

MONTANA RTAP ANNUAL TRAINING PLAN

Approach

FTA allocates resources to RTAP programs to support nonurbanized transit activities in four categories: training, technical assistance, research, and related support services. FTA defines technical assistance as “programs, processes, and resources that provide targeted support to a community, region, organization, or other beneficiary to help them access and deploy federal funding and build local capacity to develop, design, and deliver transportation plans and projects.”

This work plan outlines a plan for both training and technical assistance/related support services. It’s our understanding that to effectively engage transit agencies in training, there will also need to be a 1:1 support component with each agency to understand their training needs, and that work would fall more under technical assistance/related support services.

Current Training

- Manager Refresher Training (MDT)
- Fall Conference (MDT)
- PASS Train the Trainer (MTA), Spring Conference
- Wheelchair Securement (MTA), Spring Conference
- Spring Conference (MTA)
- DRIVE Training (OPI)
- Drug & Alcohol Training, every few years
- MPOs host training occasionally
- PASS Training at individual agencies, open to other providers
- Scholarships to CTAA conference and National Bus Rodeo

Roles & Responsibilities of MDT and Consultant

MDT: Direct strategy for RTAP program and administer FTA program funding and any administrative issues related to public transit.

Consultant: Implement strategy for RTAP program, report on outcomes, coordinate with MDT to understand transit agency needs and develop resources related to MDT’s work with transit systems.

Consultant and MDT would participate in National RTAP bi-annual peer RTAP manager meetings to learn from other programs and identify new resources to share.

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Goals

- All agencies aware of training resources
- More agencies participating in training, especially those who were less engaged previously.

Communications Plan

We recommend that MDT develop an RTAP website that shows upcoming training events and information and distribute the information on the website regularly through email communications using an email management system, such as MailChimp. Email communication would coordinate with the existing communication channels, including the Quarterly MDT newsletter and others to ensure that communications are consistent and not duplicated.

The **website** would include:

- A calendar showing all upcoming training, including training from MTA and MDT, such as the Rodeo and conferences, and training from transit operators that is open to other operators (resource sharing).
- Registration pages for each training event
- Linking to MTA and FTA and other resources
- Resource guides for common transit and training challenges
- Links to on-demand and online training from National RTAP, CTAA, and others
- Scholarship application and reimbursement
- Reporting tools for MDT and transit operators
- Training checklists and guides to understand the expectations for participation in training
- Form to share training topic requests and training needs

Resources from the website could be shared to the resources part of BlackCat, but BlackCat wouldn't be set up to display all the above information in the same way that a website would.

Email communications would include:

- Regular reminders of upcoming training (weekly, monthly, or other rhythm)
- Announcements when new training is added
- Bite-sized training resources and toolkits for transit managers
- Reminders for training (1 week before, 1 day before)
- Post-Training Survey

Training Recipients: Training would focus on providers of Tribal Transit and rural transit including operators funded through FTA Section 5311 and 5310. Other agencies can participate as allowed by MDT.

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Balance of Training Plan: Driver training is most time intensive and frequent, manager training includes the most variety and in-person time and maintenance and dispatch are tailored to their unique needs and capacity.

Training Plan by Role

All

De-escalation Training/Managing Challenges on Your Bus: This training would be developed as a custom training with qualified training provider(s) and would cover the following topics/scenarios:

- Human Trafficking
- Difficult/unruly passengers
- Bus fires and emergency procedures
- Emergency procedures for drug-related incidents
- Emergency procedures for medical emergencies
- Active shooter training
- Incident/Accident procedures and reporting

It could be offered as a 1 or 2-day training regionally, with bite-sized training components that attendees can bring back to their transit systems, such as short PowerPoints to train drivers or recommended videos, checklists, or worksheets.

Managers/Trainers

Recommended Timing from the Survey: 8am-noon Tuesday-Thursday

Technical Assistance

To meet the goal of engaging all transit systems, not just those already actively involved, the consultant would meet with each system individually at least once annually to understand their unique situation and work with them to recommend a training strategy.

Peer Roundtables

Peer groups could be an opportunity to get transit managers together to share resources and ideas, such as around pros and cons of different dispatch software. We recommend quarterly virtual meetings. The consultant would facilitate and share learnings from the roundtables out on the website or other resources.

Regional Workshops

Once a year in 3? regions (summer or winter?). Hosted at MDT facilities or at 5307 systems. Topics to include de-escalation topics (included above) and/or transit manager topics:

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Mentorship Program

Consultant would draft a description of the program (yearlong?) that can be shared with transit operators.

Option 1: Create two short applications: mentor and mentee and match people based on location and application information (similarities, etc.).

Option 2: Market program at statewide and peer roundtables. Individuals can come to MDT as a pair to be added to the mentor-mentee program.

Option 3: Combination of options 1 and 2.

Create a loose curriculum/structure for meetings and quarterly online meeting check ins for all mentors/mentees to review status, ask questions, and get support.

Webinars

Every other month webinars could be a good vehicle to share resources and training on a variety of requested topics with transit managers. Training needing more time could be introduced through webinars and expanded on at conferences or regional workshops.

