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Iowa's Senior Citizens Rely on Safe and Reliable Public Transit
More than half of Iowa's transit buses exceed federal standards for useful life

DES MOINES, Iowa – Aug. 21, 2014 – In recognition of National Senior Citizens Day, Iowa's public transit officials are drawing attention to the importance of maintaining safe and reliable public transit throughout Iowa. During the past five years, public transit in Iowa has provided 130 million rides to Iowans in all of the state's 99 counties.

Due to significant funding issues, the future of Iowa's public transit system is at serious risk. While passengers of all ages use public transit, the service is imperative to serving the basic medical, nutritional, social and day-to-day mobility needs of Iowa seniors. This is critical as the state ranks fifth nationally for people 65 years and older, and this segment adds approximately 5,000 more individuals each year.

"In Iowa, more than half (56 percent) of the 1,610 transit buses exceed the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) standards for useful life," says Mark Little, president of the Iowa Public Transit Association and managing director, Waterloo Metropolitan Transit Authority. "We have a responsibility to Iowa's seniors to provide this vital mobility service for all Iowans, and it takes adequate funding to fulfill these needs."

Earlier this year, public transit officials requested a budget allocation from the Iowa Legislature to assist with the replacement of the oldest vehicles first. Because funds were not received, officials expect to make a similar request during the upcoming legislative session.

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An analysis of the aging transit vehicles in Iowa shows that it would cost at least \$120 million to replace the fleet of transit vehicles that exceed FTA standards. The purchase cost for an American with Disabilities Act compliant vehicle ranges from \$48,000 for a standard size minivan to \$429,000 for a 40-foot heavy duty bus. The average cost for a medium duty bus is nearly \$170,000.

Transit buses in Iowa's rural areas are among the oldest with 67 percent of all vehicles in those areas exceeding the FTA standards for useful life; 26 percent are in large urban areas and 7 percent are in small urban areas.

"One out of every 16 Iowa households does not own a vehicle, and last year alone, 27.5 million rides were provided via Iowa's public transit system," Little says.

During the past five years, fuel expenses increased 60 percent, and vehicle capital costs also continued to grow by 5 to 10 percent each year as a result of inflation and required additions to meet federal clean air standards. Meanwhile, operational funding is flat, virtually no capital funding exists and proposed limitations to local funding create additional challenges.

Public transit officials encourage Iowans – especially senior citizens, which are the nation's fastest growing demographic – to let elected officials know that support is needed to maintain a safe and robust transit system.

The Iowa Public Transit Association includes 35 public transit systems that provide local transit services in all of the state's 99 counties. Iowa's public transit system includes 19 urban and 16 regional systems. Operating in all 99 counties, Iowa's public transit system has provided 130 million rides during the past five years. For more information visit www.iapublictransit.com.

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