

## Information on the COVID-19 Response

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# President's Report

By Craig Rempp

MPTA

Greater Mankato Transit



As we all struggle through this unprecedented time, I want to thank you sincerely for all the work you do everyday to serve people in your communities. We know that some systems are delivering food and finding other ways to go above and beyond during this difficult crisis. Your work is making a difference.

We're all looking for answers and information and MPTA is working to try to get as much information as we can out to you in a timely manner. We want to hear from you about challenges you're facing, new strategies that you are trying and if you need information, we will try to get some answers.

In this unique issue of In Transit, we have included a lot of information on the response to the COVID-19 outbreak, both in terms of what other systems are dealing with and in terms of assistance to meet new challenges including very badly needed federal funding provided through the CARES Act – the third federal stimulus bill designed to address the economic disruption caused by this pandemic.

The State of Minnesota has also passed legislation responding to the crisis and there may be additional bills providing relief in various ways. In addition, we expect the legislature will want to pass a significant capital bonding bill this year. MPTA staff will be following the work of the legislature closely and will be advocating for transit funding at every opportunity.

There may well be another federal relief bill. We're hearing about work on bill #4 so there may be another opportunity to address the huge financial hit that transit

is taking right now. We will let you know what we hear.

I want to thank the Office of Transit and Active Transportation (OTAT) and the Metropolitan Council for all of their work in dealing with this crisis. They have worked hard to adjust and make difficult decisions in the face of a historic situation.

This is a tough time. We know that we will get through it and will continue to serve Minnesotans into the future because transit is such a critical service for so many people.

Thank you again for everything you are doing. We hope to see you in the near future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Craig Rempp'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Craig Rempp  
President

**We will  
get through  
this.**

# Legislative Report

By Margaret Donahoe  
MPA

The 2020 Legislative Session will surely go down in history for its unprecedented operating procedures in the face of a global pandemic.

The legislature is currently on a break until April 14th. After meeting in session March 13th, the decision was made to keep legislators and staff out of the Capitol and not hold regular committee hearings. Legislators came together on March 26th for a one-day session with legislators spread all over the Capitol building and some voting remotely to pass legislation addressing special economic needs in the face of so much disruption caused by the outbreak of COVID-19.

The legislation did not address much in the area of transportation but did ensure that people with expiring driver's licenses don't have to worry about getting them renewed. This follows action at the federal level to extend expiring CDL licenses to June 30, 2020.

The 2020 Legislative Session has to end by May 18th. We're not sure at this time how much legislation will be passed. Right now, bills have to have the support of all four caucuses in the House and Senate in order to be taken up. This will limit the passage of legislation pretty significantly with a divided legislature. We do expect that there will be a capital bonding bill at some point in time and we're hopeful that funding for transit capital needs will be included.

The big news has been the passage of the federal CARES Act with \$25 billion for transit systems across the country.

Secretary Chao and Acting Administrator Williams, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) – Federal Transit Administration (FTA) released apportionment tables for the \$25 billion directed to public transit in the CARES Act. A few quick notes about the funding:

- All formula funding through four grant programs (5307, 5311, 5337, 5340) with roughly \$22.7 billion to large and small urban transit systems; \$2.2 billion to rural transit systems, including \$30 million for the tribal transit formula grant program.
- 100 percent federal share; no local match is required
- Operational and capital expenses incurred since Jan. 20, 2020 are eligible; however, priority is given to operational expenses (e.g. driver salaries, fuels, personal protective equipment, cleaning supplies, sick leave)
- All normal restrictions on funding under the grant programs still apply with the exception that projects do NOT have to be included in a TIP or STIP, unless they are capital projects with significant changes (FTA has created a docket for transit systems in states where a governor has declared an emergency to request temporary waivers from federal requirements under the grants) You may also send questions about this funding directly to DOT at [ftaresponse@dot.gov](mailto:ftaresponse@dot.gov).

In addition, FTA extended the deadlines for open notices of funding opportunities (NOFOs) by 30 days for several programs including the Bus and Bus Facilities Program. For Minnesota, these are the numbers (see next page):

# Legislative Report

## 5307

<b>Minnesota</b>	<b>\$27,288,086</b>
Duluth, MN-WI	\$6,366,509
Fargo, ND-MN	\$2,503,844
Grand Forks, ND-MN	\$527,329
La Crosse, WI-MN	\$322,515
Mankato, MN	\$2,737,439
Rochester, MN	\$7,241,881
St. Cloud, MN	\$7,588,569
<b>Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN-WI</b>	<b>\$226,499,058</b>
Minnesota	\$226,481,413
Wisconsin	\$17,645

## 5311

Minnesota	\$54,432,229
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We will continue to closely track activity at both the state and federal levels impacting transit systems. Please take a few minutes to send a quick email to local legislators so they understand what your system is facing. They may be at home, but they are still accessible. If you need assistance with how to contact your legislators, please let us know.

