

**COVID-19 Recovery Listening Session #6:
U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), Federal Transit
Administration (FTA) and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban
Development (HUD), Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH)
Partnership for COVID-19 Recovery
Friday, November 13, 2020 | 3:00 – 4:30 PM EST**

Henrika Buchanan:

Good afternoon. I'm Henrika Buchanan, Associate Administrator for Transit Safety and Oversight and Chief Safety Officer for the Federal Transit Administration. Thank you, everyone, for joining us at FTA's sixth COVID-19 Recovery Listening Session. Today, we appreciate [audio cuts out] including counterparts from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Public and Indian Housing. In addition to our technical assistance partner at the National Center for Mobility Management, four transit agency leaders and the strategic initiative managers at the Office of Housing Authority. They are joining to discuss the launch of a new DOT and HUD partnership to encourage value-added services and partnerships as communities recover from the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Let me start by introducing FTA Deputy Administrator, Jane Williams. Since 2017, Deputy Administrator Williams has led the FTA. She has focused on the Secretary's priorities of safety, infrastructure and innovation and works closely with many of you to implement those priorities. She also manages some of the largest formula and competitive grant programs in the Department, including our latest and largest funding program under the CARES Act. Her background, including serving in two previous Administrations under Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, as well as spending some time as a Senior Legislative Advisor on the Hill and working as the Director of the Washington Area Transit Office for the Maryland Department of Transportation, makes her well prepared to lead our agency as we work to provide relief for the transit industry during this public health emergency. Now, I will turn the session over to Deputy Administrator Williams.

Jane Williams:

Good afternoon and thank you, Henrika. And thank you, everyone, for joining us today. As many of you know, Henrika Buchanan has been invaluable in leading the agency's response to the COVID-19 public health emergency. Thank you, Henrika, for continuing to manage this very important work, and thank you to your team for managing our outreach to the industry through these valuable opportunities for peer exchange.

Let me also begin by thanking all of you for your dedication and resilience during the COVID-19 public health emergency. Your frontline workers continue to provide critical services to essential workers in healthcare, emergency response and food service—jobs that have sustained all of us over the past few months. On behalf of the Trump

Administration and Secretary Chao, thank you for your commitment to providing critical transportation services to those who depend on it every day.

Before I get into more details about our new partnership for COVID-19 recovery, I would like to highlight the Trump Administration's whole-of-government approach in recovering from the COVID-19 public health emergency. Since the President signed the CARES Act into law on March 27, FTA has worked around the clock to distribute \$25 billion in emergency assistance to help transit agencies across America, and to date, we have awarded more than 94 percent of CARES Act grant awards, totaling more than \$23.4 billion in funding, helping keep America and its economy moving. Under Secretary Chao's leadership, and working with our partners at FEMA, U.S. DOT distributed more than 100 million face coverings across the transportation network. As part of that, we distributed more than 14 million masks to more than 2,200 transit agencies for frontline workers and riders to support safe operations. In August, FTA launched an online platform to provide a national forum for the transit industry to exchange ideas and best practices regarding COVID-19 recovery. FTA Executive Director Matt Welbes will tell you more about that later.

Today, I'm pleased to discuss the unique partnership we've forged between FTA and the U.S. DOT and the Office of Public and Indian Housing at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Our agencies are launching a joint educational campaign to promote opportunities to help people access transportation, educational supports such as Wi-Fi access, food, medical appointments and other essential services by educating our stakeholders on how transit agencies, local municipalities, public housing authorities and school districts can coordinate in their community; by working together, we can improve access to transportation, education and other critical community services. Let me also add that on a personal note, my daughter happens to work in Secretary Carson's office at HUD, so I know first-hand the important work that they are doing there, and I'm excited to partner with Assistant Secretary Kurtz and PIH.

We want to encourage the public transit grantees, Public Housing Authority Tribes and Tribally Designated Entities to create local partnerships and develop strategies to provide healthy communities, by providing nontraditional services, such as Wi-Fi; identify opportunities to use transit access to address community needs by providing special services for older adults to get to special hours at grocery stores and Wi-Fi enabled buses and communities that lack access to the Internet to support remote learning; identify opportunities to leverage federal funding from Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility agencies to meet community needs; and share data to determine gaps in services. Our partnership could not be more important than it is today, so I hope you will join us in expanding all of the good work performed by our state and local partners across America.

Now, I'm pleased to introduce Robert Hunter Kurtz, Assistant Secretary of the Office of Public and Indian Housing. Assistant Secretary Kurtz oversees efforts to ensure safe and affordable housing across HUD's public housing programs, creating opportunities for residents' self-sufficiency and economic independence. With more than a decade of federal service, he has served in several roles at HUD, including as a Community

Planning and Development Specialist, Senior Advisor to the FHA Commissioner and Deputy Chief of Staff to the Secretary. At the White House, he served as the Deputy Chief of Staff at the Council of Economic Advisers, and prior to his federal service, he served as the Deputy Director of Detroit's Department of Housing and Revitalization. In addition to Assistant Secretary Kurtz, we will also hear from Amy Conrick with the National Center for Mobility Management and four speakers from transit systems in California, Iowa, North Carolina and Texas about how they are creating value-added services and partnerships to help their communities recover from the COVID-19 public health emergency.

When you registered for this session, you provided responses to several poll questions, and FTA Executive Director Welbes will go over the responses in a moment. You may also share additional thoughts and comments in the chat box on your screen. And with those housekeeping matters out of the way, let me turn it over to our federal partners for this initiative, Hunter Kurtz from HUD, to share insight on how this supports their mission and the needs of their audience. Hunter, the floor is yours.

Hunter Kurtz:

Thank you, Jane. My name is Hunter Kurtz. I'm the Assistant Secretary for Public and Indian Housing at HUD. I really appreciate that kind introduction and I'm really excited about the possibilities of our partnership here. To everyone out there on the phone, thank you for joining us on this Friday the thirteenth. We are excited for you to hear about this important collaboration between us at HUD and FTA. So, since Secretary Carson was confirmed as Secretary of HUD, he's really championed thinking outside of the box to solve problems for low-income Americans. This is evident in his creation of EnVision Centers. EnVision Centers are located across the country, and they sort of formalize partnerships between public housing authorities, tribes and service providers. The EnVision center model has increased the availability of vital services for low-income Americans and proved that increased cooperation amongst the community partners can have tangible success in the communities. Throughout the pandemic, we've witnessed government at all levels, private corporations and nonprofits break down existing silos in order to provide lifesaving services, and building on the success of community partnerships that were already in place. We looked at today, this will be a catalyst to begin another partnership that can further assist the COVID-19 recovery response.

