

**Cumberland County Community Development Program
2016 CDBG General Program Application
Community Cover Page**

Project Title Subsidized Fares for the Lakes Region Explorer

Lead Community Town of Windham

Additional Communities Towns of Raymond, Casco, and Naples

Contact Information Name Tony Plante

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Program Category

Public Service X

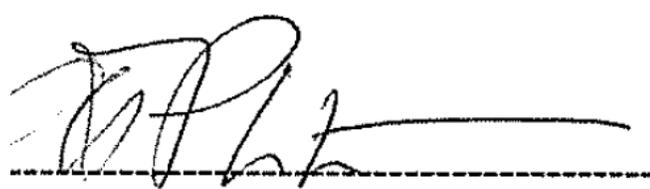
CDBG "National Objective"

Low/Moderate Income: Area-Wide Limited Clientele X

Amount of CDBG Funds Requested \$15,000

Total Estimated Project Cost \$33,600

Name of Authorized Official Tony Plante (Town Manager)



1. Provide a brief summary (400 words maximum) of the proposed project. - 10 points.

Background: After more than a decade of visioning and planning, the Lakes Region Explorer began service in November, 2013. The hybrid bus, operated by the Regional Transportation Program (RTP), currently makes four round trips each weekday from Bridgton to Portland along Route 302 with stops in each community along the way. The bus has room for 18 seated passengers, two wheelchair users, and nine standing passengers. It is also equipped with free wifi and bike racks. The current fare is \$3 per one-way trip and discount packages are also available (ten-ride passes for \$25 and monthly passes for \$50). In the past two years a project team involving RTP, the Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG), the Opportunity Alliance (TOA), and MaineDOT has convened regularly to support the bus and ensure the long-term continuation of the service.

This multi-jurisdictional project will provide subsidized bus passes on the Lakes Region Explorer to low-to-moderate income individuals in Windham (lead applicant), Raymond, Casco, and Naples. (RTP has also submitted a similar CDBG application to the Town of Bridgton). The proposed \$15,000 in CDBG funding will be used to purchase 1,200 ten-ride passes at the discounted price of \$12.50 (passes are normally \$25 each). This represents a 100% in-kind match from RTP and extends the reach of the benefit to twice as many low-to-moderate income residents.

The pass, shown below, allows the holder to board the bus without paying a fare. The driver simply punches out the numbers until it is expired.



RTP will work with each town’s general assistance (G.A.) office, the Opportunity Alliance, and school department officials to distribute the passes and confidentially determine eligibility, interest, and need. These organizations are well positioned to identify residents who are most in need of this benefit and collect all the necessary paperwork. At the close of each month, RTP staff will compile all documentation and provide it to the County to meet grant reporting requirements.

2. Provide a response to the questions below defining and justifying the need for the activity. - 20 points

a. Convey the magnitude and severity of the issue to be addressed.

While not always noticeable, an appreciable portion of Lakes Region residents cannot afford a vehicle. Or, if they own a vehicle its use is limited by lack of money for gas or maintenance. Still others are not able to drive due to a disability or the loss of their driving privileges.

In the 2013 assessment, “*Access to Health*,” conducted by the Opportunity Alliance Healthy Lakes HMP, lack of transportation was cited as the *foremost barrier* to care and good health for rural residents. The agency’s more recent 2015 “*Cumberland County Needs Assessment*” came to the same conclusion. National research shows the average low income family spends more than a third of their income on operating vehicles (*Department of Labor Consumer Expenditures Survey*).

In March of 2015, the Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG) conducted an onboard ridership survey on behalf of RTP. When respondents were asked why they were riding the bus, 24 of 57 (42.1%) indicated there was no car available on that particular day; 21 (36.8%) did not have a driver’s license, and 19 (33.3%) reported they were not able to drive or did not feel safe driving themselves.

Despite the clear need for transportation to access employment, health and social services, few resources are currently available in the Lakes Region and only a small number of residents are able to use existing state-funded transportation. While individuals enrolled in MaineCare and those with an extremely limited income are eligible to use DHHS-funded rides, many in need do not qualify because they make slightly too much or their transportation needs are non-medical.

