

TRANSREPORT

The Newsletter of the Illinois Rural Transit Assistance Program



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Training on the Front Line

One of the functions of the Rural Transit Assistance Center (RTAC) is to offer training for drivers and other transit employees in rural Illinois funded by Section 5311 and 5310 funds. With the dramatic rise in the number of employees trained over the last few years, it became obvious that RTAC's training program needed to be expanded. This was done in two phases.

The first phase involved hiring professional trainers with a good background in transit, trucks, persons with disabilities and related fields who would be willing to give up some of their time and hone their skills to enable them to teach different aspects of the training curriculum. This has been an on-going process for the last few years.

The second phase was initiated in 2000 with the Regional Training concept in which specific types of training were scheduled at pre-determined locations months in advance. Although there have been a few growing pains, the concept has worked well. One of the major reasons Regional Training has been so successful is the knowledgeable and dedicated group of trainers, who give of their time to help improve transit safety in Illinois.

Some travel around the state while others stay at their own agency conducting sessions on Defensive Driving, Passenger Assistance or Emergency Procedures. RTAC is proud of the quality of the training and the quality of the trainers. We thought you would like to meet them.

Lisa Beith

Specializing in Passenger Assistance training, Lisa has traveled to many parts of Illinois conducting training sessions during the last two years. Although she currently lives in Danville and is a native of that community, she spent 11 years in Reno, Nevada working for a school district teaching bus safety and was the first Student Management Instructor in the county teaching drivers how to deal with difficult situations. She also worked for the state of Nevada as a driver, instructor/evaluator and a third party CDL examiner.



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RTAC Notes



My first six months as RTAC Manager streaked by, as I met and worked with many extremely dedicated folks from around the state.

Delivering rural public transportation in a state as large as ours is an enormous task, and grows increasingly important due to social programs that help disadvantaged and disabled people enter the workforce, and as people realize the economic and environmental advantages of public transportation. I also believe the graying of the Baby Boomers will eventually cause a public transportation boom.

You, the providers of rural public transportation, ensure safe and efficient transportation of your customers. You, in turn, are RTAC's customer, as RTAC promotes the safe and efficient delivery of rural public transportation. I state the obvious so those new to the field will know RTAC's mission, and so seasoned veterans will realize RTAC's renewed commitment to customer service.

Each year the RTAP Advisory Council and IDOT formulate a work plan for RTAC, and RTAC, within the budget worked out with IDOT, seeks to provide the optimal amount of assistance to its customers. Training is the core of the work plan, but technical assistance is very important, also. To receive assistance, please contact us by calling toll-free at 800-526-9943 or by e-mail at RTAC@wiu.edu

We also make site visits, but due to budgetary considerations we cannot visit all of our customers as soon or as often as we would like. Thus, I urge you to contact us, whether to introduce yourself or to request assistance. We want to get to know our customers, and we want to help you in any way we can. If your request concerns a service or information we can't provide, we'll at least try to steer you in the right direction.

We look forward to serving you and hope to meet many of you in the months to come.

Ed Heflin

DOT Part 40 Becomes Final

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) published its revised drug and alcohol testing rule in the Federal Register December 19, 2000. The 117- page document can be found in Volume 65, No. 244, pages 79462-79579. The document is also accessible on-line at <http://dmsdotgov,docketOST-99-6578> or at <http://www.dot.gov/ost/dapc>



A hard copy of the rule can be obtained by calling the Fax-on-Demand telephone line (800) 225-3784) and requesting document 151.

The revisions were made to make the regulations easier to understand, incorporate guidance and interpretations of the rule into the text, and to update the rule to address changes in technology, the testing industry, and the DOT's program.

The rule, as printed, has two major components. The first addresses amendments to the current Part 40 that were effective January 18, 2001. The second component presents a comprehensive revision of Part 40 that becomes effective August 1, 2001. The Amendments address issues that enhance fairness and integrity of the process that need to be implemented immediately. The revisions address major program improvements that require a longer implementation timeline. The revisions will completely replace the existing Part 40 (including the amendments), previous guidance and all interpretations to date.