A few weeks ago, I was approached by Deputy Administrator Jane Williams with this exciting opportunity to further assist the residents we serve. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, public housing authorities and tribes have done true yeoman's work in caring for their residents during this unprecedented time. Having to serve the residents in ways unheard of in the past, tribes and public housing authorities have truly been on the front lines of the COVID response, and I thank them for their hard work and dedication. The COVID-19 public health emergency has highlighted the gaps in access to essential service for low-income individuals and families, people with disabilities and older adults. These circumstances increased the need for reimagining the delivery of a central service in communities across America. As Deputy Administrator Williams mentioned, on March 27, the President signed the CARES Act, which included \$2.2 trillion in

funding to prevent, prepare for and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically in the CARES Act there was \$12.4 billion for programs and of that, 2.4 specifically earmarked for public housing authorities and tribes to ensure families can stay in their homes during the pandemic and housing programs can continue to provide their essential services.

If we take a quick look at the slides here, you can see some of the uses for the funding set aside for public housing authorities, if we can go to the next slide, as well as tribes and Tribal Designated Housing Entities. For public housing authorities, the CARES Act funds specifically authorized the use of supplemental funds to support distanced learning efforts during the pandemic. Along with the funding, the CARES Act also provided HUD with the ability to grant broad waiver authority to public housing authorities and tribes to address the pandemic. These waivers allow tribes to use both the CARES Act funding as well as standard HUD funding to work creatively and think outside the box as they care for their residents in ways they've not needed to in the past. And as you can see listed on the slides, the next two slides, here are some things -- I'm sorry, the slides you can see some examples of how this works. I've got to say, the partnership that we are talking about today is sort of the same vein as this creative thinking, and I encourage public housing authorities and tribes to identify opportunities to align public transportation assets including Wi-Fi enabled vehicles and routes and bus stops, et cetera, with communities during the COVID public health emergency and beyond. And by working together, public transit, public housing authorities and tribes can improve the availability, accessibility and efficiency of a central services during this public health emergency. We strongly encourage this unique partnership to provide meaningful changes in our communities. If we take a look at the next -- this slide -- and, you can see some of the ways you can get access to, and ways you can use this partnership to continue and grow-- if we can go to the next slide -- there as well. And here's a couple of tips for how to really get this partnership going. But to really get into more details about this, I'm going to turn this over to Matt now who is going to do a deep dive, but before I do that, just thank you everyone out there for all your hard work and dedication during these difficult times.

Matt Welbes:

Thank you, Hunter. And good afternoon, everyone. Let me add my thanks for joining us today. As Jane said earlier, we are proud to support the transit industry COVID-19 recovery and response efforts with our listening sessions, and we're also excited today to partner with HUD and PIH for this listening session. I wanted to take this moment to remind you of the FTA's COVID-19 Recovery Discussion Forum. FTA launched this online forum earlier this year to complement these listening sessions and give transit industry professionals an additional channel to exchange ideas and best practices, and many of you have been taking advantage of this forum and many of the ongoing discussions are especially pertinent to today's listening session topic, so for more information on the forum, including information on how you can register and start interacting with your peers, you can download the handout available in the files download box that is below on your screen.

Now, I'd like to talk about the findings from our registration poll questions. We had over 1,000 participants register for today's event and of those participants, we received about 200 responses to our poll questions from transit provider representatives, each representing one transit agency. Here's what we learned. You'll see this up on the screen. About 60 percent of responding agencies said they developed partnerships with housing authorities, local businesses or nonprofit organizations to provide services to the community. 42 percent of the responding agencies are providing trips for essential workers, and one quarter of the responding agencies are providing trips for local services agencies. Another 36 percent of responding agencies are providing meal delivery, 8 percent are providing pharmacy delivery and 21 percent are providing grocery deliveries. Another 7 percent said their agencies are providing Wi-Fi for schools, community centers and other locations. About one in 10 of the respondents said they are helping to transport COVID-19 tests in their communities, and another quarter of respondents are providing on-demand transit services replacements or on location. As you can see, one-fifth of respondents told us their agencies are providing transportation mobility management services, and then some additional value-added services that respondents said their agencies are providing include the following: delivery to and from food banks, delivery from local restaurants, nonemergency medical transportation, distribution of personal protection equipment, toiletries and other protective items, as well as continued transportation to in-person classes. These results demonstrate the many innovative and advanced transit agency efforts around the country to create value-added services and partnerships as communities recover from this public health emergency, and we are really grateful to everybody who took the time to respond.

Now, we are going to begin the speaker presentations and we will begin with our first speaker, Amy Conrick. And Amy is the Director of the National Center for Mobility Management; that's an FTA program administered by Easter Seals, the Community Transportation Association of America and the American Public Transportation Association. Amy, I'm now turning the session over to you.

Amy Conrick:

Great, thank you so much. Good afternoon, everybody. I see some familiar names in the chat box. Good to see you there, and thank you for being here. I would like to take just a few minutes to tell you a bit more about who we are and how we can help setting up these new types of partnerships. So, before I do, I want to express my appreciation to the FTA and to HUD. This partnership and the types of activities your agencies are allowing grantees to pursue is an excellent example of your flexibility in responding to the needs of the community across the country, especially within the context of the pandemic.

For those who are not familiar, the National Center for Mobility Management, as Matt said, is a Technical Assistance Center funded through a cooperative agreement with the Federal Transit Administration and operated through a consortium of three national organizations: the American Public Transportation Association, my home organization which is the Community Transportation Association of America and Easter Seals. Our

mission is a pretty simple one: to promote customer-centered mobility strategies that advance good health, economic vitality, self-sufficiency and communities. We do this by working within communities and through cost-effective partnerships, such as with housing and human service agencies to help communities improve and where needed to create transportation options to better serve their community; hence the term mobility management. We assist communities in managing mobility options. NCMM, as we call it, the National Center for Mobility Management, and this DOT partnership is three-fold. First, we are here to facilitate conversations between transportation, public housing and other community partners. This can encompass a range of activity from providing information to housing partners on transit agencies and mobility managers in your area, to connecting you with promising practices as we learn them, all the way to actually facilitating conversations between local transportation and housing agencies, something we are very happy to do. We will be doing this through our Regional Liaison structure, and you can see the screen print there, so you would identify the state within which you fall within the FTA region and then contact that person and they will be happy to connect you with transit agencies in your area. And, there is the URL at the bottom of the list so you can see where to find those regional liaisons. Our second role is for NCMM to track these partnerships and projects as they occur. Already on our website you can view 20 such projects, and we would like to add yours too and so you can either e-mail those directly to me and you can see my e-mail there conrick@CTAA.org or e-mail them to your Regional Liaison. We are hoping that by continuing to track these partnerships and outcomes that we will inform future partnerships and spark other ideas in other communities. And, this is an example or a screenshot from that page; the URL as you can see is the [National Center for Mobility Management.org/CCAM](http://NationalCenterforMobilityManagement.org/CCAM). And this is our CCAM page, and there you can see a few rows of that table, which is a rolling table, and as I say, right now we have 20 examples and we look forward to adding more. Our third role is informing the broader field of transportation human services agency on cross sector partnerships that are occurring. We do this through our new feature on our website, which is updated every weekday, as well as the resources posted on our topic pages. All of NCMM's resources, blogs and new items are keyword searchable. You simply enter your search term in our advanced search features and you should have access through all the items we have that are relevant. Say, for example, the housing and transportation. In addition, as shown by that red circle, with one click, you can also search across the other four technical assistance centers funded through the Federal Transit Administration. So, think of this as a one-stop search feature for you on issues that are important to you and your agency. Finally, we hope that you develop innovative partnerships and you will let us know about those. At the very least, we will add them to the table which I showed you, but we would also like to feature some of them in our blog series. So, we are happy to get on the phone and interview you about what you are doing and add them onto our website so others can read about it. So, please stay in touch and thank you very much.