## 5311C

### Tier 1    Tier 2    Tier 3    Total

Bois Forte Reservation Tribal Council	\$181,104	\$178,571	\$7,857	\$367,532
Fond du Lac Reservation	\$190,235	\$178,571	\$22,851	\$391,657
Grand Portage Reservation Tribal Council	\$88,645	\$0	\$2,822	\$91,467
Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe	\$33,618	\$0	\$78,815	\$112,433
Red Lake Band of the Chippewa	\$50,704	\$0	\$57,458	\$108,162
White Earth Band of Chippewa	\$266,924	\$178,572	\$66,062	\$511,558



# Chao Announces \$25 Billion to Help Nation's Public Transportation

**Source:**  
**Press Release from**  
**FTA [website](#)**

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WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Transit Administration (FTA) announced a total of \$25 billion in federal funding allocations to help the nation's public transportation systems respond to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Funding is provided through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, signed by President Donald J. Trump on March 27, 2020.

"This historic \$25 billion in grant funding will ensure our nation's public transportation systems can continue to provide services to the millions of Americans who depend on them," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao.

FTA is allocating \$25 billion to recipients of urbanized area and rural area formula funds, with \$22.7 billion allocated to large and small urban areas and \$2.2 billion allocated to rural areas. Funding will be provided at a 100 percent federal share, with no local match required, and will be available to support capital, operating, and other expenses generally eligible under those programs to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19.

Further, operating expenses incurred beginning on January 20, 2020 for all rural and urban recipients, even those in large

urban areas, are also eligible, including operating expenses to maintain transit services as well as paying for administrative leave for transit personnel due to reduced operations during an emergency. Answers to frequently asked questions about this funding are available on FTA's website.

"We know that many of our nation's public transportation systems are facing extraordinary challenges and these funds will go a long way to assisting our transit industry partners in battling COVID-19," said FTA Acting Administrator K. Jane Williams. "These federal funds will support operating assistance to transit agencies, including those in large urban areas as well as pay transit workers across the country not working because of the public health emergency."

In addition to the \$25 billion funding allocation announced today, FTA has taken a number of steps to support the transit industry during this public health emergency, including expanding the eligibility of federal assistance available under FTA's Emergency Relief Program to help transit agencies respond to COVID-19 in states where the Governor has declared an emergency. All transit providers, including those in large urban areas, can now use federal formula funds under the Urbanized Area Formula Program and Formula Grants for Rural Areas Program for emergency-related capital and operating expenses. This includes the provision of personal protective equipment or special-purpose trips.

FTA also established an Emergency Relief docket that allows transit providers in states where the Governor has declared an emergency related to COVID-19 to request temporary relief from federal requirements. **5**

# Chao Announces \$25 Billion to Help Nation's Public Transportation

under 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53 as well as any non-statutory FTA requirements.

Additionally, FTA recently announced that it would provide a 30-day extension of the deadline for current competitive grant program funding opportunities, including: FTA's Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Program; Passenger Ferry Grant Program; Accelerating Innovative Mobility (AIM) Challenge Grants; and Helping Obtain Prosperity for Everyone (HOPE) Program.

The U.S. Department of Transportation is working closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other federal partners to provide guidance to the public transportation industry in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19). FTA has held regular conference calls with transit stakeholders and posted Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) regarding COVID-19 on its website.



File Photo: 2019 Bus Rodeo

# Look on the Bright side...

## Sources:

[Wadena Pioneer Journal](#)

[WCCO](#)

[Fairmont Sentinel](#)

The COVID-19 Outbreak has hit everyone hard, especially Transit systems.

Although these systems are considered essential resources to our communities, it is no surprise that ridership has decreased dramatically everywhere. In the wake of furloughed or laid off employees, union panic and an overall dark cloud seeming to follow us overhead, it's important to focus on the positives. Some communities need to look no further than their own backyards.

According to the Wadena Pioneer Journal, Wadena Friendly Rider has found a new way to help their community. Like many other transit systems throughout the state, Friendly Rider was willing to help in any way they could, both to keep employees working and to help serve the community.

Wadena County Transit Director Randy Jahnke said the Minnesota Department of Transportation gave transit agencies the ability to transport food to those in need in the midst of this public health scare.

As most may know, COVID-19 has been known to be worse in older adults – the same demographic that typically receives meals from organizations such as Meals On Wheels. Given social-distancing guidelines and Gov. Walz's order for everyone to stay at home who are considered non-essential at this time, the need for delivery was stronger than ever. That's where Friendly Rider came in.

They are delivering everything from Meals-on-wheels to groceries to essential cleaning products and more all while respecting social distancing guidelines.



