**Section 651.301 Criteria Considered in Review of Operating Assistance Applications**

The Department will consider the following criteria in evaluating applications for operating assistance and comparing and selecting for Section 18 funding proposed programs (in whole or in part) from within a region.

a) Level of need for the proposed transportation program and the capability of the proposed program for meeting the level of need, based upon:

1) The adequacy of planning activities performed to substantiate the need for the proposed service and its capability of meeting those needs as demonstrated by:

A) The formal planning process followed in developing the plan for the proposed service, including:

i) involvement of user groups, local and regional planning agencies, human services agencies, and existing transit providers in the development of the plan of the proposed program

ii) use of existing local or regional planning documents in the development of the plan for the proposed program (for example, comprehensive development plans)

B) Assessment made of existing transportation service and equipment currently available in the participant's service area, based upon:

i) Inventories of public and private agencies currently operating transportation services (including social service agencies, taxi operators, and school bus operators)

ii) surveys of the general population and of special user groups (such as the elderly and handicapped) to solicit information as to major travel destinations and current transit service needs

2) The level of local support for the proposed program as demonstrated by letters of support and minutes of public meetings and of other meetings of local agencies.

b) Managerial and Operating Capabilities

 The Department will review each application to assess the ability of the participant and proposed transit provider(s) (if different from the participant) to provide the transportation service outlined in the proposed program. In making this assessment the Department will consider the following capabilities of the proposed transit provider(s):

1) The ability to dispatch and operate the proposed service.

2) The ability to maintain equipment and vehicles to be used in providing transportation service.

3) The ability to train the drivers of vehicles to handle the special transportation needs of elderly and handicapped.

4) The ability to complete and submit the forms and information as required by the Department.

5) The past performance of a participant or proposed transit provider as it relates to the scope and nature of the proposed program.

c) Coordination Efforts

 The Department will review proposed transportation programs to determine the amount of pooling of equipment, technical skill, and financial resources available in the community. For example, the Department will evaluate efforts by the participant to utilize existing vehicles owned by private transit providers or equipment owned by public or private nonprofit agencies purchased under other Federal and State funded transportation and social service programs. The degree of support and cooperation from other Federal and State agencies and the extent of participation by user groups, social service agencies, planning agencies, and existing private and public transit service providers in the planning and implementation of the proposed program will be considered when evaluating the level of coordination to be achieved in the proposed program.

d) Continuation of Funding from Sources Previously Providing Assistance for Transit Service

 Section 18 grant funds are intended to supplement, rather than to replace, funding sources for small urban and rural transportation programs. In evaluating applications the Department will consider the level of operating assistance provided to public transportation programs within the participant's service area from other funding sources in previous years and available for the current fiscal year. Specifically, the Department will assess a participant's intention to maximize the level of operating assistance for transit service in the participant's service area from other funding sources.

e) Potential User Groups

 Proposed programs will be evaluated based on the number of potential riders to be served and on the ability to meet the unmet special transit needs of the elderly and handicapped in areas.

f) Section 22 of the UMTA Act

 Section 22 of the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964, as amended, entitled "Intercity Bus Service", authorizes a federal grant program for the specific purpose of providing assistance to intercity bus operations. The existence of the Section 22 program will be a factor considered by the Department when reviewing Section 18 applications which propose transportation services eligible for Section 22 grant assistance.