

Chapter 12 – Training

The Public Transit Section (PTS) administers the [Rural Transit Assistance Program \(RTAP\)](#), along with state funding programmed by the Iowa DOT, to sponsor fellowships and to conduct/coordinate transit training sessions for the transit community. Training opportunities are available to all public transit personnel, their service contractors, and planners. Transit managers are encouraged to provide PTS's [Compliance and Training Specialist](#) with suggestions for training seminar topics and specific courses that would enhance the professional skills of transit staff and to meet the needs of the transit community. PTS's objective is to coordinate with the transit community to provide the best possible training program and opportunities.

Technical assistance is provided through new manager orientation, compliance reviews and on-site monitoring of all small urban and regional transit systems. Recommendations for areas of improvement with emphasis on additional training are offered as a follow-up to ensure compliance with state and federal regulations. PTS staff are available for day-to-day assistance, sensitivity analysis, and regulatory investigations. Technical assistance on procurement/contracts and specifications are also available from the PTS.

The Iowa DOT Public Transit Website was developed to provide a source of information to transit systems and the public. The [website](#) includes information and resources on the criteria and application process for all the programs administered by PTS, information on each of the transit systems, the Iowa Transportation Coordination Council, links to FTA rules and regulations, and much more. Transit Agencies are encouraged to check PTS's website resources on a regular basis.

The Peer-to-Peer Program is an opportunity for new transit managers to consult with experienced transit managers. PTS provides new transit staff the contact information of other transit system staff to whom they can direct questions and PTS recommends that they use these contacts as problems arise. This peer-to-peer network expands to include existing staff interested in learning how other transit systems operate or more about specific project related information. Transit staff may choose to visit another system to learn new or different techniques regarding transit-related issues. It may also be used as a resource for transit staff to improve and enhance job skills. Alternately, a transit manager may invite a peer to visit their system to troubleshoot or offer advice. Expenses incurred by a peer-to-peer visit could qualify for an [Iowa Transit Training Fellowship](#) (staff salary is not eligible for reimbursement). To discuss a peer-to-peer contact, please contact the PTS [Compliance and Training Specialist](#).

Peer-to-Peer Visits - Transit staff interested in using the peer-to-peer networking system will be responsible to plan and set up the logistics of the visit. Allowable expenses for peer-to-peer reimbursement must be pre-approved by PTS. There will be no reimbursement for staff time. Along with an [Application for Iowa Transit Training Fellowship](#), you must send a brief description of the peer you will be working with, where you plan to visit, and what you intend to learn.

Transit Management Program (TMP)

The Iowa DOT is a member of [TMP](#). Founded under the [American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials \(AASHTO\)](#) and the [Standing Committee on Transportation \(SCOPT\)](#), TMP is a network of states that provide a forum for state level discussion of public transportation issues and sharing of technical expertise on transit topics. For issues related to TMP, please contact PTS Public Transit Director Kristin Haar.

Iowa Public Transit Association (IPTA) advocates, unifies, and advances the interests of Iowa public transit systems. This professional organization also supports the professional development and improvement of the member transit systems by providing industry information, training, technical assistance, and other opportunities for networking, collaboration, and sharing of ideas and best practices.

IPTA/Iowa DOT Transit Training Conferences - Iowa DOT contracts with IPTA to hold a minimum of three transit training conferences each year, which are open to all Iowa public transit systems - urban and rural. These conferences are funded by RTAP and State Transit Assistance with no or minimal registration fees. The Iowa DOT does not issue Fellowships to attend IPTA; rather the Iowa DOT contract with IPTA

covers registration lodging, and most meals for staff from Iowa's public transit agencies to attend the conferences. No mileage will be reimbursed to attend these events. Sessions are offered on a variety of topics to meet the interest of all systems, large and small. At least once each year, an Expo is included. The Expo offers an exhibition of vendors and equipment. It also allows conference participants the opportunity to talk with vendors and manufacturer representatives and preview actual vehicles available for purchase.

