



First Quarter Edition

eNEWSLETTER

In this ISSUE

FIRST QUARTER 2020



CARES ACT DELIVERS VITAL LIFELINE FOR TRANSIT

(CARES) Act which is a vital lifeline for transit with \$25 billion in funding for rural and urban areas across the country



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19)



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The Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) was initiated in 1986 by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to provide resources, training and technical assistance to rural transit providers. The Missouri RTAP Center is located at Missouri University of Science and Technology (Missouri S&T) in Rolla. Since April 2012, Missouri S&T has been contracted by MoDOT to manage the RTAP program.



FTA ANNOUNCES \$8.5 MILLION FUNDING OPPORTUNITY FOR HOPE PROGRAM

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NEED TRAINING?

Call our office to schedule training for your agency at 1.573.341.6155

National RTAP is a program of the Federal Transit Administration dedicated to creating rural transit solutions through technical assistance, partner collaboration and FREE training.



LETTER FROM THE MANAGER

DEAR TRANSIT FRIENDS,

Usually I begin a letter this time of year by extending my regards that the first few months are off to a great start for each of you. I also frequently look back at previous first quarter letters to generate ideas and direction. In doing so for this letter, I noticed last year I focused on spring not coming quickly enough. Still in the grips of winter, I longed for sunshine and warmer temperatures as I contemplated attending the CTAA Expo in Palm Springs, California. I encouraged everyone to consider attending the conference and do so each year, but we are currently facing a very different situation. With so much uncertainty surrounding when travel and normal business might resume, planning to attend a gathering of any size a few months from now seems a bit impractical. However, I am hopeful that our lives will return to a more normal state by the time the summer months greet us. I see the CTAA Expo as one of the kickoff events to the transit conference season. About this time, we start to see an influx of scholarship requests for various training and networking opportunities. I encourage you to be optimistic and continue making tentative plans in hopes that we will all be gathering again soon to further the mission of rural transit.



Heath Pickerill,
Missouri RTAP Manager

As we each adjust our daily routines, practice social distancing, and work remotely in many cases, we have at least had some beautiful weather to enjoy. Doreen has reported enjoying daily walks in the sunshine as she works from home but has also mentioned how much she misses coming to the office. Drop Doreen a note by email or call her if you need to hear a friendly voice. She would be delighted to hear from the transit agencies we serve. Additionally, we would love to share examples of how your agency has been persevering through these challenging times. Doreen continually updates the Missouri RTAP website, www.mortap.com, and can add these types of uplifting stories. We are all being bombarded with continuous updates on COVID 19, so staying caught up with the transit agencies throughout the state through encouraging features would be a refreshing change of pace.

All of us here at Missouri RTAP hope you, your employees, and families are staying safe and healthy, I sincerely hope by the time I am writing my letter for the second quarter, all of our lives have returned to their more normal daily routines. Until then, maintain an encouraging outlook and continue planning for an even stronger transit system in the not-so-distant future.

Stav healthv.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heath Pickerill". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Heath Pickerill
Missouri RTAP Manager

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CARES Act DELIVERS VITAL LIFELINE FOR TRANSIT

Congress crossed the finish line with the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act which is a vital lifeline for transit with \$25 billion in funding for rural and urban areas across the country.

“Congress is providing a vital line of support through its \$2 trillion stimulus package. Missouri transit agencies are facing massive deficits due to dropping fare box recovery, increased expenses from new cleaning protocols and significant driver absenteeism. This money will go a long way towards ensuring that transit agencies can survive until this public health crisis subsides. Public transportation is vital to local communities. We are grateful to our congressional delegation for stepping up for transit during this time,” said Kim Cella, executive Director of CMT and MPTA.

According to TransitCenter based in New York, transit agencies nationally, if social distancing continues over the next 12 months, will face a shortfall of \$26-38 billion. Missouri’s estimated share of that would be \$166-239 million. The model assumes that fare and park-and-ride revenue drops by 75-100% (fare revenue will fall more than ridership does), local sales tax revenue falls by 30-55%, and local/state support and other agency-generated revenue falls by 20-30%. Bi-State Development in St. Louis is estimating a loss of \$88 million from the impact of COVID-19.

Funding included in the Act would be allocated to transit operators to protect public health and safety while ensuring transportation access to jobs, medical treatment, food, and other essential services remain available during the COVID-19 response. The CARES Act provides almost three times (280 percent) the FY

2020 appropriations for each of these programs; and distributes the funds proportionally based on the ratio of funding for these formula programs in the FY 2020 apportionments.

