



## **Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization**

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**JOB ACCESS & REVERSE COMMUTE**

**AND**

**NEW FREEDOM PROGRAMS**

**QUESTIONS**

**AND ANSWERS**

**March 10, 2008**

<http://www.lincoln.ne.gov/city/plan/mpo/>

# **JOB ACCESS & REVERSE COMMUTE AND NEW FREEDOM PROGRAM**

## **2008 CALL FOR PROJECTS**

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### **Questions and Answers**

February 1, 2008, the **Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization** (MPO) issued a Call for Projects to award Federal Transit Administration Job Access & Reverse Commute and New Freedom Program funds to eligible entities and projects within the Lincoln metropolitan planning area (Lancaster County). The Lincoln MPO held a pre-proposal workshop on Thursday, February 14, 2008 for prospective project sponsors to learn more about the Call for Projects and to ask questions about the programs or prospective projects. Questions were taken at the workshop, as well as by phone and e-mail, through Friday, March 7, 2008.

### **Definitions**

*Capital Expense:* Capital funding is available at an 80/20 Federal/local share, and includes purchases such as: vehicles, service and support equipment, preventative maintenance, mobile radio units, bus stop signs, and capital support equipment (e.g., computer hardware, software, and other equipment that enhances operating efficiency). For more information, please refer to Chapter III, Section 4(A) of FTA Circular 9030.1C for more information.

*Individual with a Disability:* An individual who, because of illness, injury, age, congenital malfunction, or other incapacity or temporary or permanent disability (including an individual who is a wheelchair user or has semi-ambulatory capability), cannot use effectively, without special facilities, planning, or design, public transportation service or a public transportation facility. [FTA Circular 9045.1, Page I-3]

*Low-Income:* Refers to an individual whose family income is at or below 150 percent of the poverty line (as published annually by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) for a family of the size involved.

*Non-Profit Organization:* A corporation or association determined by the Secretary of the Treasury to be an organization described by 26 U.S.C. 501(c) which is exempt from taxation or one which has been determined under State law to be non-profit and for which the designated State agency has received documentation certifying the status of the non-profit organization. Documentation certifying the status of the non-profit organization must be submitted as part of the project submittal. [FTA Circular 9045.1, Page I-3 and FTA Circular 9050.1, Page I-3]

*Operating Expense:* Operating costs are considered those expenses necessary to operate,

maintain, and manage a transit system. Operating expenses usually include such costs as driver salaries, fuel, and items having a useful life of less than one (1) year. The term "operating expenses" is defined in the Glossary of Transit Terms for the National Transit Database as "all expenses associated with the operation of an individual mode by an operator. Operating expenses do not include reconciling items such as interest expenses and depreciation."

Generally, a grantee may call any eligible cost that is not a capital or planning cost an operating cost. For additional information, please refer to Appendix D of FTA Circular 9030.1C.

*Paratransit:* Comparable transportation service required by the American with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) for individuals with disabilities who are unable to use fixed route transportation systems.

*Planning Expense:* Activities relating to the planning and evaluation of transit projects. Eligible activities include, but are not limited to, studies relating to management, operations, capital requirements and economic feasibility, plans and specifications; evaluation of previously funded projects; and other similar or related activities prior to and in preparation for the acquisition or improved operation of transit systems, facilities, and equipment. Planning assistance is available at the 80/20 Federal/local share ratio. For more information, please refer to Chapter III, Section 3(A) of FTA Circular 9030.1C.

## **General**

### *1. Is it possible to extend the deadline?*

The Lincoln MPO is unable to extend the deadline for project submittals past the Friday, March 14, 2008 deadline. In order for the selected projects to be funded in early 2008, the specific projects must be included in two important federal financial documents: the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). If the deadline for project submittals were to be extended past the stated deadline, it would be very difficult and unlikely that we would be able to meet deadlines associated with adding the selected projects to the TIP and STIP. If these deadlines are not met, projects will have to be added to the TIP and STIP through the next update cycle, which would delay award of funds to late 2008 or 2009.

### *2. Where can I obtain data on number of welfare recipients, low-income persons, or persons with disabilities?*

The most common source of this data is the U.S. Census Bureau. A wealth of information can be found on their website at <http://factfinder.census.gov>.

### *3. What is earliest potential grant approvals? Most likely? Also receipt of funds? Can project start date on forms be flexible based on approval?*

The Lincoln MPO anticipates execution of contracts with successful entities in September

2008. The actual programming of project funds is effective October 1, 2008. Projects should be ready for implementation pending execution of the contract. Please refer to the schedule on Page 7 of the Call for Projects Instructions.

