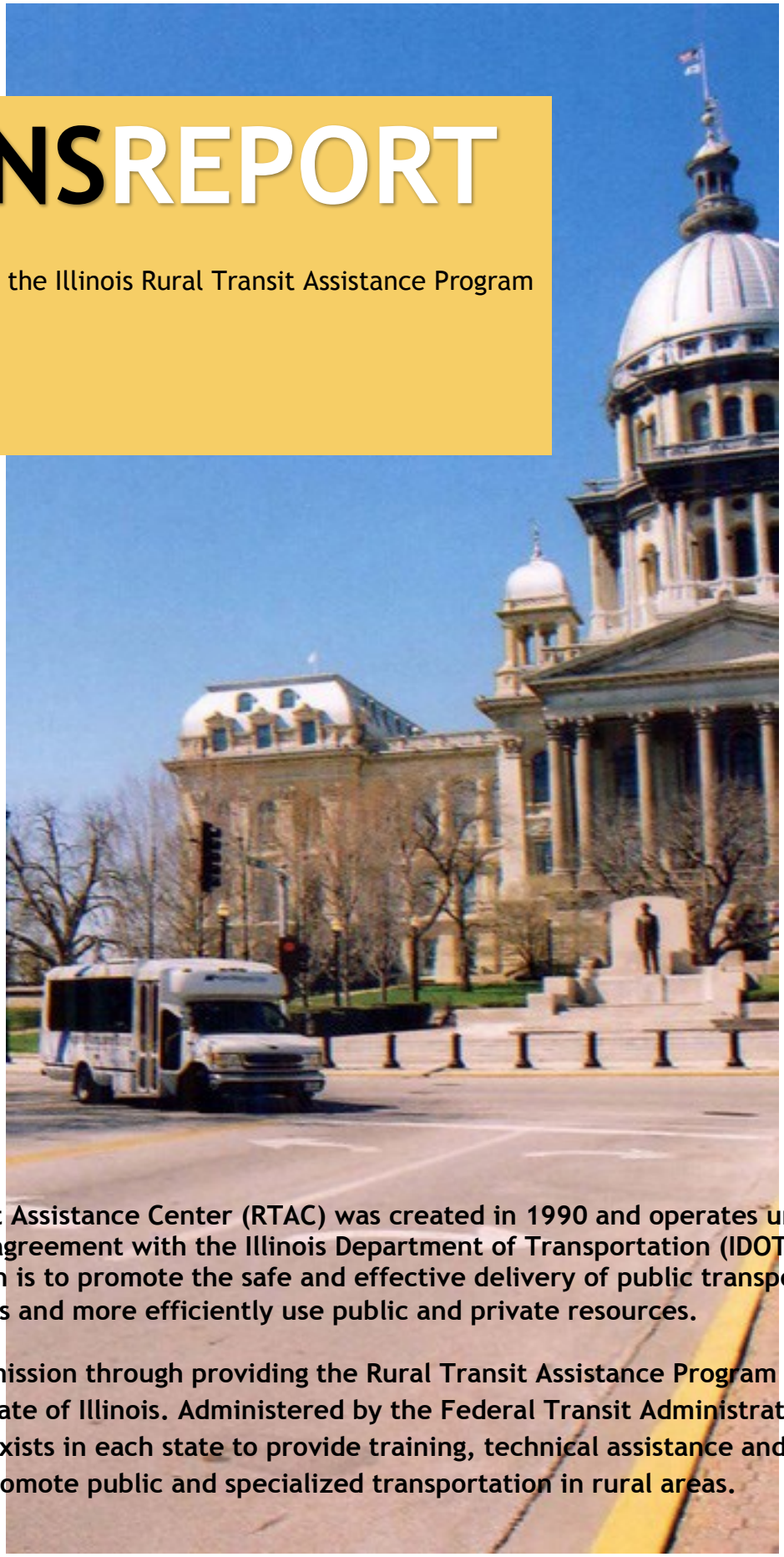
TRANSREPORT

The Newsletter of the Illinois Rural Transit Assistance Program

Winter, 2022



RTAC Staff:

Dave Patton

Mable Kreps

Ed Heflin

The Rural Transit Assistance Center (RTAC) was created in 1990 and operates under an inter-agency agreement with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). The RTAC mission is to promote the safe and effective delivery of public transportation in rural areas and more efficiently use public and private resources.

