

Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) 2006 Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedoms Initiative (NFI) Programs

OVERVIEW

The *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – a Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)* re-authorizes federal surface transportation funding programs through 2009. This application addresses two programs from the legislation; Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedoms Initiative (NFI). As the designated recipient of the 2006 funds from these two programs, the RTA has initiated a collaborative planning process with the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS), the RTA Service Boards (CTA, Metra, and Pace), and region wide stakeholders to identify projects for the 2006 program.

The objective of the 2006 program is to select multiple, sustainable projects that can be implemented in the shortest possible timeframe. It is important to clarify that this approach is proposed for 2006 projects only. Beginning in 2007, the JARC and NFI projects selected for implementation will come from a Human Services Transportation Plan. Development of this plan is proposed to begin shortly and will run concurrently with the 2006 program. It is the RTA's goal to utilize the available 2006 funding while simultaneously working with the region's planning partners to develop the 2007 program.

JOB ACCESS AND REVERSE COMMUTE (JARC)

The purpose of the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) program is to provide funding for local programs that offer job access and reverse commute services to provide transportation for low income individuals who may live in the city core, rural or other suburban locations and work or wish to work in suburban locations. Eligible projects may include, but are not limited to:

- Late-night and weekend service;
- Guaranteed ride home service;
- Shuttle service;
- Expanding fixed-route mass transit routes;
- Demand-responsive van service;
- Ridesharing and carpooling activities;
- Bicycling;
- Local car loan programs that assist individuals in purchasing and maintaining vehicles for shared rides; and

Promotion, through marketing efforts, of the:

- Use of transit by workers with non-traditional work schedules;
- use of transit voucher programs by appropriate agencies for welfare recipients and other low-income individuals

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- development of employer-provided transportation such as shuttles, ridesharing, carpooling; or
- use of transit pass programs and benefits under Section 132 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

Communities are further encouraged to:

- Establish regional mobility managers or transportation brokerage activities;
- Apply Geographic Information System (GIS) tools;
- Implement Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), including customer trip Information technology;
- Integrate automated regional public transit and human service transportation information, scheduling and dispatch functions; and
- Deploy vehicle position-monitoring systems.

NEW FREEDOMS INITIATIVE (NFI)

The purpose of the New Freedoms Initiative (NFI) is to encourage services and facility improvements to address the transportation needs of persons with disabilities that are either new and/or go beyond those required by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Eligible projects may include, but are not limited to:

- Purchasing vehicles and supporting accessible taxi, ride sharing, and vanpooling programs; including staff training, administration, and maintenance.
- Administering voucher and transit pass programs for transportation services offered by transit and human services providers;
- Administering volunteer driver and aide programs to support the management of driver recruitment, safety, background checks, scheduling, coordination with consumers, and other related support functions;
- Supporting mobility management among public transportation providers and other human service agencies providing coordinated transportation services;
- Training for individual users on awareness, knowledge, and skills of public and alternative transportation options available in their communities. This includes travel instruction and travel training services; and,
- Corridor services transportation access for populations beyond those served by one agency or organization within a community. For example, a non-profit agency receiving funding through New Freedom could not limit the services it provides to its own clientele; it would coordinate usage of vehicles with other non-profits. These services are intended to build coordination with other existing providers and service options.

The following are considered eligible mobility management activities:

- The development of coordinated plans;
- The support of State and local coordination policy bodies and councils;
- The maintenance and operation of transportation brokerages to coordinate providers, funding agencies and customers;

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- The development and maintenance of other transportation coordination bodies and their activities, including employer-oriented Transportation Management Organizations, human service organization customer-oriented travel navigator systems and neighborhood travel coordination activities;
- The development and support of one-stop transportation traveler call centers to coordinate transportation information on all travel modes and to manage eligibility requirements and arrangements for customers among supporting programs; and
- The acquisition and operation of intelligent transportation technologies to help plan and operate coordinated systems inclusive of Global Information Systems (GIS) mapping, coordinated vehicle scheduling, dispatching and monitoring technologies as well as technologies to track costs and billing in a coordinated system and single smart customer payment systems.

MATCHING REQUIREMENTS

Grants for capital expenses may not exceed **80 percent** of the net capital cost of the project. Grants for operating assistance may not exceed **50 percent** of the net operating cost of the project. Mobility management activities and contracting for transportation services will be funded as capital expenses (80%).

SELECTION PROCESS AND CRITERIA

As noted above, in 2007, projects selected for both the JARC and NFI programs must be derived from a coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan. However, in 2006, the RTA is following the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) interim guidance in working with the region's planning partners to develop a competitive selection process. Proposals for 2006 funding submitted through the solicitation process will be evaluated by a selection committee against the following un-weighted criteria:

GOAL: Provide Transportation Options

1. Does the project establish, preserve, and/or improve public transportation mobility?
2. Does the project demonstrate coordination of service delivery?
3. Does the project facilitate connections among different modes of transportation?

GOAL: Ensure Financial Viability

1. Does the project define performance measures to be used to determine the success of the project?
2. Does the project identify a local match? Does the project have the ability to leverage dollars above local match?
3. Does the project have a long term commitment to funding beyond the requested grant resources?

GOAL: Enhance Livability and Economic Vitality

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1. Does the project address a recognized need to provide access to a broader workforce?
2. Does the project provide or increase mobility for low-income populations and people with disabilities?
3. Does the project provide access to new growth areas or areas currently not served by transit?

GOAL: Demonstrate Value

1. Does the project appear to be feasible?
2. Does the project describe community/regional benefits?

2006 PROGRAM TIMELINE – KEY DATES

July 24	Joint CMTF and TFSPD meeting - endorsement of 2006 program
July 28	CATS Work Program Committee meeting - endorsement of 2006 program
August 11	2006 Program Call for Projects
October 17	CATS Policy Committee - endorsement of 2006 program
November 1	Due Date for Applications
November 10	Joint CMTF and TFSPD meeting - endorsement of 2006 projects
November 17	CATS Work Program Committee meeting - endorsement of 2006 projects
December 15	RTA Board Meeting - Approval of 2006 Projects