

# NTD

National Transit Database  
Federal Transit Administration



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**Internet Reporting Login**  
Password and ID Required

[What is the NTD?](#) ➤

## Reporting Manuals

[Annual Reporting](#) ➤

[Monthly Reporting](#) ➤

[Safety and Security Reporting](#) ➤

[Rural Reporting](#) ➤

[Sampling Manual](#) ➤

[Small Systems Waiver Manual](#) ➤

## Data, Publications and Reference Materials

[NTD Glossary](#) ➤

[NTD Reference Materials](#) ➤

[Access NTD Data](#) ➤

## NTD Resources

[FTA / NTD Presentations, Announcements and Updates](#) ➤

[NTD Feedback](#) ➤

[Seminars and Training](#) ➤

[Transit Agency Listing by Region and Other External Links](#) ➤

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[Site Map](#) | [Accessibility Information](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [NTD Privacy Notice](#) | [E-mail Webmaster](#)



**Welcome to the National Transit Database**

[Home](#)

Today the transit industry consists of over 140,000 vehicles, traveling over 48 billion passenger miles, and collecting over \$8.5 billion in passenger fares. In the past 10 years the transit industry has grown by over 20 percent - faster than either highway or air travel. As the industry continues to grow, every indication is that the NTD will continue to expand both in scope and use in the years to come.

[What is the NTD Program?](#)

[History of the NTD and Transit in the U.S.](#)

[About the NTD / How to Apply for a Reporting ID](#)

[Overview of NTD Internet Reporting System Forms](#)

**What is the NTD Program?**

The NTD was established by Congress to be the Nation's primary source for information and statistics on the transit systems of the United States. Recipients or beneficiaries of grants from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) under the [Urbanized Area Formula Program](#) (§5307) or [Other than Urbanized Area \(Rural\) Formula Program](#) (§5311) are required by statute to submit data to the NTD. Over 660 transit providers in urbanized areas currently report to the NTD through the Internet-based reporting system. Each year, NTD performance data are used to apportion over \$5 billion of FTA funds to transit agencies in [urbanized areas](#) (UZAs). Annual NTD reports are submitted to Congress summarizing transit service and safety data.

The legislative requirement for the NTD is found in Title 49 U.S.C. 5335(a):

**SECTION 5335 National transit database**

(a) NATIONAL TRANSIT DATABASE — To help meet the needs of individual public transportation systems, the United States Government, State and local governments, and the public for information on which to base public transportation service planning, the Secretary of Transportation shall maintain a reporting system, using uniform categories to accumulate public transportation financial and operating information and using a uniform system of accounts. The reporting and uniform systems shall contain appropriate information to help any level of government make a public sector investment decision. The Secretary may request and receive appropriate information from any source.

(b) REPORTING AND UNIFORM SYSTEMS — the Secretary may award a grant under Section 5307 or 5311 only if the applicant and any person that will receive benefits directly from the grant, are subject to the reporting and uniform systems.

The NTD reporting system evolved from the transit industry-initiated Project [FARE](#) (Uniform Financial Accounting and Reporting Elements). Both the private and public sectors have recognized the importance of timely and accurate data in assessing the continued progress of the nation's public transportation systems.

**History of the NTD and Transit in the US**

- 1630 Reputed first publicly operated ferryboat (Boston, MA)
- 1740 Reputed first use of ox carts for carrying of passengers (New York, NY)
- 1811 First mechanically operated (steam-powered) ferryboat (New York, NY)
- 1827 Horse-drawn omnibus begins service along Broadway (New York, NY)
- 1830 First railroad (Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Co.) (Baltimore, MD)
- 1832 First streetcar in America; horse-drawn rail cars begin service along the Bowery (New York, NY)
- 1835 Oldest street railway line still operating (New Orleans & Carrollton line) (New Orleans, LA)
- 1838 First commuter fares on a railroad (Boston & West Worcester Railroad) (Boston, MA)
- 1856 First fare-free promotion (Boston, MA)
- 1863 First subway in the world; trains hauled by steam engines begin service (London, England)
- 1868 First cable-powered (and first elevated) line (West Side & Yonkers Patent Railway) (New York, NY)
- 1870 First pneumatic-powered (and first underground) line (Beach Pneumatic Railroad Co.) (New York, NY)
- 1871 First steam-powered elevated line (New York Elevated Railroad Co.) (New York, NY)
- 1873 First cable car in the world runs up Clay Street (San Francisco, CA)
- 1883 First publicly operated cable-powered line (Brooklyn Bridge) (New York, NY)
- 1884 First electric street railway line (East Cleveland Street Railway) (Cleveland, OH)
- 1886 First semi-successful citywide street railway transit agency (Capital City Street Railway Co.) (Montgomery, AL)
- 1888 First successful electric street railway (Richmond, VA)
- 1893 First interurban rail line (East Side Railway Co.) (Portland, OR)
- 1895 First electric elevated rail line (Metropolitan West Side Elevated Railway) (Chicago, IL)
- 1897 First American subway (Boston, MA)



## About the NTD / How to Apply for a Reporting ID

[Home](#)

[Small Systems Waiver \(Thirty or Fewer\) and Full Annual Reporters NTD ID Request letter template and forms necessary to obtain an NTD ID Number](#)

[Planning or Capital Grants Reporters NTD ID Request letter template and forms necessary to obtain an NTD ID Number](#)

### Who Reports

**Section 5307 Program:** Recipients or beneficiaries of FTA's Urbanized Area Formula Program (Section 5307) must obtain an NTD ID number and file regular reports to the National Transit Database. Transit systems with Thirty or Fewer vehicles are eligible for reduced reporting requirements, but still must obtain an NTD ID number and file an Annual Report.

