



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

RURAL TRANSIT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

mnrtap.us

COVID-19 cancellations and updates

Spring Workshop (5307, 5311 and Tribal Transit)

The event scheduled for May 6–7 has been canceled. A team is evaluating options to have the agenda items shared with you through various ways of communication.

Tribal Transit Workshop Canceled

This workshop with tribal transit agencies (scheduled as part of the spring workshop, May 6 (a.m. only) will be rescheduled later this year. Stay informed on our website mnrtap.us.

OTAT 5310 Spring Workshops

The events on May 13 and May 15 are canceled. On May 19, there will be a webinar (9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.). Stay informed about the agenda and registration for the webinar on our website mnrtap.us.

Workshops and Events

Numerous scheduled events are canceled. In lieu of noting each cancellation, please visit mnrtap.us.

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Online Training

The RTAP team worked hard to deploy online training to you during these times.

Visit the website mnrtap.us — we have twelve courses being offered online. Register for these classes on our [website](#):

- [Passenger Assistance Safety and Sensitivity \(PASS\)](#) (for drivers)
- [Maltreatment Awareness](#) (for drivers)
- Defensive Driving — [Coaching the Experienced Driver 3](#) and [Coaching the Van Driver 3](#)
- [Bloodborne Pathogens](#)
- [Backing Safely](#)
- [Safe Winter Driving](#)
- [Low Visibility & Driving](#)
- [Securement 101: Basic Wheelchair Securement Training](#)

All courses are self-paced and can be taken any time. Once you register for the course through RTAP you will receive an email from Mariah Helgeson with instructions for logging in to the online training portal within 1–3 business days.

The following three courses are available now from NDSU's Small Urban and Rural Center on Mobility (SURCOM). You do not need to register, you can take these courses right away:

- [Grant Writing for Rural and Tribal Transit Providers](#)
- [FTA 101](#)
- [Customer Service for Rural and Tribal Transit Providers](#)

The hands-on training portion (wheelchair securement, etc.) of PASS will be offered to agencies by RTAP trainers once state orders allow for gatherings. Once a driver has completed both the online component and in-

person component for PASS, they will receive a certificate.

Online courses will always appear on the RTAP calendar during the last week of the month, however you can begin coursework as soon as you register and receive an email from Mariah.

Please contact mariah.helgeson@mnrtap.net if you have any questions.

These courses are offered through contracts with Minnesota RTAP. After successful completion, RTAP will reimburse the vendor and a certificate will be on your record indicating the successful completion.

Through April 3, 2020, we had over 250 individuals register for the online courses.

DPS-DVS Offices Closed; Driver's License Extensions Granted; REAL ID Deadline Extended

DPS-DVS exam stations, deputy registrar and driver's license agent offices are closed through May 4 due to COVID-19 concerns.

Minnesotans will not have access to a number of services, including renewing driver's licenses or ID cards, during this time. Any driver's license or ID card that expires during this time period is extended for two months after the month emergency ends thanks to a bill Governor Walz signed into law March 27. U.S. Department of Homeland Security extended the REAL ID full enforcement deadline to Oct. 1, 2021.

Answers to frequently asked questions are available at the [DVS website](#).

FTA announces \$25B for transit in America

Early review of [this FTA announcement](#) indicates that Minnesota will be receiving:

- \$226.5 million for Metro Transit
- \$54.4 million for Rural Transit (5311)
- \$27.2 million for Small Urban (5307)

Stay engaged with FTA announcements, MnDOT OTAT announcements, MPTA and RTAP to learn more about this recent action at the federal level.

Governor's executive order

A quick summary of the Governor's executive order is linked below.

www.transportationalliance.com/sites/ta/files/uploads/documents/basic-pages/2020-04/EO%2020-20%20FINAL.pdf

New COVID-19 Website

The Governor unveiled a new State of Minnesota COVID-19 dashboard that tracks the virus in Minnesota and provides the latest available data on available ventilators, ICU beds, personal protective equipment (PPE), and testing. The dashboard will be updated daily and is available at mn.gov/covid19/.

COVID-19 and the Transit Industry

Transportation systems are always important for communities and our country, and never more so than during a crisis. The COVID-19 virus is no exception. As transit system managers we understand the services we provide may be an individual's only connection for essential medical treatment and to access necessary groceries and supplies. We ask ourselves, what can we do to keep our passengers and drivers protected? This article identifies protective measures all transit systems can take.