RTAC fulfills its mission through providing the Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) for the State of Illinois. Administered by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), an RTAP exists in each state to provide training, technical assistance and research, and to promote public and specialized transportation in rural areas.

RTAC Notes

Dave Patton, Director

As we all look forward to Spring, and hopefully for a return to a more normal lifestyle that accepts Covid-19 as part of it, time continues to fly on by. People still need rides – seemingly fewer people, especially in urban areas, but people nonetheless. One question that has arisen recently surrounded the state law/requirement for certain vehicles to stop at railroad crossings. I believe that most public transportation providers have policies which require their vehicles to stop at crossings just the same way that school buses and tankers carrying hazardous materials stop at crossings. But, in finding the actual Illinois legislation, the law says that a 2nd division vehicle (defined as a vehicle which is capable of carrying more than 10 persons) does NOT have to stop at a crossing if it is NOT carrying passengers. School buses must stop whether carrying passengers or not – even at signal-controlled crossings. We all know that with today's threat from distracted driving there is danger at every stop and railroad crossing. Other drivers, while they are more and more conditioned to remember that school buses will stop at a crossing, are prepared to slow and stop behind the bus. But, with paratransit vehicles, that conditioning is not going to be as evident. Certainly in much of rural Illinois where people are used to seeing their local service provider's vehicles, they may be better prepared to react to a slowing and stopping paratransit vehicle at a railroad crossing. People from outside these areas, or from places with little paratransit activity – prepared not so much. So, to complicate matters, if a paratransit bus which is deadheading or otherwise running without passengers does not stop at a railroad crossing, that act is conditioning other drivers to not be prepared. Rear-ended paratransit buses is an accident that does happen. To keep it the danger minimal at crossings, it is best to require paratransit drivers to always stop at railroad crossings – carrying passengers or not. And there should be stickers on the back of each such vehicle warning that "this vehicle stops at railroad crossings." The final subsection of the law says that no vehicle needs to stop at abandoned tracks designated as such by the Illinois Commerce Commission and marked thusly. This is a tricky situation that drivers will have to navigate. I have reproduced the Rail Crossing Statue and Definitions below.

(625 ILCS 5/11-1202) (from Ch. 95 1/2, par. 11-1202)

Sec. 11-1202. Certain vehicles must stop at all railroad grade crossings.

(a) The driver of any of the following vehicles shall, before crossing a railroad track or tracks at grade, stop such vehicle within 50 feet but not less than 15 feet from the nearest rail and, while so stopped, shall listen and look for the approach of a train or railroad track equipment and shall not proceed until such movement can be made with safety:

1. Any second division vehicle carrying passengers for hire; [see below for def-

inition of “second division vehicle”]

2. Any bus that meets all of the special requirements for school buses in sections 12-801, 12-803, and 12-805 of this Code. The driver of the bus, in addition to complying with all other applicable requirements of this subsection (a), must also (i) turn off all noise producing accessories, including heater blowers, defroster fans, auxiliary fans, and radios, and (ii) open the service door and driver's window, before crossing a railroad track or tracks;

3. Any other vehicle which is required by Federal or State law to be placarded when carrying as a cargo or part of a cargo hazardous material as defined in the "Illinois Hazardous Materials Transportation Act".

After stopping as required in this Section, the driver shall proceed only in a gear not requiring a change of gears during the crossing, and the driver shall not shift gears while crossing the track or tracks.

(b) This Section shall not apply:

1. At any railroad grade crossing where traffic is controlled by a police officer or flag person;

2. At any railroad grade crossing controlled by a functioning traffic-control signal transmitting a green indication which, under law, permits the vehicle to proceed across the railroad tracks without slowing or stopping, except that subsection (a) shall apply to any school bus;

3. At any streetcar grade crossing within a business or residence district; or

4. At any abandoned, industrial or spur track railroad grade crossing designated as exempt by the Illinois Commerce Commission and marked with an official sign as authorized in the State Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways.

