
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

JULY 6 (legislative day, MAY 24), 1943.—Ordered to be printed

Mr. CLARK of Missouri, from the Committee on Finance, submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany S. 964]

The Committee on Finance, to whom was referred the bill (S. 964) 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 and recommend that the bill do pass.

The bill would authorize the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs, during the present war and not exceeding 6 months after the termination of the war, to utilize automotive equipment of the Veterans' Administration to transport employees of the Veterans' Administration between field stations and the nearest adequate public transportation at reasonable rates of fare for the service furnished.

The Veterans' Administration, in addition to its central-office activities, maintains, within the continental limits of the United States, 10 regional offices, 42 facilities with regional office activities, 50 facilities furnishing hospital or domiciliary care, and 2 supply depots, or a total of 102 field stations. At 24 of these stations no public transportation facilities are available and at 11 the public transportation facilities are wholly inadequate. Quarters are not available at any of these stations for clerical personnel or, in most instances, in the vicinity thereof. Many of these field stations are located a considerable distance from bus or railway facilities, and as a result, personnel employed at these stations have been obliged to use their own private cars or rely on such public transportation as may be available. This customary mode of travel has been seriously affected for some time by problems arising out of the existing national emergency, and conditions are becoming so acute due to the tire and gaso-

2 TRANSPORTATION FOR EMPLOYEES OF VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION

line shortage as to affect seriously the proper functioning of activities of the Veterans' Administration.

The authority granted the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs under the bill may be exercised with respect to any station only after determination by the Office of Defense Transportation that existing private and other facilities are not and cannot be rendered adequate by other means, and that its exercise will result in the most efficient method of supplying transportation to the personnel concerned and a utilization of transportation facilities consistent with the plans, policies, and purposes of the Office of Defense Transportation.

The proposed legislation was recommended by the Veterans' Administration in a letter to the President of the Senate under date of March 27, 1943, and also has the approval of the Budget. A similar letter was also directed to the Speaker of the House of Representatives by the Veterans' Administration. The letter of the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs outlining the purposes and intent of the proposed bill is as follows:

VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION,
Washington, March 27, 1943.

The PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE,
The Capitol, Washington, D. C.

SIR: There are forwarded herewith two copies of 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 the same be introduced and referred to the appropriate committee for consideration.

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

The purpose of the proposed bill is to authorize the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs, during the present war and not exceeding 6 months after the termination of the war, whenever he finds such action to be necessary for the efficient conduct of the affairs of his Administration and under such regulations as he may prescribe, to utilize automotive equipment of the Veterans' Administration to transport employees of the Veterans' Administration between field stations and the nearest adequate public transportation at such reasonable rates of fare for the service furnished as he may establish. Such authority, under the bill, may be exercised with respect to any station only after determination by the Office of Defense Transportation that existing private and other facilities are not and cannot be rendered adequate by other means, and that its exercise will result in the most efficient method of supplying transportation to the personnel concerned and a utilization of transportation facilities consistent with the plans, policies, and purposes of the Office of Defense Transportation.

The Veterans' Administration, in addition to its central-office activities, maintains, within the continental limits of the United States, 10 regional offices, 42 facilities with regional-office activities, 50 facilities furnishing hospital or domiciliary care, and two supply depots, or a total of 102 field stations. For some time the subject of transportation for personnel who reside at an appreciable distance from these field stations, whose customary mode of travel has been seriously affected by problems arising out of the existing national emergency, has been under consideration, with a view to alleviating a condition which is becoming so acute, due to the tire and gasoline shortage, as to affect seriously the proper functioning of activities of the Veterans' Administration. Many of these field stations are located a considerable distance from bus or railway facilities, and as a result, personnel employed at these stations have been obliged to use their own private cars or rely on such public transportation facilities as may be available. At 24 of these stations no public transportation facilities are available and at 11 the public transportation facilities are wholly inadequate. Quarters are not available at any of these stations for clerical personnel or, in most instances, in the vicinity thereof.

For some time effort has been made to meet the transportation difficulties by the pooling of private transportation facilities among employees but this expedient

is not adequate. If an emergency develops resulting in the break-down of a car carrying several employees to the station, instead of one employee, there are several employees unable to report for duty. The tire and gasoline rationing programs are attendant with delays incident to the obtaining of necessary authorizations for tires or retreading and the filling of accumulated orders by authorized dealers and retreading shops. Further, the pooling provisions do not meet individual needs in some instances. Such emergencies and delays, which prevent employees from reporting for duty, have adverse effect upon the proper functioning of activities of the Veterans' Administration at its field stations.

