TRANSREPORT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ILLINOIS RURAL TRANSIT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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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.

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RTAC NOTES

DAVE PATTON, DIRECTOR

Second Division Vehicles – Railroads and Medical Clearances

Frequently we are asked about second division vehicles and what specific and special requirements are in the Secretary of State's laws – specifically questions about stopping at railroad crossings and about medical clearance for drivers.

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 stopped 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 definition 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 flagperson;

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 are designed for pulling or carrying property, freight or cargo, those motor vehicles of the First Division remodeled for use and used as motor vehicles of the Second Division, and those motor vehicles of the First Division used and registered as school buses.
(Source: P.A. 92-812, eff. 8-21-02.)

Medical Clearance/Certificate
More than one transit provider has recently considered the double-whammy concept of high-costs for obtaining medical certificates for drivers, and retaining and hiring drivers. It's no secret that the average age of rural public transit employees is inching upward and when it comes to drivers, the inching may be more like "footing." With advanced age and the accompanying medical concerns, the value of an expensive DOT physical is evident. In some cases agencies are finding that simply renewing the employment of experienced drivers is getting harder and harder because not only are people leaving the workforce, but they are being driven out because their health may not be good enough to keep driving. In one case I recently learned that a doctor refused to issue a medical certificate unless the driver under exam took a sleep-study and was then determined able to drive safely. The average cost of a sleep study in Illinois falls into a range between $1500 and $2000. This is a direct cost that the transit agency must pay. So, a completely valid question from the agency is "do we really have to do this/pay for this?" _Most_ rural public transit agencies in Illinois do pay for pre-employment DOT physicals for drivers/prospective drivers. But are DOT physicals _required_? In short, the answer is yes in Illinois if the agency transports passengers in a vehicle with a gross vehicle weight of 10,000 pounds or more, or that may carry 11 or more (including the driver." And this requirement is not based upon a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) – CDL holders must pass a DOT physical. But, in Illinois, most other professional bus drivers also must. Here are the specifics:

The Illinois Secretary of State's rules of the road for non-CDLs https://www.ilsos.gov/publications/pdf_publications/dsd_x142.pdf has a little section for 2nd Division vehicles wherein there is a requirement for Medical Certificates for driving vehicles with a GVWR over 10,000 pounds, or which can carry more than ten persons. See pages 3 and 4 of this document.

The definition of a Second Division Vehicle in Illinois follows:

A second division vehicle is:

* designed to carry more than 10 persons;
* designed or used for living quarters;
* designed for pulling or carrying freight or cargo;
* a first division vehicle remodeled for use as a second division vehicle; or
* a first division vehicle used and registered as a school bus.

Operators of a second division vehicle with a gross motor vehicle weight of 10,001 pounds

or more are required to carry a Medical Examiner's Certificate with them at all times while operating the vehicle. In addition, drivers are required to maintain a file containing a written test verification, road test verification and other records.

If a transit provider only uses minivans then a DOT physical is NOT required. I am not aware of such an operation, but certainly many providers do use minivans and a driver could be restricted to only driving those minivans. But, if the reason that driver is driving only minivans is because he/she can't pass a physical, I would argue that the provider is facing unnecessary legal jeopardy in the event of this driver having a serious accident resulting in bodily injury.

So, the point of this article is that, basically, rural public transportation providers should fully expect to pay for DOT physicals and probably should pay for follow-on testing which may come from those physicals – if a particular person who will be, or will continue to drive is worth hiring. Safety of the passengers must come first, followed by limiting liability of the transit provider, and then by budget management issues. Costs have to be trimmed elsewhere.

New Advisory Council Members

Kaycie Sanders

Kaycie has been with Dial-A-Ride of Coles County since 2012. She started as a dispatcher and moved to the administrative side in 2015. Over the years, Kaycie has been involved in expanding routes, expanding into other counties, software implementation, trainings, grant writing, marketing, match securement, etc. While she is about to embark on her 12th year in transportation, she learns something new almost weekly but said at this point she thinks that is pretty typical for transit providers! Kaycie was born and raised in Mattoon (Coles County). She attended Lake Land College and graduated from Eastern Illinois University with a Bachelors in Business Administration! Kaycie lives with her husband and 6 year old son and enjoys spending time with her family when she is not working. Recently, her program has had to rely on RTAC much more than normal and they have been so wonderful and informative that I thought I would try to give back to such a great cause! She is looking forward to working on the council and is honored to be apart of RTAC!

