

PROCUREMENT



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What to Expect When Procuring an ITS Solution

Are You Ready to Take the Plunge?

We know that diving into the procurement process can be overwhelming, so we've made a guide to help you navigate through all the stages.



Click Here
to see the
Procurement
Guide



Perfecting the Procurement Process



Click anywhere on the above image to view *DigitalCT* Editor Rich Sampson's reflections on this edition, focused on procurement.

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Helping You Navigate Procurement

Hopefully you've noticed that recently, we've significantly increased the amount of member engagement here at the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA). Much of that interaction revolves around a central question: *what would you like your Association to be doing on your behalf?*

This edition of *DigitalCT* is a direct response, because judging from what we routinely and regularly hear from CTAA members, procurement is a subject that most find frustrating. It's a full-length continuation of our ongoing [How To series](#) of practical resources to help transit managers do their work more effectively.

Not surprisingly, when FTA published an update and trends from its oversight office last summer, procurement findings accounted for 26.4 percent of all review findings (the next closest was ADA, at 12.3 percent). And of those procurement findings, the following four findings topped the list: lacking independent cost estimate, no verification that excluded parties are not participating, lacking requisite cost/price analysis, and no FTA clauses.

So we set out to work up solutions for our members and readers in the procurement area — and we do so by highlighting a variety of transit peers — all CTAA members — who share their expertise in managing procurement in a professional, organized manner. That's what you see here in these articles.

Tim Thomas — General Manager of the Mid-Ohio Valley Transit Authority in Parkersburg, W.Va. — explains how [establishing an internal approvals and evaluation process](#) can prevent procurement headaches later. Meanwhile, Lochner's Jason Green presents a case study on how the Utah DOT's [approach to procurement](#) involves direct input from subrecipients to make sure the process meets their needs as effectively as possible. Our [Procurement Roundtable](#) participants explain their struggles with the current process but also ideas for improvement. And Dick Doyle — a former FTA Re-

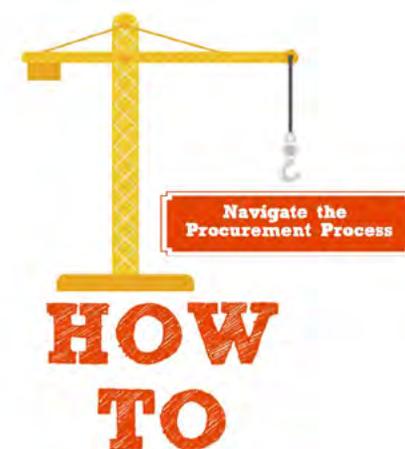
gional Administrator — encourages those undertaking procurement [communicate early and often](#) with their FTA contacts to ensure their policies, analysis and documentation is matching federal requirements. None of our experts describe the process as quick or easy, but one that can save time and money if done thoroughly.

Moreover, for those navigating the procurement process for the first time, our [Beginner's Guide to Buying a Vehicle](#) outlines the step-by-step elements of procuring rolling stock.

Still need more on procurement? Or perhaps you have a staff member who you'd like to become your agency's procurement expert. At this year's [Community Transportation EXPO in Detroit, Mich.](#), we'll offer several [workshop sessions](#) on Wednesday, June 14 and Thursday, June 15 that will cover the inside details of procurement: *Keeping Your House in Order* — avoiding common bureaucratic mistakes and achieving compliance; *Transit Asset and Fleet Management* — how procurement fits within the larger structure of managing assets and equipment; and *How to Build and Fund Facilities* — procurement within the context of buildings and facilities.

Like many issues, procurement doesn't have to be a bear. When handled in an organized, systematic way that follows a set process, it can be relatively painless. We hope this edition of *DigitalCT* helps you better handle procurement at your agency and please, let me know if you have any additional procurement questions or, even better, solutions.

Scott Bopen



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Maui Economic Opportunity, Inc. (MEO) is a private, non-profit Community Action Agency and provides a comprehensive scope of services to those in need throughout Maui County and across the state of Hawaii. MEO annually provides services to over 18,000 people touching more than 55,000 lives throughout Maui County and the State of Hawaii. The [Transportation Department](#) provides rides to the doctor, to work, to school, to adult day care, for necessary shopping, and for other needs with both standard and wheelchair lift-equipped vehicles. They're a charter, founding member of CTAA, with membership dating back to 1989 – ed.

DigitalCT: *Tell us some basics about your system.*

Johnson: MEO is a private, non-profit Community Action Agency, chartered on March 22, 1965 by federal mandate under provisions of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. The agency provides a comprehensive scope of services to those in need throughout Maui County and across the state of Hawaii.

The company operates two types of transportation services for the county of Maui.

MEMBER PROFILE

**Maui Economic Opportunity, Inc.
Wailuku, Hawaii**

Learn more about your colleagues and peers in the community and public transportation industry

**Harry Johnson
Transportation Director**

We operate the paratransit service as well as a mixture of subscription and demand response trips for the Human Service contract with the county. The human service contract is funded in its entirety by a county grant, while the paratransit is a 5-year contract bid. Our operation exists on three different islands which make up the county of Maui.

DigitalCT: *What type of people ride your system and where are they going?*

Johnson: Beside applicants for the paratransit service, we transport elderly, people with disabilities, headstart children and youth in the tri-isle county of Maui on accessible vehicles, as well as school buses and sedans.

DigitalCT: *What's innovative about your system?*

Johnson: Besides being the CTAA 1996 Community Transit System of the Year recipient, we have worked with various agencies within our community, as well as within our local government to leverage funding towards the provision of transportation services on all three islands.

DigitalCT: *What challenges are you facing?*

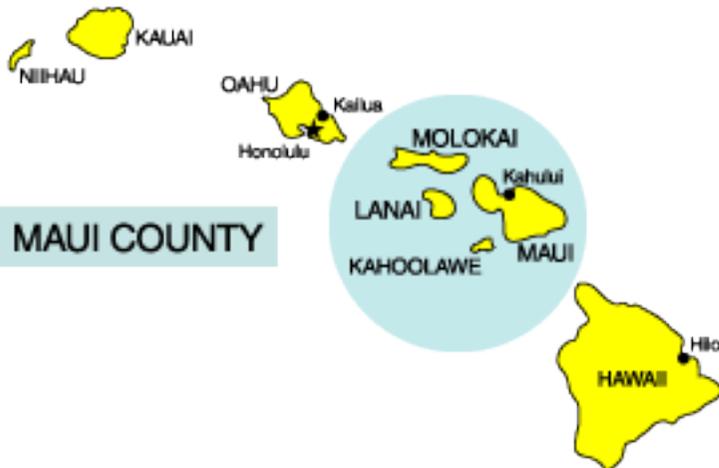
Johnson: Funding is always a challenge for our programs, especially when it comes to replacing vehicles for such an aging fleet.

