

8. UPDATE ON RURAL TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVE

You may recall, from December 2009, authorizing us to apply for a federal technical assistance grant to evaluate the feasibility of expanding the current I-Ride program into a rural transit system for Southampton County and the City of Franklin. Given the early success of I-Ride, there is clear evidence that it has growing opportunities. SSEVA has expressed strong interest in partnering with us to explore the potential for expansion of service throughout the region.

The \$70,000 grant, which requires no local match, was approved by the Commonwealth Transportation Board last May and the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation is preparing to engage a consultant on our behalf to prepare the report.

The study may identify possible routes, hours of service, potential operators, the expected cost of operational funding and the expected capital requirements. If it is determined that a rural transportation system is feasible, we are then eligible to apply for a second grant to cover the cost of developing a detailed operational plan.

Once an operational plan is approved by VDRPT, we would be eligible to apply for federal funding that could cover 65% of the operating costs of the system and 85% to 90% of the capital costs, including purchase of vehicles, construction of a maintenance facility, shelters at bus stops, signage, etc.

We are hopeful that the first study will be completed near the end of the calendar year, to be used in support of the next round of funding with submission next February.

Mrs. Lewis, who collaborated with SSSEVA staff in writing the grant application, has prepared a summary report for the Planning Commission, a copy of which is attached.

NO MOTION REQUIRED