



OREGON DEPARTMENT
of **VETERANS' AFFAIRS**



Oregon
Department
of Transportation

**Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs
and ODOT Public Transportation Division**

**Rural Veterans
Healthcare Transportation
Grant Program**

**2025-27 Solicitation Guidance
Published January 2026**

Background..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Application Process **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Eligibility 4

Goals, Objectives, and Priorities 5

Project Types and Eligible Use..... 6

Shared Rides, Costs, and Fares..... 7

General Project Requirements..... 8

Funding Estimate and Local Match 8

Coordination..... 9

2025 Grant Program Schedule 9

Appendix A: RUCA Coding 10

Appendix B: Key PTD Staff..... 11

Background

The Rural Veterans Healthcare Transportation (RVHT) Grant Program was created in 2019 via legislative budget note (Senate Bill 5538 - Package 103). With an initial investment of \$500,000, the Oregon Department of Veterans’ Affairs (ODVA) engaged the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) Public Transportation Division (PTD) in a partnership to develop and deliver healthcare transit for veterans living in rural areas, including access to physical, mental, and/or behavioral health.

In 2021, RVHT was formalized in House Bill 2139 and given \$650,000 to continue and grow the program. This increased funding contribution allowed ODOT to award projects in twelve markets. Beginning July 1, 2023, ODVA made a renewed investment of \$650,000 for the cycle allowing ODOT to add five new projects for the 23-25 biennium.

ODVA is again making a renewed investment of \$650,000 for the cycle beginning July 1, 2025. By adding savings from unspent funds from the last two biennia, ODOT expects to award up to \$1,109,000 in RVHT grants for 2025-27.

Administrative Rules:

In previous cycles, ODOT’s Special Transportation Fund (STF) Discretionary Grant Program received and distributed RVHT resources. However, effective July 1, 2023, the STF program was consolidated into ODOT’s Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF). RVHT wasn’t included in the consolidation because its financing strategy is too divergent from the payroll tax and population-based apportionments of the updated STIF program. The Administrative Rules adopted for RVHT may be found at OAR 274-039-0010.

Source Link: [Oregon Senate Bill 5538](#)
[Oregon House Bill 2139](#)
[Oregon Administrative Rule 274-039-0010](#)

Application Process

Two-Tiered Competitive Call for Projects:

ODOT and ODVA evaluated the RVHT program at the end of fiscal year 2023 for factors such as the cost-effective delivery of rides, miles, hours, outreach and innovative partnership. One outcome was a recognition by ODVA and PTD that Oregon’s rural veterans have grown to rely upon many of the services created by the partnership. With this in mind, we will continue taking a two-tiered approach this cycle to streamline the call for projects and improve the prospects of preservation funding for successful existing projects while continuing the essential role of competition in advancing new initiatives and innovation.

All eligible Counties, Transportation Districts, and Tribes (please note, all of Oregon’s Federally-Recognized Tribes are categorically eligible) are encouraged to participate. The call for projects will be structured as follows:

- 1) Submission of a Letter of Interest (LOI) is a prerequisite for all project proposals under this call for projects. Only projects for which a materially similar LOI has been received will be considered.

- 2) One project per LOI. There is no limit on the number of LOIs a respondent may submit.
- 3) After the submission deadline, the scoring and selection committee will consider LOIs for preservation projects. In addition to the LOI and any optional attachments received, the committee may consider previous performance including (but not limited to) outcome metrics and expenditures from previous cycles, on-time reporting history, local investments, innovative partnerships, most recent PTD risk assessment(s) for the applicant and proposed subrecipient(s), and advice from the Regional Transit Coordinator.
- 4) After consideration of all preservation projects (collectively and individually) relative to the available resources, the committee may choose to fund one or more preservation projects, based directly upon Letter(s) of Interest without further development/submission of proposal materials from the applicant.
- 5) For projects that don't receive direct funding based on LOIs alone as described in Step 4, the committee will invite you to submit a formal application and will share guidance for the application in the invitation email. The committee will share feedback on your LOI with your Regional Transit Coordinator for follow-up, prior to application submittal.

Source Link: [RVHT Letter of Interest form 2025-2027](#)

Eligibility

For Providers:

A transportation provider is eligible to apply for RVHT funding if:

- A) It is a County, Transportation District, or Federally Recognized Indian Tribe; and
- B) Its proposed area of service has been assigned a Rural-Urban Commuting Area (RUCA) code of 4 through 10, as determined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, as of July 3, 2019 (see Appendix A).

Please note, the RUCA codes described above include areas funded by the federal Highly Rural Veterans Transportation program. The Highly Rural Veterans Transportation program is related to RVHT, but is limited to jurisdictions with fewer than seven people per square mile. **Oregon's federally-recognized Tribes are eligible to apply irrespective of RUCA coding on their proposed area(s) of service.**

For Passengers:

The term “veteran” will follow the definitions established in ORS 408.225(1)(f), governing eligibility for preference in public employment. Public transit providers receiving funding under the RVHT program are encouraged to incorporate the statute by reference into their process for identifying veterans and recording/reporting their ride statistics.

