



INDIANA DISPATCH

*A Newsletter for Indiana's
Transportation Professionals*



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DRIVER SPOTLIGHT & TRAINING

MASTER THE TRANSIT WAGON: WHY THE INDIANA ROADEO CONTINUES TO MATTER

**A day of training, competition, and recognition brought Indiana's
transit professionals together**



Mastering the Transit Wagon

The annual Indiana Paratransit Rodeo was held on April 11 at the Columbus Municipal Airport, bringing together drivers, managers, and agencies for a day focused on skill-building, recognition, and connection.

More than a competition, the Rodeo once again demonstrated its value as a hands-on training opportunity,

reinforcing best practices, strengthening driver performance, and supporting high-quality transit service across Indiana

PARTICIPANTS IN THE ROADEO EXPERIENCED

- Hands-on training
- Time with peers (networking)
- Reinforced safety skills



INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
Driving Indiana's Economic Growth

What is the Roadeo?

The Roadeo is a driver-focused event designed to evaluate and strengthen essential transit skills through a series of practical and knowledge-based challenges. It is the only event dedicated specifically to recognizing the unique skill set of transit drivers while also providing meaningful training opportunities.

Drivers of all experience levels participated, gaining valuable experience that directly translates to daily operations.

Skills Built At The Event

Pre-Trip Inspection

Drivers identified preset defects within a limited time, reinforcing the importance of thorough, systematic inspections and attention to detail.

Wheelchair Securement

Participants demonstrated proper boarding, securement, and communication techniques to ensure passengers are safety and dignity.

Road Course

Drivers navigated a series of obstacles designed to simulate real-world conditions, emphasizing smooth operation, and safe maneuvering.

The Roadeo included four core events:

- **A Written Test – Reinforcing rules of the road**
- **A Pre-Trip Inspection – Building attention to detail**
- **A Wheelchair Securement – Focusing on safety and communication**
- **Road Course – Testing maneuvering and driving precision**

The Power of Connection

Throughout the day, drivers and managers had the opportunity to connect, share ideas, and learn from one another. These interactions continue to strengthen collaboration and improve practices across agencies.

The Roadeo Continues To Be:

- A training tool
- A morale booster
- A networking opportunity
- A platform for recognition

Recognition, Pride, and Opportunity

The Roadeo highlighted the important role drivers play in delivering safe, reliable transportation—often in a demanding and under-recognized profession.

Participating agencies used the event to celebrate their drivers, promote excellence, and build a culture of appreciation.

2026 Indiana Roadeo Winners

The winner of the 2026 Indiana Roadeo was **Dereck Johnson with the City of Columbus**.

Kristie Steiner, also with the **City of Columbus**, took **second place**, and **Michael Nelson with LaGrange County Council on Aging** placed **third**.

Dereck and Kristie will be representing the state of Indiana at the CTAA National Roadeo in Omaha, Nebraska, on May 10th.

Let's wish them the best of luck as they continue "Mastering the Transit Wagon!"

The Roadeo is more than an event, it is an investment in your drivers, your service, and your community.

EMPLOYEE INCETIVE PROGRAMS: A PRACTICAL STRATEGY FOR RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

Recognition matters, but transit agencies should establish a written policy before launching any employee incentive program.

Rural transit agencies across the country continue to face growing challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified staff.

One strategy gaining traction is the implementation of employee incentive programs, an effective way to recognize performance, reinforce priorities, and improve employee satisfaction.

Before you offer incentives

A written policy should be in place before offering employee incentives.

Programs should align with personnel policies, approved budgets, and any required board approvals.

A Policy Must Be In Place First

Before offering any employee incentive, agencies should have a written policy that defines how the program will operate.

- A policy should define:
- Purpose of the program
- Eligibility requirements
- Types of incentives
- Evaluation process
- Administration approach
- Budget and approval requirements



Examples of Employee Policies

- Driver referral bonuses
- Safety recognition programs
- Attendance incentives
- Recruitment bonuses
- Professional development

Why Incentives Work

- Improve retention
- Increase engagement
- Reinforce safety
- Strengthen culture

What Makes an incentive Program Effective

- Clearly defined performance metrics
- Transparent evaluation processes
- Consistent administration
- Alignment with agency goals

Resources Are Available

Transit agencies do not have to build incentive programs from scratch. RTAP provides guidance, templates and examples.

