Michigan Receives Large Discretionary Award From FTA

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<th>Michigan Total: $29,303,452</th>
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<td><strong>Capital Area Transportation Authority</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Central County Transportation Authority</strong></td>
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<td><strong>City of Detroit Department of Transportation</strong></td>
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Distribution of the awarded $29.3 million to Michigan agencies from the FTA bus and bus facilities program.

Michigan was awarded over $29.3 million from the Buses and Bus Facilities Infrastructure Investment Program, the Federal Transit Administration announced on Sept. 25, 2018. MDOT received over $9.5 million to be distributed among rural agencies to replace aging vehicles as well as purchase expansion vehicles. MDOT also was awarded over $4.2 million for replacement and expansion vehicles in small urban areas. CATA in Lansing, the Central County Transportation Authority in Kalamazoo and the City of Detroit Department of Transportation also received awards for replacement vehicles and facility rehabilitation.

MDOT had submitted four proposals in August, requesting a total of $21.7 million for 245 vehicles and $27.3 million for facility projects. FTA awarded $366.2 million to 107 projects in 50 states and territories. “These grants are a significant step in achieving the Administration’s goal of rebuilding our nation’s transportation infrastructure,” said FTA Acting Administrator K. Jane Williams.

MDOT expects to determine allocations for the award and request verification forms from the selected agencies by the end of December in order to submit the federal application in early 2019.

**Newsletter Highlights**

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- Quarterly Milestone Reports Due
- Micro & Small Purchase Threshold Raised
- Transit MDOT Hall of Honor Inductees
- FTA’s Low-No Grant Award
- PASS Training
- ITA’s Bus Design Contest
- DDOT’s Strategic Plan

WexExpress Drive Program
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FY19 LBO & 5311 Operating Info
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**OPT MISSION:** To provide a safe and balanced statewide network of passenger transportation services to meet the social, safety, and economic well-being for the State of Michigan.
Goodbye to a Beloved Member of the Transit Community

It is with great sadness that we share the news of the passing of a beloved member of our transit family; Sylvester Payne left us September 16, 2018, at the age of 63 in Saginaw, Michigan.

Sylvester was a former president of the Michigan Transportation Planning Association (MPTA) and spent 18 years at the helm as the executive director of Saginaw Transit Authority Regional Services (STARS), providing transit to the residents of his county.

Sylvester retired from STARS in September of 2016 due to health issues. Mark Tower of MLive quoted Sylvester in January 2016 when he announced his pending retirement as saying, "I'm actually still recovering. In light of some of the challenges still that need to be done here [at STARS], I just weighed the differences and said, 'No, I better let somebody else who has a little more energy come in and handle it.'"

Funeral arrangements were prepared by Paradise Funeral Chapel. Anyone wishing to give their condolences and celebrate the life of Sylvester may post their messages on the Paradise Funeral Chapel website at www.paradisefuneralchapel.com. Sylvester Payne, you will be missed.

Quarterly Milestone Reports Are Due

The FY 2018 third quarter milestone reports are due to be updated in the Public Transportation Management System (PTMS) for all programs except for Service Development and New Technology (SDNT) for your project manager's review by no later than Monday September 15, 2018.

If your project is marked complete, you should NOT update the report. Please remember that revised estimated completion dates must have a reason for any delay. The Federal Transit Administration expects an explanation for all revisions. Also, when you update the cost to date you should be reporting only expenses that have been reimbursed by MDOT.

If you have questions regarding your milestones, the SDNT reports, or need assistance, please contact your project manager.

Long-term OPT Employee Selected as New Administrator

We are happy to announce that Jean Ruestman has been selected as the new administrator of the Office of Passenger Transportation (OPT).

Jean has more than 27 years of experience working with the Michigan Departing of Transportation (MDOT). Jean started in OPT as a project manager and worked her way up to her most recent position as manager of the Program Administration Section, responsible for MDOT’s public transit, intercity bus, and commercial bus regulatory programs.

