

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

**SUBJECT: LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR HIRTA APPLICATION TO STATE
TRANSIT ASSISTANCE GRANT PROGRAM**

BACKGROUND:

The Heart of Iowa Regional Transit Agency (HIRTA) is the Demand Response Service (DRS) and Paratransit (Dial-A-Ride) transit provider for the region including Ames and Story County. Since 2014, ASSET staff and HIRTA have been working to improve user satisfaction with HIRTA's Demand Response Services. This process led to the completion of a report, delivered to the City Council in March, which outlines 23 action steps to improve service.

One of those proposed action steps involves dedicating one unscheduled bus each day to address unforeseen delays due to bus mechanical problems, unforeseen user needs, and other issues. This would be called an "On-Call Mobile Service," and would operate only within the City of Ames. This service would be used to address issues in both DRS and Dial-A-Ride services. A "mobile supervisor" in a transit van, who is available eight hours per day on weekdays, would help in the following ways:

- Assist in pickups if regular buses fall behind schedule due to unforeseen circumstances
- Fill in for drivers if there is a driver shortage due to illness or other factors
- Review passenger stop locations for safety and convenience, and recommend modifications if necessary
- Assist with passenger issues as they arise

This type of position was previously in place when CyRide directly ran the DRS service before HIRTA became the DRS provider.

To accomplish this, HIRTA needs support for capital expenses (purchasing and equipping a van), as well as ongoing operational costs (fuel, maintenance, staff costs). A project proposal and draft budget is attached to this Council Action Form. CyRide has access to federal funds intended for Dial-A-Ride purposes, which can pay for a substantial portion of the first year capital costs and a portion of the first year operational costs. **HIRTA would like to apply for State Transit Assistance (STA) funds through the Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT) for this new service. STA funds can be used for up to 80% of the first year operational costs and for up to 50% of the second year operational costs.**

Prior to applying for STA funds, HIRTA has requested that the City, CyRide, Story County, and United Way of Story County each provide letters of support for its STA

grant application. **HIRTA does not require City financial support at this time. However, it is likely that through the ASSET process, this enhanced level of service will need operational funding from the City and other ASSET funders.** It would be helpful to HIRTA's application if the City Council would indicate that it will consider funding this HIRTA service in FY 2016/17 and FY 2017/18, although the Council does not need to commit to a guarantee for funding at this time. It is intended that this service will be continually evaluated for effectiveness and to determine whether it should continue or be modified.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Authorize the Mayor to submit a letter of support for HIRTA's application to the Iowa Department of Transportation for State Transit Assistance funds.
2. Do not authorize the Mayor to submit a letter of support for HIRTA's State Transit Assistance application.

MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The City and other ASSET funders have invested considerable effort to work with HIRTA and the community to improve this service. This On-Call Mobile Service proposal replicates a successful service that CyRide used when it directly operated the DRS service, and further leverages a substantial amount of state and federal funding to start up the service.

Submitting a letter of support does not commit City funds to this service in the future. However, the letter will indicate that the City will consider funding this service through the ASSET process in FY 2016/17 and FY 2017/18. It will be up to the ASSET volunteers in the future to recommend funding for this service and ultimately up to the City Council to approve specific funding proposals in those years.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1, thereby authorizing the Mayor to submit a letter of support for HIRTA's application to the Iowa Department of Transportation for State Transit Assistance funds.

Unscheduled HIRTA Bus Proposal

Service Purpose/Goal: To improve on-time performance of demand response service in Ames and Story County so that trips can be provided within the established pick-up window.

Service Description: Provide a supervisor, in a bus, to oversee HIRTA's on-street operations in Ames each weekday. This supervisor would not have scheduled work activities so that he/she could immediately address a situation within the system such a bus breakdown, or a run that is behind schedule.

Position Title: Mobile Supervisor

Position Responsibilities:

- Provides assistance to drivers by providing information to drivers, assisting in picking-up trips if a bus is behind schedule allowing the run to get back on time and any other duties as necessary to provide a quality demand response service
- Will "fill in" for drivers until a substitute driver can be provided if there is a driver shortage due to illness or other unanticipated circumstances
- Reviews passenger stop locations for safety and convenience of the passenger and the bus, recommending modifications if necessary
- Assists drivers with passenger issues as needed

Trip Applicability: All demand response and Dial-A-Ride trips provided by HIRTA

Geographic Area: City limits of Ames

Hours/Days of Operation: Eight hours each weekday from 6:30 am to 3:30 pm.

Implementation Date: July 1, 2015

Vehicle To Be Purchased: One accessible minivan or MV-1 style vehicle with camera, radio and tablet installed

Cost Sharing: Based on ridership per contract (DAR, City and County)

FY14 DAR Ridership –	10,715	(14%)
FY14 City Ridership (Within city limits) –	49,779	(65%)
FY14 County Ridership (Outside city limits) –	<u>15,974</u>	<u>(21%)</u>
Total FY14 Rides	76,468	(100%)

Three Year Cost Estimate:

Year 1 –	\$104,260
Year 2 –	\$41,122
Year 3 –	\$42,248

Three Year Budget Proposal

	<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>
Operating			
Driver's Wages/Benefits (2,080 hrs. x \$19.23 /hr., 4% per year increase)	\$40,000	\$41,122	\$42,248
Consumables - Fuel	\$6,760		
Insurance	\$1,505	\$1,490	\$1,475
Total Operating Costs	\$48,265	\$42,612	\$43,723
Capital			
Minivan with tablet, radio and camera	\$57,500		
TOTAL Cost	\$105,765	\$42,612	\$43,723

Potential Funding Share:

	<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3*</u>	
STA - State	\$38,612	\$21,306	\$0	
5310 - Federal Funding From CyRide	\$46,000	\$0	\$0	
CyRide Local	\$11,500	\$0	\$6,121	(14%)
Other Local Funding	\$9,653	\$21,306	\$37,602	(86%)
City of Ames				
Story County				
United Way	\$9,653			
Central Iowa Community Services				

* Based on Rides Provided Per Contract



April 29, 2015

Michelle McEnany, Director
Office of Public Transit
Iowa Department of Transportation
800 Lincoln Way
Ames IA 50010

Dear Director McEnany:

I am writing to express the support of the City of Ames for the Heart of Iowa Regional Transit Agency's (HIRTAs) proposal for State Transit Assistance funds. The City of Ames believes that access to reliable and timely public transit is an important need in our community, and HIRTAs proposal aims to substantially improve the reliability of its services by implementing a Mobile On-Call Service.

This proposed service would allow HIRTAs significantly more flexibility in addressing unforeseen issues such as equipment breakdowns, driver shortages, delays, and passenger issues.

The City of Ames is a strong partner with a number of local human services agencies, and throughout the past year, those groups have worked together to identify ways to make transit—a critical link in delivering effective human services—more effective for both users and those agencies. The subject of this STA grant proposal is one of the many fruits of those discussions.

Through the ASSET human services funding process, the City will consider proposals from HIRTAs to fund operational costs for this Mobile On-Call service in FY 2016/17 and in FY 2017/18.

Sincerely,

Ann H. Campbell
Mayor

AHC/bp