



# Quarterly Transit Newsletter

January 2024

## Call for RTAP Review Board Nominations

The National Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) is soliciting nominations for new Review Board members to join in 2024 and 2025.

In 2024, there will be vacancies for one state transit official and four rural or tribal transit providers. The term is three years. Any group or individual involved in rural or tribal transit may nominate someone to the board. An individual may also nominate themselves for consideration.

See the online [Nomination Form](#) for full details, including Review Board member eligibility, responsibilities, and the solicitation process. [\(full details PDF\)](#) If you have any questions, contact:

[info@nationalrtap.org](mailto:info@nationalrtap.org)  
888-589-6821

**The deadline for nominations is January 30.**

## Get Email Updates from National RTAP!

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

## Statewide Planning Update

The latest State Management Plan draft [is available online](#). Comments can be sent to [mdttransitcontact@mt.gov](mailto:mdttransitcontact@mt.gov) and will be accepted until January 7.

## We want to hear from you!

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

Contact Erin Root, [eroot@mt.gov](mailto:eroot@mt.gov)



**MONTANA**  
Department of  
Transportation

*Hello Transit Providers, and welcome to the Moving Montana Transit Newsletter! 2024 will be filled with new changes, accomplishments, opportunities and exciting updates, and what better way to bring that news to you than in a newsletter geared directly towards the Montana Transit community. I look forward to hearing your thoughts and seeing your contributions throughout the next year.*

**-Tammy Ross, MDT Transit, Safety, and Planning Bureau Chief**

*Welcome to the first edition of the Moving Montana Quarterly Transit newsletter! We're excited to share with you some exciting updates and news from our transit community.*

**- Adam Kraft, MDT Transit Section Supervisor**

## State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2025 Application Season Approaching!

Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5311 and Montana State TransADE allocations are finalized.

**All applications will be available January 1, 2024.**

### Who should apply?

- Closed door services may apply for FTA Section 5310 capital.
- Rural public providers may apply for Operating, Capital, and TransADE.
- Intercity Bus providers may apply for Operating and Capital.
- Small Urban (5307) providers must submit an application to receive TransADE and/or capital funding. Small Urban providers are required to submit quarterly reports through the BlackCat reporting system.
- Tribal transit providers may apply for Operating, Capital, and/or TransADE. Operating funds may be suballocated per request and without application.



### Reminders:

- When applying for transit assistance, please include the project in your application, including TransADE.
- If applying TransADE as local match to the FTA Section 5311 operating grant, remember to include it as state match on your application.
- When applying for rolling-stock capital, each item needs to be applied for as an individual project, unless applying for two identical vehicles.
- The Needs Justification form is a guided form. You now have clear direction regarding Capital Assistance Review (CAR) committee review criteria used during the selection process.
- There is now a third option when applying for rolling-stock referred to as "Expansion for increased spare ratio". Select this option when replacing a vehicle while retaining the old vehicle to increase your spare ratio. "Vehicle replacement" shall be selected when the old vehicle is sold before or soon after receiving the new vehicle. All three options carry the same weight in terms of CAR committee scoring.

Allocation and application questions can be directed to Jackie RedEagle at [jredeagle@mt.gov](mailto:jredeagle@mt.gov). Questions during the open opportunities should be directed to your regional planner.

## Congrats to Barbara Sheridan for 30 years of service to the Montana transit community!



Barb, MDT Transit Planner, was recently honored for her service and is pictured with Bureau Chief Tammy Ross, Director Mack Long and Administrator Rob Stapley.

Barb, you are an amazing colleague and resource! We appreciate your knowledge, assistance, and humor!

## 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.

## Fiscal Updates

### Quarter 2 Reporting Timeline:

**January 31**—Subrecipient submission due.  
**February 14**—Planner approval date.  
**February 28**—Fiscal invoicing/approval date.

RTAP Reminder: Reimbursement forms and scholarship applications are in the Resources section of BlackCat. In the coming new year, there will be changes to the RTAP reimbursement process that Transit agencies should find helpful.

The reimbursement form will be updated to be more interactive as well as provide new information as to where forms should be sent. A tutorial for the form will be provided.



## BlackCat Notes

BlackCat will be rolling out a notification process to notify the subrecipient and planner when a submitted quarterly report is over budget and requires a budget amendment. This should take place prior to the due date for the second quarter on January 31, 2024.

We are working with BlackCat to improve overall usage of the system. If there are any system questions or requests please contact Nancy Lightner, Transit Planner, at [nalightner@mt.gov](mailto:nalightner@mt.gov) and 406-444-9216.

