



Community Rides Grants Webinar 1: Program Overview and Transportation Partnerships

March 23, 2021, 2:00-3:00 PM ET




U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration

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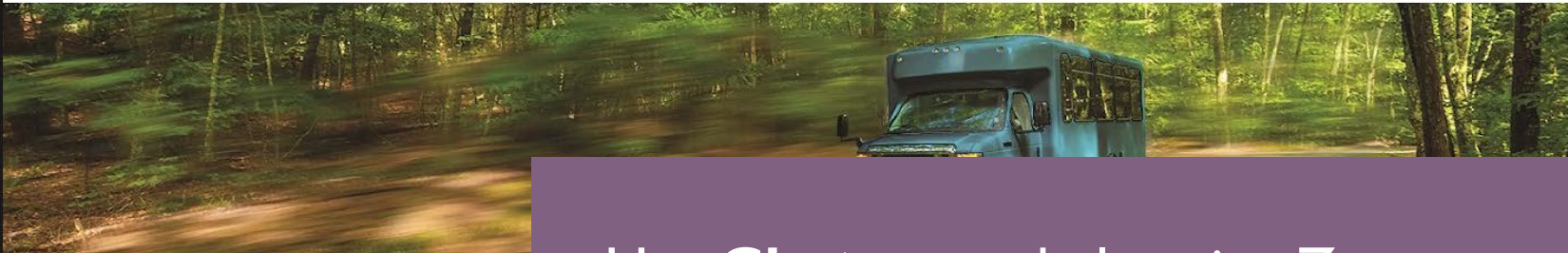
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National RTAP Rural Transit Assistance Program

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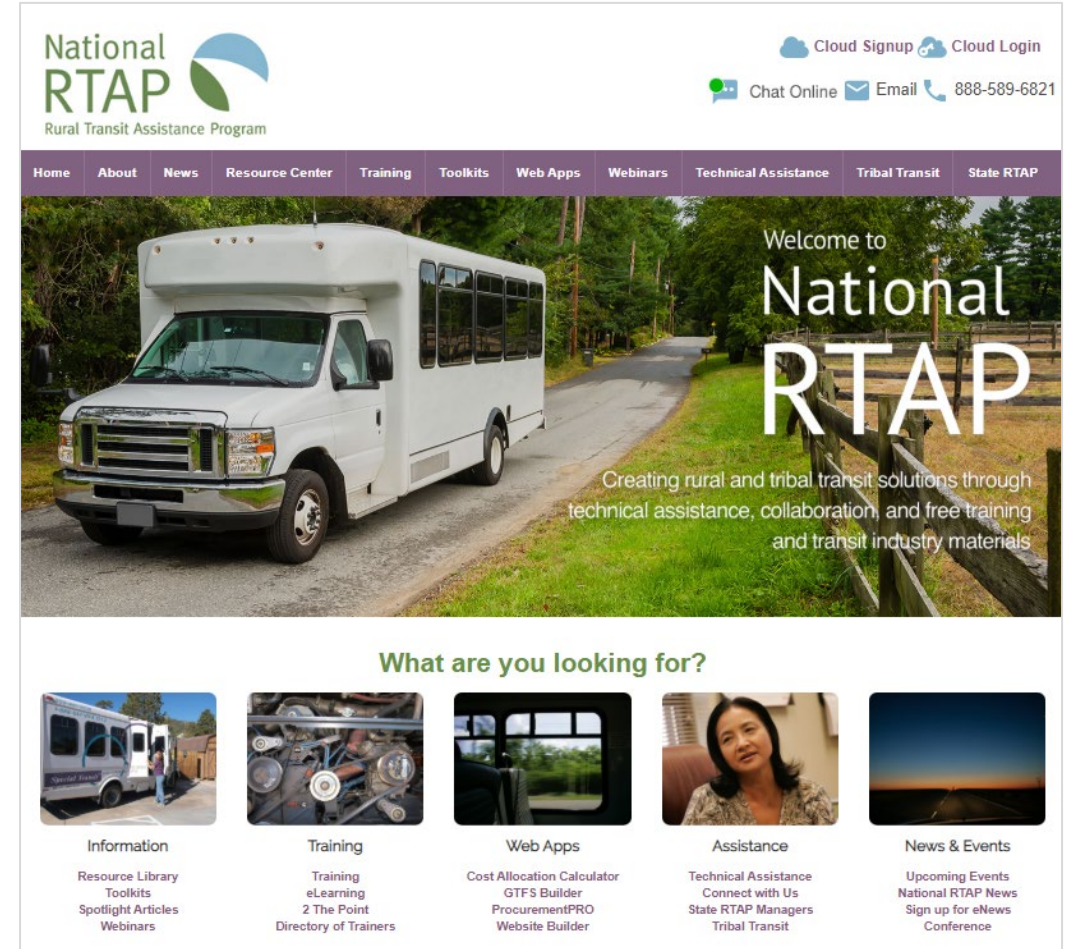
National RTAP Rural Transit Assistance Program