Funding for transit is broken out as follows:

5307 Urbanized Formula Grants: \$13.79 billion

5311 Rural Area Formula Grants: \$2 billion

5337 State of Good Repair: \$7.51 billion

5340 Fast-Growth & High Density: \$1.71 billion

The bill clarifies that these funds are for operating expenses related to the coronavirus public health emergency beginning on January 20, 2020, and should be used for operating costs to maintain service, lost revenue due to the coronavirus emergency, as well as the purchase of personal protective equipment, and paying for the administrative leave of operations personnel due to loss of service. These funds are not required to be included in the transportation improvement plan, state transportation improvement plan, or long range transportation plan. Funds will remain available until expended.

“The days and weeks ahead will be defined by more change and new challenges. The transit service that is essential now will be even more so when Missourians get back to the business of building safe, sustainable and economically viable communities. Thank you to Congress to help keep transit on track,” said Cella.

What you need to know about coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)

What is coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel coronavirus that was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China.

Can people in the U.S. get COVID-19?

Yes. COVID-19 is spreading from person to person in parts of the United States. Risk of infection with COVID-19 is higher for people who are close contacts of someone known to have COVID-19, for example healthcare workers, or household members. Other people at higher risk for infection are those who live in or have recently been in an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19. Learn more about places with ongoing spread at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html#geographic>.

Have there been cases of COVID-19 in the U.S.?

Yes. The first case of COVID-19 in the United States was reported on January 21, 2020. The current count of cases of COVID-19 in the United States is available on CDC's webpage at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-in-us.html>.

How does COVID-19 spread?

The virus that causes COVID-19 probably emerged from an animal source, but is now spreading from person to person. The virus is thought to spread mainly between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It also may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. Learn what is known about the spread of newly emerged coronaviruses at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html>.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Patients with COVID-19 have had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of

- fever
- cough
- shortness of breath

What are severe complications from this virus?

Some patients have pneumonia in both lungs, multi-organ failure and in some cases death.

How can I help protect myself?

People can help protect themselves from respiratory illness with everyday preventive actions.

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.

If you are sick, to keep from spreading respiratory illness to others, you should

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

What should I do if I recently traveled from an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19?

If you have traveled from an affected area, there may be restrictions on your movements for up to 2 weeks. If you develop symptoms during that period (fever, cough, trouble breathing), seek medical advice. Call the office of your health care provider before you go, and tell them about your travel and your symptoms. They will give you instructions on how to get care without exposing other people to your illness. While sick, avoid contact with people, don't go out and delay any travel to reduce the possibility of spreading illness to others.

Is there a vaccine?

There is currently no vaccine to protect against COVID-19. The best way to prevent infection is to take everyday preventive actions, like avoiding close contact with people who are sick and washing your hands often.

Is there a treatment?

There is no specific antiviral treatment for COVID-19. People with COVID-19 can seek medical care to help relieve symptoms.



THE WORLDS LARGEST ROLL OF TOILET PAPER CAN BE FOUND RIGHT HERE IN MISSOURI

Someday, months or years from now, we'll all look back on the great toilet paper run of 2020. We'll remember, fondly or otherwise, where we were – sitting back shaking our heads in disbelief, searching for that last roll of toilet paper, or opening our closet that's bursting with rolls and rolls of toilet paper. That's when we'll get the urge to snap selfies with the world's largest roll of toilet paper in Missouri.

Most of us really don't talk about toilet paper because, well, there's not that much to say. However, there's plenty to talk about when it comes to the world's largest roll of toilet paper

that's right at home at Ripley's Believe It or Not in Branson.

If you've never seen the massive roll of toilet paper, you'll definitely want to add it to your bucket list. You might be asking yourself right now, just how big is that roll of toilet paper?

The biggest roll of toilet paper stands 10 feet tall, boasts a diameter of 9.73 feet, and covers one million square feet. However, all those numbers really don't bring home just how huge it really is. You'd need to stack 95,000 rolls of toilet paper to make the equivalent of that humongous roll of toilet paper.



One person, according to Ripley's Believe It Or Not in Branson, uses around 49 regular rolls of toilet paper each year. If you had that massive roll of toilet paper, you'd be set for life. In fact, you could put it in your will since it would take one person 1,900 years to use it all.

That epic roll of toilet paper was made by P&G Paper Products Company right here in Missouri, earning the Charmin roll the title of the world's largest roll of toilet paper by The Guinness Book of World Records.

Have you ever seen the largest roll of toilet paper in Missouri? Do you plan to see it? Did you know Missouri's also home to the World's Largest Toy Museum? Check it out address: 3326 W 76 Country Blvd, Branson, MO 65616, USA.

