



Transit Newsletter

5th Edition
January 2025

Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) News, Events, and Trainings

Montana Transit Association (MTA) is hosting the annual **Spring Conference** in Billings, MT. The event will be May 12-16. Check mttransit.org for upcoming details.

Registration for live online driving courses is now open. Courses include **Winter Driving** and **Preventing Distracted Driving**. The Winter Driving course presents practical strategies to reduce collisions, injuries, fatalities, and repairs during the winter driving season. The Preventing Distracted Driving course teaches about distracted driving and how to modify our behavior to protect ourselves, family and friends out on the roadways. Courses are presented live on Zoom every other Tuesday from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Courses are free and open to everyone. To register, visit the Risk Management and Tort Defense Division training homepage: svc.mt.gov/doa/mtdtraining.org/.

National RTAP Human Trafficking Resources

Rural Transportation Assistance Program (RTAP) has published resources in a topic guide to help raise awareness of human trafficking in the transportation industry and assist transit agencies and other transportation stakeholders to identify and report victims of human trafficking. Visit RTAP at: nationalrtap.org/resource-center/topic-guides/human-trafficking



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 quarterly newsletter!

Contact Jackie RedEagle,
jredeagle@mt.gov.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your outstanding contributions to transit this year. As we kick off the New Year, let's make a commitment to prioritize safety in everything we do. Happy new year and stay safe!

-MDT Director, Christopher Dorrington



FTA Fiscal Changes for Section 5311 Recipients

Quarterly Report Back-Up Documentation

A general ledger is required to back up all reported operating, administrative, and preventative maintenance expenses. The ledger must include a description, the date, and the amount of the transaction. The back-up documentation must be presented in a manner that makes a financial review simple and efficient. Ledger reports that align with quarterly report categories, label or highlight reported expenses, and total expense categories are preferred. No changes have been made to the itemization requirements within the BlackCat Transit Management (BlackCat) system.

New Capitalization Threshold

A key change in the Uniform Guidance revisions, effective October 1, 2024, is the capital threshold for equipment referenced in 2 CFR 200. The threshold has increased from \$5,000 to \$10,000. The new capitalization level has a direct impact on capital expense reporting and equipment dispositions. Capital expenses \$10,000 or less are allowable as direct operating costs. Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) retains a financial interest in all equipment or unused supplies acquired with federal funds regardless of the specific value. However, recipients may not need to reimburse FTA for equipment with a disposition value of less than \$10,000 or for unused supplies with an aggregate value of which is less than \$10,000.

Reimbursement of Bus Wrap Expenses

A bus wrap expense may be reportable to either the operating or administrative account. If the bus wrap includes marketing information such as service name and contact information, then the cost is reportable to the administrative account. If not, the cost is reportable to the Operating account. BlackCat system developers are in the process of updating the "Advertising Fees" line item to read "Advertising/Marketing" when reporting administrative account bus wrap expenses and other currently reported advertising expenses. In the interim, allowable costs shall be reported as "Advertising Fees", under Other Administrative Expenses. If the wrap does not include a service name and contact information, then the cost shall be reported as an operating expense.

FTA Fiscal Changes Continued on Next Page

Older Driver Awareness and Safety

Aging affects everyone differently. When it comes to driving, it is important to understand the impact age-related changes may have on one's safe driving ability.

- Crashes are more harmful for older adults than their younger counterparts because reaction times decrease with age, and older individuals may be more prone to injury in a crash.
- Decisions about someone's ability to drive should never be based on age alone. However, changes in vision, physical fitness, and reflexes may cause safety concerns. By accurately assessing age-related changes, drivers can adjust their driving habits to remain safe on the road or choose other kinds of transportation.
- Older drivers should be proactive about being safe drivers. Below are some helpful tips to drive safer:
 - ⇒ Plan trips at times of day when traffic is light, and plan routes to reduce conflict with other traffic.
 - ⇒ As driving at night may become challenging as one ages, older drivers can plan their schedule early to be home before the sun goes down.
 - ⇒ During the winter months the sun goes down early, so plan accordingly.
 - ⇒ When out in the dark, be sure headlights are on, slow down and keep an eye out for all road users.
- Families of older drivers should work with their loved ones to plan for safe mobility even beyond the driver's seat.



Fatal traffic crashes involving drivers 65+ years old increased by 4.7% from 7,515 in 2021 to 7,870 in 2022. In 2022 the number of fatalities in traffic crashes involving older drivers was the highest since NHTSA began tracking in 1975.

For more information about older drivers, visit [NHTSA.gov/OlderDrivers](https://www.nhtsa.gov/OlderDrivers).

