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**Nebraska Submits First Round of Projects
for Rural Stimulus Transit Funding**

(Kearney, Neb.) Gov. Dave Heineman today announced that the state has submitted an application for nearly \$5.3 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds for transit projects in rural areas of the state. The request will be reviewed by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

The ARRA package allocated more than \$9.8 million for public transit projects in Nebraska's rural areas, as part of \$23 million in funding for projects that help local transit authorities acquire, construct and improve mass transportation options. The remaining \$13 million in ARRA funding for mass transit projects will be distributed among Lincoln, Omaha and South Sioux City.

A second round of rural area projects will be sent to FTA once federal environmental reviews have been completed and received by the Nebraska Department of Roads. State officials expect to submit potential projects totaling more than \$10 million to help ensure enough projects are approved to use all of the available funds in the next year.

The first round of projects submitted for federal approval includes:

The Reach Your Destination Easily (RYDE) partnership headquartered in Kearney, includes Buffalo, Kearney, Franklin, and Gosper Counties. Beginning July 1, the program will also include Adams County. RYDE participants propose using \$1,289,000 in first round funding to purchase equipment and infrastructure such as a bus storage facility, vehicles, office equipment and funding to hire a manager to coordinate transportation services for the region.

In addition, the city of Kearney expects to apply for \$4.6 million for the RYDE program to fund a bus maintenance and storage facility and house RYDE transit program staff. FTA officials are reviewing an environmental assessment, with clearance for the proposal expected in the near future. If approved, the additional \$4.6 million will be submitted by state officials as part of a second request for ARRA funds later this year.

The city of North Platte proposes using \$1,410,000 in stimulus funds for technology upgrades, a new bus storage facility and vehicles. The city has also been approved to receive \$600,000 in regular rural transit funding for a portion of the bus storage facility, which will require a \$150,000 local match.

Scotts Bluff County proposes using \$275,000 in stimulus funds for a vehicle and a manager to coordinate transportation services, funding sources and management of area rural transit programs.

Six rural providers would use an estimated total of \$644,000 in stimulus funding to purchase transit buses or vans and construct bus storage facilities for local transit programs.

These rural transit providers include: Hooker County; Avera St. Anthony's in O'Neill covering Holt County; Fullerton Senior Center covering Nance County; Community Concern in Norfolk; Saline County Area Transit covering Saline and Webster Counties; and the city of Sidney.

Finally, \$1,678,500 in grant funding would go to rural providers for transit vehicles, as well as computers and software for enhanced billing and dispatch operations.

These providers would include: Box Butte, Chase, Hall, Kimball, Pawnee, Richardson, Saunders, and Seward Counties; Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging covering Gage, Thayer, Jefferson, Nemaha, and Otoe Counties; Lancaster County Rural Transit; Tri Valley Health Systems covering Furnas County; Stratton Industrial Commission covering Hayes and Hitchcock Counties; Valley County Health System; the city of Chappell; the village of Guide Rock; the city of McCook; the city of Ogallala, and the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska.