

# GUIDE: NATIONAL TRANSIT DATABASE (NTD) REPORTING AND COVID-19

Reporting changes resulting from the pandemic in Report  
Year 2020 and beyond (Version 1.3)



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<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Update</b>
<b>1.0</b>	August 3, 2020	Initial publication
<b>1.1</b>	October 14, 2020	Added notice to beginning of document.
<b>1.2</b>	October 27, 2020	Updated guidance regarding Extraordinary and Special Items.
<b>1.3</b>	March 21, 2021	Updated guidance regarding use of NTD data for apportionments.
<b>1.4</b>	September 16, 2021	Updated dates to show Report Year 2021. Added clarification regarding temporarily out-of-service segments.

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# GUIDE: NATIONAL TRANSIT DATABASE (NTD) REPORTING AND COVID-19

Transit agencies reporting to the NTD have been affected by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic beginning in Fiscal (Report) Year 2020. COVID-19 has impacted several aspects of data collection and reporting, which may affect data availability or data quality.

FTA recognizes the challenges that agencies are now facing. In addition to answering questions regarding NTD Reporting found in the [FAQ from FTA Grantees Regarding COVID-19](#), FTA has produced this reference document to help your agency meet the NTD reporting requirements during this public health emergency. This document provides guidance on the following key data collection and reporting issues that result:

- Understanding How NTD Data Will be Used for Funding
- Collecting and Reporting Service Consumed Data
- Reporting Changes in Service Supplied
- Reporting Expenses Related to COVID-19
- Reporting Employee Data
- Reporting Condition Assessments

## Understanding How NTD Data Will Be Used for Funding

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### **FY 2021**

Funds apportioned during the 2021 Federal fiscal year (FY) (beginning October 1, 2020) are based on FY 2019 agency data reported to the NTD. FTA has the necessary data to apportion FY 2021 funds.

### **FY 2022**

On March 13, 2020 a nationwide emergency was declared; all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and 5 territories were approved for major disaster declarations for COVID-19. For apportionment for FY 2022, FTA will implement the following procedure:

1. FTA will use your data from either the 2019 or 2020 National Transit Database Annual Report

2. By default, FTA will use all data from whichever Report Year has higher agency total Vehicle Revenue Miles (VRM)

FTA's application of this procedure does not guarantee a positive outcome for all Urbanized Areas, nor does it guarantee an increase in apportionment to any Urbanized Area, State, or Tribal Area from the prior year (FY 2021) apportionment. You do not need to request that FTA use the year with higher VRM in its FY 2022 apportionment, as FTA will apply this procedure automatically for every NTD Report.

## **FY 2023**

For the FY 2023 formula apportionment, FTA will automatically use either all of your 2019 or all of your 2021 data, whichever has higher agency total Vehicle Revenue Miles (VRM).

### **Requesting Use of Lower VRM Year Data**

If your agency's total VRM is greater in the default year (e.g., FY 2019), but any of the following are greater in the other year (e.g., FY 2020);

- Fixed Guideway (FG) Directional Route Miles (DRM),
- FG VRM,
- State of Good Repair FG DRM,
- State of Good Repair High Intensity DRM,
- State of Good Repair High Intensity VRM, or
- VRM increasing in one UZA but decreasing in another,

FTA will contact your agency, prompting you to confirm use of the default year data in the apportionment.

Agencies that receive this prompt may or may not earn greater formula funding by requesting use of the non-default year data.

Your agency may request that FTA use the non-default year data at your discretion, whether you receive a prompt from FTA or not. To request that FTA use the non-default year, submit a letter to your NTD analyst, on agency letterhead and signed by the agency CEO, stating that you would like FTA to use all data from the non-default year in the apportionment. No action is needed to use the default year data.