Improved TransADE Expense Reporting for Public Transit Operators
TransADE expense quarterly reporting is new for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2025. TransADE funds are expended to reimburse eligible local expenses. Funds are disbursed up to the total annual allocation amount and may extend multiple quarters. This new reporting requirement allows for improved records retention, internal controls, and expense tracking.

SFY 2025 Operating and Capital Applications

Applications for capital, operating and, TransADE funding opened on January 2, 2025, with a closing date of March 3, 2025. Access to applications and corresponding guidance can be found on the MDT Transit Section Forms webpage, mdt.mt.gov/publications/forms, or directly through BlackCat at mtdot.blackcattransit.com. Application documents have been shortened with minor changes made to the capital spreadsheets. There are now separate applications for each funding source (i.e.: 5310 Rural, 5310 Urban, 5311, 5311F, and Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ)). Estimated total project costs include the best available costs with a 5% increase to account for future inflation or cost increases. Intercity bus applicants will find a new 5311f capital spreadsheet. Federal share percentages are accurately tied to each funding source. Please remember that projects must be created within BlackCat for capital, operating, and TransADE applications, and to upload all applicable plans, agreements, and in-kind contribution forms as applicable. For assistance with an application, please contact your regional planner.

Transit Technical Needs Study and Training Coordinator

MDT recently completed a study to strengthen rural training opportunities by increasing access to training opportunities. To achieve this goal, MDT partnered with a consultant to conduct a rural training needs study. Through this effort, MDT has developed an annual training work plan to better meet statewide transit training needs. MDT is in the process of developing a scope of work to solicit for a contracted Rural Training Coordinator. The position will assist in carrying out the recommendations set forth within the coordinator workplan, developed as part of the Technical Needs Study. MDT will issue a one year contract for this role, with four one-year renewal periods. The contract is expected to begin on July 1, 2025. More details to follow.

Rural Transit Service Needs Study

MDT has initiated a study to understand local, regional, and statewide transit needs, for use in identifying options to improve the provision of and access to transportation services and access to transportation services for rural Montana residents. From January 27 through February 27, MDT will be asking transportation service providers and social service agencies to complete a questionnaire, followed by participation in coordination workshops covering topics elevated during the questionnaire process later in the year.

Reminder: Drug and Alcohol Annual Report Submittal

The period for Drug and Alcohol Testing Management Information System (MIS), data reporting is open with report submittals due by March 1, 2025. MDT Regional Planner, Barb Sheridan, is available to assist with questions and report submissions and report submittal, at bsheridan@mt.gov. Access the USDOT MIS Data Collection Form is located here: Transportation.gov/odapc/MISreporting.

Innovative Bus Purchasing

The Montana Department of Administration, as well as the MDT Transit Section, are both members of the National Association of State Procurement Officials (NASPO). NASPO is a non-profit association dedicated to advancing public procurement by being a resource and a network of FTA eligible professionals and programs. The MDT Transit Section has been involved in the cooperative purchasing process, and is eligible to purchase vans, buses and motorcoaches off future agreements. The intent of the involvement is to reduce costs and administrative resources while increasing efficiency and timeliness of future deliveries.

Vehicle Delivery Updates

- *7-Passenger Non-ADA Vans:* SFY 2023-2025 van awards will be procured through a new third party process which requires the involvement of the awardee and the MDT Transit Section. Erin Root, MDT Procurement Planner, will provide 3rd party procurement oversight in accordance with FTA C 4220. Erin will reach out to each awardee as she works through these procurements.
- *12-Passenger Non-ADA Vans:* The Transit Section is preparing the purchase order for SFY 2024 and 2025 vehicle awards with deliveries anticipated in summer/fall 2025.
- *9-Passenger ADA Extended Vans:* A Purchase Order will be issued soon for vehicles awarded through SFY2025 and deliveries should begin in late 2025.
- *12-, 13-, 17-, and 19-Passenger Cutaway Buses:* A Purchase Order has been issued for vehicles awarded in SFY 2025. Deliveries should begin in Spring 2025.
- *Medium Duty Buses:* MDT anticipates executing a new master contract in spring 2025 with a Purchase Order to follow. Deliveries should begin in early 2026.
- *Heavy Duty Buses:* MDT anticipates executing a new master contract in February with a Purchase Order to follow. Deliveries are anticipated in spring/summer 2026.

Procurement related questions can be directed to Erin Root, MDT Procurement Planner, eroot@mt.gov, 406-444-7623.

Please take the MDT Satisfaction Survey!
[How are we doing?](#)

New and Ongoing Transit Facility Projects

New Facility in Saint Regis

The Mineral County Pioneer Council, which provides local trips and connecting service to Missoula, broke ground on their new facility in fall 2024. Construction is set to begin in spring 2025. The new facility will allow for vehicles to be stored indoors, as well as provide office space for staff. The facility is funded by FTA CARES grant, 5339 funds and local funds.



