# TRANSREPORT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ILLINOIS RURAL TRANSIT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

## Fall 2024

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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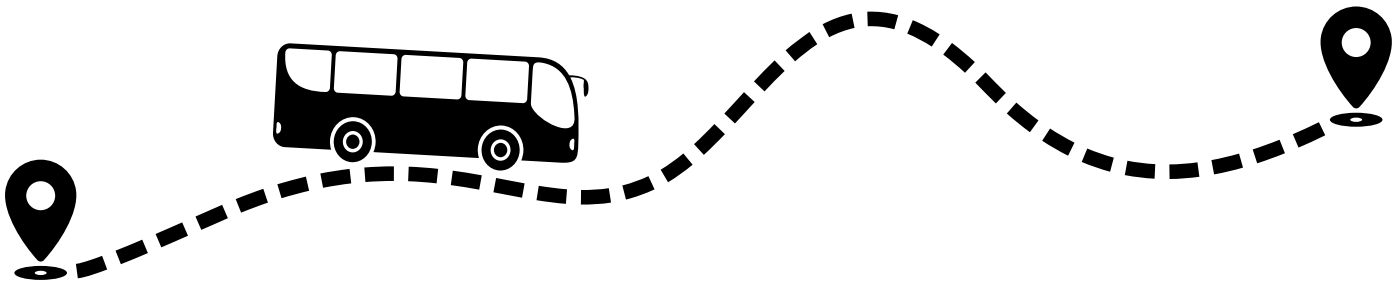
# RTAC NOTES

**DAVE PATTON, DIRECTOR**

It's undeniably a great time to be a young transit planner or engineer. Technology is pushing forward on nearly every front when it comes to equipping, operating, and sometimes even funding public transit. From IDOT's successful adoption and implementation of the Black Cat grants management system, to dispatching, scheduling, and management software widely used in rural operations, to Champaign MTD's hydrogen-powered demonstration operation, to Rock Island's Metro Link futuristic electric bus expansion and facilities, to the local utilization of EVs, clean diesel, natural gas, propane, and hybrid operations, we have come a long way. Chair lifts on buses and vans have become far more reliable and functional today. When I first drove a paratransit bus in 1988 I was ordered to never touch anything related to the lift – that "rattley" thing looked like an old-style chain-link-walled elevator built in the early 1900s!

GTFS is a current effort to modernize the transportation scheduling world. The concept, originally known as the Google Transit Feed Specification is simply a standardized file format which conveyed the critical elements of information needed to map transportation services – originally using Google Maps to create the Google Transit tool. This process started almost 20 years ago! It was widely acknowledged that average travelers had/have a hard time figuring out public transportation – especially when traveling in different regions or cities. Early travel planning software always provided options for driving or flying, so most travelers used those options. Using GTFS started to give travelers the option to consider different modes – even times/routes for walking if you use Google Maps for directions!

Most of us have seen it, or variations of it (GTFS which is now renamed to General Transit Feed Specification) when we use any of the common travel planning and fare/ticket purchase web tools like Expedia, or Google Maps/Directions. The need and application for GTFS has spread to rural areas, including Illinois. All one has to do is to imagine going to a travel/transit planning website (like Google Transit someday) and asking for options to go from rural Pike County to Galena. And then think of being disabled and in need of mobility assistance. As with most services, if planners were to have originally figured out how to design systems with the needs of the disability community first, end-products would be better for _everyone_ but that doesn't seem to happen very often. GTFS use might help some make this work, but not all. Anyway, there is a strong desire to start _somewhere_ with this project in rural areas. Maybe someday we will see answers to travel queries such as this. You might ask "how GTFS works with rural, paratransit, or demand-response services?" Planners and designers have considered that there are few fixed-routes in rural Illinois, so there are groups working on "flex workarounds" which can allow transit planning apps to see this data subset within fixed and timed schedules. In other words, users will be able to see that a transit option is available, but it won't conform to a timed-schedule. Presumably, rural transit providers will be inserted into a planning operation in order to assist such a traveler make a schedule. Route deviation also will not easily lend itself to travel planning, but again, with flexible workarounds, such possibilities are not dead-ends. Watch for more to come within Illinois over the coming years.