DigitalCT: How can CTAA better help systems like yours?

Johnson: I believe the best option is to provide continuous communication of what CTAA does for any community to our partnering government agencies. Because we rely upon them for funding support, their awareness of CTAA's goals and vision could be something that they should be able to be a part of. Such future CTAA conferences should be attended by these officials so that they can see how we are affected by the decision makers in this industry. **CT**



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Analysis: An Early Look at Transit and the Trump Administration

By Scott Bogren, Rich Sampson & Chris Zeilinger

On March 16, President Trump released the initial details of his proposal for the federal Fiscal Year 2018 budget. [The proposal is available here](#) (PDF). A full budget proposal is expected from the Trump Administration in early May. As always, the President's budget proposal represents the starting point for discussion and negotiations with Congress. The annual budget only becomes law after approval from both houses of Congress and approval from the President. The next step over the coming months will be appropriations committees in both houses of Congress determining funding levels for all federal programs, followed by votes by the full House and Senate.

For these reasons, the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) encourages its members and mobility advocates to consider the context of the President's proposal, as [it indicates none of the formularized programs](#) administered by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) are identified for reductions, including those supporting urban (5307), specialized (5310) and rural (5311) transit. For more detail on the importance of federal transit invest-

ment, [see this data](#) culled from the National Transit Database.

Across the U.S. DOT, the proposal targets three rail and transit funding items for reduction or elimination:

- [FTA's Section 5309 New Starts program](#): no new Full Funding Grant Agreements (FFGAs) would be approved. This includes the Small Starts program, which supports many bus rapid transit (BRT) projects. Any projects currently approved for FFGAs would be unaffected.
- [DOT's competitive Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery \(TIGER\) grant program](#): a program developed by the Obama Administration to build on infrastructure investment began under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). This program is frequently cited by Republicans in Congress as a prime candidate for elimination.
- [Elimination of funding to support Amtrak's long-distance routes](#): When combined with the elimination of the [Essential Air Service \(EAS\) program](#), the proposal would be a dramatic reduction of intercity travel



options to many small and rural communities. Recalling recent history, nearly every budget proposed by President George W. Bush identified both programs for elimination, which were nonetheless maintained by Congress.

It's hard to determine any big-picture direction until the full budget proposal is released in May. Most concerning for mobility providers everywhere is this statement in the proposal in regards to New Starts: "future investments in new transit projects would be funded by localities that use them & benefit from these localized projects."

At the same time, more controversial transit investments were included - such as maintained funds for the embattled Washington, D.C., Metro network - and there was no

reduction in support for FTA administrative operations. The proposal says as much about the Administration's thinking through what wasn't included as through what was. May's full budget document is likely to be more revealing, and additional reductions or eliminations are possible at that time.

In terms of political appointments at U.S. DOT under President Trump, only Secretary Elaine Chao has been confirmed by the U.S. Senate, with former U.S. DOT General Counsel Jeffrey A. Rosen under President George W. Bush having been [nominated for Deputy Secretary](#). The President has not yet announced a nomination for FTA Administrator.

Secretary Chao – in a [questionnaire submitted to the Senate](#) prior to her confirmation – identified modal and geographic parity along with reducing regulatory burdens as top priorities for her leadership at DOT.

In late January, a [potential list of infrastructure projects](#) that may be proposed by the Trump Administration was widely leaked to media sources. Some projects are already under development or construction. The total proposed investment amount could total \$137.5 billion, of which \$60.2 billion could be targeted for rail projects. Most planned projects include some level of private investment, often through public-private partnerships. This list of projects may indicate the emphasis

of President Trump's infrastructure plan will be on big-ticket items, even if the exact list of project changes.

In total, there are 16 projects involving waterways and water access, 12 highway and bridge projects, 11 involving passenger and freight rail, six improving power generation and distribution, four airport and air traffic control investments and one pipeline.

It's important to note that these projects are yet unconfirmed by the Trump Administration, and speculation varies wildly on the direction of federal transportation legislation and investment. No firm timetable has emerged in Congress for tackling an infrastructure measure.

In early January, the Senate Democrats unveiled an [extensive transportation and infrastructure proposal](#), with House Transportation and Infrastructure Ranking Member Peter DeFazio in turn introducing the [Investing in America: A Penny for Progress Act](#) on March 22 that would raise the federal gas tax by approximately \$0.01 per year. CTAA has expressed its support for this bill.

CTAA and its members have reiterated – in numerous meetings with FTA leadership and Congressional committee and member staff – the importance of honoring current levels of transit investment authorized by [the FAST Act](#) – approved in 2015 with overwhelmingly bipartisan support. As well,

we've emphasized the additional need for bus capital funding in any infrastructure legislation (see our [2017 Legislative Agenda](#) (PDF) for more).

Meanwhile, the President's initial budget-proposal indicates the Administration's [overarching objective of reducing regulatory burdens](#). As we note in our Legislative Agenda, crafting workable solutions to burdensome transit regulations would have the same impact as new investment for many mobility providers, by freeing up administrative resources spent on regulatory procedure to improve service, reduce fares or upgrade vehicles and technology. Stay tuned, as we'll be sharing our members' input on improving the regulatory environment via our Rapid Response initiative.

As always, look to CTAA's Fast Mail and Executive Director [Scott Bogren's Twitter feed](#) for the latest developments on federal policy and legislation. **CT**



Priorities & Opportunities to Improve American Communities

By Scott Bogren & Rich Sampson

In early January, CTAA produced and disseminated a document [outlining the Association's 2017 Legislative Agenda](#). This agenda was developed after significant engagement with [CTAA members](#) through our member forum phone calls, Rapid Response survey team, regional State and Tribal Delegate calls and in-person discussions at state and regional transit meetings.

CTAA's Board of Directors, as well, played a key role with the founding and meeting of a Legislative Committee. Board Members on this committee helped craft this agenda.

Here, we provide additional background and discussion points around each of the six key objectives in CTAA's 2017 legislative agenda: honoring the FAST Act; infrastructure equals dedicated bus capital; remove wasteful regulations; access to health care is vital; reward high performers through the STIC program; reconnecting rural America; and assuring independence for all.



Honor the FAST Act

Congress and the Trump Administration should honor the funding levels and provisions contained in 2015's [FAST Act](#) law through its entire reauthorization cycle – ending in 2020.

