Transit COVID-19 Response Program Information Collection Webinar
Urban and Tribal Transit Providers
March 15, 2021 2:00 PM ET

>>Paulina Orchard:
Welcome, my name is Paulina Orchard and I'm the Division Chief for Safety Policy and Promotion in the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Office of Transit Safety and Oversight. Today, you'll hear from me, and from Sharece Tyer, Senior Program Analyst, and Candace Key, Director of the Office of System Safety also in FTA's Office of Transit Safety and Oversight. We will provide a brief overview of the new Transit COVID-19 Response Program Information Collection and answer your questions.

Before we begin, I'd like to encourage you to submit your questions to us through the Q&A pod. We will answer your questions at the end of this presentation. A recording of this presentation, a transcript, and the reporting demonstration video will be made available on FTA's website after this presentation.

By now, we hope you've all had a chance to review FTA's Federal Register Notice 2021-002 requesting comments on the new mandatory reporting requirement for the Transit COVID-19 Response Program. We ask that stakeholders submit their comments to us at FTASystemSafety@dot.gov. FTA will collect data from FTA recipients and sub-recipients on the impacts of COVID-19. FTA will use the information submitted through the online application to inform its actions in support of the transit industry's COVID-19 response and recovery efforts and implementation of the Federal mask requirement for public transportation.

FTA will require this information from recipients and sub-recipients of FTA funds under the Urbanized Area Formula funding program Section 5307 or the Formula Grants for Rural Areas program Section 5311 that operate transit systems or pass-through funds to sub-recipients that operate transit systems. The focus of today's webinar is the category of transit agencies that currently provide transit service and submit reports to the National Transit Database, or NTD, as urban reporters or tribal transit agencies. This includes recipients and sub-recipients of FTA funds under Section 5307. This excludes any agencies in the planning or building process that are not yet in operations. Recipients of Section 5311 funds will report on behalf of their applicable sub-recipients. FTA will hold webinars for this reporting group on Thursday, March 18, 2021, 1:00 pm to 2:00 p.m. Eastern, and Thursday, March 25, 2:00 pm to 3:00 pm Eastern. You can register for these webinars on FTA's Transit COVID-19 Response Program Information Collection webpage. FTA may initiate voluntary reporting for recipients of Section 5310 funding in the future, but the online application is not prepared to accept voluntary Section 5310 submissions at this time.

Respondents will use the Transit COVID-19 Response Program Information Collection online application to report. The online application will show up as a new module in respondents'

Transit Integrated Appian Development Platform account using the same login information used to access the NTD.

Reporters will fill out two forms when they first access the application: a baseline form and a recurring form. The baseline form collects information on service reductions and suspensions between March 13, 2020, the start of the COVID-19 public health emergency, and February 28, 2021. Reporters will fill this form out one time for each agency. The recurring form collects cumulative data on worker counts, operational status, and COVID-19 information. Reporters will fill out this form monthly for each applicable transit agency.

The baseline form collects responses for two questions. First, did your agency at any time between March 13, 2020 and February 28, 2021, reduce service in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency? This is a "yes" or "no" question. It includes any service reduction, regardless of the length of time. For example, if your agency ran reduced service in the first month of the public health emergency and has since returned to normal operations, you would still answer yes to this question.

The second question is, did your agency at any time between March 13, 2020 and February 28, 2021, suspend service in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency? This is also a "yes" or "no" question. It includes any service suspension, regardless of the length of time. Each respondent will fill this form out once, by no later than April 16, 2021.

Next, Sharece will provide an overview of the requested cumulative data, reporting frequency, and available support for respondents.

Before Sharece begins, however, I would like to remind you to submit your questions to us in the Q&A pod on your screen. We will answer questions at the conclusion of the presentation.

>>Sharece Tyer:
Thank you, Paulina. So, the recurring form collects transit workforce data, information on service impacts, and COVID-19 data. We will go into each of these categories in greater detail in a few moments. You can find reporting instructions and definitions in the User Guide located both inside the online application and on FTA's website.

Specifically, the recurring form collects the number of transit operators, the number of other frontline essential workers, and the number of all other workers at the agency. The recurring form also asks agencies whether their operations are reduced or suspended entirely. And finally, the recurring form collects information directly related to COVID-19. It collects cumulative counts of transit worker positives, fatalities, recoveries, and unvaccinated employees. The form also collects "yes" or "no" responses on whether the agency requires workers to be vaccinated and whether the agency has implemented the Federal mask requirement for public transportation.

The categorization of transit workforce personnel in this section of the recurring form differs from employee information that full NTD reporters may provide annually to FTA. This categorization focuses on grouping full and part-time employees and contractors into three categories: transit operators, other frontline personnel, and other workers.

So, let's review each of the collected data points individually. The "Transit Workforce" section of the form collects the total number of transit operators at the end of the reporting period. This includes all full and part-time employees and contractors, including those furloughed. It includes personnel, other than security agents, scheduled to be on board vehicles and revenue operations such as vehicle operators, conductors, and ticket collectors. It also includes transit agency attendants on board to assist riders in boarding and alighting, securing wheelchairs, etc. Any employees or contractors who work as transit operators and also perform other jobs within the agency, such as working dispatch, should be counted as transit operators for the purpose of this report.

This field collects the total number of other frontline essential workers at the end of the reporting period. This includes all full and part-time employees and contractors, including those furloughed. These are individuals whose work-related duties must be performed on-site and involve being in close proximity, or less than six feet from the public or other workers. This excludes individuals who serve as operators that we discussed previously. Those should be counted as operators only.

