



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

URBAN MASS TRANSPORTATION ADMINISTRATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590

NEWS

FOR RELEASE FRIDAY
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UMTA 77-74
Phone: (202) 426-4043

U. S. Secretary of Transportation Claude S. Brinegar today announced a Federal grant of \$2,277,832 to the Berks Area Reading Transportation Authority (BARTA) for the purchase and modernization of the privately-owned Reading Bus Company, of Reading, Pennsylvania.

Because of declining patronage and increasing deficits, the private firm discontinued operations last year. Service has been continued since that time under an arrangement between the Berks County Commissioners and the private firm.

Today's grant was made by the Transportation Department's Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA). In addition to providing money to help in the purchase of the company, it will assist in acquisition of 44 new buses to replace a portion of a fleet which is the oldest in the nation. Some of the buses now in operation

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are 29 years old, and the average age of those to be replaced is 26 years.

In making the announcement, Secretary Brinegar noted that through this capital grant the Transportation Department has added another city to the growing list in which it has preserved and improved public transportation. "We hope," he said, "that with new buses and better service, BARTA will be able to reverse the trend in the Reading area where ridership has been declining at a rate as big as a million a year."

UMTA Administrator Frank C. Herringer said special consideration is being given the elderly and the handicapped in the BARTA's plans for the Reading area. He said that in addition to fare adjustments, routes will be tailored with their needs in mind and bus hshelters will be located for their convenience.

The one-fifth local share of the total project cost is being provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, Berks County and the city of Reading.

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For further information contact the UMTA Office of Public Affairs at (202) 426-4043 or Mr. Alfred M. Bertolet, Chairman, BARTA, 1700 N. 11th Street, Reading, Pennsylvania 19604 (UMTA Project No. PA-03-0046).

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