Approved by strong bipartisan consensus in Congress, the FAST Act delivers predictable, if not always spectacular – growth across all federal transit investment programs. This includes crucial restoration of competitive, dedicated bus capital investment that was slashed in the MAP-21 Act in 2012. By raising the floor of dedicated bus capital funding guaranteed to each state and re-establishing competitive programs for buses and facilities – as well as a separate pool for low- or no-emission vehicles – the FAST Act delivers essential bus capital investment to replace aging vehicles and maintain a state of good repair across the transit industry.

Additionally, the federal programs supporting urban, rural and specialized transportation services all grow to record levels during the law's five-year authorization period. These essential programs cover many of the capital and/or operating costs of maintaining transit service, and are even more acutely needed by rural and specialized operators, which depend more heavily on federal investment than large urban areas.

It is essential that Congressional appropriators fund all transit programs at the levels authorized for the FAST Act. Anything less will have dire consequences to America's public transit network. It is equally important that the Trump Administration work with Congressional leaders to ensure timely budget agreements so that needed investment flows uninterrupted to local communities.



Infrastructure = Dedicated Capital for Buses & Vehicles

Capital for buses and vehicles impacts every rural, small-city and large-urban transit operation across the country, thus providing the widest potential impact of transit-based infrastructure spending. CTAA strongly supports a minimum of \$2.85 billion set aside in any infrastructure package to replace aging buses around the nation (see details on our [sign-on letter with The Bus Coalition](#) at right). The 14,000 vehicles this funding will purchase will increase American manufacturing jobs as well as take thousands of Americans to work everyday. The result of that production would be the creation of over 100,000 jobs as parts are manufactured, vehicles assembled and drivers and mechanics hired.

The majority of transit trips each day are made on a bus, in large cities, small-urban areas and rural communities. Buses carry riders to jobs, health care, education, community services, local businesses, communities of faith and numerous other facets of daily life.

To that end, more than 285 members of CTAA and [The Bus Coalition](#) signed-on to a letter to President Trump and Congressional leaders advocating for additional investment in bus capital in any federal infrastructure measure. This investment would supplement existing funding through the FAST Act that helps replace aging buses but is not intended to expand service through additional frequency, extended routes and lengthened hours of service. Replacing older, aging vehicles improves safety and reduces operating and maintenance costs.

Due to the bus manufacturing industry's fine-tuned assembly lines, these jobs would become available almost immediately, with buses rolling off the line and into service not long after. Few infrastructure investments can deliver the widespread impact of an immediate infusion of economic development activity as buses. That economic return is magnified as more people are able to access employment, affordably reach medical care and support businesses of all kinds.



Excerpts from Sign-On Letter to President Trump

"Specifically, we support providing \$2.85 billion in additional investment to the FTA Bus and Bus Facility program to help transit systems across the country reach a state of good repair and operate a safe, affordable and efficient bus fleet. This funding request would simply fill the gap in funds diverted from the bus program between 2013- 2020.

Modernizing our nation's transit fleet with federal support will quickly create thousands of good paying manufacturing jobs in the United States, increase access to work and commercial centers and help address the backlog of aging bus fleets and facilities. We estimate this modest level of investment would allow for the purchase of over 14,000 domestically manufactured buses and create over 100,000 jobs across the country. Investing in bus replacement programs can quickly boost economic activity. Across the country, bus purchase orders are sitting on the shelf and, if funds were available, orders could be processed in a matter of days, not months or years."



Remove Wasteful Regulations

Small city, rural and specialized transit operators do not carry the risk of big city rail. Safety is critical, and regulations must not be one-size-fits-all. Small operators need relief to do their important jobs on small budgets, not more regulation where costs far outweigh benefits.

Indeed, most [regulations](#) are well-intentioned as mandated by Congress and state legislatures seeking to be good stewards of public investment and protect the peoples' interests and safety. Meanwhile, under-funded and over-worked agencies like FTA and state departments of transportation do their best to implement regulations that apply to our large and diverse industry.

Nonetheless, the work of complying with many and varied regulations represents a real and concerning bureaucratic entanglement for [CTAA members](#). With regulations spanning safety and asset management to data collection and procurement, these demands stretch the administrative and budgetary capacity of transit systems nationwide. The impact is compounded when different regulations impose duplicative work and the sum of that work is always punitive but never constructive reviews. Most concerning is that the smaller the agency, the greater percentage of its administrative workload is tied to regulatory compliance.

Rather than chronicle a list of regulatory grievances, CTAA and its members are focused on crafting solutions to help FTA and other agencies more intentionally match regulations to the realities of different strata of agencies and organizations. In the coming weeks, we'll share our members' input via our Rapid Response initiative on specific changes and improvements to the regulatory process. By direct engagement with all subsets of the transit industry, these regulations can achieve their intended goals of ensuring safety, maximizing the value of public investment and demonstrating the transformative outcomes that community and public transit produce every day.

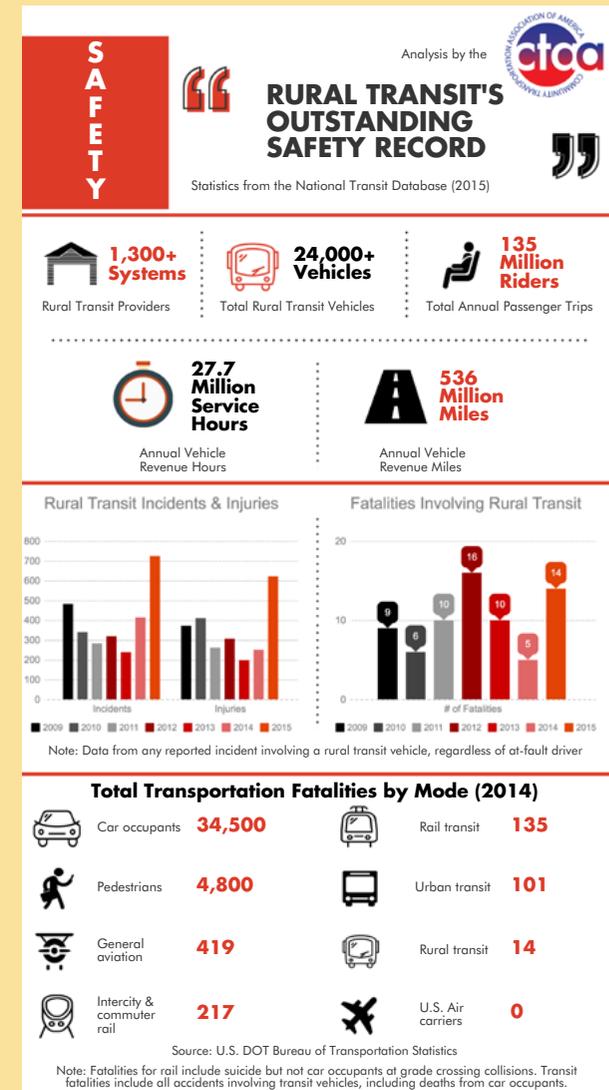
About Safety...