For these community members, long commutes and a lack of reliable transportation are often significant barriers to working. Limited transportation options also isolate them from the many services and programs designed to lift them out of poverty, or improve their health and well-being. These residents, and in many cases their dependents, are often trapped at home where even the most routine trips can present major logistical hurdles.

While many move to the Lakes Region for more affordable housing options, the majority of jobs and services remain in Portland, or in pockets along the Route 302 corridor (i.e., North Windham, Raymond Shopping Center, Naples Village, etc.). As such, access to reliable transportation is a must.

b. Identify the total number of people affected by the issue. (Out of the total number of people affected, identify the number of people from low/moderate income households).

According to the latest 2010-2014 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimate, the combined population for the Towns of Windham, Raymond, Casco, and Naples is

29,464. From that total, an estimated 2,853 fell below poverty status in the past 12 months (2010-2014 ACS 5-Year Estimate). While not *all* low-to-moderate income individuals have difficulty affording transportation expenses, we know a considerable portion do.

In March of 2015, GPCOG also conducted a region-wide opinion survey of over 450 Lakes Region residents to help RTP, the voting public, and elected officials make more informed decisions about the bus service. Of the 450 respondents, 85 (18.8%) reported total annual household incomes of less than \$30,000, while 34 (7.5%) indicated they had limited access to a vehicle due to financial constraints. If the 7.5% figure is applied to the combined population of the four towns referenced above, an estimated 2,210 residents have limited access to a vehicle due to financial constraints.

c. *Describe to what extent the project makes in the long-term measurable difference in the economic and social health of the region.*

This project will improve the economic and social health of the region by vastly improving mobility for the most impoverished residents of the Lakes Region. When public transportation allows an unemployed individual to find and keep a job, this can save local, state, and federal governments considerable costs by reducing reliance on social services and programs. Likewise, when an elderly rural resident who is unable to drive can use the bus to obtain health services, this promotes preventive health care thereby helping to keep down overall health care costs. Access to affordable transportation empowers individuals, promotes self-sustainability, and permits spending on other day-to-day essentials within the community and region.

In addition to helping those in need, this project will serve the region by building ridership and increasing awareness of the Lakes Region Explorer. While the bus has developed a loyal following and ridership increased by 20% this year, many residents who could benefit the most from the service are either not aware of it, or do not have the funds to use it regularly. By helping to reduce these barriers, this project will also invest in the long-term viability of the Lakes Region Explorer, currently the only public transportation option serving the Lakes Region and Route 302 corridor.

d. *How many people or households will be served by the project?*

If funded, RTP will distribute 1,200 ten-ride passes over the course of the year (roughly 100 per month) and provide up to 12,000 free one-way trips to those most in need. Since some people or households will likely receive the benefit on more than one occasion, an exact number is difficult to determine at this time. However, we anticipate serving between 300-400 unique people or households.

3. Provide a response to the three questions concerning management of the proposed activity – 10 points

a. Define who will manage the grant funded project and how they will manage it.

Lakes Region Municipalities: The Towns of Windham, Raymond, Casco, and Naples will play an important role in the project. As lead applicant, Windham will serve as the fiscal agent. As discussed earlier, each town's G.A. office will distribute passes and provide monthly reports to RTP. Each town will also play a role in promoting the availability of passes through various outreach channels (i.e., town website, list-serve, Facebook, bulletin boards, etc.). Town Managers and other relevant staff will be tapped for feedback on an ongoing basis through the project year.

Regional Transportation Program: RTP will play the lead role in managing the project, convening the existing project team that includes TOA and GPCOG. Having worked together on the Lakes Region Explorer for several years, this team is high functioning and able to provide significant capacity through division of labor. RTP staff will oversee the administrative aspects of the project, including compiling monthly reporting forms from the town G.A. offices and other partners, submitting reports to the Town of Windham and Cumberland County, and ensuring pass distribution partners have sufficient passes, schedules, or other materials they may need.