4. *What is the schedule for updating the coordinated plan, including updates for the latest regulations? How can we be apprised of and/or participate in that process?*

The Lincoln *Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan*, as adopted, satisfies the current regulations set forth by the Federal Transit Administration. Amendments or revisions to the Plan will be processed as needed to meet local needs and major plan updates will be undertaken as federal regulations are updated and guidance is available.

## **Project Submittal and Evaluation**

1. *May all electronic files be submitted in PDF format or Microsoft Office?*

Project proposals can be completed on-line with the new electronic format file but will need to be printed directly from this program or the proposal submittal form can be printed and then information typed or hand written on the form. The requirement for project proposal submittals to consist of one (1) original hard copy and six (6) copies in an 8 ½ x 11 inch format acceptable for photo copying. Proposals utilizing color graphics, maps or photographs will need to be made available for all six (6) copies for distribution to the *Project Selection Task Force*. Project proposals must be delivered to the Lincoln MPO office (Lincoln-Lancaster Planning Department) by the submission deadline. No projects will be accepted via e-mail.

2. *Looking at application 5 page limit for the Project Narrative of the six key topics listed underneath, does the limit apply to all of these questions?*

We are asking that the Project Narrative be limited to no more than five (5) pages. Supporting documentation, such as organizational capacity or qualified personnel may be submitted outside the three page limit through attachments and/or appendices. Project Narrative will need to cover the six (6) main topics outlined, and should be clear and concise. The questions provided under each main topic were provided as guidance. You are not expected to answer each question separately and/or individually, but rather to provide a summary that addresses those questions which are most relevant to your particular project. Exceptions to the response five page total can be made.

3. *If a project is a collaboration of several community partners, will it receive a higher score?*

The Lincoln MPO encourages projects that are collaborations between several community partners. However, that aspect alone will not automatically raise the score of a project. Scoring will focus on the Evaluation Criteria.

4. *Would additional local matching money (above the 20% or 50% requirement) result in a higher score for the project?*

The Lincoln MPO encourages projects that leverage multiple funding sources, as well as

projects that maximize the efficient use of transportation resources. However, the provision of additional local match above and beyond that required by the Federal Transit Administration will not raise the score of a project on its own. Scoring will focus on the Selection Criteria.

*5. Can scoring and weights for the selection criteria be provided?*

Please refer to pages 3 and 4 of the Application Instructions. Each project proposal will undergo a two step screening and evaluation process. The initial screening process will seek to confirm basic requirements such as agency, program, and project eligibility, as well as consistency with the *Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan*. Projects that make it past the initial screening process will be evaluated based on the Project Selection Criteria.

## **Project and Grant Requirements**

*1. What information will need to be provided in the monthly/quarterly status reports?*

Successful applicants will be required to submit Monthly Status Reports, Milestone Status Reports (MSR), Financial Status Reports (FSR), and other reports as required by the Lincoln MPO. The Monthly Status Report is intended to be a brief update (i.e., 1-2 paragraphs or bullets) that summarizes the progress made during the previous month, and serves to keep the Lincoln MPO staff aware of the schedule and related progress of each project. Quarterly status reports, including the Milestone Status Report and Financial Status Report, are required by the Federal Transit Administration.

*2. Is it correct that “subrecipients that receive only JARC or New Freedom are not subject to FTA’s Drug and Alcohol testing rules, but must comply with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration rule for employees who hold commercial drivers licenses.”*

Yes, the Federal Transit Administration requirements related to Drug and Alcohol Testing under the Job Access & Reverse Commute and New Freedom Program are found in Chapter VIII(12) and Chapter VIII(11) in their respective guidance documents. Please note that if your agency is receiving other Federal Transit Administration program funds, the Drug and Alcohol Testing requirement remains in effect.

*3. Do operational expenses include allocation of shared costs such as driver pay, dispatch salaries, administrative salaries, rent, utilities, taxes, insurance, professional fees, bank charges, telephone expense, equipment maintenance, depreciation, interest, office supplies, drug test, toll fees, (radio tower lease for driver communication), security, etc.? Are there any allocation rules or procedures?*

Under federally funded grant programs, recipients may incur costs of both a direct and indirect nature. A “cost allocation plan” is required if a grantee desires to charge indirect program-related costs to an FTA grant. For more information, please see Chapter 3.3 of FTA Circular 5010.1C - Grant Management Guidelines.