Transit attracts riders based on its ability to transport them safely, efficiently and reliably. Community and public transportation providers run on their safety record, not away from it.

Aside from commercial air travel, transit is the safest way to move people. When focusing on non-rail transit provided by buses and smaller vehicles, that record is even more impressive. The safety data for rural transit providers, in particular, is eye-popping: in 2015, while 1,300 systems provided 135 million trips on more than 24,000 vehicles over 536 million miles and 27.7 million hours of service, there were only 14 total fatalities and a little over 700 incidents and 600 injuries, regardless of the driver at fault.

Based on current trends, the average rural transit provider can expect to experience an incident with an injury once every three years and a fatality once every 93 years. Many rural systems have never experienced a fatality. CTAA estimates current federal safety regulations cost \$25,000 per year or \$95,000 per incident to achieve compliance. The bottom line is rural transit providers could spend unlimited dollars complying with federal safety regulations and not expect any measurable decrease in incidents, injuries or fatalities.

CTAA and its members believe [safety regulations](#) should reflect the exemplary job nearly all community and public transportation providers are doing in protecting their riders and employees. Agencies and organizations should not need to hire additional staff to achieve compliance. Documentation of safety procedures and data should be scaled to the size of the organization and collected in concert with other required statistics, such as those provided to the National Transit Database. Additionally, shifting regulatory burdens to state departments of transportation does not lessen the weight of regulations targeted for large metropolitan rail systems but still applied to any small urban, rural, tribal or specialized provider.



Click on the image above to download our full rural transit safety infographic



Access to Health Care is Vital

Effective health care requires access. Whatever path Congress and the Trump Administration take in addressing repeal or replacement of the Affordable Care Act must include transportation because it saves resources by reducing emergency room visits and readmissions, and assuring the success of outpatient-based care, often with patients managing chronic conditions.

The United States leads the world in cutting-edge medical treatment, research, medications and practices – through the dedication, care and expertise of doctors, nurses, researchers and others – that saves and extends lives. Previously life-threatening conditions like HIV-AIDS, renal failure and many forms of cancer have become treatable through chronic care, such as dialysis and chemotherapy.

At the same time, the way our nation pays for and provides access to health care is among the most baffling in the world. There are many intelligent and practical ways to improve these structures, but all of them require transportation. After access to employment, travel to provide or receive healthcare is the most common purpose of transit riders in communities of all sizes.

Whether it's behavioral health, dialysis, chemotherapy, physical therapy or just a routine doctor's appointment, [access to health care](#) is vital to the health care mission and saves medical providers and the tax payers millions of dollars every year in missed appointments, emergency room readmissions and unnecessary ambulance trips. The Trump Administration and Congress signal an opportunity for an engaged, strategic approach to ensure these vital transportation programs continue to help patients overcome health care barriers.

The demographic and health care provision trends that have dramatically escalated the demand for NEMT trips across the US in the past decade will, no doubt, continue. Health care policy needs to reflect this reality and continue to both value — and invest in — these vital trips.

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Impressions from 2016 SUN Conference Attendees

"This event was especially valuable, most notably the roundtable networking discussions. It was a chance to feel collegial and to get ideas on problem-solving."

Every element was great! Loved the time allowed for networking during the meeting. Days were full but not too crammed that you couldn't find time to talk with people."

The topics during the whole conference were excellent. These are the type of training sessions I like."



Reward High Performers

CTAA and its small urban network seek to increase the most outcome-based federal transit program: [Small Transit Intensive Cities](#) (STIC). This increase doesn't cost any additional investment and rewards those small urban operators that are delivering the most service.

The STIC program, which was authorized in 2005 in SAFETEA-LU, rewards high transit performance by providing funds to small-urban transit providers (serving populations between 50,000 and 200,000) based on meeting one of six measurable performance criteria. These criteria are established annually by the average service levels of larger public transit agencies. Simply put, a small-urban transit agency, whenever it exceeds the average service level of a large transit agency, is rewarded with additional federal transit investment. This additional funding has allowed these smaller transit systems to fund a variety of projects that have increased the efficiency and capacity of public transportation nationwide.

At the STIC program's outset, an FTA study identified 77 smaller urbanized areas that met the service based eligibility criteria. In 2017, 124 communities received STIC funding. By all FTA measures of transit intensity, the STIC program has been very successful. However, it has been a victim of its own success, as more communities qualify for the program, annual allocations for eligible transit agencies decrease.

The recently enacted FAST law will increase the STIC set-aside from 1.5 to 2 percent in FY 2019. While we believe this is critical to the program's continued success and are excited about this modest increase, an increase to 3 percent will provide much-needed increased funding for these successful transit providers. STIC funds will mean greater service frequency, additional service and/or more buses for these high-performing systems.

Through the work of CTAA members, U.S. Representatives Davis (IL), Etsy (CT), Palazzo (MS) and Panetta (CA) introduced H.R. 1501 – the [Small Community Transit Improvement Act](#) – on March 13 to immediately increase the STIC set-aside to 3 percent. We thank them for their leadership on this crucial piece of legislation.

CTAA's small urban members will discuss STIC and other key policy topics at our 3rd annual [small urban transit conference](#) this August in Asheville, N.C. (see left).



Reconnecting Rural America

CTAA and its members support the development of a new, innovation-driven public-private [rural and tribal transportation](#) initiative to reconnect increasingly isolated rural Americans with jobs, education, health care and more by incentivizing new technologies, partnerships and service methodologies.

Much of the innovation, research and policy focus on the future of urban and metropolitan areas, often with little regard for the trajectory of rural communities. From [emerging mobility concepts](#) such as transportation network companies (TNCs) like Uber and Lyft to autonomous vehicles and real-time information-sharing, nearly every example focuses on cities, and usually the largest ones.

And while population trends suggest more people are living in urban areas than ever before, those same population shifts makes living in rural America more difficult and costly, but with needs that are just as urgent.

