

National RTAP Peer Call: Tribal Transit - August 19, 2015 - Notes

Panelists:

- Elan Flippin, FTA Tribal Transit Program Manager
- J.D. Tovey III, Planning Director, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
- Kelly Shawn, Senior Associate, RLS & Associates
- Rob Tassinari, Liz Taylor, Neil Rodriguez (National RTAP Facilitators)

Notes:

Elan Flippin:

- The FTA conducts training to help tribes prepare for FTA assessment. The assessments generally take a full day, but can sometimes be compressed. The FTA will be conducting these workshops, to prepare tribes at the National Tribal Transportation Conference in Myrtle Beach.
 - Training will occur Sept 22nd at 1:30 - 5:20, On the 23rd there is a session from 8am (all day).
- The late allocation is due to when funds were allocated to the FTA.
- A full year of funds is now available, and a full year apportionment will be published subsequently. The previous publication was for a partial-year allocation.
- The FTA is aware of issues with combining tribes as part of funding, and is providing technical assistance to the hill on this issue.
- FTA is in the process of publishing following allocations, hopefully this week or next week.
- [Question - Donovan Gomez] As a subrecipient of 5311, how do I receive TTP funds?
 - Discretionary component: To apply for discretionary funds, when there is a competition open (spring FY16?) you will need to apply for funds. A notice of funding availability will be published in the federal register, including the steps and procedure necessary.
 - Formula component: To receive these funds, you have to be reporting your co-revenue model to the national transit database, which will in turn make you eligible for formula funds for public transportation.
- Are tribes eligible for 5339 funding?
 - They are eligible for Bus/Bus Facility funding, or any FTA program as long as they are providing public transportation.

J.D. Tovey

- Operates a bus between the reservation and Pendleton, Oregon, as well as an intercity bus that provides access to 14 cities, 2 states, etc. leading to a lot of coordination with other services.
- Working to create a conference with Oregon DOT (ODOT) to coordinate better with other services.

- When filling out formula funds forms - tribes are only allowed to count population within their jurisdiction, and not their entire service area. The reservation median income is slightly higher than the service district, leading to a slightly different fund calculation.
 - Should they apply for their entire service area to help resolve this?
 - Some cash flow from cities general funds, ODOT through relationships with those entities. Looking to set up a formal relationship with the towns, counties, MPOs
 - Some surrounding towns do not operate, or want to operate a transit service, so having the tribe operate the service is very beneficial for them.
- Funding mainly from 5311, 5310, ODOT, FTA Formula funds, Special Transportation Funds, about 10% from reservation (general funds, used towards match), and then additional funds from 5338(9?) transit facility to maintain buses
 - Having a transit facility on-site for maintenance drastically reduced maintenance costs
- Question: Does JD fill out an NTD report for each tribe? How does J.D. generate numbers for each tribe?
 - J.D. only represents one tribe.
- Intercity between Washington and Oregon has been a major reason for their success, filling a demand from cities beyond just the tribes demand.
- One challenge is that as the service expands, the service is reaching the limit of its funding.

General Discussion:

What are some of the key needs and challenges of Tribal Transit Systems?

- Working through regulatory issues in starting a tribal transit system (in terms of accessing funding for tribal transit and surrounding communities)
- Providing maintenance for vehicles.
 - Cities/local governments tend to have garages, but tribal systems may not
 - Tribal economic development (grants, programs, as a source of funding?) can help supplement these costs.
 - Frequently training from national organizations (CTAA, SWTA, etc.) on maintenance is geared towards large fleets and doesn't necessarily scale down to 12-15 passenger vans used by some tribal transit systems
 - [Elan responds] If the proposed rules (from the Federal Register published on 8/14/2015) are of concern, operators should make sure to comment on the legislation.
- Coordinating with surrounding communities, but also coordinating agencies providing services within tribes.
- What are your needs and key challenges as a tribal transit system? Is there a training or technical brief that could help?
- Where do you get training? What are the barriers to getting training for your program, if any?
 - Possible Providers:

- National RTAP, CTAA, Rural and State Bus Conference (national conferences)
 - National RTAP training modules
- What issues do you have working with state, federal, and other local governments?
- For non-tribal affiliates, what are your challenges coordinating with tribal transit systems in your area and how might that relationship be improved for all parties involved?

Resources:

- Federal Register published 8/14/2015
- FTA's presentation on starting a tribal transit service
- JD will be presenting at the National RTAP Conference, presenting on the relationship between rural & urban transportation

Questions Submitted Online:

- I'm still not clear on how we as a subrecipient of the state's DOT can become a TTP.
- When will we receive the final allocations?
 - Before the month is over.
- I've logged on to the discussion late and missed the discussion on the FY 2015 formula allocations; it sounds as if the Table 10 amounts for FY15 may change, please advise.
- This is Donovan. We are reporting, we are receiving the FTA formula funds. Does this make us a TTP?
- I'm looking at the NTTC Annual Conference Agenda, it does not have the FTA Tribal Transit Assessment listed.
 - Session on "Comprehensive Tribal Transportation Planning Google Earth" by Chris Robideau at 2015 NTTC - <http://www.ttapnttc.com/detailed-agenda/>
- Any information about the discretionary grants still waiting to be announced?
- Are tribes eligible for the state's allocation of 5339 funds for capital in rural areas or metro areas if they provide public transit services there?
- Has there been any discussions regarding the new funding bill with the issue of funding planning for future tribal transit systems? Funding gets to be complicated and we know it takes outside funding other than FTA to be a success.
 - Planning is eligible under both discretionary and formula funding of TTP funding. No changes have been made to this process.
- We are beginning a new Intercity Public Transit system in the Panhandle Region of Western Nebraska. How do we find out our state tribal contacts and those of South Dakota, Colorado & Wyoming? [Jonnie Kusek]
- At SWTA there was a session on how to start a tribal transit program, that was the first time the session was offered, but if there is need the FTA is willing to schedule additional sessions. [What is needed, what are the requirements, etc.]
 - National RTAP offers technical briefs, including one brief on grant writing.
 - National RTAP can make FTA's presentation on starting a tribal transit service available.

- There was some interest in the comments on having a session for grant writing at the National RTAP conference.
- Need training to apply for transit grants - Pit River Tribe
- How can we start relationships with surrounding tribal communities? [Jonnie Kusek]
 - We will forward this question on to Charla offline