

Get Ready!

Rural Transit Day is July 16, and the National Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) has resources available to help plan your celebration. Visit their website to find the Rural Transit Day Toolbox, Pledge, Proclamation Template, Hero Cards and many other resources [Rural Transit Day \(nationalrtap.org\)](https://nationalrtap.org)



Get Email Updates from National RTAP!

Join the [mailing list](#) to receive National RTAP's biweekly e-newsletter. You can also sign up to receive announcements about new products and events, tribal transit updates, and more.

The Montana Transit Association (MTA) is hosting the annual Spring Conference and Vendor Expo May 20 to 22 in Bozeman. You can find the agenda and registration information on the MTA website:

[2024 Spring Conference & Vendor EXPO - Montana Transit Association \(mtatransit.org\)](https://mtatransit.org)

Please take the MDT Satisfaction Survey!

[How are we doing?](#)



Happy Spring! Let's celebrate Earth Day by continuing to reduce traffic congestion and greenhouse gases through the delivery of quality, flexible public transportation.

- Adam Kraft, Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) Transit Section Supervisor

April is National Distracted Driving Awareness Month. Join the effort to raise awareness about the dangers of distracted driving to eliminate preventable deaths and injuries on our roadways.



Register now for a Montana DRIVE workshop!

It is that time of year again! Registration for the Advanced Defensive Driving Course (DRIVE) located in Lewistown is open. Classes are offered from June 4 to August 9. The MDT Transit Section will provide RTAP scholarships for interested transit providers to attend the DRIVE Course on first come first serve basis. Please keep in mind that your driver must not have attended the course in the previous 2-years to qualify for the scholarship program. MDT will cover related travel costs and the registration fee of \$375/person.

- Contact Erin Root to receive approval for scholarship(s) to attend the workshop. Make sure to include the driver names – eroot@mt.gov or 406-444-7623.
- Contact OPI-Montana DRIVE Workshops to select a date and register your drivers. [2024 Montana DRIVE](#).

If your driver is approved to attend the training, please pay for the training and travel costs, then submit your RTAP reimbursement form along with the receipt for the registration, related travel expenses, and the Certificate of Completion confirming the driver attended the training.

MDT is hosting New/Refresher Transit Manager training April 10 and 11 in Billings. Please contact your regional planner by April 5 if you are interested in attending the training.

Topics include:

- Transit Program Overview.
- Intro to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).
- BlackCat Reporting System Overview.
- Federal and State Funding Opportunities and Applications.
- Financial Management.
- Asset Management.
- Transit Planning Projects.
- Drug and Alcohol Program.
- Compliance Reviews.
- Civil Rights.
- Contract and Program Updates.
- RTAP.

2024 MDT Transit Fall Workshop

Save the Date!

Tuesday, September 10 and Wednesday, September 11

Helena Great Northern Hotel

Information for securing a room and further details to follow.

Transit Section Customer Service Email

MDT has a Transit Section email account:
mdttransitcontact@mt.gov.

Subrecipients can use this email for general questions or when their regional planner is not available. In some scenarios (ex: form returns) responses should be sent to the section email to streamline processing.

GovDelivery

The State of Montana has encountered limitations sending bulk email communications, so MDT has transitioned to GovDelivery to send these communications. GovDelivery is subscription based, and if you unsubscribe, you will not receive these important communications. Use this link to check your subscription status:

[Montana Department of Transportation \(govdelivery.com\)](https://govdelivery.com)

Vehicle Updates

- **Non-Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):** 4-month wait period for each vehicle delivery. State Fiscal Year (SFY) 22 and 23 on order. Most SFY 22 vans have been delivered.
- **ADA Minivan Conversion:** New vendor contract signed in December 2023. MDT placed SFY 22 and 23 orders in January 2024. Pricing approximately \$74,000/unit.
- **ADA Ext. Van:** SFY 22 and 23 on order with the first vans to be completed mid-April 2024.
- **Non-ADA Ext. Van:** SFY 23 ordered in January 2024. Delivery expected in September 2024.
- **Lt. Cutaway 12, 13, 17, & 19 Passenger:** SFY 21 and 22 have been ordered. First buses to be completed in mid-April 2024.
- **MD Cutaways:** Estimated date of delivery, early 2024.
- **HD Bus:** SFY 22 on order.
- **HD Low-floor Bus:** Currently preparing specifications to place SFY 23 order.

