

FEATURE

## Working on Transit

By John Elias

*Transportation strategies to support employment*



**W**ith today's uncertain financial climate, businesses and workers alike must tighten their belts and investigate every possibility to help the pocketbook as well as the bottom line. Transit agencies already serving the community have an opportunity to reach out to commuters and businesses to grow ridership and serve more people. The Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) developed its *Transportation to Work Toolkit* to help educate employers about the benefits of transit. The toolkit details a variety of inexpensive and tax-deductible ways businesses can increase employee satisfaction, retention, and company profits, all while promoting "green" solutions and developing a reputation as innovative *continued on page 2*

FEATURE

### Rural Transit Achievement Report

By Nick Pappas

**A**fter five years of providing increased funding for rural transit, SAFETEA-LU has reached its end. It is clear that local transit funding has grown during this time, even if it did take a number of years to

get grants in place. Overall, funding under Section 5311 (the program that funds public transportation for non-urbanized areas) grew 74 percent and funding under Section 5310 (the program providing capital funding assistance for agencies serving elderly and disabled populations) grew 40 percent. What impacts have these increases in funding had on new and established agencies? Are there any specific examples that demonstrate the

effectiveness of SAFETEA-LU? This article describes how the bill's funding has been used over the past five years, shows its effect on transit agencies in Kansas, and details some barriers to developing new or expanded services.

#### Effects of increased funding

Since the 2005 authorization of SAFETEA-LU, 86 percent of the states have *continued on page 4*

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employers. Transit agencies looking to expand service and add commuters can use the toolkit to help bring businesses on board. Here is a look at some of the ideas in the toolkit.

### Partnering with businesses

Proactive transit agencies may seek out large businesses in the area to establish partnerships or leverage already-existing relationships with business leaders. Transit providers could package current monthly passes and multiple fare discounts together to serve job-access commuting.

Chatham Area Transit (CAT) in Georgia recently partnered with the City of Savannah to create the Half Off Transit (HOT) Program. Through the HOT program the City pays half of the cost of monthly CAT bus passes for participating employees. The remaining cost of the pass is deducted pre-tax from the employee's paycheck. Passes can also be used for non-work trips.

Agencies might also seek out individual solutions through meetings with businesses to brainstorm about employer-specific transit solutions. Transit experts could survey management and employees to determine employees' transportation needs and develop solutions that work for both the employer and the transit provider. Both parties could investigate ways to optimize work schedules and bus schedules to best utilize each other's resources. The employer may take advantage of tax incentives to purchase reduced fare passes for her employees. Or the transit provider may see an opportunity to design bus routes specific to the employer's locations.

### How to get it done

With myriad options and employers unfamiliar with transit, agencies may need to take an initial lead in hosting discussion sessions before developing a cooperative relationship.

To facilitate coordination on a day-to-day basis, a business may wish to designate one employee to function as a transportation liaison with the transit agency. The business's liaison would work with the transit agency as a point of contact for changes in service or interruptions and would function as a valuable resource in the office for questions about transit. Liaisons typically post and update route maps and schedules around the work site, educate employees about options and make transit agencies aware of any changes in



*Marketing itself as a “transportation green” company can cultivate an employer’s image as a forward-thinking, responsible member of the community.*

service necessary to better serve commuters. The transit agency could even allow liaisons to sell bus passes and tickets. Involving the transportation liaison in the early brainstorming sessions also provides an employee perspective during decision making and encourages employee participation in the program.

### Ideas for saving money

In addition to promoting solutions to provide transportation for employers, the *Transportation to Work Toolkit* contains a wealth of information for employers and employees to save money. Through the IRS Qualified Transportation Fringe Benefit Program (see article on page 6: “Helping Businesses Help Commuters”), employers can reduce employment taxes by providing direct benefits or before-tax set-asides to employees who take advantage of transit and other transportation options. Encouraging alternative transportation solutions in this program can truly be a win-win solution for businesses and commuters.

In addition to working to create transit solutions, employers and employees who promote or take advantage of ride-sharing are eligible for tax incentives.

### Sources

- CTA *Transportation to Work Toolkit*: <http://web1.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles//anviewer.asp?a=1442&z=5>
- Accor Services: Tax and Environmental Benefits Calculator: [www.accorservicesusa.com/](http://www.accorservicesusa.com/)

Some employers may choose to coordinate vanpool services themselves, taking advantage of the tax benefits or utilizing their existing fleet of vehicles to serve seven to fifteen riders on work commutes. Many others look toward local transit agencies to provide vanpool services for a fee that covers administration, promotion, and maintenance. Transportation liaisons at businesses may also help in coordination and education about vanpools. Both transit providers and liaisons also provide resources about carpool options or ride matching services to link people together.

### Green benefits

While businesses recognize the tax and employee benefits to transit, they can also capitalize on the environmental benefits. Developing a partnership with transit providers allows the company to market itself as an innovative partner in the community and a business devoted to environmental sustainability. In addition to promoting “Transit First” with employees through a designated liaison or simpler promotion and employee information packages, employers can promote the number of gallons of oil saved or pollution avoided through their commuter incentives. Environmentally-conscious efforts increase employee retention and community support. Marketing itself as a “Transportation Green” company can cultivate the company’s image as a forward-thinking, responsible member of the community.

Increasingly, due to high fuel costs or financial concerns, workers are turning to transit solutions for commuting. Transit agencies can increase ridership and widen service areas by partnering with businesses to design the best transportation solutions for commuters and create Guaranteed Ride Home Programs to alleviate worker’s fears about being stranded (see sidebar). Transit agencies can use the tools developed by the CTAA *Transportation to Work Toolkit* to interact with businesses and outline benefits, develop those partnerships and increase the economic well-being of the community. •

### Let your light shine!

**T**he Beverly Foundation, through its STAR Search/STAR Awards program, annually honors organizations that provide transportation services to older adults. Organizations that want to be considered for an award in 2010 must meet eligibility guidelines and complete an online application/survey before February 26. The survey will include 10-20 demographic questions plus three questions on these topics:

- Transportation Services for People with Dementia
- Transportation Services for Older Adults in Rural America
- Management Principles to Enhance Transportation Services for Older Adults

For more information, visit [www.beverlyfoundation.org](http://www.beverlyfoundation.org).