Get Started With Confidence

Check the INRTAP website for the Transit Employee Incentive Program Guide which provides:

- Model policy framework
- Program design worksheet
- Implementation guidance

LIFT OPERATIONS & WEB LOOPS: WHAT DRIVERS SHOULD (AND SHOULD NOT) DO

Ensuring safe and consistent lift operation procedures is a critical responsibility for transit agencies and operators. The Indiana Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) continues to emphasize that safety must remain the top priority during all passenger boarding and securement activities.

RTAP recently received a question regarding whether drivers should attach securement web loops to a mobility device while the passenger remains on the lift platform at bus floor level.

The Answer: NO

Drivers should not attach securement web loops while the passenger is positioned on the lift platform. Securement should only occur once the passenger has been fully brought into the vehicle and is positioned on stable flooring.

Why This Matters

The lift platform is designed strictly as a boarding device for vertical transport—not as a securement area. Attempting to secure a passenger while on the lift introduces unnecessary risks and does not align with best practices or manufacturer guidance.

Potential hazards include:

- Increased risk of collisions while the passenger is on the platform
- Possibility of wheelchair roll-off
- Equipment malfunction or failure
- Securement web loops becoming entangled in wheels
- Snagging or improper attachment of securement devices

Best Practice for Lift Operations

To ensure the highest level of safety and consistency, drivers should follow this process:

- Operate the lift to bring the passenger to vehicle floor level
- Move the passenger fully into the vehicle without delay
- Position the mobility device in the designated securement area
- Attach all securement devices on stable, interior flooring

This approach minimizes time on the lift platform and reduces the risk of incidents during boarding.

Addressing Common Misconceptions

Some drivers may feel that attaching web loops while the lift is at floor level is easier from a physical standpoint. While accessibility may appear improved at that height, this approach does not outweigh the associated safety risks.

Drivers who have passed the required DOT physical are considered capable of performing the physical duties necessary to safely complete securement procedures inside the vehicle. Convenience should never take precedence over established safety protocols.



LIFT OPERATIONS & WEB LOOPS: WHAT DRIVERS SHOULD (AND SHOULD NOT) DO

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

Training and Compliance Expectations

RTAP training, industry best practices, and manufacturer guidance consistently support completing all securement activities inside the vehicle after boarding is complete.

Transit agencies should ensure that:

- Drivers are trained on proper lift and securement procedures
- Training is reinforced regularly through refresher sessions
- Supervisors monitor adherence to established protocols
- Safety practices are applied consistently across all operations



Key Takeaway

Lift platforms are for boarding—not securement.

By completing securement inside the vehicle on stable flooring, transit agencies can reduce risk, improve consistency, and ensure the safety of both passengers and drivers.

COMPLIANCE & BEST PRACTICES

PRE-TRIP INSPECTIONS AND EDVIR SYSTEMS: MEETING FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS IN RURAL TRANSIT

Ensuring the safe operation of transit vehicles is a fundamental responsibility for all agencies receiving funding from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). A key component of this responsibility is the implementation of a documented preventive maintenance program that includes daily pre-trip inspections.

Pre-trip inspections are not simply a routine task—they are a critical safety practice that supports compliance, reduces risk, and ensures vehicles are safe for passenger service.

Federal Expectations for Pre-Trip Inspections

All FTA-funded transit agencies are required to maintain a documented preventive maintenance plan that includes daily pre-trip inspections conducted by the vehicle operator.

Operators must:

- Inspect the vehicle before it enters service
- Confirm that it is safe to operate
- Identify and document any defects
- Complete a Driver Vehicle Inspection Report (DVIR) each day

These requirements align with practices outlined by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), which provides detailed procedures for maintaining vehicle safety and reliability.

PRE-TRIP INSPECTIONS AND EDVIR SYSTEMS: MEETING FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS IN RURAL TRANSIT

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4)

ADA Equipment Must Be Included

Pre-trip inspections must also include all ADA-related accessibility equipment to ensure safe and accessible service for passengers with disabilities.

This includes:

- Wheelchair lifts and ramps
- Securement systems
- Occupant restraint devices
- Interlocks, alarms, and lift indicators

Failure to properly inspect these components can impact both safety and compliance.

Why Compliance Matters

Pre-trip inspections and preventive maintenance are essential not only for safety—but also for maintaining eligibility for federal and state funding.

Transit agencies must demonstrate that:

- Vehicles are in a state of good repair
- Safety equipment is functioning properly
- Inspection and maintenance processes are consistently followed

Failure to meet these expectations can result in compliance findings and may place funding at risk.

