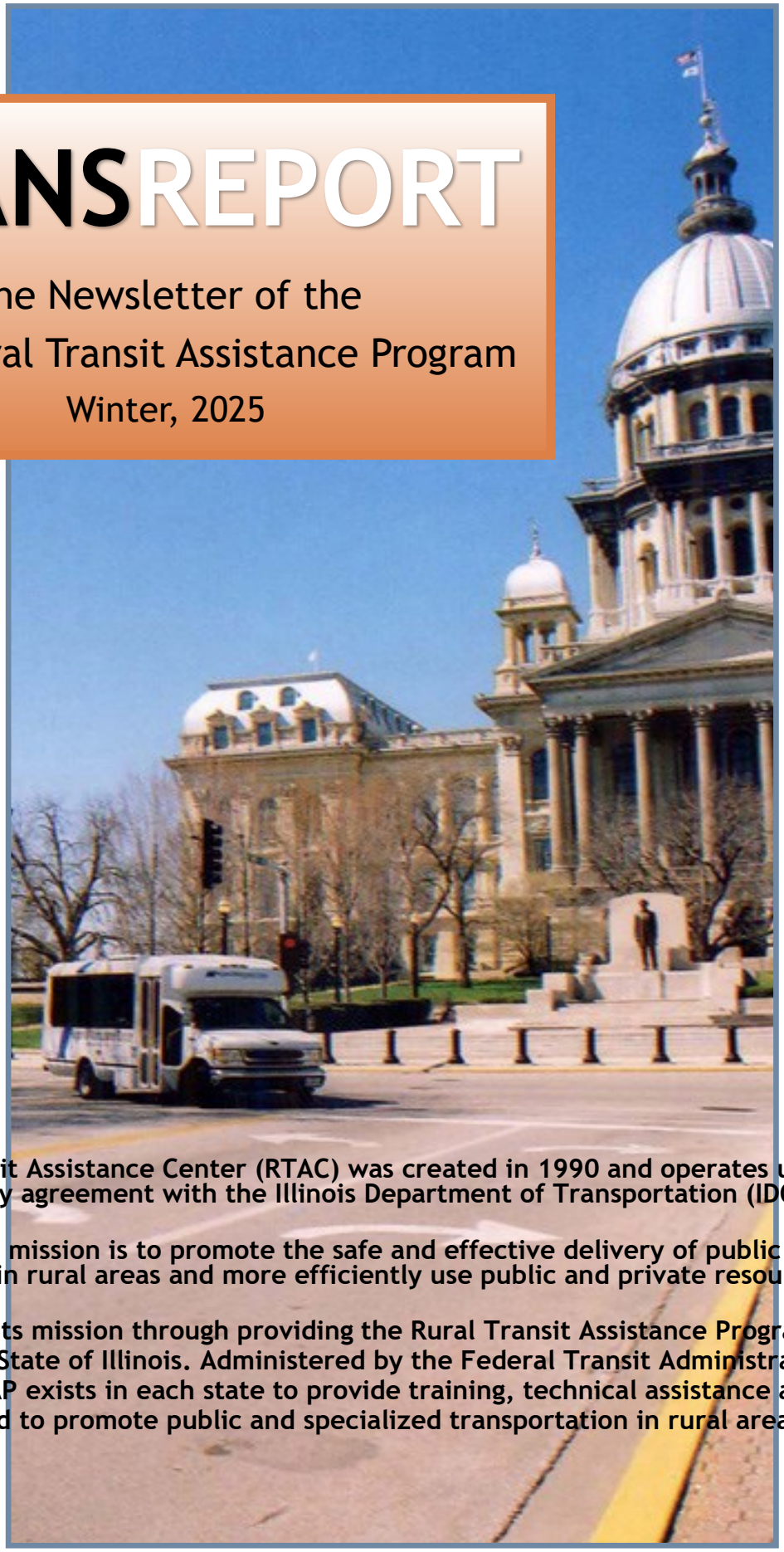
TRANSREPORT

The Newsletter of the
Illinois Rural Transit Assistance Program
Winter, 2025



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

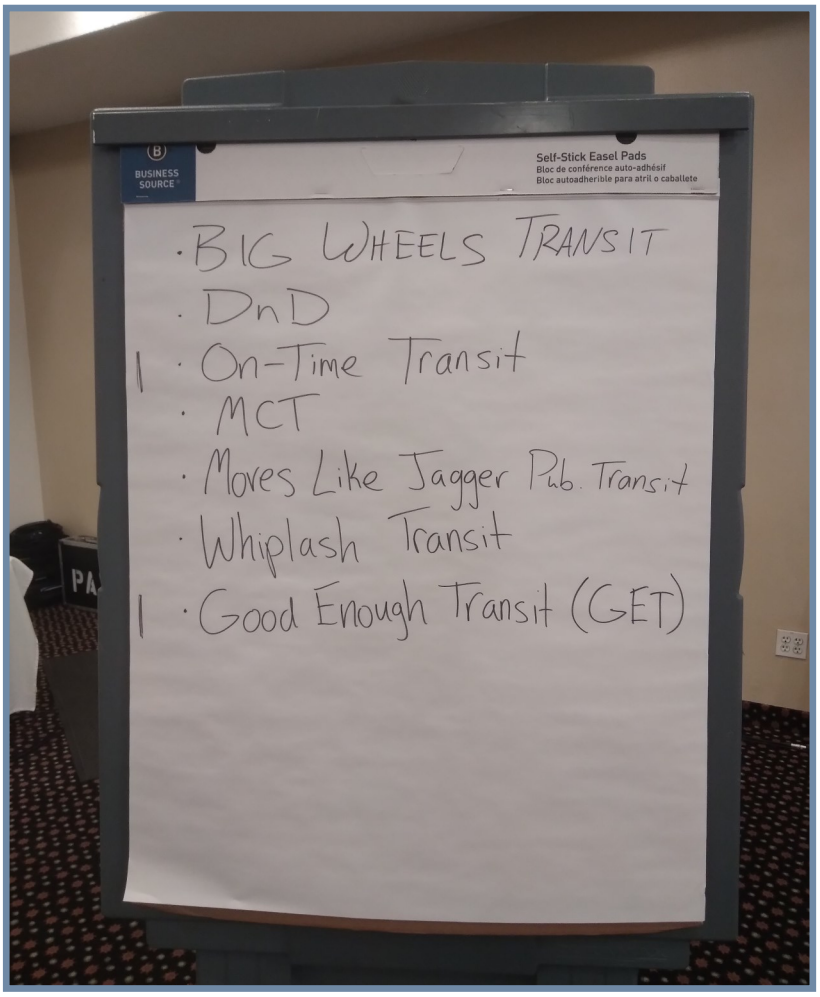
Dave Patton, Director

We just wrapped up another interesting and educational Spring conference. After several decades of working, I am still a little star-struck about being around good instructors and good public speakers. And when you think about it, most education or training is achieved through human speakers – we all gather to watch and listen and learn from people speaking about what they know or what they have done and accomplished during their careers. There is much to be said about the positives for attending training and lectures in-person. I realized during this particular conference that the observance of the subtle nuances of crowd interaction is one of the best ways to learn. More than just being there, people can learn from watching how others ask questions; what others find important; to whom and what the attendees react: and how the lecturer collaborates with those people and questions. RTAC's sponsorship of the terrific TAPTCO online courses allows students to work at their own pace and without the expense of travelling, but whenever a chance comes along to attend training from renowned speakers and lecturers, it is worth the effort.

This year we were fortunate to have been able to bring Robbie Sarles, the President and Founder of RLS & Associates – a company of transit experts, to the conference, who conveyed her in-depth knowledge of DBE compliance and working with NEMT and Medicaid transportation. Michael Walk and Christina Bune travelled from the Texas Transportation Institute and delivered special training about how to plan and run the expense-side of small urban and rural transit.. Joan