

## Frequently Asked Questions

# Wearing of Face Masks While on Conveyances and at Transportation Hubs

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued an [Order](#) on January 29, 2021, requiring the wearing of masks by travelers to prevent spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. Conveyance operators must also require that all persons wear masks when boarding, disembarking, and for the duration of travel, with certain exemptions as described in the Questions below. The Order defines “conveyance” as including “aircraft, train, road vehicle (including rideshares), vessel...or other means of transport, including military transport.” (42 CFR §§ 70.1, 71.1). Operators of transportation hubs must require all persons wear a mask when entering or on the premises of a transportation hub. A “transportation hub” means any airport, bus terminal, marina, seaport, or other port, subway station, terminal, train station, U.S. port of entry, or any other location that provides transportation”. More information about this order can be found on the [CDC’s website](#), including CDC’s FAQ’s for this mask requirement, [here](#).

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has issued an emergency amendment and three security directives in support of the CDC Order. They can be found [here](#). SD 1582/84-21-01 pertains directly to owners and operators of ground transport. The other three pertain to the aviation industry. For more information about the TSA’s COVID-19 prevention efforts visit their [COVID-19 hub](#), or their

To assist ground transportation operators in the implementation of the Order and the Directive, the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) compiled a list of questions and answers, and will continue to update them as additional information becomes available.

The USDOT will also continue to engage stakeholders in conjunction with the CDC and other Federal agencies.

For air transportation operators, please see FAA’s [Fly Healthy web page](#) for more information.

### [General](#)

[Federal Aviation Administration \(FAA\)](#)

[Federal Transit Administration \(FTA\)](#)

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[Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration \(FMCSA\)](#)

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## General

### [What is the CDC’s Order and who does it apply to?](#)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued an Order on January 29, 2021, requiring the wearing of masks by travelers to prevent spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. Conveyance operators must require all persons to wear masks when boarding, disembarking, and for the duration of travel. Operators of transportation hubs must require all persons to wear a mask when entering or on the premises of a transportation hub.

This Order must be followed by all passengers on public conveyances (e.g., airplanes, ships, ferries, trains, subways, buses, taxis, rideshares) traveling into, within, or out of the United States as well as conveyance operators (e.g., crew, drivers, conductors, and other workers involved in the operation of conveyances) and operators of transportation hubs (e.g., airports, bus or ferry

terminals, train or subway stations, seaports, ports of entry) or any other area that provides transportation in the United States.

People must wear masks that cover both the mouth and nose when awaiting, boarding, traveling on, or disembarking public conveyances. People must also wear masks when entering or on the premises of a transportation hub in the United States.

### [What does the CDC Order require?](#)

The CDC Order requires conveyance operators to use their best efforts to ensure that persons wear masks while boarding and disembarking a conveyance, for the duration of a trip, and within a transportation hub. Best efforts may include:

- Boarding and allowing entry to only those persons who wear masks;
- Instructing persons that Federal law requires wearing a mask on the conveyance and in the transportation hub and failure to comply constitutes a violation of Federal law;
- Monitoring persons onboard conveyances and in facilities for anyone who is not wearing a mask and seeking compliance from such persons;
- At the earliest opportunity, disembarking any person who refuses to comply; and
- Providing persons with prominent and adequate notice to facilitate awareness and compliance of the requirement to wear a mask, with best practices including, if feasible, advance notifications on digital platforms, such as on apps, websites, or email; posted signage in multiple languages with illustrations; printing the requirement on tickets; and other methods as appropriate.

Best efforts should take into consideration the safety of conveyance operators when identifying roles and responsibilities for implementing the CDC Order.

### [What if we have a local mask mandate already in place?](#)

The CDC Order does not apply within any state, locality, territory, or area under the jurisdiction of a tribe that: (1) requires a person to wear a mask on conveyances; (2) requires a person to wear a mask at transportation hubs; and (3) requires conveyances to transport only a person wearing a mask. Such state, local, territorial, or tribal requirements must provide the same level of public health protection as—or greater protection than—the requirements of the CDC Order. In addition, the CDC Order does not preclude operators from imposing additional requirements or conditions that provide greater public health protection and are more restrictive than the requirements of the CDC Order.

### [How does CDC define mask?](#)

*Mask* means a material covering the nose and mouth of the wearer, excluding face shields. CDC guidance for acceptable masks in the context of this Order is available [here](#).

### [Are there any exemptions to the CDC Order?](#)

The CDC Order exempts the following categories of persons:

- A child under the age of 2 years;
- A person with a disability who cannot wear a mask, or cannot safely wear a mask, because of the disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. § 12101 *et seq.*); and
- A person for whom wearing a mask would create a risk to workplace health, safety, or job duty as determined by the relevant workplace safety guidelines or federal regulations.

