

Memo to the Commissioners

March 11, 2024

From: Liz Blackwell-Moore, Public Health Director

Subject: Proposal in response to the University of Minnesota's Mobility, Access, and Transportation Insecurity program (MATI) RFP

The University of Minnesota's Center for Transportation Studies recently released a Request for Proposals for the Mobility, Access, and Transportation Insecurity program (MATI) with funding from the Federal Transit Administration. The purpose of the program is to support the planning and development of demonstration projects that can help address issues of transportation insecurity. In Phase 1, the MATI program is awarding 8 grants of up to \$150,000 to collaborative teams to develop detailed implementation plans for innovative demonstration projects, including a research and evaluation plan. Selection for Phase 1 means you are eligible for Phase 2 implementation funding up to \$700,000 over 24 months. This funding aligns very well with the Cumberland County Public Health Department's goal to "Improve Transportation Access," adopted in the 2022-2025 Community Health Improvement Plan for Cumberland County. The plan includes the following priority strategies:

- Establish financing mechanism to fund fare-free transit for low-income communities.
- Build capacity of Mobility Management initiatives to improve transportation access.

Since 2022, the Cumberland County Public Health Department has been partnering with the Moving Maine Network, the City of Portland Resettlement Program, and other stakeholders to improve transportation access for very low income families and individuals, especially people experiencing homelessness and those living in emergency housing. The Department worked to develop and implement several solutions, including a shuttle service between Freeport hotels and Portland and a FEMA-funded bus pass program for asylum seekers. The proposed MATI project would enable the Department to continue these efforts to create transportation solutions for very low-income individuals and families.

The Cumberland County Public Health Department is proposing to use Phase 1 MATI program grant funding to develop a community-informed implementation plan for an "institutional-style" bus pass program that provides unlimited rides to qualifying individuals and families in the Greater Portland region. This would include access to the Greater Portland METRO, South Portland Bus Service, BSOOB Transit, and the Lakes Region Explorer. It would function similarly to MaineHealth's pass program for staff and Portland Public Schools' pass program for high schoolers. The implementation plan would include a mobility management program, with staff focused on outreach and partnership-building to ensure accessible, understandable information is available to riders and potential riders.

The planning process itself would result in a comprehensive needs and assets assessment around culturally relevant transportation access in Greater Portland, as well as significant coalition-building among stakeholder organizations. Involved organizations would include transportation providers and agencies that work with the target populations, including immigrant-led community based organizations and the City of Portland's Resettlement Program. Regardless of whether Phase 2 funding is procured, the Phase 1 work would position the region for taking action on solutions and leveraging other discretionary dollars.

Phase 1 MATI program funding will fund the following:

- 0.2 FTE Coordination by Alexis Guy, Health Eating Active Living Team Lead at Cumberland County Public Health Department

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- 0.5 FTE Project Management from the Moving Maine Network – a non-profit statewide coalition focused on advancing transportation access
- Support for community engagement activities – which may include contracts with partner organizations as well as items such as translation, facilitation, stipends, incentives, childcare, etc.
- Technical assistance from a consultant with expertise on institutional pass programs

No matching funding is required for this grant and no additional funding will be needed from the County in order to complete the requirements of this grant.