



CTAA Survey of Rural and Small-Urban Transit Operating Members Reveals Growing Need for Additional COVID-19 Stimulus Funding

Last week, in the wake of Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021 (CRRSAA) allocation announcements, the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) surveyed its rural and small-urban transit system members to highlight CRRSAA inequities and to communicate these operators' serious needs moving forward. Without additional federal funding support, many small-urban and rural transit systems face major service cuts and the inability to continue providing the essential services they do everyday as CARES Act funding dwindles.

“Public transit is a national program,” says CTAA Executive Director Scott Bogren. “CTAA and its members strongly urge the Biden Administration and Congress, in any COVID-19 stimulus package, to utilize the standard formulas for rural, urban and specialized transit (Sections 5307, 5310 and 5311) to ensure that all transit agencies receive vitally needed funding to continue providing essential trips all across the nation.”

What follows is a quick snap shot of what the survey revealed:

CTAA's rural and small-urban members have tended to spend down CARES Act funding more slowly than the nation's largest metropolitan transit properties, but are starting to run out of those funds.

- The average rural transit system leadership is “very concerned” about the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on local and state economies with an expectation of at least 19 more months of economic hardship at the local level. Rural transit system survey responders expect to have CARES Act allocations last another 9.6 months.
- The average small-urban transit system leadership is “concerned” about the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on state and local funding sources. Small-urban transit responders expect their current CARES Act allocations to last another 13.1 months.

- Only 39 of the nation's 320 small-urbanized areas (population between 50,000-200,000) received CRRSAA funding. Twenty-eight (28) state departments of transportation received no rural transit funding assistance through CRRSAA. For the vast majority of rural and small-urban transit systems and passengers, CRRSAA provides no benefit.

CTAA's rural and small-urban transit system members report numerous service cuts in the past 10 months during the COVID-19 pandemic yet have lost "only" around half of their normal ridership — highlighting how many of these trips are for essential workers and purposes and need to be sustained.

- More than two-thirds (68%) of rural system responders reported cutting service in the past 10 months. Interestingly, 25 percent of rural system responders reported adding service during the pandemic to assist with food, meal and prescription delivery.
- Seventy (70%) percent of small-urban transit system responders reported service cuts in the past 10 months.
- CRRSAA funding was effectively designed to forestall significant services cuts in the nation's largest metropolitan transit operations. The majority of rural and small-urban transit has already instituted service cuts.
- Rural transit system responders reported year-to-year ridership loss at 52.2 percent.
- Small urban transit system responders reported year-to-year ridership loss at 49.02 percent.

CTAA's rural and small-urban transit system members are actively engaged or engaging with local public health leadership to develop ways to ensure people who are transportation insecure have access to COVID-19 vaccine sites and distribution.

- Forty-four (44) percent of rural transit system responders report engaging with public health officials at the local level to assist in a variety of ways with vaccine distribution.
- Twenty eight (28) percent of small-urban transit system responders report engaging with public health officials at the local level to assist in a variety of ways with vaccine distribution.
- At a time when many CTAA members stand ready to assist with the vitally important role of increasing access to vaccine distribution sites and efforts, many are beginning to run low on the CARES Act funds they received last year and need new emergency funding to continue operating.