Jean brings a wealth of knowledge in public transit, federal compliance, bus regulations, intercity bus services, and management. She replaces Sharon Edgar, who retired in June 2018. Jean assumed her new role in August and is very excited to help guide the office and industry into the new era of shared mobility. Jean had this to say about her work in transit: “I’ve developed a true passion for what we do – both for the industry and for the people who work at MDOT. I intend to use that passion to ensure that we are providing the best service we can to all of our customers, and to ensure that this is a great place to work.”

Micropurchase & Small Purchase Thresholds Raised

On June 20, 2018, the U.S. Office of Management and Budget issued memorandum OM-18-18, which raises the threshold for micropurchases under federal financial assistance awards to $10,000, and raises the threshold for simplified acquisitions (small purchases) to $250,000. The increases apply to FTA-funded procurements made on or after June 20, 2018. OPT is in the process of updating procurement forms and creating master agreement amendments to reflect the new thresholds.

The increase in the small purchase threshold does not change the Buy America requirements. Buy America still applies to procurements of $150,000 or more. Also note that if your agency’s or municipality’s procurement policy has lower thresholds than the federal level, you must follow the procedures and requirements of your local policy.
Two men who were influential in public transit are being inducted into MDOT’s Hall of Honor at a ceremony in Lansing on Oct. 18.

Philip Kazmierski, former deputy director of MDOT’s Bureau of Urban and Public Transportation (UPTRAN), and Michael Mobey, former general manager of the Isabella County Transportation Commission (ICTC), are among five individuals who were selected for induction in the Hall of Honor. The hall gives permanent recognition to individuals who made significant contributions to the development of Michigan’s transportation system. In its 47 years of existence, only 83 individuals have been inducted into the Hall of Honor. The last inductees were in 2014.

Appointed in 1987 by Gov. Blanchard and reappointed by Gov. Engler, Phil Kazmierski served as UPTRAN’s deputy director until his retirement in 2002. He was responsible for statewide public transit, rail and marine programs and regulatory functions for bus and rail. Kazmierski worked tirelessly with local, state and federal elected leaders to secure state and federal funding for public transit, intercity bus, and ferryboat services, resulting in Michigan providing the sixth-highest level of state funding for public transit. Under Kazmierski’s direction, the Detroit-Chicago rail corridor became one of five federally designated high-speed corridors, leading to 110 mph operations. Other achievements include selling an abandoned railroad yard to the village of Elberta that was redeveloped for recreational purposes, and leading the Detroit Intermodal Freight Terminal Project.

As general manager of ICTC from 1983 to 1995, Mike Mobey pioneered flexible routing, which became a rural transit system standard in Michigan. Under his leadership, ICTC was the first rural transit agency in the state to: offer countywide transit service; become a fully computerized rural service; establish fixed routes; write specifications for procurement of new buses; rebuild buses for other systems; and join the Greyhound Rural Connector Program public/private partnership. Under Mobey’s direction, ICTC was the state’s first rural system to reach the 1 million, 2 million, and 3 million ridership marks. In addition to mentoring successive ICTC general managers and staff, he was instrumental in developing a home-study course for rural transit managers offered through Central Michigan University. Mobey passed away in 2003.

Also being inducted this year are:

- Martin F. Schultz Jr., who began his state career as an aircraft mechanic trainee in 1947, retiring in 1984 as administrator of MDOT’s Bureau of Aeronautics Safety and Services Division.
- G. Robert Adams, a 38-year MDOT employee who served in numerous positions, culminating in chief deputy director from 1989 to 1996.

The induction ceremony, including a luncheon, will be begin at 10:30 a.m. Oct. 18 at the Country Club of Lansing. Tickets, available through Oct. 10, are $35 and may be purchased by contacting Cindy Miller at 517-335-4408 or Keith Belonga at 517-243-3908.