Stevens-Thome came to us from the Sangamon County Health Department and showed us how to understand opiate-overdoses and how to use Naloxone to save lives. All of these experts were available to answer questions during and after their presentations – such a valuable resource that one can only have when there in-person.

We were also fortunate to have great people step-up to lead the ever growing in popularity breakout sessions. Many thanks to Morgan Lewis, Norm Smith, Terri Finn, Riley Anderson, Ron Gorst, and Mike Pietrowski. It is wonderful to have so many people willing to share their expertise and enthusiasm. As this was my last conference, and will be my last

newsletter, I want to thank everyone who has assisted with the provision of the conferences, workshops, online training, in-person training (special thanks to Rudi Muzzarelli, Marcus Cox, Kevin Tavender, Bob and Nancy Bugger, Mike Neuenkirchen and Brian Van Hine). And of course, great thanks go to the indefatigable Mable Kreps who looks after nearly everything, and to Ed Heflin for always being there to bounce ideas off of and to counsel others, and to the Institute for Rural Affairs which continues to work towards the betterment of rural Illinois. Oh, and congratulations to Greg Gates and the Reagan Mass Transit District, Ed Heflin, and the folks at IDOT OIPI who all got together and figured out how to provide transportation for rural Winnebago County! That concept has been long-sought and will finally happen. The next couple of pages have some pictures from the conference, including the one below which lists the names of the fictional new transit agencies created during Thursday's training! :-)



RTAC Conference Pics

Above, Mable and Erin preparing the beautiful entrance-way for the conference registration.

Above, a big crowd listens to Robbie Sarles, of RLS & Associates.