Matt Welbes:

Thank you, Amy. Our next speaker is Julia Castillo. Julia is the Executive Director for the Heart of Iowa Regional Transit Agency, providing services in central Iowa. Julia, I'm now turning the session over to you.

Julia Castillo:

Thank you much. Good afternoon, everyone. I'm excited to be here and tell you about Iowa and what HIRTA has been doing. Iowa is unique in that we have it written in the state code that there will be public transportation provided in all 99 of our counties, so HIRTA is the designated state system serving the seven-county region in central Iowa, and we also are unique in that we have the seven counties that surround the Des Moines Metro. As you can see on the screen, our population for our region is a little over 300,000 and our total square miles we serve are a little over 4,000. We currently provide door-to-door demand response services in addition to contracting with CyRide, which is providing their ADA paratransit services. We also have two contracts for vanpools, and we are partnering with volunteer driver programs and where there aren't any, we are in the process of developing our own.

So, the impacts of COVID, as you can see before COVID we provided about 300,000 trips annually, and in early COVID that decreased by about 90 percent and currently we are at about 79 percent. However, Iowa is currently a hotspot, and our numbers are increasing, and so we anticipate that the decrease will continue to rise over the next little while until they can get a better handle on it here in our state. The allocated cost of providing those trips since COVID has increased 45 percent. So, that's been a little bit of a challenge as well. With our workforce, we decreased our workforce by about 40 percent, and that was due to a lot of our drivers requesting leave or decided just to quit because they do fall into the high-risk category of COVID, and we had a pretty drastic decline in requests for service, so we were not able to keep everybody on. Currently, all of our employees, including our dispatchers and schedulers, have all been moved to remote work and they are continuing to do that right now.

So, the impact on our budget was that most of our contract services abruptly ended, and our nonemergency medical transportation revenue declined significantly. Again, our trips increased 45 percent, but things like fixed cost expenses, utilities, Internet, those all remain the same even though revenues declined, and so we've been taking a really hard look at this point what this is going to mean for us in the future because we were not the only ones affected by COVID, so were the cities and counties, United Way, our bus ads, all things we rely on to help fund transportation. And the cost for safety of course went up as well, and we do anticipate that that will continue. All of the protocols we have now in purchasing machinery and driver protections, like the new barriers, and social distancing bands for the buses and keeping larger supplies of cleaning and PPP. So, the CARES Act funding I must say we are very, very grateful for the federal government for providing that as a stopgap measure, and it really helped save us being able to continue to operate through this, but it also gives me pause to think we have to look at other ways of funding transportation. And one of the things I know we've talked

to CTAA about—is there a way we can change the 5311 funding from a 50/50 match to 80/20 because knowing smaller rural areas, that 50 percent match is going to be quite difficult in the coming years.

So, the things we are doing, we were fortunate to have a Mobility for All Pilot Program grant. So, we hired a Mobility Coordinator. They are creating a life of a trip educational video and developing a *do you have transportation* campaign and we're working with health agencies to get them to inquire about transportation while they are making their appointments, and we're building a travel training program that'll focus on educating caregivers, and we are developing a lot of materials to do outreach more to target diverse groups, such as refugees or Latinos and lower income. Some of the other things we've been able to do is partner with our local area agency on aging for meal delivery and we also have been able to do assurance calls where we have a staff member that literally makes calls to all of the seniors that are currently not riding our services and making referrals and reaching them out and connecting them with other food securities, and one thing not on this slide that we just got was the United Way received a grant from the state, and we are providing transportation to get people to trainings to train to be -- get nursing or welding or things like that for displaced workers, so we are really happy to be part of that as well. Thank you.

Matt Welbes:

Thank you, Julia. Our next speaker is Gray Johnston, and Gray is a Transportation Planner for the Greensboro Transit Agency, providing services in the Greensboro, North Carolina area. Gray, I'm turning the session service over to you now.

Gray Johnston:

Hello, everyone. Thank you for having me at FTA. Glad to be here. I will briefly go over Greensboro. Basically, we are a midsize city in North Carolina, about 300,000 people, and as you see on the slide we have 16 daily fixed routes that peak at 30 minutes during the weekdays and hourly services on weeknights and weekends, and we have a specialized service with some University partners we call HEAT, which are three fixed routes for students, and they are open to the general public as well. And then lastly, we have a citywide transit service paratransit that's pretty high in demand. Next slide please.

The impact of COVID has been pretty tremendous obviously as it has everywhere. And I am more of a long-range planner, so I'm not in the day-to-day operations. So, the first thing I looked at when we were analyzing this is the ridership losses obviously. And I'll preface all of this by saying the majority of our riders are folks that depend on transit, and so there is not necessarily that we lost riders, but that we lost trips that these riders are taking because first and foremost they were being safe and staying home if they could, but also, we've vastly reduced our services during the peak of lockdown. But during that time it coincided with the FTA's HOPE grant application, and essentially we were looking forward to the future, and luckily that's what I get to do is live in the future instead of the present, especially pertinent in 2020, and we decided looking at all the