## Guaranteeing a ride home

**O**ne often-cited question that discourages transit use is “What would I do in case of emergency?” Many commuters won’t consider traveling to work via transit due to concerns about getting a ride in the emergency situations or fears about staying too late for bus service.

Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) services can eliminate these fears. GRH programs ensure that commuters can get home with just a phone call.

Some GRH services use transit agencies or taxi cab companies and require cash payment for the ride, then reimburse after the fact. Other programs provide employees with vouchers to pay for service and alleviate the need for cash payment at the time. Some employers choose to pay transit agencies a small base rate to provide GRH services. Each program sets its own rider policies, hours and allowable destinations.

The single greatest incentive for using commuter transit may be provision of a GRH service. Transit agencies can encourage employers and commuters to support and use transit through creation or maintenance of such programs.

*The single greatest incentive for using commuter transit may be the provision of a guaranteed ride home.*

# Transit achievements under SAFETEA-LU *Continued from page 1*

been able to make improvements to their rural and intercity bus transportation programs, largely due to increases in funding. According to a recent study conducted by KFH Group, Inc. (TCRP Project J-6, Task 71), some of the changes include:

- Increases to service in areas that were already being served;
- Transit agencies being able to increase salaries for drivers (resulting in a lower turnover and more professional staff);
- Additional programs in rural areas that could not previously afford them prior to SAFETEA-LU; and
- Increases in coordination with human service programs; and funding of facilities, ITS, and mobility management efforts.

According to the TCRP study, states are using the increased funding in a variety of ways. Most states are increasing funding for existing programs as well as creating new services. Table 1 illustrates the percentage of states that used funding for particular improvements using specific funding programs.

As the increase in transit funding pertains to Kansas, 87 of the 105 counties in the State—approximately 83 percent—now have transit of some sort (see map on next page). This is up from approximately 81 percent in 1995. This is greater than the national average of 77 percent, which increased from 60 percent in 1994.

## Impact on local communities

In a national survey of 20 rural transit providers conducted during this study, there were many similarities in the effects of increased funding under SAFETEA-LU. Most agencies reported that increased funding allowed them to acquire new vehicles and drivers, improve accessibility, and reduce fleet age; increase the number of trips they can provide; create new routes; increase frequency of service; serve new communities and employment-

Targeted improvement:	% of states reporting improvements, by program		
	5311	5910	5311(f)
Create new transit services	93%	62%	67%
Improve existing services	100%	31%	54%
Replace existing vehicles	73%	85%	46%
Improve transit services	80%	8%	31%
Other	27%	15%	15%

**Table 1:** Percentage of states using funding for major improvements, delineated by funding program. Source: TRB 2009.

*Finney County and the City of Salina participated in a national survey on the effects of increased funding from SAFETEA-LU.*

related destinations; provide service to communities that Greyhound no longer serves; improve customer services by adding new dispatchers and shortening travel times; provide competitive salaries and better training for drivers; improve safety; increase coordination through mobility management; and expand volunteer driver programs.

Of the 20 agencies surveyed, two are from Kansas: Finney County Transit and OCCK, Inc. / City of Salina.

Finney County Transit (FIT), has been in operation since the late 1970s and operates City Link—a fixed-route service for the general public—and Mini Bus—a paratransit service for the elderly and people with disabilities. In 2007, FIT purchased three new vehicles for four new

fixed routes and converted its demand-response service to a paratransit service. In 2008, operating hours were extended and another dispatcher was added. Advertising and marketing were also increased. The result has been a 94 percent growth in ridership since 2007, positively benefiting the community with increased mobility, accessibility, and customer service.

The second agency surveyed in Kansas, OCCK Inc. / City of Salina, has also benefited from increased funding through SAFETEA-LU. OCCK's CityGo provides fixed-route service in Salina and intercity and specialized medical transportation services to communities within North Central Kansas. In 2008, OCCK, Inc. secured funding to create three fixed-routes throughout the City of Salina, acquiring six new 20-passenger vehicles. With the addition of the fixed-route services, ridership is expected to grow from 55,000 a year to 140,000 annually, yielding an average annual growth rate of 154 percent! Like FIT, OCCK, Inc. / City of Salina has been able to increase mobility for people who otherwise could not get around.

The success of these systems shows some of the local benefits SAFETEA-LU has provided in Kansas.

## Barriers to development of new or expanded services

While there have been substantial benefits, the study also identified some obstacles to developing new services or expanding current services. The two major financial barriers cited by many agencies include increases in operating costs (such as fuel and insurance), and lack of state and local matching funds. State and

## Source

*Rural Transit Achievements: Assessing the Outcomes of Increased Funding for Rural Passenger Services under SAFETEA-LU.* April 2009. This TCRP document is available online at [http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/tcrp/tcrp\\_webdoc\\_46.pdf](http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/tcrp/tcrp_webdoc_46.pdf)

Targeted improvement:	Questions answered by states	
	Response Percent	Response Count
Lack of state and local matching funds	84.2%	16
Shortage of state staff to manage program	42.1%	8
Need for a coordinated plan	26.3%	5
Increased cost of fuel	89.5%	17
Increased cost of insurance	42.1%	8
Decreased revenue from state fuel tax	21.1%	4
Other		7

**Table 2:** Survey of all states, posing the question: “What were the major barriers to the development of new or expanded rural or intercity transportation in your state?” Source: TRB 2009.

all states, depicting the largest barriers to expanding or creating services.