IPTA/Iowa DOT Transit Roadeo - The Iowa DOT and IPTA sponsor an annual Transit Roadeo to promote and provide recognition for safe driving skills by Iowa's public transit vehicle operators. Transit operators from around the state meet at the current year's host site to compete and demonstrate their safe driving skills. Each operator performs a series of maneuvers that represent many of the actual situations they encounter during their daily route. Funding for the roadeo is provided through RTAP and STA.

IPTA members, PTS staff, local organizations and volunteer groups provide judging for the competition. Competition is broken out into two categories: large bus and small bus. *Winners are offered an opportunity to represent the state of Iowa and their transit system on a 100% Iowa Transit Training Fellowship at the national or international competition.* Winners of the large bus category may compete at the next [American Public Transit Association \(APTA\)](#) National Roadeo conducted in conjunction with its annual meeting. Winners of the small bus category may compete in the [Community Transportation Association of America \(CTAA\)](#) sponsored Community Transportation Roadeo competition. Competitors in either national roadeo may participate at member rates when representing a transit system member of either APTA or CTAA.

Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP)

Congress authorized the formation of the Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) funded through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). RTAP was established to offer a coordinated program in rural areas (under 50,000 population) for training, technical assistance, and research opportunities as well as other support services to improve the delivery of transit services by small urban and rural transit operators. FTA uses RTAP funding to support both a national level RTAP program, which is administered by the Neponset Valley TMA, and separate state level programs in each state.

The objectives of the RTAP are:

- to promote the safe and effective delivery of public transportation in rural areas and to make more efficient use of public and private resources
- to foster the development of state and local capacity for addressing the training and technical assistance needs of the rural transportation community
- to improve the quality of information and technical assistance available through the development of training, technology, and technical assistance resource materials
- to facilitate peer-to-peer self-help through the development of local networks of transit professionals
- to support the coordination of public, private, specialized, and human service transportation services
- to build a national database on the rural segment of the public transportation industry

RTAP National Program – At the national level, a steering committee guides the development of [National RTAP products and services](#) including training materials, technical assistance briefs, peer-to-peer technical assistance network, web applications, a National RTAP Chat, email, and a hotline.

- **Training materials** have been developed on a number of subjects that cover either new requirements or areas where there was a perceived lack of existing resources. These materials may include a video presentation, an instructor manual, and participant workbooks.
- **Technical Assistance Briefs** are a series of briefing papers designed to keep rural transit informed. These briefs include legislative and regulatory updates, as well as topics of specific interest to rural transit operators. The briefs also incorporate material that has been presented at workshops.

- The **peer-to-peer network** was established to allow local transit systems to access the knowledge base of other local transit professionals who have expertise on specific topics. Most peer assistance takes the form of technical assistance via telephone or email.
- **Web applications** assisting small urban and rural transit agencies with website development and procurement are also available from National RTAP.
- **A National RTAP Chat, Email and Hotline**, offers answers to transit related questions, provides referrals to the peer network, and helps disseminate technical assistance and training materials. To receive more information, call a National RTAP specialist at 1-888-589-6821 or go to the [National RTAP](#) website for chat and email capabilities.

RTAP State Program – PTS receives a portion of the state level RTAP funding based on Iowa's share of the nation's non-urbanized population. PTS commits Iowa's share of RTAP funding to technical assistance projects and training. PTS sponsors transit specific training seminars, assists with on-site training, coordinates a peer-to-peer program, sponsors an annual Transit Roadeo, and administers the Iowa Transit Training Fellowship Program, which can also be found in this chapter of the handbook.

Marketing and Advocacy Information – Marketing and advocacy assistance is provided through the PTS to help transit systems in their effort to increase public awareness and ridership. Along with brochures and various marketing materials, the Iowa DOT has produced, using RTAP funds, two videos that are offered free of charge to the public.