Keep vehicles and facilities clean

Increase the frequency and intensity of all cleaning routines by utilizing EPA-approved, anti-viral cleaning agents in order to maintain the highest levels of sanitation. Restrict access to facilities to staff only when possible.

Consult with the Minnesota Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to ensure appropriate preventative measures are being utilized.

Educate staff and passengers on necessary precautions

Remind passengers and employees to please follow health and safety protocols established by the CDC. These include recommendations to:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that includes at least 60% alcohol.
- Practice social distancing of six feet if possible.

- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow instead of your hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently-touched objects and surfaces.
- Take your temperature at least once daily; if you have a fever stay home.
- Individuals who are experiencing symptoms and may have traveled to areas of concern or have been in contact with someone who has traveled to these areas should call ahead to their healthcare provider before presenting for treatment.

Other precautions

Transit systems can take other precautions to protect our passengers and drivers. Additional precautions include:

- Promote frequent and thorough hand washing, including providing workers, customers, and worksite visitors with a place to wash their hands.
- Encourage workers to stay home if they are sick.
 - Employees who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness are recommended to stay home and not come to work until they are free of fever (100.4° F [38.0° C] or greater using an oral thermometer), signs of a fever, and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants). Employees should notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.
 - Do not require a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick with acute respiratory illness to validate their illness or to return to
- work, as healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely way.
- Employers should be aware that more employees may need to stay at home to care for sick children or other sick family members than is usual.
- Providing protective gloves for handling of fares and fareboxes.



- Providing protective masks for drivers and passengers.
- Ensuring waste baskets are available on board for passengers to discard items such as Kleenex.
- Post precautions on the vehicle and at transit stops.

- Discourage workers from using other workers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, without sanitizing.
- Develop policies and procedures for prompt identification and isolation of sick people, if appropriate.
 - Prompt identification and isolation of potentially infectious individuals is a critical step in protecting workers, customers, visitors, and others at a worksite.
- Encourage employees to conduct personal health checks twice a day, to include:
 - Taking their temperature to monitor for fever. If they have a temperature of 100.4°F or higher, they have a fever and should not come into the workplace and should not go out in public.
 - Self-monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 if they suspect possible exposure.
- Develop policies and procedures for employees to report when they are sick or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.

Should you have questions or concerns about the coronavirus, please consult the CDC's website at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html.

COVID-19: What Transit Systems Need to Know

During this time, it can be difficult, especially in the transit industry, to find credible and pertinent information on how to react to this National Emergency.

In an effort to provide that credible and pertinent information, MnRTAP has collected lists of resources,

webinars, and frequently asked questions from organizations like the CDC, the Federal Transit Administration, the American Public Transportation Association, and National RTAP. The following resources answer questions like should transit workers be wearing PPE, how should transit buses be cleaned, what should transit systems do about drug and alcohol testing, and more.

CDC

“Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)”

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#protect

“Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)”

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-business-response.html

FTA

“DOT Guidance on Compliance with DOT Drug and Alcohol Testing Regulations”

www.transportation.gov/odapc/compliance-with-dot-drug-and-alcohol-testing-regulations

“Frequently Asked Questions from FTA Grantees Regarding Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)”

www.transit.dot.gov/frequently-asked-questions-fta-grantees-regarding-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19

“U.S. Department of Transportation Announces

Increased Flexibility to Help Transit Agencies Respond to Coronavirus”

www.transit.dot.gov/about/news/us-department-transportation-announces-increased-flexibility-help-transit-agencies

American Public Transportation Association (APTA)

“Public Transit Response to Coronavirus or COVID-19” (Webinar)

www.apta.com/public-transit-response-to-coronavirus/

“COVID-19 Virus Fact Sheet”

www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/COVID-19_Virus_Fact_Sheet.pdf

“Developing a Contagious Virus Response Plan”

www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/Standards_Documents/APTA-SS-SEM-S-005-09.pdf

National RTAP

“Hot Topics- Coronavirus”

www.nationalrtap.org/Toolkits/Find-Anything-Toolkit/Free-And-Low-Cost-Resources/Hot-Topics#Coronavirus

“Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Information and Resources for Transit”

nationalrtap.org/Resource-Center/Advanced-Search/fid/1082

MnRTAP is always available for small urban and rural transportation providers to provide technical assistance and support and will remain available during this complex and difficult time. As always, if you have any questions or concerns please contact MnRTAP at: deb.brisk@mnrtap.net.