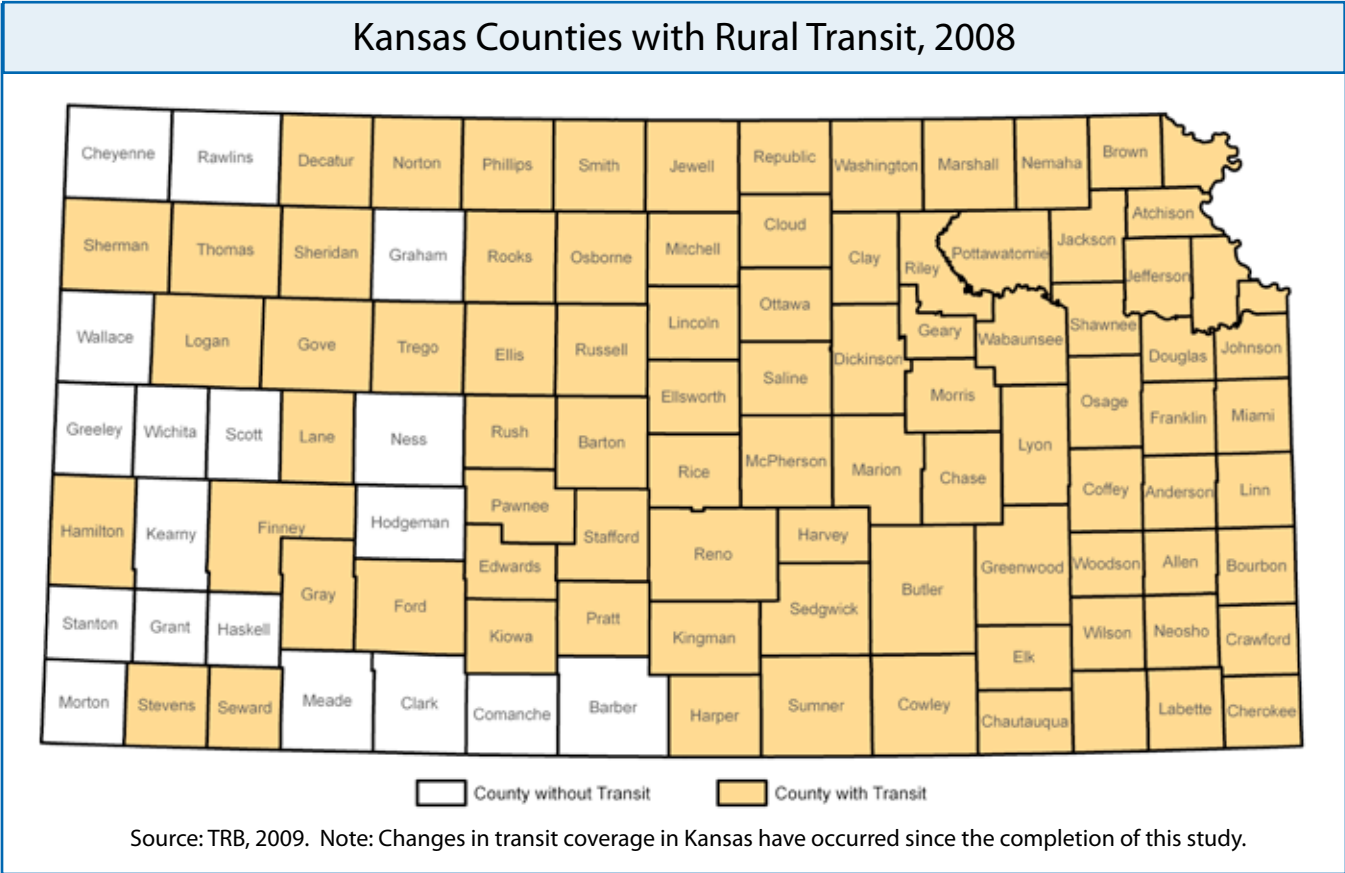
**Conclusion**

It is certain that increased funding under SAFETEA-LU has had a positive impact on states and transit agencies. Not only have existing services been maintained, but new services have been implemented in areas that would not have otherwise been able to fund them. This is true in Kansas, as can be noted in the increase in transit services statewide since 1995 and in the case studies of Finney County Transit and OCCK, Inc. / City of Salina. Still, there have been barriers to this increased funding—barriers that have challenged the ability to get adequate public transportation to communities.

local matches are highly dependent on economic conditions; current conditions have resulted in decreased revenue available to states and local communities to support rural transit initiatives.

Another constraint from the state perspective has been the shortage of staff to manage the increases in existing programs and new programs. Due to the increasing role of the state in

managing FTA programs, the expansion of responsibilities and increased workloads—coupled with prior staff shortages and the limited ability for states to hire additional staff—has proven to be a difficult problem for most departments of transportation. State staffing levels for transit management were highest in 2000 and have consistently decreased since then. Table 2 shows survey results from



# Helping Businesses Help Commuters

By John Elias



*Employers have a variety of methods to provide a qualified transportation fringe benefit that can cover transit costs up to \$230 per month per employee.*

**D**ifficult economic times cause people and businesses to adjust priorities. A tenuous or uncertain employment outlook combined with fluctuating gas prices leaves many workers with little or no margin for error in spending their incomes. Having options for access to employment become even more important to commuters. Coupled with that, employers want to sustain their businesses by keeping their valued employees and attracting new employees.

The Federal Tax Code offers valuable fringe-benefit tax incentives for transit. Making local business leaders aware that your agency can become a partner in attracting good workers and keeping the workers they have can increase ridership while helping the economic strength of the community.

## Employer tax credit options

The Qualified Transportation Fringe Benefit, Section 132[f] of the IRS Code, encourages employers to provide

## Savings Example:

**U**nder the Qualified Transportation Fringe Benefit Program, employees are encouraged to use transit at reduced rates while also saving gas and wear and tear on their vehicles. Employers who encourage participation in the program not only provide a fringe benefit to attract workers but also reduce their payroll taxes. A typical worker and company could experience the following savings:

1. An employee could:
  - Save \$20+ per month over an auto commute.
2. An employee making under \$30,000 per year could:
  - Save an additional \$29 per month (\$343 per year) due to tax benefits.
  - Save wear and tear on his or her automobile.
3. A company could:
  - Save \$26 per year per employee in payroll taxes.
  - See improved employee attendance.
  - Adjust compensation to include benefit.
  - Increase employee retention/satisfaction.
  - Market itself as an environmentally-friendly company.

You can calculate transit tax benefits for specific organizations at [www.accorservicesusa.com/](http://www.accorservicesusa.com/).