- [Your Ticket to Safety: Blood Borne Pathogen Awareness for Transit Professionals \(1993\)](#). This blood borne pathogen video discusses hazards involved with contacting body fluids, the appropriate precautions, and clean-up techniques in a passenger transportation setting. It also addresses OSHA requirements and the concept of "universal precautions." [Your Ticket to Safety](#) brochures are available to be downloaded from PTSS's website.
- [Wherever Life Takes You](#) (2008) is a state-funded 10-minute video that can be used as a marketing tool, also available on PTS's website.
- [Public Transportation Service in Iowa](#) (standard or large print) is a brochure, funded by the DOT that lists the names and locations of Iowa's transit systems, Rideshare programs, and intercity bus carriers. These brochures are downloadable from PTS's website, or a hardcopy can be obtained by contacting PTS's [administrative assistant](#).
- *Various other state-funded marketing materials*, as available, such as brochures, [activity books](#) or calendar strips, can be ordered by contacting the PTS [administrative assistant](#), or downloading from the PTS publications and studies [website](#).

RTAP-Funded Training Seminars – PTS sponsors training sessions on transit topics in part with RTAP funds. These courses range from mini workshops to multi-day courses on such issues as customer service, management, ADA, drug, and alcohol program compliance, procurement, or planning. All sessions are offered to Iowa public transit systems and transit planning agencies free of charge or for a nominal registration fee. For more information, please see the [Iowa Transit Training Fellowship](#) guidelines in this section of the handbook.

Some of the types of training seminars that have been offered by PTS and conducted in Iowa are:

- Accounting (financial management)
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Service Requirements
- Board Training
- Bus Operator Training
- Commercial Drivers Licenses (CDL)
- CTAA Iowa Institute for Transportation Coordination
- Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE)
- Federal Drug and Alcohol Testing Program Requirements
- FTA Funding Programs
- Governmental Cost Allocation Plans and Indirect Cost Rates

- Defensive Driving Certificate Course
- Lift Training
- Mentoring Program (Peer-to-Peer)
- Metropolitan Transportation Planning
- National Transit Institute
- Passenger Assistance Safety and Sensitivity??? (PASS)
- Procurement
- Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP)
- Rural Transit Management
- Service Planning and Design
- Specialized Transportation Needs
- Third Party Contracting
- Transportation Safety Institute (TSI)
- Vehicle Maintenance

PTS-Iowa Transit Training Fellowship Program

*****Please note to conserve Fellowship funding, all transit agencies are asked to be conscientious when traveling (i.e., whether staying overnight vs. going home is fiscally responsible).**

The PTS sponsors transit training fellowships for public transit training for identified Iowa public transit agencies or planning agencies. Transit-related training may be in-person at conferences, courses, or seminars or the training may be online through e-learning and webinar opportunities. Federal and state funds are programmed each fiscal year for training fellowships, and are funded from these programs:

- Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) – For all regional and small urban transit systems, and Regional Planning Affiliations (RPAs).
- State Transit Assistance (STA) – For all large urban transit systems, and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs).

Iowa public transit systems and planning agencies, identified by the DOT, may sponsor their own or subcontractor staff members to attend transit training under an approved fellowship.

In most cases, fellowships are either funded at 70% or 100% of total allowed costs, i.e., transportation, lodging, and tuition or registration. The percentage is determined by whether the funding source is RTAP (100%) or STA (70%), as detailed above. PTS may, at the office director's discretion, allow reimbursement at a higher percentage for PTS sponsored or other specific training for which participation is strongly encouraged by PTS. Iowa Roadeo winners in two categories are eligible for 100% funding to compete in national rodeo competitions.

In order to make the most of the staff time spent on processing applications and reimbursements, the Iowa DOT has set a minimum dollar amount for fellowships. No fellowship applications will be accepted for transit training expenses under \$100 total (\$100 federal or \$70 state match). For training opportunities costing under \$100, the planning or transit agency will be responsible for the entire expense.