CTAA believes an initiative that seeks out rural communities as equal participants in our nation's mobility future. Through pilot programs, demonstration grants, public-private partnerships and other tools, we can establish the models and strategies to ensure the future of rural transportation.

Need Help Improving or Launching Rural or Tribal Transit Service?

CTAA Can Help



In 1988, USDA created the Rural Passenger Transportation Technical Assistance Program (RPTTAP). Administered by CTAA, the RPTTAP provides technical assistance for small communities of less than 50,000 people. The focus of the program is economic development: helping small and emerging businesses and stimulating economic development through new and improved public transportation. A similar program helps Native American tribes improve their mobility options.

Click on the logo above for additional details. Short-term assistance is available year-round, while long-term projects are selected annually.



Assure Independence for All

Specialized mobility options help millions of Americans – especially older adults and people with disabilities – live independently in their own homes and off costly government programs.

Many specialized mobility providers are independent non-profits, with innovation, efficiency and customer service imprinted in their DNA. They take risks, partner with like-minded companies and organizations and adapt to the marketplace. All this is part of a mission to serve those most in need of mobility options. With our specialized provider members, CTAA has worked to model [inclusive planning practices](#) in partnership with the Administration for Community Living and mobility management strategies through the [National Center for Mobility Management](#).

Several federal programs – including those under the auspices of FTA and the Department of Health & Human Services – support these flexible and responsive services. These investment streams must be protected at levels authorized by Congress and increased when possible.

Additionally, incentives can de-risk innovation and encourage partnerships to leverage private funds, grants can help introduce new technologies and regulatory reform can make business less burdensome. All these resources can provide more and better service at the same – or perhaps even lower – cost.

CT



A Beginner's Guide to Buying a Vehicle

By Chris Zeilinger

Purchasing a new vehicle is an exciting and significant accomplishment for any transit manager. However, the most seasoned veterans will note that the process for procuring a new bus, van or smaller vehicle is a multi-faceted effort, occasionally spanning months and years.

Based on input from transit leaders and procurement officers across the industry, a series of steps and decisions is necessary to take a vehicle or fleet purchase from concept to reality.

This beginner's guide seeks to outline the various questions that need answers in a systemic, logical manner. In the coming months, we'll improve this resource by compiling a collection of samples, guidelines and peer resources as a one-stop shop for procurement novices. Procurement veterans: if you have a great template or sample RFP that you could share as an example, please send those to cteditor@ctaa.org.

Of course, no vehicle purchase is the same, and be sure to follow the specific requirements based on the funding program you're utilizing or state(s) in which your services operate. Keep notes as you go along that you can reference next time. And feel free to contact us at CTAA any time you're feeling overwhelmed or something just doesn't make sense. We'll help guide you through or put you in touch with your peers that have done this before.

Step 1: Determine Your Needs

Are you replacing old equipment with like-kind vehicles?

Are you expanding service and/or trying to accommodate larger numbers of passengers on the bus?

Are you considering smaller or more flexible vehicles?

Do you know the size, configuration, seating capacity you need?

How many wheelchair securement locations or other ADA-required accessibility features do you need?

Will the equipment be used in fixed-route service, demand-response service, and/or some other mode(s)?

Does your service area's climate, terrain, infrastructure, etc., influence your vehicle needs?

Are there other special items of equipment or design features you need in this vehicle?

Are you trying to acquire a vehicle for which the operator will not need to hold a Commercial Driver's License (CDL)?

Step 2: Identify the Purchaser & Procurement Method

Is your transit agency buying this vehicle?

Are you seeking to acquire this vehicle through a state-managed procurement?

Are you seeking to "piggyback" this vehicle procurement as part of a multi-agency cooperative procurement?

Are you looking to have a donor or other third party in your community buy the vehicle and donate to your transit program?

SEND US YOUR EXAMPLES



cteditor@ctaa.org

Step 3: Develop a Procurement Timeline

When does the vehicle need to enter service?

Working backward from that date, how much time do likely sources of your vehicle require for constructing the vehicle and delivering it to your location?

How much time is required for developing specifications and solicitation documents, seeking bids or proposals, and entering into a contract with your chosen supplier?

Are you looking to have a donor or other third party in your community buy the vehicle and donate to your transit program?

Step 4: Develop Specifications

Based on the needs you've identified, plus conditions or features that may be required by your funding sources, and incorporating necessary technical and performance details, compile the necessary specifications.

You haven't done this before? A good strategy is to find someone in your state who successfully acquired vehicles similar to what you're seeking, and see if you can borrow language from their specifications.

Step 5: Determine Approximate Cost and Identify Funders

What's the approximate cost of the vehicle(s) you're seeking?

Do you have funding lined up to cover these costs, plus a bit more, in case costs are greater than you're expecting?

What funding is involved, and what special conditions come along with your funding. For example, FTA funds carry a Buy America requirement for procurements over \$150,000, FTA requires pre-award and post-delivery audits of all rolling stock acquired with FTA assistance, vehicles acquired with FTA assistance must be of bus models that have passed the tests at FTA's Altoona (Pa.) Bus Research and Testing Center, other federal funding sources may have unique requirements, your state may have its own requirements that apply to vehicle procurements, and your agency may have your own specific requirements that apply to these procurements?

Step 6: Identify Likely Vendors

Where do entities in your state tend to get vehicles similar to yours? If you don't know, ask your peers.

Do the various manufacturers of vehicles such as you're seeking have dealers or distribution networks that are known to you?

Does your state have any recommendations or requirements concerning possible vendors?

If you're acquiring the vehicle with federal funds, can you be sure you're not including any debarred or suspended contractors in your list of likely vendors?

Do you have a way of reaching out to other qualified vendors for the vehicle(s) you're seeking to acquire?

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cteditor@ctaa.org

**Step 7:
Develop Your
Solicitation
Document**

Based on what you've determined in the preceding steps, plus your standard procedures for this sort of procurement, assemble an Invitation for Bids, Request for Proposals, or whatever solicitation document is appropriate for your agency and this procurement.

You haven't written this kind of IFB/RFP before? If so, this is another instance where you may want to reach out to others in your state who've successfully carried out such solicitations, and see if you can learn from the language of their solicitation documents.

**Step 8:
Conduct Solicitation &
Carry Out Procurement**

Following your already established procurement procedures, guided as necessary by the dictates of your state or other funders, solicit competitive bids or proposals for your vehicle, make a selection (using the criteria set forth in your solicitation document), and enter into a contract with the selected vendor.

Do you have contract language suitable for this procurement? If not, here's yet another instance where you may want to learn from the documents and experiences of colleagues within your state who have had successful vehicle procurements.