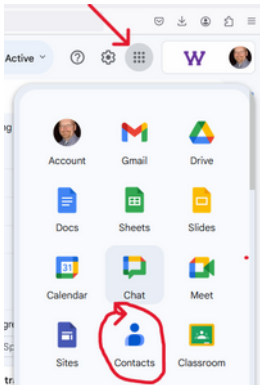


# How to Remove Old or Incorrect Email Addresses from Google's Gmail

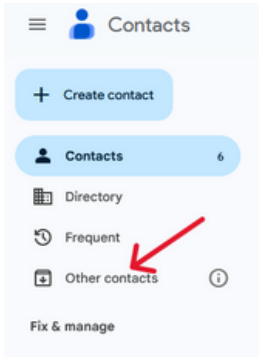
Gmail is a commonly used web email tool that is part of Google's wide-ranging set of online tools. More than 1.8 billion people on Earth use Gmail, including 42 percent of Americans. Therefore, I thought it would be an easy task to remove old email addresses from the "address book" which is maintained within my Gmail account. Unfortunately it wasn't a straight-forward task, and I always have to "Google" how to do it, so I finally decided to document the process and share it.

It is possible to tell Gmail to not autofill or suggest addresses, but I don't want to do that, as I don't want to have to type-in the entire address to the person whom I am writing. So, use the following steps to get to the "Other Contact List" which has the overall list of email addresses which you have used in some way.

1. Ensure that you are signed-into Google and your email account. Click on the nine-dot Google Apps icon found in the upper right corner of your Gmail screen.
2. Look for the "contacts" icon which will appear among all the Google apps, and click on that.

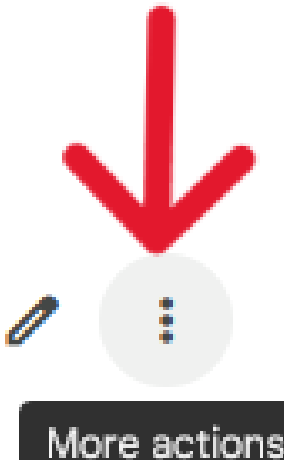



3. Look to the left of your screen and you will see another list of options under Contacts, and click on "Other Contacts."




4. Scroll through the resulting list of email addresses to find old addresses which you want to remove.

5. Hover your mouse cursor over the person's name, or the icon/avatar of the person whose email address needs to be deleted – hovering over the name will turn the icon/avatar to an empty box. Click in that box.




6. Then click on the ellipsis which appears on the far right, and follow that by clicking "delete, and answering "move to trash" to the question about "deleting from contacts" and you are done. Seems like it should be easier!

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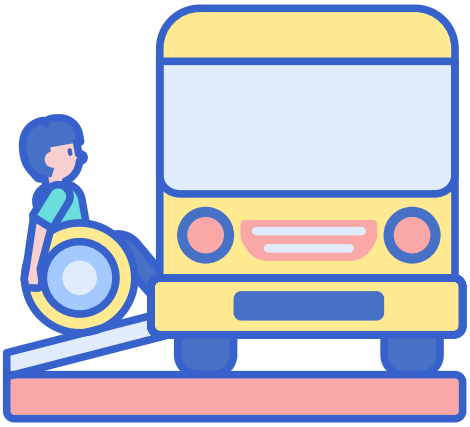
# Medicaid Transportation Coordination Fact Sheet

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services partnered with the Federal Transit Administration to develop a Medicaid Transportation Coordination Fact Sheet to encourage state-level coordination between programs to better serve riders. To read more about it click here.



# Bus Fire Safety Training

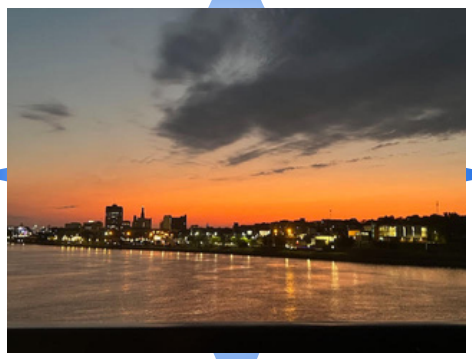
Jo Daviess County Transit drivers participated in their monthly training the week of October 7, 2024. The training focused on emergency bus evacuations. After a classroom session, drivers practiced removing passengers from a bus utilizing the emergency exits. A fog machine was used to simulate a bus fire and the drivers got to experience what it would be like to evacuate a bus under “smoky” conditions with limited visibility.

# Procurement 101 E-Learning Course

FTA’s new Procurement 101 e-learning course is now available to help FTA recipients better understand the requirements of procurement. The course will help grant recipients ensure their procurements are compliant with federal, state and local procurement rules and regulations and prepare recipients for FTA audits, particularly Triennials, State Management Reviews and Procurement Systems Reviews. Please register for the Procurement 101 course here.