existing inequities in our community, we really honed in on the digital divide as people are calling it and as our school system built for county schools shut down, over 7,000 students didn't have access to the Internet. So, we decided to put an application about getting our transit agency to apply for funds to do a technical study to see how we can leverage our transportation and transit infrastructure to expand Wi-Fi access throughout the community. Essentially, we are still very much in the conceptual phase and haven't started the planning process at all, but there's a lot of synergy happening in Greensboro. We saw Gilbert County schools put their school buses in the communities and neighborhoods that lacked access, and we saw them turn parking lots at schools into Wi-Fi access hubs, and we already had existing infrastructure on our buses; we have modems that actually can project Wi-Fi. But then we started thinking bigger about as COVID winds down hopefully the impact of the digital divide isn't going to go away necessarily, so we thought about more permanent solutions that could last and help Greensboro be more resilient and equitable. So basically, the plan will look at transit shelter, streetlights, our buses, and also our fiber-optic cable signal systems, and we are going to look to see how each of those assets can project Wi-Fi networks and basically weave together a public-free Wi-Fi network. It just so happens that transit -- we are in the business of physical mobility but we also started thinking about transit as being in this virtual mobility space, and basically we think it will improve both the quality of life for our riders and the general community, but also help us deliver our service better. Transit has been rapidly adapting to new technologies as most of us probably know, and GCA just adopted along with several regional peers mobile ticketing applications and we've been using a live tracking app for a long time, so we started thinking about those folks that don't have full access to these applications that help us communicate how our service is running, and if we have Wi-Fi at a shelter, may be folks that have a smart phone but don't have a data plan can be better in tune with how to ride GTA. So, another alternative part that I'll finish on is we also hope that as this concept of Internet becomes more and more pertinent that we might be able to better asset manage our shelters and our bus stops, so we might be able to see the status of the trash cans or see if a shelter has been damaged and quickly respond with our maintenance department. Really the possibilities are endless, and right now as I said it's all conceptual, so hopefully within a year I can come back to you all with more specific information as soon as we know what this looks like. Once again, I appreciate your time and I hope to answer some questions going forward. Thanks.

Matt Welbes:

Thank you, Gray. We appreciate your presentation. Our next speaker is Carl Sedoryk. And Carl is the General Manager and Chief Executive Officer for Monterey Salinas Transit providing services in the Monterey Salinas area. Carl, now turning the session over to you.

Carl Sedoryk:

Thank you, Matt. I will call for someone to change the slides for me. Again, thank you. So, again, we are located in the Central Coast region of California and serve a four-

county area that makes up one-fifth of the coast region of California, providing traditional fixed route, ADA paratransit, micro transit, publicized taxi and volunteer services in our most rural areas. We support the workers of major industries, including 55,000 -- 50,000-person agriculture industry, 25,000 people in tourism, and 15,000 people for various defense bases and another 25,000 students at our various colleges and universities. And no local sales tax in our county to support fixed route, but we historically managed to have tourist partnerships with the local tourist attractions that support over 2 million local visitors, like the Monterey Bay aquarium, the community colleges and the military installations. Next slide.

We do all this with a relatively small fleet considering the area we serve, 128 fixed route vehicles for the demand response paratransit vehicles and then a variety of taxis and other vehicles as well. Next slide.

So, when COVID hit our region, this shows you we went from 7 percent unemployment in April of 2019, to over 20 percent unemployment in April of 2020, the second highest unemployment rate in the county. You can see the projected impact on occupancy tax of our local hotels, which drives our economy and again supports so many local employees.

Next slide please. Given much of our employees are hospitality workers and nearly half of them were laid off at the time and continue to be laid off because we still have not been able to move out of the most severe rating for our county; we had an immediate drop off in ridership and we've been slowly building back, but all of those 25,000 college students, all the universities are doing remote learning, and military bases are closed, and the Monterey Bay aquarium is closed. So, all those partnerships I just talked about, they were not there for us anymore. Next slide.

So, the year prior, this is what our revenue structure looked like. A 53 million-dollar revenue coming from a variety of sources. Next slide.

To projections for 2021, a big empty 20 percent drop in revenue is anticipated for the coming year virtually overnight. Next slide. Fortunately, the CARES Act came to the rescue, and you can see how in the remainder of 2020, '21 and '22, we see how the CARES Act will fill our operating budget and keep our people employed in the ability to provide services because even though we are providing less than half of the trips or the rides that were occurring before, we need twice as many vehicles for employees to do that to maintain social distancing onboard our buses. Next slide.

So, we were well-positioned to provide an immediate response because we had a business continuity and response plan in place, and the FTA and CDC had included a 2014 pandemic response plan that was included in our plan. So, we had something to work off of and we did what many others did, upped our game on PPE and cleaning, and we eliminated fares, and the time that we went fare-free from March through August, we had 400,000 of essential trips made by essential workers and we saved of the community \$750,000 with money that was not going into our fare box but those unemployed furloughed folks that needed to go to grocery stores and medical appointments were keeping that money in their pocket. Next slide.

So, we adopted and our board adopted a FEMA recommended best practice of the whole community approach, and that's looking to those industries driving your community and finding out how your publicly-funded assets can be used to help bring back the economic recovery. When the economic recovery happens, then your services can grow with the whole rising tides floats all boats. So, what we found by reaching out to our community was that the ag workers, 55,000 of them in the community, were three times more COVID infections than the general population because of their working conditions; they lacked access to PPE and access to medical services and testing. There is a 65 percent increase in request for food assistance through Meals on Wheels. The VA Hospital lost all their volunteer drivers because they are generally very elderly volunteers, and there were services not provided to veterans getting to local medical clinics, and so we put in a variety of services to take on the underemployed resources and delivered 8,000 meals using our vehicles and drivers to the elderly and food insecure. We dispatched Wi-Fi enabled buses to rural and underserved communities, providing over 7,000 Internet connections. We donated PPE equipment that was provided to us by the FTA, but we already had our own supplies in place, so we donated those to the ag areas and to the ag workers who really needed them. We used our employees to make calls to the elderly and the disabled and veterans to make sure that at home, they had services they need. Next slide.

We donated vehicles to be used to transport the homeless to medical and shelter, and we had our donated buses converted into mobile COVID-19 testing labs to test farmworkers in the field. And we are also implementing the first-of-its-kind contactless open loop credit card system where we will be able to accept fares in a contactless way, and this will be the first one in the country that is in a non-major urban area. So, we hope to show that this is something that is viable for smaller urban areas as well. Next slide.

I would just like to say that all of us, Mr. Rogers said, "in an emergency, look to the helpers." We are trying to rebuild the plane while trying to fly the plane and we all have a part to play. And, I want to thank the FTA and our partners for helping to serve our community. Thank you. That concludes this presentation.

Matt Welbes:

Thank you, Carl. We appreciate your presentation, Carl.

Our next speaker is Jeffrey Arndt. Jeff is the President and CEO of Via Metropolitan Transit, providing services in San Antonio, Texas. Jeff, I'm now turning the session over to you.

Jeffrey Arndt:

Thank you so much, and I want to thank the photographer for the digital enhancement of that headshot. I would also like to thank the FTA; you know, this year the word of the year is "unprecedented," and I think the level of support that the FTA has provided in so many respects and with such a sense of urgency, has been also unprecedented. So,

thank you so much for your support. I'm with Via. We are deep in the heart of Texas, so you have the heart of Iowa and ear of Texas here today. And I will give you a quick overview of VIA as an organization. These are calendar year 2019 numbers -- we carry over 36 million trips during that year, and we have a fleet of 525 buses and 132 vans or VIA trans, which is the ADA paratransit. All 650 of those vehicles are housed at one location, a garage that was built in 1947, and as a result of that we have North America's largest CMT fueling station at that facility because we have so many vehicles at that location. However, we are building a separate facility for our ADA paratransit and so we will bring those numbers down somewhat by this time next year. We've introduced an MOD zone, we call it VIA Link, the first zone; we have two more that we intend to open in FY '21. Our service area is 1,213 square miles, so not a small service area here; in fact, second only to Houston Metro in the state of Texas, and not that much smaller than Houston Metro. And finally, we have about 7,000 bus stops and what is significant is we have 2,600 plus shelters at bus stops, and that's about 38 percent of our bus stops providing shelter.