**Step 9:
Oversee
Production & Accept
Delivery**

Are you procuring 10 or more vehicles with FTA assistance? If so, you'll be required to have an on-site presence when the vehicles are being assembled (this typically is done through the use of contracted inspectors). Even if not, some regular communication with your vendor or their suppliers is useful, so that you can be assured of timely and acceptable delivery.

When the vehicle is delivered, you are responsible for assuring that it was indeed assembled according to your specifications, and (if FTA funds are involved) you will need to be sure you've got the applicable manufacturer's certifications around a variety of FTA-specific requirements.

Do you have all the records you may need in case post-delivery work or corrective actions are needed while the vehicle and its components are under warranty?

Once you've satisfied all these steps, plus whatever is required in your state (or by your funders) for registering, tagging and insuring the vehicle, you should be able to place it into service.

**SEND US
YOUR EXAMPLES**



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Procurement: Support, Process & Ethics

By Tim Thomas

As I look over 26 years of transit experience in the roles of paratransit manager for a small social service agency, procurement officer for the [West Virginia Division of Public Transit](#) and now General Manager of a small-urban transit system, the [Mid-Ohio Valley Transit Authority](#) (MOVTA, a CTAA member), all of these roles seem to involve the procurement process. When you speak of procurement, it is not the most exciting of topics, but it is one of the most important which can make or break the trust of your local citizens and communities that you serve.

To be successful in the procurement area, one must always have the support of your Board of Directors, upper management and staff. All must understand and be willing to follow the rules and regulations set forth. Without their support, all policies and procedures that are enforced would be void. Over the past 26 years, I have always had the support and willingness from top to bottom when it comes to procurement. I, as well as my staff here at MOVTA, highly value our procurement procedures and policies, as well as our Board of Directors. Having strong policies in place, training of staff on rules and regulations, and em-

phasizing the importance of full and open competition, the general public, our Board of Directors, and our funding sources can continue to have confidence in how MOVTA conducts business.

A second element is you must have planning to be successful. Each year when we develop our budget, I seek the input of all staff and we make sure that there is a clear understanding of the budget process when it comes to our procurement needs. This process allows us to forecast future procurement needs. After your budget is set and approved, a key element is to monitor your procurement plan to make sure that you are within your budget and that your targets will be met. A truly successful procurement begins with a strategic plan and a collaborative effort between procurement staff and stakeholders.

As a small transit system, we don't have the staff or technology as other systems may have, so organization is a major part of the planning process. Each staff member must understand and follow the steps each time. To ensure that everyone follows the procurement process, each staff member at MOVTA is required to take the NTI procurement training and attend other training sessions as directed by me as the General Manager. By employing knowledgeable



Tim Thomas (2nd from right) and colleagues from MOVTA receive the Gold Award for Safety for bus systems with fewer than four million passenger trips annually from the American Public Transportation Association in 2014.

staff that understands the process, this creates a valuable resource for our transit system.

Beyond the basic standards of procurement, when I became the General Manager of MOVTA, I implemented an evaluation process on all procurements. The process is detailed and requires at least three signatures on all procurements prior to purchasing any item or goods. Each procurement must follow all policies and procedures and each file must have a history along with a checklist on how we came to procure such items. All bidding documents are reviewed by a procurement committee prior to solicit-



ing bids and prior to finalizing any awards. Conducting a thorough and competitive process ensures that taxpayer dollars are spent wisely, which, in our policies and procedures process, are the keys to a successful procurement operation. When followed, this gives our communities the best quality for the best price and in the end, a trust that we are conducting business within our prescribed rules.

The final element is to be organized and be ethical in order to follow the plan that is developed. This is a critical component for success. Without organization and structure, the procurement process cannot be followed. Organization starts at the top and rolls down to the bottom. Any successful business is well organized with knowledgeable staff, a willingness to compete the task at hand, and to follow a process to achieve

the goals of a successful business. Like the old saying, “you must have your ducks in a row.” All aspects of procurement must be organized to be successful. Since 2000, while working at the State of West Virginia and now at MOVTA in the area of procurement, I am proud to say, I have never incurred a triennial review or state management review finding. In 2017, MOVTA is looking for a third-straight triennial review without a finding and I honestly believe, the elements mentioned above and with a staff who is willing to follow the rules and regulations set forth, is the reason why MOVTA continues to excel in the area of procurement. A true team does not have one successful person, but many. I cannot take sole credit for the accomplishments of the last 26 years of procurement without a strong dedication from a board, previous upper management and a staff who is willing to

make sure that we are all successful.

Ask yourself, “did you, or did you not, do everything possible in your job today to make sure you did your best to enhance and provide the most favorable outcome to benefit your company and your communities?” This is a strong statement. Ethics is a strong principle to live by daily.

Everyone has to live and die by rules, policies, and procedures in the business world. Ethics is a higher standard to live by and knowing that, at the end of the day, you ethically did the best you could. In our type of job, we are held to a higher standard, in the eyes of many. Daily we spend others money: people buy our service, pay taxes, and ride our buses. People expect that we supply a high standard of service and ethics since they are paying for this service to sup-

port our transit system.

Policies, rules and decisions (change) may not be viewed favorably, and may not be liked by others, but if they are ethical, then it is right, regardless of the views of an individual. Ethical standards must be followed by all employees. Each person must do their job. When decisions are made, input must be sought from all sources and be part of the decision-making process. Decision makers must be together and problems must be taken care of ethically.

Lastly, my final words are to document, document, and document some more. Make sure that your system files are complete by reviewing them regularly. Have a checklist to follow from your funding sources, make sure that your staff review any new regulations and follow any best practices that are available to your system. You must have a complete process, policy driven and most of all a mind-set and dedication to succeed.

Tim Thomas is the General Manager of the Mid-Ohio Valley Transit Authority in Parkersburg, W.V. MOVTA operates 22 vehicles on its EasyRider fixed-route network and paratransit services. It carries more than 515,000 annual riders. CT



The poster features a yellow background with a green banner across the middle. At the top, there is a logo for the National Volunteer Transportation Center, which includes a stylized green and blue arch over the text "NATIONAL VOLUNTEER TRANSPORTATION CENTER". Below the banner, there is a white box containing text. At the bottom, there is a Twitter logo and the text "LET'S TRAVEL!" with a green arrow pointing right. Below that, there is a URL: "FIND OUT MORE AT HTTP://NATIONALVOLUNTEERTRANSPORTATIONCENTER.ORG".