The Opportunity Alliance: TOA will promote passes within its own social service programs and serve as the link to other community partners. As the community action agency for Cumberland County, TOA currently serves approximately 1,600 low-to-moderate income individuals in the four-town project area. By supplying program staff with information about the project, TOA can ensure a wide reach for promotion of the passes through programs such as WIC, Head Start, and Heating Assistance, which work closely with individuals and families balancing a limited budget. Furthermore, TOA can promote the benefit through its 211 program (the call center and website that is the go-to for social services in Maine), email and social media, earned media at local newspapers, and outreach that taps schools, child cares, food pantries, local employers and medical care providers.

Greater Portland Council of Governments: GPCOG will continue to serve as liaison with town leaders, ensuring ongoing communication to inform and enhance the project. Additionally, GPCOG will assist RTP and the Opportunity Alliance with the organizational aspects of the project – from outreach and promotion of passes to reporting and documenting. At the close of the project GPCOG will compile all relevant data to generate a summary report detailing the impact of the project.

b. Explain the experience of the applicant in undertaking projects of similar complexity.

With the shared goal of increasing transportation access for the Lakes Region, the project team of RTP, TOA, and GPCOG have partnered over the past several years on numerous aspects of operating and promoting the Lakes Region Explorer. The team has

worked on sustainable funding for the bus including extensive outreach to the five Lakes Region towns to secure a combined local match of \$45,000, leveraging a \$10,000 technical assistance grant from the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA), and selling advertising space on the bus. The team has also worked on promotion efforts, including rebranding the bus as the Lakes Region Explorer with a new logo and look, distributing thousands of brochures and fliers within the region, and earning local and regional media coverage. With RTP as convener, the four organizations have a standing monthly meeting schedule and solid communication, resulting in quality project management.

c. Describe efforts undertaken or planned to obtain non-CDBG funds, to diminish future reliance on Cumberland County CDBG funds and continue the program without CDBG program funds.

The Lakes Region Explorer project team is committed to continued work on creating a sustainable future for the bus. Once the service achieves a diversified funding stream, RTP will have an increased ability to offer subsidized fares to eligible riders without CDBG funds. As discussed above, RTP and its project team have worked over the past two years to leverage a local match of \$45,000 from the five Lakes Region towns served by the bus. This supplements the MaineDOT funds and farebox revenue used to operate the bus. The team is already working to maintain this support in the next fiscal year through ongoing communication with the towns. The team will be working in 2016 with a rural transit marketing consultant through funding from the CTAA on promoting the Lakes Region Explorer and expanding funding opportunities.

4. Demonstrate that the project is ready to proceed – 20 points

• Describe the steps that have been completed or must be completed to initiate the project. These may include: community support, staffing, securing an appropriate location, marketing and networking.

Beginning in summer 2015, the project team began laying the groundwork for this initiative. The Opportunity Alliance and GPCOG conducted outreach to towns to assess the best locations and approach to distributing ten-ride passes to those in need.

The project team connected with staff and administrators at the Town of Windham's General Assistance Office, the Bridgton Community Center (which serves the region), the Lake Region High School Guidance Department, and the Bridgton Police Department (which deals with people from throughout the region). This established the community partnerships needed to connect individuals and families with passes for this project.

The team also ran a small, pilot pass distribution project through TOA case managers, the Town of Windham, Bridgton Community Center, Bridgton Police Department and Lake Region School District. Information about who passes were distributed to and who is using the passes informed this application.

RTP, TOA and GPCOG also met several times to clarify the respective roles for project management outlined above.

- **Describe any existing and/or potential impediments to project initiation.**
The efforts described above aim to minimize impediments to project initiation as much as possible. Still, we see two potential impediments to project initiation. First is the challenge for pass recipients to adjust to using transit. Understanding transit schedules and managing getting from stops to desired locations involve a learning curve for users. The project team will work to address this through support and easy-to-use brochures. The second challenge is successful promotion of the availability of passes. Though the promotion plans are extensive (as outlined above), we know that word-of-mouth is a primary promotion mechanism in the Lakes Region communities -- especially within the target population of low to moderate income individuals -- and so we expect it will take some time for the information to truly get out in the community

**Please see Match Documentation page (Appendix A) for more details.*

5. Budget: Fill in the attached budget form and provide the basis for determination of budget amounts. - 5 points

**Please see Project Implementation Schedule / Project Budget page (Appendix B)*

6. Implementation Schedule: Fill in the attached schedule form. - 5 points

**Please see Project Implementation Schedule / Project Budget page (Appendix B)*

7. Provide a response to the three questions demonstrating the need for CDBG program funds - 15 points

a. Why are CDBG funds critical for the commencement and ultimate success of the project?

