



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

Urban Mass  
Transportation  
Administration

# CIRCULAR

UMTA C 9041.1

Subject: RURAL TRANSIT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM  
GUIDANCE AND APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

February 8, 1988

1. PURPOSE. This circular provides guidance on the State-administered portion of the rural transit assistance program (RTAP). Under this program grants are awarded to States to provide training and technical assistance for nonurbanized area transit.
2. REFERENCES.
  - a. The Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964, as amended, 49 U.S.C. Section 1601, et seq.
  - b. UMTA Circular 9040.1A, "Section 18 Program Guidance and Grant Application Procedures," dated 5-23-85.
  - c. UMTA Circular 9070.1A, "Section 16(b)(2) Capital Assistance Program Guidance," dated 5-14-85.
3. IMPACT ON DELEGATIONS OF AUTHORITY. This circular contains no delegations of authority.

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## CHAPTER I

### GENERAL OVERVIEW

I-1. PROGRAM OVERVIEW. The Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) is intended to be a broad and flexible program of training, technical assistance, research, and other support services for non-urbanized transit. It provides a source of funding to assist in the design and implementation of training and technical assistance programs and other support services tailored to meet the specific needs of transit operators in nonurbanized areas (under 50,000 population). The program has two components. A State program provides an annual allocation to each State to develop and implement training and technical assistance programs in conjunction with the State's administration of the Section 18 formula assistance program. A national program element will develop information and materials for use by local operators and State administering agencies.

I-2. RTAP AUTHORIZATION. The Federal Mass Transportation Act of 1987, which reauthorizes the Federal transit program through 1991, amended Section 18 of the UMT Act by adding a new subsection 18(h) as follows:

"(h) Rural Transit Assistance Program. -- The Secretary shall establish and carry out a rural transit assistance program in nonurbanized areas. In carrying out this subsection, the Secretary is authorized to make grants and to enter into direct contracts for transit research, technical assistance, training, and related support services in nonurbanized areas".

Prior to this action, the FY 1987 Appropriations Act had designated \$5 million to be used for a rural transit assistance program as part of UMTA's Innovative Techniques and Technology Introduction Program under Section 4(i) of the UMT Act. Thus, Fiscal Year 1987 RTAP funds were derived from the Mass Transit Account of the Highway Trust Fund. Starting in Fiscal Year 1988, RTAP funding will be authorized from the general fund rather than the trust fund.

I-3. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES. The objectives of the RTAP are:

- a. To promote the safe and effective delivery of public transportation in nonurbanized (rural and small urban) areas and to make more efficient use of public and private resources.
- b. To foster the development of State and local capacity for addressing the training and technical assistance needs of the rural/small urban transportation community.

- c. To improve the quality of information and technical assistance available through the development of training and technical assistance resource materials.
- d. To facilitate peer-to-peer self help through the development of local networks of transit professionals.
- e. To support the coordination of public, private, specialized, and human service transportation services.
- f. To build a national data base on the nonurbanized segment of the public transportation industry.

I-4. PROGRAM COMPONENTS. The RTAP has two components which are described below. This circular addresses requirements and application procedures for the first component.

- a. State Program. A portion of the RTAP funds are allocated annually to the States. States may apply for these funds to develop and implement training and technical assistance programs and other support services for rural operators. This component of the program is administered as an element of the annual Section 18 grant to the States.
- b. National Program. This portion of the program is managed in UMTA Headquarters and will consist of the development of training and technical assistance materials for use by States and local operators, a national information clearinghouse function, and other research and coordination activities carried out through contractual arrangements.

It is intended that these two components be coordinated, and that activities undertaken and products developed through the national program be of use to and supportive of the individual State programs. The direction and emphasis of national program efforts will be shaped by the training and technical assistance needs identified by States and local operators. Initial efforts under the national program will include: developing a centralized training and technical information clearinghouse; assessing the kinds of training and technical assistance materials and resources that currently exist and areas that need further development at the national level; developing or adapting training materials for applicability to rural transit operations; keeping abreast of the kinds of activities available through the various State programs; and coordinating the establishment of peer-to-peer assistance through networks of local rural transit operators.