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER TRANSPORTATION CENTER

CONNECTING PEOPLE

The Center was created in 2014 response to the outpouring of interest in volunteerism related to the delivery of transportation services to many population groups including children, work force participants and older adults. Each of the founders have extensive experience in studying, supporting, and delivering volunteer transportation and are aware of the positive experience of those who volunteer to provide services as well as the many benefits accorded to those who receive the services.

The founders are: Community Transportation Association of Washington, D.C.; the Beverly Foundation of Albuquerque, N.M.; Ride Connection of Portland, Ore.; CIMA Volunteers Insurance of Woodbridge, Va.; and AlterNetWays of San Francisco, Calif.

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Working with the Utah DOT: A Procurement Case Study

By Jason Green, AICP

Laughter and tears are both responses to frustration [and exhaustion]. I myself prefer to laugh, since there is less cleaning up to do afterward.

-Kurt Vonnegut

Like life, working with FTA regulations can often times be teeming with frustration. I dare say, the cause of many of these frustrations are the result of the procurement process. Those of us fortunate enough to work in the procurement arena have experienced a myriad of frustration working for months on a bus specification, trying to understand DBE requirements (which is still befuddling to me), documenting Buy America, or maintaining micro-purchase documentation,

It should be noted that FTA and its partners no doubt recognize this issue and have produced a number of useful tools to assist us through the process.

While frustrations exist for those of us working as grantees or direct recipients, they are indeed multiplied for subrecipients, including small fixed-route and



demand-response providers. Although manuals, trainings and user-friendly tools can help, time, practice, context, and staff limitations are the tip of the issues for subrecipients. But at the end of the day, it is the grantee that is responsible for compliance. Although this symbiotic relationship can oftentimes make that little vein on the side of your head pulsate, we must remember subrecipients are our partners and, most importantly, our customers. In addition, it is easy to forget most of these entities are not in the business of transportation, but are

required to provide assistance to administer their true service mission. It is true that funding and staff limitations exist; however, grantees should do everything possible to ensure customer satisfaction, which inevitably leads to grantee peace-of-mind and mythical gold stars during FTA reviews.

The Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) believes in this approach, which has led to deeper subrecipient relationships and exemplary state management reviews (SMRs). From a procurement perspective,

CT FAST MAIL



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UDOT views subrecipients as authorized or unauthorized. Those considered authorized, include the larger providers or those entities that have an established procurement process. In these cases, UDOT may or may not need to develop specifications, but will be involved in all stages of the procurement process. Authorized agencies are required to notify UDOT of upcoming procurements, work with agency staff to ensure all necessary pre-procurement documentation is approved (i.e. environmental approval) develop DBE goals (if necessary) and have UDOT review all procurement documents prior to public release. UDOT is then notified prior to award to ensure the chosen entity is not debarred or suspended; has provided all necessary documentation and certifications; and has clearly documented good faith efforts if a DBE goal is not to be met. If the procurement is for rolling stock, all pre- and post-delivery certifications are reviewed, including Buy America (including sub-components), and pre- and post-delivery inspections. While UDOT is not leading the effort, it is included in multiple stages to ensure a successful and compliant procurement is documented.

The majority of UDOT subrecipients are unauthorized entities, or those that choose to have UDOT lead the procurement effort. While the process is similar to the authorized, utilizing the DOT leverages the knowledge and weight of the agency, including: program management, procurement professionals, and legal review (if necessary) with each procurement process.

Statewide, rolling stock is the largest need. To ensure compliance, efficiency and competitive pricing, UDOT procures a five-year rolling stock contract for 22-, 25-, and 29-foot ADA-compliant cutaway buses. Specifications are informed by a comprehensive subrecipient survey to understand the needs of providers and includes a menu of options to ensure that an agency is maximizing its needs and limited match dollars. Options include several seat configurations, seat materials, colors, luggage racks, and bike racks – to name a few. Although the process may lead to additional upfront work (primarily spec development) it allows subrecipients to focus on service while UDOT focuses on a compliant procurement process,



The Utah Transit Authority (UTA) – the state’s largest transit provider – operates hundreds of vehicles that are the result of UDOT’s procurement process.

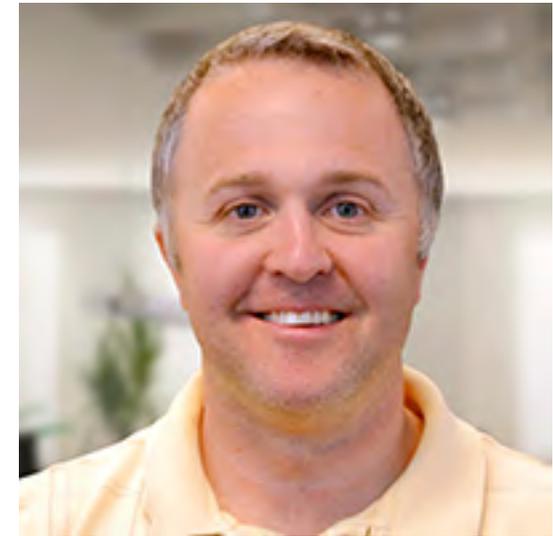
thereby saving time for all in the long run. Technology and innovative ADA accessible vehicle design is now allowing agencies to potentially procure smaller, more efficient and easier to drive vans. While UDOT has procured these vehicles on an individual basis, it will soon be working on specifications to address the growing interest in these vehicles.

UDOT is not perfect and the ever-shifting demands of program management keep staff on their toes; however, UDOT believes customer service is vital to its success. In addition to being involved to varying degrees with procurement efforts statewide, UDOT has created a number of resources

to inform subrecipients of procurement requirements and continues to offer state-wide trainings on varying policies and procedures. While the procurement process is oftentimes where grantees interface with its subrecipients, UDOT staff works regularly with its subrecipients to ensure its subrecipients maintain eligibility and compliance. Strong relationships and a knowledgeable customer base will help leverage local funds and the continuance of essential services around the State of Utah.

“Frustration, although quite painful at times, is a very positive and essential part of success.”

-Bo Bennett



*Jason Green, AICP, is a Senior Associate with [Lochner](#) (a CTAA member) in Salt Lake City, Utah. He has assisted in leading regional land use and transportation visioning efforts, and has worked closely with municipalities throughout the state of Utah on a variety of land use and transportation issues and opportunities. He has also been instrumental in expanding Lochner’s transit program, including leading the development of a company-wide transit initiative business plan. **CT***

CTAA's Procurement Roundtable



David Bruffy
[Mountain Line Transportation Authority](#)
 Morgantown, W.V.