The exemption for a person with a disability is a narrow exception that includes a person with a disability who cannot wear a mask for reasons related to the disability. CDC will issue additional guidance regarding persons who cannot wear a mask under this exemption [here](#).

The CDC Order also states that the requirement to wear a mask shall not apply under the following circumstances:

- While eating, drinking, or taking medication, for brief periods;
- While communicating with a person who is hearing impaired when the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication;
- If unconscious (for reasons other than sleeping), incapacitated, unable to be awakened, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance; or
- When necessary to temporarily remove the mask to verify one's identity, such as when asked to do so by a ticket or gate agent or any law enforcement official.

In addition, persons who are experiencing difficulty breathing or shortness of breath or are feeling winded may remove the mask temporarily until able to resume normal breathing with the mask. Persons who are vomiting should remove the mask until vomiting ceases. Persons with acute illness may remove the mask if it interferes with necessary medical care such as supplemental oxygen administered via an oxygen mask.

### [Are conveyance operators permitted to impose additional requirements or conditions regarding masks?](#)

Yes. The CDC Order does not preclude operators from imposing additional requirements or conditions that provide greater public health protection and are more restrictive than the requirements of the CDC Order. The Order also encourages, State, local, territorial, and tribal governmental entities that operate conveyances to implement additional measures to enforce the Order regarding persons utilizing their system. Additional requirements or conditions may be imposed that provide greater public health protection and are more restrictive than the requirements of the CDC Order, including requirements for persons requesting an exemption from the mask requirement, including medical consultation by a third party, medical documentation by a licensed medical provider, and/or other information as determined by the operator.

### [How long is the CDC Order in effect?](#)

The effective date of the CDC Order is February 1, 2021, at 11:59 p.m. The Order will remain in effect for the duration of the COVID-19 public health emergency, and as determined by the CDC.

## Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)

For air transportation operators, please see FAA's [Fly Healthy web page](#) for more information.

## Federal Transit Administration (FTA)

### [Are transit operators considered a public conveyance?](#)

Yes.

### [Is Federal funding available to support implementation of the CDC Order?](#)

Yes. FTA recipients may use the \$39 billion in Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) and Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021 (CRRSAA) funds to implement the CDC Order. Operating expenses incurred beginning on January 20, 2020, for all rural, and small and large urban recipients, also are eligible to draw from FTA urbanized area and rural formula funds, including operating expenses to purchase and provide face masks to employees or

passengers, install additional cameras in transit vehicles, hire additional transit security personnel, and/or enter into additional contracts for security services to implement the CDC Order. Federal Emergency Management Agency funding also may be available.

### [Who should I contact if I have questions about the face mask requirement for transit?](#)

Please submit your questions about the implementation of the CDC Order for public transit to [TransitMaskUp@dot.gov](mailto:TransitMaskUp@dot.gov).

### [What technical assistance will FTA provide to support implementation of the CDC Order?](#)

In coordination with Federal partners, FTA will support transit's implementation of the CDC Order, with a focus on leveraging its existing technical assistance and stakeholder engagement platforms, including the following:

- Coordinating and publishing FAQs with Federal partners to provide the transit industry with guidance on implementing requirements of E.O. 13998, the CDC Order, the TSA Security Directive, and applicable Federal guidance.

FTA will post responses to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on the DOT FAQ page. Please submit your questions about the implementation of the CDC Order for public transit to [TransitMaskUp@dot.gov](mailto:TransitMaskUp@dot.gov).

Additionally, in accordance with Executive Order 13166, FTA will ensure that FAQs will be made available in languages other than English, to ensure access for individuals with limited English proficiency.

- Hosting industry-wide stakeholder calls, weekly during February and as needed, to deliver key messages on the mask requirement to a broad transit audience.
- Hosting listening sessions with transit stakeholders to provide an opportunity for transit agencies across the United States to share their experiences and lessons learned as they implement a mask requirement and respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency.  
When necessary, FTA will ensure these sessions are accessible in languages other than English.
- Encouraging transit industry engagement in the FTA-sponsored [COVID-19 Recovery Discussion Forum](#) to facilitate peer-to-peer exchanges on ideas, practices, and other information related to implementation of a mask requirement.
- Continuing to work with the American Public Transportation Association and the Community Transportation Association of America to produce a [COVID-19 Recovery Vendor List for Transit](#), which documents over 350 vendors providing critical materials for transit's COVID-19 recovery efforts.
- Publishing updates to the [COVID-19 Recovery Practices in Transit](#) resource, which provides web links to practices implemented by transit systems across the globe to respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency. In providing this resource, FTA also will remind transit agencies to ensure that publicly available information related to COVID-19 practices are made available in languages other than English.
- Publishing weekly updates to the [COVID-19 Resource Tool](#), a one-stop-shop for Federal COVID-19 guidance and recommendations on transit-related topics. This tool includes information from CDC on face masks.