File Photo: 2019 Bus Rodeo

Friendly Rider isn't the only system offering meal and food deliveries at this time. Many, including Metro Mobility and Transit Link, are doing their part to help their community members, free of charge.

## Mobile Food Shelves.

Just a hop, skip and a jump away, the Faribault Martin County Transit board had a special conference call to address the COVID-19 Outbreak. According to the Fairmont Sentinel, the board unanimously approved a motion to adopt a food shelf assistance program.

There is now an effort to support local food shelves by delivering packages containing food and other provisions to those who normally utilize this resource. With the decrease in ridership, the transit system is able to help many residents in the area with this delivery service.

MnDOT has also been very vocal about supporting any and all efforts to get food to those in need during this time, and Transit systems have been hopping on this idea in any way they can.

## Connecting to Safe Havens

It's no surprise that homeless shelters have had to adapt their operations in order to accommodate all those in need at this time while being mindful of the virus, but now Metro Transit is also stepping up to help.

# Look On the Bright Side...

Metro Transit drivers will transport unsheltered people to hotels where they can be better protected from the illness and the elements. According to WCCO, the company says it helped transport about 60 people to the InterContinental hotel during the weekend of March 28-29 alone.

Over 200 people were transported to hotels for shelter by the group from the middle to the end of March alone. It is clear that transit has become a necessity to everyone during this time of need.

## **Transportation becomes a necessity.**

Not only have many transit systems been providing the community with food and other essentials, but they have also provided communities with one particularly important good: transportation.

Seems simple, right? It's what we do every day, but in the wake of this public health scare, cities have become ghost towns. Only essential workers are to be going out in public, many of which rely on public transit, and that's where we come into play.

Transit is now an essential service. Systems all across Minnesota may have shortened their hours or the area they span for the time being, but they are still going out and providing rides to those in needs. While we're all hunkered down inside they're still trucking along.

Transit systems are helping medical workers, grocery store employees and many more to get to and from where they need to be. When the going got tough, transit workers were there.

Although things will not be easy for a while, there will still be a silver lining. Transit systems will continue to help

others by delivering essential products and transporting essential workers to serve others in this time of need.

Together, we will get through this.

**Many of these stories and more were available first on MPTA's social media.**

**Keep up with us on Facebook and Twitter.**

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@MNPublicTransit**



# 2020 Bus Rodeo Cancelled

2020 Would have been the 33rd annual State Bus Rodeo for MPTA.

Announcements for 2021 will be posted on the MPTA website and social media as they become available.

At this time the 2020 Transit Conference is still on for October 5th-7th in Rochester. If any changes in the plans are made they will be posted on our website and social media.

More details on the Transit Conference coming soon.

Visit our website for more info.  
[www.mpta-transit.org](http://www.mpta-transit.org)

**Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the 2020 Annual Bus Rodeo in Rochester has been cancelled.**



**Thank you to everyone; sponsors, volunteers, and participants, for your support of the Bus Rodeo and MPTA. We appreciate your support and understanding.**

**Join us next year! Details coming soon.**

# FTA FAQ

## Source:

[FTA](#)

View this and other resources on our [website](#)

## Frequently Asked Questions from FTA Grantees Regarding Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

These FAQs provide clarity regarding how COVID-19 preparations impact certain FTA requirements. They also contain recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to help grantees and subgrantees prepare for COVID-19. (Updated 3/30/2020)

### Program Eligibility:

**Q: Are all expenses normally eligible under the Urbanized Area Formula Program (49 USC 5307) and the Formula Grants for Rural Area Program (49 USC 5311) eligible under the CARES Act?**

**A:** Yes, the CARES Act provides funds to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19. Although the priority for the funding is operational expenses, FTA will generally consider all expenses normally eligible under the Section 5307 and 5311 programs that are incurred on or after January 20, 2020 to be in response to economic or other conditions caused by COVID-19 and thus eligible under the CARES Act.

In addition, CARES Act funds are available for operating expenses for all FTA Section 5307 and 5311 recipients, including those in large urban areas, and including administrative leave for transit workers.

**Q: What is eligible as an operating expense?**

**A:** Funds available under the CARES Act are available for all operating activities (net fare revenues) that occur on or after January 20, 2020 are eligible.

In general, operating expenses are those costs necessary to operate, maintain, and manage a public transportation system. Operating expenses usually include such costs as driver salaries, fuel, and items having a useful life of less than one year, including personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies. See Chapter IV of the Urbanized Area Formula Program circular or Chapter III of the Formula Grants for Rural Areas circular for more information on eligible operating expenses.

The CARES Act funding can be used for administrative leave, such as leave for employees due to reductions in service or leave required for a quarantined worker.

