
PROVIDING FOR FURNISHING TRANSPORTATION IN GOVERNMENT-OWNED AUTOMOTIVE VEHICLES FOR EMPLOYEES OF THE VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION AT FIELD STATIONS IN THE ABSENCE OF ADEQUATE PUBLIC OR PRIVATE TRANSPORTATION

JUNE 1 (legislative day, MAY 28), 1953.—Ordered to be printed

Mr. MILLIKIN, from the Committee on Finance, submitted the following

R E P O R T

[To accompany H. R. 1730]

The Committee on Finance, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 1730) to provide for furnishing transportation in Government-owned automotive vehicles for employees of the Veterans' Administration at field stations in the absence of adequate public or private transportation, having considered the same, report favorably thereon without amendment, and recommend that the bill do pass.

By virtue of this act, the Committee on Finance accepts the report of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs as follows:

EXPLANATION OF THE BILL

The purpose of this bill is to continue until July 1, 1955, the existing temporary authority of the Veterans' Administration to transport its employees, when fully justified in each case, between field stations and the nearest adequate public transportation at reasonable rates of fare for the service furnished. It would mainly be utilized in certain remote areas where public transportation systems have not been able to operate at a profit and thus have been unable to furnish the necessary service. At the present time, transportation is being furnished certain employees of the Veterans' Administration center at Fort Harrison, Mont., and at hospitals located at Fort Howard, Md.; Amarillo, Tex.; Lincoln, Nebr.; and Saginaw, Mich. Services at Saginaw, Mich., will be discontinued as soon as the public transportation to the hospital is resumed, but it is anticipated it will be necessary for the Veterans' Administration to furnish a limited amount of transportation at the other stations on a continuing basis. The present temporary authority for the furnishing of this type of transportation expires on June 30, 1953. It is, therefore, essential that this bill be considered at an early date.

The additional cost for furnishing transportation to employees under the present law has been met in substantial part by the fares charged the employees. It is estimated that the cost of this bill if enacted would be very slight.

The report of the Veterans' Administration follows:

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JANUARY 9, 1953.

HON. ALBEN W. BARKLEY,
President of the Senate,
Washington 25, D. C.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: There is enclosed a draft of a proposed bill entitled "A bill to provide for furnishing transportation in Government-owned automotive vehicles for employees of the Veterans' Administration at field stations in the absence of adequate public or private transportation," with the request that it be introduced and considered for enactment.

The purpose of the proposed bill is to continue on a permanent basis the existing temporary authority of the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs to utilize, under certain specified conditions, automotive equipment of the Veterans' Administration to transport its employees between field stations and the nearest adequate public transportation at such reasonable rates of fare for the service furnished as he may establish.

The proposed bill contains the same basic provisions as the present temporary law, which requires specific findings and determinations by the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs as conditions precedent to the exercise of the authority to utilize automotive equipment of the Veterans' Administration to transport its employees between field stations and the nearest adequate public transportation. Prior to the exercise of such authority the Administrator must find that such action is necessary for the efficient conduct of the affairs of the Veterans' Administration. He must also determine as to the particular station that existing private and other facilities are not and cannot be rendered adequate by other means, and that the exercise of the authority will result in the most efficient method of supplying transportation to the personnel concerned and a proper utilization of transportation facilities. Further, it is required that a reasonable fare be collected and deposited in the Treasury to the credit of miscellaneous receipts.

In keeping with the stringent limitations which are placed by the law on the exercise of this authority, it has been used most sparingly during and since World War II and care has been taken to restrict its use to those exceptional situations which could not otherwise be met without serious detriment to the service which the Veterans' Administration is obligated by law to provide for veterans.

The existing temporary authority of the Administrator originated in Public Law 170, 78th Congress, approved October 25, 1943, which was amended by section 2 of Public Law 338, 79th Congress, approved April 9, 1946, to provide the authorization in the same terms set forth in the proposed bill, except that its exercise was limited to the period of "the present war (World War II) and not exceeding 6 months after the termination of the war." [Parenthetical words supplied.] The Emergency Powers Continuation Act (Public Law 450, 82d Cong.) of July 3, 1952, extended various wartime statutes, including this one, until 6 months after the termination of the national emergency proclaimed by the President on December 16, 1950, or such earlier date as may be provided by Presidential proclamation or by concurrent resolution of the Congress, but in no event beyond April 1, 1953. The last-mentioned deadline of April 1, 1953, was apparently fixed so that the continuation of the specified wartime provisions during the present national emergency would not exceed such period as would permit the Government agencies concerned to seek, before the proper congressional committees, legislation on either a permanent basis or on a more extended temporary basis. (See H. Rept. No. 2041, 82d Cong., to accompany H. J. Res. 477; see also daily Congressional Record of July 3, 1952, p. 9265.)

As of June 30, 1952, the Veterans' Administration maintained a total of 541 field stations, including 157 installations furnishing hospital or domiciliary care. Among the many field installations of the Veterans' Administration there have continued to be a small number at which the furnishing of transportation to a few employees as provided under the existing law is necessary for efficient operations. Although the authority was originally granted as a wartime measure, experience has shown that some conditions not related to a war or national emergency can be met only by the exercise of such authority. Without such authority it would be difficult, if not impossible, to obtain and retain certain classes of technical and other hospital personnel where public transportation is not available to accommodate the unusual working hours of such employees. In other instances, public transportation facilities are wholly inadequate or nonexistent and proper maintenance of hospital service for veteran patients requires transportation of employees in Veterans' Administration vehicles. Further, there will be instances, as there have been in the past, of temporary interruption of public transportation during which it will be necessary to furnish transportation for some employees to and from installations for short periods of time.

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While the problem of furnishing transportation to employees of the Veterans' Administration is not widespread, it is one which is recurring. Wherever the problem arises, and particularly at hospitals, it is one which must be met promptly in order to maintain efficient operations and thus protect the interests of veteran patients and beneficiaries. At the present time, a limited amount of transportation is being furnished certain employees by the Veterans' Administration Center, Fort Harrison, Mont., and by the Veterans' Administration hospitals located at Fort Howard, Md.; Amarillo, Tex.; Lincoln, Nebr.; and Saginaw, Mich. With the exception of Saginaw, Mich., where the service will be discontinued as soon as the public transportation to the hospital is resumed, it is anticipated that it will be necessary for the Veterans' Administration to furnish a limited amount of transportation at the mentioned installations on a continuing basis.

It is worth noting that the somewhat similar, though in some respects broader, wartime authority to provide transportation to employed personnel which was granted to the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Navy, as well as the Chairman of the Maritime Commission, by the act of December 1, 1942 as amended by section 1 of Public Law 338, 79th Congress, April 9, 1946, was extended on a permanent basis as to the Departments of the Army, Navy, and Air Force, by the separate enactment of May 28, 1948 (Public Law 560, 80th Cong).

The experience of the Veterans' Administration is that the additional cost of furnishing transportation to employees under the present law is met in substantial part by the receipt of fares charged for the services rendered. Hence, it is estimated that the cost of the bill, if enacted, would be slight.

It is urgent that this proposed bill be considered promptly and enacted prior to the termination of the present authority (not later than April 1, 1953) in order that the Veterans' Administration may continue, without interruption, to meet the needs relating to transportation of its field employees as described and thus maintain the efficient functioning of essential field activities.

Advice has been received from the Bureau of the Budget that there would be no objection to the submission of the draft bill to the Congress for its consideration.

Sincerely yours,

CARL R. GRAY, Jr., *Administrator.*

