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Public Transit Officials Seek Funding for Vehicle Replacement
More than half of Iowa's transit buses exceed federal standards for useful life

DES MOINES, Iowa – March 20, 2014 – During the past five years, public transit in Iowa has 130 million rides to Iowans in all of the state's 99 counties. Safe and efficient public transit is a necessity for tens of thousands of Iowans. Due to significant funding issues, the future of Iowa's public transit system is at serious risk. Public transit officials are requesting a \$5 million budget allocation from the Iowa Legislature to assist with the replacement of the oldest vehicles first.

“Currently 56 percent of the 1,610 transit buses in Iowa 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. “Public transit is at a critical juncture in Iowa, and with adequate funding we can continue to provide this vital mobility service for all Iowans.”

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.

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“Last year alone, Iowa’s public transit system provided 26 million rides to Iowans from all walks of life. One out of every 16 Iowa households does not own a vehicle, and Iowans depend on us to provide them with a safe, environmentally responsible and affordable transportation option,” 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.

Economic Impact

The estimated direct economic benefit of public transit services in Iowa is \$33.4 million. Indirect benefits increase the impact threefold for a total annual economic benefit of more than \$100 million. At the local level, the state-regulated transit levy for urban areas has remained at 95 cents/\$1,000 valuation since 1991, and there is no levy for counties to support rural operations.

Public transit officials encourage Iowans to let elected officials know that they support maintaining a safe and robust transit system through funding support. To learn more about information that has been shared with state and federal lawmakers visit

http://www.iapublictransit.com/literature_96178/2014_IPTA_Infographic.

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.