



Community Rides Grants Webinar 1: Program Overview and Transportation Partnerships

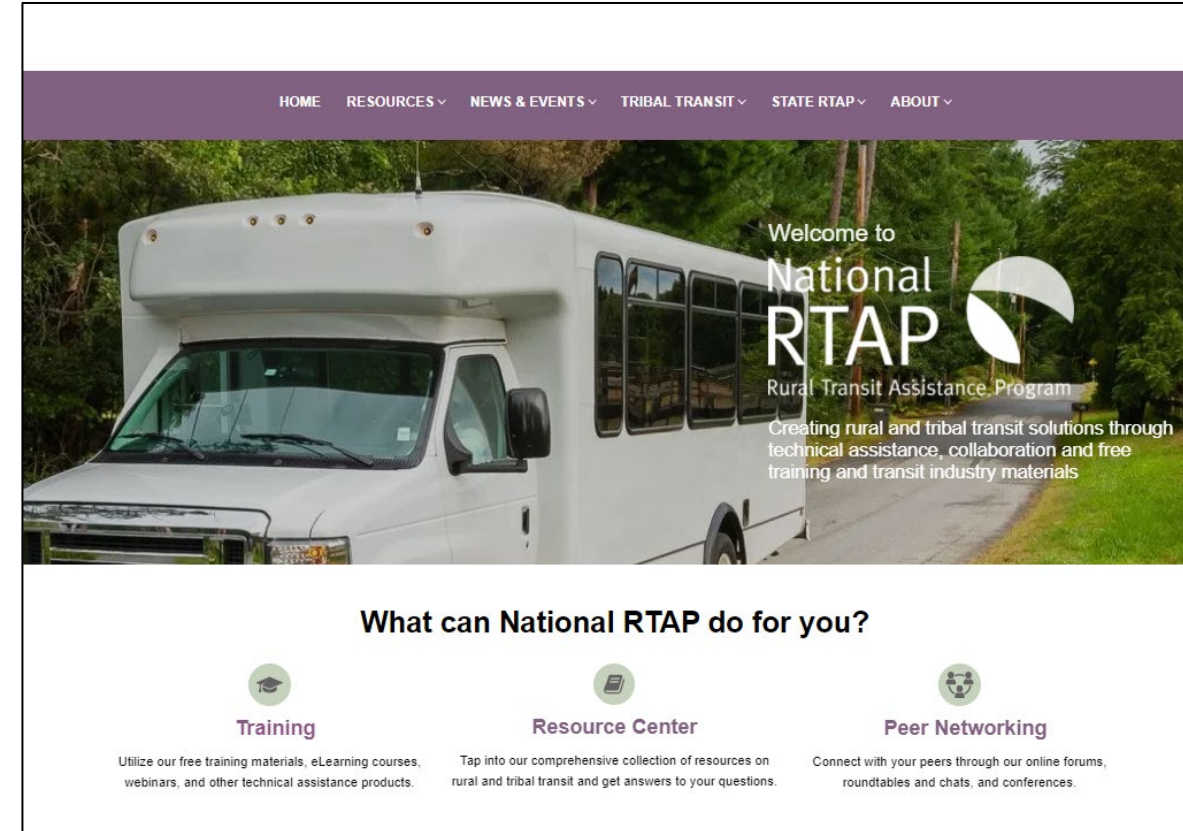
June 22, 2:00-3:00 PM ET



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration

National Rural Transit Assistance Program

- Technical assistance center funded by FTA through the Section 5311 Program
- Provides free training materials and technical assistance to rural and tribal transit providers and state RTAP programs
- Review Board – state DOT and rural and tribal transit agency staff
- Learn more at nationalrtap.org



National RTAP Resources and Services

Training

manuals, videos, slides, and eLearning for front-line staff and management

Information

and best practices via tech briefs, toolkits, topic guides, articles, and news

Technology Tools

for procurement, cost allocation, website building, and GTFS

Peer Networking

and training via webinars, conferences, roundtables, and online forums

Assistance

through reference services and tech support – bring us your questions!

Webinar Agenda

Community Rides Grants Overview

- How to access grant program information
- Key dates
- Program summary
- Local partner examples
- Additional partner & funding examples
- National RTAP support
- Eligible projects and project examples

Question & Answer Session 1

Transportation Partnership Examples

- Ron Baumgart, River Cities Public Transit
- Pamela Hernandez, Rural Economic Assistance League

Question & Answer Session 2

How to Access Grant Program Information



National RTAP
Community Rides Grants

For complete up-to-date information:

<https://www.nationalrtap.org/News/Community-Rides-Grants>

- Download the [Request for Proposals](#)
- [Register](#) for Webinar 2 on Jul 31, 2:00 PM ET
- [Sign-up to be notified](#) about grant program updates
- View helpful resources and past grantee project summaries
- Email grants@nationalrtap.org with any questions