Bite-Sized Staff Training Resources (PowerPoints, Videos, etc.)

This could include updating existing resources, when possible, to include more relevant videos and up-to-date information and training.

Training at Fall Conference

If there is space on the agenda, RTAP funds could be allocated to bring in a trainer for short training sessions as part of the MDT fall conference.

Training at Spring Conference (MTA)

If there is space in the agenda and it's appropriate, RTAP funds could be allocated to support training at the spring conference, such as past topics:

- PASS Train the Trainer CTAA?
- Wheelchair Securement (Train the Trainer?) Q'Straint

Or other topics to be coordinated with the consultant, MDT, and MTA.

PASS Train-the-Trainer could also be offered via CTAA's virtual courses via a scholarship or coordinated as an in-person workshop, regionally if there is enough interest.

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Bus Operators

Recommended Timing from the Survey: 8am-2pm Tuesday and Wednesday

Passenger Assistance Safety & Sensitivity (PASS)

Online: Establish a relationship with a provider of PASS training online (CTAA or other) that can register bus operators through the consultant. Consultant would assist operators in getting set up for training and tracking progress and certification.

In-Person: Regional quarterly 1-day new driver training classes, likely offered back-to-back in different regions depending on trainer availability.

Entry-Level Driver Training (ELDT)

Coordinate with MDT to understand transit systems needs and capabilities. Solutions could include train-the-trainer support, resource sharing strategies (exploring if small urban systems are willing to bring rural system drivers into their training), and scholarships to CDL courses at universities or other ELDT providers.

Defensive Driving

Offered online through the Risk Management and Tort Division (RMTD) (scheduled webinars) or Coaching Systems (on-demand) or in-person through a qualified trainer (if desired).

Winter Driving

Offered online through RMTD (scheduled webinars) or Coaching Systems (on-demand).

Driver Skills

Short driver training skills courses could be offered through providers like the National Safety Council, with topics like:

- Speed management
- Weather and road conditions
- Avoiding fatigued driving
- Backing and parking lot strategies
- Etc.

If needed, the consultant could also create short training PowerPoints for managers to use with their drivers on key topics.

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Maintenance

Wheelchair Lift Repair and Maintenance

The consultant would work with MDT to identify lift maintenance trainers that could work with the types of vehicles and lifts used in Montana. BraunAbility could provide some/all of this training. The trainer would travel to each agency or through a corridor to provide training to each transit system.

Vehicle Maintenance Management and Compliance (VMMC)

This is a comprehensive vehicle maintenance course from CTAA that covers preventive maintenance, fleet management, and technology. The intended audience would also include transit managers. It could be offered online through scholarships to attend CTAA's virtual courses or coordinated as an in-person training if there is enough interest.

Dispatchers

Customer service training was a lower priority in the focus groups and dispatch training didn't come up as a direct need, so for this, we recommend working with the transit agencies to connect them to the online Dispatching & Scheduling training through National RTAP and listening for further requests for more in-depth or in-person training as requested.

Scholarship Plan

Scholarships are a key part of the training plan as they would provide a way for transit systems to attend training — online and in-person, both out of state and in-state. The advantage of using a scholarship for some training is that because the recipient pays for the training up front there are fewer no-shows for training.

The consultant would work with MDT to understand the current scholarship policy and budget, including limits on funds, how reimbursement form questions are used, and ways to streamline the application process through the website, if interested. These tools can reduce the time spent entering data for both the agency and MDT and enhance reporting. For example, when the application and reimbursement are part of the same website form, the recipient only needs to update their expenses for reimbursement, instead of entering all the data twice and some parts of the application can be pre-populated from their user account, such as their name, address, etc.

With MDT approval, scholarships could also fund technology purchases for transit agencies, including dispatch software training or computers for online training.

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Advisory Committee Plan

An advisory committee would engage transit system representatives in the work of overseeing the RTAP program. It provides helpful insight into training needs and creates a highly engaged group of transit agencies that can help to amplify RTAP programs to their peers. Having representatives from partners like MTA can also help coordinate training with partners and improve communication.

The consultant would help coordinate the committee and lead meetings, which could include 12-15 participants and meet monthly, every two months, or quarterly virtually.

Partnerships Plan

Consultant and MDT would identify key partners in the state who know of training needs. If appropriate, there could be a representative from those groups on the advisory committee, and if not, meetings could be set once or twice a year with the consultant, partner, and MDT to review training needs and share the training plan for awareness and collaboration.

Metrics & Reporting

Reporting would be updated quarterly and shared at Advisory Committee meetings to include:

- Training Participation by Agency
- Training Participation and Registration by Event
- Survey Result Summary
- Training Feedback
- Scholarship Use and Participation

Annual Training Budget

The 2024–2028 statewide management plan lists state RTAP funds as of FFY 2024 as \$321,156 in carryover funds and \$154,417 in annual apportionment. We recommend that an annual budget is set using the annual apportionment and the carry-over funds divided evenly among the years that the funds are available before they expire.