Core Components of a Pre-Trip Inspection

While agencies may expand their inspection checklists, the following components represent a recommended baseline:

Engine Compartment

- Oil, coolant, and transmission fluid levels
- Belts, hoses, and pulleys
- Battery condition
- Evidence of leaks

Exterior and Safety Devices

- Lights and turn signals
- Mirrors and windshield condition
- Windshield wipers
- Body damage or loose components

Tires and Wheels

- Tire pressure and tread depth
- Rim condition
- Secure lug nuts

Emergency Equipment

- Fire extinguisher
- First aid kit
- Reflective triangles
- Bloodborne pathogen kit
- Seat belt cutter

Interior Safety

- Driver and passenger seating
- Emergency exits and alarms
- Interior lighting and warning systems

ADA Equipment

- Lift and ramp functionality
- Securement systems
- Safety interlocks
- Audible and visual alerts



PRE-TRIP INSPECTIONS AND EDVIR SYSTEMS: MEETING FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS IN RURAL TRANSIT

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5)

Best Practices for Inspection and Documentation

To maintain compliance and ensure safety, agencies should implement consistent inspection and documentation practices.

Best practices include:

- Reviewing previous DVIRs before operating the vehicle
- Verifying that all reported defects have been repaired
- Documenting all new defects clearly and accurately
- Ensuring vehicles are not placed into service until safe
- Maintaining a consistent and auditable inspection process

Structured processes help reduce errors and prevent incomplete or inaccurate reporting.

Transitioning to Electronic DVIR (eDVIR) Systems

Many transit agencies are transitioning from paper-based inspection reports to electronic DVIR (eDVIR) systems. These systems are fully permissible under federal regulations and are becoming an industry standard.

eDVIR systems can:

- Improve accuracy and legibility
- Reduce administrative workload
- Increase visibility into maintenance issues
- Strengthen compliance and audit readiness



Key Requirements of a Compliant eDVIR System

To meet federal expectations, an eDVIR system should include:

1. Defect Documentation

Operators must be able to clearly record and classify defects

2. Electronic Signature Capability

Drivers must certify inspections with a secure, time-stamped signature

3. Repair Certification Workflow

Maintenance staff must document completed repairs and link them to reported defects

4. Record Retention

Inspection and repair records must be securely stored and accessible

5. Audit Accessibility

Systems must allow quick retrieval of records for audits and compliance reviews

Resources and Support

The Indiana Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) recommends the use of its standardized pre-trip inspection template when developing inspection processes.

This template supports:

- Consistent safety checks
- Comprehensive ADA compliance
- Alignment with FMCSA categories
- Improved usability for drivers and staff

Key Takeaway

Pre-trip inspections are not optional—they are a daily requirement that directly impacts safety, compliance, and funding.

By implementing consistent inspection practices and leveraging tools such as eDVIR systems, transit agencies can strengthen operations, reduce risk, and ensure continued service to their communities.

PASSENGER ASSISTANCE: WHEN TO CHECK YOUR POLICY

Not every situation a driver encounters follows a standard training scenario. From unique passenger needs to unexpected equipment challenges, real-world conditions can require quick judgment and decision-making.

When situations fall outside routine procedures, agency policies and established guidance should be the primary reference point.

Why It Matters

Clear expectations help ensure that decisions made in the field are consistent, appropriate, and aligned with agency standards. This supports:

- Consistent service across drivers and shifts
- Confident decision-making in unfamiliar situations
- Reinforcement of training through real-world application
- Safety for both passengers and drivers

“Good training builds confidence, clear policy helps guide the moments in between.”

In Practice

When a situation is unclear, drivers should:

- Follow established procedures
- Prioritize safety
- Communicate with dispatch or a supervisor when needed

Key Takeaway

Training provides the foundation—but policy provides the direction when situations don’t follow the script. Consistent application of both ensures safe, reliable service for all passengers.

NEWS & UPDATES

INDIANA RTAP NEWS & UPDATES

The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) Office of Transit continues to advance key initiatives supporting transit systems across the state. The following updates highlight important program activities, deadlines, and upcoming opportunities.

Grants & Contracts

- CY2026 contracts and purchase orders have been executed for applicable recipients.
- Copies are available within the BlackCat Management System under the Contracts Module.

Upcoming Grant Applications

- Section 5311/5339 grant applications became available on March 18, 2026.
- Applications must be submitted by May 15, 2026.
- All current recipients will receive automatic notification through BlackCat.