## **Funding Matching Requirements**

1. *Can in-kind donations be counted towards the local match portion of the cost of the project?*

Non-cash local match such as donations, volunteer services, or in-kind contributions are federally eligible to be counted toward the local match requirement. The use of such non-cash local match is associated with increased reporting, documentation, administration, and oversight. Therefore, The Lincoln MPO will consider requests for the use of non-cash local match on a case-by-case basis.

2. *Can money from other federal or state funding sources be used as local matching funds?*

Yes. However, the local share must be provided from sources other than Federal Department of Transportation Funds. Some examples of sources of local match which may be used for any or all of the local share include (but are not limited to): state or local appropriations; other non-DOT Federal funds; dedicated tax revenues; private donations; revenue from service contracts; and toll revenue credits. Please see the Job Access & Reverse Commute [FTA Circular 9050.1, Chapter III-12] and New Freedom [FTA Circular 9045.1, Chapter III-12] program guidance for more information on potential sources of local match.

3. *What documentation will be needed to prove that there are local matching funds available?*

No formal documentation is required as part of the project submittal. However, projects selected for funding will require a signed document stating that local matching funds are available prior to The Lincoln MPO executing a contract. The form will be provided as part of the contract.

4. *How many years can projects get funded through this Call for Projects?*

Projects can be submitted for one or two years of funding under this Call for Projects. As mentioned in the *Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan* and in the Application Instructions, Funding under these two programs is limited, and as such is intended to be used to pilot new and innovative solutions to address the unmet transportation needs of people with disabilities and individuals with limited incomes. The Lincoln MPO envisions funding under these two programs to serve as “seed money” and encourages projects that have the potential to become self-sustaining.

5. *Can projects submitted in this Call for Projects get more funding in the next Job Access & Reverse Commute and New Freedom Call for Projects?*

Eligible projects funded with Job Access & Reverse Commute or New Freedom funds may continue to be eligible for funding as long as the project(s) continue to be part of the coordinated plan. However, as mentioned above, The Lincoln MPO is looking for projects that have the potential to become self-sustaining. In addition, there is no guarantee that a given project will be funded through subsequent competitive calls for projects.

6. *Is there funding available for capital projects?*

As stated in Application Instructions, this Call For Projects is not accepting proposals for the financing of capital project expenses with Job Access and Reverse Commute funds or New Freedom funds. This excludes purchases such as: vehicles, service and support equipment, preventative maintenance, mobile radio units, bus stop signs, and capital support equipment (e.g., computer hardware, software, and other equipment that enhances operating efficiency).

*7. If we have a potential source of matching funds and something happens with that source after the application is submitted, will we have an opportunity to submit a replacement? What if a grant has already been approved? What happens if we cannot find substitute, both before and after grant is approved?*

The Lincoln MPO encourages project sponsors to identify and secure local match prior to submittal and execution of a contract with the Lincoln MPO. However, understanding the nature and difficulty in securing local match and the Lincoln MPO staff will work with project sponsors related to local match issues. If after substantial time and/or effort, a project has no source or potential source of local match, the federal funds will be de-obligated and reprogrammed in subsequent calls.

*8. For the budget match, in a voucher or similar program, if the eligible client pays for 50% of the regulated fare and the grant is used to subsidize the other 50%, is the rider's payment of 50% considered a match? Also where various third parties such as employers or social service or government agencies pick up the 50% instead of the actual rider?*

Per the Job Access & Reverse Commute [FTA Circular 9050.1, III-12(a)] and New Freedom [FTC Circular 9045.1, Chapter III-12(a)] program guidance, the Federal share of the eligible operating costs may not exceed 50 percent of the net operating costs of the activity. It is the responsibility of the applicant to demonstrate that the amount of funds being requested for operating assistance is no more than half the operating expenses after fare and other system-generated revenues are used to reduce the operating costs to a net operating project cost.

*9. Project Budget Sheet – is this for one year or the entire project? What are the to and from dates for the period? What about year two of a two year project, shall we apply now or apply later? Also, there is apparently two years of funding available it is unclear how these years dovetail into the project years we are to propose – are you combining to one year or spreading over two years? When will the next application be and what period of time will it be for?*

The project budget sheet should reflect all years of requested funding, from one up to the maximum of two years. The to and from dates will reflect the date the project begins, and will vary from submittal to submittal. The Lincoln MPO expects to execute contracts with successful applicants by September of 2008, so the start date can begin as soon as October 1, 2008 but could also start later, such as the spring of 2009. The fact that two years of JARC and New Freedom funding are available has no bearing on each applicant's budget sheet, and should be treated as a lump sum request. The next Call for Projects is anticipated to occur in 2009, and will include FY 2008 funding, and if available, FY 2009 funding.