Transit Training Fellowships are awarded using the following criteria:

- The training is public transit job related.
- The applicant identifies which training sessions they plan to attend and describes how the training will benefit them concerning transit related issues.
- It is cost effective.
- Funds are available.
- Training is presented by qualified persons with recognized expertise in the area(s) covered.

Transit Training Fellowships will not be awarded for community or regional advocacy and lobbying trips unless a public transit training component can be demonstrated. The annual IPTA trip to Washington, DC is eligible for training fellowships as it directly relates to public transit in Iowa and includes a training component by CTAA and/or APTA.

Application for Training Fellowships – To apply for a fellowship, an [Application for Iowa Transit Training Fellowship](#) must be completed according the instructions and requirements stated on Page 2 of the form, and **submitted to PTS at least two weeks prior to the training**. The form must receive the approval of the transit manager, planning director, or other official signatory. The completed form and a copy of the brochure or training information should be emailed to PTS's [administrative assistant](#).

You will receive an email notification as to whether your request was approved. This notification will also include a fellowship approval number that you will need when requesting payment.

Applications will not be approved if submitted after attending the event or webinar, except in extenuating circumstances as approved by the PTS Director.

Allowable costs for training fellowships (receipts are required)

For a list of allowable and ineligible expenses, please see Instructional Page 2 of the [Application for Iowa Transit Training Fellowship](#). Any cost comparisons that might be requested in the approval process are the responsibility of the applying/sponsoring transit or planning agency to provide.

- **Tuition/Registration** - A registration receipt or other payment verification (extra charges for banquets or food or excursions from the venue are ineligible expenses)
- **Lodging (Hotel/Motel/Airbnb/VRBO)** – A *detailed* invoice/receipt that shows a zero balance is required. The invoice/receipt must show the cost of a single room per night, the number of nights stayed, taxes, and any other covered room charges. Eligible room charges are hotel parking (self-parking), hotel internet, and documented business calls. Room charges that did not receive preapproval in the application process shall not be allowed. These charges are personal calls, valet parking, safe fee, vacation night stays, companion expenses, double room rates, food, tips, alcohol, incidentals, room service, cancelled room, etc. Allowable single room rates are limited to \$150.00 plus tax within Iowa. Higher rates may be approved upon request due to location or when the room is booked at the conference rate. Cost comparisons of hotel stays may be requested from the transit or planning agency during the approval process. In some instances, it may be cheaper to use an Airbnb or a VRBO. These types of lodging can be used if it is proven to be cheaper than a hotel/motel.

Lodging reimbursement – The single hotel or motel room rate will be reimbursed unless a room is shared by two or more persons each attending under the Iowa Transit Training Fellowships Program. If a rate other than the single room rate is charged, the single room rate must be shown on the bill. Effective January 1, 2022, all in-state lodging providers must complete the Iowa Department of Public Safety's Human Trafficking Training certification in order to receive public funds for employee lodging, conferences, meetings, banquets, or events. All of the lodging provider's employees must complete the training to be certified. If a lodging provider is not certified, public funds cannot be used for in-state travel reimbursement. This is per [Iowa Administrative Code 80.45A](#). When applying for a transit training fellowship, which will include in-state lodging or other meeting or conference-type expenses, public transit agency staff must confirm the lodging provider has received the Human Trafficking Prevention Training certificate, found at <https://stophtiowa.org/certified-locations>. A copy of the search results will need to be included with the training fellowship application. Public transit agency staff traveling on a fellowship will not be reimbursed for stays at non-certified facilities.