# Pictures

Expo Show at IPTA



Sunset Cruise at IPTA

Shoun Reese Providing IDOT updates

Kevin Tavender Presenting Defensive Driving

Marcus Cox Presenting Emergency Evacuation

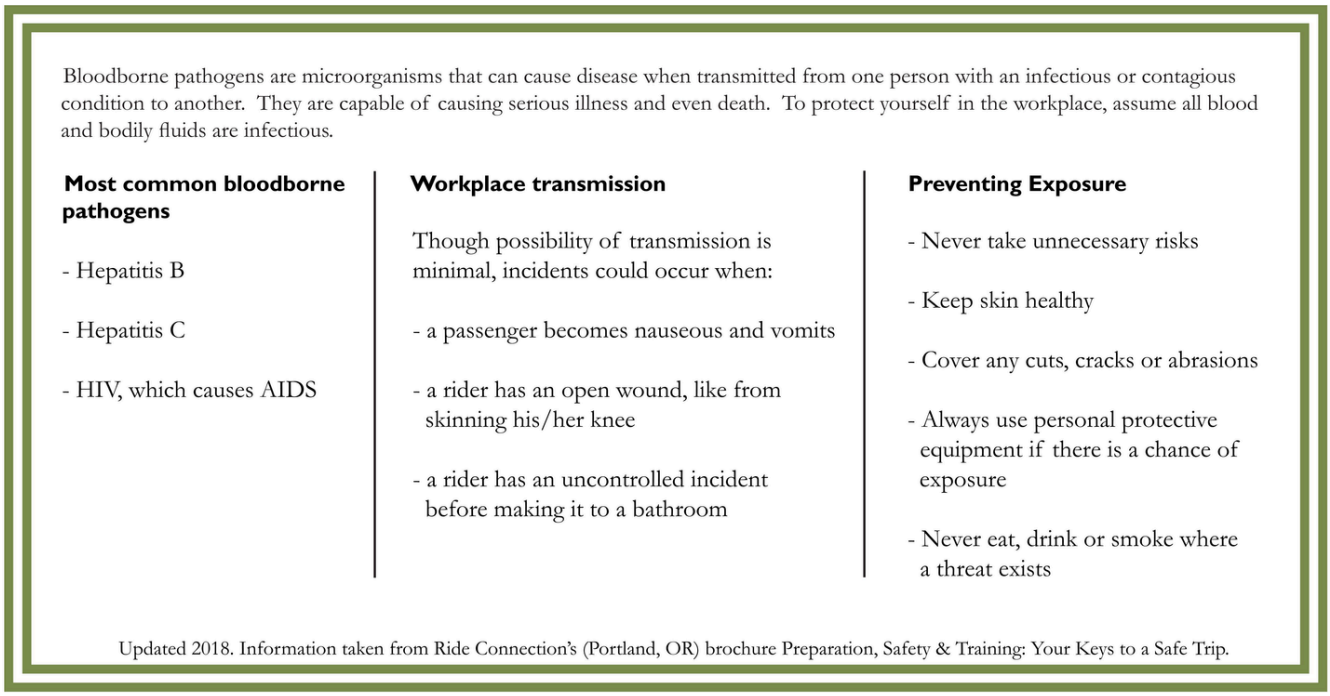
Rudy Muzzarelli Presenting Passenger Assistance

# RTAP TRAINING

## Bloodborne Pathogens

Issue One: Bloodborne Pathogens and the Workplace

National RTAP
Rural Transit Assistance Program



Bloodborne pathogens are microorganisms that can cause disease when transmitted from one person with an infectious or contagious condition to another. They are capable of causing serious illness and even death. To protect yourself in the workplace, assume all blood and bodily fluids are infectious.

**Most common bloodborne pathogens**

- Hepatitis B
- Hepatitis C
- HIV, which causes AIDS

**Workplace transmission**

Though possibility of transmission is minimal, incidents could occur when:

- a passenger becomes nauseous and vomits
- a rider has an open wound, like from skinning his/her knee
- a rider has an uncontrolled incident before making it to a bathroom

**Preventing Exposure**

- Never take unnecessary risks
- Keep skin healthy
- Cover any cuts, cracks or abrasions
- Always use personal protective equipment if there is a chance of exposure
- Never eat, drink or smoke where a threat exists

Updated 2018. Information taken from Ride Connection's (Portland, OR) brochure Preparation, Safety & Training: Your Keys to a Safe Trip.

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

# New National RTAP Driver Retention Best Practices Spotlight Article

National RTAP published a Best Practices Spotlight Article on Driver Retention. It has been becoming increasingly difficult to recruit and retain rural and tribal transit drivers. To retain quality employees, transit agencies need to offer competitive pay and benefits, and implement programs and processes that make drivers feel valued and appreciated. The article provides practical and easy-to-implement strategies from several rural and tribal transit agencies that can be used to create a workplace that drivers will want to remain in and thrive in.

# SAVE THE DATES

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

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**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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