

“Support Community and Public Transportation”



Ask: Put public and community transportation in statute and support two state funding requests for public and community transit

Why: Accessible, affordable transportation is essential for the employment, healthcare access, and community participation of Alaskans with disabilities, seniors, Alaska Mental Health Trust beneficiaries, youth, and low-income residents. Many communities still lack public or nonprofit transit systems, leaving vulnerable populations without transportation options. Transportation consistently ranks among the top needs in surveys of seniors and people with disabilities.

Alaska’s community transportation systems relies heavily on federal grants, fare collections, and local government support. However, rising fuel costs and growing demand have placed unprecedented financial pressure on transit systems, leading to service cuts and fare increases that disproportionately affect low-income riders.

To address these challenges, we urge the Legislature to support the following three actions:

1. **Enact Statutory Support for Public and Community Transportation**

The DOT&PF currently has no statutory mandate to prioritize public and community transportation. We support **HB 26 (Rep. Mina)** which would require the DOT&PF to develop a statewide public and community transit plan with local input from public, tribal, and nonprofit transit providers. This legislation ensures that community transportation becomes a core responsibility of the department, protecting federal funding, promoting equitable access, and reducing the risk of Title VI violations.

2. **Fund the Human Services Transportation Grant Program—\$1 Million**

We request \$1 million in capital funding for the Human Services Transportation Grant program, administered by the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF). This funding supports essential transit services for seniors and Alaskans with disabilities. The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority recommends \$1 million, while the Governor's FY26 Capital Budget proposes \$750,000. We urge the Legislature to close this \$250,000 gap to ensure consistent, flexible transportation options for those in need.

3. **Restore Transit Match Funding—\$1 Million**

Prior to FY 2018, the state contributed General Fund capital dollars to help transit providers meet local match requirements for federal grants. This funding, ranging from \$500,000 to \$1.5 million annually, leveraged more than triple the amount in federal funds for operational support and capital improvements. To maintain access to federal funding and sustain community transit, we request \$1 million in capital funds to assist transit providers in meeting their match obligations for federal grants.

Conclusion: Investment in Alaska's community transportation systems is critical for connecting all Alaskans to employment, healthcare, and essential services. Legislative support for funding and statutory recognition will strengthen transit networks, improve quality of life, and ensure that vulnerable populations are not left behind.