### [Does the mask requirement apply to Section 5310 operators?](#)

The CDC Order applies to all recipients and subrecipients of Federal funding under 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53 that own, operate, or maintain a public transportation system, including an entity that receives Federal financial assistance only under the formula grants for Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (49 U.S.C. §5310).

### [Does FTA have training on de-escalation for transit operators?](#)

Yes. FTA works with the [National Transit Institute](#) at Rutgers University to deliver a 3-hour training on [Assault Awareness and Prevention for Transit Operators](#), which addresses de-escalation techniques. Virtual offerings of this training became available beginning in February 2021. The goal of the course is to give vehicle operators in the transit industry – with an emphasis on bus

operators—the knowledge and skills needed to reduce the likelihood of assault incidents from occurring. Prevention methods covered include discussing the types of incidents that could be considered assault and recognizing key vulnerability factors. Prevention strategies focus on communication and response skills, and the value of reporting incidents.

### [What Federal resources will be available to support enforcement of mask usage on transit systems and to reduce the risk of assault to employees who might enforce the CDC Order?](#)

The primary goal of the CDC Order is compliance, not enforcement. The CDC Order requires transit operators to use their best efforts to ensure that persons wear masks while boarding and alighting a transit vehicle, for the duration of a trip, and within a transit facility. Best efforts should take into consideration the safety of transit employees when identifying roles and responsibilities for implementing the CDC Order.

FTA recipients may use the \$39 billion in Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) and Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021 (CRRSAA) funds to implement the CDC Order. Operating expenses incurred beginning on January 20, 2020, for all rural, and small and large urban recipients, also are eligible to draw from FTA urbanized area and rural formula funds, including operating expenses to purchase and provide face masks to employees or passengers, install additional cameras in transit vehicles, hire additional transit security personnel, and/or enter into additional contracts for security services to implement the CDC Order. Federal Emergency Management Agency funding also may be available.

### [Do transit employees who work behind plexiglass barriers or shields on public transportation conveyances or in transportation hubs still need to wear a face mask?](#)

Yes. A transit employee is required to wear a mask unless covered under an exemption, even if the employee is separated from passengers or other employees by plexiglass or another protective barrier. While protective barriers help limit transmission, respiratory droplets that can spread the virus that causes COVID-19 still can enter shielded areas. Masks provide an additional and necessary layer of protection against transmission.

### [Does the mask requirement apply in administrative facilities?](#)

The CDC Order applies to administrative facilities that are housed within transportation hubs. Administrative facilities include, for example, executive offices, training facilities, and construction field offices. Transit employees must wear masks while on public transportation conveyances, and on the premises of a transportation hub unless they are the only person in the work area, such as in a private office.

As applied to transit, public transportation conveyances are transit vehicles being used in revenue service. A transportation hub is any location where people gather to await, board, or disembark public transportation, such as bus and ferry terminals, train and subway stations, and ride-share pick-up locations. It also includes any facility directly involved in the provision of transit service, such as ticket sales offices, vehicle maintenance facilities, vehicle cleaning facilities, operations control centers, electric vehicle charging facilities, operator break areas, and fueling facilities.

Per the CDC Order, persons for whom a mask would create a risk to workplace health, safety, or job duty as determined by the relevant workplace safety guidelines or Federal regulations are not required to wear a mask. A narrow subset of employees with disabilities also are exempt from the mask requirement under CDC Order because it would be unsafe for them to wear a mask due to their disability. The CDC states it will issue additional guidance regarding persons who cannot wear a mask under this exemption.

### [Does the mask requirement apply to employees in transit maintenance and operations facilities?](#)



Yes. Transit employees must wear masks while on public transportation conveyances and at transportation hubs. The starting point is that everyone should be wearing a mask and employees are broadly required to wear masks by the CDC Order. As applied to transit, public transportation conveyances are transit vehicles being used in revenue service. A transportation hub is any location where people gather to await, board, or disembark public transportation, such as bus and ferry terminals, train and subway stations, and ride-share pick-up locations. It also includes any facility directly involved in the provision of transit service, such as ticket sales offices, vehicle maintenance facilities, vehicle cleaning facilities, operations control centers, electric vehicle charging facilities, operator break areas, and fueling facilities. An employee is not required to wear a mask if he/she is the only person in the work area, such as in a private office.

The CDC Order broadly requires persons to wear masks whenever possible, particularly in any transit facility or location where persons are not alone. Employees must wear a mask while on the premises of a transportation hub unless they are the only person in the work area, such as in private offices.