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[Training on the Front Line](#)

Lloyd Belford



For the past 12 years Lloyd has worked at Rides Mass Transit District, headquartered in Rosiclare. He started as a substitute driver, then full-time driver, system scheduler, county supervisor and currently serves as the driver trainer for all nine counties in the RIDES system.

Although a native of southeastern Illinois, Lloyd's family moved to Indiana when he was young. Lloyd worked for LTV Steel for 31 years and had the distinction of receiving the first maximum Suggestion Award that had a cash stipend of \$10,000. Lloyd suggested a cost saving reduction on natural gas used to operate heat-treating furnaces.

Lloyd was selected to do a special heat-treat project for the federal government, including heat-treating the suspension system for the Titan Missile bases and the spring suspension system for the Space Shuttle Transfer Vehicle. Lloyd trained employees how to operate large furnaces that produced steel and operated heavy equipment used to transport hot steel.

In the late 80's Lloyd moved back to southeastern Illinois and subsequently went to work for RIDES.

Morris "Mo" Berry

Mo worked in business management for much of his career, after graduating from Centralia Junior College. In 1994 he joined South Central Transit (SCT) in Centralia as a driver and quickly moved into the position of Director of Operations, in charge of



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maintenance, training and operations. A short time later when SCT expanded their service area to serve additional counties, Mo was named supervisor over five counties.

In 1998 Mo was asked to create a training program for SCT. To learn different aspects of training, Mo attended many training courses offered by some of the top transit training organizations in the country, on subject matter ranging from defensive driving and passenger assistance to first aid and drug and alcohol awareness. Mo, in 1998, was certified by the State of Illinois as a CDL Third Party Safety Officer road testing for SCT.

Mo reduced his time to part-time in 1999. Throughout his SCT career he has encouraged agencies as well as individuals to improve and increase their driver training to help ensure that passenger safety remains a high priority. He is most proud of the last six years of SCT drivers logging over 3.5 million miles with no serious accidents or injuries. Mo feels this is the mark of a good training program.

Bob Fuhr

Bob is the newest instructor with RTAC, having started teaching Emergency Procedures earlier this year. Bob has worked at Bridgeway in Macomb for almost five years. Starting in the Maintenance/Transportation Department, Bob performed vehicle maintenance and monthly inspections for the vehicle fleet as well as drive a daily route. For the last two years Bob has been the Maintenance/Transportation Supervisor and also heads the transportation training for Bridgeway.



Tim Mitchell



Since 1988 Tim has been the Lead Instructor in the Truck Driving Training Program at Southeastern Illinois College in Harrisburg. Prior to this he worked 11 years as a professional truck driver, following his graduation from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale.

Tim has skid pad certification from both Mayflower and Fox Valley Technical College. He has taught hundreds of beginning drivers the basics to obtain an Illinois CDL, along with many refresher courses to experienced drivers. During his time with Southeastern Illinois College, Tim has been instrumental in increasing the truck fleet from one to four. The program recently merged with the Diesel Mechanics Truck Program to provide more opportunities for students.

In addition to teaching defensive driving for RTAC, Tim does private consulting work and training for corporate clients. He has been a presenter at national Truck Driving Symposiums, won driving competition awards, and is a certified National Safety Council Instructor.

Tim's professional goal has always been to help put the best professional drivers possible on our streets and highways.

Bob Myers

Starting as a mechanic and later working as a driver, Bob has been with Voluntary Action Center (VAC) in Sycamore since 1988, the last 11 years as Assistant



Transportation Director. Bob is responsible for driver training, orientation and program development while also serving as safety officer.

Prior to joining VAC, Bob had a distinguished 12-year career in the U.S. Air Force. During his service Bob was presented a “National Volunteer of the Year” award by President Ronald Reagan.

In addition to driver training that Bob oversees, he also conducts in-house CDL testing, a program he created at VAC. Additionally, Bob was instrumental in the development of VAC’s employee recognition program, including the “Wall of Fame” and “Safety Day Reward.”

Bob continues to take additional training courses to fine-tune VAC’s training program. For his hard work and innovative program development at VAC, Bob received statewide recognition as the “IACT Employee of the Year” in 1998.