I-5. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES.

- a. Section 18. The Section 18 program provides capital, operating, and administrative assistance for nonurbanized transit operations. The most direct relationship of the RTAP is with the Section 18 program, since the purpose of the RTAP program is to benefit nonurbanized transit operators, who are usually recipients of Section 18 capital or operating assistance. Under the Section 18 program, States may use up to fifteen percent of their annual State apportionment for administering the program and for providing technical assistance to recipients of funds under this section. Such technical assistance may include project planning, program development, management development, coordination of public transportation programs (public and private), and such research as the State may deem appropriate to promote effective means of delivering public transportation service in nonurbanized areas. States are encouraged to continue to use Section 18 funds for such purposes in ways which complement new activities undertaken with RTAP funds. Any expenses incurred by State agencies in administering the RTAP program may be covered within the fifteen percent of the Section 18 State administration funds.
- b. Section 16(b)(2). The Section 16(b)(2) program provides capital assistance for nonprofit agencies to provide transportation for elderly and handicapped persons. Approximately sixty percent of the local agencies which receive Section 16(b)(2) funding provide service in nonurbanized areas. Some of these organizations are also recipients of Section 18 funds and some are participants in coordinated systems which provide a range of transportation services to various human service agency clients. These providers in nonurbanized areas are also eligible to be beneficiaries of RTAP training and technical assistance.
- c. Section 8. Section 8 funds which are made available to the States for planning and technical studies are often used to carry out projects for the benefit of nonurbanized area transit. Two of the National Emphasis Areas for the Section 8 Planning and Technical Studies program directly impact nonurbanized transit. First, States are encouraged to coordinate the management of the Sections 8, 18, 16(b)(2), and the Section 9 Governor's apportionment, since these programs complement each other and have many parallels. States are asked to consider all of these program resources and program for their coordinated use. Second, States are encouraged to develop State Coordination Plans for rural and specialized transportation, especially taking into account the human service transportation services supported by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

d. DOT Coordination Initiative with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

DOT and DHHS have entered into an interagency agreement to promote the coordination of transportation programs supported by the two Departments, and to work with State transportation and human service agencies to improve efforts to coordinate programs at the State and local levels. States may elect to use RTAP funds to undertake activities in support of such coordination efforts.

e. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Rural Transportation Assistance Program (RTAP).

FHWA administers a rural training and technical assistance program, also called RTAP, which was established by Congress in 1982. This program provides for training and technical assistance activities in three areas of rural transportation: highways, bridges, and public transit. FHWA RTAP funding to State highway departments has resulted in the development of Technology Transfer Centers, referred to as T-2 ("T-square") Centers, at universities in forty-three States. These Centers provide a variety of ongoing training and technical assistance activities, primarily oriented to the improvement of rural roads and bridges. In some cases, however, Center activities address broader rural transportation issues, including rural public transit.

The UMTA RTAP is a distinct program, administered separately from the FHWA RTAP. However, where appropriate, State agencies implementing the UMTA RTAP may desire to contract with local FHWA-funded Technology Transfer Centers to carry out particular elements of their transit assistance program.