Next slide please. I'm just going to briefly talk about the impacts of COVID-19. Like everyone else, we saw a decrease in ridership. We saw about a 50 percent decrease over 2019 numbers. About a 50 percent decrease. Like Carl said, hospitality workers are a big piece of our market. San Antonio is a tourist destination, third-largest industry in our city; one in seven San Antonians are employed within that industry and they were the hardest hit industry related to COVID, and so we had a significant drop in use and, again, that was a perfect phrasing that we didn't lose riders but we lost trips because riders no longer needed to make those specific trips. We did implement safe capacity limits on our vehicles, and so as a result of that, we are currently running about 85 percent of our weekdays service, although some routes that have higher frequency today than they did pre-COVID in order to maintain that 16-passenger limit. It was unfortunate because our ridership had turned the corner about a year ago right now. Our ridership was trending up about 6 percent over the year before due to the investment we made in two additional primo routes. So, we have three primo routes, which you would think of as BRT lite. They have all the aspect of BRT, save the dedicated lane, and the City of San Antonio invested \$10 million among 18 routes where we increased frequency, and on some of those routes, we saw double-digit increases almost overnight, and so we had really turned the corner, and it's very unfortunate that that has kind of abated right now, but we are looking forward to the recovery and to the return of that increase.

The financial impact -- first of all, the biggest concern we have a sales tax, we are funded by sales tax dollars. We have a 1/2 cent sales tax for the FTA, and we get one other piece of sales tax; almost three quarters of our budget of our annual revenue is sales tax revenue, so we are going to watch what happens with sales tax very closely.

What we did see also is we, like several of you mentioned, stopped collecting fares for the safety of the passenger and for the safety of the operator, so folks didn't have to dwell at the farebox. So, the combined impact of the drop in sales tax revenue, which fortunately was not as steep as had been projected, and the loss in farebox revenue in order to maintain safe operation led us to about an 8-10 percent decrease in revenue on

a fiscal year basis for FY 2020, but the first half of the fiscal year was pre-COVID and so that tells you we are probably for that last half of the month down 15-20 percent. Just as a note, MTA is in the state of Texas because the state conferred the right for us to collect sales tax do not receive any state support on any kind of regular basis.

So, what we did -- and one other note which is on the paratransit side because I saw several of you primarily on paratransit type services, our ridership in paratransit is around 80 percent and that's because so many of the locations closed, and we are back now at just 50 percent reduction in paratransit service, and fixed route has remained at about 50 percent. We were in constant system redesign. I tell people we did more system changes during about a four-month period than we would typically do in a year. We first came back to something like a modified Sunday schedule, but then as we implemented our safe capacity limit we were having to expand service and we were adding space -- what we called spacer buses, so if an operator had 16 people on board and had to pass them by, they would radio dispatch and we would send a vehicle to pick up the people that were not able to board due to safe capacity; we continuously are making changes to that service, and we suspended about a dozen routes or route segment, some of which may not return actually as we come back from COVID, and we expect that sometime in FY '21 we will indeed return to that 100 percent level.

Next slide please. At the same time that we were making these adjustments -- and like all of you I'm sure we're very thankful for the CARES Act funding because it allows us to maintain employment for folks that for example had been providing VIA transit service which was down 80 percent, but we also implemented a program called VIA Cares and VIA Cares like several of the programs we talked about today are all about making use of our resources to serve the community in special ways during these times of special need. So the first thing that happened is we worked with our food bank, and many of you may have seen that aerial shot where there are thousands of cars all lined up at the San Antonio food bank to get food, but we are reminded that not everybody has a car, and so we've done and we continue to do delivery of boxes of foods, primarily to senior centers and housing authorities, and we've delivered over 3,000 boxes of food since this all began. In the slide there, you can see we also volunteered to help provide food for -- in those very long lines of cars. So this was done in partnership with the San Antonio food bank. And the second element was our introduction of Wi-Fi. We were contacted by the San Antonio Independent School District who were concerned because they knew a number of their students had little or no Internet access and needed it to maintain their schooling, and we worked in partnership with them and with the Housing Authority, the San Antonio Housing Authority, and started placing these VIA Trans vans -- again, we had the lesser need for VIA Trans vans -- in those developments on a scheduled basis. And so, we served I'm going to say about eight to 10 different housing areas. We put them typically inside housing facilities, and it was really a stopgap measure, because I will tell you that since the summer, the city of San Antonio -- we are not part of the city, we're independent. So, the City of San Antonio, the school districts have really put forth a lot of effort to get more permanent infrastructure, so we are available for that but we were the only source of that infrastructure during the early days of the pandemic. We've added two additional -- but we really added one additional service that we will be providing beginning at the end of this month, and this is in

partnership with the city of San Antonio's metro health organization, and they have flu shots, regular flu shots, they're trying to get out to the community. Again, they recognize that particularly our ADA paratransit customers are probably high need and have less ability to get out and get those shots, so we are providing them a community room in our central transit center, which is called VIA central plaza, and we will be providing free transportation for ADA paratransit passengers so that they can come to our community room and get inoculated with flu shots, and we are beginning to develop a plan at the very early stages for when we have the COVID-19 vaccine, because again it will be necessary for us to support the distribution of those vaccines as well. And with that, I thank you for your attention.

Matt Welbes:

Jeff, thank you very much, appreciate your update.

Our final speaker is Catherine Crago Blanton, and Catherine is the head of Strategic Initiative for the Housing Authority of the City of Austin, Texas. Catherine, I'm now turning the session over to you.