Photo by Mélissa Jeanty on Unsplash

FTA and US DOT Compliance During the COVID-19 Emergency

The FTA and US DOT have been inundated with drug and alcohol testing compliance questions during the COVID-19 emergency. Official guidance was issued on March 25, 2020. The guidance below is provided for quick reference, however you are encouraged to visit the ODAPC website at www.transportation.gov/odapc/compliance-with-dot-drug-and-alcohol-testing-regulations for complete details of the published guidance.

The below guidance on compliance with the DOT and modal drug and alcohol testing programs applies during this period of national emergency.

For DOT-Regulated Employers

As a DOT-regulated employer, you must comply with applicable DOT training and testing requirements. However, DOT recognizes that compliance may not be possible in certain areas due to the unavailability of program resources, such as collection sites, Breath Alcohol Technicians (BAT), Medical Review Officers (MRO) and Substance Abuse Professionals (SAP). You should make a reasonable effort to locate the necessary resources. As a best practice at this time, employers should consider mobile collection services for required testing if the fixed-site collection facilities are not available.

If you are unable to conduct DOT drug or alcohol training or testing due to COVID-19-related supply shortages, facility closures, State or locally imposed quarantine requirements, or other impediments, you are to continue to comply with existing applicable DOT Agency requirements to document why a test was not completed. If training or testing can be conducted later

(e.g., supervisor reasonable suspicion training at the next available opportunity, random testing later in the selection period, follow-up testing later in the month), you are to do so in accordance with applicable modal regulations. Links to the modal regulations and their respective web pages can be found at www.transportation.gov/odapc/agencies.

If employers are unable to conduct DOT drug and alcohol testing due to the unavailability of testing resources, the underlying modal regulations continue to apply. For example, without a “negative” pre-employment drug test result, an employer may not permit a prospective or current employee to perform any DOT safety-sensitive functions, or in the case of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), you cannot hire the individual (See 14 CFR § 120.109(1) and (2)).

Additionally, DOT is aware that some employees have expressed concern about potential public health risks associated with the collection and testing process in the current environment. Employers should review the applicable DOT Agency requirements for testing to determine whether flexibilities allow for collection and testing at a later date.

As a reminder, it is the employer’s responsibility to evaluate the circumstances of the employee’s refusal to test and determine whether or not the employee’s actions should be considered a refusal as per 49 CFR § 40.355(i). However, as the COVID-19 outbreak poses a novel public health risk, DOT asks employers to be sensitive to employees who indicate they are not comfortable or are afraid to go to clinics or collection sites. DOT asks employers to verify with the clinic or collection site that it has taken the necessary precautions to minimize the risk of exposure to COVID-19.

Employers should revisit back-up plans to ensure the plans are current and effective for the current outbreak conditions. For example, these plans should include availability of collectors and collection sites and BAT, and alternate/back-up MRO, as these may have changed as a result of the national emergency. Employers should also

have regular communications with service agents regarding the service agent’s availability and capability to support your DOT drug and alcohol testing program.

For DOT-Regulated Employees

If you are experiencing COVID-19-related symptoms, you should contact your medical provider and, if necessary, let your employer know about your availability to perform work.

If you have COVID-19-related concerns about testing, you should discuss them with your employer.

As a reminder, it is the employer’s responsibility to evaluate the circumstances of the employee’s refusal to test and determine whether or not the employee’s actions should be considered a refusal as per 49 CFR § 40.355(i).

For Service Agents

As a collector, BAT, laboratory, MRO, or SAP, you should continue to provide services to DOT-regulated employers if it is possible to do so in accordance with State or local mandates related to COVID-19. Should you have concerns about COVID-19 when testing or interacting with employees, please follow your company policy, directions from State and local officials, and guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

You are encouraged to continue to monitor guidance from public health officials and to refer to official government channels for additional information related to COVID-19.

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If you are not receiving this newsletter directly, or know of someone who is not currently receiving it and would like to, please contact Julie Schafer at jschafer@rlsandassoc.com. This publication is free.

Visit the **Minnesota Rural Transit Assistance Program** website
for a catalog and a listing of upcoming 2020 events:

mnrtap.us/calendar-of-events/

This newsletter is published under contract with the Minnesota Department of Transportation from a grant received from the Federal Transit Administration under 49 U.S.C. Section 5311–Formula grants for other than urbanized areas (CFDA 20.509).

The newsletter is published by:

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