FTA U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration

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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
- National RTAP offices are in MA and DC
- Learn more at nationalrtap.org



Webinar Agenda

Community Rides Grants Overview

- How to access grant program information
- Key dates
- How to apply
- Program summary
- What are social determinants of health?
- Potential partners
- Eligible projects and project examples

Question & Answer Session 1

Transportation Partnership Examples

- Julia Castillo, HIRTA Public Transit
- Jennie Rowland, Big Woods Transit

Question & Answer Session 2

How to Access Grant Program Information



National RTAP
Community Rides Grants

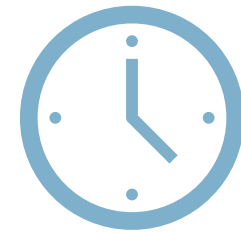
For complete up-to-date information:

www.nationalrtap.org/News/Community-Rides-Grants

- Download the [Request for Proposals](#)
- [Register](#) for Webinar 2 on April 15, 2021, 2:00 PM ET
- [Sign-up to be notified](#) about grant program updates
- Download the [Helpful Resources](#) document
- Email grants@nationalrtap.org with any questions

Grant Program Key Dates

3/11/21	Request for proposals (RFP) published
3/23/21	Informational webinar for interested applicants #1
4/7/21	SurveyMonkey Apply grant application portal opens
4/15/21	Informational webinar for interested applicants #2
5/10/21	Grant application due date at 11:59 PM EDT
6/18/21	Approximate date of grant award announcements
6/21/21	Approximate date that grantees begin their work
9/30/22	End date of grant activity



How to Apply

- ✓ Carefully review the Request for Proposals (RFP)
- ✓ Talk to potential partners and determine your project team
- ✓ Start outlining your application responses in Word and collecting information and the required letters of authorization, commitment, and support
- ✓ Utilize materials and training from the Helpful Resources list
- ✓ Starting April 7, 2021, register on the NRTAP grant portal to get started
- ✓ Using the budget template, to be provided by April 7, develop a budget
- ✓ Review your application and ensure it meets all requirements and evaluation criteria
- ✓ Submit your application by May 10, 2021 at 11:59 PM ET to the grant portal

Grant Program Summary – Funding and Eligibility

- Grant awards of up to \$100,000; there is no minimum grant amount
- Funding distributed monthly on a reimbursement basis
- Project duration is 15 months
- Eligible applicants are rural or tribal transit systems that receive FTA Section 5311 or Tribal Transit Program funding
- Applicants must serve as the lead agency and have a written agreement with 1+ partners demonstrating their involvement



Photo from Curtis Raines, Klamath Tribes Chiloquin, OR

Grant Program Summary – Goals

- Support transportation partnerships that improve social determinants of health in rural and tribal communities
- Improve access to critical needs like employment, healthcare, education, healthy food, social services, etc., as well as build the capacity of transit programs
- Reduce transportation as a barrier to independence and health and increase the awareness of transit's important role in the health of individuals and communities
- Fill gaps in service and reduce duplication to build transit services that are responsive to the needs and values of the community
- Increase access to non-transit funding available for transportation and enhance sustainability.
- Share promising practices from these projects nationwide.

Grant Program Summary – Project Objectives

Projects should be:

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



What are “Social Determinants of Health”?

The U.S. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion states:

“Social determinants of health are conditions in the environments in which people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks.”

