



Veteran's Advocate

August 2009

Volume 5 Issue 8

Disabled Veterans Eligible For Free Transit

Minnesota's disabled veterans are now able to use public transportation throughout Minnesota at no charge beginning today. The transit benefit was passed by the legislature and signed into law by Gov. Tim Pawlenty this year.

Disabled veterans simply need to show the proper identification card to bus operators of any fixed-route service in the state, including Metro Transit and suburban transit providers in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area as well as regular-route services in Duluth, St. Cloud, Rochester, Moorhead, East Grand Forks and Mankato.



"This initiative will provide a tremendous service for disabled veterans in Minnesota. They are our nation's heroes," said Clark Dyrud, commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs. "How appropriate that this benefit for disabled veterans begins so close to the Fourth of July when we show our respect and support for those who defend the freedoms we enjoy," said Peter Bell, chair of the Metropolitan Council, which oversees public transportation in the Twin Cities.

There are approximately 50,000 disabled veterans in Minnesota. The free ride benefit also extends to a personal care attendant who may be assisting a disabled veteran as they travel.

(Continued on Page 2)

Post-9/11 GI Bill Transferability Rules Set

While the Post-9/11 GI Bill offers a very generous post-service education benefit, a special provision of the program allows career service members the opportunity to share their education benefits with immediate family members. Allowing career service members to transfer their GI Bill benefits to family members has long been one of the most requested items among military family readiness and advocacy groups. The department has established the policies and procedures for this important new program. These policies and procedures are described below.

Application Procedures

Applications for transferability will start on June 29, 2009. However, the effective date of any transfer will be no earlier than August 1, 2009, regardless of application date. All applications will be submitted through the Transferability of Educational Benefits (TEB) website, located at <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/TEB/>. Service members will be able to securely access this site with a Common Access Card, a DoD Self Service User ID, or a DFAS PIN. Currently this application may be accessed only with Internet Explorer.

Eligible Individuals

Any member of the Armed Forces (active duty or Selected Reserve, officer or enlisted) on or after August 1, 2009, who is eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill, and

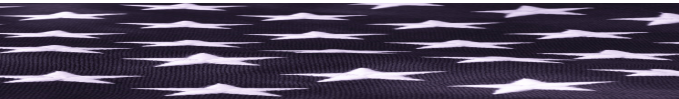
Has at least 6 years of service in the Armed Forces on the date of election and agrees to serve 4 additional years in the Armed Forces from the date of election.

(Continued on page 2)

In the Metro area, this benefit is also available on the Hiawatha light-rail line and on the Northstar commuter rail line, which will begin operations late this year between Big Lake, MN., and down-town Minneapolis.

“The transit providers in Greater Minnesota are an important part of our multi-modal transportation system. I appreciate that the fixed-route transit providers are acknowledging the contributions of our disabled veterans by offering them free service,” said Tom Sorel, commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Transportation, which oversees and funds transit service outside of the metro area.

To qualify for the free rides, disabled veterans must show a Veterans Identification Card, or VIC issued by a VA Medical Center with the words “Service Connected” or the initials “SC” below the photo. The cards are available at the VA medical centers in Minneapolis and St. Cloud. For information call (612) 467-1991 or visit www.va.gov/healtheligibility/application/IDCard.asp.



New Driver License Option for Minnesota Veterans



Effective August 1 Minnesota Veterans may elect to have “Veteran” listed on their Minnesota drivers license or identification card at the time of renewal or reissue. To take advantage of this option, Veterans must pay the required license or I.D. card fee, check a box on the application stating they are a Veteran, and provide a certified copy of their discharge papers (DD214).

The Minnesota Department of Public Safety Driver and Vehicle Services will attach a copy of the DD214 to the application and maintain an electronic record. At any time Veterans may request, in writing, to have their name removed from the list. This information is classified as private data, with the exception that it can be made available to the Minnesota Commissioner of Veterans Affairs for the purpose of administering Veterans benefits.

Has at least 10 years of service in the Armed Forces (active duty and/or selected reserve) on the date of election, is precluded by either standard policy (service or DoD) or statute from committing to 4 additional years, and agrees to serve for the maximum amount of time allowed by such policy or statute, or

Is or becomes retirement eligible during the period from August 1, 2009, through August 1, 2013. A service member is considered to be retirement eligible if he or she has completed 20 years of active duty or 20 qualifying years of reserve service.

- For those individuals eligible for retirement on August 1, 2009, no additional service is required.
- For those individuals who have an approved retirement date after August 1, 2009, and before July 1, 2010, no additional service is required.
- For those individuals eligible for retirement after August 1, 2009, and before August 1, 2010, 1 year of additional service after approval of transfer is required.
- For those individuals eligible for retirement on or after August 1, 2010, and before August 1, 2011, 2 years of additional service after approval of transfer are required.
- For those individuals eligible for retirement on or after August 1, 2011, and before August 1, 2012, 3 years of additional service after approval of transfer required.

Eligible Family Members

An individual approved to transfer an entitlement to educational assistance under this section may transfer the individual's entitlement to:

- The individual's spouse.
- One or more of the individual's children.
- Any combination of spouse and child.

A family member must be enrolled in the Defense Eligibility Enrollment Reporting System (DEERS) and be eligible for benefits, at the time of transfer to receive transferred educational benefits. A child's subsequent marriage will not affect his or her eligibility to receive the educational benefit; however, after an individual has designated a child as a transferee under this section, the individual retains the right to revoke or modify the transfer at any time. A subsequent divorce will not affect the transferee's eligibility to receive educational benefits; however, after an individual has designated a spouse as a transferee under this section, the eligible individual retains the right to revoke or modify the transfer at any time.

Nature of Transfer

An eligible Service member may transfer up to the total months of unused Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits, or the entire 36 months if the member has used none.