(Source: P.A. 95-756, eff. 1-1-09; 96-1244, eff. 1-1-11.)

Second Division Vehicle Definition

(625 ILCS 5/1-217) (from Ch. 95 1/2, par. 1-217)
Sec. 1-217. Vehicle. Every device, in, upon or by which any person or property is or may be transported or drawn upon a highway or requiring a certificate of title under Section 3-101(d) of this Code, except devices moved by human power, devices used exclusively upon stationary rails or tracks and snowmobiles as defined in the Snowmobile Registration and Safety Act.

For the purposes of this Code, unless otherwise prescribed, a device shall be considered to be a vehicle until such time it either comes within the definition of a junk vehicle, as defined under this Code, or a junking certificate is issued for it.

For this Code, vehicles are divided into 2 divisions:

First Division: Those motor vehicles which are designed for the carrying of not more than 10 persons.

Second Division: Those vehicles which are designed for carrying more than 10 persons, those designed or used for living quarters and those vehicles which

IDOT Announces Capital Grants

Gov. JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Transportation announced that almost $110 million has been awarded to transit providers downstate as part of the historic, bi-partisan Rebuild Illinois capital program, reinforcing the governor's priority to create economic opportunity by moving people more safely and efficiently while improving all modes of Illinois transportation. The Rebuild IL announcement represents the second round of competitive grants awarded as part of $355 million identified in Rebuild Illinois to invest in transit outside the Chicago area. A total of 37 transit systems are receiving $111.4 million to advance 51 projects including the purchase of new vehicles as well as the construction of bus shelters, stations, and maintenance facilities to expand and improve service, provide more transportation options in downstate communities, and promote an enhanced quality of life.

A full list of recipients can be viewed by visiting IDOT's Public Transportation Providers page or by clicking here.

Illinois Department of Transportation

IPTA Notes

Laura Calderon

In 2021 transit agencies across Illinois made significant strides to recover from the impacts of the pandemic. Ridership began to rebound as IPTA members continued to pivot in an effort to provide safe, efficient, and reliable service to their communities. Much like 2020, agencies answered the call and found themselves serving their communities in new ways as our state began the roll out of the COVID-19 vaccines. Some agencies hosted mobile vaccine clinics, while many others provided transportation allowing their riders to access vaccine appointments, and proving once again how vital public transportation is in the communities across our state.

After taking a hiatus from in person meetings and conferences, IPTA members came back in full force as we joined with RTAC to put on the 2021 IPTA/RTAC Fall Conference & Expo. We gathered in Peoria at the Pere Marquette Marriott and the Peoria Civic Center. Transit professionals were able to connect with their peers and share ideas on important issues such as diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace, operator shortages, implementing vaccine/testing policies, rebuilding ridership, and transportation security. We also had the opportunity to reconnect with many of the top vendors in the industry and learn about many of the products and services they have to offer during IPTA's first ever Expo with an indoor vehicle display.

We ended the year on a high note as Congress passed and President Biden signed into law a major Bi-Partisan Infrastructure Bill, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), providing significant increases in federal funding for transit over the next five years. IIJA Provides:

- $106.9 billion for public transit, an increase of $41.1 billion (63 percent) from current levels, including:
- $91.1 billion of guaranteed funding, including $69.9 billion of contract authority and $21.2 billion of advance appropriations for fiscal year (FY) 2022 through FY 2026; and
- $15.8 billion of additional General Fund authorizations for Capital Investment Grants (CIG) and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)

As we look ahead and begin a new year, new challenges are on the horizon. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has issued the Entry-Level Driver Training (ELDT) Final Rule, which will impact transit agencies as they work to hire and train operators. This rule includes new baseline Federal requirements for training that entry-level drivers must complete before being permitted to take certain commercial driver's license (CDL) skills or knowledge tests on or after February 7, 2022. Among other types of CDL's, this rule applies to anyone seeking to obtain a passenger (P) endorsement for the first time. These new requirements are not retroactive and do not apply to operators who have already obtained a CDL with a passenger endorsement prior to February 7, or have received a certified Commercial Learner's Permit (CLP)

by that date and complete their CDL with passenger endorsement prior to the expiration of that CLP.