## Sources

Transportation Toolkit for the Business Community – Fact Sheet #1. *Employee Commuter Benefits: A Boost to Your Bottom Line*. <http://web1.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/articlefiles/jlfactsheet1.pdf>

Transportation Toolkit for the Business Community – Fact Sheet #6. *Tax Incentive for Businesses: A Direct Dividend of Commuter Benefit Program*. <http://web1.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/articlefiles/jlfactsheet6.pdf>

Transportation Toolkit for the Business Community – Resource Sheet #1. *Commuter Tax Benefit Program: Calculate the Savings for Your Business* <http://web1.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/articlefiles/jlresource.pdf>

transit through tax incentives. Currently 7.6 million American workers take advantage of the program with a great many different modes of transportation, including:

- Bus
- Paratransit
- Shuttle
- Subscription buses
- Vanpools serving seven or more people
- Parking costs (on-site or at park-and-ride lots)
- Just added: Bicycle-related expenses (annual benefit)

Transit agencies can create partnerships with employers and describe the ins and outs of the Fringe Benefit option to alleviate fears some may have dealing with tax code.

Employers have a variety of methods to provide the benefit that can cover transit costs up to \$230 per month per employee. In the Direct Purchase option a business may purchase transit passes for their employees and choose to recoup those costs on the company tax return. Or the

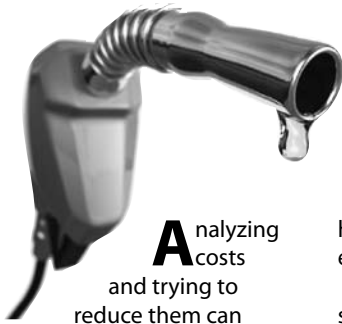
business could make available a Pre-tax Set-Aside to the employees. Set-asides reduce employment taxes in the total amount of the benefit. Employers can also choose to combine direct and pre-tax benefits together to tailor a program for the needs of their employees.

### Savings all around

The Fringe Benefit offers three types of savings. A typical 20-mile commute trip costs over \$100 per month (assuming \$2.50/gal). Switching to transit with \$2 one-way fares would cost only \$80 for the same commute (Savings #1). Under the Qualified Transportation Fringe Benefit, employers can deliver that fare to commuters at before-tax rates (Savings #2) while reducing the company's payroll tax burden (Savings #3).

By reaching out to businesses and providing educational support, transit agencies provide expertise to coordinate a program benefiting riders and employers, create an important link with businesses in the community, and increase ridership to serve the community and strengthen the economy. ●

## MANAGEMENT



# Reducing the Cost of Fuel Consumption

By Matthew Barnett

*Tips for conserving fuel and saving money.*

**A**nalyzing costs and trying to reduce them can be a daunting task for anyone, especially during tough financial times, so here's a quick look at some ways to help reduce your fuel cost.

### Vehicle maintenance

Each of the measures below may not seem like much when looked at separately, but when combined, they can produce some positive results in fuel consumption.

First, perform monthly checks on all your vehicles. Doing so may prevent larger problems from arising, which will cost you big later on down the road.

Changing your oil is another routine maintenance measure that can keep your vehicles healthy and prevent problems later. When oil isn't changed properly, it can result in poor engine performance,

higher fuel consumption, and even severe engine damage.

With each oil change, you should also inspect your air filter. Replacing filters on a regular schedule can help decrease fuel consumption by 10 percent. Engines that struggle with air intake can burn excess fuel and work harder to expel exhaust.

You should also maintain the air system, repairing leaks whenever needed to minimize compressor operation. The compressor uses fuel for power when it's pumping, so running it can reduce fuel economy by two percent. Maintaining the cooling system can boost fuel economy by 5 to 10 percent because keeping the cores clean and unobstructed will minimize the engagement of the fan-clutch. The fan uses fuel for power, so when the fan is fully engaged, it really eats away at fuel economy.

Depending on the terrain and type of service, you

### Useful fuel economy Web sites

- **Fueleconomy.gov**  
Official site for fuel economy information. U.S. Department of Energy
- **www.epa.gov/air/actions/drive\_wise.html**  
Has tips for saving energy and reducing pollution when driving. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- **www.afdc.energy.gov/afdc/index.html**  
Provides information regarding alternative fuels use. U.S. Department of Energy
- **video.webcasts.com/events/bobi001/28426**  
Bus fuel economy webinar: Are your buses fuel-efficient? School Bus Fleet Metro Magazine

might consider reducing the horsepower in your next vehicles to improve fuel economy. A 50 HP reduction can improve fuel economy by up to 5 percent. Need to get up and down hilly terrain all day? If yes, then you might need that extra power. If the answer is no, then you may consider a lower HP vehicle. Have high passenger volume?

If yes, then you probably need that power to get them to their destinations. Ask your mechanic about the options; he should be able to recommend the appropriate action you should take.

Other adjustments should be checked regularly too. Alignment is one of those. Poor alignment can not only speed *continued on page 8*

## Fuel savings *Continued from page 7*

up tire wear and hamper steering ability, but it can also decrease fuel economy by two percent. When a vehicle moves forward, drag causes the tires to move outward. The drag then makes the tires parallel when the vehicle is moving forward. Tires that are not aligned properly and therefore do not roll parallel cause extra road friction that puts extra wear on the tires. This extra friction also decreases fuel economy. (To see an illustration of this concept, go to <http://dnr.louisiana.gov/sec/execdiv/tehasmt/ecep/diesel/f/dsl-f39.gif>).

Tire pressure should also be checked often. Checking tire pressure once a week can improve fuel economy by four percent. It only takes one under-inflated tire by 8psi to reduce fuel economy (and the life of the tire by 9,000 miles).

When tires lose pressure, more tire surface area is in contact with the ground. This extra "footprint" of rubber increases the resistance on the vehicle. More fuel is then needed to counteract the resistance, meaning that it will take more fuel to move the vehicle.

All of the above measures can improve fuel economy, and they also insure a safe, reliable "ride" that could be worth more when it's time to sell or trade it.

### Smart purchasing

Smart purchasing also contributes to fuel cost reduction. One way to help reduce fuel cost is to purchase lower-priced fuel in bulk (thousands of gallons) from suppliers in your area.

### Efficient driving

The greatest impact on fuel economy is efficient driving, so all your drivers should be educated on proper driving techniques, with emphasis on managing speed. Driving at high speeds is the single

biggest factor in squandering fuel. Each 1mph increase over 55 mph can decrease fuel economy by .1 mpg.

Train your drivers to accelerate and decelerate as smoothly as possible, select the highest gear suitable for the desired speed, avoid using climate control unless they really need it, and use cruise control to your advantage by using it whenever possible. Use of cruise control can lessen acceleration and deceleration during your trip, which will conserve your fuel.

