

Policy Action meeting agenda/notes (in red)

April 21, 2020

Zoom Meeting

Present: Tim Schmutzer, Marcia Westover, Carri Levitski, Brandy Herbst, Bob Benes, Ashley Eckdahl, Karen Onan

Continue with advocacy of legislative change for Volunteer Driver issues.

It appears at this point that the tax subtraction portion may only pass through, leaving the issues of Volunteer Driver vs. For Hire Driver / Insurance Issue still at large.

It seems that most volunteer drivers are working under bigger programs that pay at the federal rate. What often is the case though, is these rates are passed down to the drivers after Medical Insurance pays the bigger organization – only allowing drivers to drive NEMT (Non-Emergency Medical Transportation). Not drive for other reasons (grocery, pharmacy, etc.).

What support can be found that would push/persuade that volunteers be reimbursed at the federal level?

Would AARP be able to be of assistance? Others?

2020 Volunteer Driver Forum: *Send the current agenda and meeting zooms to the ECRTCC Policy Action subcommittee. Virtual. All revised 2020 Agenda is being drafted. Looking towards a third week of November date. 2 days. Karen to send out the agenda. Issue of legislators invited being replaced by new legislators as this forum will occur after the election. How will this be handled?*

Volunteer Driver Coalition: volunteerdrivermn.org *Send the meeting zooms to the ECRTCC Policy Action subcommittee. Continue full support of and action with the coalition.*

Legislation: The major push back is coming from multiple sources. This is not a funding year, the time schedule is very tight, and it also has to go through 3 different committees (transportation, commerce, tax).

4/14 meeting: Sherry Munyon's report:

Sherry works for MPTA (MN Public Transit Association) <https://www.mpta-transit.org/>

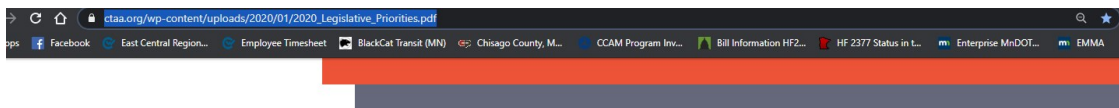
Focus on the definition of a Volunteer Driver – DOT's definition. We (the group) would like to read the new definition of Volunteer Driver.

Campaign currently focused on the Federal Level.

CTAA (Community Transportation Association of America – a National Organization who represents the Public Providers) discussed the reimbursement fare in their 4 page letter. MPTA has signed on to the letter, adding our reimbursement ask, but it is in the midst of a 4 page letter.

Suggested it to be better if we all send out personal letters.

All transit organizations should sign the petition.



For surface transportation reauthorization, CTAA will work towards:

- Increasing FTA formula program investment, including for tribal transit programs
- Addressing the Highway Trust Fund shortfall
- Maintaining existing support for federal tax incentives for transit

Within reauthorization, work towards these goals for rural, specialized and tribal transit providers:

- Making the safety regulation deferral for 5311 and 5310 permanent
- Ensure more local match flexibility for 5311 and 5310 programs
- Incentivize volunteer driver programs by allowing systems to claim value of volunteer drivers as in-kind match for FTA programs and reimbursing volunteer drivers at the IRS business mileage rate
- Raise end-of-life fair market value of buses/vehicles to a fixed percentage of purchase price



Contact Congressional Leaders.

Unfortunately, the world transit is not focused on RURAL – volunteer drivers are utilized more to fill in gaps in RURAL areas.

https://ctaa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/2020_Legislative_Priorities.pdf

Volunteer Driver Issue/Panel? At a later date? Needed?

Media issue.

Possibly be held at Pine County courthouse. *Now would be virtual.*

Bring Tina Smith into the conversation of Volunteer Driving issues.

MCOTA Discussion of Volunteer Driver Brochure “Getting There Safely” is on hold. There is not a confirmed hearing yet, but that they are hoping from one in transportation. Commerce and tax are not settled. This brochure’s information will help alleviate issues with insurance companies, assuring the differentiation of a Volunteer Driver and a Driver for Hire.

Discussion with Public Service Providers the need to purchase smaller vans for economical rural transport, and the regulations regarding the utilization of funds from MnDOT. PHASE has offered the use of their vans, what are the insurance issues regarding this?

Vehicle Sharing with Phase – what are the problems? What can we do to move past these problems?

Other issues that come to mind?

Please look this over and send suggestions for editing content.

Policy Action Task’s Mission:

Transportation improvement efforts are dependent on legislation and/or negotiations with regulators.

Bob’s comments:

Current Situation due to Covid19, and future changes related to the unknown:

Volunteer Drivers are not only transporting people. Volunteer drivers are needed now for transporting food, meals, educational materials, things other than medical and people transport.

The issue is the regulation makers - namely insurance providers don’t want to see the rate change because they don’t want to see volunteer drivers in general.

Tim’s comments:

Mentioned that Beverly (Arrowhead RTCC) is requesting that public transportation providers be released to utilize their transit providers to allow for use in other capacities. For example, transporting food, supplies, etc. – not medical related. AEOA’s volunteer driver program is only for medical rides. Is this something that she is working on changing? Rides are paid through insurance programs at the federal reimbursement rate. The issue is, who pays for the volunteer drivers who are delivering food, supplies, etc.?

Volunteer drivers are needed to bring people home from the hospital who have been diagnosed with the virus. Who will do this?

Is there any organization developing a narrative specific to finding volunteers during the pandemic? The list of volunteer drivers is already low, more will be lost for fear of spread of the virus. What will be done about this?

- *Automated cars?*
- *Passenger/Driver partitions? Costs?*
- *Sanitation Methods? Costs?*
- *Utilize those people who have been deemed as immune?*