Nominations for the Hall of Honor can be made at any time, although the selection committee reviews nominations no more than every two years. Nominees must have been retired from the field or position for which they are to be recognized for a year or more. To submit a nomination, contact Clark Harder at the Michigan Public Transit Association or John Drury at MASSTrans.
Blue Water Receives Funding Through Low-No Grant Program

Blue Water Area Transit (BWAT) will be receiving $1.5 million in funding for the purchase of battery electric buses and chargers as part of the Federal Transit Administration’s (FTA) $84.45 million in grant selections for the Low- or No-Emission (Low-No) Grant program.

The program, which funds the deployment of transit buses and infrastructure that use advanced propulsion technologies, will fund 52 projects in 41 states.

“Communities across America will benefit from these investments in their transportation infrastructure,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao.

Other eligible projects include the purchase or lease of buses that are powered by modern systems such as hybrid or battery electric engines, as well as related infrastructure investments such as charging stations.

“FTA is proud to partner with transit providers across the country to support their transit priorities. The participation from our local partners shows a dedication to improving access to jobs and opportunities,” said FTA Acting Administrator K. Jane Williams.

Interurban Holds Bus Design Contest for Local Residents

Interurban Transit Authority (ITA), which offers demand response services to Saugatuck, Douglas, and Saugatuck Township, held a bus design contest in May 2018.

ITA, which had purchased a used bus to replace its 28-year-old trolley, wanted a fun way to welcome the new addition to its fleet.

Entry forms for the ITA contest were distributed throughout the community and published in the local papers. The community outreach effort garnered 65 submissions from residents ranging from age 3 to 93. ITA even had an entire second-grade class participate in the contest.

A panel of six local judges selected four of the entries, and ITA staff submitted ballots for the tie breaker. The 64 first place winners were awarded 10 free rides with ITA, and grand prize winner Molly Blue won $100 dollars and had her design posted on the bus, which was unveiled at the local Fourth of July parade.

ITA Executive Director Phyllis Yff said, “The entire experience was lots of fun with lots of community engagement and a great way to spread the word about what we do.”

MPTA Offers PASS Training

The Michigan Public Transportation Association (MPTA) will hold a Passenger Service and Safety (PASS) Train the Trainer certification workshop October 9-11, 2018 in Mt. Pleasant.

The PASS trainer certification program ensures that community transportation trainers have current expertise in passenger assistance, techniques, sensitivity skills, bus evacuation knowledge, and skills in order to train drivers to serve person with disabilities.

Topics covered include but are not limited to the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), assisting passengers with service animals, diabetes, epilepsy or seizure disorders, blood borne pathogens, lift operating procedures, and accidents and emergency evacuations.

For questions or more information on future training dates, please email MPTA training coordinator Joseph DeKoning at mptajoe@comcast.net.
Detroit Releases Ambitious Transportation Strategic Plan

The City of Detroit has released an extensive plan to address many of the challenges facing transportation in the city. In partnership with Bloomberg Associates, Detroit now has many strategies and priorities over the next four years with the goal of revitalizing the city and helping residents connect with what their city has to offer.

The plan has five main goals—economic opportunity, safety, vibrancy, community outreach, and city functionality—with one-year and four-year goals outlined.

While the plan outlines several ways to improve parking in the city and the adoption of a beautification design for streets and alleys to remove dead trees and plants, it also strategizes heavily on transit in the hopes of increasing ridership on its bus system. Parts of the plan are already being implemented, such as the rebranding of Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT) buses and the expansion of services on the 10 most popular routes.

Additional benchmarks for DDOT in their first-year plan include the following:

- Launching a new bus stop program with 50 new bus shelters—with new maps.
- Create a mobile bus app and more efficient ways to pay (which will speed up boarding).
- Simplify fare structures and increase the number of places where riders can buy passes.
- Improve traffic signal timing and prioritize transit in street design.
- Expand the Project Green Light program to bus stops.

