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STATE OF ALASKA

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By Verdie Bowen

State of Alaska, Office of Veterans Affairs

Highly Rural Transportation Grant available for rural Alaska veterans accessing healthcare

Anchorage, Alaska — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs provides a \$250,000 transportation grant to the State of Alaska, Office of Veterans Affairs. Veterans residing in the boroughs of Denali, Matanuska-Susitna, Kodiak Island, Kenai Peninsula, and Prince of Wales-Hyder can utilize this grant for free transportation to the VA or VA-authorized health care services.

"Last fiscal year, this grant reached out to 3,147 veterans in rural areas," said Verdie Bowen Sr., director of the State of Alaska Office of Veterans Affairs. "Our transportation partners transported Alaska's veterans over 116,000 miles and over 33,000 nautical miles, round trip for free. We provided the first step in ensuring our veterans in some of our rural communities have access to quality care."

To support all eligible veterans, the Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs partnered with five transportation organizations: Interior Alaska Bus Line (Denali Borough), Valley Mover (Matanuska-Susitna Borough), Alaska Marine Highway System (Kodiak Island Borough), AAA Alaska Cab, Inc. (Kenai Peninsula Borough), and Inter-Island Ferry Authority (Prince of Wales-Hyder).

Until all funds are expended for that area, the transportation will be covered for veterans requiring access to the VA Medical Clinic, Community Based Outpatient Clinic's, hospitals under the Native Health Care Sharing Agreement or VA authorized vendors, such as pharmacies or medical specialists.

"I encourage veterans in each of the boroughs identified to contact our transportation partners for schedules and locations for pick up and drop off," Bowen said. "The continued funding of this program is a great victory for our highly rural veterans."

The Office of Veterans Affairs has named the grant the Maurice "Mo" Bailey Highly Rural Transportation Grant in honor of the late Mo Bailey. Bailey served in the U.S. Army from 1956 to 1976, and committed

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his life toward helping veterans. He was dedicated to rural and urban outreach, from providing veterans rides in his aircraft to access care and services to distributing food boxes to veterans in need. Bailey was always there to serve and was the 2007 recipient of the Governor's Veterans Advocacy Award.

For more information, please contact either Forrest Powell or Verdie Bowen Sr. at (907) 334-0874 or 1-888-248-3682.

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