Catherine Crago Blanton:

Thank you. Good afternoon, everyone. It's my pleasure to be here to present the perspective of a Housing Authority, and what we know and what we've learned in the past several months is that housing is intrinsically tied to our ability to survive. It's connected to transportation and education and workforce opportunities, and it's connected to health and the well-being of our community as a whole. So, I will just share a little bit about the Housing Authority in the city of Austin. We are one of the -- we are a large public housing authority, but we're on the smaller end of public housing authorities, and we are founded in 1937 with the first property built in 1938, one of the oldest in the United States, if not the oldest. And today we serve about 20,000 of Austin's most vulnerable residents. Our residents in subsidized housing are in 18 properties that span from north to south across the east of Austin, what is called the crescent of poverty in Austin, and we serve 5,000 residents in that public subsidized housing, and in that map on the right there, the residence by property you can see that there are a number of dots, there's about 6500 families that have Section 8 housing choice vouchers that they take to the private rental market, and we serve those families as well about 14,000 people in total, but you'll see they also span from north to south across that eastern crescent. Austin is a north-south town, and the recent transit plan has emphasized the north-south route with decreased frequency of buses along a few north-south routes, and a variety of transportation options for residents to take that east-west route. About 50 percent of our residents are children. 25 percent are seniors, almost 1/3 have some kind of disability, and 60 percent of our households are female-headed households. Those families earning about \$13,000 per household per year. And Austin has grown tremendously over the years as I'm sure you all know, and with that growth many of our properties that were built in the '30s and 40s are in neighborhoods that are gentrifying rapidly, and what that means is those agencies that

serve folks with less affordable food and healthcare and other social services have moved, and so the transportation needs of our residents has never been greater.

Next slide please. So, there are about 3,300 public housing authorities across the United States, I believe, and like those housing authorities, our core focus is on providing safe, decent and affordable housing, but what's a little bit different for most housing authorities is we are deeply invested in programs that support the people living inside the home. So, we have a turn rate basically of about six and a half years for families who come into housing, and our aim is to ensure they can get the education and reach their educational goals, their workforce development goals, and their health and wellness or quality of life goals so that they can be successful in their endeavors. And the image you see there on the right, that is really the heart of how we do that work. That is before COVID – an image of a back-to-school event for the community center, and you see one staff there, Veronica, working with a couple of kids and those kids are being supported by various afterschool programs and behind that camera parents were learning about new service from community partners like other nonprofits, but on Wednesday March 18 those property and community centers closed to residents. So, that door you see on the right there, that is what you would have seen if you were a resident on that morning, and you would come to seek assistance of some kind. And many other agencies of course as well in response to the state and local COVID orders, you would see the same thing. So the first goal with continuity of service, and one of the posters you would see in that window on the upper right is for the resident and client support center, which it's about a week of virtual contact centers, so it's meant to provide residents access that they would've had from their support specialists and property managers and in those community centers, and that was opened in the first month seven days per week, 12 hours per day and staffed by about 24 staff from various departments who were basically -- were required to work remotely during that time. The first call we received at that client support center, we put the posters up at the property and mailboxes and doors and waited for the phone to ring, and the first call that came in was a voicemail left at 5:30 in the morning the next morning. The caller's voice was pretty steady, and he said his name and he was very calm but very measured and said I'm 79 years old and I'm a veteran, and I don't know what's going on. My caregiver hasn't been here in a few days. I'm three days without food. I need to go to the food bank. We called him back and fortunately the Central Texas food bank and Cap Metro have been collaborating to organize food box delivery and through our partnership with Cap Metro we were very fortunate to be able to deliver 450 food boxes each month for the first five months of the pandemic to residents all over town who are over the age of 60. A few days later, we got a call from a mother in the Northgate property and she explained her son was on the honor roll, perfect attendance, loves school and is sad to be home, and she wanted a gas card and she wanted a gas card to drive to a local public Wi-Fi access point daily and of course idle her car -- it can be quite hot in Texas - - so he could participate in online learning several hours per day. And so, that was the case for many folks, but as Mr. Arndt said, not everybody has a car, so we were very fortunate that Austin Independent School District had pivoted very rapidly to begin deploying Wi-Fi buses, and we were able to support those buses with Cap Metro's local hotspots to three of our properties. So, 340 households, more than 250 kids in K-12 remote learning. You know, Cap Metro provides services to all of the populations we

serve, and they have an intelligent network presence throughout the region. And one of our goals is to provide a consistent, affordable high-speed Internet access to all of our families. While we are able to do that for 700 homes through our partnership with Google fiber, that left us with about 400 K-12 households that did not have Internet service. So, we've been very fortunate to work with Cap Metro's I.T. team to identify the right plans and the right fit for residents across town. And finally, we've been very fortunate to organize with Cap Metro a van service with drivers and dispatch support to help us deploy donated and refurbished technology, computers, school supplies, Wi-Fi hotspots to families that don't have transportation or who are working during the hours that we are open, and they are operating off peak hours for several weeks, and we could not do that incredible work to help families participate in remote learning and work without Cap Metro and our other partners. And we are excited how it can be a platform and a rich opportunity for partnerships that help our most vulnerable residents survive during this COVID recovery period.

Matt Welbes:

Thank you all for sharing your experiences with us. We will now have our speakers answer questions that were submitted by the listening session audience in advance. Our first question for the speakers how can transportation agencies and housing authorities build relationships to improve opportunities for low and moderate income citizens? And Julia, we'll start the answers with you.

Julia Castillo:

I think one of the things that we have actually done is work with our county officials. We are fortunate we have a Board of Directors that is made up of county supervisors and they are very involved with the housing authorities, and so that is how to -- in the smaller rural communities how we can best work with them.

Matt Welbes:

Thank you, Julia. Gray.

Gray Johnston:

Hello. So, I guess the coordination between different agencies, for our projects specifically, the IT. department within working directly with them for several years with fiber-optic signals projects so we already had a good rapport with them as an internal department, and then through our new director, who is very close with the school systems and generally our universities, there's a whole lot of synergy happening in Greensboro around the Internet access work, and so we are hoping to build off of that. And the last thing is a private local Internet provider who is very interested in when we are ready for implementation being a partner, so a lot of good stuff going on.

Matt Welbes:

Thank you Gray. Jeff, your turn.

Jeffrey Arndt:

Thank you. So, that is a really, really good question because I think we all know that H plus T is the big deal not H or T independently. And I heard yesterday that talent is universal, but opportunity is not, and I believe that our housing authority and VIA in San Antonio, our dream is that opportunity would be universal as well. So one of the ways that I've been able to build a very strong relationship in that space is I am impressed -- I'm sorry, I am a member of the housing commission for the City of San Antonio so is the CEO of the San Antonio Housing Authority, and so we sit monthly obviously developing out -- right now a lot of the effort is obviously helping people stay in their homes, which is very important, but we've built an independent taskforce to work on that H plus T element, because there's nothing more frustrating to a transit agency than to see affordable housing built 5 miles away from the nearest bus route and know the folks that live out there are going to be challenged either financially or physically to get around town.

Matt Welbes:

Thank you very much, Jeff. Catherine, your turn.