## CHAPTER II

### ALLOCATIONS AND FUNDING

- I-1. NOTIFICATION. Formal notification of each State's annual RTAP allocation will be made at the same time as the notification of the Section 18 annual apportionment.
- I-2. STATE ALLOCATION. Eighty-five percent of the annual RTAP funding will be designated for State programs. These funds are allocated to the States by an administrative formula. The formula consists of a base level of funding for each State, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the Insular Areas. For States and Puerto Rico, the base is \$50,000, and for Insular Areas (Guam, American Samoa, Northern Marianas, and the Virgin Islands) the base is \$10,000. The remaining funds are distributed according to each State's or area's percentage of the nation's nonurbanized population.
- I-3. FUNDS AVAILABILITY. RTAP funds will have the same period of availability as the Section 18 formula funds. That is, RTAP funds are available to the State for obligation during the fiscal year in which they are allocated, plus two additional fiscal years. Thus, States have three fiscal years in which to apply for their annual RTAP allocation, and have the funds obligated by UMTA in an approved grant. If a particular State's funds are not obligated by UMTA in an approved grant within this time, they will be reallocated among all the States with the following fiscal year's allocation.
- I-4. FEDERAL MATCHING REQUIREMENTS. There is no Federal requirement for a local match for the RTAP funds.
- I-5. STATE APPLICANT. There will be a single administering agency for RTAP funds at the State level. Normally, this applicant/recipient will be the agency designated by the Governor to administer the Section 18 program. State agencies will apply for RTAP funding within the same grant application that they use to apply for Section 18 funding.

During the initial start-up years of the program there may not be enough lead time to permit a consolidated application for both programs. In such cases, the RTAP application will be treated as an amendment to the State's most recent Section 18 grant. However, once the program is operating on a regular basis, the State's annual RTAP funding request would be included as an element of the annual Section 18 grant application. If there are unusual circumstances under which an exception to this must be considered, these should be discussed with the appropriate UMTA Regional Office.



### CHAPTER III

#### PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY

III-1. ELIGIBLE ASSISTANCE CATEGORIES. RTAP funds may be used to support nonurbanized transit activities in four categories:

- a. training;
- b. technical assistance;
- c. research; and
- d. related support services.

III-2. PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT. Each State's RTAP program should be developed through a process which provides maximum opportunity for the participation of nonurbanized transit operators, both public and private, in identifying and establishing priority areas of need for the training, technical assistance, research, and other support services, and in determining the appropriate mechanisms for delivering services. This process should be documented in the State's State Management Plan for Section 18.

III-3. PROGRAM DELIVERY. States have broad discretion in deciding how best to provide assistance and implement projects under the RTAP program. States may use a wide range of mechanisms for program delivery based on the needs and resources available in each State. These can include:

- a. assistance by in-house State staff;
- b. contracts with private consultants, universities, nonprofit organizations, State transit associations or other organizations of operators;
- c. support of peer-to-peer networks of individuals to provide assistance to each other;
- d. interagency agreements with other State agencies, both within the State and in other States; and
- e. scholarships or tuition and expenses for individuals to attend training courses or workshops.

III-4. NEW ACTIVITY. The RTAP program is intended to serve as a stimulus for new activity in the training, technical assistance and research areas, not as a funding substitute for current programs. While there is no specific prohibition against using RTAP funds to support existing activities, States are encouraged to use the resource to expand their activities in areas which qualify under the program.

- III-5. STATE ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES. RTAP funds may not be used for administration of the RTAP program or for overhead expenses. However, any State administrative expense incurred in administering the RTAP program may be covered by the fifteen percent of a State's annual Section 18 formula allocation available for administrative purposes.
- III-6. ADVISORY COMMITTEE. Each State, as part of its implementation of RTAP, is encouraged to establish an RTAP advisory committee, or other mechanism, to enable nonurbanized transit operators within the State to provide ongoing review and comment on the State's program development and delivery. The costs associated with implementing an RTAP advisory committee are eligible RTAP expenses.
- III-7. RTAP PARTICIPATION BY PROVIDERS IN URBANIZED AREAS. Providers of specialized transportation in urbanized areas, such as 16(b)(2) funded operations, as well as public transit operators in small urbanized areas, have many of the same training and technical assistance needs as transit providers in nonurbanized areas. Participation by these providers in RTAP-sponsored activities is permitted, at the State's discretion, so long as the activities are primarily designed to benefit nonurbanized transit providers.
- III-8. POOLING OF STATE RTAP FUNDS. UMTA encourages States to consider the possibility of "pooling" RTAP funds in order to support activities or projects that would be more effectively carried out on a larger scale than a single State. Such pooling could be done among two or more States within a region, depending on how many States chose to participate. Examples of activities that could be funded through pooled State RTAP funds include regional workshops or training courses, development of technical assistance information, and peer-to-peer assistance activities.