Larry Roeckeman



When hired in 1997 at South Central Transit (SCT) as a part-time driver, Larry said he took this job as a stopgap measure until he could find a “real job”. As Larry will tell anyone, he quickly changed his mind about his job at SCT.

Prior to his work at SCT, Larry graduated from Centralia Junior College and served two years in the U.S. Army and was discharged as a drill instructor.

With his driving job at SCT Larry realized this was a job that would afford a person great satisfaction at the end of the day. Two things immediately became evident to Larry: (1) he was providing a service that many people would consider invaluable, and (2) the look of gratitude from the day-to-day clients made daily frustrations disappear.

Larry was promoted to lead driver/trainer assistant in 1998 and to director of safety/training the next year. Larry continues to learn about his job, attending many training schools to become more knowledgeable in all aspects of transportation. He recently became a certified trainer in Passenger Service and Safety.

Instilling the same feeling of self-worth in other drivers that Larry has is one of Larry’s goals. He strives to see that all new SCT drivers are trained to the best of his ability and is willing to help insure that traveling with SCT is unequalled in safety, service and dependability.

Gerry Stodgel

Gerry is the most senior trainer, having worked with RTAC three and a half years traveling the state teaching Defensive Driving.

After a stint in the U.S. Army as a truck mechanic, Gerry purchased a tractor and delivered goods across the country for 10 years. He learned the regulation side of trucking as an auditor with the Illinois Commerce Commission and later worked as an account manager and maintenance manager for two different trucking firms. Since 1995 he has served as the Director of Driving Training at Spoon River College where he teaches the semi-truck driving curriculum.



While working, Gerry found time to earn an Associate Degree from Spoon River College and a bachelor’s degree from Western Illinois University.

Vehicle Tips from Tom Ochal

Tom Ochal, Illinois Department of Transportation Section 5310 Program Manager, offers these suggestions about the maintenance and use of paratransit vehicles in provider fleets around the state. - ed.

- If you have a vehicle that a local dealer doesn't want to work on, though it is obviously a chassis problem, contact the manufacturer directly. Put your concerns in writing, with a copy to Tom.
- Keep an individual file for each vehicle in your fleet, and store in it items such as receipts and maintenance history.
- In Section 5310 program reviews Tom looks for items such as pre-trip inspection sheets. A pre-trip inspection of your vehicle(s), including ADA equipment, will help ensure a smooth trip with the extra benefit of liability prevention due to documentation that the vehicle had been inspected prior to its use.
- You will have a big liability issue if you disconnect your vehicle's safety interlock system.
- Tom will be glad to get in the loop on discussions of solving vehicle problems, but also encourages you to contact other providers, many of whom have faced the same issues and have found solutions.

If you have questions or comments, Tom can be reached at (312) 793-3507 or by e-mail at OchalTA@nt.dot.state.il.us

Attention all Section 5311 Grantees and Operators:

The Illinois Department of Transportation, Division of Public Transportation is now accepting applications for its FY 2002 Small Capital Grant Program. This program provides 100% State funded capital grants to Section 5311 grantees for eligible small capital procurements and minor facility improvements. Applications are due on May 15, 2001. Please contact Nicholas Haddad, Project Manager, Downstate Area Programs, Division of Public Transportation, at (312) 793-3663 to receive an application or if you have any questions.



Maintenance Tips for Transit

It's Time to Service Air Conditioning Units

by Les Patrick, Springfield Mass Transit District

Here are guidelines for causes and a check list for trouble shooting:

Common Causes of A/C Failure

- The system is low on refrigerant. These A/C systems are engineered to normally lose small amounts of refrigerant over time, thus requiring more to be added periodically. The new R-134A systems are less tolerant of this loss than the old R-12 systems.
- Electrical system failures such as defective fan motors, evaporator motors, loose or defective wiring, faulty switches, etc., may cause A/C system failure. Also, an inefficient or weak battery charging system may cause problems because the A/C system draws a lot of current when in use.
- Loose A/C compressor belts can cause the system to fail. Loose alternator belts can cause problems. Dirty components such as filters, evaporator and condenser coils can cause system failure.

