

Open Plains Transit Calls for Resolution of FY2026 Reimbursement and FY2027 Operating Agreements

ALLIANCE, NEBRASKA — September 22, 2026

Senior Services, Inc. (SSI), dba Open Plains Transit (OPT), is calling on Nebraska's elected and congressional officials to help bring an urgent transportation funding matter to resolution with the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT).

Despite providing eligible FY2026 transportation services, NDOT has refused to reimburse OPT for more than \$1.3 million in eligible FY2026 operating expenses, citing missed audit deadlines for FY2024 and FY2025.

It is important to understand that this is not a situation in which Open Plains Transit has failed to work toward compliance with the audit requirements. OPT has been actively working to complete the required audits, and two separate accounting firms are currently engaged in addressing and completing the outstanding audit work.

While NDOT established deadlines for completion of the audits, significant factors have contributed to the delays. The primary issues have been technological in nature and largely beyond OPT's control. These circumstances have affected OPT's ability to timely access, recover, transfer, and reconcile the financial information and records necessary to complete the audit process.

OPT does not dispute the importance of completing the required audits and remains committed to achieving full compliance. However, the circumstances surrounding the missed deadlines are important to understand.

At the conclusion of FY2024, the NDOT reimbursement process for Open Plains Transit had not yet been completed. Because reimbursement remained outstanding, OPT did not realize that the audit deadline had become an issue affecting its eligibility for reimbursement. No notice was provided to OPT at that time indicating that the outstanding reimbursement process did not relieve or otherwise affect the applicable audit requirement.

OPT subsequently learned of the audit issue during a meeting with NDOT in October 2025, well after the FY2024 audit deadline had passed.

OPT cannot speak to NDOT's understanding or internal communications during this period. However, based on the fact that the reimbursement process remained unresolved and the audit issue was not raised until October 2025, OPT had no reason to understand that the missed deadline would later be used as the basis for refusing reimbursement for eligible FY2026 transportation operations.

The Impact on Rural and Frontier Nebraska

Regardless of how this situation developed, the consequences are now significant.

Open Plains Transit has continued providing transportation services to rural Nebraskans while conducting the costs of those operations. OPT's services support 18 Nebraska counties and more than fifty-five communities across approximately one-third of Nebraska's land area, where distances are substantial and alternative transportation options are often limited or nonexistent.

OPT's transportation network also provides critical connections extending beyond Nebraska into Wyoming, Colorado, and South Dakota, including the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Reservations.

- Intercity bus and airline connections
- Connections between rural communities and regional transportation networks
- Healthcare and medical services
- Employment
- Veterans' services
- Essential shopping and other necessary destinations

- Education

For many rural and frontier residents, these transportation services are not simply a convenience. They are an essential link to healthcare, employment, education, Veterans' services, and other destinations that may be many miles from home.

A Call for Resolution

Open Plains Transit was notified of the NDOT's refusal of FY2026 operating expenses May 12, 2026, **eleven and a half months** into the fiscal year. Open Plains Transit has requested that NDOT reconsider its decision on three separate occasions, but NDOT has not reversed its position.

OPT is asking Nebraska's elected and congressional officials to help bring this matter to a reasonable resolution—one that recognizes the real-world consequences of withholding reimbursement for eligible transportation services that have already been provided.

The current issue affects the continuation of the FTA Section 5311 program (Formula Grants for Rural Areas) for local and intercity bus transportation. Without resolution of the outstanding FY2026 reimbursement and execution of all three FY2027 Operating Agreements under this program—including the agreements necessary to continue Open Plains Transit's rural transportation services and reinstate Express Arrow's intercity bus services agreement with OPT—Open Plains Transit will be forced to cease operations effective September 30, 2026.

The potential loss of these services would affect access to transportation throughout a substantial portion of rural and frontier Nebraska, as well as critical connections extending into Wyoming, Colorado, and South Dakota, including the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Reservations.

Open Plains Transit is not asking for audit requirements to be ignored. OPT is asking for the opportunity to complete the work already underway and for a reasonable resolution that does not result in the loss of essential public transportation services for the people and communities who depend on them.

CALL TO ACTION

TIME IS CRITICAL.

Open Plains Transit is asking the people and communities who depend on these transportation services to contact their elected and congressional representatives immediately and ask them to help bring this matter to resolution before September 30, 2026.

Please ask your representatives to:

- Urge NDOT to resolve the outstanding FY2026 reimbursement issue;
- Support execution of the FY2027 FTA Section 5311 Operating Agreements needed to continue rural and intercity transportation services; and
- Help ensure that essential transportation services are not lost while OPT completes the required audit work already underway.

Your voice can help make a difference.

Please contact your elected and congressional representatives today.

About Open Plains Transit

Senior Services, Inc. dba Open Plains Transit provides rural and intercity public transportation services to communities across western Nebraska and critical connections extending into neighboring states.

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