Picture by Jon Schwarder, Reed Mountain Construction

Facility Expansion in West Yellowstone

The West Yellowstone Foundation connects West Yellowstone to Bozeman and Idaho Falls. The facility expansion is intended to accommodate additional vehicles needed for increased ridership, and includes three bus bays as well as office/meeting space for staff. The project is currently in development. The facility is funded by FTA 5339 and local funds.



Picture by the West Yellowstone Foundation

New Facility in Ronan

Western Montana Transit, serving the residents of Lake County, has started construction on a new facility with a groundbreaking ceremony held on November 19, 2024. The facility will feature sheltered bays to protect buses from harsh weather, a new conference room for local transit providers to gather and address regional transit needs, and office space for staff. The facility is funded by FTA 5339 funds and local funds.



Picture by KPAX TV

Facility Expansion Project in Blackfeet Nation

Blackfeet Transit serves local residents in Browning, in addition to providing service for riders to Kalispell, Great Falls, and Cut Bank. Blackfeet Transit has grown 395% in ridership from 2021 to 2024. Their mileage has also increased about five times in that same time period. The facility expansion is a much anticipated addition with bus bays for additional vehicles as well as additional office space. The facility is funded by a direct FTA grant, suballocation of FTA pass-through funds from MDT, and tribal funds.



Picture by Blackfeet Transit

Webinars and Trainings

- What's New in the ADA Toolkit?**
 February 6, 2 p.m.—3 p.m. EST. National RTAP provides an ADA Toolkit that is being updated with guidance and resources for rural and Tribal transit agencies on how to provide transit services for individuals with disabilities. Join this webinar to find out what is new for 2025. [Nationalrtap.org](https://www.nationalrtap.org)
- National RTAP Employment-Focused Transit Manager Peer Roundtable**
 March 13, 2 p.m.—3 p.m. EST. This is an opportunity to hear from industry experts and ask questions during this informal meeting. [Transit.dot.gov/events](https://www.transit.dot.gov/events)
- FTA Drug and Alcohol Program National Conference**
 March 18—20, 2025, Kansas City, Missouri. Conference is for Drug and Alcohol Program Managers and transit officials to foster a better understanding of the FTA Prevention of Alcohol Misuse and Prohibited Drug Use in Transit Operations. [Transit.dot.gov/events](https://www.transit.dot.gov/events)
- Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) Expo 2025**, June 2 - 4, 2025, San Diego, CA. CTAA's largest event of the year brings more than 1,000 rural, tribal, and small urban transit agencies and their partners together to share and discuss opportunities and work through transportation challenges in their community. [CTAA.org/expo-2025](https://www.ctaa.org/expo-2025)



Office of Civil Rights (OCR) Pre-Bid Networking Conferences

MDT OCR is hosting additional Pre-Bid Networking Conferences. These events offer an opportunity for MDT, transit providers, airports, cities, and counties to discuss their upcoming projects and opportunities for small businesses. Visit the OCR website for more up to date information: mdt.mt.gov/business/contracting/civil/dbe.aspx. Please reach out with any questions: mdtdbeprogram@mt.gov. We hope to see you there!

What	When	Where
District 2: Pre-Bid Networking Conference	February 13, 2025 3 pm	La Quinta Inn & Suites Butte, MT
District 5: Pre-Bid Networking Conference	March 13, 2025 11:30 am	DoubleTree by Hilton Billings, MT

2024 Annual Rodeo Results

The annual Bus Rodeo took place on September 21, 2024, in Butte. The Best Western Plus - Plaza Inn was the host hotel, with the events taking place at the Civic Center and Stodden Park. Sponsors this year were Davey Coach, Gillig, and Q'Straint. Division 1 had eight drivers participate, Division 2 had 11 drivers participate, and 20 people volunteered to be judges. In total, 54 people participated in the event.

Division 1 Winners (Urban Systems 35" Buses)

- ◆ 1st Place: Bill Sharkey (Butte Silver-Bow Transit)
- ◆ 2nd Place: Jay Aitken (Great Falls Transit)
- ◆ 3rd Place: Mary Darnell (Mountain Line)

Division 2 Winners (5311 Cutaway Buses)

- ◆ 1st Place: James Hunt (MET Transit)
- ◆ 2nd Place: Delbert Anderson (Liberty County Transit)
- ◆ 3rd Place: Gerald Becker (Mountain Climber)

The Carey Pope Award for Comradery and Sportsmanship was given to Gerald Becker of Mountain Climber. Thank you MTA and Butte Silver-Bow Transit for organizing and hosting this event.

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	1-Jul - 30-Sep
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 April 1 and June 30. Payment may take place after June 30.