Five-Point Operator Check List

Some of the things that you as operators and owners of these vehicles can check to determine if there may be problems with the A/C system are:

- With the engine off, check the tension of the A/C and alternator belts. (Also check all the belts on the vehicle at this time.)
- Check for dirt buildup and oil around the compressor seals and hose connections. Oil and dirt buildup may indicate worn or damaged hoses.
- Check to see if the filters, condenser and evaporator coils are dirty.
- Start the engine and turn the A/C to its coldest setting. Check to see if all the fans are working. (Including evaporator fans on the outside of the bus.) Check to see if the compressor clutch is engaged. Cycling on and off frequently may indicate problems with the system.
- With the engine running and A/C system set to the coldest setting, put a thermometer in some of the air ducts. After a few minutes the temperature should level off to between 65 and 68 degrees Fahrenheit. The temperature should be checked at both the front and rear of the passenger compartments. This check will work better if the vehicle is in a warm area such as a garage.

For more information about A/C systems, call Les Patrick at (217) 522-6087; e-mail lpatrik@SMTD.org or fax (217) 789-9819.

GREAT Transit System

Beginning in 1998, the County of Grundy was approached by several social service agencies citing the lack of transportation as a major impediment to their clients gaining access to services that were critical to their well being. In addition, the local Private Industry Council (PIC) identified transportation and childcare as the two most significant barriers to moving from the welfare rolls to gainful employment by their clients.

As a result of these concerns, the Government Affairs Committee of the Grundy County Board began to look at ways that the problem could be addressed. The Grundy County Administrator identified a grant opportunity with the Illinois Department of Transportation for a Section 5311 grant.

An application was made to the State and a grant was awarded to fund administrative and a portion of the operating costs of a system. The County requested proposals from parties interested in providing administrative services and operating services to the system. Standard Shuttle Service, Inc. of Joliet was selected to provide both administration and transportation based on their experience and the resources they had available.

After making careful preparation, on April 3, 2000 the GREAT Transit System became reality due to the efforts of Pat and Ken Polcyn of Standard Shuttle and Fred Bourdelais, the Grundy County Administrator.

The name GREAT stands for Grundy Rural Expanded Area Transit and has become a thematic of the Grundy County Orientation Video. The transportation service is available to the general public Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and provides service to 13 towns in the Grundy County area.

Ridership during the year 2000 has steadily increased as a result of suggestions made by the Social Service Agencies, and Standard Shuttle making suggestions based on their experience as a provider of services. Current ridership is running at about 150 per month. Fred Bourdelais commented that he was very pleased with the experience that Standard Shuttle was able to provide to the transportation program. Not only are they experienced, but also their equipment is reliable and well maintained, "they take a lot off my mind," commented Bourdelais. Standard uses a 1998 GMC mini-coach. The bus is air-ride equipped and is colorfully decorated to make an excellent first impression on riders.



Taking part in the ribbon cutting at the start of GREAT's service were from left, Donald Severson and Ruth Hermann, county board members; Fred Bourdelais, county administrator; Ken Polcyn, Standard Shuttle Service general manager; Christa Davito, county board member; Don Kaufman, county board chairman; and Tom Poole, county board member. (Photos courtesy of Morris Daily Herald)



Morris residents Barb Raab and Judy Ness were the first to sample what the shuttle service has to offer.

Standard Shuttle is a W.B.E. Company owned by JoAnn Polcyn which has been providing transportation to the general public since 1995. Standard has numerous contracts with municipalities and corporations to provide a transportation experience to over 265,000 riders annually. They provide transportation services with 7 24-passenger mini-coaches, and employ 12 full-time and 10 part-time employees. They have affiliations with other providers that allow them to muster a fleet that includes vans, limousines, and over-the-road charter buses.

Ken Polcyn is general manager of Standard Shuttle and has been in the transportation business for over 20 years. He is responsible for working with the various counties and municipalities to promote and expand the services. Michelle Turrisi is the Director of Operations and Ken’s strong right arm. Much of the credit for the success of the GREAT system can be attributed to Michelle’s knowledge of the passengers and working closely with the drivers to ensure that their needs are met. Her 14 years of experience allow her to assume responsibility for compliance, dispatch and scheduling.

All of the vehicles are maintained and repaired according to strict preventive maintenance schedules and repair procedures by Mrs. Polcyn’s other companies, one of which is a GMC truck dealership. The other is a towing and auto body shop.

