
May 17, 2024

TO: RAILS Board
FROM: Monica Harris, Executive Director
SUBJECT: 8.5 Policy on Meeting via Electronic Means

The RAILS Board Policy Committee met on May 17, 2024, and reviewed the Policy on Meeting via Electronic Means. The Policy on Meeting via Electronic Means was last updated by the RAILS Board on August 4, 2018.

This policy details how RAILS can be compliant with the Open Meetings Act when meeting virtually. It is important to note that, because of our size, RAILS has special provisions under the Open Meetings act to attend meetings virtually as long as we abide by the outlined rules.

Recommended changes include:

- Changing the language in #5 (board member or committee member) to reflect similar wording in #4
- Adding a provision ensuring compliance with 625 ILCS 5/12-610.2(b) which prohibits persons from using an electronic communications device to participate in any video conferencing app (including Zoom) while operating a motor vehicle.

The Committee approved the draft policy as presented and voted unanimously at their May 17 meeting to approve it for recommendation to the RAILS Board.

I look forward to further discussion at our May 24 meeting.

Policy on Meeting via Electronic Means

Approved by RAILS Board July 1, 2011
Amended by RAILS Board August 24, 2018

The Reaching Across Illinois Library System (RAILS) board believes it is in the best interest of its members and Illinois residents that the fullest participation and attendance in all meetings be achieved whenever possible.

The RAILS board in all of its regular, special, and committee meetings complies and intends to comply with the provisions of the Open Meetings Act. The Open Meetings Act allows attendance at public body meetings through audio conference, video conference, or by any other electronic conferencing without physical attendance.

The Open Meetings Act also allows library systems with jurisdiction over specific geographic area of more than 4,500 square miles [5 ILCS 120/7(d)], such as RAILS, to permit board and committee members to attend meetings by other means than physical presence so long as they adopt specific procedural rules.

1. All pertinent provisions of the Open Meetings Act must be complied with, including specifically the proper notice of any regular or special meeting, the proper record keeping or minutes of each meeting, the appropriate agenda preparation and posting for each meeting, in particular, any use of closed sessions shall be in compliance with the provisions of the Act.
2. RAILS board members or RAILS board committee members may attend by video and/or audio conferencing or by other electronic means for quorum and voting purposes in accordance with the provisions of the Open Meetings Act.
3. All RAILS board members or committee members attending meetings by electronic conferencing shall be entitled to vote as if they were personally and physically present at the meeting site so long as a quorum is, in total, present.
4. A board member or committee member who attends a meeting by video or audio conference must provide notice to the recording secretary at least 48 hours prior to the meeting unless such advance notice is impracticable.
5. A board member or committee member may attend an RAILS board meeting or committee meeting through electronic conferencing if, in the opinion of the member, his or her physical presence at the meeting is unable to be obtained or is inconvenient for any reason including, but not limited to reasons such as personal schedule or time conflicts, length of required travel time, the high cost of such travel, or vehicle, fuel or time involved.

6. Availability of electronic participation in RAILS board or committee meetings shall be indicated on the agenda and posted according to the Open Meetings Act.
7. The meeting minutes shall include, but need not be limited to; i) the date, time and place of the meeting; ii) the members who were either present or absent from the meeting and whether those members in attendance were physically present or present by audio conference, video conference or by other electronic means; iii) a summary of discussion on all matters proposed, deliberated, or decided, and iv) a record of any votes taken.
8. The location of the meeting included on the notice shall be equipped with a suitable transmission system (e.g. a speakerphone) in order that the public audience, the members in attendance and any staff in attendance will be able to hear any input, vote or discussion of the conference and that the member attending by electronic means shall have a similar capability of hearing and participating in such input, vote or discussion.
9. At the beginning of RAILS board and committee meetings and as necessary during the meeting, the chair will check with all remote location(s) with RAILS board or committee member(s) present to ensure that each such connection is active.
10. The chair will call on all remote location board and committee members throughout the meeting to encourage full participation and discussion.
11. All decisions will be made using majority rule except when a higher vote is required.
12. There will be no sidebar discussions among board members at any time.
13. Board Members or committee members attending a meeting remotely must comply with 625 ILCS 5/12-610.2(b) which prohibits persons from using an electronic communication device to participate in any video conferencing app (i.e., Zoom, Teams, WebEx) while operating a motor vehicle.

Originally Approved by the Merger Transition Board on April 6, 2011
RAILS Board Approved July 1, 2011
RAILS Board Amended August 24, 2018

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