FTA ANNOUNCES \$8.5 MILLION FUNDING OPPORTUNITY FOR HOPE PROGRAM

Update: FTA will host a webinar to provide information about the HOPE Program on Wednesday, April 8, 2020, at 2 p.m. ET, to learn more about applicant and project eligibility. Visit the FTA website for more information. The FTA has extended the application deadline for applying to June 3, 2020.

The FTA announced a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) to apply for \$8.5 million in Fiscal Year 2020 competitive grant funding for projects that help lift communities out of poverty and support recovery from substance abuse. The new Helping Obtain Prosperity for Everyone (HOPE) program supports planning, engineering, and technical studies or financial planning to improve transit services in areas experiencing long-term economic distress.

“This new \$8.5 million grant program will improve mobility in underserved communities, including rural areas,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao.

The HOPE program will provide funding for planning, engineering, and technical studies and financial plans that will result in improved public transportation, new transit routes and facilities, and innovative technologies in communities experiencing persistent poverty. It will also support coordinated human service transportation planning to improve transit service or provide new services such as rides to opioid abuse recovery and treatment.

“The HOPE Program is designed to help communities succeed,” said FTA Acting Administrator K. Jane Williams. “We want to ensure that transportation connects people to jobs, school, and healthcare and is not a barrier for people seeking substance abuse treatment and recovery services.”

Eligible applicants must come from counties with more than 20 percent of the population living in poverty for 30 years or more, as measured by the U.S. Census, or the 2013-2017 American Community Survey. Many of the communities are in rural areas, which experience unique challenges in providing public transportation, ensuring safety and keeping transit assets in a state of good repair. Applicants are encouraged to partner with nonprofit organizations engaged in public transportation and anti-poverty issues.

The NOFO encourages applicants to demonstrate how their proposed projects are consistent with the Department’s Rural Opportunities to Use Transportation for Economic Success (R.O.U.T.E.S.) initiative, which seeks to address disparities in rural transportation infrastructure, and FTA’s Accelerating Innovative Mobility (AIM) program, which promotes innovative approaches to improve financing, system design, and service.

Projects will be evaluated by the criteria outlined in the NOFO. Applications will be accepted until 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on May 4, 2020.



HELP
STOP THE
SPREAD
AND STAY HEALTHY

MAKING PUBLIC TRANSIT SAFER DURING COVID-19 OUTBREAK

Transportation systems are always important for communities and our country, and never more so than during a crisis. That's why so many at the U.S. Department of Transportation are working overtime to respond to the ongoing COVID-19 (coronavirus) situation affecting the U.S. and the world.

The Department's Federal Transit Administration (FTA), for example, is working closely with local transit authorities to free up resources to help them deal with COVID-19. Every year, Americans use mass transit to take more than 10 billion trips. FTA is taking steps to make more resources available to local transit authorities to fund cleaning efforts and other measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

The Department supports urban and rural transit in large part through formula transit funding, as established by Congress. The Federal share of expenditures for preventative maintenance is capped at 80 percent. This can include measures to protect health as well as safety.

However, personal protective equipment, such as facemasks, gloves, or hand sanitizer have long been treated as an operating expense. Large operators are not normally allowed to cover operating expenses with any of their Federal formula funding. Smaller and rural operators can use federal formula funding to cover only half of their operating expenses.

If a governor declares an emergency and the Department concurs, the FTA Emergency Relief Program (49 USC 5324) lets transit agencies in those

states use their urban and rural transit formula funding to pay up to 80 percent of the cost of activities aimed at containing COVID-19. This will unlock billions of dollars to keep transit systems safe for riders.

This funding flexibility will help transit operators implement preventative measures. These include performing enhanced cleaning and sanitizing of trains, buses, stations, bus shelters and more. It will also include placing hand sanitizer dispensers in high traffic areas and providing personal protective equipment as appropriate.

Local transit agencies can also request other relief from Federal requirements by making a request through the Federal Transit Administration's Emergency Relief Docket.

These are among many actions the U.S. Department of Transportation is taking to help keep Americans safe and keep our Nation's transportation systems operating at a high level.

Of course, these preventative measures are most effective when all of us do our part, by avoiding public spaces if we are sick, washing our hands frequently, and following the guidance of health experts.

JOHN HAS NEW RTAP WHEELS!



The next time John Rice, MO-RTAP Trainer comes to your facility, he will be driving a new set of wheels! John was slated to receive a new vehicle by the end of 2019. The old vehicle had over 250,000 miles and had been to every corner of Missouri. The last two years, the vehicle had been giving John some worries if he would make it to an agency to train.