If two or more States agreed to undertake an RTAP project which involved pooled funds, two methods could be used to consolidate the funding:

- a. Transfer of obligated RTAP funds. Under this method a State would include in its RTAP program of projects a contribution to a "pooling" project. Once the RTAP/Section 18 application was approved, the State could transfer the designated funds to the organization that had the lead in implementing the project, either through a contract or some type of interagency agreement. The receiving organization could be another State agency administering RTAP, or it could be an independent organization (public or private) agreed upon by the States involved. In this method, UMTA would not have a role facilitating the pooling project other than to approve individual States' RTAP programs of projects.

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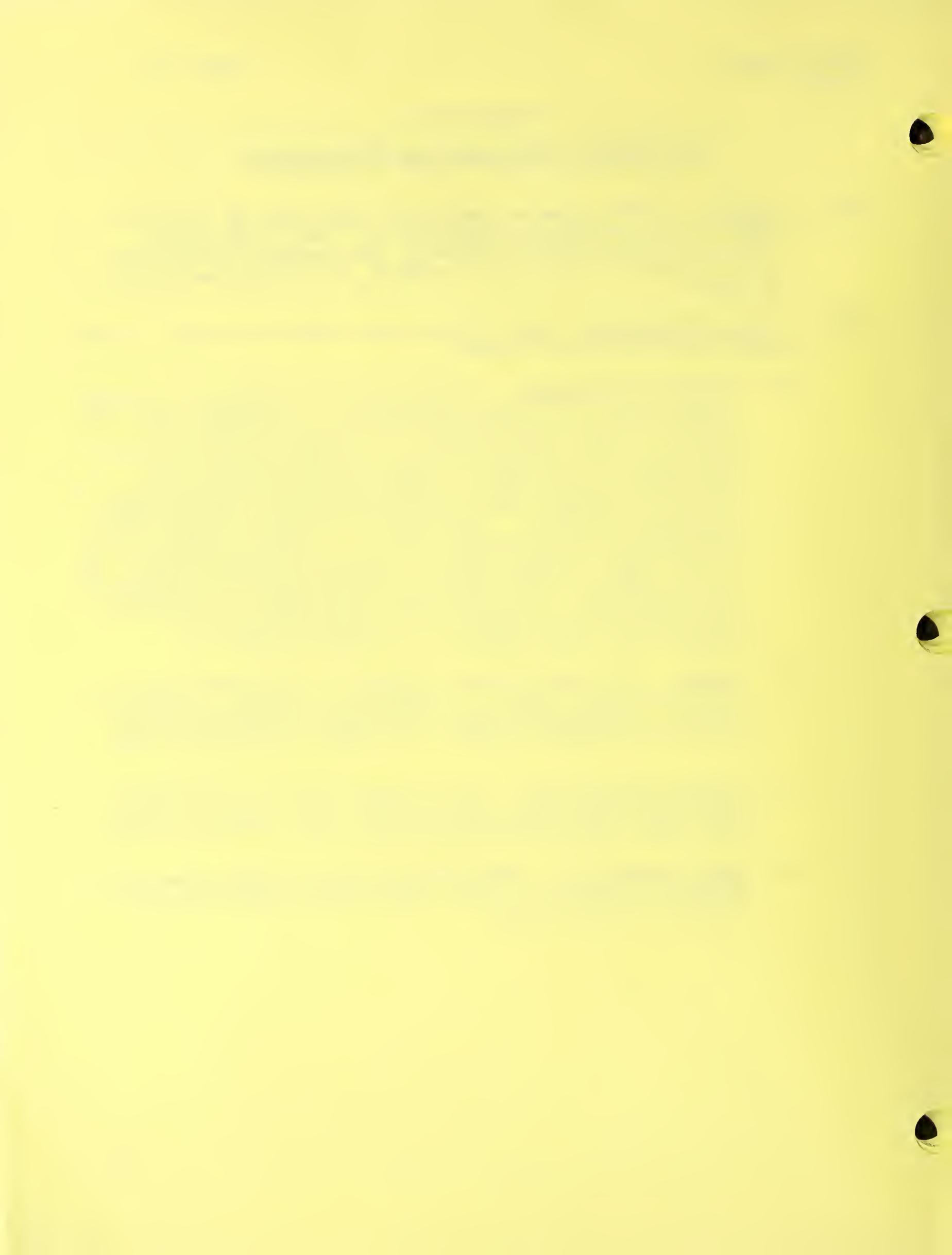
- b. Pooling funds awarded to single State agency. Under this method, a single State agency would be agreed upon to be the grant recipient for all of the pooled funds of participating States. Those participating donor States would each inform the UMTA Regional Office in writing that they desired to have a certain amount of their RTAP allocation transferred to the recipient State for use in the joint project. The donor States would then have the RTAP funds available to them for obligation reduced by the amount of the requested transfer. The recipient State would apply to UMTA for the entire amount needed to fully fund the joint project.