Five main social determinants of health:

(1) Economic Stability

(2) Education

(3) Health and Health Care

(4) Neighborhood and Built Environment

(5) Social and Community Context

Potential partners include:

- Community stakeholders, such as employers, healthcare providers, non-profits, and chambers of commerce, as well as other transportation organizations.
- Cooperation among grantees of the [130 non-DOT federal programs that fund human services transportation](#) is also encouraged.
- Projects may include coordinating with or seeking additional funding through other federal or national programs focused on rural health and economic development.
 - Examples include: CDC, EPA, USDA, HRSA, RCORP, ACL, VA, NADO

Successful Partnerships

- Will work collaboratively to build lasting improvements to public transit through tasks such as, but not limited to:
 - formalizing relationships
 - convening partner agencies
 - planning and coordinating services
 - leveraging resources with partner agencies
- Working with community partners to assess needs, transit agencies may deploy improvements targeted to part of the community but available to the general public.



Eligible Projects

- Eligible projects under this grant program are any projects eligible under the Formula Grants for Rural Areas Program (49 USC Section 5311) that meet the Community Rides Grant Program goals and objectives, **with the exception of vehicle purchases as well as expenses for existing transit services.**
- Refer to [FTA Circular 9040.1G - Formula Grants for Rural Areas: Program Guidance and Application Instructions](#) for more information about eligible projects and activities under the Section 5311 program.

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
- Improving transportation information and trip planning to increase awareness of existing services
- Implementing new technology to improve operations efficiency to increase or improve service

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

Questions

Questions Received in Advance

- How is "rural community" defined?
- How do other interested parties register?
- What types of projects are RTAP grants used for?
- Can a shuttle service along the Virginia capital bike trail between Richmond City & Williamsburg be considered for the project using trolleys & vans?
- Can parts of the funding be connected to getting child car seats?
- Can parts of the funding be used to encourage seatbelt use?

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

Speaker Introductions



Julia Castillo
Executive Director
Heart of Iowa Regional Transit
Authority (HIRTA Public Transit)
Urbandale, IA



Jennie Rowland
Transportation Manager
Big Woods Transit
Bois Forte Band of Chippewa
Nett Lake, MN



HIRTA

PARTNERSHIPS



SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS

- Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council

IOWA DD Council

Preparation, Participation, Power

- United Ways – Local



United Way of Story County

- Area Agency on Aging



- Goodwill Career Connections



Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council and Iowa DOT



Grant available to provide transportation opportunities and services to persons with disabilities, especially those with developmental disabilities.

HIRTA's process:

- **NEED:** Determine what the barriers and gaps were in our 7-county region.
- **GOAL:** Have data and a plan that would allow us to address the outcomes, (perceived or real), to better meet the needs of the disability community.
- **HOW:** Determine who we know to help us figure out the best method. This led to a conversation with the National Aging and Disability Transit Center (NADTC) because we had a well developed relationship with their Communications Manager.
- **SUBMITTED GRANT:** “Barriers to Transit Equity for People with Disabilities”

Scope of Project

Easterseals Project Action has a well-developed successful process called “Accessible Transportation Community Initiative”(ATCI), which is a series of work-sessions with a 5 step frame-work:

- 1) **Establish a sense of urgency**
 - List urgent issues
 - Prioritize urgent issues
- 2) **Presentation: How to develop an action plan**
- 3) **Develop action plan**
 - Develop a measurable objective
 - List steps to achieve this objective
- 4) **Create tentative timeline and persons responsible for completing tasks/steps**
- 5) **Report out and obtain feedback**



Sample – Partial list of Community Partners invited to participate in this project.

- CIRTPA (rural version of MPO)
- Disability Rights Iowa
- Area Agency on Aging
- Mental Health Region
- Iowa DOT
- IDDC
- Medicaid Transportation broker
- City and County Reps
- Taxi/TNC's
- Iowa Paralyzed Veterans of American
- Public Health
- Epilepsy Foundation
- Solution based riders
- Dept. for the Blind
- Vocational Rehab
- VA Officers

United Ways – Local Community Partnerships

PARTNERS IN THIS WORK

UWSC partner agencies are at the cutting edge of meeting needs in health, education, and financial stability. We also convene collaborations to strengthen the work in many areas.