Alternative transportation ideas are also being explored in order to make it easier to live and work downtown without a car. The city wants to expand on ride and bike sharing:

- Introduce a Maven car-sharing pilot program.
- The bike-sharing program MoGo will be expanded into northern neighborhoods.
- MoGo would like to increase participation in its Access Pass Program ($5 a year for those receiving assistance) throughout the city.

The city also plans a study on the feasibility of offering free transit passes to those living in public housing.

For more information on Detroit’s strategic plan for transportation, you can access the plan at www.detroitmi.gov/Portals/0/docs/deptoftransportation/DetroitStrategicPlanForTransportation.pdf.
WexExpress Provides New Freedom Volunteer Driver Program

The Cadillac/Wexford Transit Authority, better known as WexExpress, launched its New Freedom Volunteer Driver Program on January 2, 2018.

This program was made possible by 5310 New Freedom funds and many community partners. The transit’s Mobility Coordinator, Kristen Kendall, works with seniors, persons with disabilities, and veterans to find the best transportation options available for medical appointments throughout Michigan. This is accomplished by coordinating with commercial providers, public transportation, and volunteer drivers in conjunction with community partners who provide financial assistance for volunteer driver mileage reimbursement. The program’s community partners include the Wexford County Council on Aging, Area Agency on Aging, Wexford County Veteran’s Services and the Missaukee County Commission on Aging.

The service provides new options that essentially fill the gaps in the existing transportation infrastructure and helps to break-down mobility barriers for passengers who need non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) to facilities outside the transit’s traditional county boundaries. The New Freedom program currently has 13 volunteer drivers who provide transportation for medical appointments, vision appointments, physical therapy, or dental appointments throughout the state.

The New Freedom Volunteer Driver Program has provided 1,300 rides for 128 families to non-emergency medical appointments and has logged over 48,000 miles to many locations throughout the state, including Grand Rapids, Saginaw, Mt. Pleasant, Ann Arbor, Detroit, and Traverse City. Since its launch in January, volunteers have donated an astonishing 2,000 hours to help those in need of transportation. The community has embraced this program and the growth over the past several months has been tremendous. The WexExpress looks forward to continuing this momentum into FY2019 and expanding the program further.

BATA Launches New Mobile Ticketing App with Hopthru

The Bay Area Transportation Authority (BATA) has launched a new mobile app that allows riders to easily pay for the bus directly from their smart phones. Mobile tickets are valid for any of BATA’s fixed route City and Village Loop systems, as well as its demand-response Link service.

Customers can download the Hopthru app on their Apple or Android devices by visiting the Apple or Google Play app stores. Riders also can receive a link to download the app by texting “hopthru” to 43506.

Once the app is downloaded, riders simply enter their payment information, select the type of ticket they want from a variety of fare options and activate the selected ticket to show the driver before boarding the bus. Purchased passes can be activated at any time with or without an internet connection, enabling riders to travel without having to worry about keeping a cell signal. For a limited time, first-time users of the Hopthru app get their first ride free (a $1.50 value).

Hopthru mobile ticketing features includes:

- Single-use City Loop, Village Loop or Link tickets ($1.50 - $3.00).
- 1-day and 3-day unlimited use passes for all Loop routes ($9.00 - $17.00).
- 31-day Commuter Pass for unlimited use on all Loop routes ($35.00).
- Reduced fare options available for students, seniors 60+, people with disabilities, veterans and active military with proper ID or a BATA Reduced Fare card
- Trip planning tool.

“Being able to purchase BATA fares through a mobile app is a technology our riders have been requesting and we’re thrilled to make this feature available to our customers,” said BATA Executive Director Kelly Dunham. “Mobile fare payment is one of many new rider-friendly technologies we hope to launch in the next couple of years, and we’re excited to partner with Hopthru to pilot this particular technology.”