Please note, ODVA and ODOT recognize that tribal communities are not defined by geography. As such, **Oregon’s federally-recognized tribes are eligible for reimbursement for RVHT service(s) to their veterans, residing anywhere in the State of Oregon.**

Source Links: [ORS 408.225](#)
[Rural-Urban Community Area \(RUCA\)](#)
[Federal Highly Rural Veterans Transportation Program](#)

Goals, Objectives, and Priorities

The goal of the RVHT Program is to overcome transit-based barriers between veterans living in rural areas and the healthcare services they’ve earned. RVHT’s objective is to inspire innovative local solutions to transit challenges such as:

- Lifeline transit service in bedroom communities.
- Schedules and frequencies that conform to veterans’ needs.
- Appointments with out-of-market specialists and regional veterans hospitals.
- Ongoing appointments for the treatment of chronic conditions.
- Access to behavioral health services, counseling, and support groups.
- Periodic service to screening, detection, diagnosis, and disease prevention events.
- Accessible transit for veterans living with disabilities.

RVHT prioritizes projects with clearly identified needs and innovative, measurable solutions. Anticipated outcomes should be appropriate in scope and scale to the budget and time frame of a grant award. To the maximum extent practicable, proposals should demonstrate coordination of transportation services and resources.

Please note: Applicants are encouraged to *think broadly* about the definition of *healthcare* and related destinations. Veterans do not need to be accessing a facility funded or operated by the U.S. Department of Veterans’ Affairs to qualify for transit services under this program. Access to goods and services that

contribute to a veteran's well-being should be accommodated. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Community and walk-in clinics, including those staffed by nurse practitioners and/or in proximity to other destinations such as major retailers
- Vision services, including vision retailers
- Dentists and denturists
- Audiology and hearing aid clinics/retailers
- Physical or occupational therapists
- Pharmacies and durable medical equipment vendors
- Smoking cessation and weight loss services
- Palliative care and alternative/cultural medical services
- Nutritional support services and food access (e.g., grocery stores)
- Mental health care and related wellness activities.

Project Types and Eligible Use

RVHT funding may be used for the following purposes:

- 1) Preservation of efficient and effective services that have been funded under an earlier RVHT competitive call for projects.
- 2) Expansion of such services.
- 3) Creation of new transportation services that support healthcare and healthy living for veterans.
- 4) Planning for, and development of, services that support access to healthcare transportation who are not currently served by an RVHT or federal Highly Rural Veterans Transportation program.

This call for projects will prioritize proposals for operations and purchased services projects. These project types will minimize the recipient's reporting and create (or preserve) immediate benefits for veterans.

While mobility management and planning projects are eligible, we encourage applicants to approach them carefully. RVHT is a highly competitive resource, and applicants will need to demonstrate how such investments will **meaningfully and measurably** improve healthcare access or other positive health outcomes for rural veterans.

We encourage applicants to think holistically about the scope of service necessary to be successful and to allow for these expenditures in their proposed project budgets.

Shared Rides, Costs, and Fares

RVHT seeks to serve the highest number of veterans possible within available resources. Service to veterans in a shared ride mode is encouraged (including with general public passengers sharing common origins, destinations, or routes). **However, the absence of a shared ride option is not a sufficient reason to decline a veteran's travel request for an otherwise eligible trip.**

RVHT is limited to the fully allocated cost of serving veterans. **Incidental civilian costs from shared rides are ineligible.** While the following examples are not exhaustive, they may provide helpful illustrations of the expenses that are reimbursable under RVHT:

Generic shared ride trip: Average cost per ride is one simple method of determining eligible RVHT costs for a veteran using a local fixed route or demand response systems. Cost per ride is all of the expenses in the previous year, quarter, month or cycle of your choosing (optionally, within a specific mode) divided by the total rides delivered within the same parameters. This figure represents the fully allocated cost of a trip. RVHT would expect to pay no more than this figure, per served veteran ride.

Special out-of-market, shared ride trip: A trip that leaves the local area imposes costs beyond the generic ride described above (and therefore requires a different expense model). In these cases, it may be more appropriate to apply fully allocated cost per mile or fully allocated cost per hour – whichever the provider chooses to employ with consistency. The method of establishing costs is the same (total expenses for the selected time period, divided by total miles or revenue service hours).

RVHT would expect to pay the fully allocated cost of only the veterans involved in this trip. For example, for a four-hour trip at \$100/Revenue Service Hour, shared by three veterans and one civilian, RVHT would expect to pay \$300.

Dedicated Trip: From time to time, circumstances may arise when the shared ride preference for RVHT will be a poor fit. For example, a veteran may need to travel out of market for care to places (or on days, or at times) when no shared ride demand exists. Alternatively, the unique conditions of a veteran's care needs may make a dedicated driver and vehicle the best service choice. In these instances, RVHT would expect to pay the full cost of delivering the trip. For convenience of consistently calculating these costs, providers may wish to use the cost per hour or cost per mile methods described above.