Grant Program Key Dates

7/2/25	Request for proposals (RFP) published
7/22/25	Informational webinar for interested applicants #1
7/31/25	Grant application portal opens
7/31/25	Informational webinar for interested applicants #2
8/29/25	Grant application due date at 11:59 PM EDT
10/24/25	Approximate date of grant award announcements
1/1/26	Selected projects begin work
12/31/26	All Community Rides Grant projects must be completed
3/31/27	Final report/supporting materials due



Grant Program Summary – Funding and Eligibility

- ~\$250,000 distributed year one / distributed annually
- Additional resources available for Tribal projects
- Grant awards of up to \$100,000; \$25,000 minimum grant amount
- Funding distributed monthly on a reimbursement basis
- Project duration is 12 months
- Eligible applicants are rural or tribal transit systems that receive FTA Section 5311
 - **Not eligible: vehicle purchases and expenses for existing transit services**



Photo from Curtis Raines, Klamath Tribes Chiloquin, OR

Grant Program Summary – Goals

- Support local transportation partnerships
 - ***Must have a minimum of one local partner***
- Improve access to critical needs like employment, healthcare, education, healthy food, social services, etc., as well as build the capacity of transit programs
- Fill gaps in service and reduce duplication to build transit services that are responsive to the needs and values of the community



Rides To Wellness
FREE round-trip transportation to medical appointments at the SDUIH in Pierre

Schedule Your Appointment

Pierre Clinic
605-224-8841
Monday - Friday: 8a-5p

SDUIH
South Dakota Urban Indian Health
INTEGRATED CARE FOR ALL



The COLORExpress Materials Developed

REAL Inc.
As a national leader in transit and a long-standing member of the transportation industry, REAL Inc. is proud to be a part of the COLORExpress project.

Need a ride to school? GET ON BOARD and hop on the COLOR Express

College Routes
We want to establish express routes for students of higher education in the United States. We would also like to work with local high school students who need travel assistance for their college or university.

Technology for Easy Access
New software, mobile app and real-time payment options will be available for users to create a more efficient process. Upgrading our system was needed for this project to keep up with the needs of students. More information and updates will be at your convenience.

Health and Safety First
Your health and safety is our top priority. REAL Inc. vehicles are cleaned, sanitized and inspected daily to ensure they are safe for all passengers. We also have all passengers wearing their seat belts and masks at all times.

As we are in the early stages of rolling out the COLOR Express, we hope to meet with more leaders in the community to discuss a self-service that will meet their needs. We are especially looking forward to working with local educators to help our hard-working students with transportation to higher education. If you or someone you know can benefit from transportation to higher education please let us know we can reach out and start the process now.

Grant Program Summary – Project Objectives

Projects should be:

1. Directly linked to the community
2. Scaled to the rural environment
3. Innovative
4. Replicable
5. Sustainable



Example Local Project Partners

Local Partners (must have one local partner)

- Employers
- Healthcare providers
- Health clinics
- Community organizations
- Community college or university
- Chambers of Commerce
- Drug rehab/recovery centers



National RTAP
Community Rides Grants

A minimum of one letter of commitment from a local partner is required

Examples of Additional Project Partners & Funding Opportunities

- Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM) program inventory non-DOT federal programs that fund human services transportation.
 - Many of these agencies have local programs/projects operating in your area supporting transportation initiatives.
- Projects may include coordinating with or seeking additional funding through other federal or national programs focused on rural health and economic development.
 - Regional Transportation Planning Organizations
 - State Department of Transportation (DOT) agencies
 - U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
 - U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
 - Rural Community Opioid Response Program (RCORP)
 - National Association of Development Organizations (NADO)

National RTAP Support

- National RTAP will work collaboratively with selected projects throughout the grant period:
 - Helping prepare before projects begin January 2026
 - National RTAP resources and technology tools
 - Peer network and support
 - Monthly meetings with current and past grantees
 - Sharing lessons learned
 - Work with non-selected projects to build readiness with technical assistance & partnerships



Potential projects include:

- New or enhanced routes to improve access to health-supportive destinations
- Feeder route for intercity connectivity to jobs and healthcare
- Rural transportation management association (TMA) or employment vanpool
- Volunteer transportation network
- Mobility Management outreach and service coordination
- Improving transportation information and trip planning
- Implementing new technology to improve operations efficiency
- Coordinating with social service and recovery centers to build reliable connections
- State DOT supported RideSheet implementation

Community outreach, planning, and developing a business plan to support any of these types of initiatives should also be part of your project.

Questions

Questions Received in Advance

- How is "rural community" defined?
 - Agency that receives or is eligible for 5311 funding
 - Rural Area. Any area that has not been designated by the Secretary of Commerce in the most recent decennial census as an "urban area" with at least 50,000 people (49 U.S.C. 5302)
 - U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration Circular: FTA C 9040.1H (November 1, 2024)

Other questions? Put them in the Q&A box.

Speaker Introductions



Ron Baumgart
Executive Director
River Cities Public Transit



Pamela Hernandez
Manager of Mobility Management Services
Rural Economic Assistance League (REAL)

SPOTLIGHT SOUTH DAKOTA



Rides To Wellness

A guide to workplace self-care in the new “new normal”





Target Audience

Individuals with unmet medical transportation needs –

Native Americans

Veterans

Elderly

People with disabilities

General Population

Examples include - Individuals who may not have a driver's license, may not own a vehicle, may have an unreliable or broken vehicle, may rely on others for transportation, may not drive in bad weather, in the dark, or from rural to metro areas due to traffic increases.