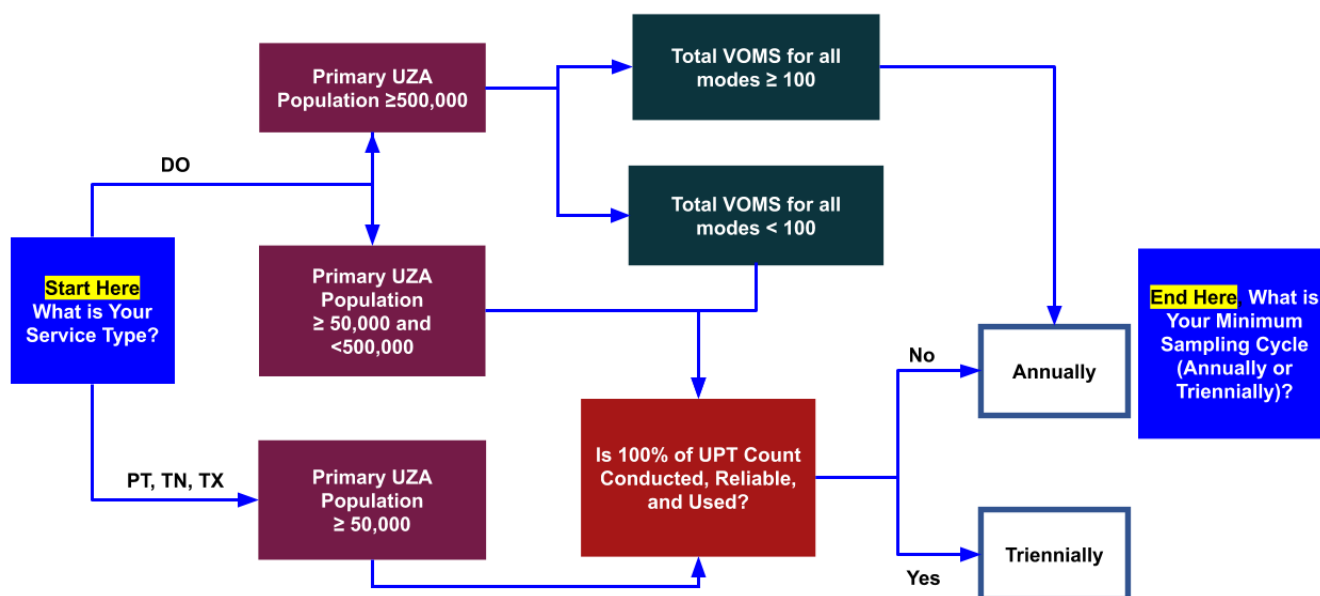
## **Collecting and Reporting Service Consumed Data**

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On March 25, 2020, FTA requested that agencies suspend their sampling activities for NTD reporting purposes if those activities involved onboard data collectors or "ride-checkers." If your agency did suspend sampling activities, your reporting approach will

depend on how often FTA requires sampling. You can determine your agency’s minimum required sampling cycle by consulting the table below. Please consult the NTD reporting manual for the definitions of terms found in this diagram.

**Exhibit 1: Determining Sampling Frequency**



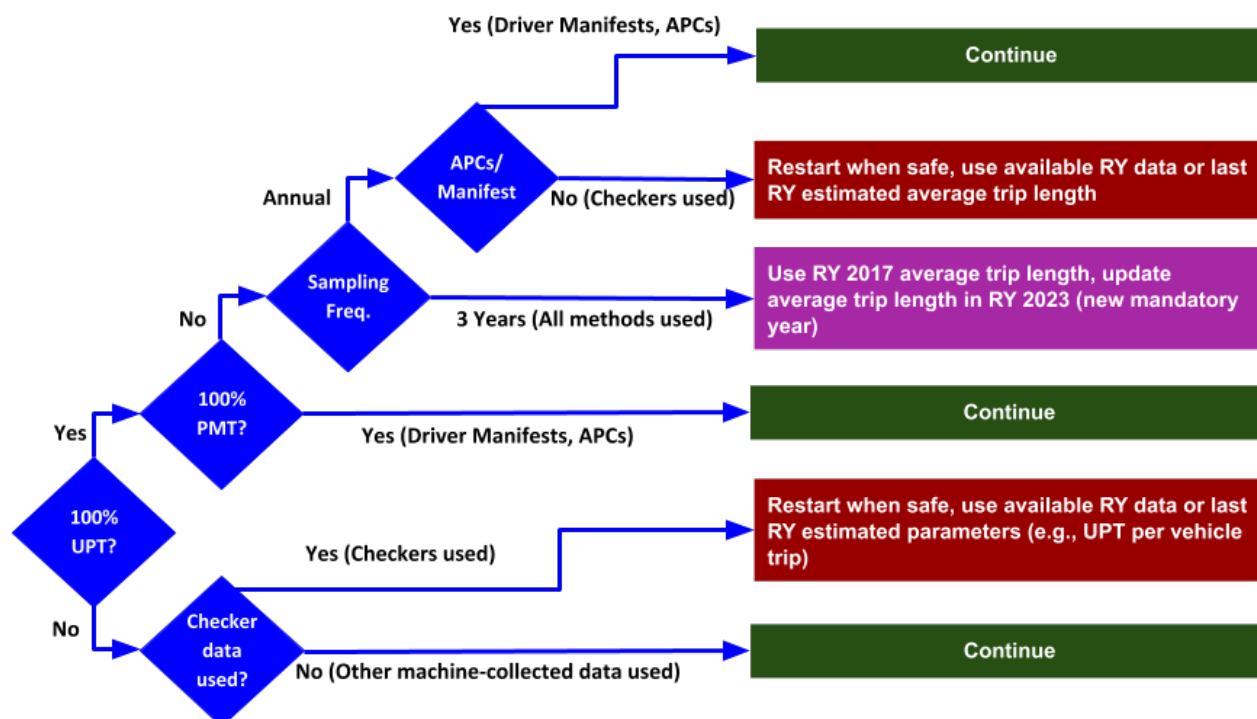
**FTA amended the sampling requirement for Report Year 2020 with the following objectives in mind:**