Agencies are encouraged to review the **BlackCat Module Training/Guides** for step-by-step application support.

Training Opportunity

- INDOT has scheduled the CY2026 North/South Training for June 17, 2026.
- This will be a single-day training.
- At least one representative from each 5311 agency is required to attend.
- Location details will be shared once finalized.

Statewide Initiatives

Transit Director Listening Tour

INDOT Transit Office Director Larry Buckel will be visiting transit systems across the state to meet with agency staff, tour facilities, and gather feedback.

These visits are intended to:

- Strengthen collaboration
- Provide an opportunity for open dialogue
- Gain insight into system operations and challenges

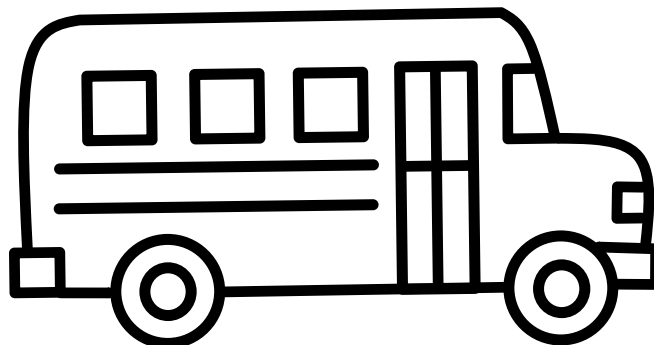
Agencies are encouraged to share preferred dates or coordinate directly for scheduling.

Compliance & Reviews

- The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has initiated the State Management Review (SMR) for INDOT.
- Selected 5311 recipients may be included as part of this review.
- INDOT will notify agencies and provide preparation guidance as needed.

Vehicle Procurement Update

- The State Quantity Purchase Agreement (QPA) for vehicle procurement is currently pending final execution.
- This contract must be in place before agencies can place new vehicle orders.
- INDOT will provide instructions once the contract is finalized.



UPCOMING INRTAP TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

April 2026

4/24/2026 (9:00-5:00) -
Passenger Assistance
Techniques (PAT) @ Jasper Co.,
Rensselaer

4/24/2026 (9:00 - 5:00) -
Passenger Assistance
Techniques (PAT) @RTAP
Training Center, Columbus

4/30/2026 (10:00 - 12:00) -
Emergency Procedures and
Evacuation Webinar

May, 2026

5/1/2026 (9:00 - 5:00) -
Passenger Assistance
Techniques (PAT) @RTAP
Training Center, Columbus

5/5/2026 (1:00 - 3:00) - Pre-
Trip Inspection Webinar

5/19/2026 (9:00-5:00) -
Passenger Assistance
Techniques (PAT) @ Boone Co,
Lebanon

5/19/2026 (10:00 - 12:00) -
Defensive Driving Webinar

5/26/2026 (1:00 - 3:00) -
Emergency Procedures and
Evacuation Webinar

5/28/2026 (9:00-5:00) -
Passenger Assistance
Techniques (PAT) @ Paul
Phillips Resource Center,
Frankfort

June, 2026

6/2/2026 (9:00-5:00) -
Manager/Supervisor
Passenger Assistance
Techniques @ Carroll Co,
Delphi

6/4/2026 (1:00 - 3:00) -
Defensive Driving Webinar

6/9/2026 (1:00 - 3:00) -
Diversity & Sensitivity in
Transit Webinar

6/18/2026 (1:00 - 3:00) - Pre-
Trip Inspection Webinar

6/25/2026 (9:00-5:00) -
Passenger Assistance
Techniques (PAT) @ Noble Co,
Kendallville

6/26/2026 (9:00 - 5:00) -
Passenger Assistance
Techniques (PAT) @RTAP
Training Center, Columbus

6/30/2026 (1:00 - 3:00) -
Emergency Procedures and
Evacuation Webinar



July 2026

7/28/2026 (9:00-5:00) -
Passenger Assistance Techniques
(PAT) @ Boone Co, Lebanon

September 2026

9/24/2026 (9:00-5:00) -
Passenger Assistance Techniques
(PAT) @ New Horizonz,
Batesville



Training Calendar

Please remember to check out the [Home](#) page and the [Training](#) page on the INRTAP website for most current training information. Trainings are constantly being added so check in often!

In order to register for a training, please navigate to the [Training Calendar](#) on the INRTAP website in order to register.