Future plans for the GREAT system include adding an additional bus to the overwhelming service area and the expansion of service to neighboring counties.



Editor’s Note:

To ensure that this newsletter is relevant to your needs, we would appreciate your input.

The preceding Spotlight article is a way to recognize and applaud the efforts of rural transportation providers from around the state. Please contact us if you have suggestions for a future Spotlight article.

Likewise, Transit Movers is a way to recognize people in Illinois transit who have been promoted, changed responsibilities or have moved to a different agency. Please let us know about such changes.

Please contact us for article suggestions, agency news coordination activities, “best practices,” etc.

Give us a call; we would like to hear from you.

Free Drug and Alcohol Newsletter Available

Since 1996 the Office of Safety and Security in the Federal Transit Administration has published a free newsletter focusing on drug and alcohol regulations as they affect transit organizations. The newsletter, published quarterly, is a great resource for current information about substance abuse topics as well as a resource for archived materials.

To read the current issue or any of the archived issues on the Internet, simply:

- (1) Type on your web browser: <http://transit-safety.volpe.dot.gov>
- (2) Click on the transit bus
- (3) Click on transit safety
- (4) Click on drug and alcohol testing
- (5) Click on newsletters

If the people in your organization responsible for your system's drug and alcohol program would like their own subscription to the FTA Drug And Alcohol Regulation Updates newsletter, here are the contacts to request a subscription:

Mail: RLS & Associates
3131 South Dixie Hwy, Suite 545
Dayton, OH 45439
Phone: (937) 299-5007, Fax: (937) 299-1055, E-mail: rlsasc@mindspring.com

Part 655 FTA Regulations Await Publication

The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) for 49 CFR Part 655, the revision and consolidation of 49 CFR Parts 653 and 654, has been delayed by the backlog of regulations awaiting to be printed by the Government Printing Office (GPO), according to the FTA Drug and Alcohol newsletter.

Since Part 655 is viewed as a "nonsignificant regulation" as defined by the Department's regulatory policies and procedures, other regulations will take precedence. Furthermore, the Bush administration has placed a moratorium on rule publication until the rules can be reviewed by the administration's appointees.

When published, an electronic copy of the NPRM can be obtained from the GPO's Electronic Bulletin Board Service at (202) 512-1661. Internet users may download the document from the Federal Register's home page at <http://www.nara.gov/fedreg> and from the GPO database at <http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara>

Once published, it is anticipated that people will be given at least sixty days to comment on the proposed rules.

Every covered employee who is subject to 49CFR Parts 653 and 654 and performs a safety-sensitive function must be in an organized and approved drug and alcohol testing program.

GoWEST Purchases Bus On Internet

Buying buses on-line has finally arrived. Jude Kiah, Transit Coordinator for the GoWEST transit system in Macomb bought a bus on E-bay.com in January.

Kiah said he learned about the bus after an associate who had seen the same bus go up for auction previously made him aware of it. He believed the bus on the regular market would sell for \$25,000 to \$30,000. The bus was shipped to Macomb on a flatbed truck from its seller in Johnson City, New York and was quickly put into service.

Kiah said that most of GoWEST's large buses carry 60-65 passengers, but this bus will carry 80. He indicated that most of GoWEST's passengers are college students and any time the system can be more efficient and save students' money, he wants to do that for his clientele.

Maintenance Workshop in Springfield October 17

The fall maintenance workshop has been scheduled for the Springfield Mass Transit District facility on Wednesday, October 17, 2001. Please put this date on your calendar.

Fall Conference Dates Are Set

The Illinois Public Transportation Association Fall Conference will be September 11-13, 2001 in Galena. Put these dates on your calendar. More information will be provided at a later date.

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Calendar of Events		
May 3, 2001	Maintenance Workshop	Rockford, IL
September 11-13, 2001	IPTA Fall Conference	Galena, IL
October 17, 2001	Maintenance Workshop	Springfield, IL

Need a . . .
Customer Service Course?
Defensive Driving Course?
Emergency Preparedness Course?
Passenger Assistance?
Call RTAC at (800) 526-9943

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