Additionally, the IL Secretary of State has proposed amendments to the Administrative Code that not only reflect the ELDT requirements, but also propose additional minimum hours of classroom, range and over the road training. These proposed rules will be heard by the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules on February 15. IPTA will be working with members to provide comments to the proposed rule amendments. Look for more information and resources to assist you in making the transition to these new requirements.

IPTA says farewell to three board members this winter. Longtime board member Rocky Donahue, Executive Director of Pace, retired at the end of December. Marcus Cox, former Transit Director for the City of DeKalb, has moved on to a transit tech company, Swiftly, Inc. And Amy Brown, CEO of CRIS Rural Mass Transit District, has accepted a position with the Illinois Department on Aging. Congratulations and best wishes to Rocky, Marcus and Amy! I personally am tremendously grateful for your many contributions to our board and association.

Save the date for IPTA's 2022 Fall Conference, which will be held in O'Fallon, IL, September 13-15. More details will soon be available. ϴ

Here are some pictures from the 2021 IPTA Conference in Peoria.

Karl Gnadt, Siron Sims, Michael Stubbe, and Jennifer Hirsch participate in a roundtable discussing contingency plans and the ongoing challenges of Covid-19 in the workplace.

The Vendor Exhibit was full of great displays and products.

Illinois State Senator Scott Bennett (52nd District) receives the 2021 *IPTA Legislator of the Year Award* from President Karl Gnadt.

Welcome to Jason Osborn

Director

IDOT Office of Intermodal Project Implementation

Osborn was named director of the Office of Intermodal Project Implementation in 2022 after more than 20 years in the transportation field. Prior to joining IDOT, he worked at Metra, leading system and performance analytics, Title VI conformity and GIS development. He also worked at the McHenry County Division of Transportation where he helped established the MCRide coordinated demand response service, undertook long-range planning, and programming and at an engineering consultant firm where he completed many highway planning studies.

Areas of expertise include: long-range planning, project management, transportation policy, economic development and public administration. Osborn earned master's degrees in urban and regional planning from the University of Iowa and public policy and administration from Northwestern University. His adopted hometown is Woodstock, IL where he is a regular Metra rider.

Illinois Department of Transportation

IDOT Welcomes Jack Cruikshank

John "Jack" Cruikshank joined IDOT as a Project Manager in the Northern Section of the Bureau of Transit Operations in September.

Before coming to IDOT, Jack worked for a public affairs consulting firm, spending the majority of his time working with the Chicago Department of Transportation managing the CREATE Program, a $4.6 billion public-private partnership improving passenger and freight rail movement throughout the region and the country overall. Jack also previously worked for the Will County Governmental League, overseeing the distribution of federal Surface Transportation Program funds and the implementation of those projects in coordination with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

In the first few months with IDOT, Jack has been involved in many aspects of transit in the work to provide the highest-quality transit service for the residents of the State of Illinois. He lightheartedly acknowledges there is still plenty more he has to learn.

Jack has a master's degree in Political Science/Public Administration and a bachelor's degree in International Relations. In his personal life, he enjoys automotive restoration and travel to obscure places. Θ

Illinois Department of Transportation

IIRA Announces

Register Now

IIRA
Illinois Institute
for Rural Affairs

FY 2022 RTAC Classroom Driver Training

RTAC is pleased to provide to your agency this year's classroom driver training program. The RTAC trainers have created new true/false and multiple choice question tests for Defensive Driving, Emergency Procedures, Passenger Assistance, and an optional Passenger Emergencies training. Each of the written tests relates to the corresponding on-site training. All of the driver training classroom material will soon be available at http://www.iira.org/rtac/resources/

Also, please visit our website to view the library items that correlate with the four trainings.

How to proceed:

1. Have each driver take the written tests—these tests are not just for new drivers, but for everyone.
2. Fill out the sign-in sheet, which signifies that your drivers have taken the written tests. At the end of August 2022, RTAC will submit to IDOT-OIPI a listing of each agency that has completed the written tests/on-site training, broken down by employee name and which tests and on-site trainings the employee completed.
3. Call/email RTAC to schedule the on-site trainings: Mable Kreps at 309.298.2141 or MR-Kreps@wiu.edu
4. Mail, email, or fax (309.298.2162) the sign-in sheet(s) for the tests and on-site trainings to RTAC. Please do not send us the completed tests.