**Voluntary Reporters:** FTA also accepts NTD reports from other transit systems serving urbanized areas, both public and private, on a voluntary basis. FTA evaluates NTD ID applications from these transit systems to determine that they provide public transportation services. Voluntary reporters must meet all of the same reporting obligations as mandatory reporters.

**Section 5311 Program:** Recipients or beneficiaries of FTA's Other Than Urbanized Area Formula Program (Section 5311) must report to the Rural Module of the NTD. They do not need to apply for an NTD ID unless they receive or benefit from the Section 5307 Program. FTA assigns NTD IDs for the Rural Module to each of the States and Indian Tribes are direct FTA grantees in the Section 5311 Program. States and Tribes then file reports on behalf of their subrecipients – subrecipients in the Section 5311 Program do not report directly to the Rural NTD Module. For more information on Rural Reporting, please contact Lauren Tuzikow at (202) 366-2059.

### What to Report

All reporters must file a complete report for all of their transit-related activities. This includes all transit service using funds from Section 5307, Section 5311, other Federal programs, state, local, or private funding. Additionally, the report must include both directly operated (DO) services and purchased transportation (PT) services contracted to a private provider.

Activities not related to public transportation, however, are generally excluded from NTD reporting. Applicants for an NTD ID that also do intercity, charter, or sight-seeing operations must indicate how they will allocate shared costs (e.g. administrative overhead) between public and non-transit activities in their NTD report.

### Who Requests an NTD ID for Urbanized Area Reporting?

FTA assigns NTD IDs either to the Section 5307 grant recipient, or to the record-keeping unit of a transit provider. A record-keeping unit is one that can meet NTD's reporting requirements for financial revenues, operating and capital expenditures, and service operations, and is subject to an annual financial audit. For example, a satellite bus garage would not be assigned its own NTD ID if its financial and operating data are kept by a central administrative office that oversees the transit operations of several bus garages.

A transit provider is an entity that provides directly operated transit service, purchased transportation transit service, or both.

- Directly operated service occurs when the reporter uses its employees to operate the transit vehicles.
- Purchased-transportation occurs when the reporter competitively seeks a private operator to provide some or all of their transit services. Typically, this is done through a request for proposals (RFP). The transit agency normally sets the conditions for service, i.e., service area, routes, schedules or hours of operation, and fares. The selected operator makes direct employment decisions (i.e. hiring and firing) of the service operators.

In many cases, two public entities may have a contractual relationship with each other for the operation of transit service. The arrangement may not be a competitive contract as described for private operators, but rather a funding agreement for service between a "buyer" and a "seller" of service. In these cases, FTA prefers that the public entity that is physically operating the service report the service under its own NTD ID, but in some cases the public entity paying for the service may be approved as the reporter of the service under its own NTD ID. In either case, services operated as the result of a contractual agreement between two public entities are always reported to the NTD as "directly operated" service.

### Urbanized Area Reporting

Transit systems serving urbanized areas must report to the Annual Module, as well as more-frequent reports to the Monthly Module and to the Safety & Security Module. For more information on these requirements, please consult the relevant Reporting Manuals.

There are four major classes of urbanized area reporters:

- Full Reporters: Transit systems filing an individual report to the NTD fall into this category, unless they qualify for and request one of the two types of waivers listed below.
- Consolidated Reporters: One reporter may file a consolidated report on behalf of multiple small transit systems if it is easier to collect and control the quality of the data. This often occurs when one transit agency coordinates the development and funding of public transportation services over a large area. Transit agencies filing a consolidated report must operate within the same UZA.
- 30 or Fewer Vehicles Waiver: A transit system that operates 30 or fewer vehicles in annual maximum service may request a 30 or Fewer Vehicles waiver for significantly reduced reporting requirements in the Annual Module, and exemption from reporting to the Monthly and Safety & Security Module. If you also receive Section 5311 funds, you must submit your rural data through your State DOT to the [Rural Module](#).
- Grants Waiver: Some recipients of 5307 funding do not operate service. These are generally Metropolitan Planning Organizations who are either engaged in transit planning or in purchasing capital items for future services. As these reporters do not operate service, there are significantly reduced reporting requirements.

### When Do Reporting Requirements Begin?

Recipients or beneficiaries must begin reporting to the NTD for whichever is earlier of:

- The year after they apply for a Section 5307 Grant in TEAM
- The year in which they first draw down Section 5307 funds

Prospective grantees must apply for an NTD ID sufficiently in advance to meet NTD reporting deadlines.