

Rural Public Transportation Vehicle Earmark

With high gas prices and an aging population leading people in rural areas to increasingly turn to public transportation, rural public transit providers—including counties, other local governments, and private agencies—are having a difficult time keeping up with demand. One significant challenge is that rural transit providers do not have adequate resources to purchase new public transit vehicles or replace those that are past their useful life or are no longer adequate to meet demand. ODOT's Public Transit Division administers a rural public transportation vehicle purchase program using state and federal funds, but the need to purchase and replace rural transit vehicles outpaces the funding available to ODOT.

In order to expand the resources available for rural communities to receive public transportation funds, ODOT proposes seeking an authorization earmark for vehicle replacements on behalf of rural transit agencies throughout the state that would have a difficult time competing for funding on their own. ODOT proposes to request \$9 million in funding for rural transit vehicle purchases, which would pay for approximately 135 vehicles (primarily vans and small buses). This would help reduce a backlog of needs throughout the state.

The earmark would be administered as follows.

- Upon receipt of the final earmark, which is likely to be substantially less than the request, ODOT's Public Transit Division will produce an updated list of rural public transportation vehicle replacement needs. Based on this survey, ODOT will propose an allocation of the available funding to transit providers. ODOT's Public Transportation Advisory Committee (PTAC) will be asked to review and approve this allocation and grants would be written to sub-recipient agencies in the normal grant process.
- Any earmarks in the authorization legislation a transit provider receives directly will reduce their allocation of funds from the statewide earmark on a dollar for dollar basis.
- Transit providers will be responsible for providing matching funds.