Without CDBG funding, RTP will not be able to offer subsidized fares in any effective capacity to those with economic and transportation challenges in the Lakes Region. Since the Lakes Region Explorer is a small service with extremely limited discretionary income, local funding support and farebox revenues are essential components of the yearly budget. As such, additional funding is needed to help underwrite the cost of the \$25 ten-ride passes.

b. Have you, or will you, seek funds from other sources? If so, what are those funding sources?

As mentioned previously, RTP and partners have worked steadfastly over the past several years to grow and diversify funding sources for the bus. In 2015 RTP requested and received local funding contributions from each Lakes Region community along the route. This support accounts for roughly half the bus's operating expenses and is crucial to the future of the service. RTP is currently requesting the same amount from the communities this year. In March the project team will also be working with a rural transit marketing specialist hired by the CTAA to further explore advertising and marketing opportunities.

c. What is the impact on the project if CDBG funds are not received or if only partial CDBG funds are received?

If CDBG funds are not awarded, RTP will not be able to provide free ten-ride passes at the desired scale to low-to-moderate income residents in the Lakes Region. If RTP does pursue a free pass distribution program on its own, it would be in a very limited capacity – similar to the small pilot project described previously.

8. Distress Score: To be determined by Cumberland County staff.

9. Multi-Jurisdictional Bonus: Please see Signature Endorsement Page (Appendix C).

a. How will low/moderate income residents in each participating community benefit from the project/activity?

As described throughout this application, the proposed project will vastly improve mobility and access to transportation for low-to-moderate income residents in each community. Since the number of low-to-moderate income residents varies by town, ten-ride passes will be distributed proportionately to each community based on population, eligibility, and need. The table below is a preliminary idea, based on population only, for how the passes may be distributed among the participating communities.

	2014 Population	Percent of Region	# of Yearly Passes	# of Monthly Passes
Windham	17,300	59%	708	59
Raymond	4,460	15%	180	15
Casco	3,796	13%	156	13
Naples	3,908	13%	156	13
Total	29,464	100%	1,200	100

b. What role will each applicant community play in the project/activity?

With assistance and oversight from RTP, TOA, and GPCOG, each community will be responsible for distributing ten-ride passes to those who are eligible and providing all necessary documentation and paperwork. As lead applicant, the Town of Windham will serve as the fiscal agent, while RTP will provide Cumberland County staff with compiled monthly reports.

Appendix A: Match Documentation

Sources of Match				
Match Type/ Amount		Match Source	How is the match calculated?	Is the match secured?
In-Kind	\$16,200	RTP	\$15,000 ten-ride passes (600 at \$12.50)/ \$1,200 staff time (~2 hrs. per month at \$50/hr.)	<u>Yes</u>
In-Kind	\$1,200	Opportunity Alliance	\$1,200 staff time (~2 hrs. per month at \$50/hr.)	<u>Yes</u>
In-Kind	\$1,200	GPCOG	\$1,200 staff time (~2 hrs. per month at \$50/hr.)	<u>Yes</u>
Total	\$18,600			

Regional Transportation Program – Total Match \$16,200

- Program Materials: \$15,000
Remaining \$12.50 for the cost of 1,200 ten-ride passes – normally priced at \$25 each
- Personnel (includes Wages & Salaries and Payroll Taxes & Fringe): \$1,200
Cindy Gilson: 2 hours/month for 12 months @ \$50/hr

Greater Portland Council of Governments – Total Match \$1,200

- Personnel (includes Wages & Salaries and Payroll Taxes & Fringe): \$1,200
Rick Harbison: 2 hours/month for 12 months @ \$50/hr

