



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

**Federal Transit  
Administration**



## **DOT-FTA \* HUD-PIH Partnership for COVID-19 Recovery Fact Sheet**

The U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH) are partnering to share information on value-added services and partnerships that are developing across the country to ensure that targeted populations have access to transportation, education support services including Wi-Fi, food, and medical care by leveraging transit assets as communities recover from the COVID-19 public health emergency.

### **What is “Incidental Use”?**

Incidental use is when a transit system allows the use of federally funded assets by another public or private entity for non-transit purposes. The non-transit activity may not reduce or limit transit service. Incidental use of federally funded assets is permitted for recipients of funding under all FTA grant programs.

### **How Can Incidental Use Help My Community Respond to COVID-19?**

In response to the COVID-19 public health emergency, many transit providers have reduced service and have idle assets, such as buses, vans, transit stations and garages, that may be used for non-transit purposes under the incidental use policy to provide services to communities.

Transit systems may partner with local Public Housing Authorities (PHAs), Tribes and Tribally Designated Housing Entities (TDHEs), and other community partners to use transit vehicles, facilities, or equipment to deliver essential services that help provide the community with safety and security or access to food, shelter, medical care, and communications infrastructure. Examples include, but are not limited to, meal, grocery, and prescription medicine delivery, transportation to feeding sites, and establishing mobile Wi-Fi hotspots for community members who may not have access to the internet.



**THIS BUS IS  
(( Wi Fi ))  
ENABLED**

#### *Examples of Incidental Use Addressing Community Needs*

- 1) In Columbus, Ohio, the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) partnered with Columbus City Schools and the Central Ohio YMCA to provide Wi-Fi hotspots to school children. COTA parked transit vehicles at the YMCA, allowing children access to the Wi-Fi.
- 2) In Austin, Texas, Capital Metro partnered with Austin Independent School District to provide Wi-Fi hotspots to students living in neighborhoods with the greatest need. The Mobile Hot Spot program was able to serve students from Austin schools, Del Valle schools, and Promesas Public School. Additionally, Capital Metro supported the Housing Authority of the City of Austin and Austin schools to deliver laptops and hot spots to students.

## **How Do We Pay for Operating Costs of Incidental Use?**

FTA funding may be used to pay for the associated operational costs of providing essential services through the incidental use of transit assets.

- 1) The CARES Act provided \$25 billion for the public transit agencies to respond to and recover from COVID-19. CARES Act funds may be used for operating expenses, including the operational costs of providing essential services, at 100% Federal share.
- 2) Urbanized Area and Rural Area formula funding (Section 5307 and 5311 funds, respectively) are apportioned to FTA funding recipients every year. Any available Section 5307 or 5311 funds that have not been expended may be used by any recipient of Section 5307 and 5311 funds to pay for 100 percent of the operational costs associated with the provision of essential services in response to COVID-19.

The use of CARES Act, Section 5307, or Section 5311 funds to pay for the operating expenses associated with incidental use of their federally funded assets for essential services is at the discretion of the FTA funding recipient. When using FTA funding for operating expenses associated with incidental use for essential services, the FTA funding recipient must make sure an appropriate operating assistance line item is included in its grant application prior to drawing down funds. The use of FTA funds to pay for essential services that do not involve the incidental use of a transit asset is not permitted.

Some essential services are also eligible for funding under the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Public Assistance program. FTA recommends that recipients check with their State Office of Emergency Services to determine whether those resources are available, or to seek reimbursement from the entity requesting the service. A recipient may charge only costs not covered by other entities to an FTA grant. For more information and contacts for your locality, please visit FEMA's [website](#).

### **Use of Existing Assets**

During the public health emergency, prior approval for the incidental use of facilities, vehicles, or equipment for the provision of essential services is not required, although the FTA regional office should be notified.

### **Getting Started**

The National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM) is an FTA-funded national technical assistance center that can act as a broker, connecting PHAs, tribes, TDHEs, and other community organizations to local public transportation providers. For help making your connection, reach out to the [NCMM liaison](#) assigned to your region.

### **Other Helpful Links for FTA Grant Recipients and their Community Partners**

[List of local Public Housing Authorities](#)

[National Directory of Tribes and Tribally Designated Housing Authorities](#)

[Lists of transit public transportation agencies and State Departments of Transportation](#)