Veterans (and their Personal Care Attendants) may not be charged a fare, co-pay, **or other fee** for using these services. A veteran may make a donation to providers that are structured to receive them. **However, a provider shall not ask for or otherwise solicit a donation from RVHT passengers.**

Source Links: [National RTAP Cost Allocation Model](#)

General Project Requirements

Pursuant to the crosscutting requirements of PTD funded services, RVHT projects must comply with 49-CFR-Part 37 Transportation services for Individuals with Disabilities (Americans with Disabilities Act) section 37.3 and be coordinated with other transportation programs and services to the maximum extent feasible.

Reporting

As a condition of RVHT funding, PTD requires completion of a quarterly report. In order to submit an application for an RVHT 2025-27 grant, each recipient must agree to complete a report using a short online form provided by ODOT. Without a copy of the report attached in OPTIS, the Regional Transit Coordinator will not advance a recipient's Reimbursement Request for payment.

Source Links: [RVHT Quarterly Report Form](#)

Funding Estimate and Local Match

PTD expects to award up to \$1,109,000 for the 2025-27 biennium. No local match is required. However, the project scoring and selection committee may consider a project that features cash or in-kind contributions from an applicant more favorably than one that does not.

As a state resource, an RVHT award may be eligible for use as local match in complementary transit efforts delivered using federal funding. Please consult with your Regional Transit Coordinator if you are unsure (please see Appendix B – Key PTD Staff).

The minimum request for a project is \$10,000 and there is no maximum, but we estimate most awards will be between \$50,000 and \$150,000.

Applicants are encouraged to **ask for what the project needs**. Projects should feature a realistic budget and manageable outcomes for a 24-month delivery schedule.

Coordination

ODVA and PTD recognize that for some applicants, the available funding may not be sufficient to create and implement a new program. In such cases, we encourage applicants to coordinate with nearby Counties, Districts, and/or Tribes to submit joint-funded and mutually beneficial proposals. Alternatively, neighboring applicants may realize efficiencies by proposing individual purchased services projects that coordinate through a mutual service provider.

We encourage applicants adjacent to those applying for ongoing RVHT projects or those receiving Highly Rural Veterans Transportation support from the U.S. Department of Veterans’ Affairs to explore preservation and/or expansion opportunities that mutually leverage the available resources and capacities.

2025-27 Grant Program Schedule

2025	Oct. 13	RVHT LOI and call for projects Guidance Released
	Nov. 10	RVHT LOI call for projects closes
	November	Scoring and selection committee makes LOI recommendations to PTD Administrator
	Jan. 28, 2026	Full RVHT applications, guidance and invitations to apply released
	Feb. 18 2026	Full application deadline
	Spring 2026	Award notifications released
	Spring 2026	Agreements begin
Services become reimbursable on date of fully executed agreement or date of stipulated pre-award authority (if applicable) , whichever comes first. Dates are subject to change. Please visit the ODOT Public Transportation Funding Opportunity website for the most up-to-date solicitation schedule.		

Additional information and an electronic version of this notice can be found on the Public Transportation Division website and Funding Opportunities pages here: [Funding Opportunities Link](#) . For questions about RVHT grants, contact Hope Estes at hope.estes@odot.oregon.gov or reach out to your Regional Transit Coordinator.

Appendix A: RUCA Coding

Rural-Urban Commuter Area (RUCA) Coding is a population density and travel orientation methodology developed by the United States Department of Agriculture and the Department of Health and Human Services. This census-tract-based approach is utilized by the United States Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) to determine rurality. In addition to compatibility with the standard used by the VA, RUCA provides this project with an effective tool to determine eligibility for veterans residing in areas that may be ineligible if we only considered the rurality of their county. For example, please consider

County X:

County X is rural by almost any metric you wish to consider. Its largest city is home to less than 15,000 people. However, one of Oregon's metropolitan communities has been growing across its boarder for the last few decades. A strict county-based definition of rurality may unfairly leave County X classified as ineligible.

County Y:

County Y is geographically large and diverse. Outside of one of Oregon's major metropolitan areas that call it home, there is only one community approaching 10,000 people. There are in fact, over 80 unincorporated communities within its borders. The coastal area of County Y comes up consistently in the veteran's healthcare access conversation as a place where more access services are needed. However, due to an urban area that's a 90-minute drive away, these populations would be ineligible if we applied a county-based population threshold on RVHT.

Primary RUCA coding breaks census tracts down as follows (paraphrasing for ease of understanding and reference):

- 1 – 3 Metro areas (over 50,000 people) with varying levels of primary traffic flow moving between them;
- 4 – 6 Micropolitan areas (10,000 to 49,999 people) with varying levels of primary traffic flow moving within or between an urbanized area.
- 7 – 9 Small town areas (2,500 to 9,999 people) with varying levels of primary traffic flow toward micropolitan or other small town areas.
- 10 Rural areas with primary flow of traffic to a census tract outside the classifications above.

Source Links: [Rural-Urban Commuting Area Codes](#)

Appendix B: Key PTD Staff

General questions about the RVHT Program and technical assistance inquiries should first be directed to your [Regional Transit Coordinator](#), then to Hope Estes at hope.estes@odot.oregon.gov.