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A Federal grant of \$23,306 to the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council to assist transportation planning in Clearwater and the surrounding area of Pinellas County in Florida was announced today by Secretary of Transportation John A. Volpe.

"Transportation planning is a basic tool for guiding the development of entire regions, and mass transit can no longer be considered a device to relieve highway congestion. It is an instrument for creating better communities," Secretary Volpe said.

The Federal grant will be augmented by a contribution of \$11,654 from the member governments of the Central Pinellas Transit Committee.

The grant was made by the Department of Transportation's Urban Mass Transportation Administration, headed by Carlos C. Villarreal.

Clearwater and the surrounding area is served by Clearwater Transit, a privately owned bus system.

Although the area is growing rapidly in population and employment, Clearwater Transit has cut back service after experiencing financial deficits in 1966 and 1967. Only one-fifth of the area's population is served by the bus company.

"It is estimated that 33,000 of the area's population of 133,000 are more than 65-years old. The elderly are the primary users of public transportation and suffer most when quality and quantity of transit is reduced," Villarreal said.

The study will define immediate transit needs and propose methods to meet them.

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