= Month Training Will Occur
= Continuous

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	Calendar Year 2025												Calendar Year 2026												
Training	Jan-25	Feb-25	Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Mar-26	Apr-26	May-26	Jun-26	Jul-26	Aug-26	Sep-26	Oct-26	Nov-26	Dec-26	
Bus Operators																									
Passenger Assistance Safety & Sensitivity (Online)																									
Passenger Assistance Safety & Sensitivity (In-Person)																									
Defensive Driving (Online)																									
Winter Driving (Online)																									
ELDT Coordination																									
Driving Skills (Online)																									
Montana DRIVE Adult Driver One-Day Workshops (OPI)																									
Managers/Trainers																									
Technical Assistance																									
Fall Transit Workshop (MDT)																									
Spring Conference (MTA)																									
State Bus Roadeo																									
Manager Refresher Training																									
Tribal Transit Workshop																									
Regional Workshop																									
Peer Roundtables																									
Mentorship Program																									
Transit Management Topic Webinars																									
Maintenance																									
Wheelchair Lift Repair & Maintenance																									
VMMC (Virtual Sessions or In-Person) — Month TBD																									
Dispatch																									
Customer Service (Online)																									

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Role	Course Title	Duration	Location	How Often Offered	Mandatory/Recommended	Trainer	Delivery Method	Estimated Cost (approx.)
All	De-escalation Training/Managing Challenges on Your Bus	6-8 hours	3 Regions	Annually	Recommended	TBD	In-Person	~\$6,000-\$7500 per class
All (or Managers)	Peer Roundtables	1 hour	Online	Quarterly	Optional	Facilitated by Consultant	Online (Live)	Labor cost
Dispatcher	Dispatching and Scheduling Training for Rural Transit Systems	Self-Paced	Online	Continuous	Recommended	National RTAP	Online (Self-Paced)	Free
Driver	Passenger Assistance Safety & Sensitivity (PASS)	4-8 hours, self paced	Online	Continuous	Strongly Recommended	CTAA or Other Online Provider	Online (Self-Paced)	\$25-50 per student
Driver	Passenger Assistance Safety & Sensitivity (PASS)	8 hours	Regionally	Quarterly	Required?	TBD	In-Person	~\$800 per class
Driver	Defensive Driving	4 hours	Online	Continuous	Strongly Recommended	Coaching Systems/National Safety Council	Online (Self-Paced)	~\$32 per student
Driver	Defensive Driving	4 hours	Online	TBD	Strongly Recommended	RMTD	Online (Live)	Unknown
Driver	Winter Driving	4 hours	Online	Continuous	Recommended	Coaching Systems/National Safety Council	Online (Self-Paced)	~\$32 per student
Driver	Winter Driving	4 hours	Online	TBD	Recommended	RMTD	Online (Live)	Unknown
Driver	Montana DRIVE Adult Driver Summer Workshops	8 hours	Lewistown, MT	Weekdays June-August	Recommended	OPI	In-Person	\$375 per student
Driver	National Safety Council Driver Modules - Speed Management - Avoiding Aggressive Driving - Lane Management - Intersections - Avoiding Impaired Driving - Avoiding Fatigued Driving - Weather and Road Conditions - Backing and Parking Lot Strategies	1 hour or less	Online	Continuous	Recommended	Coaching Systems/National Safety Council	Online (Self-Paced)	\$10.75 per student
Maintenance	Wheelchair Lift Repair and Maintenance	4 hours	Along a travel corridor/each agency individually	Annually	Strongly Recommended	BraunAbility?	In-Person	TBD
Maintenance	Vehicle Maintenance Management and Compliance (VMMC)	8 hours	TBD	TBD	Optional	CTAA	In-Person	\$6,500 per class
Maintenance	Vehicle Maintenance Management and Compliance (VMMC)	7 hours	Online	TBD	Optional	CTAA	Online (Live)	\$600-750 per student
Managers	Regional Workshops	8 hours	Regionally	Annually	Strongly Recommended	TBD	In-Person	~\$6,000-\$7500 per class
Managers	Mentorship Check Ins	1 hour	Online	Quarterly	Optional	Consultant	Online (Live)	Labor cost
Managers	Technical Assistance Meetings	1 hour	Online	Annually	Strongly Recommended	Consultant	Online (Live)	Labor cost
Managers	PASS Train-the-Trainer	8 hours	Online	TBD	Recommended	CTAA	Online (Live)	\$600-750 per student
Managers	Topic Webinars	1.5 hours	Online	Every other month	Recommended	TBD	Online (Live)	Range, but outside trainers in the \$1,000-2,000 range

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Transit Manager Training Topics
RTAP 101: How to take advantage of training tools
Procurement
HR Basics
Public Engagement & Managing TACs
NTD Reporting & BlackCat
Policy Training and Checklists
Civil Rights: Title VI, Title II and ADA
Disability Etiquette
Coordinated Transportation Planning
Marketing
Fleet & Facility Asset Management
Incident/Accident Procedure & Reporting
Insurance for Small Transit Agencies
Drug & Alcohol Program Management (coordinate with existing training)
Program Updates (as/if needed?) (Required)
Project Administration
Building Websites for Transit
Planning