Chapter IV

APPLICATION PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS

- IV-1. GENERAL. State agencies apply for RTAP funds as part of their annual Section 18 application. Where this is not possible in the start-up years of the program, States may apply for RTAP funds as an amendment to an approved Section 18 grant.
- IV-2. STATE APPLICATION. The following are required as part of the application for RTAP funding:
- a. Program of Projects. A separate RTAP program of projects is required with every application. It differs from the regular Section 18 program of projects in that the projects within the program do not indicate subrecipient assistance, but rather the type of activities to be undertaken within the four RTAP assistance categories. A format and sample RTAP program of projects are provided as Exhibits A and B. The samples in Exhibit B are only intended to illustrate the level of detail expected, and to show that a broad range of projects can be funded. It is not meant to suggest that projects should be funded in all categories, or to prescribe the number or kinds of projects that are eligible. A State's program of projects may vary greatly from year to year.
  - b. Budget. The RTAP funding request will be shown as an additional line item of the Section 18 budget, (Exhibit C of UMTA Circular 9040.1A). Exhibit C of this circular shows that budget modified to include the RTAP funding.
  - c. Standard Assurances. The one-time Section 18 Standard Assurances that are on file in the UMTA Regional Office will cover the RTAP program also.
  - d. State Assurances. The Section 18 State Assurances filed with each Section 18 grant application cover the RTAP funding, as applicable.



Chapter V

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

V-1. UMTA PAYMENT PROCEDURES. RTAP payments will be made through the same procedures that recipients receive payments for the Section 18 grants. Requests for RTAP reimbursement have a special identifier. The number "7" is used in place of the letter "X" in the grant number when claiming reimbursement.

V-2. PROGRAM REPORTING.

a. Reports to UMTA

(1) RTAP Program of Projects. Semi-annually the State should send to the Regional Office an updated RTAP program of projects. This should be reported on the same schedule as the semi-annual update of the regular Section 18 program of projects.

(2) Financial report. The annual Financial Status Report (SF 269) should include RTAP fund activity.

b. National Program Coordination. States may be asked to provide information on various RTAP activities conducted by the State for use by the National Program.

V-3. REVISIONS TO THE RTAP PROGRAM OF PROJECTS. It is intended that the State agency have broad flexibility in programming its RTAP allocation within the four eligible RTAP program categories: training, technical assistance, research, and related support services. Any activities within these categories are included within the scope of the RTAP project. States may make the following revisions to an approved RTAP program of projects without prior UMTA notification or approval:

a. Changes, additions, or deletions to activities within the four eligible RTAP categories.

b. Reallocation of funds among the four RTAP categories.

V-4. STATE MANAGEMENT PLAN REVISION. State agencies participating in the RTAP program should revise or amend their Section 18 State Management Plan (SMP) to include the administration of RTAP. SMP revisions should be forwarded to the UMTA Regional Office by July 1, 1988.