*10. If a project fits under both JARC and New Freedom, how does the Lincoln MPO decide*

*from which area to fund the project?*

The Lincoln MPO will accept projects that fit under more than one program area. The projects will initially be screened under the requirements of each program to ensure the project is derived from the regional coordination plan and fit the basic program requirements. If the project is selected for funding, the Project Selection Task Force will fund the project under the program that most closely matches the needs and goals of the project, and maximizes the implementation of the coordination goals, and strategies identified in the *Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan*.

## **Job Access & Reverse Commute Program**

*1. Does a project have to be new (or expanded) to receive funding under the Job Access & Reverse Commute Program?*

No. However, the Lincoln MPO places an emphasis on projects intended to fill gaps or provide service where service is limited or none is currently available.

*2. Are enhancements to travel training an eligible expense?*

Yes, travel training is an eligible project type under Mobility Management [FTA Circular 9050.1, Chapter III-11®].

## **New Freedom Program**

*1. How does the New Freedom Program address the needs of seniors?*

The New Freedom program aims to provide additional tools to overcome existing barriers facing individuals with disabilities (see definition) seeking integration into the workforce and full participation in society. Funding may be used for projects that target seniors with mobility problems.

*2. Are planning projects eligible under New Freedom?*

Federal Transit Administration defines planning as: a holistic approach to evaluating state and regional transportation needs at the broadest level. This type of planning expense is not eligible under the New Freedom Program. However, project level planning, such as creating a plan for a project, project logistics and other project related administration efforts are eligible expenses.

*3. What is “new” service under New Freedom?*

For the purposes of the New Freedom Program, “new” service is any service or activity that was not operational on August 10, 2005, and did not have an identified funding source as of August 10, 2005, as evidenced by inclusion in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) or Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). In other words, if not for the New Freedom Program, the project would not be operational. [FTA Circular 9045.1, Chapter III-11]

*4. Do volunteer drivers need ADA accessible vehicles?*

If using personal vehicles, volunteer drivers would not be required to provide ADA accessible vehicles. However, FTA does note that any volunteer program supported by New Freedom funds must meet the requirements of both “new” and “beyond the ADA.”

*5. Is bringing a vehicle up to ADA requirements an eligible expense?*

No. Vehicle enhancements must go beyond the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act to be eligible for funding under the New Freedom Program.

*6. The New Freedom grant will be a reimbursement contract. Can the subcontractor or provider of transportation use a unit rate; i.e., cost per trip or cost per mile? Can the match likewise be based on the same unit rate?*

If documentation of the unit rate methodology is provided and approved by the Lincoln MPO, the grantee may use a unit rate (i.e., cost per trip or cost per mile). However, the grantee must request reimbursement on a line item basis using the appropriate match ratio for the net operating expenses.

## **Additional Resources**

Job Access & Reverse Commute Guidance

[http://www.fta.dot.gov/laws/circulars/leg\\_reg\\_6623.html](http://www.fta.dot.gov/laws/circulars/leg_reg_6623.html)

New Freedom Guidance

[http://www.fta.dot.gov/laws/circulars/leg\\_reg\\_6624.html](http://www.fta.dot.gov/laws/circulars/leg_reg_6624.html)

FTA Circular 5010.1C – Grant Management Guidelines

[http://www.fta.dot.gov/laws/circulars/leg\\_reg\\_4114.html](http://www.fta.dot.gov/laws/circulars/leg_reg_4114.html)

FTA Circular 9030.1 - Urbanized Area Formula Program

[http://www.fta.dot.gov/laws/circulars/leg\\_reg\\_4125.html](http://www.fta.dot.gov/laws/circulars/leg_reg_4125.html)

*FTA Circular C 9050.1 (May 1, 2007): The Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) Program Guidance and Application Instructions [pdf]*

[http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/FTA\\_C\\_9050.1\\_JARC.pdf](http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/FTA_C_9050.1_JARC.pdf)

*FTA Circular C 9045.1 (May 1, 2007): New Freedom Program Guidance and Application Instructions [pdf]*

[http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/FTA\\_C\\_9045.1\\_New\\_Freedom.pdf](http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/FTA_C_9045.1_New_Freedom.pdf)