Catherine Crago Blanton:

I really appreciate that formula, H plus T. That idea of bringing those things together because not only does it help build programs but the core of the sustainability of a program is trust. And we've been very fortunate. In 2018, we received a grant from our transit empowerment fund to hire HACA residents to serve as mobility ambassadors; those are folks who would learn how to use tools to navigate transportation and as part of that, our Transportation Department provided Smart trips training and Cap Metro provided something they called a transit adventure, where someone will come to a property, hang out in the office for a while and just get to know residents and then go together somewhere on public transportation using digital tools, and what that morphed into was a program that really engaged residents in the future of Austin's mobility; in a two day workshop about strategic mobility plans, engagement in a recent 700 million-dollar bond election called Project Connect, and even Austin energy, our utility provider has an electric vehicle program. And so, they've been engaged as well in building that trust and helping to teach residents how to use electric bicycles to take the east-west journeys, the 10-minute journeys on an E-bike to a north-south route. So, I think those little things have built up that trust and now we are able to pivot quickly and we're able to work together with residents on the ground about how do we do this virtually, and we are now doing this training and so forth virtually.

Matt Welbes:

Thank you, Catherine. For our second question, can you please tell us about the Wi-Fi technology your agency uses and how it schedules and positions transit vehicles to maximize Wi-Fi support for your community. Carl, please go first. Carl, if you are speaking, you may be muted.

Carl Sedoryk:

Thank you. I hit the mute button twice. Sorry about that.

Matt Welbes:

No worries.

Carl Sedoryk:

MST had in place prior to COVID a number of long-distance commuter routes serving out of county trips, and we discontinued those trips because there were some orders to limit out-of-town travel, and at that same time we heard as I mentioned from our community partners of the need, so we worked together with the Monterey County Office of Education and other business partners to find out where the need was most present in disadvantaged rural communities, however we did find that in the most remote parts of the counties where there was a need, we had no broadband or rural Wi-Fi for our buses to connect to, so that remains an issue in our county. And we've been attempting to look at the U.S. Forest Service department to convert fire watch towers to put Wi-Fi equipment and communication equipment up on the ridge tops and across the agricultural valleys. That though has been -- we do need some assistance getting through the whole NEPA process and other process just working with multiple agencies to make that more broad-based in our community, but we did good. Like I said, 100 connections made over about 100 days coordinated with the County Office of Education.

Matt Welbes:

Great, thank you, Carl. Gray, you are next.

Gray Johnston:

So, I guess really the leg work so far has been done by the school systems and really our public libraries and any public institutions that carry free Wi-Fi, so really where we are coming in is looking forward to the future and looking at kind of permanent solutions, and luckily Greensboro has several universities, and the IT. department recently received a big grant related to this with the universities that expand our broadband infrastructure. Also, Greensboro is one of 27 cities across the country that has extensive 5G infrastructure being constructed right now. And so, we are looking at --

that's a brand-new technology that has potential to expand Internet access even further than we can comprehend. So one last thing I will say is I mentioned in my presentation our buses pre-COVID were outfitted with modems for our mobile ticketing projects, cloud-based fare system, and at the time we didn't consider really turning those buses on for public Wi-Fi access, but now any time going forward if we have to vastly reduce service like we did back in March and April, we can team up with Gilbert County schools to send our buses in neighborhoods, but hopefully by the time that happens, we will have a lot more infrastructure in place for free Wi-Fi.

Matt Welbes:

Thank you, Gray. Julia, you have the floor.

Julia Castillo:

We do not have Wi-Fi on our buses, and Iowa is a pretty rural state so there are still some broadband issues within some of the more rural communities, but I know our state is taking it as a huge initiative to fix this issue, and so we are just keeping our finger on the pulse to see what we can do to be part of that.

Matt Welbes:

Very helpful. Thank you. Jeff, we will start with you answering our third question, what types of interagency coordination activities has your agency engaged in to support the expansion of Wi-Fi in your community?

Jeffrey Arndt:

Most of the activity we've engaged in has been both with the school districts and the city. So, the school districts and their foundations, frankly, have been able to generate funds to provide hotspots to many of their students. Of course, this was done during the summer, and that's why we actually put our VIA Trans vans physically in some of those housing projects to provide that stopgap measure, and as Gray said we are hopeful if this ever happens again, at that point the digital divide will be vastly narrowed, and in the city of San Antonio has taken upon themselves -- again, they have a very large equity program within the city, and so one of the programs they are developing out is having the city participation in narrowing that gap as well. But those were the two primary entities we've worked with as far as expanding Wi-Fi. When we were looking at trying to provide Wi-Fi as that stopgap measure, we worked primarily as I said with the school districts and with the San Antonio Housing Authority and in concert with those to develop the schedule where we would move the vans from housing project to housing project to support them.

Matt Welbes:

Very helpful. Thank you, Jeff. Catherine, your answer is next.

Catherine Crago Blanton:

Well, of course we do coordinate with the school district. We have a data-sharing agreement that enables us to identify families who have not requested Wi-Fi hotspots for school, and in conjunction with some of our partners such as communities and schools, we surveyed about 370 families in July and August to determine whether they needed support for Internet. Many of the agencies that provide Wi-Fi services, they do that electronically, through e-mail or an electronic form, and not every family has that digital literacy to be able to complete that form, but one of the things we did to really catalyze change is by August 5 or so, we have learned about 10 different nonprofits who had planned to provide their clients who are also HACA residents with some type of Internet service, anywhere from the Urban League -- the Austin area Urban League to United Way to the Housing Authority of Travis County, and just among those 10, in early August they were planning on spending about \$400,000 on various Internet services. So, to ensure we were not duplicating efforts in our HACA ecosystem and that our funds would be used well, we hosted a couple of meetings for those agencies. The first one focused on how do you buy low-cost Internet service for low-income folks and what are the programs that are available across -- from the FCC, the Federal Communication Commission, from the Internet service providers and how do we evaluate those offers? And the next day, we hosted -- in Austin, we are in a competitive broadband market, so we hosted a convening for six Internet service providers to share with nonprofits about their offers and what they can do. And we are fortunate in our city we do have a digital inclusion division in our office of telecom and regulatory affairs, so we have a digital inclusion strategic plan, so we are fortunate to have that. It helps us coordinate, but those are a couple of the things we have done with other agencies. And with Cap Metro, with technical support from Cap Metro.

Matt Welbes:

Thank you, Catherine. Gray, your response is next.

Gray Johnston:

I embarrassingly already answered that question so I feel bad because I didn't answer the housing question because that is super important. I feel like I talked a lot about our partnerships, but really quick just wanted to throw out the connection with housing as being a new very central goal to our city, and we had just passed a comprehensive plan that from a transportation perspective is looking at making Greensboro a, quote, unquote, car optional city, and that's going to entail a whole lot of work to coordinate between interdepartmental coordination, but also with our housing authorities. So basically, Greensboro is a very sprawling city, and a lot of inequity we are seeing is kind of as you transition into the county single-family housing characteristics of the neighborhoods that you move externally toward the county that we're really having to figure out and brainstorm the best suited right sized transit policies -- sorry, I'm tripping up right now. Basically, I'm trying to emphasize that housing is very important for our future, and I didn't want to be redundant in answering my coordination question. So, thank you for that.