Kevin Coggin
[Coast Transit Authority](#)
 Gulfport, Miss.



Elaine Wells (right)
[Ride Connection](#)
 Portland, Ore.

Procurement presents challenges for community and public transportation providers of all sizes across the nation. We asked three General Managers of CTAA member systems to share not only their concerns about the procurement process, but also potential solutions to reduce the administrative burdens of procurement compliance – ed.

DigitalCT: What challenges does your organization face with the current procurement process?

David Bruffy: Our experience with the procurement process has been a difficult one at best - like hitting a moving target in a wind storm with a ping pong ball. Typically, our system will try to do joint procurements

with other agencies as we do not have the staff resources to work through our own procurement procedures and the small quantity of vehicles we would purchase only serves to drive up the per-unit cost and squander scarce resources. There are various other nonsense idiosyncrasies that have to have their box checked as well, and we have actually been caught in post-bid, post-purchase, post-delivery issues using joint procurements where FTA has *clarified* their procurement procedures after the purchase has been made and found issues with joint procurements that complied with the rules in place at the time the procurement was made. It kind of resembles a speed limit being reduced on a street one morning, the Sherriff showing up that afternoon and

giving you a speeding ticket that afternoon because you exceeded today's speed limit - yesterday.

On the large bus side, every procurement has to duplicate the same paperwork at every agency that buys buses - even though there are only 4-5 big bus manufacturers. Then, that duplicate paperwork is filed by each agency and inspected through the Triennial Review process. It would be much more logical for FTA to station 4-5 representatives, one at each manufacture's location, and verify information first-hand. The information isn't going to change from agency to agency, particularly documentation like the Bus Testing Certification, the TVM Certificate, the Buy American Certification,

the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards Pre-Award and Post-Delivery Certification, the Excluded Parties Listing and the Lobbying Certification. Why do we have 400 transit agencies populating hundreds of files of information that is basically worthless paperwork minutia that could be collected, inspected and confirmed at the source? The amount of time, energy and effort expended on this pointless exercise would easily cover the cost of the positions necessary to perform this function directly through an FTA representative, not to mention elimination of this portion of the Triennial Review.

Kevin Coggin: We have minimal staff that dedicates time to providing good service. The volumes of FTA procurement regulations are difficult to comply with. CTA has developed a comprehensive procurement policy to compliance with FTA regulations. The number of processes required to complete and documents to develop for the audit file is very time consuming.

Elaine Wells: ODOT has a generic state price agreement for most capital and services we are looking for. The process is that we state what we are looking for and vendors respond according to their ODOT agreement. Most times it works well for us and saves us time because we don't have to write our own RFP. However, the challenge for us is that we still have to go with the lowest bidder, and sometimes we want a different item. But we cannot go out for bid ourselves unless we get permission from

ODOT showing that there is not a vendor on our state purchase agreement that meets our minimum requirements.

Ride Connection has very strict procurement rules ourselves which we feel is sufficient to keep us compliant with federal regulations. However, we must follow the state's procurement process to meet our state's procurement compliance rules (which also keeps us in compliance with federal regulations).

DigitalCT: What changes do you feel could help reduce those challenges?

David Bruffy: Ideally, FTA would provide national, regional or quantity based bids (to preserve competition) and build an 80 percent bus. Local systems could then purchase these 80 percent buses from the manufacturer and the 20 percent local funds would go toward the various features unique to each transit system such as radios, fare boxes, destination signs, GPS systems, seat styles, and the minor differences between buses that give buses their local character in each community.

As it stands, bus procurement is polluted with make-work bureaucratic processes and procedures that drive up costs, drive down efficiencies, prolong the amount of time it takes to apply FTA appropriations in the free market, and all without any real purpose.

Kevin Coggin: I would like to see FTA spend some time in the field visiting small transit systems. They should be more aware of the impact all these new regulations they are constantly developing have on providers.

Elaine Wells: We think a Consumer Reports-type of document which would show the pluses & minuses of items we wish to purchase. It would include an opportunity to also review quality.

We also think that Buy America rules might be too strict.

Do you have other concerns about the current procurement process and regulations, or have a solution to make procurement a less strenuous ordeal? Share your ideas with Editor Rich Sampson at sampson@ctaa.org. Your perspectives will be shared directly with Federal Transit Administration and Congressional staff to help improve policy-making – ed. CT

Procurement Tips from a Former FTA Official

By Dick Doyle

Dick Doyle is the former Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Regional Administrator for Region 1, New England and currently a member of CTAA's Board of Directors. He shares his advice on traversing FTA's procurement process – ed.

If you are a direct recipient of Federal funds (states, cities and public agencies) or a sub recipient, you must follow FTA's procurement procedures. States may issue their own procurement procedures for sub recipients to follow as long as they follow/do not conflict with Federal regulations and procedures. Making sure you are following Federal or state procedures is very important because non-compliance can result in your procurement being ineligible for Federal assistance.

Fully understanding all of FTA's requirements is often not easy, no matter what size grantee you are. Depending on the size of your procurement and whether you are contracting for design/engineering services, office supplies, new buses and vans or undertaking construction projects, different requirements may apply. Small purchase under \$100,000 have significantly reduced requirements.

Every grantee or sub recipient should take the time to review FTA requirements prior to any procurement action. To its credit, FTA has done a very good job explaining its requirements in its [Third Party Contracting Circular and a Frequently Asked Questions Document](#). FTA has also issued a Best Practices Manual and continually updates it, so you may find answers to some of your procurement questions in that document. If you have any questions about how to put together procurement documents or how to evaluate bids, you should call your FTA Regional Office or state transit office to go over your questions and solicit their advice. Don't be shy about making these calls as the failure to get it right may require you to start your whole procurement process over again or worse yet, result in non Federal participation.

When FTA conducts Triennial Reviews or State Management Reviews, FTA examines 52 mandatory procurement standards that apply to all grantee procurement systems. They will actually review specific procurements. In my experience, the most findings result from grantees having inadequate policies and procedures, conducting deficient cost and price analyses, failing to document a procurement's history and decision making and failing to include all the required Federal clauses. A more complete list of



the most common findings can be found in FTA's [Procurement System Self-Assessment Guide](#).

Getting your procurements right can save you a lot of time and in some instances, a great deal of money. Be pro-active. There is no reason you can't have a successful procurement if you just take the time to do it right. Using FTA's written guidance supplemented by your willingness to actively seek technical assistance from your FTA regional office or state transit offices will always be a winning strategy. **CT**

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