The Opportunity Alliance – Total Match \$1,200

- Personnel (includes Wages & Salaries and Payroll Taxes & Fringe): \$1,200
Zoe Miller: 2 hours/month for 12 months @ \$50/hr

Appendix B: Project Implementation Schedule / Project Budget

Project Implementation Schedule				
Activity	Q #1 J – S 2016	Q #2 O – D 2016	Q #3 J – M 2017	Q #4 A – J 2017
Distribution of bus passes to town offices and partner agencies.	X			
Promotion of availability of bus passes through relevant channels (RTP website, Facebook, 211, town websites/list serves, etc.).	X	X	X	X
Distribution of bus passes to low-to-moderate income residents.	X	X	X	X
Review of project successes and challenges, including gathering feedback from towns and partners. Adjustments made as needed.		X		X
Project Completed:				X

Project Budget			
Cost Category	CDBG Funds	Other Funds/ In-Kind	Total
Materials/Supplies	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$30,000
Salaries		\$3,600	\$3,600
Total Costs	\$15,000	\$18,600	\$33,600
<p>Budget Description: The \$15,000 in CDBG funds will be used to purchase 1,200 ten-ride passes. At \$25 per pass, \$15,000 would typically purchase 600 ten-ride passes. However, for the purposes of this grant, RTP is willing to discount the price of each pass to \$12.50 in order to extend the benefit to more people. This fulfills all match requirements as RTP’s in-kind contribution of \$15,000 represents a 100% match.</p> <p>Cindy Gilson (RTP), Zoe Miller (TOA), and Rick Harbison (GPCOG) will also collectively spend approximately six hours per month administering the program. Zoe and Rick will coordinate the distribution of passes among the communities and collect all necessary paperwork and documentation. Cindy, RTP’s HR and Administrative Manager, will compile all monthly reports to send to the Town of Windham (lead applicant/fiscal agent) and Cumberland County.</p>			

Appendix C: Multi-Community Endorsement Signature Page

CUMBERLAND COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

CDBG GENERAL PROGRAM APPLICATION – 2016

Lead Community Applicant: Town of Windham

Lead Community Authorized Official: Tony Plante (Town Manager)

Signature of Authorized Official:



Additional Community Applicant: Town of Raymond

Additional Community Authorized Official: Don Willard (Town Manager)

Signature of Authorized Official:



Additional Community Applicant: Town of Casco

Additional Community Authorized Official: David Morton (Town Manager)

Signature of Authorized Official:



Additional Community Applicant: Town of Naples

Additional Community Authorized Official: Ephrem Paraschak (Town Manager)

Signature of Authorized Official:



**In addition to the above signatures from each community's town manager, Windham's Town Council officially endorsed the proposal at their January 26, 2016 meeting. Although the minutes are not yet available, documentation can be provided if needed.*

Appendix D: Supplemental Visual Aids

Greater Bridgton Chamber of Commerce one-page advertisement

LAKES REGION EXPLORER

BRIDGTON ↔ PORTLAND

MONDAY – FRIDAY BUS SERVICE

Downtown Portland Stop

Loading Your Bike is Easy!

Birthday-Party!

Naples Causeway

Portland's Old Port

FREE ON-BOARD WIFI | BIKE RACK | HANDICAP ACCESSIBLE

USE THE LAKES REGION EXPLORER FOR...

- Commuting to Work, School, and Appointments
- Shopping and Dining Out in Downtown Portland
- Visiting Family and Friends
- Recreation and Entertainment
- Connecting to Transportation Options in Portland

Look for Lakes Region Explorer bus stop signs

Scheduled Stop (parking)
The Explorer stops and does not leave before the scheduled time.

Request Stop (no parking)
Riders tell the driver to pull over, or hail the driver at the stop.

For specific fare, stop, and schedule information visit:
www.rtprides.org

Appendix D: Supplemental Visual Aids (Cont'd)

Current rack card showing route, schedule, and pricing information.