The last field in the "Transit Workforce" section of the form collects the total number of other workers at the end of the reporting period. This includes all full and part-time employees and contractors who are not otherwise counted as transit operators, or as other frontline essential workers, including those furloughed.

Under "Service Impacts," select from "Suspended," "Reduced," or "Normal" operations in the drop-down menu. Select "Suspended" if your agency suspended transit service entirely due to the COVID-19 public health emergency at the end of the reporting period. Select "Reduced" if your agency reduced the level of transit service from its normal level due to the COVID-19 public health emergency at the end of the reporting period. Select "Normal" if your agency has operated normal levels of service at the end of the reporting period.

The "COVID-19 Data" section starts by collecting the cumulative total number of workers that have tested positive for COVID-19. So, this includes full and part-time employees and contractors. This total is cumulative from the beginning of the COVID-19 public health emergency, March 13, 2020 through to the end of the reporting period. So, for example, your April 16, 2021 recurring form submission, which collects data through the end of March, should provide the number of workers who have tested positive for COVID-19 from March 13, 2020 to March 31, 2021.

This field collects the cumulative total number of workers that have died from complications related to COVID-19. This includes full and part-time employees and contractors. This total is cumulative from the beginning of the COVID-19 public health emergency—again, March 13, 2020 to the end of the reporting period. This number cannot exceed the number of COVID-19 worker positives.

So, this field collects the cumulative total number of workers that have recovered from COVID-19. This includes full and part-time employees and contractors that have returned to work following an absence due to a positive COVID-19 test. Please note that this number includes workers who were kept home due to an exposure or potential exposure. This total is cumulative from the beginning of the COVID-19 public health emergency, March 13, 2020, to the end of the reporting period.

So, this question asks if your agency currently requires COVID-19 vaccinations or plans to require COVID-19 vaccinations for some or all of your workers. This is a "yes" or "no" question.

Next, this field collects the total number of workers including full and part-time employees and contractors that have not received a COVID-19 vaccination. This number cannot exceed the total number of workers reported earlier in the form. Please note, your agency should submit this data to the extent that you are able to compile such information consistent with applicable privacy laws or this field can be left blank.

So, this field asks whether your agency implemented the recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Order and Transportation Security Administration Security Directive which requires workers and passengers to wear masks on public transportation.

So, respondents must fill out the baseline form and March 2021 recurring form by, again, April 16, 2021. After the initial report, recurring reports are due on the 15th of the following month. So, when the 15th falls on a weekend, the report is due on the next business day. For example, the April 2021 recurring form will be due on May 17, 2021. Respondents will continue filling out the monthly recurring reports until December 31, 2021, or until the end of the COVID-19 public health emergency, whichever comes first.

So, FTA built in a number of features to make it easier to report. First, the data collected in the recurring form is cumulative and subsequent recurring forms are pre-populated with the values from the previous month. So, for example, the form for April 2021, will be pre-populated with the data provided in the March 2021, or initial recurring report. Additionally, if your numbers have not changed, you do not have to do any data entry. You can just click to submit the report. Also, the form itself is built with a few simple validation checks for typos and other errors and the application sends out automated notifications and reminders. You can also access definitions with the click of a button while inside the application and the User Guide, which includes definitions, is available within the application and on the Transit COVID-19 Response Program

Information Collection [website](). So, next, let's watch a short video that demonstrates how to navigate the online application.

>>Video Speaker:
Reporting starts by entering the Transit Integrated Appian Development Platform using the same username and password you already used to access the National Transit Database (NTD). Once the COVID-19 response program information collection module is live, you will find links to both the NTD and the COVID-19 form on your main page. Clicking on the COVID-19 form opens the overview page. From here you can access either the baseline form, or the recurring form.

We can tell that our fictional agency, Straightline Transit, needs to submit a report because their current status is "Outstanding Submission." Straightline Transit has already filled out their baseline form. We can tell because of the little green check box next to the link. Let's take a look at the baseline form. Remember, your agency will fill this form out only once. The yellow exclamation point tells us that Straightline Transit has not yet completed their recurring form for the reporting period. Clicking on the link takes us to the recurring form. The recurring form collects information on three main topics: Transit Workforce, Service Impacts, and COVID-19 Data. As you enter numbers into the Transit Workforce section, the system automatically calculates your total workforce. Remember that these numbers are cumulative. When Straightline Transit accesses its next recurring form for the next reporting period, the system will automatically carry over these numbers, making it easy to update any that have changed. Note, the blue question marks to the right of each line: clicking on any one of these question marks will access a brief description of the field and provide relevant definitions. Once we click "Submit" and "Close," we will see our reporting status change to "Up-to-Date" and a green checkmark will appear next to our recurring form. Straightline Transit is now done with their report for the month.

>>Sharece Tyer:
FTA developed a Transit COVID-19 Response Program Information Collection [website]() where respondents can access more information about the information collection and the online application, including fact sheets, the user guide, and links to industry webinars. As Paulina mentioned at the beginning of this presentation, we will post a copy of this presentation, the transcript, and a recording demonstration video to the website. We also encourage you to contact FTA's Office of Transit Safety and Oversight at [FTASystemsSafety@dot.gov]() for further assistance.

>>Paulina Orchard:
Thank you, everyone. Please remember to contact us at [FTASystemsSafety@dot.gov]() if you have any questions on this information collection effort. And, this concludes today's session. We really appreciate you joining us. Thank you.

<div align="center">###</div>