- Prioritize the safety of operators, other employees, and passengers.
- Consider the need for accurate, recent service consumption data.
- Prevent a penalty to any urbanized areas, no matter their reporting frequency (see the section *Understanding How NTD Data Will be Used for Funding* above).

Please see the below flowchart which illustrates the updated FTA sampling requirements for Report Year 2020 and beyond.



## Exhibit 2: Report Year 2020 Service Consumed Data Collection Requirement



### Triennial Sampling Requirement

Per the triennial sampling requirement, 2020 was a mandatory sampling year. FTA will waive the sampling requirement for Report Year 2020 for all agencies with this sampling frequency. To estimate passenger miles traveled (PMT) in your 2020 NTD Annual Report, please use the average passenger trip length from 2017, or from your most recent past-year sample. The next mandatory sampling year will be in Report Year 2023.

### Annual Sampling Requirement

If your agency is required to sample annually and you have not resumed sampling, you should estimate your agency’s PMT using the best available data for Report Year 2021. Please contact your assigned NTD analyst to discuss the method you plan to use if your agency cannot follow its normal sampling approach.

### Impact Based on Methods for Data Collection

If ride checkers normally sample for your agency, resume that sampling approach when your agency determines that it is safe. If your agency uses a machine collection method for unlinked passenger trips (UPT) or PMT—such as a registering farebox or automated

passenger counter, or if your vehicle operators record ridership and are still able to do so safely—please continue to collect this data. (This includes using one of those methods to sample data.)

If your agency moved to rear-door boardings for safety and could not collect UPT or lost some UPT data as a result, please contact your NTD analyst to communicate the scope of the issue and discuss potential remedies. You should also discuss with your analyst any concerns regarding incompleteness of average passenger trip length sampling for new services (modes or routes). There may be cases in which no Average Passenger Trip Length data are available for a new service as a result of the ongoing public health emergency. In this case, please provide your analysts with the relevant detail and plan to discuss an alternative, statistically appropriate estimating procedure.

### **APC Maintenance Plan Requirement**

In line with the “resume when safe” policy for sampling, FTA will also waive the Automatic Passenger Counter (APC) maintenance plan requirement that applies to agencies who use APC-collected data who were not able to complete this sampling. FTA has otherwise not modified its mandatory benchmarking year for agencies using APCs, which is in Report Year 2022. You must request a waiver from this requirement in Report Year 2021 for FTA to waive the requirement.

## Reporting Changes in Service Supplied

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### **Service Reductions and Suspensions**

Many agencies have reduced service during the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **Reporting Service Schedule**

Full Reporters that are operating reduced schedules should calculate their average weekday, Saturday, and Sunday data to represent an average over the entire fiscal year. Include both the normal period (before and after the national emergency was declared) and the abnormal period of reduced service (during the emergency) in the calculation of each schedule. This means the agency will report a normal number of days operated in each period, though average data for each would be reduced.

