2.0 Program

2.1 Overview

There appears to be strong justification for a Federal funding program that will assist in addressing Federal lands transit needs by providing the stability required for these systems to succeed. If a Federal lands transit funding program is established to assist in addressing the transit needs of the FLMAs, it is recommended that the following items be included in establishing the funding program:

- **A transit program with separate funding categories for each of the three DOI agencies (NPS, FWS, BLM) –** It is recommended that the new transit program include separate funding categories for each of the three DOI agencies. The multi-year authorizations allow opportunities to develop realistic long-range priority programs of projects and provides adequate lead time for cooperative, comprehensive transportation planning. By establishing separate funding categories, the FLMAs are provided long-range financing and flexibility to meet their needs.

- **A requirement that all projects be subject to the transportation planning procedures developed under Title 23 U.S.C. 204(a). The Section 204 procedures require the FLMAs to carry out transportation planning processes that are consistent with the statewide and metropolitan transportation planning processes in Title 23 U.S.C. 134 and 135.** It is recommended that the transit strategies and projects funded through this program be included in a continuous, comprehensive, coordinated transportation planning process that requires public involvement and participation with other stakeholders.

- **Flexibility to use funds for leasing of vehicles.** It is recommended that the funds be available for leasing of vehicles. Leasing is a financing tool that allows the FLMAs to reduce up-front capital purchases and allows payments to be spread out over an asset's useful life or planned period of use. It also allows for the use of capital assets for a limited period of time without having to acquire them outright.

- **Flexibility to use funds for contract operations.** It is recommended that the funds be available to fund contract operations. Contract operations allow the FLMAs to provide greater flexibility in providing service. Federal lands sites often experience varied seasonal demand patterns. A private entity can more easily adapt their schedule and labor force to such conditions. Also, using contract operations allows the FLMAs to buy existing service expertise and do not need to train their own staff or hire new staff to provide the necessary service.

If a Federal Lands transit program is established, the FTA and the FHWA will be better able to provide support to the FLMAs in the implementation of transit services.

2.2 Recommendations for Funding Authorization

The recommendations for short-term and long-term transit strategies developed for this study could be used as a basis for allocating funds provided through a Federal lands transit program to the NPS, the BLM and the USFWS. If capital and project development costs for the 2001-2010 period are used for allocation, the agency formula distribution could be as follows:

- NPS 91 percent
- BLM 2 percent
- USFWS 7 percent

If estimated operations and maintenance costs are considered in addition to capital and project development costs, the formula provides a slightly larger amount of funding to the BLM and the USFWS:

- NPS 88 percent
- BLM 3 percent
- USFWS 9 percent

Additional criteria could be considered in making these allocations, such as visitation levels and measures of traffic and parking congestion. Criteria could include traffic levels of service on key roadways or number of days when parking capacity is exceeded. In general, however, these additional variables probably complicate the formula beyond what is necessary.

The program could reward sites that have invested in existing systems. One option for accomplishing this is to incorporate existing system ridership, route-mileage, and/or investment into the formula. A simpler alternative is to dedicate a percentage of program funds to existing systems.

A needs-based formula would appear to be adequate for the first round of funding. Adjustments could be made in future years, based on expenditures and periodic reevaluation of needs.