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Utica, New York will buy 27 new 45-passenger transit buses with the help of a \$392,231 Department of Transportation capital grant, Transportation Secretary John A. Volpe announced today.

The grant, by DOT's Urban Mass Transportation Administration, represents one-half of the \$784,462 net purchase cost. DOT will make an additional \$130,743 grant to Utica if a comprehensive, coordinated regional transportation plan is completed within three years, Volpe said.

The grant will go to the Utica Transit Commission. A publicly-owned system, UTC is the principal mass transportation carrier in the Utica urban area. UTC presently operates 48 buses over 67.3 route miles. In 1968, it carried 3,260,000 revenue passengers.

UTC says it needs 50 buses to maintain its present service level. Two buses were recently scrapped because of advanced deterioration, reducing the fleet to 48. The new buses will replace vehicles that are, on the average, 20 years old. The older buses frequently break down, disrupting scheduled service and discouraging ridership.

Five of the new buses will be equipped with overdrive for use in a contemplated express bus service.

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