weekdays from 5:00 pm to 11:00 pm, Saturdays from 8:00 am to 11:00 pm, and Sundays and Holidays from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. This continues to fill a gap in Handi-Van transportation services not provided by StarTran Handi-Van operations.

The League is continuing to use the services of Transport Plus as a contract provider which is a well developed and experienced provider of Handi-Van transportation services. Transport Plus has been a contract provider of Handi-Van reliever services for StarTran for more than eight years and serves this program well in this same capacity. The League has over 36 years of continued service in Lincoln and Lancaster County in providing services to persons with disabilities. The League also has a well developed relationships with StarTran and is a founding member of the Human Services Federation for Lincoln and Lancaster County.

Discussion

This is the fourth year this program is recommended for funding. The “Extended Hours Service” project is administered by the League of Human Dignity fills a portion of the widening gap in transportation services by providing mobility for individuals with limited mobility. The foundation developed and funded the “demonstration project” that was successful in filling a need and this grant will enable the program to continue to be fully operational. Coordination is called for in the *Coordinated Transportation Plan* which is a key element in this project.

This program extends the existing Handi-Van operations and the overall plan appears to have the ability and resources to become an effective and sustaining program. Experience is an important element in program success that is evident in this program. The League is an established provider of services to persons with disabilities and Transport Plus has been a trusted contract provider of Handi-Van services in Lincoln. The personnel and infrastructure is in place to take reservations, check eligibility, and schedule rides within the contract limits. This type of program is identified in the *Coordinated Transportation Plan* and is an eligible activity under the New Freedom Program guidelines. This fills a gap in local transit services, is cost effective since it administered primarily on the League of Human Dignity resources and is operated on a cost reimbursement basis.

The *Project Selection Task Force* supports this project fro New Freedom grant funding with the following recommendation. This is 100% of the funds requested.

New Freedom Funds Requested: \$46,200

Recommended Funding: \$46,200

Lincoln Seniors Transportation Program (LSTP)

Program Proposal

The Lincoln Seniors Transportation Program (LSTP) increases transportation options for older adults and older adults with disabilities in the Lincoln area by providing a “**Mobility Management**” program. This program is intended to coordinate transportation services for community by promoting and coordinating transportation services. The mobility manager works with local organizations and councils clients in the coordination of transportation services. An ongoing activity is to work closely with organizations that serve ADA and ADA eligible populations to increase their transportation options and to work with human service agencies and/or workforce centers to promote and coordinate transportation services.

The LSTP increases transportation options for older adults by supporting a volunteer based social transportation program where volunteers provide the transportation to those unable to drive or access other transportation services to a destination. The program has developed an infrastructure that uses a staff to coordinate these services to older adults and older adults with disabilities. Staff collaborates with the Seniors Foundation, Lincoln Aging Partners and Southeast Community College (SECC) to provide the support needed for program services. The Seniors Foundation is seeking to work with Easter Seal in expanding services into the rural Lancaster County areas.

Discussion

This is the fourth year for the Lincoln Seniors Transportation formal volunteer social transportation program that is centered around providing a “**Mobility Manager**” to coordinate transportation services for older adults and older adults with disabilities. This program is has been proven effective in Lincoln and the existing program currently has greater demand than available volunteers. This is a well developed program, developed from a pilot program in 2008. The program check points require volunteer drivers will undergo background checks and must complete an application, provide proof of insurance, and participate in a “behind the wheel” driver evaluation.

The Seniors Foundation has developed experience in serving older adults and have the ability, along with Easter Seals to continue an effective and sustaining program. This type of program is identified in the *Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan* and is well designed to meet the goal of increasing access and is an eligible activity under the New Freedom Program guidelines. The program has proven to be cost effective, especially when the time and resources of volunteers are factored into the program. This continues to be a valuable addition to the community that is expected to continue growing and expanding into new area of service over time.

The *Project Selection Task Force* supports this project fro New Freedom grant funding with the following recommendation. This is 100% of the funds requested.

New Freedom Funds Requested: \$42,530

Recommended Funding: \$42,530



Final

Agency Funding Proposals Job Access & Reverse Commute and New Freedom Programs FY 2011-12

Project	Sponsoring Agency	Project Title	Requested Funds	Local Match	Total Costs	Operating / Planning	FFY	Type	Recommended Grant Award
Section 5316: Job Access & Reverse Commute Program									
1	Lincoln Literacy Council	Transportation Services for New Americans Preparing for Work Entry	\$ 28,523	\$ 160,849	\$ 189,372	Operating	2012	JA/RC	\$ 28,132
2	StarTran/City of Lincoln	Subsidize StarTran Bus Route	\$ 396,334	\$ 396,334	\$ 792,668	Operating	2012	JA/RC	\$ 361,826
3	Center for People in Need	Driver Voucher Program	\$ 90,000	\$ 90,000	\$ 180,000	Operating	2012	JA/RC	\$ 48,651
JA/RC Funds Requested:			\$ 514,857			Recommended Funding:			\$ 438,609
JA/RC Available:			\$ 438,609			Carry-over Funds:			\$ 0
Balance:			(\$ 76,248)						
Section 5317: New Freedom Program									
1	League of Human Dignity, Inc.	Extended Hours Service (EHS)	\$ 46,200	\$ 46,200	\$92,400	Operating	2012	NF	\$ 46,200
2	Seniors Foundation of Lincoln and Lancaster County	Lincoln Seniors Transportation Program	\$ 42,530	\$ 89,093	\$ 131,623	Operating	2012	NF	\$ 42,530
New Freedom Funds Requested:			\$ 88,730			Recommended Funding:			\$ 88,730
New Freedom Funds Available:			\$ 99,436			Carry-over Funds:			\$ 10,706
Balance:			\$10,706						