More information about BATA’s mobile ticketing app can be found at BATA’s website at www.bata.net/fares/mobile-ticketing.html.
Quarter 4 & Reconciliation of FY18 State Operating Assistance

This is a reminder to agencies that FY18 regular service, JARC, and New Freedom fourth quarter and reconciled Operating Assistance Reports (OAR) are due Friday, November 9, 2018. All OARs require submission via the Public Transportation Management System (PTMS). Please remember the reconciled OAR should be for the period beginning October 1, 2017, and ending September 30, 2018.

For questions regarding your fourth quarter and reconciled OARs please contact your project manager.

You may also refer to the Local Public Transit Revenue and Expense Manual (R & E Manual) to properly classify revenues, expenses and nonfinancial data. The R & E manual can be located on the OPT website at www.michigan.gov/documents/mdot/FY2018RevenueAndExpenseManual_542387_7.pdf.

FY19 LBO Budget Distribution

The FY 2019 appropriation for Local Bus Operating (LBO) is $190,750,000. The FY 2019 budget operating assistance reports (OARs) have been reviewed and the allocation of the funds has been completed. Statewide budgeted eligible expenses went up slightly after the preliminary distribution was sent in July, resulting in a slight decrease in the distribution percentages.

The LBO budget distribution will be as follows:

- Urban agencies with a population greater than 100,000 will receive 32.0376 percent of their eligible expenses in FY 2019
- Urban agencies with a population less than 100,000 and nonurban agencies will receive 38.0667 percent of their eligible expenses in FY 2019

In accordance with the state’s schedule for FY 2019 funds, the Michigan Department of Transportation anticipates sending the payments for the October LBO payments on Monday, October 1, 2018. We expect the transit agencies to receive the payments by October 10, 2018.

If you have any questions regarding this, please contact Sandy Lovell at 517-335-2525.

FY19 Section 5311 Operating Assistance

OPT is very happy to announce that we will be able to provide at least 18% of eligible expenses for FY 2019 Section 5311 operating assistance. We will continue looking for ways to bring the percentage back up to 18.5%; however, there are several variables that will impact available funds, including the lack of a federal budget and the final-audited distributions for FY 2016 through FY 2018.

We recommend that you base your spending on 18% reimbursement. We will let you know as soon as possible if more funding becomes available.

State Rates Apply When Submitting OAR Travel Expenses

OPT wishes to remind agencies when submitting travel-related expenses such as lodging and meals to be reimbursed under project authorizations awarded under the 2017 master agreements and some non-standard contracts that the reimbursement rate cannot exceed the maximum published state rate. These established rates are based on the joint recommendations of the State Personnel Director and the Department of Technology, Management & Budget (DTMB). The applicable published state rates for meals and all modes of travel including air, rail, auto, ferry, etc., can be located on the DTMB website at www.michigan.gov/dtmb/0,5552,7-358-82548_13132--00.html.

These rates also apply to third-party contracts. While a third-party contract agreement may allow for higher rates, agencies will have to use local funds for any amount that exceeds the state rate.

Travel regulations pertaining to eligible and ineligible related expenses can be located on the DTMB website at www.michigan.gov/documents/dtmb/STR_October_2015_501741_7.pdf.

If you have any question regarding the standard state rates and eligible expenses, please contact your project manager or Sandy Lovell at 517-335-2525.
There was an overwhelming response to the $8M Michigan Mobility Challenge. The 43 proposals, totaling over $27 million, reflect a wide variety of technology and innovative service models to solve mobility gaps for the target audiences as well as the general public. The selection process was difficult but the selection team has identified nine proposals to be funded in full or in part. Approximately $3.5M of the $8M will be distributed for these projects.

The team sought to select projects that provide geographic diversity (north, east, west and south), various population densities (urban, rural, suburban), multiple technologies and service models (avoiding duplication as much as possible), and benefits to each of the identified target audiences (seniors, persons with disabilities, veterans). A strong emphasis was placed on the ability to demonstrate solutions, rather than conduct research or expand existing services. Also sought were strong public/private partnerships and projects that considered the current transportation network when feasible.