**Training Announcement:** MDT will host New/Refresher Transit Manager training this spring in Billings. Please watch your email for more information. Please contact your regional planner if you are interested in attending the training.

## Transit Section Customer Service Email

MDT has a Transit Section email account: [mdttransitcontact@mt.gov](mailto:mdttransitcontact@mt.gov).

Subrecipients can use this email for general questions or when their regional planner is not available. In some scenarios (example, 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.

## Facilities/Rolling Stock Asset Preventative Maintenance Plan

An email containing the Facilities/Rolling Stock Asset Preventative Maintenance Plan template and instructions for use was sent via GovDelivery to all providers on December 8, 2023. All FTA funded assets are required to be included in a preventative maintenance plan that meets program requirements. MDT requests a copy of your current adopted plan. The plan must include your agency name with the current adoption date. For transit providers with new facilities, MDT strongly suggests the adoption of this new plan. For those who do not have facilities, MDT will review your existing plans for compliance. MDT encourages all transit providers to review and consider adopting the new template.

Please continue working with the Transit Section to ensure this requirement is met. **The due date for plans is January 5.**

## Funding Opportunities and Guidance

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 | FTA \(dot.gov\)](#)

[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.



## Vehicle Updates

- **Non-ADA:** 4-month wait period for each vehicle delivery. SFY 22 and 23 on order. Most SFY 22 vans have been delivered.
- **ADA Minivan Conversion:** New vendor contract signed in December 2023. MDT to begin placing 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 to be ordered by the end of 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](mailto:mdttransitcontact@mt.gov) for updates on specific vehicles for your agency.

## Civil Rights Updates

MDT and the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Program are hosting networking meetings to increase DBE participation and awareness of bidding opportunities on our projects. Whether you are building a new facility, expanding, or just looking for different services to support your transit operations, these networking meetings can be a benefit to you:

**January 25—Bozeman**  
**February 13—Missoula**  
**March 12—Billings**  
**March 26—Great Falls**

Visit our [website](#) for updated information as the events get closer.

The DBE Program recently certified new firms that may provide services you are looking for:

[BACTrack Mobile Drug Screens](#) is based in Glasgow and conducts drug screens primarily in Northeastern Montana. The owner, Marcie Kittleson, can be reached at [mjkittleson77@gmail.com](mailto:mjkittleson77@gmail.com) or 406-390-3909.

[B-Right Testing](#) is based in Helena and provides a modern di-electric testing lab that specializes in testing and inspecting the rubber insulating goods used by utility companies, electricians, and linemen. The owner, Jamie Bright, can be reached at [jamieyeske@gmail.com](mailto:jamieyeske@gmail.com) or 406-422-7635.

[Dupree Building Specialties of Montana](#) is based in Billings and supplies bathroom fixtures, fire extinguishers, window coverings and more. The owner, Matt Rose, can be reached at [matt@dupreebldgspec.com](mailto:matt@dupreebldgspec.com) or 406-655-3555.

[MT Traxx Services](#) is based in Billings, but provides janitorial services throughout Montana, including West Yellowstone. The owner, Desiree Kroll, can be reached at [mttraxxps@gmail.com](mailto:mttraxxps@gmail.com) or 406-694-6538.

## Civil Rights Q and A: Service and Comfort Animals

Transportation providers must allow service animals to accompany individuals with disabilities in vehicles and facilities [49 CFR Part 37, Section 37.167(d)]. This section of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Toolkit is organized in the following subsections:

[Definition of a Service Animal](#)

[Determining Whether or Not an Animal is a Service Animal](#)

[Other Considerations about Accommodating Service Animals](#)

[Case Study: Lane Transit District Paw Print Endorsement Approach](#)

[Additional Resources on Service Animals](#)

[Section Sources](#)

### Are transit providers required to allow a passenger to travel with a comfort animal?

No. Under Department of Transportation (DOT) ADA regulations at 49 C.F.R. Section 37.167(d), transit entities are only required to allow service animals to accompany individuals with disabilities in vehicles and facilities. DOT ADA regulations at 49 C.F.R. Section 37.3 define a service animal as an animal “individually trained to work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability.” If an animal’s only function is to provide emotional support or comfort for the rider, that animal would not fall under the regulatory training-based definition of a service animal. Simply providing comfort is something that animal does passively, by its nature or through the perception of the owner. However, the ADA does not prohibit a transit agency from choosing to accommodate pets and comfort animals, which would be a local decision.