Below, Terri Finn and Riley Anderson, HSTP Coordinators for Regions 9, 10, and 11, lead the excellent Breakout Session “The HSTP Program — Everyone’s Role.”

Above Ron Gorst led an entertaining Breakout session called “Providing the Ride.”

On Wednesday afternoon and all-day Thursday, Michael Walk and Christina Bune from the Texas Transportation Institute, presented **"Managing System Costs: Operational** and **Capital Cost Management at Rural and Small Urban Public Transit Systems"**

And below, Jami Trybom, IDOT/OIPI's Bureau Chief led a special training designed for Section 5310 operators.

Charter Service

Discussion and Decision Tree

Text is from a discussion on the IL-5311 Groups.io email list.

*The definition of charter is found in **49 CFR § 604.3.***

The FTA describes "Charter service" like this (in simpler terms):

(1) Transportation provided by a recipient at the request of a third party for the exclusive use of a bus or van for a negotiated price. The following features may be characteristic of charter service:

(a) A third party pays the transit provider a negotiated price for the group;

(b) Any fares charged to individual members of the group are collected by a third party;

(c) The service is not part of the transit provider's regularly scheduled service, or is offered for a limited period of time; or

(d) A third party determines the origin and destination of the trip as well as scheduling

(2) Transportation provided by a recipient to the public for events or functions that occur on an irregular basis or for a limited duration and:

(a) A premium fare is charged that is greater than the usual or customary fixed route fare; or

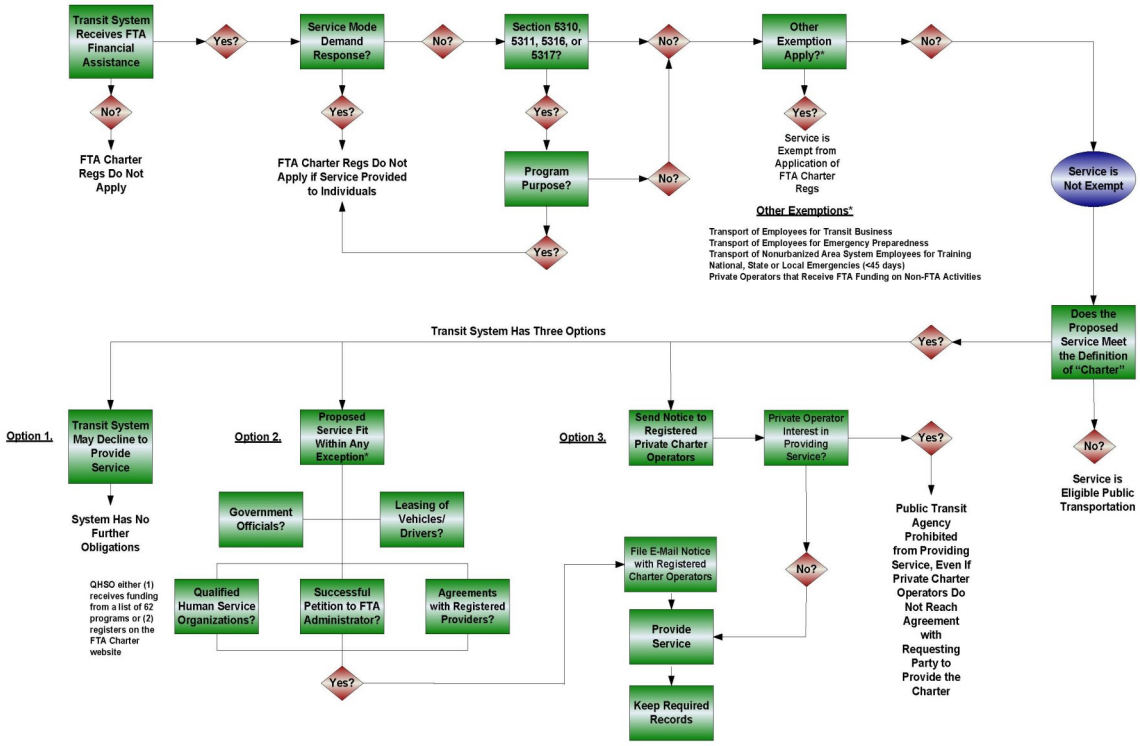
(b) The service is paid for in whole or in part by a third party.

FTA excludes recipients of Section 5311 from charter regulation coverage ***if*** the service

is for "program purposes." FTA defines this term as: "*…transportation that serves the needs of either human service agencies or targeted populations (elderly, individuals with disabilities, and or low income individuals).*"

Charter Service

Decision Tree



RTAC Spotlight

HSTP Regions 4 and 7 Coordinator **Haley Dorethy**

Haley has joined Illinois' cadre of hard working HSTP coordinators and is quickly picking-up the job duties and learning the intricacies of rural public transportation. She says:

I started with WIRC in February of 2021 in the Community Services Block Grant department, I left the agency in November 2023 and returned in September, 2024 as the HSTP Coordinator for Regions 4 & 7.