Matt Welbes:

Thank you, Gray. We appreciate the insights you are sharing. Julia, your turn.

Julia Castillo:

I don't have anything else to add. I think it's all been said.

Matt Welbes:

Okay. And then Carl, you have the final word on this topic.

Carl Sedoryk:

Repeat the question.

Matt Welbes:

Sure, you bet.

Carl Sedoryk:

I got lost in the answers.

Matt Welbes:

No worries. The question is what types of interagency coordination activities has your agency engaged in to support the expansion of Wi-Fi in your community?

Carl Sedoryk:

As I mentioned, there is a group of local political leaders, policymakers that have been working particularly to help in our more remote areas of our county along the Big Sur coast, which is pretty rugged and remote as well as the southern ends of our Salinas Valley where you not only have residents, but very low-income residents -- farmer families and workforce housing, labor camps and that sort of thing that do not have access, but you have agribusiness that's very large scale, and so it's been a combination of working with private donors from the agriculture business, states' donations, and, again, reaching out to the U.S. Forest Service to see if we could get access to some of the ridge tops there to beam out across the agricultural valleys and down to the lower coast. Universities have been helping out as well as working with local and national folks, like AT&T and Charter Communication and our own local ISP provider to come up with these solutions. Really, I think what we've been hung up on is in the access roads through the forest area to get this equipment up on top of these ridge tops due to private property easements on public lands as well as, like I said earlier, some of the NEPA and other requirements that seem to be hanging us up. So,

if there are policymakers in the room, sure would like to see some streamlining there to help with this important issue in rural parts of the country.

Matt Welbes:

Thank you, Carl, and thanks to each one of you for your time and sharing your insights about what your agencies are doing right now to create value-added services and partnerships as communities work to recover from the COVID-19 public health emergency. At FTA and at HUD, we are looking forward to supporting all of you in any way we can as the country recovers. We've been taking good notes on the insights you are sharing with us so we can make progress and return to normal.

With that, I will now turn to Deputy Administrator Williams and the Assistant Secretary Kurtz to ask two questions we received from our audience. And for our first question, please discuss the benefits for optimizing the relationship between public transportation and public housing. Jane, please go first.

Jane Williams:

The Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility conducted focus groups with state and local entities back in I think 2018 to learn more about some of the barriers to the coordination and transportation services, and the second largest barrier that emerged from all those sessions with our stakeholders is the unengaged stakeholder. So, what we learned and heard loud and clear from our focus groups was that there were challenges associated with establishing and maintaining an organizational and community partnership necessary to pursue that transportation coordination. That is why we are undertaking this initiative today to help strengthen those interagency partnerships and collaboration that not only at the federal level, but also obviously the state, local and industry level between FTA and PIH's transportations and public housing networks. Ultimately, the benefits of these partnerships will facilitate improved access to a variety of services for people with disabilities, older adults and individuals and families of low-income, and it will dramatically raise the standard of living for these communities, so we are really excited about this new initiative.

Matt Welbes:

Thank you very much. Assistant Secretary Kurtz, your turn.

Hunter Kurtz:

Secretary Carson as everyone knows is a doctor, and he has really emphasized at his tenure as Secretary at HUD really to take a holistic approach in trying to deal with all issues, but especially as we deal with poverty in America and helping Americans work their way out of poverty and we really need to -- as the Deputy Administrator just mentioned the holistic approach and look at this, and us coordinating with FTA and hopefully encouraging some of you all at the local level tribes and public housing authorities to start working with some of your local transit authorities. This is not just a

one-time issue where we just didn't deal with COVID, but hopefully it begins a relationship that we can continue in the future and continue to service the people living in public housing or living in tribal lands.

Matt Welbes:

Thank you, Assistant Secretary Kurtz. And our second question is: Are there grants or demonstration programs or projects available to support partnerships among local, state and regional agencies? And, are there foundations to fund community development and public transportation options? Jane, could you start again please?

Jane Williams:

Sure, back in 2019, FTA published a CCAM program inventory, and we talked a bit about CCAM today, and this catalog identifies more than 130 federal programs that may provide funding for human service transportation, for people with disabilities, older adults and/or individuals of low-income. In addition to those grant programs, FTA makes planning grants available through the National Technical Assistance Centers that help bring local and state partners together to develop innovative transportation solutions to improve the mobility of our most vulnerable citizens. So, you heard from Amy Conrick today for the National Center for Mobility Management. The NCMM is one of those FTA funded technical assistance centers that provides those planning and implementation grants. So, Amy and her team at NCMM I'm sure can help you connect with other centers and their grant programs as well, like the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center and the National Rural Transit Assistance Program as well. A lot of help there.

Matt Welbes:

Thank you, Jane. Assistant Secretary Kurtz, your turn.

Hunter Kurtz:

In the Office of Public and Indian Housing here at HUD, we have a couple of programs that focus on looking at a broader perspective when developing housing. I think the one that comes to mind that fits into this perfectly is what we call our choice neighborhoods program, where we award competitive grants each year to neighborhoods that are transforming public housing and part of the competition that we rate them on is looking at things like transportation, education, leasing, other -- food sources. Other things like that as they are building a neighborhood rather than just looking at like we're going to build housing here. Our Native American programs, we have a community development grant program, which allows for a wide range of funding, which will include transportation. And in HUD, we have other programs, like the community development grant program that's open to states and localities that can provide a number of different flexibilities for the communities to look at a number of different ways to provide services

including transportation. But those would not be through the public housing authorities; those would be through the city or state.

Matt Welbes:

Certainly. Thank you and thanks for all that you and your colleagues at HUD are doing right now in supporting this partnership with FTA and everyone participating in our conversation today. Any parting words for all of us?

Hunter Kurtz:

First of all, thank you to everyone out there that's working diligently to provide services from a housing transportation to people during the impact of COVID. This is a difficult time and in many ways our work has never been more important than it is today. So, I thank you for your hard work and dedication. But I just have to say I'm super excited, as I mentioned just a second ago, about the possibility of this not just being a one-time collaboration but the continuation of collaboration between us, FTA as well as collaboration at the local level between tribes, public housing authorities and transit agencies. I think there's a lot of good we can do and continue to do, and I look forward to see what the future holds.

Matt Welbes:

Absolutely. Thank you again. With that, I will now turn it back over to Jane to wrap up our session today.

Jane Williams:

Thank you, Hunter, and thank you, Amy, Matt and Henrika and each of the panelists for your insight and taking the time to share your experiences with us. We are excited about this partnership and can't wait to work with you more at HUD, Hunter. And let me say thanks on behalf of the Trump Administration and Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao for all you are all doing to keep America and Americans moving. Stay safe. Thank you.