



State RTAP Manager's Peer Roundtable Summary

COVID-19 Focus

March 24, 2020

Updated April 20, 2020

Q: How is COVID-19 impacting services in your state?

A: In New Jersey, rural routes are limiting the amount of people on buses to 1-4. They are keeping inventories of people who have ridden their buses. Certain routes are designated as grocery, laundry, etc., routes only. Some of their drivers are also performing meals-on-wheels service (with only thermal-packaged, frozen foods for safety). Some systems have added earlier routes for new early morning senior shopping hours. Many states have had to reduce their routes. Factors influencing this decision have included closure of businesses, schools, etc. Some facilities that had been used as drug and alcohol testing centers are now becoming COVID-19 testing centers.

Q: How are State RTAP Programs and State DOT Programs keeping in contact with local, regional, and state emergency efforts?

A: Michigan DOT participates in daily meetings of a local joint operations committee with health department and emergency management staff. Lea Sheridan, New Jersey RTAP Manager, is holding weekly phone calls with county systems. Kaitlyn McClanahan, Tennessee RTAP Manager, is involved with weekly calls with state transportation agencies with all transit agencies.

Q: What transit services do you consider "essential"?

A: Essential transit services discussed during the call included dialysis, chemotherapy, medical visits, food shopping, and laundromats.

Q: How has teleworking affected your operations?

A: Indiana RTAP Manager Vicky Warner described how her state is pursuing eLearning options, as they are not currently offering in-person trainings. Minnesota RTAP cancelled in-person trainings for the next 2 months and reintroduced online training, including PASS training. National RTAP is also increasing our eLearning bandwidth to accommodate more learners. New Jersey RTAP moved to an electronic signature program. The state is asking drivers to keep track of all their expenses related to COVID-19, such as cleaning and personal protective assistance supplies.

Q: How have service reductions affected transit staff scheduling and compensation?

A: A number of agencies are paying drivers to take online trainings. In New Jersey, some systems are still paying staff even if they are not able to come to work, and also offering future comp days for staff who are still needed to work onsite.

Q: What measures have you heard about to protect against the spread of COVID-19?

A: It has been difficult for some agencies to obtain cleaning supplies. An agency in Michigan was able to borrow a high-level cleaning machine from a school that had to close. Lea Sheridan recommends limiting congregation of drivers and having them leave right after they perform their post trip inspection. In New Jersey, cleaning supplies are considered part of the state emergency plan, which includes public transit agencies.

Q: How are states tracking service changes in light of COVID-19?

A: Tyler Bender, Ohio RTAP Manager, shared ODOT's [online form](#) for tracking subrecipients' service change/reduction requests. This was developed by the ODOT Office of Transit program management section to help track transit agencies requesting service reduction, how the agency plans to communicate their reductions, and what indicators they will use for resuming normal service in the future. The form is driven by logic so the individual completing the form must select certain criteria for more questions to populate. The rural portion of this form is more substantial than the urban since ODOT has direct oversight responsibility for rural subrecipients.

Q: How are State RTAP programs helping subrecipients?

A: Vicky Warner said that the Indiana RTAP program is receiving numerous email and phone calls for technical assistance, on issues like CDL physical requirements, waivers, service changes, etc. The program is providing technical assistance for all subrecipients.

Q: What informational resources have you found most helpful on COVID-19?

A: National RTAP Executive Director Robin Phillips attended a webinar from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) that she found helpful for NEMT issues. National RTAP lists all relevant COVID-19 webinars on our [Calendar of Events](#).

Q: Are extensions being granted by FTA for submissions for Title VI, DBE, Financial Performance Plans, and Agency Safety Plans?

A: FTA is postponing the submission of all Title VI Programs with current or upcoming due dates until October 1, 2020. Recipients may use their current on-file Title VI Programs through November 30, 2020. FTA has decided to postpone remaining fiscal year 2020 program oversight reviews (triennial, state management, etc.) until early in federal fiscal year 2021. From <https://www.transit.dot.gov/frequently-asked-questions-fta-grantees-regarding-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19#CARES>, accessed April 20, 2020.

Q: How can agencies comply with Drug and Alcohol testing regulations?

A: On March 23, 2020, U.S. DOT issued [Guidance on Compliance with DOT Drug and Alcohol Testing Regulations](#). DOT-regulated employers must comply with applicable DOT training and testing requirements. They should make a reasonable effort to locate the necessary resources. As a best practice at this time, employers should consider mobile collection services for required testing if the fixed-site collection facilities are not available. If employers are unable to conduct DOT drug and alcohol testing due to the unavailability of testing resources, the underlying modal regulations continue to apply. Employers should review the applicable DOT Agency requirements for testing to determine whether flexibilities allow for collection and testing at a later date. Agencies with questions can contact ODAPCWebMail@dot.gov.

Q: How can National RTAP continue to help State RTAP programs?

A: We will list the date at the end of our COVID-19 technical as we continue to update it, in addition to how we have been listing the update date in our Resource Library web page. We will plan another State RTAP Manager peer roundtable, and RTAP Managers are welcome to submit questions to info@nationalrtap.org at any time, which will be answered individually and at the time of the call.