All Aboard for Kids
American Red Cross
Ames Community Preschool Center (ACPC)
The Arc of Story County
ACCESS
Boy Scouts of America Mid-Iowa Council
Boys & Girls Clubs of Story County
Camp Fire Heart of Iowa
Central Iowa RSVP
ChildServe
Emergency Residence Project
Eylerly Ball
Friendship Ark Homes
Girl Scouts of Greater Iowa
Good Neighbor Emergency Assistance, Inc.
Heartland Senior Services

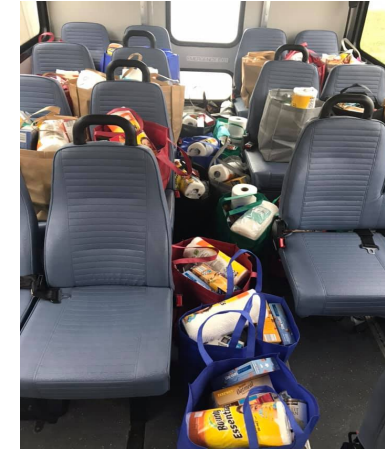
Heart of Iowa Regional Transit Agency (HIRT)
Iowa Able Foundation
Legal Aid Society of Story County
Lutheran Services in Iowa (LSI)
Mainstream Living, Inc.
Mary Greeley Medical Center Home Health Services
Mid-Iowa Community Action (MICA)
NAMI Central Iowa
Raising Readers in Story County
Story Time Child Care Center
The Salvation Army
University Community Childcare (UCC)
Volunteer Center of Story County
YSS
YWCA Ames-ISU



- Annual Funding from multiple County UW's
- Technology Funding (Cameras, Phone App, etc.)
- COVID funding for individually wrapped face masks and hand sanitizers for the buses
- Partnered with HIRTA to transport people during the pandemic, who lost their job or wanted to change careers, to a local College for skills training

Aging Resources of Central Iowa

- Annual Funding
- COVID Funding
 - Meal Deliveries to individual homes
 - Meal Deliveries in bulk to senior housing complexes
 - Assurance Calls to those no longer riding transit to see if they needed other services, such as meals, mental health, etc.
 - Supplied us with Hand Sanitizer and Masks when it was extremely difficult to get



Goodwill Career Connection

- We received funding to provide free rides to job interviews and also the first 30 days of employment.



in partnership with



**CAREER
CONNECTION
CENTER**

This certificate entitles:

Number: _____

To: One free ride (up to two dollars in value)

Issue: _____

AUTHORIZED BY: _____

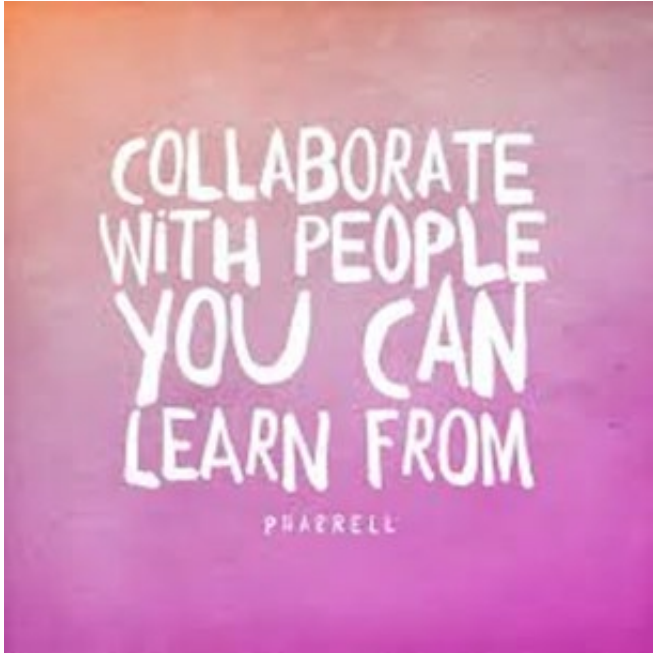
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A few parting thoughts

- Transit, when it is accessible, is an asset to the community
- Transit is key to economic impact
- Identify and make the first move to connect with potential key partners
- Sustainable partnerships mean:
 - Both parties benefit
 - Both parties contribute
 - Everyone wins
- Keep an active list of projects you want/need so when grants become available you already have the need, goal and budget amount ready