The situation existing at the Lyons, N. J., facility, is typical of conditions at a number of other field stations where employees live some distance from the station and public transportation is inadequate or not available. Approximately 417 employees at that station reside outside the facility grounds, many at Newark, N. J., 14 miles distant, where the facility was formerly located, and others in adjacent towns. The nearest small community is 3 miles distant. The pooling of private cars among employees has been in effect for some time but does not meet the needs.

At the Chillicothe, Ohio, facility, there are approximately 182 employees in the low-salaried group who live off the station, most of them in the city of Chillicothe, 4½ miles distant. Difficulties have been experienced by employees at that station in having tires retreaded due to the large number of orders accumulated in the only reliable retreading shop in Chillicothe. There is no public transportation from Chillicothe to the facility and efforts made by the Association of Federal Employees to interest someone in the establishment of a bus line between the facility and Chillicothe have been unsuccessful. While taxi service from Chillicothe to the facility is available, the cost thereof is prohibitive in this low-salaried group.

It was, and is, the opinion of the Veterans' Administration that the selling (for fares) of surplus space in Government busses and ambulances operating between Veterans' Administration facilities and public-carrier stations is not precluded by the provisions of the act of February 3, 1905 (5 U. S. C. A., sec. 77), and of section 302, Public No. 495, Seventy-seventh Congress, an act making appropriations for the Treasury, and Post Office Departments for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1943, and for other purposes, which reads in part, as follows:

"SEC. 302. No appropriation available for the executive departments and independent establishments of the Government for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1943, whether contained in this Act or any other Act, shall be expended—

* * * * *

"(b) for the maintenance, operation, and repair of any Government-owned motor-propelled passenger-carrying vehicle not used exclusively for official purposes; and 'official purposes' shall not include the transportation of officers and employees between their domiciles and places of employment, except in case of medical officers on out-patient medical services and except in cases of officers and employees engaged in field work the character of whose duties makes such transportation necessary and then only as to such latter cases when the same is approved by the head of the department or establishment concerned. The limitations of this subsection (b) shall not apply to any motor vehicles for official use of the President, the heads of the executive departments, Ambassadors, Ministers, and chargés d'affaires."

With this thought that it would be proper to sell or lease to employees of the Veterans' Administration, at reasonable rates, surplus space in Government-owned automotive vehicles that are being used for official purposes, notwithstanding these restrictions, or under the provisions of section 29 of the World War Veterans' Act, 1924, as amended (38 U. S. C. A., sec. 455), the Comptroller General of the United States was requested, on July 31, 1942, to advise whether he agreed that such procedure would be authorized. In reply to this submission, the Comptroller General rendered a decision dated August 18, 1942 (B-27813), to the effect that such procedure is not authorized pending further legislation on the subject.

In view of the position of the Comptroller General and the growing needs at isolated stations submission of a proposed bill was made to the Director, Bureau of the Budget, which would grant authority for furnishing transportation in Government-owned vehicles for employees of the Veterans' Administration, similar, but much more limited in scope, to that conferred upon the Secretary of War, Secretary of the Navy, and the Chairman of the Maritime Commission by Public, No. 779, Seventy-seventh Congress, December 1, 1942, in providing transportation

4 TRANSPORTATION FOR EMPLOYEES OF VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION

facilities for employees of such agencies, including employees of private plants engaged in the manufacturing of war material. Under date of March 10, 1943, the Director advised that if the bill were revised to conform to certain requirements of the Office of Defense Transportation, there would be no objection to submission of the proposed legislation to the Congress for its consideration. These requirements are contained in the last sentence of the proposed bill which reads:

"The authority herein granted the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs shall be exercised with respect to any station only after determination by the Office of Defense Transportation that existing private and other facilities are not and cannot be rendered adequate by other means, and that its exercise will result in the most efficient method of supplying transportation to the personnel concerned and a utilization of transportation facilities consistent with the plans, policies, and purposes of the Office of Defense Transportation."

Slight additional cost is anticipated as only equipment owned by the Veterans' Administration will be utilized in transporting employees of the Veterans' Administration between its field stations and the nearest public transportation and this cost will be largely offset by the receipt of fares charged for the service rendered.

It is urgent that this legislation be secured at the earliest possible date to enable the Veterans' Administration to meet the needs relating to transportation of its field employees as desired, thus insuring the proper functioning of field activities of the Veterans' Administration.

Respectfully,

FRANK T. HINES, Administrator.