The CDC Order exempts from the mask requirement persons for whom a mask would create a risk to workplace health, safety, or job duty as determined by the relevant workplace safety guidelines or Federal regulations; such persons are not required to wear a mask. A narrow subset of employees with disabilities are also exempted from the mask requirement under CDC's Order because it would be unsafe for them to wear a mask due to their disability. The CDC states it will issue additional guidance regarding persons who cannot wear a mask under this exemption.

FTA encourages transit agencies to implement mask policies in all areas of their organizations, including those areas where masks are not required to be worn under the CDC Order. The CDC has developed specific guides for [rail](#) and [bus](#) transit employers to protect transit workers in the workplace. In addition, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) issued guidance, [Protecting Workers: Guidance on Mitigating and Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in the Workplace](#) (dated January 29, 2021), to help identify risks of being exposed to COVID-19 in workplace settings and to determine any appropriate control measures to implement, which could be informative to the use of masks in transit offices and facilities.

### [How will FTA enforce the CDC Order?](#)

FTA has amended the Master Agreement to incorporate the requirements of the CDC Order. Pursuant to the terms and conditions of FTA Master Agreement FTA MA(28), FTA may take enforcement action against a recipient or subrecipient that fails to comply with this Order, including, but not limited to, actions authorized by 49 U.S.C. § 5329(g) and 2 CFR §§ 200.339-.340 when a recipient does not comply with Federal law with respect to the safety of its public transportation system.

### [Are riders with disabilities exempt from mask requirements?](#)

The CDC Order exempts people with disabilities who cannot wear a mask, or cannot safely wear a mask, because of their disability, as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. § 12101, *et seq.*). This is a narrow exemption to be applied in very limited circumstances. It is not meant to cover persons for whom mask-wearing may only be difficult. The [TSA Security Directive](#) gives examples of persons unable to wear a mask due to safety reasons who would be exempt, including those who do not understand how to wear or remove the mask due to cognitive impairment, cannot wear or remove a mask on their own due to dexterity/mobility impairments, or cannot communicate promptly to ask someone else to remove the mask due to speech impairments or language disorders.

### [May a transit agency require requests for exemptions from mask requirements to be made in advance of travel?](#)

Yes. The [TSA Security Directive](#) states, "Operators may further require that persons seeking exemption from the requirement to wear a mask request an accommodation in advance. Operators may impose requirements, or conditions of carriage, on persons requesting an exemption from the requirement to wear a mask, including medical consultation by a third party, medical documentation by a licensed medical provider, and/or other information as determined by the owner/operator."

The exemption process is likely easier to implement in systems that require riders to make trip reservations in advance, and especially in Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) complementary paratransit service, where the agency has already confirmed the eligible rider's disability status and functional limitations, and where the submittal of medical and other information is routine.

For fixed-route bus and rail systems, which do not require rider reservations, granting exemptions and ensuring only individuals qualified for an exemption ride without wearing a mask may be more challenging. Consistent with the CDC Order and TSA Security Directive, fixed-route transit providers may require individuals to request an exemption in advance of being allowed to travel and could issue riders a card or other document noting the exemption to present to transit personnel on future trips.

**[Is a transit agency required to adopt a specific process for handling exemption requests, such as through its already required Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\) reasonable modification of policy procedures?](#)** ^

Generally, no. The TSA Security Directive does not dictate a specific process. Most individuals, including those with disabilities, can tolerate and safely wear a mask. However, a narrow subset of individuals with disabilities may not be able to wear a mask or cannot safely wear a mask. Those who cannot safely wear a mask – for example, a person with a disability who, for reasons related to the disability, would be physically unable to remove a mask without assistance if breathing becomes obstructed – should not be required to wear one. The current exemption for people with disabilities who cannot wear masks safely is in a TSA Security Directive, and is not a reasonable modification under the ADA. Agencies have discretion in how they process such exemption requests; however, any process adopted should provide a prompt response to the person requesting the exemption. The process also must be sufficiently advertised so that people know how to make the request. 49 CFR § 37.167(f). Public information explaining the process also should be provided in languages other than English consistent with the agency’s Title VI program.

**[Does a transit agency need to ensure frontline workers and other personnel understand the exemption process for people with disabilities?](#)** ^

Yes. Regardless of the exemption process an agency adopts, training and providing information to personnel on the process is key to ensuring effective implementation and appropriate communications with riders with disabilities. The DOT Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations at [49 CFR § 37.173](#) require personnel to be prepared to “properly assist and treat individuals with disabilities who use the service in a respectful and courteous way, with appropriate attention to the difference among individuals with disabilities.”