Ron Gorst

Ron Gorst is the Operations Director for Shawnee MTD. Ron has over 20 years combined experience in dispatching and route configuration in the industrial franchise industry and public transportation. Gorst enjoys exploring innovations in public transportation to enhance public service. He is dedicated to streamlining processes and delivering exceptional transportation solutions that exceed client expectations. Outside of work, Ron enjoys restoring all types of vehicles, which fuels his customer service and problem-solving skills.

RTAP TRAINING

National RTAP
Rural Transit Assistance Program

When serving customers with disabilities, you should keep the following in mind:

1. Treat customers with disabilities with courtesy and respect.
2. Use person-first language (e.g., person who uses a wheelchair instead of wheelchair user).
3. Give customers with disabilities the same information and choices that you give other customers. Include accessibility information in your customer materials.
4. Never make assumptions about your customers' abilities.
5. Ask customers if they need assistance. If they say yes, ask them how you may assist.
6. Do not touch customers or their wheelchairs without their permission.
7. Speak directly to customers, not their companions.
8. Speak clearly with a normal tone and speed, unless the customer requests otherwise.
9. If you are asked to repeat or write what you said, do so calmly and pleasantly.
10. If you don't understand what the passenger is saying, just ask him/her to repeat - calmly and pleasantly.
11. There are many disabilities and not all can be seen- never assume anything about your passenger!
12. Pay appropriate attention to the differences among people with disabilities.

Updated 2018. Information taken from Easter Seals Project ACTION and American Bus Association's Motorcoach Operator's ADA Pocket Guide.

National RTAPs "2 the Point Training" cards have been designed to be quick refresher trainings for drivers. Each card has training information on the front and a set of questions on the back. After the driver finishes reviewing the information, he/she can answer the short quiz. There is space at the bottom of the card for both the driver's and his/her supervisor's signature. We are able to provide each agency with one full set of training cards. This training was released in 2013 and updated in 2018. To download these cards click here: 2 the Point Training

OCTOBER IS CYBERSECURITY AWARENESS MONTH

National RTAP and the National Center for Applied Transit Technology (N-CATT) are co-hosting a webinar on Cybersecurity for Transit: What You Need to Know on October 1, 2024, from 2:00-3:30 PM ET. Panelists are Scott Belcher, Co-Founder of Cybrbase, LLC; Julia Castillo, Executive Director of HIRTA Public Transit; and Todd Chollet, Cyber Practice Lead, Sunstar Insurance.

This webinar will cover cybersecurity for transit basics and provide guidance for small transit agencies on the actions to take to prevent, respond to, and recover from cyberattacks. Attendees will leave with steps they can implement right away.

From the National RTAP Website

What Transit Agencies Need to Inform the Public About Before Making Changes

National RTAP
Rural Transit Assistance Program

Released: January 2019, Updated February 2024

Compliance

☐	Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Program Changes
☐	Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Activities
☐	Proposed Rules in the Federal Register
☐	Regulatory Approaches
☐	State-Specific Requirements for Notification
☐	Title VI Program, Nondiscrimination and Environmental Justice Policies

Priorities and Strategies

☐	Agency Initiatives and Plans Bus Service and Fare
☐	Changes Environmental Impacts and Programs New
☐	Technologies and Travel Modes Transit Studies
☐	Transportation Coordination and Intercity Initiatives
☐	
☐	

Allocating Funds

☐	Capital and Construction Projects
☐	New Funding Sources
☐	Projects or Activities to be Financed

Acknowledgments

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Further information:

Communicating with the Public in National RTAP's Transit Manager's Toolkit http://tinyurl.com/9nvk29pn
Administrative Procedure Act https://www.archives.gov/federal-register/laws/administrative-procedure/552b.html
Improving Regulation and Regulatory Review https://www.reginfo.gov/public/jsp/Utilities/EO_13563.pdf
The Informal Rulemaking Process https://www.transportation.gov/regulations/rulemaking-process
Executive Order on Modernizing Regulatory Review https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2023/04/06/executive-order-on-modernizing-regulatory-review/

SAVE THE DATES

2025 RTAC Spring Conference
March 4-6, 2025
Northfield Conference Center
Springfield, IL

RTAC Roadeo
April 26, 2025
Sangamon County Fairgrounds

IL RTAP Advisory Council
Adam Lach, Rides MTD, Chair
Morgan Lewis, Warren County PCOM, Vice Chair
Kate Downing, Sangamon/Menard Co. Area Regional Transit
Stefanie Eisele, Dept. on Aging
Sarah Nollman-Hodge, South Central IL MTD
Sherry Hicks, FAYCO, Inc.
Kim Zimmerman, North Central Area Transit
Ron Gorst, Shawnee Mass Transit District
Kaycie Sanders, Dial-A-Ride

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