

Subject: Urgent Request for Federal Assistance to Maintain Rural Transit Service in Scotts Bluff County

Dear [Senator/Representative Last Name],

On behalf of the Scotts Bluff County Board of Commissioners and Scotts Bluff County Public Transit, we respectfully request your immediate assistance in securing additional federal funding to maintain essential public transportation services for constituents across our rural region.

Our transit system has already absorbed significant reductions during the current fiscal year. Funding levels required budget requests to be reduced by 30%, which equates to negative three percent (-3%) growth compared to the prior year. This forced significant service reductions to remain operational. Projected funding for the upcoming fiscal year requires an additional budget reduction of 28% in federal funds in addition to reduced state funding. These reductions compound prior cuts and place continued service at serious risk.

Beginning in January, service levels were reduced to slow spending and preserve system viability. Budget projections based on those reductions are currently underway; however, without additional federal assistance, further service reductions are likely, and the risk of long-term service interruption increases.

The Scotts Bluff County Board feels it is important to note that many county residents are entirely reliant on rural transit as their only means of transportation. For these individuals, public transit is not a convenience but a necessity that provides access to medical care, employment, education, groceries, pharmacies, and other essential services. In our rural county, where travel distances are substantial and alternatives are limited or nonexistent, further service reductions would immediately isolate vulnerable residents and impair their ability to meet basic daily needs.

While we acknowledge and appreciate the significant availability of federal grant funding for capital projects such as facilities, equipment, and planning activities, these funding streams do not address the immediate and most pressing need facing our system: the ability to operate service. In rural transit systems like ours, there is currently far greater access to funding for non-operational investments than for the day-to-day operating support required to put vehicles on the road and transport constituents to work, healthcare, and essential services. Facilities and assets alone do not move people; operating funds do. Greater flexibility to apply existing or supplemental federal resources toward operating expenses would have an immediate, direct impact on our ability to serve residents across Scotts Bluff County.

We are requesting your assistance in identifying and securing any available federal funding relief, including discretionary funds, supplemental appropriations, or grant flexibility, to help stabilize rural transit operations during this period. Interim support would allow continued service while long-term funding solutions are pursued.

We appreciate your leadership and welcome the opportunity to provide additional details or work with your staff on potential solutions. Thank you for your consideration and continued support of rural communities in western Nebraska.

Sincerely,  
Scotts Bluff County Board of Commissioners

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Mark Harris, Chairman of the Board