1/2015



LAKES REGION EXPLORER

BUS SERVICE

DAILY ROUND TRIPS FROM BRIDGTON TO PORTLAND

..... **FREE WIFI**

PRICING & INFORMATION

ONE-WAY TRIP	\$3		FREE TRANSFER TO
SENIORS (65+)	\$2		METRO AND SOUTH
STUDENTS (W/ID)	\$2		PORTLAND BUS.
10-RIDE PASS	\$25		(MUST BE USED ON
MONTHLY PASS	\$50		THE SAME DAY).

DISCOUNTED FARE WITH TRANSFER FROM METRO OR SOUTH PORTLAND BUS (\$1.50)
CHILDREN 5 & UNDER FREE (with fare paying adult)
PASSES CAN BE PURCHASED ON THE BUS, OR AT THE RTP OFFICE (CASH, CHECK, OR MONEY ORDER ONLY, EXACT CHANGE IS REQUIRED).
FOR HOLIDAY SCHEDULE AND WEATHER NOTIFICATIONS, PLEASE CHECK OUR FACEBOOK PAGE, OR VISIT rtpRIDES.org.

127 ST. JOHN STREET | PORTLAND, MAINE 04102
rtpRIDES.org | 207-774-2666 | 1-800-244-0704

ROUTE & SCHEDULE

BRIDGTON TO PORTLAND | MON - FRI

Bridgton Community Ctr.	6:00 AM	9:10 AM	3:45 PM	7:10 PM
Lake Region HS	R (6:11)	R (9:21)	R (3:56)	R (7:21)
Naples Village/Library	R (6:18)	R (9:28)	R (4:03)	R (7:28)
Naples Amer. Legion	6:23	9:33	4:08	7:33
South Casco Fire Stn.	6:32	9:42	4:17	7:42
Sunset Variety	6:39	9:49	4:24	7:49
North Windham Ctr.	6:50	10:00	4:35	8:00
Time4Printing (SB)	R (6:56)	R (10:06)	R (4:42)	R (8:06)
Prides Corner**	R (7:10)	R (10:20)	R (4:56)	R (8:20)
USM/Forest Ave (SB)	R (7:23)	R (10:33)	R (5:10)	R (8:33)
Elm Street Pulse	7:30 AM	10:40 AM	5:20 PM	8:40 PM

PORTLAND TO BRIDGTON | MON - FRI

Elm Street Pulse	7:35 AM	11:35 AM	5:30 PM	8:45 PM
USM/Forest Ave. (NB)	R (7:40)	R (11:40)	R (5:38)	R (8:50)
Prides Corner	7:55	11:55	5:55	9:05
Brookhaven Dr. (NB)	R (8:09)	R (12:09)	R (6:09)	R (9:19)
North Windham Ctr.	8:15	12:15	6:15	9:25
Sunset Variety	8:26	12:26	6:26	9:36
South Casco Fire Stn.	8:33	12:33	6:33	9:43
Naples Amer. Legion	8:42	12:42	6:42	9:52
Naples Village/Library	R (8:47)	R (12:47)	6:47	R (9:57)
Lake Region H.S.	R (8:54)	R (12:54)	6:54	R (10:04)
Bridgton Community Ctr	9:05 AM	1:05 PM	7:05 PM	10:15 PM

*R - Request stop (times are approximate; riders tell the driver to pull over or hail the driver at the stop). | **Drop-off only.

GENERAL INFORMATION




www.rtpRIDES.org | 207-774-2666 | 1-800-244-0704

THE LAKES REGION EXPLORER IS BIKE AND HANDICAP ACCESSIBLE

When waiting for the Lakes Region Explorer, please stay as close as possible to the bus stop sign. This is especially important at Request Only stops, where the driver WILL NOT STOP if he/she does not see you.

Please arrive at your stop 10-15 min. early to avoid missing the bus; if the bus is running late, please be patient, it may be in traffic, or the driver may be assisting someone. If the bus is over 15 min. late, please contact RTP at 207-774-2666.

Look for Lakes Region Explorer bus stop signs.

127 ST. JOHN STREET | PORTLAND, MAINE 04102
rtpRIDES.org | 207-774-2666 | 1-800-244-0704