

COVID-19 Tribal Transit Manager Peer Roundtable III – Summary
April 22, 2020

Below are questions, experiences, and comments from Roundtable participants.

Question: Have any tribes applied for the CARES Act funding yet, and if so, were there were any hiccups or specific language that tribes need to be using in their applications?

- Big Woods Transit: They applied and it has already been executed.
- Chickasaw Nation Transportation Services: They have not yet applied.

Question: How are tribal transit agencies planning to use the CARES Act funds and what guidance is available to assist tribes?

- Region 8 staff: FTA has developed a grant making toolkit that does specify how to structure a CARES Act grant for tribes as well as the specific language needed. It has been shared with all of Region 8 tribes. Other regions are also sharing it. This toolkit came from headquarters to streamline the process of writing and reviewing the CARES Act funds so that they can be awarded as quickly as possible. As to what agencies are requesting the funding for, it seems to be for operations and the admin leave, to help out staff and systems that have reduced service or reduced fares.
- Region 10 staff: They are sending out the toolkit very soon. Headquarters will likely not post it on the website, but sharing via regional offices.
- Region 7 staff: They shared what the CARES Act funds can be used for - anything that 5311 funds could be used for before, but also some specific uses related to COVID-19 response (PPE, admin leave, cleaning costs, sanitizing materials, etc.). See FAQs on website. Most CARES Act fund requests are so far for operations and admin leave.
- COVID-19 and CARES ACT FAQs on the FTA webpage:
<https://www.transit.dot.gov/frequently-asked-questions-fta-grantees-regarding-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19#CARES>

Question: What has been your tribe and transit agency's experience with COVID-19 so far?

- Kayak Public Transit, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation:
 - Had one of the first COVID-19 cases in Oregon. Had to shut down early and have been shut down for a month now. They are putting together plans for reopening.
 - Tribal Board of Trustees put together a comprehensive Incident Command team. It is not just a health impact, but it's also economic and societal. They are trying to take a holistic approach.
 - Did a bulk order of KN95 masks for our drivers. They are also retrofitting plexiglass kind of cages, but they have cutaway buses and all of them are different.
 - Ordering those foggers and more PPE for detailer. The buses will be sanitized after every single run once the system is running again, hand wiping everything down and

- o a nightly deep clean. Realized their drivers were without equipment just out there hand wiping down the buses after every route, and that wasn't sufficient. Putting proper procedures in the place before start operating again.
 - o Hoping in the next 10 to 14 days to at least do limited startups. Most routes run four times a day, 60-70-mile trips. Might just start with just the morning and evening runs and then slowly work back up as kind of time allows.
 - o The State of Oregon has reopening and they have five subcommittees, and transit is one of those subcommittees on that. Kayak was invited to join.
 - o All their drivers are over 55, except one who is 54. A few people were stranded and they have been assisting them. Many people are getting help with rides or deliveries from family or other community members, so most elders are able to stay home. Our dispatchers are helping connect people with rides in the community.
- Chickasaw Nation Transportation Services:
 - o Still doing services, but cut back, mostly work or medical focused rides. Skeleton crew: 14 drivers vs 27. Trips have decreased daily. Demand response service only.
 - o All drivers have masks. Sanitizing after every trip. They are doing the best they can.
- Muscogee Creek Nation:
 - o On March 13 a state of emergency was issued. A week later, the high-risk employees went on admin leave. They didn't have many riders. A few weeks later they were told to stop service and have been shut down for 3 weeks now. The most recent stay at home order was until sometime in May.
 - o There are 400 within their jurisdiction. The numbers in OK are still rising.
- Big Woods Transit, Bois Forte Band of Chippewa Tribe:
 - o Transit is running. Volunteer driver program started a few months ago, which has slowed down after the closures of many medical appointments and casinos, etc. Adult day care centers have closed, but local routes are still open for grocery stores, etc., six days per week. Seeing a shift of their services, to try to package food boxes to take to people's houses.
 - o There is a tribal red zone to try to not go outside the red zone. And if you go outside the red zone, you have to self-quarantine to avoid transmission within the reservation.
 - o Food shelter – using two buses to provide social distancing on the bus when going to the food shelter program.
 - o They are disinfecting buses after each route. Handmade mix - bleach, dish soap, water solution. Masks available on buses for those without them. Hand pumps of hand sanitizer.
 - o CARES Act funding has allowed them to get full wages. Transit is very busy. People can't drink the water on the reservation, so people need to get bottled water and food.
- Mississippi Band of Choctaw:
 - o They're going through their surge right now. Tribal Chief and members of tribal council tested positive.
 - o The Tribe has gone into a 24-hour lockdown. There were 4 cases, now 30, one tribal member death. Keep extending the lock down. Having to be very careful to avoid transmission.

- Only essential individuals are healthcare related and transit, though he wanted to shut services. They went from 20 to 10 drivers. All supportive staff are at home. Dispatchers are still working, but shorter shifts. Mostly dialysis and medical runs.
 - They are using Isoclean spray - public health staff is doing this.
 - Someone going to dialysis failed to mention that his brother tested positive. They are now asking if anyone tested positive or if they have had contact with anyone who has tested positive. They put them in touch with the dialysis center for alternate transportation if needed. They have new protocols and have to keep changing them.
 - Only working on fire/police vehicles for their maintenance services. They were taking food out to elders and meals for kids, but everything is suspended now.
 - Interested in more information about hazard pay and National RTAP was going to provide some information shared by other transit agencies.
- Chickaloon Native Village:
 - Not suspended, but very few rides. Many staff are on administrative leave. Working with health and social services. Trying to focus on driver training, working with Neil and using RTAP training.
- Oglala-Sioux Transit:
 - Started with 30-day shelter in place ordinance. The first case of COVID was not a tribal member, someone who had been in Denver. Tribal council banished them from the reservation and did a two-week lock down. There are patrols on the borders, people are only let out for essential activities - medical appointments, picking up medications, getting certain groceries. This Friday is end of the two-week lock-down. The shelter in place will remain until the tribal council removes it.
 - We have not been operating since March 23. We have had a few at tribal council meetings asking why we can't provide service, but our vehicles are so small, so they cannot do social distancing. It was deemed we were not essential and too risky. Tribal programs that are essential are law enforcement, public health, etc.
 - They are doing Zoom tribal council meetings. It is amazing how everyone is adapting to the new technology.
 - Requirements of resolutions in order to get funding in TrAMS. This is an added challenge for tribes. Is a formal resolution/authorization required?
 - Another tribe said an authorization resolution was not required for her when getting the CARES funding.
 - Staff from FTA in Region 9 said they don't require a resolution/authorization for the existing application for the Emergency Relief program, but that CARES Act funding will apply as a new application.

Question: When should we have another Peer Roundtable?

- The group decided to wait 2-3 weeks, so in early to mid-May.