### Sources

- [http://www.linkingcommunities.com/user\\_media/23608/vehicle%20maintenance%20final.pdf](http://www.linkingcommunities.com/user_media/23608/vehicle%20maintenance%20final.pdf)
- <http://www.regulations.gov/fdmspublic/component/main?main=DocumentDetail&o=0900006480637ee5> (NHTSA-2008-0121-0001.1[1].pdf)
- <http://dnr.louisiana.gov/sec/execdiv/tehasmt/ecep/diesel/f/f.htm>

## MARKETING

# Planning Transit—One Person at a Time

By Nick Pappas

*A primer on Individual Transportation Plans: what they cover, who creates them, and where your transit agency fits in.*

**F**or some individuals, public transportation is more a necessity than a choice. Due to age, temporary or permanent disability, or low income, some may not have access to private automobiles. While this may not be a problem in communities that have adequate public transportation, its effects are far-reaching in others. Not only are individuals' simple daily activities restricted, but medical appointments and access to jobs can become difficult. Consequently, inadequate transportation can affect an entire community by placing a burden on human service agencies, i.e.,



medical, educational, and employment agencies, that must factor in late arrivals and missed appointments.

A recent document by United We Ride—*Building an Individual Transportation*

*Plan*—details what human service agencies can do to help identify the transportation needs for each of their clients, thereby improving their own level of service and allowing individuals to meet their goals of independence and community inclusion. Perhaps your transit agency can encourage these service organizations to implement some of the ideas in the document and include transportation as a point of discussion during intake and service provision. In addition, you may be able to market your transit agency's services to organizations that may purchase transportation for their consumers from you.

## What a human service agency should know

There are two primary factors a human service agency should consider when seeking to improve transportation for a consumer—administrative logistics and employee knowledge about transportation in the community. Information required from the service agency includes whether or not transportation can be provided to assist an individual in the first place; the service agency's ability to pay for transportation; the service agency's preference regarding mode choice; and the service agency's willingness to offer consumer education about navigating in the community via public transportation.

Perhaps the most helpful topic your transit agency can address is funding. "The reason Individual Transportation Plans (ITPs) are used is to utilize New Freedom funding," said Bob Olsgard, transportation coordinator for North Country Independent Living, a human service agency in Superior, Wisconsin.

"We have income guidelines and we provide vouchers to individuals who qualify. We sit down with each individual and find out where they go and how many trips they make. Once we know this information, we apply for the funding we need. The individual can then use vouchers to access public transportation," he said.

By helping a service agency understand this process, your transit agency will not only be providing a valuable service to the community, but also will help market your services to these organizations that will potentially direct their consumers your way.

In addition, the human service agency should also consider obtaining training for its employees to increase their knowledge about transportation in the community. During intake and service provision, an individual will be better served if the service agency employee has basic knowledge of resources and services.

Issues the service agency should address include whether their employees know how to travel across town on the community bus system, if employees can arrange for daily transportation for someone with a significant disability,

## Four issues a human service agency should consider before crafting individual transportation plans

- Is a policy in place that determines if transportation services may be provided to assist individuals in accessing agency services?
- Can our service agency pay for transportation? How is the trip cost of consumers covered?
- Is there a preference or a rule that determines the type of transportation that can be provided or purchased?
- Can consumer education and/or travel training be offered to help individuals learn how to safely navigate within and around the community using public transportation?

if employees know the types of transportation services available in the community (buses, carpools, vanpools, etc.), and whether employees are familiar with the transportation services that operate during business and non-business hours.

## Benefits to the transit agency

"Helping human service agencies in any way is a great way to build public support for your transit agency," Olsgard said. "In these times, it's more important than ever to build relationships with the community. Communication and collaboration are key elements," he said.

By helping train the service organization's employees about your services, you are effectively marketing your agency while providing essential information they can convey to their clients who may not be aware of your agency and what it provides.

## What an individual should know

There are several issues consumers should consider before each creates his or her ITP. Ultimately, individuals should evaluate their upfront concerns, which may include: their individual capability to be mobile, their specific transportation needs, convenience, reliability, cost,

comfort and confidence, and safety. Individual mobility, for example, can include the use of a mobility device such as a wheelchair, scooter, walker, or cane; the ability to walk or climb stairs; and the ability to communicate with transportation providers. Similarly, transportation needs can include knowing the origin and destination of the trip, how many trips will be taken in a day, and whether intermediate stops will be needed.

It's useful for the human service agency to provide the consumer with the questions they will be asked during the creation of their ITP, prior to the actual meeting. Olsgard advises to mail an introductory packet to individuals beforehand—a trip diary that asks the individual where they need to go and how they need to get there. Also, "when they come in, they should also know their income, other types of funding sources they have such as Medicare, and their schedule," Olsgard said.

By having a human service agency encourage a potential rider to consider these issues before they meet to create their ITP, a more inclusive transportation plan can be crafted.

To view a sample trip diary that human service agencies can give to prospective consumers, check out the Rural Wisconsin Transportation Toolkit document, authored by Olsgard, at <http://www.northcountryil.com/Rural%20Transportation%20Toolkit%201-08.pdf>.

## Conclusion

By helping an human service agency determine if they can provide transportation in one form or another (either by themselves or with your assistance) and by helping them in the process of creating individual transportation plans for potential riders, you can help all involved—the service organization, the rider, and your transit agency. For more information or to view an individual transportation plan template, check out United We Ride's *Building an Individual Transportation Plan*, available at <http://www.connectingcommunities.net/documents/useful/itp.pdf>.

# Newer Transit Resources at Kansas RTAP

Add this page to your Kansas RTAP Resource Catalog 2008 to include the following resources added in the last few years. To order any of these resources, go to <http://www.ksrtap.org>. Click on "Lending Library." Don't have a 2008 catalog? Order one on page 15.

## **Charter Service Final Rule Fact Sheet.**

The FTA published a final rule for charter service with an effective date of April 30, 2008. This one-page fact sheet provides a summary of the features of the revised charter regulations. (1 pg) 2008.

## **Disaster Response and Recovery Resource for Transit Agencies.**

Based on lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina and other events, FTA has documented practices and procedures to improve emergency preparedness. It provides local transportation providers with useful information and best practices in emergency preparedness and disaster response and recovery. 41 pgs) 2006.

