



**Synopsis of the State Transit Association Call with CTAA
March 23rd, 12:00p.m. (Eastern)**

Agenda:

- Congressional assistance efforts
 - Emergency Relief Packages
 - Relief package 3 is currently being debated, and we're hopeful that a Phase 3 package will include \$20 billion for transit (\$16 billion for urban, \$4 billion for rural)
- The administration's assistance efforts
 - Discussions with FTA leadership
 - Bus and Bus facility grant deadlines will likely be extended
 - CDC will likely release transit specific guidance soon
- Open sharing of conference postponement assistance, funding issues, and other topics
 - Conference Postponement
 - CTAA is working with ASAE to see if there can be relief for associations who had conferences canceled. Some mentioned the possibility of increasing RTAP funds to provide assistance in this regard
 - It was noted during the call that fall dates at hotels and convention centers are filling up - imperative to act fast
 - Many members have found success in negotiating with hotels to be more successful this week, rather than last week, due to the stark change in hotel operations (incl closures and layoffs).

General thoughts (a summary of all questions and comments):

- We need to look at how state and local transit revenue will be affected by the pandemic
 - Most transit systems receive some type of funding through a local or state sales tax. Systems should track what's going on in local economies to plan ahead and be prepared for future budgets
 - Conference postponement relief; conferences are often a significant funding source for associations

- Availability and training of drivers; some members anticipate new drivers becoming available as other industries shutter, while others are experiencing drivers walking off of the job in fear for their (or their family's) health
- Some state members are being constantly saturated with surveys and questions. At this point, associations should be asking the “need to know questions,” not the “want to know questions.” Example given by Washington state: a Google Sheet. This allows multiple collaborators and can be updated live. Justin stated that systems can input daily data quickly, and it can be seen in real-time by his staff and the Governor’s staff (important for the quick decisions being made)
- Other challenges include:
 - Lack of supplies and predictable supply procurement and shipping
 - Lack of state or federal guidance on NEMT trips (FL provided their state’s guidance: https://ahca.myflorida.com/medicaid/statewide_mc/pdf/2018-23_plan_comm/PT_2020-14_Attach_COVID-RESPONSE_NET_03142020.pdf)
 - State guidance on whether transit is deemed essential or not; and the implications that come with these decisions
 - FTA is encouraging this decision to be made locally. CTAA notes the importance of coordinating with public health agencies and other local organizations before shutting down all service.

CTAA One-Stop Shop for COVID-19 Resources: <https://ctaa.org/covid-19-resources/>

Link to full meeting: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JlQ3oxfavOQ>

Pending Questions:

- From Mark Nestlen : Can the money be used to pay drivers that are idle — either because of having tested positive, having to be home for child care, and/or service reduction?
- From Lyn : What about the flexibility to cover charges associated with cancelled conferences?
- From Jacklyn : Any possible funding assistance for 5310 agencies that provide services?
- From Elaine Haytko : Do we have guidance on when a passenger is clearly exhibiting symptoms of COVID19? On fixed route service in terms of passengers who answer yes to health related questions? Can we deny boarding based on symptoms?
- From Shawna : Related to Elaine's question, I'm wondering if any one has received State DHS guidance related to NEMT? FL has put some out, PA is "thanking us for their patience." Whenever we "get there," on the agency please... thanks!
- From Mark Nestlen : Has there been clarity as to whether the designation of essential critical infrastructure worker prohibits a system from closing down?
- From Shawna : IOW, can medical transportation trips right now be denied if COVID-19 related? Ambulance companies are denying trips when asked, yet better equipped for this than a shared ride transit scenario.
- From Lyn : At the very least could FTA have a one-time allowance to put in for reimbursement?
- From Margaret : What about additional RTAP funding for transit associations?
- From Jacklyn : What about an extension on PTASP plans due this summer, and no one has time to work on right now?
- From TPTA : Has anyone developed a tool for quantifying the statewide financial impacts of lower ridership, employee-related costs, increased cleaning, etc.?
- From Shawna : Is anyone seeing drivers "walk off" the job when asked to transport individuals requesting to be transported for COVID-19 testing? How are your states handling?
- From Shawna : Any chance of the industry being able to join together to do a bulk purchase for PPE as inventory becomes available? Could pooling our collective purchasing power help us secure needed supplies? Tagging onto your point earlier about the power of TSA-DHS notation as essential.
- From Shawna : Any word on potential availability of drivers, given other economic happenings? States with lots of oil and gas jobs are about to have abundant pools of available labor, with CDLs.
- From Rich Sampson : Our survey indicated very few members had any kind of insurance coverage to offset revenue for this type of situation. Has anyone heard of any systems that have been able to access insurance support? This was a question we got from House THUD majority staff last week
- From Allen : Has anyone considered trying to use school bus drivers to help out while many schools are currently out?