**[COVID-19 Employer Information for Transit Maintenance Workers - CDC Guidance](#)** ^

[CDC Guidance for Transit Maintenance Workers](#)

**[What Rail Transit Operators Need to Know about COVID-19 - CDC Guidance](#)** ^

[CDC Guidance for Rail Transit Operators](#)

**[Are direct recipients, such as State Departments of Transportation \(DOTs\) and local governmental authorities, responsible for ensuring subrecipients implement the mask requirement?](#)** ^

Yes. State DOTs and other direct recipients have the responsibility to ensure that subrecipients are implementing a mask requirement as a term of their grant agreements. On February 9, 2021, FTA issued an [amendment to its Master Agreement](#) to incorporate the requirements of the [CDC Order](#) into the standard terms and conditions for all of its grants, cooperative agreements, and loans authorized by Federal public transportation law or administered by FTA.

**[Are State DOTs required to report non-compliant passengers to TSA’s Transportation Security Operations Center \(TSOC\)?](#)** ^

It depends. Under [TSA's Security Directive](#), owners/operators must report to the TSOC at 1-866-615-5150 or 1-703-563-3240 if an individual's refusal to comply with the mask requirement constitutes a significant security concern. State DOTs must report non-compliant passengers to the TSOC only if they are the owners/operators of the transportation conveyances or hubs where the incidents occurred.

### [Can local law enforcement enforce the mask requirement?](#)

The [CDC Order](#) requires conveyance operators to use best efforts to ensure that any person, unless otherwise exempted, on the conveyance wears a mask when boarding, disembarking, and for the duration of travel; and operators of transportation hubs must use best efforts to ensure that any person entering or on the premises of the transportation hub wears a mask, unless otherwise exempted. The [TSA Security Directive](#) requires that owner/operators establish procedures to manage situations with persons who refuse to comply with the mask requirement. At a minimum, these procedures must ensure that if an individual refuses to comply with an instruction given by the owner/operator with respect to wearing a mask, the owner/operator must deny boarding, make best efforts to disembark the individual as soon as practicable, or make best efforts to remove the individual from the transportation hub/facility. Satisfying the mask requirement could include obtaining support from cooperating local law enforcement to assist transit agencies with implementation and minimize confrontations between transit operators and passengers.

### [Can transit agencies choose not to deny boarding or remove passengers who refuse to wear a mask if local law enforcement does not assist, or if doing so would impact service or put operators in harm's way?](#)

Transit agencies must use best efforts to deny boarding to passengers who refuse to wear a mask, unless otherwise exempted, and make best efforts to disembark a passenger who removes a mask as soon as practicable unless the person is otherwise exempted. As defined by the [CDC Order](#), what actions constitute "best efforts" include:

- Boarding only those persons who wear masks, unless persons not wearing masks are exempt from the CDC Order;
- Instructing persons that Federal law requires wearing a mask and failure to comply constitutes a violation of Federal law;
- Monitoring persons onboard for anyone who is not wearing a mask and, unless such persons are exempt from the CDC Order, seeking compliance from such persons; and
- At the earliest opportunity, disembarking any person who refuses to comply.

[TSA](#) also clarifies that "best efforts" should take into consideration the safety of transit vehicle operators when identifying roles and responsibilities for implementing the CDC Order. If an individual's refusal to comply with the mask requirement constitutes a significant security concern, the transit agency must report the incident to the Transportation Security Operations Center at 1-866-615-5150 or 1-703-563-3240 for tracking and consideration for possible penalties.

### [How does the requirement apply to riders who use oxygen?](#)

Persons with acute illness may remove the mask if it interferes with necessary medical care such as supplemental oxygen administered via an oxygen mask (see footnote 7 of the CDC Order). Persons who use oxygen full time may be exempt from the mask requirement if a mask interferes with the ability to use an oxygen mask.

### [CDC guidance on mask wearing seems to suggest people who have trouble breathing shouldn't wear masks, but what if these people don't qualify for an exemption under the CDC Order?](#)

The [CDC Order](#) clarifies that persons who are having trouble breathing or shortness of breath, or are feeling winded, may remove the mask temporarily until able to resume normal breathing with the mask (see footnote 7 of the CDC Order).



### [What should transit agencies do when drivers with glasses report difficulty wearing masks because their glasses fog up?](#) ^

The [CDC Order](#) requires transit employees to wear masks while engaging with passengers and operating transportation conveyances. CDC [recommends](#) that individuals who wear glasses find a mask that fits closely over their nose or has a nose wire to help reduce fogging and consider using an antifogging spray.

Transit agencies should work with drivers on mask fit to reduce fogging. In certain circumstances, where this issue cannot be resolved, the CDC Order provides for exemptions to ensure workplace safety and safe operation of the transit vehicle.