**Q: Is there a limit for how much funding can be used for operating expenses?**

**A:** No. All funds made available under the CARES Act may be used for operating expenses.

**Q: What is meant by administrative leave?**

# FTA FAQ

**A:** Administrative leave is an administratively authorized absence from duty without loss of pay or reduction in an employee's available leave. In the context of the COVID-19 public health emergency, administrative leave could include, but is not limited to, leave for an employee who is not required to work due to a reduction in service or leave for a worker who is quarantined after potential exposure to an individual infected with COVID-19.

**Q: Does the limit on using up to 10 or 20 percent of a recipient's apportionment of 5307 and 5311 funds for paratransit service in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act apply?**

**A:** No. Funds provided under the CARES Act are available at a 100 percent Federal share to maintain operations. As such, there is no limit on the amount of funds made available under the CARES Act that may be used to pay for paratransit service provided on or after January 20, 2020, which is typically an operating expense.

## **Program Requirements:**

**Q: Do the normal Urbanized Area Formula Program (49 USC 5307) and the Formula Grants for Rural Area Program (49 USC 5311) requirements apply to these funds?**

**A:** Yes, all the normal Section 5307 and 5311 requirements apply to funds made available under the CARES Act, with the following exception:

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) or the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP): CARES Act funds used to pay for operating expenses do not need to be included in the TIP/STIP. CARES Act funds used to pay for capital expenses for emergency relief do not need to be included in the TIP/STIP

unless the projects are for substantial functional, locational, or capacity changes. 23 CFR §§ 450.326(e)(5), 450.218(g)(5).

**Note:** The Emergency Relief docket remains open and available for requests for relief from FTA statutory and administrative requirements of Section 5307 and 5311 funding in states that have declared an emergency or the President has declared a major disaster under Section 401 of the Stafford Act.

**Q: What is the Federal share of a CARES Act grant?**

**A:** The Federal share for all grants awarded under the CARES Act is up to 100 percent, at the discretion of the recipient.

**Q: What is the period of availability to obligate or spend CARES Act funding?**

**A:** Funds are available until expended. There is no lapse date to obligate funds available under the CARES Act. Transit systems are encouraged to spend funds expeditiously to respond to local needs.

**Q: Is there a deadline by which funds must be used?**

**A:** No, however grants for operating expenses may not be used for operating expenses incurred prior to January 20, 2020.

# FTA FAQ

**Q: Does the requirement apply that states must use at least 15 percent of the Formula Grants for Rural Area Program (49 USC 5311) funding for intercity bus transportation, unless the Governor certifies, after consultation with affected intercity bus service providers, that the intercity bus service needs of the State are being met adequately?**

**A:** Yes. All requirements for the Section 5311 program apply unless otherwise noted.

**Q: Do projects have to be in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) or the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)?**

**A:** It depends. CARES Act funds used to pay for operating expenses do not need to be included in the TIP/STIP. CARES Act funds used to pay for capital expenses for emergency relief do not need to be included in the TIP/STIP unless the projects are for substantial functional, locational, or capacity changes. 23 CFR §§ 450.326(e)(5), 450.218(g)(5). Accordingly, capital projects to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19 that involve substantial functional, locational, or capacity changes must be included in the TIP/STIP.

**Q: Do CARES Act grants have to be sent to the Department of Labor (DOL) for certification?**

**A:** Yes. The CARES Act requires that grants using funds made available under the CARES Act receive DOL certification consistent with current Section 5307 and 5311 procedures.

**Q: Does a new split letter need to be submitted by designated recipients of CARES Act funding?**

**A:** Yes. Split and/or sub allocation letters must be updated to include funds made available under the CARES Act. Once sub allocation letters for FY 2020 funding are finalized, they should be uploaded as part of the application into TrAMS. Recipients are encouraged to work expeditiously to agree upon the sub allocation of CARES Act funds.

**Q: Can I seek a waiver from requirements under the Emergency Relief docket for CARES Act funds?**

**A:** Yes. The Emergency Relief docket remains open and available for requests for relief from FTA statutory and administrative requirements of Section 5307 and 5311 funding in states that have declared an emergency or the President has declared a disaster.

## **FTA Funding & Emergency Relief**

**Q: Is funding available under FTA's Emergency Relief Program for public transportation expenses related to COVID-19?**

**A:** Capital and operating activities undertaken in response to COVID-19 are eligible for reimbursement under the Urbanized Area Formula Program (49 U.S.C. 5307) and Formula Grants for Rural Areas Program (49 U.S.C. 5311). FTA Acting Administrator K. Jane Williams has issued a Notice of Concurrence with declarations of emergency issued by Governors that relate to COVID-19.



# FTA FAQ

Accordingly, for recipients in states in which the Governor has declared such an emergency (49 U.S.C. 5324), FTA will permit Urbanized Area Formula Program or Formula Grants for Rural Areas Program funding to be used for COVID-19-related public transportation capital or operating expenses at an 80 percent federal share, regardless of whether operating expenses generally are an eligible expense for a recipient.