Commentary -

- From Jacklyn : Dawn Sweet told me that you can deny a trip if that would create threat to others
- From Laura Calderon - IL : In IL our Governor specifically cited IL as essential/critical. However, we've been asked that if an agency is considering closing down, they are asked to work with their local county public health departments and EMA's before making that decision.
- From Shawna : Same in PA, Laura. So far, no one is closing. Reducing service, yes...
- From Kristen : I read that some agencies are running medical trips with volunteer drivers. These are drivers who want to help keep their customers going.
- From Chris Zeilinger : To underscore Scott's point, the federal govt can incur trillions of dollars in debt, but there's going to be a huge dropoff in local tax collections, esp sales tax, but also impact down the road of lower income tax collections in 2021.
- From Laura Calderon - IL : In IL our state operating assistance equates 65% of operating expenses. The revenue into the fund that funds this, is a portion of state sales tax. It's difficult to quantify what the hit here will be, but no doubt with so many retailers/restaurants/bars, etc. shut down, sales tax revenue will plummet.
- From Shawna : Back to conferences for a quick minute: Hotels are much more willing to work with people on conference postponements this week than last, fyi,, much of their staff have been laid off, Last week =, many were still digging in. Sweet as pie now... Also, dead on about the "act now",,, fall dates and later filling up fast,
- From lisabacot : Agree with all of you, major problem here in Florida. Sales tax collection has virtually stopped during one of our most busy times of the year. :(
- From Chris Zeilinger : As a shred of funding solace, the bill language currently debated in the Senate - while not yet passed - would provide \$20 b in transit formula grants "until expended," which can at least tide your members over for a bit of a while, after a fashion. But we need to see what actually gets enacted. As a disturbing aside, the bill has a provision that would prohibit any of these "recovery" funds from going to nonprofits receiving Medicaid dollars. Not targeted at NEMT (it was a Planned Parenthood thing), but something we hope gets cleaned up quickly.
- From Lisabacot : As Shawna mentioned earlier, FL Medicaid did issue some guidance that Covid 19 positive or presumptively positive MUST be transported by Ambulance providers. I can send the notice to Taylor, if you like.
- From Chris Zeilinger : For instance, we sort of need a statutory provision in FY 2021 and later appropriations that provides a 'hold harmless' so that future apportionments - primarily to large urban and tribal operators - aren't slashed because of the current reductions in service.
- From Elaine Haytko : We are having some drivers opting out of their duties due to members in their household being higher risks.
- From Chris Zeilinger : The Treasury Dept is allowing distillers to produce and distribute sanitizers, primarily to first responders and healthcare providers. Not sure if transit folks can make the connection, but maybe worth a thought if you've got a small distillery in your area. They've made a quick switch, with bars and restaurants having closed.
- From Clark Harder : Distilleries in Michigan were granted authority to produce sanitizer just last week.

- From Jacklyn: Many of our agencies are in insurance pools and large claims could devastate the pools for any future losses