### [If transit agencies have mobile ticketing, are they required to provide notice of the requirement in the app?](#) ^

No. Transit agencies are not required to provide notice of the requirement on their app, though it is a good practice to do so. The [TSA Security Directive](#) does require that, at a minimum, transit agencies provide prominent and adequate public notice of the mask requirement at the time the conveyance departs its location after boarding passengers. The notice must include the following statements:

- Federal law requires wearing a mask while on the conveyance and failure to comply may result in denial of boarding or removal; and
- Refusing to wear a mask is a violation of federal law; passengers may be subject to penalties under federal law.

The [CDC Order](#) requires conveyance operators and transportation hub operators to use their best efforts to ensure that persons wear masks while boarding and disembarking a conveyance, for the duration of a trip, and within a transportation hub. Best efforts could include advance notifications on digital platforms, such as on apps, websites, or email; posted signage in multiple languages with illustrations; printing the requirement on tickets; and other methods. Best efforts also should include advance notifications in languages other than English consistent with the transit agency's Title VI program, and in accessible formats for persons with disabilities.

### [Are transit agencies required to notify passengers of penalties for non-compliance? If so, what information must transit agencies provide?](#) ^

Yes. The [TSA Security Directive](#) states that, at a minimum, public notice must include the following statements:

- Federal law requires wearing a mask while on the conveyance and failure to comply may result in denial of boarding or removal; and
- Refusing to wear a mask is a violation of federal law; passengers may be subject to penalties under federal law.

## Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)

### [Are both passenger and freight train operators and rail employees covered by the mask mandates?](#) ^

Yes, both passenger and freight train operators and rail employees are subject to Executive Order 13998 and the [CDC's Order](#) requiring masks during rail transportation.

### [Who should I contact if I have questions about the face mask requirement for railroads?](#) ^

Please submit your questions about the implementation for railroads to [RailroadsMaskup@dot.gov](mailto:RailroadsMaskup@dot.gov).

### [Does the mandate require mask wearing by employees in railroad yard offices, rail facilities, rail maintenance facilities, vans hauling crews, or occupied engines?](#)

The Order of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC Order](#)) broadly requires employees to wear masks in conveyances and transportation hubs. This applies to railroad terminals, yards, storage facilities, yard offices, crew rooms, maintenance shops, and other areas regularly occupied by railroad personnel. Masks are also required in vans hauling crews and occupied engines. The [CDC Order](#) broadly requires persons to wear masks in such settings and applies in both passenger and freight rail facilities. See CDC FAQs explaining that employees at transportation hubs must wear a mask while on the premises of a transportation hub unless they are the only person in the work area, such as in private offices, private hangars at airports, or in railroad yards (available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/face-masks-public-transportation.html>).

Although wearing a mask is required as outlined above and critical to stop the spread of COVID-19, the [CDC Order](#) specifically exempts situations involving commercial truck drivers who are the sole occupants of the vehicle. 86 FR 8025, 8028 (Feb. 3, 2021). Similarly, a railroad employee who is the sole occupant of a vehicle, locomotive cab, or hi-rail truck, would have flexibility through company policy or employee discretion to choose not to wear a mask. Moreover, per the [CDC Order](#), persons for whom wearing a mask would create a risk to workplace health, safety, or job duty as determined by the relevant workplace safety guidelines or federal regulations are not required to wear a mask.

Additionally, note that the Occupational Safety and Health Administration issued guidance, [Protecting Workers: Guidance on Mitigating and Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in the Workplace](#) (dated January 29, 2021), to help identify risks of being exposed to COVID-19 in workplace settings and to determine any appropriate control measures to implement, which could be informative to the use of masks in rail offices and facilities.

### [Does the mandate require mask wearing by railroad employees at all times or only when such employees cannot maintain social distance?](#)

The Order of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC Order](#)) broadly requires employees to wear masks in conveyances and transportation hubs. This applies to railroad terminals, yards, storage facilities, yard offices, crew rooms, maintenance shops, and other areas regularly occupied by railroad personnel. Masks are also required in vans hauling crews and occupied engines. The [CDC Order](#) broadly requires persons to wear masks in such settings and applies in both passenger and freight rail facilities. See CDC FAQs explaining that employees at transportation hubs must wear a mask while on the premises of a transportation hub unless they are the only person in the work area, such as in private offices, private hangars at airports, or in railroad yards (available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/face-masks-public-transportation.html>). Masks are required at all times, aside from the limited exceptions as outlined in the CDC Order (e.g., while eating, drinking, or taking medication, for brief periods).

