

Ladders of Opportunity Initiative Grant Opportunity Summary

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) announced availability of approximately \$100 million in funding for a competitive discretionary bus capital program. The funds may be used to modernize and expand transit bus service specifically for the purpose of connecting disadvantaged and low-income individuals, veterans, seniors, youths, and others with local workforce training, employment centers, health care, and other vital services. Funding for FTA's Ladders of Opportunity Initiative is drawn from remaining discretionary grant funds originally available prior to the enactment of MAP-21. The FTA will cover up to 80 percent of the total project cost; a 20 percent local match is required. Program funds may be used to purchase, replace, or rehabilitate transit buses and vans as well as to modernize or construct bus facilities.

As part of this grant program, Metro Transit applied for \$3,872,000 in Federal funds to support three projects.

- Metro fixed route fleet expansion to increase service to employment centers. Metro has received requests from Epic Systems for additional service which isn't possible without additional buses. Also, current service is experiencing overloads and pass-ups in the busiest route corridors during peak periods (Ex Route 75 - Epic Service). Additional buses will also help Metro meet service needs elsewhere, including service to the new UW Hospital on Madison's east side. The capital funds for this project will add 3 buses to our current fleet of 214 in 2015 to meet expansion needs.

- Replacement of eight 40-foot buses that have exceeded their useful life to help sustain the level of quality service in the region. The regulation changes in MAP-21 and cutbacks in discretionary earmark funding, which Metro has used over the past 20 years for meeting basic replacement and expansion capital needs, has left a shortfall in federal funding for transit capital. The capital funds for this project will replace 8 buses in our fleet that have exceeded their useful life.

- Replacement of six vans to sustain the YWCA's YW Transit JobRide Program. This program provides safe reliable transportation to low-income workers who would otherwise not be able to get to work. In order to continue providing this service to the community, Ladders of Opportunity Initiative funds are needed to upgrade vehicles to maintain a functional, efficient fleet. The capital funds for this project will help replace the aging fleet over a 2-year period (3 regular vans in 2015 and 2 regular and 1 ADA accessible vans in 2016).

Metro, along with other transit systems in our state, historically used discretionary funds to help bridge the gap caused by the fact that Wisconsin receives about 1% of national transit capital funding, but has about 2% of the population in the United States. This new Federal Ladders of Opportunity Initiative grant opportunity is viewed by the City of Madison as a method to try to address our essential capital needs in the face of the elimination of discretionary earmarks.