Pursuant to FTA's Emergency Relief rule at 49 CFR part 602, eligible activities include emergency protective measures to eliminate or lessen threats to public health and safety, such as performing enhanced cleaning/sanitizing of rolling stock, stations, bus shelters, etc.; placing hand sanitizer dispensers in high traffic areas; and providing personal protective equipment as appropriate.

**Q: Has FTA waived any federal requirements?**

**A:** FTA has established an Emergency Relief docket that allows recipients in states in which the Governor has declared an emergency related to COVID-19 to request temporary relief from federal requirements under 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53 as well as the provisions of any non-statutory FTA requirements. The ER docket should only be used to request a waiver of federal requirements. All other questions regarding COVID-19 should be directed to [FTAresponse@dot.gov](mailto:FTAresponse@dot.gov).

Some federal requirements include specific provisions related to emergencies, and therefore, no FTA waiver is necessary. For example, federal procurement standards established in 2 CFR part 220.317-326 permit the use of a noncompetitive (sole source)

procurement when the circumstances of an emergency (or public exigency) would not permit a delay resulting from competitive solicitation.

**Q: How can FTA funding support transit agency response measures?**

**A:** FTA grantees may use their Urbanized Area Formula Grants (Section 5307) and Formula Grants for Rural Areas (Section 5311) funds to take protective measures to protect health and safety, such as cleaning of rolling stock, which is considered preventive maintenance (a capital expense) and is eligible for an 80-percent federal match. Personal protective equipment (PPE) and other measures are eligible as either a maintenance or operating expense, whichever is appropriate.

**Q: How should a public transportation system determine whether it should suspend operations in an area with an outbreak?**



# FTA FAQ

**A:** FTA grantees should follow the direction of local and state public health and law enforcement agencies. This local and state information generally is coordinated with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Department of Homeland Security and is the most accurate assessment of the situation locally. A transit agency also should notify FTA before suspending operations.

## **Transit Agency Responses**

### **Q: What are other transit agencies doing in response to COVID-19?**

**A:** Many transit agencies are responding with safety alerts and documents, including:

The New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority deployed health guidance in English, Chinese, Spanish, Russian, and Korean across the system on 3,600 subway screens, 2,000 bus screens, and at 84 subway station street entrances, and issued a press release.

The Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority's Police Department issued an Emergency Preparedness Bulletin to employees.

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority issued an interoffice memo to its staff.

Bay Area Rapid Transit is taking Emergency Preparedness actions, updated their website with messaging to the public, and is utilizing a Public Health Recommendations poster.

King County Metro is performing daily cleaning of buses and water taxis, and has created an informational page on their website and sent an email to stakeholders.

Sound Transit issued a blog post and Community Transit posted information on their website.

## **CDC Recommendations for Workplace Preparedness & Protection**

**The following were prepared by the CDC for posting by FTA:**

### **Q: (CDC) Are masks or other protective gear recommended for transit workers?**

**A:** Transit agencies and workers should follow the CDC's recommendations for personal protective equipment (PPE). The CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19. Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is also crucial for health workers and people who are taking care of someone in close settings (at home or in a health care facility). See more CDC FAQs on how to protect yourself.

While PPE is not recommended at this time, transit workers are encouraged to perform regular hand hygiene, including using a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. If hands are visibly soiled, wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds. Transit workers should avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands and should avoid close contact with people who are sick.

# FTA FAQ

Additionally, there is no specific Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standard for PPE explicitly for COVID-19. However, some OSHA requirements may apply to preventing occupational exposure to COVID-19, including OSHA's PPE standards and General Duty Clause of the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Act of 1970. See OSHA Guidance on Preparing Workplace for COVID-19.

**Q: (CDC) How can transit agencies and operators best begin a constructive dialogue about COVID-19 with public health officials in their local community?**

**A:** Transit agencies are encouraged to reach out to local public health officials to establish ongoing communications to facilitate access to relevant information before and during an outbreak.

**Q: (CDC) What transit interior surfaces require the most attention and what cleaning solutions are the most effective against the virus? How frequently should cleaning occur?**

**A:** High touch surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected at least once a day.

High touch surfaces include kiosks, turnstiles, benches, railings, handrails, garbage cans, door handles, payphones, restroom surfaces (faucets, toilets, counters), poles, handrails, seats, benches, grab bars, and exit buttons.

If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.

Products registered with EPA for use against novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 (the cause of COVID-19) are expected to

be effective against COVID-19 based on data for harder to kill viruses. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.). See this list of products registered with EPA for use against novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2.

For soft or porous surfaces such as carpeted floor, rugs, and drapes, remove visible contamination if present and clean with appropriate cleaners indicated for use on these surfaces.