Although wearing a mask is required as outlined above and critical to stop the spread of COVID-19, the [CDC Order](#) specifically exempts situations involving commercial truck drivers who are the sole occupants of the vehicle. 86 FR 8025, 8028 (Feb. 3, 2021). Similarly, a railroad employee who is the sole occupant of a vehicle, locomotive cab, or hi-rail truck, or a railroad employee performing duties outdoors and not in proximity to any other persons (e.g., a railroad employee performing a train or track inspection outdoors and far from any other persons), would have flexibility through company policy or employee discretion to choose not to wear a mask. Moreover, per the [CDC Order](#), persons for whom wearing a mask would create a risk to workplace health, safety, or job duty as determined by the relevant workplace safety guidelines or federal regulations are not required to wear a mask.

Additionally, note that the Occupational Safety and Health Administration issued guidance, [Protecting Workers: Guidance on Mitigating and Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in the Workplace](#) (dated January 29, 2021), to help identify risks of being exposed to COVID-19 in workplace settings and to determine any appropriate control measures to implement, which could be informative to the use of masks in rail offices and facilities.

## **Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA)**

### [Do drivers still need a mask if they are behind plexiglass?](#)



A driver is required to wear a mask, even if a driver of a conveyance is segregated from passengers by plexiglass. Plexiglass shields and other fixed barriers on conveyances do not provide adequate protection to limit the spread of COVID-19.

### [Do passengers need to wear a double mask?](#)



No, two masks are not required under the CDC Order. “Mask” means a material covering the nose and mouth of the wearer and secured to the head, including with ties or ear loops. Masks do not include face shields. CDC guidance for acceptable masks is available [here](#).

### [May passengers remove masks when they are in the restroom on a conveyance or at a transportation hub?](#)



No, there is no exception for passengers who are in a restroom. A passenger is required to wear a mask the entire time while they are on the conveyance or at a transportation hub, other than those exceptions specified in the CDC Order.

### [Are bus companies required to provide riders with masks?](#)



No, it is the responsibility of the passenger to have a mask prior to attempting to board a conveyance. Boarding or entry will be denied if a passenger is not wearing a mask. A bus company may provide masks for free, or for a charge.

### [What if a passenger loses their mask, or the mask gets damaged after the passenger is already on board?](#)



All passengers and carriers are responsible for making their best efforts to comply. A good practice for all passengers would be to have a spare mask, and as specified above a bus company may have spare masks available, for free or for a charge, for such situations.

### [Who should I contact if I have questions about the face mask requirement for motor carriers?](#)



Please submit your questions about implementation for motor carriers to [FMCSAMaskUp@dot.gov](mailto:FMCSAMaskUp@dot.gov).

### [Are school bus operators and their passengers required to wear masks?](#)



Yes, school bus operators, including operations by public school districts, and their passengers are required to wear masks as defined by the Order issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CDC Order provides limited exemptions to the mask requirement for certain small categories of individuals, including: children under the age of 2; persons with disabilities who cannot wear a mask, or cannot safely wear a mask because of a disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. 12101 *et seq.*); and persons for whom wearing a mask would create a risk to workplace health, safety, or job duty.

In an FAQ concerning the CDC Order, the CDC states that passengers and drivers on school buses must wear a mask unless the driver is the only person on the bus. This requirement applies to all school buses whether publicly or privately owned.

#### **Background**

The President’s Executive Order 13998, *Promoting COVID-19 Safety in Domestic and International Travel*, directs the CDC and the heads of Agencies to take action, to the extent appropriate and consistent with applicable law, to require masks to be worn in compliance with CDC requirements when traveling in or on various modes of transportation. The CDC subsequently issued an

Order, *Order under Section 361 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 264) and 42 Code of Federal Regulations 70.2, 71.31(b), 71.32(b)* (CDC Order), under its existing statutory and regulatory authority, requiring individuals to properly wear masks, unless otherwise exempted, when boarding, disembarking, and traveling on any conveyance, as defined in the CDC Order, to prevent the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. Similarly, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) issued Security Directive No. SD 1582/84-21-01 (TSA Security Directive), applicable to certain surface transportation modes, to implement Executive Order 13998 and enforce the CDC Order. Both the CDC Order and the TSA Security Directive became effective on February 1, 2021.

The CDC Order, consistent with the mandate in Executive Order 13998 to implement additional measures to protect public health in domestic travel, requires a mask to be worn by any operator or passenger traveling on a *conveyance* within the United States unless otherwise exempted. Conveyances include all road vehicles (subject to certain exceptions, e.g., for private conveyances operated solely for personal, non-commercial use), including school buses.

[1]

[1] Executive Order 13998 directs the heads of Agencies to require masks, to the extent appropriate and consistent with applicable law, in or on all forms of public transportation as defined in 49 U.S.C. § 5302. School bus operations are specifically excepted from the statutory definition of public transportation. The TSA Security Directive, likewise, does not include school bus operations in its mask mandate. However, as explained above, the CDC Order applies to school buses.

### [Are passengers required to wear masks if bus service is not for-hire, inter-city fixed-route \(i.e., charter service, irregular route, private passenger carriers\)?](#) ^

Yes, unless otherwise exempted, passengers are generally required to wear masks when traveling on any bus into or within the United States. There are limited exemptions to the mask mandate for specific categories of persons, such as a child under the age of 2 years, described in the CDC Order.

#### **Background**

The President's Executive Order 13998, *Promoting COVID-19 Safety in Domestic and International Travel*, directs the CDC and the heads of Agencies to take action, to the extent appropriate and consistent with applicable law, to require masks to be worn in compliance with CDC requirements when traveling on intercity buses, or on any other modes of public transportation.

The CDC issued an Order (CDC Order) under its existing statutory and regulatory authority, requiring travelers to properly wear masks when traveling on any conveyance to prevent the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. Similarly, the TSA issued Security Directive No. SD 1582/84-21-01 (TSA Security Directive) applicable to certain surface transportation modes to implement Executive Order 13998 and enforce the CDC Order. Both the CDC Order and the TSA Security Directive became effective on February 1, 2021.

The CDC Order, consistent with the mandate in Executive Order 13998 to implement additional measures to protect public health in domestic travel, requires a mask to be worn by any operator or passenger traveling on a *conveyance* within the United States, unless otherwise exempted. Conveyances include all road vehicles (subject to certain exceptions, e.g., for private conveyances operated solely for personal, non-commercial use), including charter buses, buses operating on irregular routes, and buses operated by private motor carriers of passengers.

[2]

[2] Executive Order 13998 directs the heads of Agencies to require masks, to the extent appropriate and consistent with applicable law, in or on all forms of public transportation, as defined in 49 U.S.C. § 5302. Charter bus operations are specifically excepted from the statutory definition of public transportation. The TSA Security Directive, likewise, does not include charter bus operations in its mask mandate. However, as explained above, the CDC Order applies to charter bus operations.

### [What should a bus driver do with a non-compliant passenger who refuses to wear a mask and proceeds to cause a disturbance?](#) ^



Pursuant to the CDC Order, bus drivers should either refuse to board or seek to disembark as soon as safely possible any passenger who refuses to wear a mask, unless otherwise exempted from the mask requirement. If the passenger continues to cause a disturbance before the bus driver can safely disembark the individual(s), the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) recommends following company policy related to de-escalation and coordination with law enforcement.

If a company does not have a policy for handling disruptive passengers, FMCSA recommends each company develop a policy and provide training to implement the policy. The training should include de-escalation techniques to reduce the disruption; when to call law enforcement for assistance; knowledge and skills needed to reduce the likelihood of assaults occurring; the definition and prevention of assault, including discussing the types of incidents that could be considered assault and recognizing key vulnerability factors; prevention strategies focusing on communication and response skills; effective communication with limited English proficient individuals; and the value of reporting incidents.

FMCSA re-emphasizes that bus companies should include the refusal of a passenger to wear a mask in existing company policies for handling disruptive passengers to provide clarity for drivers on how to handle these situations. Company policies should also include considerations regarding when to call law enforcement, which may ultimately be necessary to enforce the mask mandate. In addition, the TSA Security Directive, which applies to an over-the-road bus operating in fixed route service (among other types of transportation service), includes the following reporting requirement: “If an individual’s refusal to comply with the mask requirement constitutes a significant security concern, the owner/operator must report the incident to the Transportation Security Operations Center (TSOC) at 1-866-615-5150 or 1-703-563-3240 in accordance with 49 CFR 1570.203.” If there is an immediate threat, the first priority is to notify and work with first responders before contacting TSOC to provide information about the incident. Drivers should contact federal law enforcement or state and local law enforcement if assistance is required to enforce the mask mandate, regardless of company policy.

### [What should drivers do if their employer requires them to transport passengers without masks and those passengers are not exempted from the mandate in the CDC Order or TSA Directive?](#)

Drivers who believe their company is preventing them from enforcing the mask mandates may be covered by the whistleblower protection provisions in 49 U.S.C. § 31105. Drivers may refuse to operate a vehicle if required by their company to transport passengers without masks. Whistleblower protection prohibits the employer from retaliating against drivers who exercise their rights under the statute. Go to [www.whistleblowers.gov](http://www.whistleblowers.gov) for further information about how to file a complaint. If you choose to inform FMCSA, send an email to [FMCSAMaskUp@dot.gov](mailto:FMCSAMaskUp@dot.gov).

Last updated: Wednesday, March 17, 2021

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