



Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Guidance for Texas Transportation Organizations

Preventing the Spread of Disease

Key Messages:

- Transportation organizations can take steps to stop the spread of COVID-19.
- Effective prevention of disease transmission in public transportation will require a combination of non-pharmaceutical measures.
- Transportation organizations should consult with [their local public health organization](#) and emergency preparedness/management officials to create a plan.
- For examples of Texas transit providers' plans for responding to COVID-19, visit: <https://www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/division/public-transportation/covid-19-response-information.html>

Measures to Prevent the Spread of Disease

The most important steps that transportation organizations can take to prevent the spread of disease include:

1. Increased cleaning and disinfection of transportation assets.

Vehicles, stationary public area, and work areas should be cleaned regularly. High-touch surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected at least once a day. High-touch surfaces include kiosks, turnstiles, benches, railings, handrails, garbage cans, door handles, payphones, restroom surfaces (faucets, toilets, counters), poles, handrails, seats, benches, grab bars, and exit buttons.

Depending on the status of COVID-19 transmission in the community, more frequent disinfection of high-touch surfaces may be appropriate. Additional cleaning and disinfection protocols may be implemented when a passenger or vehicle operator is confirmed to have COVID-19.

Recommendations:

- Transportation organizations should determine what supplies need to be kept in stock to ensure sufficient cleaning and disinfection.
- If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.

- Products registered with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for use against novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 (the cause of COVID-19) are expected to be effective against COVID-19 based on data for harder-to-kill viruses. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.). See this [list of products](#) registered with EPA for use against novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2.
- Consider installing hand sanitation stations with hand sanitizer dispensers and wipes at facilities and stations.
- For soft or porous surfaces such as carpeted floor, rugs, and drapes, remove visible contamination if present and clean with appropriate cleaners indicated for use on these surfaces.
- Staff should be trained on use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and wear PPE in accordance with the disinfectant manufacturer's instructions while cleaning and disinfecting. After removing PPE, staff should wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

2. Engineering controls to separate people.

- Examples include installation of plexiglass barriers to separate ticket sellers and vehicle operators from passengers.

3. Administrative controls to keep employees involved in infection prevention efforts.

- Staff should be appropriately trained on all plans, policies, and procedures to [prevent the spread of disease](#).
- A policy should be in place requiring vehicle operators to practice appropriate hand hygiene, frequently washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or using hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol when soap and water are not readily available.
- Staff should be actively encouraged to stay home when they are sick. Staff who appear to have symptoms (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) upon arrival at work or who become sick during the day should be immediately separated from other staff and sent home. If a staff is confirmed to have COVID-19 infection, then employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

4. Provision of task-appropriate PPE to workforce.

- Vehicle operators and other staff should be provided with and required to use task-appropriate personal protective equipment.

- When performing environmental cleaning, staff should wear PPE in accordance with the disinfectant manufacturer’s instructions. After removing PPE, staff should wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) currently does not recommend use of facemasks or N95 respirators for transit agencies and workers for non-cleaning activities.

5. Enforcement of social distancing (keeping at least 6 feet of distance between people).

Examples of actions to encourage social distancing include:

- Post “skip a seat” signs to increase space between passengers.
- Ask passengers (except those who need to use the lift, ramp, or “kneeling” feature) to enter buses through the rear door to minimize contact with vehicle operators.
- Post signs and play announcements telling staff and riders how they can [protect themselves and others from COVID-19](#).
- Use a radio or phone to talk to managers and other drivers.
- Maintain separation in dispatch areas, locker rooms, fueling stations, and when working in places where there is likely to be a group of people.

Service Provision

Transportation organizations are likely to be faced with two challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic: increased employee absenteeism and the need to implement social distancing and other measures to prevent the spread of disease. This may require transportation organizations to determine which functions are essential during the COVID-19 pandemic. Strategies for continued provision of essential transportation functions may include:

- Service reductions
- Route modifications
- Shutdown of non-essential functions

Paratransit Operation

Paratransit is a critical service for many customers. Consider [developing a plan or handling paratransit operations](#) if your organization offers one.

- Consider reducing number of trips.
- Engage staff to contact major facilities, dialysis centers, and paratransit subscription holders, and plan services accordingly.
- Consider suspending in-person assessments and extend recertifications.

Ill Passengers

It is possible that persons exhibiting [symptoms of COVID-19](#) (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) will attempt to use public transportation. Transportation organizations must establish clear safety protocols to address this and train all staff members accordingly.

Examples of actions transportation providers can take include:

- Deny service or provide reasonable accommodation.
- Require sick riders to wear a surgical mask.
- Use environmental controls such as physical barriers or stand-off zones.
- Provide hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes to passengers.
- Perform enhanced or more frequent vehicle and structure disinfection.

Workforce Considerations

Worker safety and a healthy and safe workplace must be the highest priority for transportation organizations. This will allow for the continued fulfillment of essential functions. Transportation agencies will likely need to modify staffing patterns during the COVID-19 pandemic to address challenges such as:

- Widespread absenteeism due to illness or fear of exposure.
- Reduced routes or services.
- Need for additional or temporarily reassigned staff to perform environmental cleaning and disinfection.
- Higher levels of stress.
 - Encourage staff to take rest breaks and getting enough sleep.
 - Foster work-life balance for drivers and other staff as much as possible.

Additionally, organizations should set expectations related to:

- When staffing level reductions will be implemented.
- How and when employees should provide notification of symptoms or possible infection or exposure.
 - Employees who have [symptoms of COVID-19](#) (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) should notify their supervisor and stay home.
- [Quarantine following suspected exposure](#) or [isolation of confirmed COVID-19 cases](#), in accordance with local, state, and federal guidance.
 - Employees should not return to work until the criteria to [discontinue home isolation](#) are met, in consultation with healthcare providers and state and local health departments.

- Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 should notify their supervisor and follow [CDC-recommended precautions](#).
- When ill employees will be allowed to return to work.
 - Sick employees should follow [CDC-recommended steps](#). Employees should not return to work until the criteria to [discontinue home isolation](#) are met, in consultation with healthcare providers and state and local health departments.

Adapted from the National Cooperative Highway Research Program, *Report 769: A Guide for Public Transportation Pandemic Planning and Response* (<http://www.trb.org/Publications/Blurbs/170529.aspx>), and the Federal Transit Administration, *Frequently Asked Questions from FTA Grantees Regarding Coronavirus Disease 2019* (<https://www.transit.dot.gov/frequently-asked-questions-fta-grantees-regarding-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>)

Additional Resources:

- American Public Transportation Association: <https://www.apta.com/public-transit-response-to-coronavirus/>
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration: <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html>