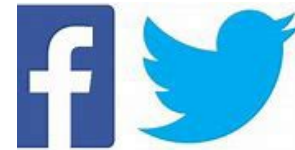
Julia Castillo

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BOIS FORTE BAND OF CHIPPEWA
ZAGAAKWAANDAGO ININIWAG ISHKONIGAN

Big Woods Transit

Bois Forte Volunteer Driver Program

BWT Mobile Food Shelf

Wii-doo-kaa-ge NEMT

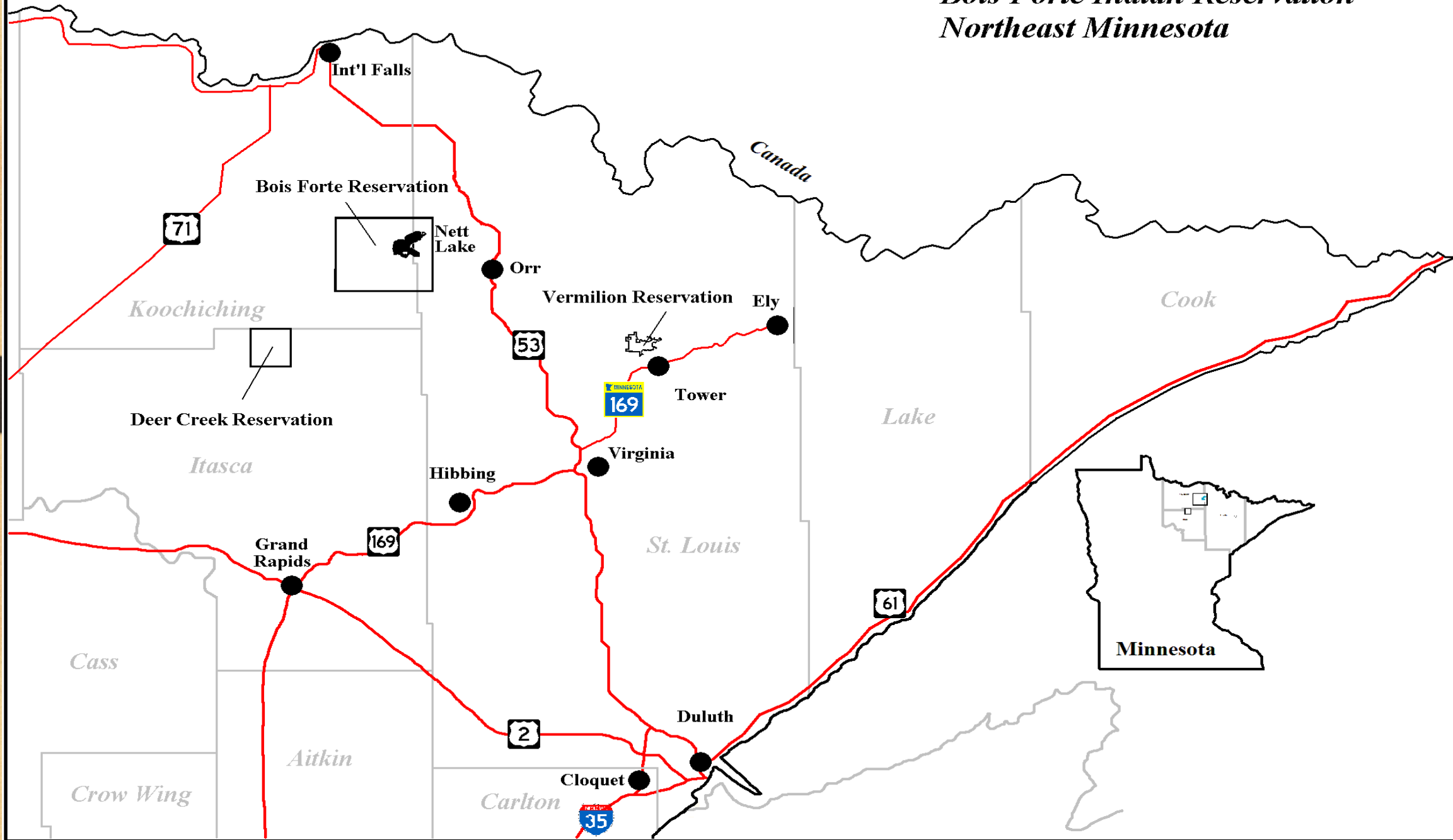
Who are the Bois Forte people?

