Providing community-responsive, cost-effective public transportation in rural America has never been easy. Distances are greater in rural areas, and without access to reliable automobiles, rural residents are unable to fully participate in the economic and social activities of their communities. Rural residents are often aging in place, and emerging regional economies mean that the services and programs they need are further away. Today, more than ever, public transportation can play a fundamental role in providing essential access to economic empowerment opportunities for rural residents.
The Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) has been addressing the unmet mobility needs of rural America through its Rural and Tribal Passenger Transportation Technical Assistance Program. With support from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, CTAA has competed for the opportunity and been selected to provide practical, hands-on technical assistance and training to rural and tribal communities to enhance, expand or establish public transit services. CTAA's efforts help fill the gaps that are unmet by U.S. Department of Transportation grant and technical assistance programs. The planning assistance is offered at no cost and focuses specifically on strategies that succeed. Since the inception of the Rural and Tribal Technical Assistance Programs, CTAA has launched 127 major rural projects and 46 major tribal projects in 49 states and territories. Of these projects, 153 supported transit service development or enhancement, and 20 assisted with facility development. CTAA also has undertaken more than 200 short-term technical assistance projects to address smaller-scale transportation issues and challenges across rural America. These projects typically involve expanding service, reconfiguring routes and improving efficiency in order to reach more jobs.
OUR PROJECTS CREATE & SUSTAIN JOBS

Throughout the nation, CTAA focuses the economic impact, quality of life and job creation that these vital transit projects create and support. Each of these projects has generated a minimum of five new jobs while the larger projects have often produced more than 50 new jobs. Transit program managers who have directly benefitted from this program tell us that the resulting new transit operations are transporting anywhere from 20 to 400 persons to jobs every day. Further, CTAA’s rural area transit programs enable rural and tribal residents to access otherwise inaccessible educational opportunities and critical health care as well as numerous social services and other destinations. The program’s new and renovated facility projects each support 10-30 short-term construction jobs, as well as 10-30 permanent new jobs upon completion.

Lincoln County, W.V.
"Ridership increased from 8,200 to 33,000 a year"

Cortland, N.Y.
"Improving access to work helped significantly cut commuting expenses for workers, providing more disposable income to spend in the community"

Catawba Tribe, S.C.
"In addition to providing access to employment and training opportunities, the service has increased access to other essential services. New workers are now better able to sustain their families and have disposable income to spend in the community"

Wasilla, AK
"We now transport 80,000 people to jobs each year"
The mobility needs and challenges of rural America are changing and evolving, and so, too, is the very nature of this important program. Enhanced technology and communications are increasing the number of transportation alternatives, even in rural communities. The range of solutions to transportation problems now includes concepts like vanpools, private ride-hailing companies and other app-driven technologies. Our approach and unique qualifications include identifying creative and innovative funding strategies that leverage Federal investment. The recently-approved FAST Act surface transportation law provides new opportunities for rural transit, and through this technical assistance program, the USDA-CTAA partnership will help rural communities maximize these opportunities.