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7th National Rural and Tribal Technical Assistance Conference - Fall 2027

Request for Proposals (RFP) for Local Host *RFP closes upon selection*

The National Rural Transit Assistance Program (National RTAP) is requesting proposals for locations for our 7th biennial technical assistance conference. The 2027 conference will focus on implementation and improvement of rural and tribal programs, including intercity. National RTAP is the lead agency and will work directly with the successful proposer. The purpose of the conference is to share strategies, current regulatory information, and best practices of relevance to rural and tribal transportation services. The conference is generally held between mid-September to early-December. Attendance typically ranges from 500-600 and includes rural public and human service transit providers, tribal transit managers, planners, state agency staff, intercity bus operators, consultants, researchers and trainers.

The Conference Committee assigns a Conference Program Planning Committee with Conference Chair (or Co-Chairs) made up of membership from the federally funded technical assistance centers, representatives of the National RTAP Review Board and other interested parties with responsibility for oversight of the overall conference, particularly program content. This solicitation is for a local host of this conference with responsibilities associated with local site planning. The Local Host Committee is selected to assist with identifying a host facility (meeting and lodging) and other activities unique to the local site to support the conference. The Chair of the Local Host Committee sits on the overall Program Committee as liaison between local site and the national technical assistance session planning.

The conference traditionally rotates locations among different regions of the country. The first conference was held in Scottsdale, Arizona in March 2012, followed by the second in Denver, Colorado in late October 2015. The third conference took place in Omaha, Nebraska in late October 2017. The fourth was hosted in Portland, Oregon in September 2019, and the fifth was held in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina in late November 2023. Most recently, the sixth conference was held in Austin, Texas in December 2025.

We would like to partner with a location that has not had the benefit of a national training conference in 2026 or 2027. Local hosts are extremely important to the success of the conference, ensuring the vitality of the conference by involving as many transit agencies, transit associations, and state DOT public transit staff as possible. State transit associations, state

DOTs, universities, or some combination have served as the local host for other similar conferences. Significant and particular weight will be given to demonstrated interest and capacity of the state DOT, the state transit association, and local transit agencies.

In general, the responsibilities of the local host are to identify the site, assist with soliciting proposals from local hotel sites in the region, arrange local events, organize volunteers to assist with the conference, and help publicize the conference to local transit agencies in the region to encourage attendance, including supporting a vendor development committee. Funding of direct costs of the conference are paid through a variety of sources that support the conference, however, the majority of the administrative tasks related to planning and holding the conference will be supported by the National Rural Transit Assistance Program. Local Committee members can participate in session development, however National RTAP and other technical assistance center staff will facilitate session committees.

Proposals will begin the evaluation process when received. The evaluation committee is made up of National RTAP Staff and Review Board members. National RTAP would like to find a host location by Friday, May 22, 2026 and all potential proposers who have given National RTAP notice of intent to propose will be notified of any changes or selection of a host site. To provide notice to National RTAP of intent to propose, please email conference@nationalrtap.org with the subject "Intent to Propose." Provide your name, affiliation, and contact information. Conference hotels do not need to be reserved as part of the proposal. Hotels meeting the requirements need to exist and potentially have availability during the conference timeframe.

Proposals must be submitted in letter format, address the requirements outlined below, and not exceed five pages in length. Example: "We propose _____ which meets your location requirements and has _____ hotels which meet your space requirements." Please identify the lead person for the proposal and the representatives for the supporting organizations.

Local Conference Site Requirements

Location

- Access to a major Airport within an hour / 60 miles or less
- Reasonable time and cost of local transportation connections to the conference site

Hotel/Conference Site Requirements (Tuesday morning –Friday afternoon)

- Plenary Banquet space to accommodate 500-600 in rounds, riser/head table in front with 8-10 people per table
- Break space that also accommodates up to 30-40 tabletops for vendors
- Adjacent space for vehicle display or in plenary space 5-10 vehicles
- Reception space for 250 to 400
- Sleeping rooms from Monday night – Saturday check out (with the majority of rooms on Tuesday-Thursday) with option for the conference rate three days pre- and post-conference

- AV support optional which allows for some equipment or external consultants to be brought on site as needed

Local Host Responsibilities

- Host local planning committee for up to 25 one year in advance of the conference (November 2027)
- Make invitations to local VIPs and Flag Ceremony for opening plenary session as confirmed with the conference committee
- Develop a list of local/state volunteers to serve as session monitors
- Assist with volunteer staffing of conference registration desk and as session monitors
- Identify AV resources, such as computer projectors and laptops, for use at the conference (to supplement AV contractor services, where appropriate)
- Assist with onsite conference preparation and registration
- Assist with name badges, signage, printing, etc.
- Assist with identifying local sponsors and contributors for the conference

National RTAP Responsibilities

- Negotiate and sign the contract with the conference hotel
- Identify and purchase participant amenities (e.g. bags, notebooks, and/or pens) for distribution at the conference (available for sponsorship: ie badges, lanyards, etc.)
- Assist with onsite conference preparation and registration
- Assemble the conference sessions and agenda
- Solicit sponsor (TRB Rural Issues Committee, Tribal Transportation, etc.) and vendor support
- Solicit Keynote and FTA speakers in coordination with partner agencies and host state.

Required Qualifications for Host State

- Demonstrated support of state DOT transit staff
- Demonstrated support of state transit association
- Demonstrated support of local transit agency or agencies
- Demonstrated support in hosting and conference planning and implementation
- Location in proximity to a major airport, with good connections to all parts of the country, and affordable shuttle services from the airport to the conference site
- Adequate sleeping rooms (typically 450-500 total room nights at the host hotel, with options for other hotels nearby) that are reasonably priced (at least some percentage available at the federal per diem rate)
- Meeting space to accommodate up to 500-600 participants: including 5 concurrent sessions, plenary and banquet space for 500 (ideally separate), vendor space for 30-40 tabletops, and outdoor display space in proximity to accommodate up to 10 buses
- Assistance identifying location for Big Night Out.

Desired Qualifications

- Experience hosting conferences of 500 or more
- Relationship with local transit agency for volunteer support and bus passes etc.

Q&A Webinars

The purpose of these webinars is to provide information and answers about the 2027 and 2029 National RTAP Technical Assistance Conference. The target audience for these webinars is State Program Managers, DOT Staff and State and Regional Transit Associations.

1. 2:00 PM EST on May 5, 2026:
https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_ckKFtjENTLWSBIXoOoMNRQ
2. 2:00 PM EST on May 7, 2026:
https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_X2ILLXbDQYC9rNvCNhXeOA

For more information or questions, contact:

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