

Follow up on Veteran's Transportation Task Force to the Senate Veterans & Emergency Preparation Committee

Introduction:

Prior to the implementation of the Legislative Task Force on Veteran's Transportation, the 2005 session of the Oregon Legislature asked about gaps in services to veterans. One gap identified was transportation costs for job seeking veterans. House Bill 5163, signed into law by the Governor on August 29, 2005 provided funds (\$54,000) "which may be expended for transportation needs related to the employment, training and education of veterans." The funds were given to the Oregon Employment Department (OED) to administer.

In 2008, Governor Kulongoski, commissioned the Governor's Task Force on Veteran's Services which included in finding number four, "Existing transportation systems for veteran mobility to/from health care and employment/workforce programming are insufficient to current and projected need/s." While the Veteran's Transportation Task Force focused on veteran's medical transportation issues, the need for job related transportation for veterans still exists.

Discussion:

Input supplied by the Local Veteran Employment Representatives (LVERs) and Disabled Veteran Outreach Program staff (DVOPs) drove the decision to use the 2005 funds for bus passes and gas vouchers as the preferred method of overcoming work and education related transportation barriers. The funds were distributed to the OED local offices based on the number of veterans registered in the iMatchSkills® database. Guidelines were sent to each office giving the LVERs and DVOPs the responsibility of assessing veterans' need for and distributing the funds. All the funds were obligated by the end of the 05-07 biennium.

Summary:

The veteran transportation funds met a critical need for our veterans. It was noted that some veterans returning from the war in Iraq and Afghanistan had difficulty getting back to work due to financial needs. Meeting the cost of getting to an interview or commuting before the first paycheck arrived made the difference in getting or keeping the job.

Over the course of the biennium (2005-2007):

- 748 individual veterans were served
- 397 found work (about 53%), as of the end of June 2007
- 951 gas vouchers were issued, accounting for about 70% of the funds expended
- 738 bus passes were issued, accounting for about 30% of the funds expended

Recently, a short survey was sent to the OED veteran representatives (DVOPs) asking if and what veteran transportation issues exist. The DVOPs indicated that job search related transportation continues to be a major unmet need for many veterans. This included all areas of the state, both metropolitan and rural.