Staff should wear PPE in accordance with the disinfectant manufacturer's instructions. After removing PPE, staff should wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

**Q: What actions can transit agencies take to increase COVID-19 preparedness for potential outbreaks in their service areas?**

**A:** CDC has developed interim guidance for businesses that includes planning considerations and recommendations for developing an infectious disease outbreak response plan.

**Q: What personal protective equipment should we provide to our employees?**

**A:** The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) hosts a webpage summarizing OSHA standards and directives and other related information that may apply to worker exposure to COVID-19. In addition, monitor OSHA's COVID-19 webpage for any potential updates or recommendations. These FAQs do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies. Grantees and subgrantees should refer to FTA's statutes and regulations for applicable requirements.

# Where to find Reliable & Relevant Information

Misinformation and unwanted news is easy to come across everywhere. Looking for reliable news that meets your needs? We're here to help.



## Visit Our Website.

New documents and information are posted as they are made available to the public.

- ▶ **[www.mpta-transit.org](http://www.mpta-transit.org)**
- ▶ Click on the tab “Meeting Information/ Reports”

- **Find** FAQs.
  - **Learn** about Volunteer Driver Recommendations.
  - **Check out** the latest info from APTA and CTAA.
  - **View** survey results from Transit Systems.
  - **Read** News Stories on how different systems are coping with the outbreak.
  - **Find** Information and Guidelines.
- And so much more.**



# Office of Transit & Active Transportation FAQ

## Sources:

[OTAT FAQ](#).

PDFs can be found on our [website](#).

An FAQ from 3/18/2020 with more information can also be found on the MPTA website.

## Frequently Asked Questions for Transit Agencies during this Federal and State Declared Emergency in response to COVID-19 FAQ from 3/25/2020

**Q1: We are coming up with several drivers whose medical cards are about to expire. As medical clinics in my area are overwhelmed with pandemic testing, they are limiting what they will see at their sites. What should we do?**

**A1:** On March 24, 2020, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) issued a 'CDL Waiver' and 'Enforcement Notice on Expiring CDLs' on their website. For more information regarding your question, please go to <https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/emergency/fmcsa-coronavirus-covid-19-information-resources>.

**Q2. Similar to my first question, the drug-and-alcohol program is becoming more difficult to oversee since the declared COVID-19 national emergency. Has guidance or waivers been issued?**

**A2.** On March 23, 2020, the U.S. Department of Transportation published a guidance document to provide clarity to DOT-regulated employers, employees, and service agents on conducting DOT drug-and-alcohol testing given concerns about the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Please visit <https://www.transportation.gov/odapc/compliance-with-dot-drug-and-alcohol-testing-regulations>

**Q3: We're thinking of going fare-free during this COVID-19 emergency to reduce the interactions between driver and rider. Is it possible to have this revenue reimbursed – we'll have ridership info to document the revenue not received by passengers?**

**A3:** We are waiting to hear from the FTA regarding this question and will forward information when we learn more.

**Q4: Is there any way the state or MnDOT can find masks or prioritize them for transit vehicle drivers? I know that there aren't enough around but we have a lot of drivers very scared, and it may lead to us losing service because they are too scared to be in the public.**

**A4:** Your concern for your drivers are legitimate given the pandemic environment we're witnessing. It's clear your drivers are on the front lines and it's understandable they would be concerned about their health, as well their family's health. Like you, we are also concerned about transit workers as they provide this hugely essential service to those that depend upon transit to get them where they need to go – especially those who can't conduct their work or appointments remotely. We want to express our sincere gratitude for the commitment they're showing to the community they serve. Please let us know how we can reduce the anxiety and the concerns that drivers are expressing.

MnDOT does not have access currently to this equipment that can be provided to transit systems. We will continue to monitor our ability to obtain the PPE, but at present, this equipment is being prioritized for health care and first responder staff.

# Office of Transit & Active Transportation FAQ

Additionally, the current information provided by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the MN Department of Health is that masks are not recommended for healthy people to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19. The CDC further states that “facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others.”

**Q5: I’m uncertain as to what stay-at-home will mean for transit systems. Are transit workers/drivers/dispatchers labeled as essential employees?**

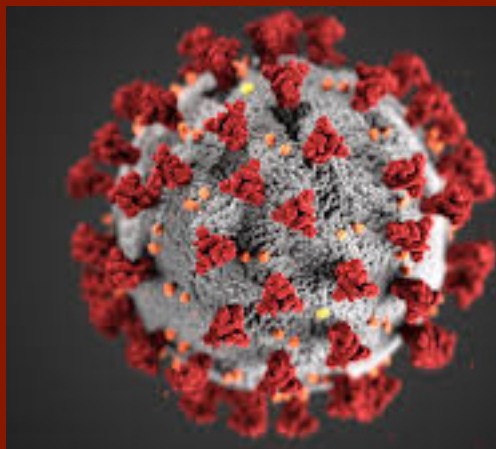
**A5:** Today through executive action, Governor Walz signed an executive order directing Minnesotans to stay at home and limit movements outside of their home beyond essential needs. This order takes effect at 11:59pm on Friday, March 27 and ends at 5:00pm on Friday, April 10.