- **Transportation (To and From Conference)**
 1. **Air:** A detailed copy of the airline receipt must show date traveled, cost for flight, the number of passengers, taxes, and fees. Please note that only the basic (Coach/Economy) flight rates will be

- covered. Luggage in excess of one checked bag, trip insurance and, upgrades to seating will not be covered.
2. **Car:** The number of eligible miles traveled should be documented (please include web mileage verification) and multiplied by \$0.50 per mile or the current state rate. Mileage reimbursement is limited to a maximum of the cost of basic airfare. Ridesharing is encouraged, but only one person per vehicle can claim the mileage reimbursement. Only direct routes are eligible for reimbursement.
 3. **Rental Cars:** Preapproval on economy rental cars in the application process is required. The cost of a rental car, including parking at the destination, will only be paid up the lowest comparison cost of mileage, bus, shuttle, or other modes of transportation, and will require detailed receipts. Cost of fuel and mileage for the rental vehicle, any additional insurance, coverages, or upgrades are not eligible for reimbursement.
 4. **Bus/Cab/Shuttles/Rideshare:** Cost comparisons including web mileage verification might be requested at time of application. Travel costs only include from airport to hotel venue, or hotel to training venue. Excursions are not allowable expenses. Receipts should have the number of occupants, company name and contact information, date, origin, and destination. Tips and Metro pass balances are not allowable expenses.
 5. **Parking:** Parking reimbursement requires a detailed receipt showing the days, cost, and the contact information for the parking lot company. Valet parking is not eligible unless it is approved for health or accessibility reasons during the application process. Extra days in airport parking for vacation is not eligible for reimbursement.
 6. **Foreign travel restriction:** No fellowship shall be awarded for training outside the United States unless the cost of training is less expensive than comparable training available domestically, or if the training is so essential to the transit system that justification for waiving this restriction is accepted by the director of PTS.

*Please note that if drive time to the conference exceeds four hours from home base of the transit or planning agency then the Iowa DOT will consider paying for a flight rather than mileage or rental car.

Reimbursement of Costs – A [Transit Request for Reimbursement](#) with the required receipts and documentation must be submitted within 60 days after the event. Payments are made only to the applicant sponsoring transit system or planning agency. No payments to individuals are made, nor are any direct payments made to subcontractors. The request must be signed by the transit system's designated signatory, the transit manager, or the planning director if the request is for a planning agency. Fellowship payments must also be reflected on year-end financial reports.

The fellowship approval number must be included on the request form. Send the signed reimbursement request and necessary receipts by email to Amy Colwell at amy.colwell@iowadot.us.

Additional Transit Training Fellowship Guidelines

College Credit – Fellowship assistance will not be approved for course work being taken to satisfy requirements for a college degree or general course work needed to improve a person's job qualifications. For more instructions, and for a list of allowable and ineligible expenses, please see Page 2 of the [Application for Iowa Transit Training Fellowship](#).

Cancellation – If the recipient of a transit training fellowship cannot attend a course/workshop for which registration fees or a room deposit has been paid, the office must be promptly notified. PTS approval must be obtained prior to substituting anyone for the original training fellowship recipient. Expenses may not be billed under a fellowship unless someone approved by PTS actually receives training. Costs of forfeited airline reservations, registration fees, or room deposits are not eligible fellowship expenses.

Ground transportation – To minimize ground transportation expenditures, recipients are required to take public transportation, airport limousines or shuttle buses whenever available instead of taxis. Whenever possible, share ground transportation mode with others. Travel by taxi or rental cars should be the last resort.

On-Site Training - Fellowship assistance may be granted for on-site training to employees of Iowa transit systems, their contracted service providers, and Iowa transit planning agencies. The training must propose a substantial benefit to the public transit system(s).

Costs eligible for on-site training include fees and per diem for the instructor, training room, equipment rental, and other related training needs and materials. In general, refreshments are not eligible costs.

To obtain PTS staff approval to hold on-site training in your area, submit the following application materials to PTS:

- Completed [Application for Iowa Transit Training Fellowship](#)
- List of participants to be trained
- Workshop information including criteria, outline, and agenda; dates and times of workshops, and instructor information
- Cost Proposal: an estimated breakdown of total training cost
- A brief description of the reason for the workshop
- How the training will benefit the transit system and employees' skills