## **Distance Learning Event: Going Regional: Regional Transportation Networks.**

Easter Seals Project Action. Discussion of regional transportation networks including benefits of regional networks, obstacles to success, steps to achievement, stakeholders to be involved and expected outcomes of a successful regionalism effort. (13 pages) 2009.

## **Emergency Preparedness and Individuals with Disabilities.**

US DOT. Basic information on emergency preparedness, transportation accessibility, and evacuation methods for certain modes of transportation. (7 pgs) 2004.

## **People on the Move: Sensitivity Training.**

Project Action. The purpose of the module is to increase awareness of disability issues and to introduce a new exercise to train others regarding disability sensitivity. Shares basic information about sensitivity to people with disabilities. Presentation includes awareness of disability issues, an exercise for providing sensitivity training, and resources for sensitivity training. (24 pages) 2008.

## **Perfect Together: Public Transportation and Medical Transportation.**

CTAA, 2006. Describes the benefits of public transportation in meeting needs associated with non-emergency medical trips. Available electronically at [http://www.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/articlefiles/ct/summer06/Perfect\\_Together.pdf](http://www.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/articlefiles/ct/summer06/Perfect_Together.pdf). (2 pgs) .

**Power of Brand Delivery, The.** McKinsey & Company. Guidelines on building emotional bonds with customers by using strong branding. (13 pgs) 2001.

**The Professional Driver.** Guidelines on how to act as a professional driver at all times, with emphasis on patience, common sense, and respect for your passengers. (67 pgs) 1997.

**Public Transit is Public Service: Disability Etiquette for Transportation Providers.** West Virginia Assistive Technology. How to work sensitively with persons who have disabilities. 2005.

## **Senior Transportation: Toolkit and Best Practices.**

CTAA. A manual designed to help plan and implement transportation solutions for older adults. Covers current practices and opportunities for program development. Available electronically at [http://www.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/articlefiles/senior\\_toolkit\\_color1.pdf](http://www.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/articlefiles/senior_toolkit_color1.pdf) (212 pages) 2003.

## **System Security Awareness for Transit Employees.**

NTI. Explores key aspects of system security for transit employees, including what to look for and what to do regarding suspicious activity, packages, devices and substances. (15 min) 2009.

**The Mark.** NTI. A fast-paced training video depicting a fictionalized version of a threat against an average metropolitan transit system. (20 min) 2006.

## **The State of Medical Transportation.**

Special edition of the *Community Transportation Reporter*. Articles include "Researching the Health Benefits of Medicare Transportation" and "True Dialysis Stories." Available electronically at <http://web1.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/anmviewer.asp?a=201&z=41>. 2002.

## **Transit Agency Security and Emergency Management Protective Measures.**

NTI. This document provides an approach that integrates a transit agency's security and emergency management programs with the Department of Homeland Security's

(DHS) Homeland Security Advisory System (HSAS). 2006.

## **Transit Bus Safety and Security Program.**

Objectives include improving safety and security for passengers, employees and others that share the roadways with America's urban and rural public transit bus operations. (6 pgs) 2007.

## **Transportation & Dementia, Fact Sheet.**

Beverly Foundation, Inc. Vol. 1(8). Provides an overview of dementia, how it affects personal travel and driving and transit options for those with dementia. Also provides the "5 A's" of dementia-friendly transportation. (4 pages) 2008.

## **Volunteer Friends Model.**

Beverly Foundation, Inc. Fact Sheet Vol 1 (9). Provides a description of the Volunteer Friends model designed as a low-cost, low-maintenance customer driven approach for providing transportation to older adults. (4 pages) 2008.

## **Join Us at the FTA Region VII Training Meeting**

**Kansas City, Missouri  
March 22-25, 2010**

This meeting is intended for all professionals from urban, rural and tribal transit agencies, state DOTs, planning agencies, associations, and more — anyone interested in learning the latest in Federal Transit Administration program management and improving transit in Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska and Kansas. Topics will cover planning, management and regulation of urban and rural transit agencies.

Early registration deadline is

**February 22, 2010.**

Visit <http://www.fta7meeting.org>.

# The Nuts 'n Bolts of Lift Maintenance

By Matthew Barnett

*Tips for regular maintenance during winter and anytime.*

**M**ultiple safety checks should be done by drivers and mechanics to each wheelchair lift over the course of a year. They can be broken down into daily checks performed by drivers, bi-weekly safety checks that could involve drivers and the agency's mechanic(s), a mandatory six month safety check (after 1750 cycles of operation) to be done by a mechanic, and an annual safety check (after 3500 cycles of operation) that must be done by an authorized service agent. It's important to be up-to-date on maintenance for safe and efficient lift operation.

## Daily safety check

Drivers should run the lift for one cycle while observing the lift's overall condition. Listen for any abnormalities, such as grinding or binding. Check the control pendant (remote control) for damage and make sure the cable connectors are still tight.

## Two-week safety check

Drivers who feel comfortable doing so can perform a good portion of this safety check. Start by checking the overall condition of the lift, as well as checking the underside of the vehicle to verify everything looks normal. After the control pendant is checked, inspect the electrical



wiring for frayed wires, loose connectors, etc. When all is good, you can place the vehicle in non-interlock mode and attempt to operate the lift. The next step is to check handrail integrity. All handrail fasteners should be properly tightened. Re-affix or replace any decals that are not clearly visible and legible.

Mechanics should take over from here. Ensure that all lift mountings and support points are in proper order and free of damage. Mounting bolts should be tight. Next, ensure that all traveling frame pins are installed properly and are free from damage and locked into position. The platform and platform attachment points should operate properly during all lift functions without obstruction(s).

Check that the inner

rollstop is properly operating during lift functions without obstruction(s), as well. The inner rollstop should deploy fully as the platform stops at proper vehicle floor level. Now observe the platform rollstop to be certain that it operates properly without obstruction(s) when it contacts the ground.

The last step is to check the hydraulic power unit for leaks and its fluid level. Also, make sure the pump's backup manual release valve is lightly-snug.