Minnesotans may leave their residences only to perform any of the following activities, and while doing so, they should practice social distancing:

- Health and safety activities, such as obtaining emergency services or medical supplies
- Outdoor activities, such as walking, hiking, running, biking, hunting, or fishing
- Necessary Supplies and Services, such as getting groceries, gasoline, or carry-out
- Essential and interstate travel, such as returning to a home from outside this state

- Care of others, such as caring for a family member, friend, or pet in another household
- Displacement, such as moving between emergency shelters if you are without a home
- Relocation to ensure safety, such as relocating to a different location if your home has been unsafe due to domestic violence, sanitation, or essential operations reasons
- Tribal activities and lands, such as activities by members within the boundaries of their tribal reservation

Minnesota workers, who work in critical sectors during this time, which includes public transit, are exempt from the stay at home order. These exemptions are based on federal guidance from the [Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency \(CISA\)](#) at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security with some Minnesota-specific additions.



COVID-19 Graphic courtesy of [CDC](#)

# Office of Transit & Active Transportation FAQ

These critical sectors includes, but is not limited to, jobs in:

- Healthcare and public health;
- Law enforcement, public safety, and first responders;
- Emergency shelters, congregate living facilities, drop-in centers;
- Child care;
- Food and agriculture;
- News media;
- Energy;
- Water and wastewater;
- Transportation and Logistics (including public transit workers); and
- Critical manufacturing.

To learn more, please see Governor Walz executive order at <https://www.mpta-transit.org/sites/mpta/files/uploads/2020-03/EO%2020-20%20FINAL.pdf>

MnDOT understands that demand for public transit has decreased significantly with the closure of schools and other institutions. Where possible, MnDOT encourages transit agencies to continue providing essential services. This would include:

- Providing rides for non-emergency but essential scheduled medical appointments such as dialysis, chemo-therapy, etc.;
- Providing trips to grocery stores and to retrieve essential supplies;
- Food delivery; and
- Providing rides for essential employees to and from their place of work.



File Photo: 2019 Rodeo

**More Information  
is available on our  
website**

**[www.mpta-transit.org](http://www.mpta-transit.org)**

**Click the Meeting  
Information/  
Reports Tab.**

# MPTA Transit Survey

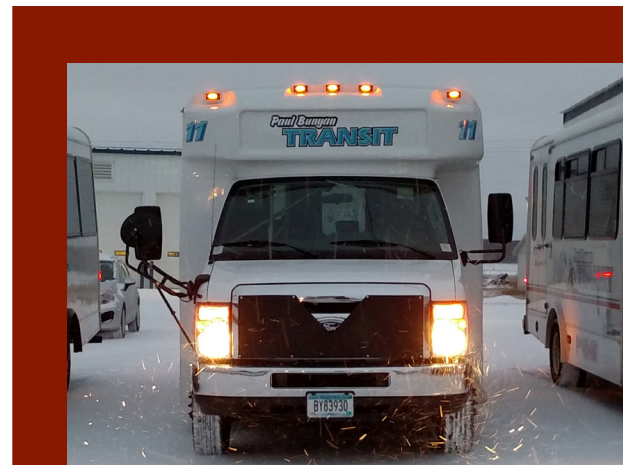
**If your Transit System has not sent in their survey responses, please type them up and submit them ASAP!**

**Survey responses can be emailed to Katie [here](#).**

**Near the end of March MPTA sent out a survey to Transit Systems all over the state to acquire information on how each system is coping with the decrease in ridership due to COVID-19 concerns. It is important that we hear from as many Transit Systems as possible in order to better represent the interests of all systems in the state.**

**MPTA received many survey responses. If your system has not submitted a survey response, please do so as soon as possible. The questions are listed below. Feel free to reach out to MPTA's Program Manager, [Katie Leibel](#), if you have any questions or to send the surveys in.**

- 1) Have any of your contracts for service with organizations changed or been cancelled?
- 2) Roughly, how many ride cancellations has your system experienced due to COVID-19 concerns?
- 3) Are you limiting the number of people on a bus at any given time or requiring certain spacing of passengers?
- 4) Are you performing more cleaning of the vehicles?
- 5) Have you reduced service in terms of the span of service?
- 6) Have you reduced service in terms of the area you serve?
- 7) Do you anticipate having any difficulty in providing the required local match for state and federal funds? If so, how much of a reduction in funds do you anticipate?
- 8) How many of your volunteer drivers have informed you that they will no longer provide rides? How many clients have cancelled rides with volunteers?
- 9) Is your system providing other services in response to COVID-19 such as food delivery?
- 10) Are there any other important consequences of this situation that you would like to tell us about?