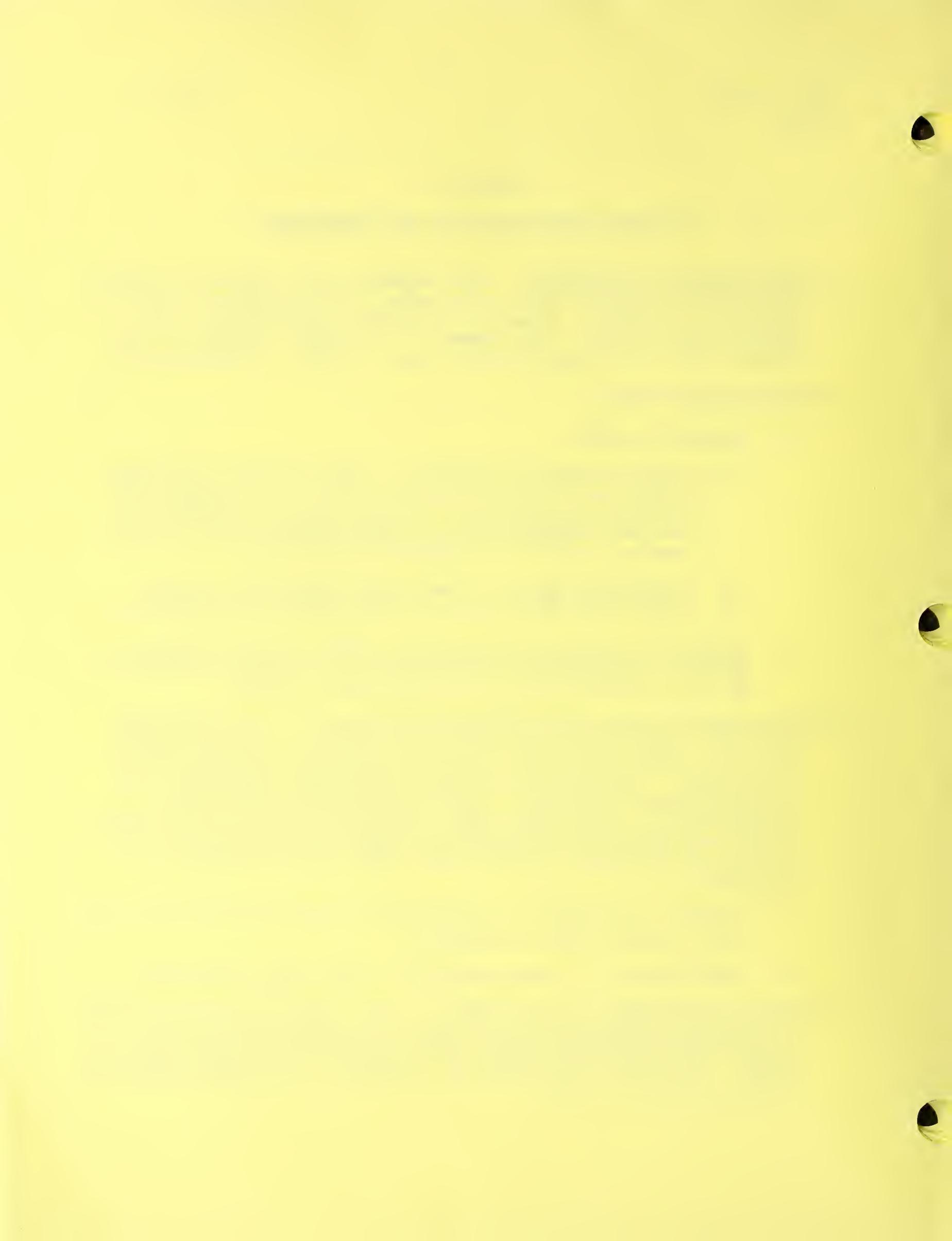


EXHIBIT A  
RTAP PROGRAM OF PROJECTS  
(SAMPLE FORMAT)

STATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
FY \_\_\_\_ ALLOCATION: \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
CARRYOVER FUNDS : \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
TOTAL RTAP FUNDS AVAILABLE: \_\_\_\_\_

	<u>Project Description</u>	<u>Federal Share</u>
A.	<u>TRAINING</u>	
1.		\$ _____
2.		\$ _____
3.		\$ _____
	TRAINING -SUBTOTAL	\$ _____
B.	TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE	
1.		\$ _____
2.		\$ _____
3.		\$ _____
	TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE - SUBTOTAL	\$ _____
C.	TRANSIT RESEARCH	
1.		\$ _____
2.		\$ _____
	TRANSIT RESEARCH - SUBTOTAL	\$ _____
D.	RELATED SUPPORT SERVICES	
1.		\$ _____
	SUPPORT SERVICES - SUBTOTAL	\$ _____
E.	PROGRAM RESERVE (Not to exceed 10% of programmed RTAP funds)	\$ _____
	TOTAL PROGRAMMED (RTAP)	\$ _____

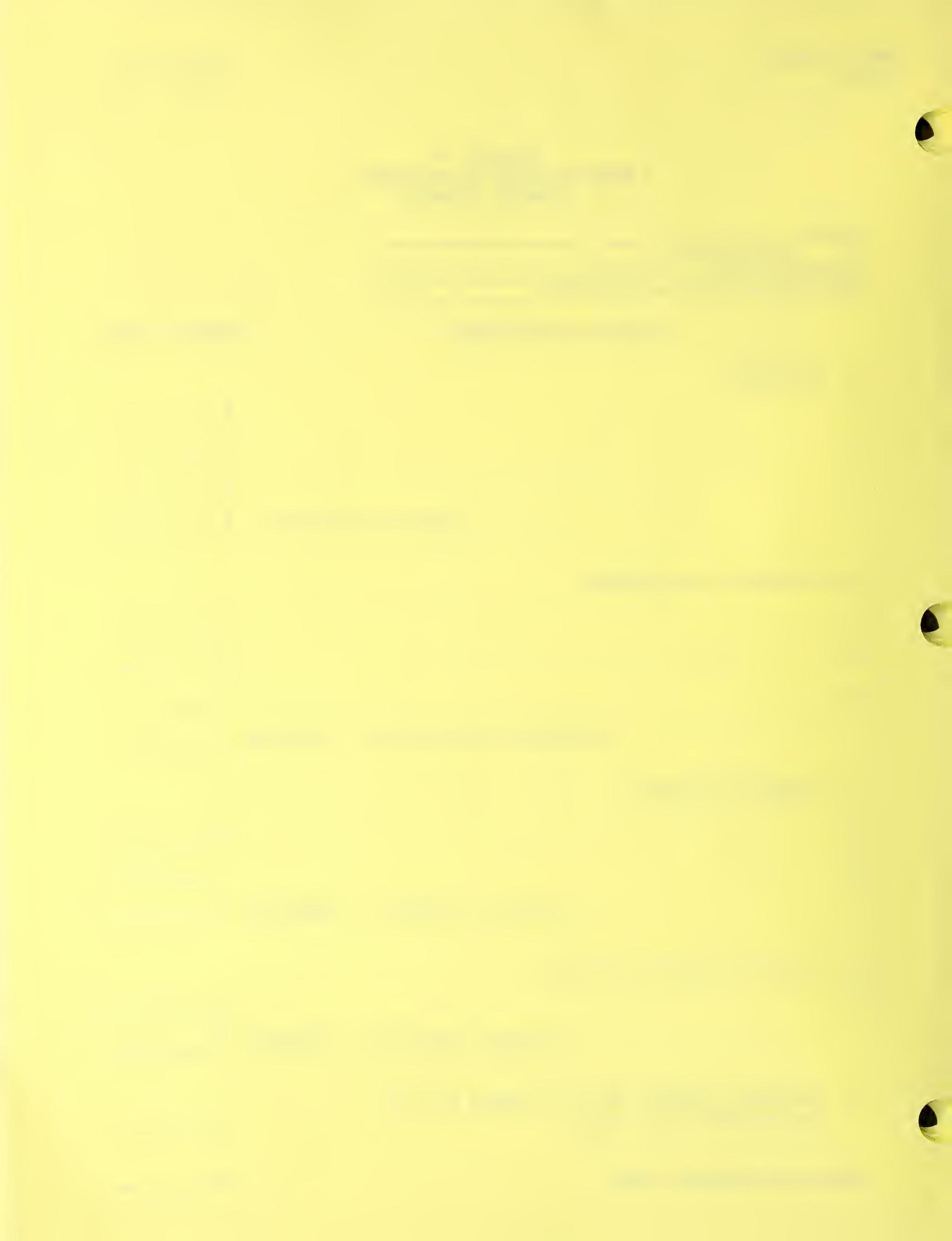


EXHIBIT B  
RTAP PROGRAM OF PROJECTS  
- SAMPLE -  
(For Illustration Purposes Only)

STATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
FY \_\_\_\_ ALLOCATION: \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
CARRYOVER FUNDS : \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
TOTAL RTAP FUNDS AVAILABLE: \_\_\_\_\_

A. TRAINING

1. Two workshops on "Contracting with the Private Sector" to be held in northern and southern parts of state. \$ \_\_\_\_\_
  2. Development of training module on vehicle maintenance procedures particularly suited to climate and terrain of this state (adaptation of off-the-shelf materials). \$ \_\_\_\_\_
  3. Scholarships for four local managers to attend the Rural Transit Management Workshop at the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee. \$ \_\_\_\_\_
  4. Purchase of three video cassette recorders for use in the state's training program. \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- TRAINING - SUBTOTAL \$ \_\_\_\_\_

B. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

1. One state "Circuit Rider" to travel around state giving on-site technical assistance to Section 18 and 16(b)(2) recipients (salary, benefits and travel expenses). \$ \_\_\_\_\_