## Six-month safety check

Mechanics should check the handrails for properly tightened fasteners. The lift should be cleaned with mild soap and wiped dry. Surfaces can be rubbed down with a light oil using a soft cloth to avoid rusting. Wipe clean any excess oil. A lubricant can be sprayed to lubricate the lift. Make sure to follow the labeled directions on the container, and wipe excess grease from surrounding areas. Next, make sure the platform is at ground level, and be certain

that the pump hydraulic fluid level is maintained at the required FULL level with the lift in this lowered position. Only add Texaco 01554 Aircraft Hydraulic Oil or its equivalent U.S. mil spec H5606G fluid.

## Annual safety check

This safety check (3500 cycles of operation) must be performed by an authorized service agent only. They will inspect the hydraulic cylinder, hoses, and fittings. As with

*Newer buses are experiencing more battery cable corrosion. Be sure to clean your cables regularly.*

the six month check, service should be increased if lift use is heavier than normal (ten cycles or more daily).

## Corrosion alert

Zack Zackula of Kansas Truck in Wichita, KS, recently spoke to us about corrosion they are seeing in side-mounted battery compartments. Adding to the problem, Zackula mentioned that bus builders are starting to mount the circuit breaker in this compartment.

"...We have seen a number of cases in which the corrosion  
*continued on page 12*

## Sources

RICON S-Series™ Transit Use Wheelchair Lift: Maintenance and Repair PDF  
<http://www.cargafacil.com/biblioteca/pdf/elevadores/s-series/32dst00.j4.pdf>

## Lifts *Continued from page 11*

will cause a bad connection or eat up the cables," he said. Zackula believes more ventilation may help the problem.

As buses become more "sophisticated," they require more battery power. "We are charging the batteries harder because of more equipment on our buses," Zackula said. "We need to maintain a strong charge on our batteries because all of our equipment demands a more constant voltage to operate properly." Zackula advises to check for corrosion and clean the battery cables more often. "Just wiping the corrosion off will not properly clean and restore contact," he said.

### Bottom line

Having a properly functioning lift is no accident! It takes periodic and diligent maintenance to keep it running at its best. Proper maintenance will make your lift safer and will help save money for your transit agency.

## Are lift maintenance requirements different in the winter?

We recently spoke about lift maintenance issues in winter with Mike Kimberling, shop foreman of the Lenexa, Kansas branch of United Access. He said there were no specific lift performance issues that he saw more frequently in the winter than other times of the year, especially if agencies kept up good maintenance.

Kimberling said the main problem he sees in his shop is improper lubrication of the many moving parts on the lifts. He advised never using white lithium grease. "It gets hard, and then the joints won't work properly," he said. In his shop they use a synthetic Cheetah-brand spray; Kimberling said WD-40 dries too quickly. Kimberling's bottom line: lubricate, lubricate, lubricate!

Here are a few more lift maintenance tips:

- DO NOT add fluid to the hydraulic power unit until the platform is lowered to ground level. Adding fluid while lift is stowed will cause the tank to overflow when the platform is lowered.
- Regularly clean the lift with mild soap and dry thoroughly to protect painted surfaces. Cleaning is especially important in areas where roads are salted in winter. Make sure that lift pivot points remain clear and clean prior to lubrication.
- DO NOT lubricate the lift's motor or other electrical components. Lubrication of electrical components may create unintentional short circuits.

## TECHNOLOGY

# Using Social Media to Promote Rural Transit

By John Elias

*Can Twitter and Facebook connect riders with transit providers?*

Social networking Web sites like Facebook and Twitter come up more and more in conversation. These social media Web sites, and others like Google Groups and LinkedIn, represent a new form of connectivity, one more dynamic than a traditional Web page. Social networking creates connections between individuals and allows users to share thoughts, links to interesting Web sites, videos and music with one another without specialized computer programming experience. Increasingly, companies and communities have begun using social media Web sites as a cheap and effective method to reach out to people and make the public aware of the organization or keep people updated. How can transit agencies best use these new technologies?



### Social media advantages

Traditional Web sites can provide a great deal of information. They direct people to routes and timetables, agency and contact information. Some can even provide dynamic maps and engaging tools, but all of the information remains in one location. A Web site might link to other external sites but interaction with riders typically still takes place via telephone or email. Additionally, updating Web sites requires some degree of skill in programming.

Social media sites like Facebook provide a new means for an organization to communicate with riders. Transit agencies could use these sites to form a community of people interested in transit to share information.

Social networking sites are free to join, and:

- Updating requires no special web programming skills.
- Users can quickly and easily share new information and links with anyone in their network.
- New developments in mobile phone technologies allow people to visit anywhere and anytime.

See sidebar at right for a brief social networking primer.

### Where to begin?

Utilizing social networking Web sites can facilitate interaction with riders in new and engaging ways but how can transit providers ensure the resource will be well utilized? Bronwyn Mauldin of Workforce Developments, a consulting firm, works as a consultant and blogger in workforce development and also lectures on leveraging social networking sites for public purposes. Mauldin counsels organizations to consider the audience they currently have and the audience they aim to connect with before beginning to work in social networking sites. Mauldin cautions that social networking will not take the place of traditional marketing in print and other media but can be used to market to attract and engage different ridership cheaply and effectively.

At the start, determine the sort of information and interaction the agency would like to foster through social networking. Give thought to how people currently access information about agency services and the nature of that information:

*continued on page 14*

*As site interactions grow, connections among users “spider out” creating a diverse, interlinked network of people sharing similar interests.*

## Social Networking Micro-Primer



**www.twitter.com**

“Micro-blogging” social networking site. User posts are limited to 140 characters per entry – called a “tweet.” Users can choose to “follow” one another. Followers see tweets in a dynamic scrolling page.

Transit agencies with frequent updates may find Twitter an effective tool. Johnson County transit (The JO) began using Twitter in mid-2009. Cris Gault, Community Relations Coordinator, tweets about special fare offers and shares interesting articles about transit. Gault reports that The JO’s Twitter account has more than 170 followers and the best uses have been making riders aware of service delays due to weather or other issues.

Gault has recently created a Facebook page as well. Both services allow her to direct riders to The JO’s website and interact with riders in a different way. Gault envisions using Twitter for route-specific information soon.

View The Jo’s pages at <http://twitter.com/JoCoTheJO> and [www.facebook.com/pages/Johnson-County-Transit-The-JO](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Johnson-County-Transit-The-JO)



**www.facebook.com**

More than 300 million users worldwide. Users post information, pictures, videos and links about themselves and their interests. Facebook “friends” and “fans” of an organization see posts in a dynamic scrolling page.