You can email mdttransitcontact@mt.gov for updates on specific vehicles for your agency.

National RTAP is hosting a Rural and Tribal Capital Projects Training Workshop in Spokane, Washington April 22 to 24. Relying heavily on the *FTA Construction Project Management Handbook*, this workshop offers guidance to those who are taking on sizable construction projects despite limited prior experience. Attendees will be introduced to transit capital development/ construction project management principles through all phases of project development (e.g.: project initiation and scoping, NEPA, project funding, solicitation writing, construction, commissioning, and closeout), and will learn how to: administer their projects through in-house staff or consultant contractors, complete projects on time and within budget, and comply with FTA requirements, etc. Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/42r6cm8t>

Fiscal Updates: If you have any questions or need clarification on the reporting of in-kind as match, please contact your regional planner first. Then, we would be more than happy to answer your questions or set up a one on one training with MDT's Fiscal Section.

MDT TRANSIT PROGRAM - QUARTERLY REPORT TIMELINE

QUARTER END DATE	QTR	SUBRECIPIENTS 30 DAYS TO SUBMIT	REGIONAL PLANNERS 15 DAYS APPROVAL	FISCAL PLANNERS 31 DAYS INVOICING / APPROVAL	EXPENSE DATES*
30-Sep	Q1	31-Oct	15-Nov	30-Nov	7/1 - 9/30
31-Dec	Q2	31-Jan	15-Feb	1-Mar	10/1 - 12/31
31-Mar	Q3	30-Apr	15-May	31-May	1/1 - 3/31
30-Jun	Q4	31-Jul	15-Aug	31-Aug	4/1 - 6/30**

*The expenses reported in Q1 through Q3 must be received and paid by the subrecipient within the stated dates for each quarter.

**The expenses reported in Q4 need only be received by the subrecipient between 4/1 and 6/30. Payment may take place after 6/30.

MCS Transit Vehicle Condition Inspections Q & A

Who does this?

Motor Carrier Service (MCS) Officers do this on behalf of the Transit Section. Positioned throughout the state, MCS Officers make this process more efficient.

What is this?

This is a biannual vehicle inspection divided between the Western Region one year, and Northern and Southern the next year. The Western Region was inspected in 2023. The Northern and Southern Regions will be inspected in 2024.

What is not?

These are condition inspections and asset reconciliations. They are not Commercial Driver's License (CDL) or Department of Transportation (DOT) inspections, and are not intended to remove vehicles from service or alter your ability to provide service.

Where is this?

Officers will come to your location, or where you keep the vehicles, to perform the vehicle inspections.

When is this?

Inspections will begin in spring of 2024, and end at the beginning of winter. Specific times will be coordinated between you and the Officer. They will reach out to you to coordinate each inspection. Multiple visits may be necessary if some vehicles are in use at the time of the scheduled inspection.

Why is this done?

All MDT pass-through FTA funded vehicles are required by the federal program to be inspected. This requirement is listed in the MDT Statewide Transit Management and Transit Asset Management Plans, and is in place to encourage recipients of Federal financial assistance to conduct them as part of maintaining a State of Good Repair and a Quality Assurance/Quality Control program. (If it has a DOT Project ID in the BlackCat transit grant reporting system, then it will need to be inspected.)

Who to contact with questions?

Please contact Jackie RedEagle at jredeagle@mt.gov or 406-444-0886.

Compliance Reviews

2024 compliance reviews are currently underway in the Southern Region. MDT staff will schedule site visits throughout the summer. Contact your regional planner with any questions.

Civil Rights Q & A

May a transit provider require a rider to travel with a personal care attendant (PCA)?

Under DOT ADA regulations at 49 C.F.R. Section 37.5(e), a transit entity is prohibited from requiring that an individual with disabilities be accompanied by a personal care attendant (PCA). Transit entities are also not required to provide PCA services. This provision must be considered in light of the fact that under 49 C.F.R. 37.5(h), an entity may refuse service to someone who engages in violent, seriously disruptive, or illegal conduct. If an entity may legitimately refuse service to someone, it may condition service to him on actions that would mitigate the problem. The entity could require a PCA as a condition of providing service it otherwise had the right to refuse. However, a transit entity cannot refuse to provide service solely because an individual's disability results in appearance or involuntary behavior that may offend, annoy, or inconvenience the entity or other persons.

How much weight must a vehicle lift be able to accommodate?