River Cities Public Transit: Rides TO Wellness

1. Develop a phone app so individuals have ease in scheduling rides. (70% of cost covered by IMI grant, 30% of cost covered through Rides to Wellness grant)
2. Teach medical personnel the phone app usage so they in turn could teach patients
3. Provide NEMT rides where possible





Mobile App

English: <https://tinyurl.com/mtmctvx7>



Spanish: <https://tinyurl.com/yp5wffbf>



Community Rides Grantee

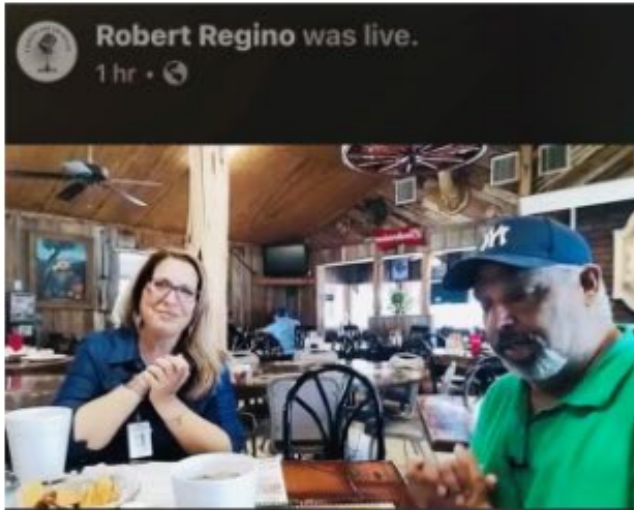
*The **COLORExpress***

Service Launch



- ▶ 3,435 Completed Trips
- ▶ 114,898 Completed Miles
- ▶ 28 Miles Average Trip length

Services



Local transit company providing free transportation for college students in rural communities to, from campus



Pam Garza, with R.E.A.L Inc., says she hopes no one ever counts themselves out of an opportunity over the concern of transportation, and to instead, call her office.



- ▶ “The Color Express program gave me the opportunity to complete my last semester of college. When my family only had one car at home that my parents used for work and we lived an hour away from the college, I did not think I would be able to finish my last semester. Color Express was a blessing for me, I see the finish line!” – Fernando (Rider)



Connecting Students Across South Texas To A Higher Education



Forming Partnerships

Project Sustainability:

- ❖ Discussions with project partners for transitioning into a compensated phase.
- ❖ Agreement made for the continuance of service with one partnered school.



The image features a yellow banner at the top with the text "Cougars CROSSING" in blue and black, accompanied by a cougar head logo. Below this, the "REAL Transit" logo is shown next to the text "FREE TRANSPORTATION FOR STUDENTS" in red. Underneath the banner is a photograph of six students standing in front of a brick building with large "CBC" letters. The students are holding signs that say "Cougars CROSSING". To the right of the photo, there is text describing the service: "Free transportation for students in rural areas", "Flexible routing to educational institutions", and "Wifi available on select buses". Below this text, it says "For more information or to schedule a ride, call R.E.A.L. Inc. at (361)668-3158". At the bottom, there are logos for "R.E.A.L. Inc. RURAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE LEAGUE" and "Coastal Bend COLLEGE".

Cougars CROSSING

REAL Transit **FREE TRANSPORTATION FOR STUDENTS**

COLORADO EXPRESS

CBC

SUCCESS

Cougars CROSSING

Free transportation for students in rural areas
Flexible routing to educational institutions
Wifi available on select buses

For more information or to schedule a ride,
call R.E.A.L. Inc. at (361)668-3158

R.E.A.L. Inc.
RURAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE LEAGUE

Coastal Bend COLLEGE

Questions

Upcoming National RTAP Events

ProcurementPRO: Tools and Tactics, July 24, 2025,
12:00-1:00 PM ET

State RTAP Manager Peer Roundtable, July 29, 2025,
2:00-3:00 PM ET

Community Rides Grant Webinar #2, July 31, 2025

Books in Transit Discussion Group: Bus People, August
19, 2025, 2:00-3:00 PM ET



**Wrangling Access and Mobility
in Rural and Tribal Transit**

December 7-10, 2025 in Austin Texas

<https://www.nationalrtap.org/News/Conference/2025-Austin>

To register or to access recordings, slides, or summaries, go to:

[nationalrtap.org/Training/Peer-Roundtables-and-Chats](https://www.nationalrtap.org/Training/Peer-Roundtables-and-Chats) and [nationalrtap.org/Webinars](https://www.nationalrtap.org/Webinars).

Thank You!

National Rural Transit Assistance Program

nationalrtap.org

info@nationalrtap.org

Find us on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn & Instagram

888-589-6821

Community Rides Grant Program

nationalrtap.org/News/Community-Rides-Grants

grants@nationalrtap.org

781-404-5015



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration