



**UPCOMING ENROLLMENT DEADLINES:**



**Next:**  
**Monday, March 18, 2013**

**Future:**  
**Thursday, April 18, 2013**  
**Friday, May 17, 2013**

**QUESTION OF THE MONTH:**

**How do I withdraw a participant with a TRANServe Debit Card?**

Reviewing officials should collect the debit card, destroy it, and notify DOT that the participant needs to be withdrawn.

**WHAT IF I GET FURLOUGHED?**

The Department of Defense (DoD) has notified Congress that civilian employees may be furloughed up to 22 days from April through September 2013. What will happen to my transit benefit if I am furloughed? DoD Instruction 1000.27<sup>1</sup> only allows participants to receive transit benefits for days they commute to and from work using a qualified means of transportation. Participants who purchase their mass transit on a daily basis will remain eligible for transit benefits for the days they commute to and from the workplace. For example, if John Doe typically pays \$4 to ride the subway to and from work for each of his 20 workdays, he is eligible to receive \$80 (\$4 x 20) in transit benefits. If Mr. Doe is furloughed one day each pay period, and as a result only uses the subway for 18 days in the month to commute, he would only be eligible to claim \$72 (\$4 x 18) for the month. Participant's using the TRANServe debit card should only use funds on the card to cover actual commuting expenses. Any remaining funds should be left on the card to be returned to the Federal government.

Many Transportation Incentive Program (TIP) participants do not purchase their mass transit on a daily basis. DoD Instruction 1000.27 requires participants to purchase the most cost effective combination of fare media available. This means that for many participants the most cost effective fare media is a monthly pass. Other participants can only purchase a monthly pass because their transit authority or transportation company does not offer daily or weekly passes. Participants who purchase a monthly pass are required to ride at least 50% of their eligible work days in a month in order to buy the monthly pass with transit benefits. For example, Jane Doe buys a monthly pass to ride the bus, and she typically works 20 days per month. In a normal month, she would be required to ride at least 10 days in order to use transit benefits to cover the cost of the monthly pass. (This assumes 10 daily passes are either unavailable or cost more than a monthly pass). If Ms. Doe is furloughed for one day a week, she would only be eligible to work on 16 of the original 20 work days. The number of her eligible workdays is then adjusted from



20 to 16. This would mean that Ms. Doe would need to ride the bus at least 8 days (instead of 10) to meet the "at least 50%" ridership requirement. Any day that an employee is furloughed should be treated as a regular day off (RDO) and should not be counted as an eligible workday when calculating the 50% ridership requirement.

Vanpools may also be impacted by furloughs. Vanpool participant's individual ridership requirement will be adjusted in the same manner as the bus rider in the previous example. However, in addition to individual ridership requirements for vanpool participants, a van must also meet the 80/50 rule to qualify as a vanpool, and this too may be impacted by furloughs. The 80/50 rule is defined as at least 80% of the mileage use of the vehicle must be for:

1. the purpose of transporting personnel in their local commute to and from their residence to their place of employment/duty station, and
2. on trips during which the number of riders is at least one-half the adult seating capacity (not including the driver).

This means that vanpools must have at least 50% occupancy not including the driver for at least 80% of the trips to and from the worksite. Vanpools that operate with a full van will likely not be impacted by the furlough, since on any given day up to half of the passengers can be absent before falling below the 50% threshold. Vans that operate at less than 100% occupancy may be impacted. As potential furloughs near, vanpools should work to optimize their operations to avoid falling below the 50% occupancy threshold.

The Department of the Navy vanpool policy memo<sup>2</sup> allows vanpool participants whose vanpool fails to meet the 80/50 rule as the result of extenuating circumstances to submit an exception request in writing to the Office of Financial Operations via their local reviewing official. Participants whose vanpool fails to meet the 80/50 rule as the result of the furlough may submit an exception request to have the 80/50 rule waived for the month that the vanpool did not meet the minimum requirement as a result of the furlough. Completed vanpool logs must be submitted along with the exception request. Participants should mark an "F" on their vanpool log for each day they are furloughed. Participants whose exception request is granted will not be responsible to repay the Federal government as a result of their van not qualifying as a qualified means of transportation, and the month of the request will not count as the participant's warning month for the calendar year.

If a van's failure to meet the 80/50 rule was not the direct result of the furlough, then a furlough exception request may not be granted. For example, if all vanpool members are furloughed every Friday, and the van does not run on Fridays, the van would still need to have at least 50% occupancy on 80% of the remaining 16 days in the month that the van does operate. The employee's furlough would not be an sufficient reason to waive the 80/50 rule in this case.

There is still some hope that furloughs can be prevented, but if the government furloughs its employees, reviewing officials and participants should be aware of how their furlough may impact their transit benefit.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.fmo.navy.mil/documents/Divisions/FMO3/TIP/TIP\\_DoDI\\_100027p.pdf](http://www.fmo.navy.mil/documents/Divisions/FMO3/TIP/TIP_DoDI_100027p.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.fmo.navy.mil/documents/Divisions/FMO3/TIP/DASN\\_Financial\\_Operations\\_Memo\\_06\\_Feb\\_12.pdf](http://www.fmo.navy.mil/documents/Divisions/FMO3/TIP/DASN_Financial_Operations_Memo_06_Feb_12.pdf)

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