- The Bois Forte Band of the Minnesota Chippewa is a recognized Indian Tribe under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934.
- We are located in northeastern Minnesota with approximately 3800 members, 800 of which are living on the Nett Lake sector of the Reservation.
- There are 3500 American Indians residing within the Bois Forte Health Services service area.
- We provide transportation, medical, and dental services to all Native and non-Native communities throughout the Arrowhead region of northern Minnesota.

Why transportation is critical?

- Strong infrastructure
- Economic Depression
- Aging Population
- Returning Veterans
- Rural Isolation
- Health Care
- Community Cohesion
- Local Partnerships
- Responsible Stewardship
- COVID pandemic

***Bois Forte Indian Reservation
Northeast Minnesota***



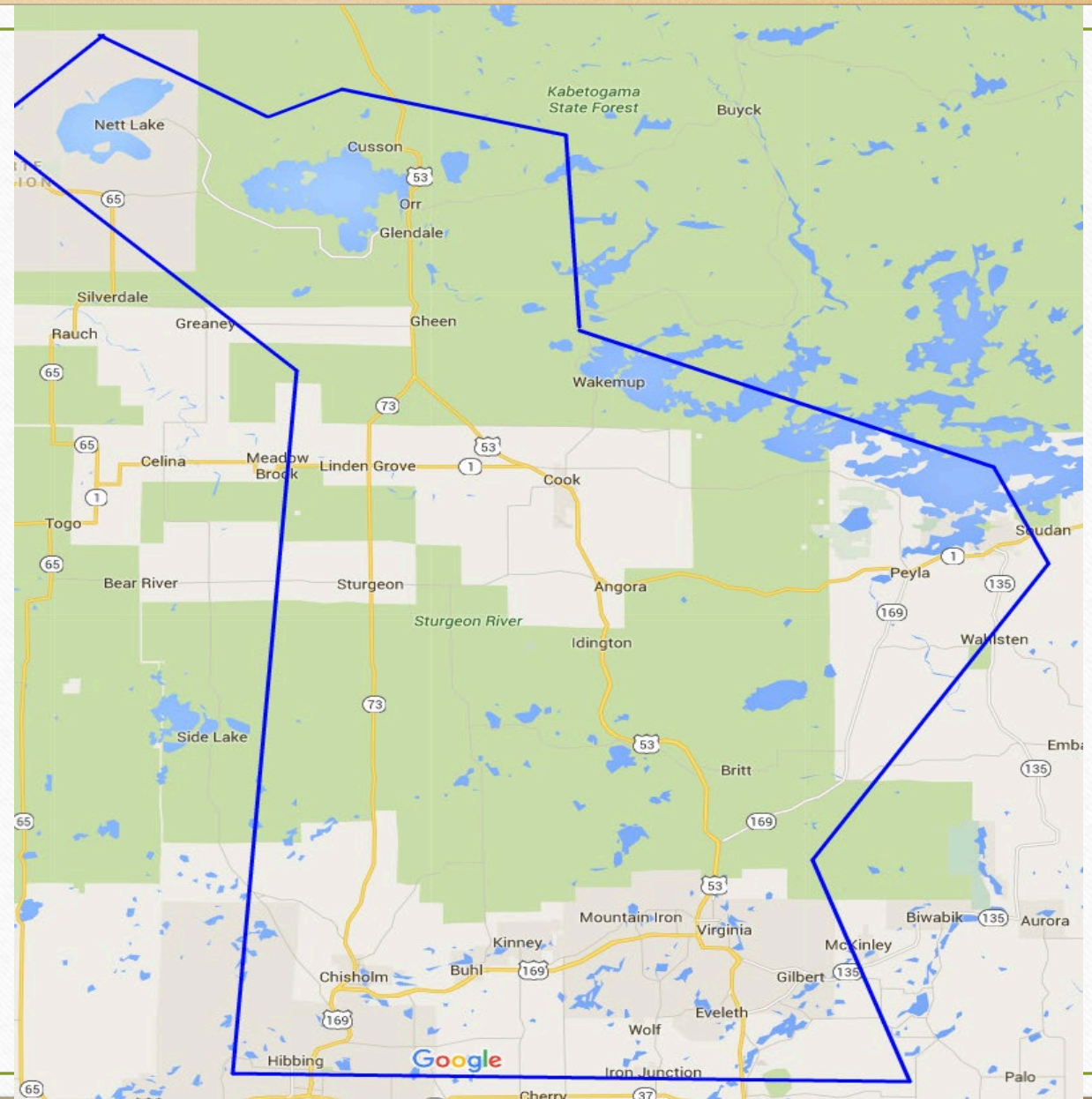
Service Area - Arrowhead region of northern Minnesota