There was a time or two that John let us know that he was turning around enroute to an agency and hoped to make it to a repair shop to have the vehicle checked-out and repaired.

After our office was informed the new vehicle, a 2019 Ford High Roof Conversion Van, was ready to be delivered to the Missouri S&T campus, a delivery date was scheduled. On the date of delivery, we were informed that fifteen minutes out of St. Louis, the passenger airbag light would not go off so the vehicle needed to be returned to Ford in Illinois.

About two months later, another delivery date was scheduled and we finally received the new MO-RTAP vehicle. After a check over by our campus Physical Facilities and the Missouri S&T and Missouri RTAP logos were applied, the vehicle was ready for John to take the wheel.

We do feel John is a happy camper with the new MO-RTAP vehicle. He said it's comfy, it has a heated driver's seat, and is a really nice ride!

OATS NORTHWEST REGION TRAINING



MO-RTAP Trainer, John Rice, conducting Wheelchair Securement, Passenger Assistance Techniques, and Child Seat Securement trainings at the OATS Northwest Region Office training location in Trenton, MO on March 4, 2020. Thank you for taking and sending us the pictures of your training, Beth Langley, OATS Northwest Region Director!



AVAILABLE TRAINING PROGRAMS

The following is a list of the training programs and course length of each that are currently available to rural transit providers through Missouri RTAP. Requests for training can be made by contacting Doreen Harkins, MO-RTAP Program Specialist, at harkinsd@mst.edu or 573-341-6155.

1. ACTIVE SHOOTER PREVENTION AND RESPONSE - 2 hours.
2. AGGRESSIVE DRIVING — 1 hour.
3. BACKING SAFETY — 1 hour.
4. BASIC FIRST AID — 1 hour.
5. BLOOD BORNE PATHOGENS — 1 hour.
6. CPR & BASIC FIRST AID — 4 hours.
7. DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PASSENGERS - 2 hours.
8. DEFENSIVE DRIVING — 3 hours.
9. DISTRACTED DRIVING — 1 hour.
10. DIVERSITY & AWARENESS TRAINING - *PROVIDING QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE FOR TRANSPORTATION PASSENGERS WHO HAVE DISABILITIES* — 2 hours.
11. DRIVEN TO EXTREMES — 1 hour.
12. DRUG ABUSE AWARENESS IN RURAL TRANSIT — 1 hour.
13. EMERGENCY & EVACUATION PROCEDURES — 1 1/2 to 2 hours.
14. ENTRY LEVEL CDL DRIVER TRAINING — 2 hours.
15. FATIGUE AWARENESS FOR DRIVERS — 2 hours.
16. HIPAA — 1 hour.
17. NIGHT DRIVING — 1 hour.
18. OPERATION LIFESAVER - HIGHWAY-RAIL CROSSING SAFETY — 1 hour.
19. PASSENGER ASSISTANCE/MOBILITY AID SECUREMENT — 2 hours.
20. REASONABLE SUSPICION TRAINING FOR SUPERVISORS — 2 hours.
21. SAFE & SECURE PROPER INFANT AND CHILD SEAT INSTALLATION — 2 hours.
22. SENSITIVITY AWARENESS — 1 hour.
23. SEXUAL HARRASSMENT — 1 hour.
24. SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS — 1 hour.
25. WHEELCHAIR SECUREMENT — 2 to 3 hours depending on number of participants.
26. WINTER DRIVING SAFETY — 1 hour.



For more information on classes and to register please visit: mltrc.mst.edu/mortaphome/mortaptraining/

RESOURCES

National RTAP – Rural Transit Assistance Program
www.nationalrtap.org/

**Transportation Safety Institute –
Transit Safety & Security Training Division**
www.tsi.dot.gov/Transit.aspx

**Federal Transit Administration –
Rural Transit Assistance Program Page**
[www.fta.dot.gov/funding/grants/
grants_financing_3554.html](http://www.fta.dot.gov/funding/grants/grants_financing_3554.html)

Missouri Public Transit
www.mopublictransit.org/

National Transit Institute
www.ntionline.com/

**Kansas RTAP – Kansas University
Transportation Center**
[www.kutc.ku.edu/cgiwrap/kutc/rtap/
index.php/index.html](http://www.kutc.ku.edu/cgiwrap/kutc/rtap/index.php/index.html)

**Transportation Research Board's (TRB) Transit
Cooperative Research Program (TCRP)**
www.tcrponline.org/