I graduated from Spoon River Community College in May 2023 with my Associates Degree in Art, and am currently working toward a Bachelor's degree at WIU for a major in Sociology and a minor in Women's Studies. I love what WIRC does for the communities we serve and I am looking forward to working with all the transit agencies and HSTP coordinators. I hold several certifications that help me better serve our regions including being a Family & Community Development Specialist, I have completed a course of Community Action: Our History.

I am also a part of the National Society of Leadership and Success through WIU. In my spare time when I am not running one of my three children (ages 7, 5, & 2) to an extra-curricular activity, or doing homework I enjoy reading.

Joint Office of Energy and Transportation

The Joint Office of Energy and Transportation's (Joint Office's) mission is to accelerate an electrified transportation system that is convenient, affordable, accessible, reliable, and safe. To fulfill this mission, it is critical that communities across the nation have access to information and resources on a variety of zero-emission transportation options, whether it be cars, buses, bicycles, scooters, or shared fleets.

This is an interesting site full of information related to vehicle electrification and operation, and many publications.

The Joint Office is available to help transit providers with cold weather concerns and other operational issues, such as:

Battery sizing and options for cold weather fleets. The Joint Office can help identify optimal battery size and evaluate elements such as heating options by assisting with a route analysis based on real-world battery electric bus experience.

Charging infrastructure, which can be affected by cold weather and snow. The Joint Office can assist fleets in properly sizing charging stations for different temperatures, evaluating options for siting, and advising on best practices.

In addition, the Joint Office can help fleets build strong electrification plans and avoid pitfalls associated with cold weather by providing examples of success stories and connecting transit agencies with other battery electric bus users in similar climates.

FTA partners with the Joint Office to offer new technical assistance to transit agencies shifting their fleets from diesel vehicles to low- and no-emission buses and ferries. The new program, established by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, supports transit entities as they transition to battery electric, hybrid, or hydrogen fuel cell technology that reduces greenhouse gas emissions and prepares the transit workforce with new skills and expertise.

Reading Federal Regulations

And the difference between USC and CFR

The United States Code (USC)

The **United States Code (USC)** is made up of the official federal statutes of the United States, and contains 53 titles. It includes laws passed by Congress, also called statutes.

The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)

The **Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)** contains all of the regulations promulgated by executive agencies.

For example:

49 U.S.C. 5311 - Formula grants for rural areas is interpreted as:

Publication Title: United States Code, 2012 Edition, Supplement 3,
Title 49 - TRANSPORTATION

Category: Bills and Statutes

Collection: United States Code

Contained Within: Title 49 - TRANSPORTATION
SUBTITLE III - GENERAL AND INTERMODAL PROGRAMS
CHAPTER 53 - PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
Sec. 5311 - Formula grants for rural areas

Read verbally: "Formula Grants for Rural Areas, Title 49 of the US Code, Section 5311."

RTAC Fun Fact

Why are there so many “Union Stations?”

A **union station** (also known as a **union terminal** and, in Europe, a **joint station**) is a railway station at which the tracks and facilities are shared by two or more separate railway companies, allowing passengers to connect conveniently between them. The term 'union station' is used in North America and 'joint station' is used in Europe.

In the U.S., union stations are typically used by all the passenger trains serving a city, although exceptions exist. For example, in Chicago, the Illinois Central and Chicago & North Western depots coexisted with Union Station, and although most Metra commuter trains (and all Amtrak services) continue to use Union Station today, some lines depart from other terminals, such as Ogilvie Transportation Center or Millennium Station.

The busiest station to be named "Union Station" is Toronto Union Station, which serves over 72 million passengers annually. The first union station building was Columbus Union Station in 1851, though Indianapolis Union Station, planned in 1848 and built in 1853, had more elements of a cooperative union station.

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.

SAVE THE DATE

2025 RTAC Roadeo

April 26, 2025 at Sangamon County Fairgrounds

2025 IPTA Conference:

September 29—October 1, 2025 in Champaign

2026 RTAC Spring Conference

March, 3-5 at the Northfield Conference Center

IL RTAP Advisory Council

Adam Lach, RIDES MTD, Chair

Morgan Lewis, Warren County Public Transportation, Vice-Chair

Kate Downing, Sangamon/Menard Co. Area Regional Transit

Stefanie Eisele, Department on Aging

Sarah Nollman-Hodge, South Central IL MTD

Sherry Hicks, FAYCO, Inc.

Kim Zimmerman, North Central Area Transit

Ron Gorst, Shawnee MTD

Kaycie Sanders, Coles County Dial-A-Ride

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

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

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