- We operate all our public transportation programs out of the village of Nett Lake, MN which is located on the Nett Lake sector of the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa Reservation.
- The following map is a close representation of our service area which encompasses approximately 10,000 sq. miles
- We are the only public transit/NEMT/volunteer driver programs operating in this area and we dovetail our services with our neighbors as much as possible. We provide connections with Arrowhead Transit and with Jefferson Lines.
- Our demand service covers door-to-door transportation to all the small towns throughout this region for Native and non-Native communities.

Service Area

From Nett Lake in the west to Buyck and Orr in the north... over to Soudan in the east and as far south as Eveleth/Gilbert and Chisholm.

We are in the process of expanding a commuter route to the town of Ely and Fortune Bay Resort Casino, approx. 10,000 sq. miles.



Community Participation – Personal and Professional

- We talked to our communities
- We talked to our different departments
- We consulted the heads of the programs
- We gathered data
- The one comment that started the entire change was: “...of all the medical rides requested only 50% of those rides are provided. Of the 50% some rides never show up and other drop our Elders off in another town and forget to come back for them.”

Volunteer Driver Program

- Started at the beginning of the pandemic and went 'live' before foundations were complete
- Eliminated all the rules and became customer focused and volunteer supportive
- After reviewing current programs doing this service and reviews of the product of the service others provide, we wanted to do better. A higher quality product provided to our community by our community.
- Any question we always err on the side of the participants, NOT on the side of the program. This is a person focused service.

Volunteer Driver cont'd

- We are at one year of service without a single medical reimbursement
- FTA authorization to use our formula funding
- We standardized everything and wrote it down as policies as questions arose.
- We adapted our own forms, simplified them, and increased the font for 'older' volunteers
- Our clinic hired a consultant and she is facilitating a contract with MNDOT and St. Louis County to expand beyond our village to encompass our entire service area
- Arrowhead Agency on Aging has been super supportive with 3-\$5,000 grants to date

BWT Mobile Food Shelf

- Initially a response to COVID-19 pandemic
- We had everything we needed on hand to begin
- Used the oldest bus and removed all the seats except the jump seat for the helpers
- We pick up and deliver food boxes from food agencies in northern Minnesota
- I wrote a grant for HungerMN.org and received \$100,000 to continue the service.
- Future focus will be on fresh foods as we are located in a food desert
- Its 65 miles to the nearest comprehensive grocery store

Wii-doo-kaa-ge (Helping Others) NEMT

- The idea started watching families struggle to transport family members to the only dialysis clinic which is located 65 miles away, 130 mile round trip
- We expect delivery on 4 mini vans each with one wheel chair position in 6 weeks from an FTA grant through the Tribal Transit program
- We will run it like a van share program allowing members of the public to check them out
- Baseline criteria was determined by our insurance agency with the driver having a valid DL, current insurance and an online defensive driving course.
- They can be driven by one of our staff drivers, they can be checked out by an Tribal Government insured employee, and/or checked out by a member of the public.

Contact information

Jennie Rowland, Transportation Manager

Big Woods Transit, BWT Mobile Food Shelf,

Bois Forte Volunteer Driver Program and

Wii-doo-kaa-ge Non-Emergency Medical Transportation

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Questions

Upcoming Events

Community Rides Grant Program Webinar 2

Project Development, Performance Measures, and Application Portal Overview

Thursday, April 15, 2021, 2:00-3:00 PM ET

Topics will include Project Development, Performance Measures, Online Grant Application Portal Overview, and Answers to Additional Questions

Transit Manager Peer Roundtable

Thursday, March 25, 2021, 2:00-3:00 PM ET

Topics may include COVID challenges, funding, and vaccine distribution; public transportation safety plan (PTASP) development and implementation; and planning.

Thank You!

National Rural Transit Assistance Program

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