If a mode is not operated at all during the pandemic period, record the number of days that the mode was not operated under Days Not Operated (S-10 form).

### **Addressing Suspended Service**

Generally, service that was not supplied should not be reported to the NTD, as FTA collects actual data. However, directional route miles for Reportable Segments that are temporarily out of service as a result of the public health emergency may still be reported to the NTD.

## **Accommodating Social Distancing in Revenue Service**

Some transit agencies have instituted a social distancing policy on their transit vehicles. Riders are encouraged to seat themselves or stand six feet apart from other passengers. This type of policy has reduced the effective capacity of transit vehicles. Some agencies are restricting passenger loading and/or requiring operators to prevent admitting additional passengers until others alight the vehicle.

### **Seating and Standing Capacity**

Agencies implementing this type of reduced vehicle capacity policy have asked if seating and standing capacities on the A-30 Revenue Vehicle Inventory form need to be revised to reflect the temporary capacity changes made in response to COVID-19.

Do not update values for the Seating Capacity and Standing Capacity for existing fleets in the Revenue Vehicle Inventory to reflect any temporary capacity changes made in response to COVID-19. Similarly, for vehicles added to fleets during the year, agencies should report seating and standing capacity as they would have per normal operating standards (e.g., before COVID-19).

### **Temporarily Restructured Ridesharing Services**

FTA requires agencies to provide shared rides for the service to be considered public transportation. Many vanpool and other ridesharing services have limited the number of passengers allowed in the vehicle at one time as a safety measure during the ongoing public health emergency. Therefore, agencies may still report public transportation services even if a single passenger is permitted on the vehicle at a time during the emergency, assuming the service otherwise meets the definition of public transportation.

### **“Doubleheading” Vehicles**

When transit agencies notice that crowded vehicles are passing by passengers on the same trips every day, the agency schedules a “doubleheader” vehicle or “shadow service” for those trips. This means that a second vehicle is added to operate in tandem with the scheduled vehicle. Passenger timetables remain unchanged. The only difference is that two vehicles, instead of one, arrive at the scheduled times on the route.

If your agency uses doubleheader vehicles because you anticipate needing extra capacity on a route on a regular basis, report the miles and hours traveled by those vehicles along the assigned route as **revenue service** in your agency's monthly and annual reports. Revenue service begins when the doubleheader vehicle starts its route service, even if passengers do not board the shadow vehicle until a later point in the route. You should also report the associated deadhead hours and miles for these buses as part of vehicle hours and miles in the annual report.

Similarly, if doubleheader vehicles are dispatched daily, as capacity concerns arise in real time, you should report the miles and hours those vehicles spend in route service in your agency's monthly and annual reports. Report the associated deadhead hours and miles for these buses as part of the vehicle hours and miles in the annual report.

### Floater Vehicles

Sometimes transit agencies will use "floater" vehicles to provide immediate response to problems relating to passenger capacity and breakdowns. These agencies station floater vehicles (typically buses, for fixed-route systems) at selected locations in their service areas away from their garages and parking areas. Transit agencies will dispatch the floater vehicle(s) to restore service where breakdowns have occurred and to address passenger overloads on selected routes.

If a floater vehicle is dispatched to provide immediate response to accommodate vehicles that have reached capacity, you should report the miles and hours those vehicles spend in route service as revenue service in your agency's monthly and annual reports. Report the associated deadhead hours and miles (e.g., before arriving at its first stop) for these vehicles as part of the vehicle hours and miles in the annual report.

If a floater vehicle is not dispatched to provide immediate response to a breakdown and/or a passenger capacity problem, you should not record or report any miles or hours operated by the floater buses. FTA does not consider the miles and hours spent traveling to and from the stationing locations by the floater buses as reportable miles and hours, because these vehicles did not provide revenue service.

### Emergency Services

You should not report emergency services provided by your agency unless these services meet the statutory definition of public transportation. Typically, emergency services carried out by transit operators in coordination with medical centers or emergency management agencies in response to COVID-19 do not meet the FTA definition of public transportation. Likewise, services that your agency provides under contract, which do not

involve the transport of passengers, (such as a meal delivery program), do not meet the FTA definition of public transportation.