These first nine proposals distribute a little less than half of the funds available as part of the challenge. Three additional project teams were identified to receive special technical assistance to further refine their proposals prior to determining the level of funding they may receive in Phase 2. Two other projects have been identified for potential funding from other sources.

The Challenge plans to fund some additional proposals in the next several months as we continue to evaluate the proposals and provide further technical assistance. Agencies will be notified when those determinations have been made. There will be local press releases issued this week and a larger press event in the next few weeks regarding the funded projects.

On behalf of the Michigan Department of Transportation, PlanetM/Michigan Economic Development Corporation and all of our partners in the Michigan Mobility Challenge, OPT thanks everyone who submitted proposals for the $8M Michigan Mobility Challenge.
Transit Increased Workforce in Huron County Increases Ridership for Transit

Thumb Area Transit is beginning to serve the first wave of Puerto Rican residents that have been hired by Huron Casting, Inc.

Huron Casting employs local residents and brings in several hundred workers from Saginaw daily by bus or personal vehicle, but more are still needed to maintain production levels. Plans to hire up to 300 Puerto Rican workers to fill these gaps were announced in June 2018. Additionally, Huron Casting is in the process of purchasing and upgrading the former U.S. Air Force Base in Port Austin Township to provide housing options for the new workers.

The hiring effort is also expected to significantly increase ridership for Huron transit providers. Thumb Area Transit is working hard to meet the demand for transit and prepare itself for the needs of the new community residents with expanded language services and community partnerships.

“The influx of workers and their families will be a positive effect because they’ll be paid extremely well and contribute money to the local economy,” said, Matt Davis, senior vice president of Huron Casting.

MDOT 101 Training Manual Available for Transit Agencies Use

An MDOT 101 Training Manual has been posted to the OPT website at www.michigan.gov/mdot/0,4616,7-151-9625_21607-47323-,00.html.

The manual contains information that directors, operations, and finance personnel at your agencies would use while working with MDOT. The items covered include contract administration, funding, resources, federal compliance, reporting, annual application, transit vehicles, training and board of directors.

The electronic version of the manual includes imbedded links for websites referenced. All documents that are not accessible by website are included in separate sections for easy reference. This document will be reviewed and updated annually as changes are needed.

A one-day training was conducted on August 9, 2018, at the Frontline Conference at Boyne Mountain. OPT is planning a training that will encompass one full day and two half days to be presented in the spring. Details will follow regarding date and location.

Q&A Corner with OPT

Quick Answers for the Transit Agency on the Go!

Question

Dear OPT – I’ve been reviewing your federal contract clauses online for procurements and I think there are missing clauses like for topics regarding veteran’s preferences and persons with disabilities. Is this possible? - Covering my Federal Bases

Answer

Dear Covering - OPT has conducted a thorough review of the language in the 12 sets of federal contract clauses used for procurements, which are provided for agency use on our website at www.michigan.gov/mdot/0,4616,7-151-9625_21607-86364--,00.html. OPT used the National Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) software ProcurementPRO to identify the latest federal requirements. We compared this language to the checklists in the FTA Circular 4220.1F – Third Party Contracting Guidance and to the suggested language in FTA’s Best Practices Procurement & Lessons Learned Manual.

There is a list of “other federal requirements” that include items like veteran’s preferences and persons with disabilities; however, these are not federal clauses, so they were not included in the sets of federal contract clauses forms we have provided on our website.

For further information on these other federal requirements and the federal contract clauses please contact your project manager.

Do you have questions? OPT has answers!

If you have questions that you would like to submit to Q&A Corner, please contact OPT at hoffmeyerm@michigan.gov.

Ideas for the Newsletter?

The OPT Dispatch Quarterly Newsletter has been developed as a tool to notify transit agencies of training opportunities, due dates, and innovations. If you have questions or article ideas for our newsletter, please contact OPT at hoffmeyerm@michigan.gov.