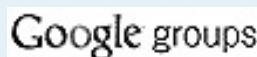
Facebook Pages, Groups and Events allow organizations to keep people aware of topics of interest. Facebook includes tips and tricks about creating organization pages and effectively marketing groups.

CyRide, the city bus service for Ames, IA, uses its Facebook page to connect over 1,500 fans. CyRide has posted videos about how to ride the bus and read its route schedules. Its page also directs people to its Web site, includes service updates and changes. These updates are also linked with its Twitter account with 270 followers. View CyRide’s pages at [www.facebook.com/cyride](http://www.facebook.com/cyride) and <http://twitter.com/cyride>



**www.linkedin.com**

Business-oriented social networking site with 50 million users worldwide. LinkedIn allows users to post resumes, recommend one another’s work and network with other professionals.



**http://groups.google.com**

Discussion-group service provided free by Google, Inc. Users participate in “threaded” conversations about topics of common interest. Users can post and answer other posts to share information and observations.

Mobility managers across Wisconsin use Google Groups to share information across the state (see more information on page 14 in this article).



# Resources Order Form

Check the resources you would like below. Add your information to this form and mail it to the KUTC Lending Library, 1530 W. 15th Street, Room 2160, Lawrence, KS 66045 —or— fax the form to 785/ 864-3199.

**Rural Vanpool Webinar (Recording).** Rural communities are often challenged to provide workers with shared-ride commuting options and an increasing number of communities are looking to vanpools. Vanpooling offers a flexible and cost-effective solution for smaller, more widely dispersed communities, and is an option that benefits commuters and businesses alike. Use this link to listen to three presentations about rural vanpooling. <http://ctaa.acrobat.com/p36434883/>.

**Volunteer Friends Model.** Fact Sheet Vol. 1(9). This fact sheet provides a description of the Volunteer Friends model designed as a low-cost, low-maintenance, customer driven approach for providing transportation to older adults. 4 pages. Beverly Foundation, Inc. 2008.

**Transportation and Dementia.** Fact Sheet Vol. 1(8). This fact sheet provides an overview of dementia, how it affects personal travel and driving, and transit options for those with dementia. The fact sheet also provides the “5 A’s” of dementia-friendly transportation. 4 pages, Beverly Foundation, Inc. 2008.

**Kansas RTAP Resource Catalog 2008.** Contains scores of publications, videos and CDs on transit-related topics.

## Address Change?

Send us this form with your corrected address, or fax your changes to 785/864-3199.

## Special training opportunities

### • Starting and Growing Rural Vanpool Programs: From Financing to Vehicle Procurement.

March 23, 2010 Webinar 1:00 – 2:15 p.m. (CST).  
For more information: <http://www.ctaa.org>.

Vanpool program operators are using creative funding and partnership-building strategies to build their vanpool programs. This Webinar will assist you in thinking broadly about how to develop and sustain vanpooling in your community. Speakers will present examples of how federal, state and local funds and tax benefits can be packaged to support rural vanpools. Speakers will also share ways to obtain vehicles.

### • Planning for Agency Safety, Security and Emergency Preparedness: An Orientation Workshop for Kansas Rural and Small Urban Transit Agencies

June 22, 2010 in Salina, Kansas

This workshop will provide information to transit managers about the FTA program that supports developing high quality safety and security programs in rural and small urban transportation systems. The focus of the workshop will be to assist Sections 5307 (small urban) and 5311 (rural public) transit systems in understanding and using the FTA Transit Bus Safety and Security Program. The workshop will also provide an orientation to the structure, use, and value of the new FTA Bus Safety and Security Web site, including how to use the Web site to locate and download information important to developing a program. To register, visit the RTAP training calendar at <http://www.ksrtap.org>. Taught by Ream Lazaro and sponsored by Kansas Rural Transit Assistance Program.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_

Agency \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip+4 \_\_\_\_\_ Date Materials Needed \_\_\_\_\_

Return Service Requested



The *Kansas TransReporter* is an educational and technology transfer newsletter published quarterly by the Kansas University Transportation Center (KUTC), under the umbrella of KU's Transportation Research Institute. The newsletter is free to rural and specialized transit providers and others with an interest in rural and specialized service.

The *Kansas TransReporter* is co-sponsored by the Federal

Transit Administration under its Rural Transportation Assistance Program (RTAP) and the Kansas Department of Transportation.

The purposes of the RTAP program are to: 1) educate transit operators about the latest technologies in rural and specialized transit; 2) encourage their translation into practical application; and 3) to share information among operators.

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## Calendar

### Rural Transit Training and Conferences

*2010 Kansas RTAP Driver Training:*

**Defensive Driving and Passenger Assistance Skills**

- March 3 in Chanute
- March 4 in Bonner Springs
- March 8 in Arkansas City - 5 spaces left!
- March 9 in Wichita
- March 18 in Holton
- April 1 in Junction City
- April 8 in Salina
- April 15 in Topeka
- April 22 in Great Bend
- August 5 in Topeka
- August 12 in Olathe
- August 26 in Ottawa
- October 14 in Pittsburg
- October 21 in Newton

**Defensive Driving and Emergency Procedures**

- May 6 Dodge City
- May 20 in Pratt
- June 3 in El Dorado
- June 10 in Independence
- June 17 in Emporia
- June 24 in McPherson
- July 15 in Concordia
- July 22 in Oakley
- July 29 in Hays
- August 19 in Atchison
- September 2 in Manhattan
- September 30 in Salina
- October 7 in Garden City

*Additional training:*

**March 23-25, 2010.  
Region VII FTA Public Transportation Training Meeting**

Kansas City, MO  
<http://www.fta7meeting.org>  
Early registration ends February 22.  
Sign up today!

**June 22, 2010.  
Planning for Agency Safety, Security and Emergency Preparedness**

Salina, KS  
Contact Kansas RTAP

**August 30 – September 1, 2010.  
Kansas Public Transit Association**

Hutchinson, KS  
<http://www.kstransit.org>

To register for a Kansas RTAP workshop, go to <http://www.ksrtap.org>. Click on "Register to attend."