If your agency provides emergency services that you believe may be reportable, please contact your assigned NTD analyst to discuss the reporting eligibility of these services.

## Reporting Expenses Related to COVID-19

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The public health emergency presents challenges in accounting and reporting expenses to the NTD.

FTA provided initial guidance in a previous version of this guide stating activities undertaken in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency were to be reported as Extraordinary and Special Items (E&S) on the Reconciling Items form (F-40). The Uniform System of Accounts defines **Extraordinary items** as “events or transactions that are distinguished by their unusual nature **and** by the infrequency of their occurrence” where **Special items** are “events or transactions that are either unusual in nature or infrequent, but not both.”

However, FTA is clarifying that Full Reporting agencies may either report COVID-19-related expenses as E&S **OR** as ordinary modal operating expenses. Agencies may report directly traceable COVID-19-related expenses in the appropriate field and allocate shared costs using an allocation model.

For example, agencies may have varying levels of Personal Protective Equipment, hand-sanitizer, barriers, and other items that may be directly linked to a particular mode or type of service. If so, FTA asks agencies to report these expenses on the F-30 form for the appropriate mode. However, if your agency prepared to account for (or already reported) these expenses in the NTD as E&S based on previous guidance, you may continue to do so for Report Year 2020.

Reduced Reporters and Rural Reporters, if possible, should include COVID-19-related expenses in Funds Expended on Operations by Mode and Type of Service. If you already prepared to account for (or already reported) these expenses in the NTD as E&S based on previous guidance, you may exclude these expenses from Funds Expended on Operations by Mode and Type of Service. However, you must include the costs in the appropriate category under Sources of Revenue Expended.

FTA recognizes that it is highly unusual to allow multiple reporting mechanisms for expenses. FTA will provide more uniform reporting guidance for Report Year 2021.

The sections below review possible COVID-19-related expenses.

## Health & Safety Expenses

Most transit agencies have responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by taking action to prevent the spread of the virus on transit vehicles and property. Examples of these actions include the following:

- Extra cleaning of vehicles and facilities
- Installing breath/cough/sneeze guards
- Providing personal protective equipment, such as face masks and gloves
- Installing sanitizer stations
- Erecting barriers to enforce social distancing
- Public messaging such as signs, videos, and online messages

## Financial Support of Agency Employees

Many agencies have taken additional measures during the pandemic, such as

- Furloughing employees with pay, partial pay, or benefits;
- Placing more operators on the extra-board than would typically be needed for the level of service provided (e.g., to meet specific agency policies); and
- Providing extra benefits to employees, such as additional sick leave.

## Indirect Expenses

Your agency may incur indirect or overhead expenses separately from the direct expenses described in the sections above. Examples of indirect expenses include support provided by finance and human resource departments and oversight provided by general management.

## Reduced Revenues

Agencies are observing much lower ridership, and many are experiencing reduced revenue streams during the pandemic. Many agencies have stopped collecting fares due to safety concerns.

Reduced revenues are not considered an expense for NTD reporting. Do not report the estimated reduced revenues for your agency as an expense in the Operating Expense Forms (F-30) or in the Extraordinary and Special Items Form (F-40).

## Reporting Employee Data

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Full Reporters should use the R-10 form to report employee work hours and head counts for directly operated modes. Hours spent working on activities that are considered Extraordinary and Special Items, as described above, should be included on the R-10 only if they were included on the F-30. Include a count of all employees at fiscal year-end as you would during a normal year. Include furloughed employees in this count.

## Reporting Condition Assessments

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FTA recognizes that the condition assessment required for facilities covered by the Transit Asset Management (TAM) rule and reported on the TAM Facilities Inventory form (A-15) may have been delayed during this time. Therefore, FTA is waiving the requirement to inventory 3/4 of all facilities in FY 2020. The exhibit below identifies the updated phase-in schedule for this aspect of TAM.

**Exhibit 3: Updated Asset Inventory Module Requirement Schedule**

<b>NTD Report Year</b>	<b>Set Internal Performance Measure Targets</b>	<b>Report Condition Assessment - Facilities</b>
RY 2019	Required (for FY 2020)	2/4 Required
RY 2020	Required (for FY 2021)	<b>2/4 Required</b>
RY 2021	Required (for FY 2022)	<b>4/4 (All) Required</b>