Here is what to expect during the on-site trainings:

Defensive Driving: The course focuses on driving techniques that will enable transit drivers to drive in a more defensive manner. It addresses issues such as stopping distance, field of vision, vehicle controls, speed management, and vehicle inspections.

Emergency Procedures: Focuses on emergency preparedness (safety checks the driver should conduct before leaving on the trip and types of emergency equipment that should be on the vehicle) and on procedures to follow in case of an actual emergency (evacuation of passengers, first aid, etc.).

Passenger Assistance: In addition to explaining proper securement of wheelchairs, use of the wheelchair lift, and various ways to physically assist passengers, this course also addresses sensitivity issues and the best way to communicate with people with disabilities, manual operation of the lift in case of mechanical failure, as well as a customer service component.

Passenger Emergencies: Topics discussed will include the types of passenger emergencies, effective communication, how to be proactive, and how to respond to a variety of passenger emergencies.

If you have any questions, please email or contact Mable at 309.298.2141 or MR-Kreps@wiu.edu

RTAC Announces Availability of TAPTCO Online Training!

RTAC has partnered with TAPTCO to provide online driver training. For over 30 years, the experts at TAPTCO Transit & Paratransit Company have been designing award-winning bus driver training programs with specialties that include fleet operations and safety, industrial psychology, instructional design, and media production. This breakthrough series of safety video programs and study guides for bus driver training are designed by our team of performance improvement experts with specialties that include fleet operations and safety, industrial psychology, instructional design, and media production.

This training, the Paratransit Operator Development Course, is widely used across the nation, and in an online form, is highly appropriate for training new drivers and refreshing experienced paratransit personnel. All Illinois Section 5311 grantees and operators are eligible for this free training, with Section 5310 providers on a secondary basis. The best way to take advantage of this online resource is to have an agency's training manager (or whoever holds this duty) send RTAC each trainee's name, and email address, and RTAC will set-up an account for that trainee, and send a return email to the trainee with a username and password. At present, in order to use the online system, each trainee must have a unique email address. Each trainee will be able to access his/her account and step through the 32 training courses and quizzes. Agency training managers will be able to see each student's progress and when the course is completed, print out a certificate.

More information will be disseminated soon. RTAC expects to begin taking reservations shortly.

RTAC

If you're new(er) to rural transit, make sure to surf over to the National RTAP website and check-out the newly updated Transit Manager's Toolkit. This is a fantastic and comprehensive manual which explains almost everything you could need to know, from working with Boards, to understanding federal regulations, to operations and planning. The document is 179 pages.

2022 RTAC Roadeo

The next RTAC Roadeo is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, April 30, 2022 in

New Berlin, IL.

The Roadeo trophy table at South Central Illinois Mass Transit District!

RTAC Spring Conference

2022's conference will be held in Springfield March 1-2. Registration

IL RTAP Advisory Council

Jean Jumper, West Central IL MTD, Chair

Adam Lach, Rides MTD, Vice-Chair

Rollin Barton, Dept. on Aging

Sarah Nollman-Hodge, South Central IL MTD

Sherry Hicks, FAYCO, Inc.

Kim Zimmerman, North Central Area Transit

Mike Neuenkirchen, Voluntary Action Center

Morgan Lewis, Warren County PCOM

Rural Transit Assistance Center (RTAC) Staff

David Patton, Director, DC-Patton@wiu.edu, 309.298.3392

Mable Kreps, Transit Specialist, MR-Kreps@wiu.edu, 309.298.2141

Ed Heflin, Transit Specialist, EL-Heflin@wiu.edu, 309.298.2377

Our mailing address is:
Rural Transit Assistance Center, Stipes Hall 318, 1 University Circle, Western Illinois University, Macomb, IL 61455

Toll-Free Telephone: 800.526.9943
Fax: 309.298.2162
RTAC Website: www.iira.org/rtac/

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