  2. Support for peer-to-peer network (travel and expenses). \$ \_\_\_\_\_
  3. Support for consortium of operators developing specifications for joint purchase of insurance and organizing self-insurance pool. \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE - SUBTOTAL \$ \_\_\_\_\_

C. TRANSIT RESEARCH

1. Survey of human services agencies providing transportation services independently, not as part of coordinated systems.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

TRANSIT RESEARCH - SUBTOTAL \$ \_\_\_\_\_

D. RELATED SUPPORT SERVICES

1. Support for Joint Symposium on Coordination sponsored by four states in region for state Human Services and Transportation administrators.

SUPPORT SERVICES -SUBTOTAL \$ \_\_\_\_\_

- E. PROGRAM RESERVE (Not to exceed 10% of programmed RTAP funds)

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL PROGRAMMED (RTAP)

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

EXHIBIT C

SECTION 18 BUDGET

State: \_\_\_\_\_

Grantee: (designated State Agency)

SECTION 18

A. State administration, Planning  
and Technical Assistance

S.18 Fed. Share (100%)  
S. 9 Transfer (80%)

B. Project Administration

\_\_\_\_\_  
(net cost) Fed. Share (80%)

C. Capital

\_\_\_\_\_  
(net cost) Fed. Share (80%)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(E & H) Fed. Share (95%)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(bicycle) Fed. Share (90%)

D. Operating

\_\_\_\_\_  
(net cost) Fed. Share (50%)

E. Program Reserve  
(Catory C)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(net cost) Fed. Share (80%)

TOTAL SECTION 18 FUNDS REQUESTED

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

=====

RTAP

A. Training

\_\_\_\_\_

B. Technical Assistance

\_\_\_\_\_

C. Research

\_\_\_\_\_

D. Support Services

\_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL RTAP FUNDS REQUESTED

\$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Fed. Share (100%)

=====

TOTAL GRANT FUNDS REQUESTED  
(SECTION 18 AND RTAP)

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

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