File Photo: Paul Bunyan Transit Buses



# Waiver in Response to the COVID-19 Emergency

**Source:**  
**FMSCA and**  
**MPTA website**

FMSCA granted a waiver to Commercial Driver's License (CDL) and Commercial Learner's Permit (CPL) holders, as well as to other interstate drivers operating commercial motor vehicles.

This waiver:

- Extends until June 30, 2020 the maximum period of CDL validity by waiving 49 CFR 383.73(b)(9) and 383.73(d)(6) for CDLs due for renewal on or after March 1, 2020.
- Extends until June 30, 2020 the maximum period of CLP validity by waiving 49 CFR 383.73(a)(2)(iii) and 383.25(c) for CLPs that are due for renewal on or after March 1, 2020, without requiring the CLP holders to retake the general and endorsement knowledge tests.
- Waives the requirement under 49 CFR 383.25(e) that CLP holders wait 14 days to take the CDL skills test.
- Waives the requirement under 49 CFR 391.45 that CDL holders, CLP holders, and non-CDL drivers have a medical examination and certification, provided that they have proof of a valid medical certification that was issued for a period of 90 days or longer and that expired on or after March 1, 2020. e.
- Waives the requirement under 49 CFR 383.71(h)(3) that, in order to maintain the medical certification status of "certified," CDL or CLP holders provide the State Driver Licensing Agency with an original or copy of a subsequently issued medical examiner's certificate, provided that they have proof of a valid medical certification that expired on or after March 1, 2020.

- Waives the requirement under 49 CFR 383.73(o)(2) that the State Driver Licensing Agency change the CDL or CLP holder's medical certification status to "not certified" upon the expiration of the medical examiner's certificate or medical variance, provided that the CDL or CLP holder have proof of a valid medical certification that expired on or after March 1, 2020.
- Waives the requirements under 49 CFR 383.73(o)(4) that the State Driver Licensing Agency initiate a CDL or CLP downgrade upon the expiration of the medical examiner's certificate or medical variance, provided that the CDL or CLP holders have proof of a valid medical certification or medical variance that expired on or after March 1, 2020.
- In accordance with 49 CFR 383.23(a)(1) and 391.41(a)(1)(i), FMCSA continues to recognize the validity of commercial driver's licenses issued by Canadian Provinces and Territories and Licencias Federales de Conductor issued by the United Mexican States, in accordance with 49 CFR part 383, when such jurisdictions



File Photo: Paul Bunyan Bus.

# Waiver in Response to the COVID-19 Emergency

issue a similar notice or declaration extending the validity date of the medical examination and certification and/or validity of the corresponding commercial driver's license due to interruption to government service resulting from COVID-19.

- This waiver does not apply to a CDL or CLP holder if the driver's license expired before March 1, 2020.
- This waiver does not apply to a CDL or CLP holder if the driver's privileges have been suspended or withdrawn for traffic offenses.
- Drivers claiming relief under this waiver from the requirement for a valid medical certificate must have proof of a valid medical certificate that expired on or after March 1, 2020, and carry a paper copy of their expired medical certificates.
- Drivers who cannot produce evidence of a prior medical certification that expired on or after March 1, 2020, are not covered under this waiver, including new drivers who have never obtained a medical certification.
- Drivers who, since their last medical certificate was issued, have been diagnosed with a medical condition that would disqualify the driver from operating in interstate commerce, or who, since their last medical certificate was issued, have developed a condition that requires an exemption or Skill Performance Evaluation from FMCSA are not covered under this waiver.
- This waiver does not apply to medical examiner's certificates originally issued for less than 90 days.



File Photo: 2019 Bus Rodeo.

This waiver was created in response to the President's declaration of a national emergency, and is in the public interest and is likely to achieve a level of safety that is equivalent to, or greater than, the level of safety that would be obtained in the absence of this waiver.

More information on this waiver is available on our [website](#) or on the [FMCSA site or PDF](#).



## Upcoming Events:

**Washington D.C.**

**Fly-In**

**Tuesday, September**

**22nd- Thursday**

**September 24**

[Register Here!](#)

**2020 Transit**

**Conference & Expo**

**Monday, October 5th-**

**Wednesday, October 7th**

**Mayo Civic Center,**

**Rochester, MN.**

*More Info Coming Soon.*



## Contact Us:

Have a story for us?

Want to nominate  
someone for "Meet the  
Director?"

Reach out to us here:

[Katie Leibel](#)

Program Manager

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