Under DOT ADA regulations at 49 C.F.R. Section 38.23(b)(1), wheelchair lifts must accommodate a design load of at least 600 pounds, with a safety factor of at least six (3,600 pounds) for working parts, such as belts, pulleys, and shafts that can be expected to wear, and a safety factor of at least three (1,800 pounds) for nonworking parts, based on the ultimate strength of the material. For vehicles equipped with ramps, the design load must be at least 600 pounds. for ramps in excess of 30 inches in length, with a safety factor of at least three (1,800 pounds); ramps less than 30 inches in length are required to have a design load of at least 300 pounds. Transit agencies are not prevented from acquiring vehicles and equipment with a higher design load but are not required to accommodate mobility devices that exceed the capacities of their lifts or ramps.

Civil Rights Q & A continued

Are bus operators required to assist persons with disabilities?

Yes. Under DOT ADA regulations at 49 C.F.R. Section 37.165(f), transit entity personnel must assist individuals with disabilities with the use of ramps, lifts, and securement systems. If it is necessary for the personnel to leave their seats to provide this assistance, they must do so, even if the entity's drivers traditionally do not leave their seats (e.g., because of labor-management agreements or company rules). On a vehicle which uses a ramp for entry, the driver may have to assist in pushing a manual wheelchair up the ramp, particularly if the ramp slope is relatively steep. In sum, transit entity personnel must ensure that a passenger with a disability is able to take advantage of the accessibility and safety features on vehicles.

The new [Clean Bus Planning Awards](#) program from the [Joint Office of Energy and Transportation](#) and the [National Renewable Energy Laboratory](#) leverages federal dollars for technical assistance to develop fleet electrification transition plans. The initiative also offers deployment assistance for participating transit agencies, making it easy to transition from planning to implementation.

Establishing a zero-emission transition plan is the first step in creating an economically and environmentally sound fleet and is [required in applications](#) for FTA's low- and no-emission bus grants. Plans will create a vision backed by realistic targets and serve as a foundation and reference point for day-to-day operations during zero-emission bus deployment.

Eligible applicants include FTA grant recipients, including state and local governmental authorities, and tribes.

The [application](#) opened on February 20, and the National Renewable Energy Laboratory will review applications on a rolling basis.

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.

Links:

[Clean Bus Planning Awards](#)

[Apply to the Program](#)

[Low and No-Emission Vehicle Federal Technical Assistance](#)

[FTA Zero Emission Fleet Transition Plans](#)

The updated Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) publication will be posted in mid-May:

[Statewide Transportation Improvement Program \(STIP\) | Montana Department of Transportation \(MDT\) \(mt.gov\)](#)



MONTANA
Department of
Transportation

Alternative accessible formats of this document will be provided on request. Persons who need an alternative format should contact the Office of Civil Rights, Montana Department of Transportation, 2701 Prospect Avenue, PO Box 201001, Helena, MT 59620. Telephone 406-444-5416 or Montana Relay Service at 711.

FTA publishes an annual list of all Certifications and Assurances (C&A). C&A requirements flow down to all subrecipients of FTA funding and are agreed upon through the contract process. You can find the current Federal Year, 2024, list of C&As as well as a redline version on the FTA website: [Certifications & Assurances](#).

On February 29, FTA announced \$9.9 billion in federal funding available to support public transportation throughout the country. The funding to states, urbanized areas and tribal governments is based on statutory formulas and represent a partial year of federal support for transit. Visit [Current Apportionments](#) to find the funding summary and the partial year apportionment tables.

The following Notices of Funding Availability/Opportunity are linked to the Federal Register website:

[Federal Register : Guidance for Grants and Agreements](#)

[Notices of Funding Opportunity](#)

[Grant Programs | FTA \(dot.gov\)](#)

[Grant Programs | FHWA \(dot.gov\)](#)

The Federal Register is the Federal Government's official daily publication of rules, proposed rules, and notices of federal agencies, and provides a forum for public participation in the democratic process.

Drug/Alcohol Reminder

Be sure to redact **ALL** donor information prior to uploading the collection documents – this includes the Random draw list. To clarify: all documents sent to MDT (quarterly reporting) must be redacted, the copies your agency keeps should be retained as your policy directs. Contact your regional planner with any questions.

We want to hear from you!

Please reach out if you have news you would like to share with the Montana Transit community in a future newsletter!

Contact Erin Root, eroot@mt.gov

